



Pentecost, or Whitsunday, the 50th day after Easter (May 19 this year; see page 11)

InSpiring

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The Streets in San Francisco



Coming from Melbourne where begging on the streets is limited, when I visited San Francisco a few

years ago the numbers of homeless beggars came as a bit of a shock. With some financial acumen, the homeless "open shop" around the tourist spots along Powell Street where the cable car begins its journey toward Fishermen's Wharf. While not exclusively, most of the homeless that I saw in San Francisco were either black or disabled. I remember some year ago visiting a friend in New York who said, "Poverty in the US has a face and it is black." Of course, in Australia poverty also has a black face when we consider the plight of Aboriginal people.

I had breakfast one morning at Max's Restaurant at the corner of Powell and O'Farrell Streets. I watched from the comfort of my seat a man on the adjacent corner. He was black, aged somewhere between 50 and 70 years of age and as people passed, he offered them a small newspaper and some other object I couldn't quite see. I noticed a small child with her father walk up to the man. As the child stood in front of him, the man reached out his hand and gently touched the little girl's head. The gesture was friendly and kind and it reminded me of how I have lovingly put my hand on the head of a small child.

I finished my breakfast and made my way over to the man. When he saw me approaching, he eagerly held out the newspaper, "Just a dollar to support the homeless," he said. I took the paper and gave him a dollar. I saw that the other object he was holding was a CD, "What's the CD?" I asked. He was quick to tell me that it only cost \$10 and was produced by several San Francisco musicians to raise money for a homeless shelter in the downtown. I took \$10 from my wallet and put it into his hand. He thanked me and said, "This is my work, you know, this is how we support ourselves."

I looked into his face and saw a real dignity and a generosity of spirit. Indeed, his face was ravaged by the hard life he had lived, but it did not diminish a sense of worth and integrity. Before I left, I asked him, "What's your name?" "Christopher," he replied. "Heh! that's my name too," I said. He smiled and laughed at the connection we had made. "Where you from, Christopher?" he asked. "Australia," I replied. "Well Christopher, that must be a glorious place." I agreed, shook his hand and started to walk away. "You have a very good day, Christopher," he called to me. "And to you too Christopher," I called back. We both left smiling.

If I had given him my name first and then he said that's my name too, I would not have believed him. I would have thought that he was just trying to use the name to get something from me, which may say more about me than about him. What I discovered in this encounter was that generosity does not just flow one way. I may have had the money but my friend had something else. He may have been homeless and poor but he had a big spirit, a generous spirit. You could see it in his eyes and feel it in his handshake. Jack Kornfield in his book, A Path with Heart says, "An act of generosity opens our body, heart and spirit and brings us closer to freedom... whether it is generosity with our time, our possessions, our money or our love, the principles are the same. True generosity grows in us as our heart opens and expands with integrity and health in the inner life".

Christopher

THE SEARCH FOR OUR NEW MINISTER – UPDATE

Dick Carter

The Joint Nominating Committee (JNC) has completed the Mission Study and it was submitted to our Presbytery of Port Philip East on 23 April. Preparation of the Mission Study recommending whether the ministerial placement should be filled is the first of six steps in the Uniting Church's process of filling a Ministerial Vacancy.

Presbytery's Pastoral Relations Committee and its Finance & Risk Committee will review the Mission Study at their respective meetings during May. We are hopeful that by the end of the month the JNC will receive Presbytery's agreement that the vacancy should be filled and to prepare a Congregation Profile which is the second step towards calling a new minister.

The Profile sets out comprehensive details about the Congregation and surrounding community, what are the congregation's missional objectives and its hopes for the future, what gifts and qualities are sought in a new minister, and so on. It is intended that the Profile will give potential ministerial candidates a good understanding of the matters that they need to know when deciding whether or not to express their interest in having a conversation with the JNC which may lead to a call being issued by the congregation.

Preparation of the Profile has already begun in hopeful anticipation of a favourable reaction by Presbytery to our Mission Statement. The JNC's objective is to have the Profile complete and approved by our Church Council ready for submission to Presbytery's Pastoral Relations Committee by the end of June.

The body of the Mission Study follows.

MISSION STUDY

Introduction

This Mission Study has been conducted jointly by the Presbytery of Port Phillip East (PPPE) and the Congregation of Stonnington Community Uniting Church, Malvern East (SCUC) as Step One in the UCA's process of filling the current Ministerial Vacancy at SCUC.

It draws heavily on the results of a special survey of SCUC members, the subsequent live consultation with the members at a congregation General Meeting, & other material in which the Congregation's needs have been expressed.

The Survey & Consultation

The special survey was conducted in February/March 2024. It took the form of a statement – "What Are We Now?" – and a questionnaire – "How Do We Want to Be?". The statement and questionnaire are attached (Appendix 1). The survey was sent by email to 72 members and hard copy versions were also distributed to those members who attended Sunday services.

The results of the survey showed there was broad agreement with the "What Are We Now?" statement, and clear feedback on the qualities which were desired in a Minister. What was valued in church services was well articulated as was what aspects of the wider life of the Congregation were particularly enjoyed. There was a positive view for the near-term future of the Congregation but members were less certain about the long term. A wish to increase outreach to the local community was also expressed. The detailed analysis of the survey results can be provided on request.

The General Meeting consultation with the Congregation was held on 17 March with 36 members in attendance. An analysis of the responses to the survey was presented and a lively discussion ensued.

Interpretation Of the Survey & Consultation

SCUC is a vibrant faith community, and we see ourselves as being on a spiritual journey. The SCUC community embraces diversity and is open to experimentation and the testing of new ideas and approaches. Over the last two decades the underpinnings of our worship have shifted towards a progressive theology. Rather than treating the New or Old Testaments as the literal truth, we seek to understand them as providing, through a rich vein of metaphor and parable, a deep understanding of Jesus' message. We take account of the cultural and political context in which Jesus lived in order to apply his message of God's Kingdom on Earth to our very different modern world.

Our members are more inclined to acknowledge God as a mystery, all pervasive in our lives and throughout the Cosmos, rather than as a remote, interventionist Being or Deity. However, the beliefs of SCUC members are varied, with some members not feeling as 'progressive' as others but their views are acknowledged and respected. Thus, our aim to be inclusive of all should enable all members of the congregation to enjoy the style and order of the Sunday service, particularly in celebrating the old traditions associated with occasions such as Christmas and Easter, and our celebration of the Eucharist.

Congregation members have played a leading role in the founding of the Progressive Christian Network of Victoria (PCNV) and in establishing and conducting several "Common Dreams" conferences. The congregation continues to provide administrative support for the PCNV and Common Dreams.

Our purpose is to seek, through our community's fellowship and faith, an enhancement of our individual lives, and through those lives, the lives of the wider community. That "life enhancement" is reflected in the caring we receive and the caring we give, in our capacity to love more and to be loved, and in our assured progression

through life with the spiritual comfort of the Holy Spirit within us.

Our vision is to create a spiritual home for a secular people through which we can secure, perpetuate and grow this "life enhancement" opportunity, extending the SCUC faith community (and its purpose) deeper and wider with people from all walks of life who live, study, or work in the broader East Malvern and surrounds, or who come from further afield to experience the progressive theology espoused by SCUC.

SCUC is a safe place for all people to attend, regardless of ethnicity, creed, gender, cultural background, or sexual orientation. We warmly welcome visitors and new members. We aim to be a listening church and regard ourselves as non-judgemental, sympathetic beina and compassionate. We strive to be a helping church, supporting each other, helping the community, working for the disadvantaged, seeking social justice and caring for the environment. There are strong friendships within our community and we can look to each other for support. Pastoral care is seen as a high priority in a community of older members.

Our church services do have structure, but we have long abandoned the traditional church service, with its formal seating and preaching format. Many members have expressed their love and respect for some of the traditional aspects of church services, including hymns, prayers and Bible readings, but they also value not being restricted by conventional forms of worship/liturgy. Over a number of years, we have become accustomed to more interactive services, with seating in the round and more flexibility in the choice of readings, poetry and other references from a wide variety of other wisdom sources.

Music plays an important role in our ministry. We have an excellent organ and grand piano and we engage capable organists and pianists; congregation members make up a regular choir and, together with friends, a regular musical ensemble, both of which perform monthly or for special services. Often, our hymns have replaced older, and theologically contentious words with modern, more appropriate words (though for some, the older words still have a nostalgic appeal).

Members wish to be enlightened and challenged by the ideas presented during the service. They hope to be engaged by the minister's reflections and to find them relevant to today's world. Members seek to be inspired and uplifted by the service and by the company of people whom they trust and respect; to feel the "togetherness of community". Some speak of the perception of being cleansed, grounded or soothed, and of feeling a sense of dignity, of being in a special place on Sunday morning.

Members of our congregation are very enthusiastic about the wider life of SCUC. We meet for morning tea after our service and we lunch in our Parish Hall on the first Sunday of the month following the Communion service and all these occasions are valued. Many members commented positively on other associated activities: 'Something for the Spirit', a more widely based discussion group which meets on a monthly basis; Book Chat, a book discussion group meeting several times a year; our monthly church newsletter, InSpire; Common Threads, a 'secular' craft circle which meets monthly; UCAF, known as "Afternoon Fellowship", which meets monthly; the Library, which is maintained by a small group of members; an informal monthly social get-together at "Coffee and Soul", a local coffee shop.

These activities help to form strong bonds of friendship between members of the congregation and develop a warm sense of community. Members care for one another and reach out to each other, and lifelong friendships have developed over many years. There is a strong commitment to refugees, inter-faith groups, First Nations peoples and to social justice issues and several members of the congregation are actively involved in organisations supporting these causes. Members stress the need for the SCUC's continued support for humanitarian organisations and causes.

In spite of being an ageing group, members seek new opportunities for significant outreach to the local community; in the future, they hope for a stronger footprint in the community.

In pondering the future, members hope that SCUC can maintain our membership or even achieve modest growth in it, and they have expressed the hope that we can keep functioning as a church. Members hope we can continue to explore our progressive Christian journey and appeal to the 'spiritual but not religious' people in our community. Members emphasise the continuing need for pastoral care directed at those undergoing significant life changes within our ageing congregation.

The Gifts, Qualities, & Skills Sought In A Minister

Members of the SCUC congregation are looking for a minister with pastoral gifts, someone who can care for the members, and who displays kindness, compassion, sincerity and empathy; someone who will visit members in their homes or hospital, when needed.

We are seeking a person who identifies with progressive and contemporary theology. This person will be open to discussion about faith and will have a willingness to test boundaries and to take on the challenge of new ways, an individual who displays curiosity but understands that there are variations of belief held within our congregation and all must feel included. We see ourselves as being on a journey.

We look for a person who has strong personal integrity and is a good listener. We need a leader who uses clear speech and plain language and can be heard and understood easily by older people with less acute hearing. This person should have the ability to explain complex matters in understandable language and to deliver reflections that are stimulating and to the point. We seek a leader who is willing to express their own views with humility and confidence and who can communicate Jesus' message and to show how it is still relevant today.

We wish for a leader who can stimulate us intellectually and morally and is willing to support members who are actively involved with humanitarian organisations, seeking social justice and caring for the environment. We need inspiration and support from this leader as we seek to reach out and integrate SCUC more widely into the community.

What Type Of Ministry Agent Is Appropriate?

The Vacancy should be filled by an experienced Minister of the Word with the gifts, qualities, and skills outlined above.

Who Makes the Call To The New Minister?

The Placement should be filled by a call of the Congregation.

Viability Of The Placement

The Placement should be financially viable for at least the next five years. Please see the "5 Year Budget" accompanying this Mission Study Report. This budget follows the standard Excel spreadsheet template prescribed by PPPE.

The projections included in the Budget are in 2024 money values & based on the actual experiences of the past four years with most weight being given to 2023 outcomes. Except for lease income where rent reviews are locked in, there has been no attempt to guess the effects of inflation, movements in remuneration, or other changes in the economic environment.

The Budget indicates that the Congregation should be in a near breakeven cash flow situation in all of the out years except for 2025 when a planned maintenance project will push the result into deficit. The deficit in 2025 will be met either from funds in the Congregation's Working Accounts or by drawdown from Investments. Possible deficits in other years will be managed in the normal way by shorter term adjustments when causes are identified.

SCUC has significant financial resources with \$1.0 million of cash (\$40,000) & U Ethical Growth Trust investments (\$960,000) projected to be on hand as at 1 January 2025. Over the longer term it can be reasonably expected that the growth investments will increase in market value.

Terms Of Placement

The Terms of Placement are attached (Appendix 2). These terms are based on the Synod of Vic/Tas current Summary of Ministerial Provisions and Charges.

Approval of This Report

This Mission Study Report is submitted on behalf of the Joint Nominating Committee by Rev Dr Julie Hall, Chairperson of the SCUC Joint Nominating Committee.

Signed 23 April 2024

Dick Carter

STONNINGTON COMMUNITY UNITING CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT Joyce Jenkin, Secretary

A large part of the April council meeting was devoted to discussion about revamping our Website. Rosemary Grenness, who was very involved in setting up our website initially, attended the meeting and took us through a number of issues. She had put together a discussion paper and also mocked up some possible web pages for us. It was agreed that we like what she has done and we have accepted her generous offer to do the work for us. We are very grateful to Rosemary and look forward to having the new site. At Lencie's suggestion, it was agreed that we consider applying for a PWMU Cookbook grant on behalf of ASRC.

SOMETHING FOR THE SPIRIT Lorna Henry

It wasn't possible to meet in April. We had thought we would attend a film 'Freud's Last Session', but fortunately a preview was available, and on the basis of that we decided not to go ahead.

May will bring us a chance to see another film, this one hopefully more positive and rewarding. 'The Way, My Way' is the story of an Australian man who decided to walk the 800-km long Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route through northern Spain. With thanks to Maria Sandbach for this suggestion; we will arrange to go as a group and have time for discussion afterwards.

Please note however, that we won't meet on the third Sunday this month, but **on the fourth Sunday, May 26.** Closer to the time, there will be an email regarding arrangements to people on the SFTS mailing list. If you don't receive that email and would like to join us, please contact Lorna

LIBRARY NEWS Faye Pattinson

Our next Book Chat will be held on Thursday 16th May at 10.30 am in the Margaret McKinnon Room. All welcome. Come and enjoy the chat and a cuppa even if you haven't a book to share. You might hear about something you want to read.

More books from our March Book Chat:

The People on Platform 5 by Clare Pooley. With nothing in common but their commute, an eclectic group of people learn that their assumptions about each other don't match reality. But when lona's life begins to fall apart, will her new friends be there when she needs them most? Abide with me by Elizabeth Strout. After the tragic death of his young wife, Reverend Tyler Caskey, a New England minister, struggles to hold together his own life, his family, and his town, while dealing with his personal anger, grief, and loss of faith.

The Lost Testament by Alan Gold. A suspensefilled thriller, ripped from tomorrow's headlines-when the sacred meets the secular, mankind will stop at nothing in the name of the Word. When the news is heard that a prophetic testament written by Jesus Christ may yet exist, scholars, fortune hunters, religious groups, and reporters converge on the site within hours. Their reasons vary, but their desire is the same.

Flinders by Grantlee Kieza. Fearless, sharp-eyed and handsome, Matthew Flinders was one of the greatest of all maritime adventurers and undertook one of the most important voyages of discovery - to circumnavigate and map the famed Great Southern Land. Together with his Aboriginal interpreter and guide, Kuringgai man Bungaree, and his beloved rescue cat Trim, Flinders explored the furthest reaches and rugged coastlines of Australia and meticulously. It's also a story of technical brilliance - Flinders' meticulous charts gave us the first complete maps of our continent, which are so accurate they are still used today.

Daughter of Calabria by Tania Blanchard.

Calabria, Italy, 1936. In a remote farming village nestled in the mountains young and spirited Giulia Tallariti longs for something more. While she loves her home and her lively family, she would much rather follow in her nonna's footsteps and pursue her dream of becoming a healer. But as Mussolini's focus shifts to the war in Europe, civil unrest looms. Whispers of war are at every corner and her beloved village, once safe from the fascist agenda of the North, is now in very real danger.

Looking forward to seeing you on May 16!!

AFTERNOON FELLOWSHIP

Lencie Harding

Another productive meeting was held on Monday 15th April.



With plenty of chatting, the four tarnished collection plates were polished and are now gleaming. In addition, 30g of stamps donated by Trish Brownrigg, Grace McAllister and Jan Riches were trimmed for Sammy Stamp.

Afternoon tea which included Kooka's Country choc raspberry Cookies baked in Donald was enjoyed with the company of Cheryl who took a break from organ practice.

I am grateful for the help with the stamp trimming.

OPPORTUNITY TABLE

Lencie Harding

On behalf of our Treasurer, Jan Riches, I am pleased to report that the Opportunity Table on Sunday 21st April raised \$188 which included a \$20 donation and \$25 from a home delivery to Grace and Keith McAllister. Jan's text read 'Our SCUC friends are so generous'.

Michael Williams' delicious jams continue to sell well as do the scrumptious baked treats. We had

three visitors from Glen Iris Uniting Church who bought several jars of Michael's jams.

Thank you to everyone who brought and bought.

SAMMY STAMP

Lencie Harding

The Sammy Stamp volunteers were pleased to receive a delivery of 470g of trimmed and sorted stamps last month together with some selfstamped envelopes. Thank you to the members of our congregation and others for their support.

Special thanks to Grace & Keith McAllister for their generous donation of stamps.

My Sammy Stamp box is now refilling following Jan and Jo's stamp trimming efforts at Afternoon Fellowship's April meeting.

The following is from Allan Clark's report for the May 2024 issue of the Uniting Church Adult Fellowship's magazine *Net Work:*

The year progresses, but Sammy Stamp keeps working diligently. Sales up to 7/4/2024 have reached about \$4,962 (Same week last year \$6,199).

We have approved a grant of \$2,000 to go to the Vanuatu Prevention of Blindness Project to assist their work. We have now approved \$11,900 in grants so far this year.

Anyone is welcome to come and visit us on a Thursday at 15 Black Street between 9.00 a.m. -12 noon to see us at work. You are always welcome to join in and learn how to prepare stamps for the buyers who come in seeking treasures and/or their regular orders.

Your help will assist us to raise funds for many worthy causes.

Allan Clark Convenor Lencie forwarded this message from our friend **Herro Zhao**, who shared these photos. Herro joined in an outdoor activity on 20th of April including a traditional Chinese old town visit and hiking. She says that spring is a very comfortable season to go out.

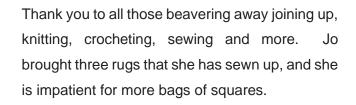




A traditional Taoist practice area

COMMON THREADS

We acknowledged ANZAC Day when we met (all six of us) on Thursday April 25 by feasting on Anzac biscuits, baked by Michael Read and Alison, in addition to Jo's homemade shortbreads and Dawn's cupcakes.







What beautiful scenery!





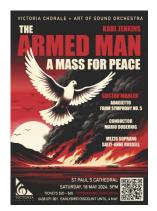


Dawn joined this rug, and Anne made several children's beanies, all for KOGO. Dawn has delivered the completed articles to Wondoflex in Malvern Road for KOGO pick-up.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS in which our members are performing

On Saturday May 18 and Sunday May 19, you can enjoy choral music by two of Melbourne's most prominent choirs.

Anne Page is performing in the Victoria Chorale concert on the 18th at 5pm in St Paul's Cathedral, and Alison in the Astra concert on the 19th at 4.30pm in Footscray.



"The Armed Man" was commissioned to mark the end of one of mankind's most destructive millennia, and first performed in the Year 2000, with hopes for a new era of peace. After a

decade of Balkans warfare, Welsh composer Karl

Jenkins dedicated this thrilling Mass to the victims of the Kosovo violence. Now Victoria Chorale performs The Armed Man in this time of new and dangerous conflict. Exciting, brilliant, varied and passionate, the work is a great kaleidoscope of musical styles. With its rich harmonies and exciting percussive sections, it ends in a rousing song of peace.

Link to the opening section of The Armed Man, L'Homme armé:

https://youtu.be/njJsHbfY6Vc?si=3IJ6MmHAmz X1LpIJ

Link to the second last section of The Armed Man, the Benedictus:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zc1Zoz-NUro

Link to more information about Karl Jenkins: http://www.karljenkins.com/biog

The program will begin with Gustav Mahler's yearning Adagietto, from his Fifth Symphony.

Please see Anne Page for tickets.

The Astra Choir Between Mall & Chapel

A Whitsunday Moveable Feast

Sunday 19 May, 4:30 - 6:30 pm

Beginning: 4.30 – 5.30 pm <u>Metro West Mall, 47 Paisley Street Footscray</u> (corner of Albert Street) Continuing: 5.45 – 6.30 pm <u>Baptist Church, 60 Paisley Street Footscray</u>

The Astra Choir joins the Sleepless Footscray Festival with a concert in motion on Sunday 19 May. This date is known as **Pentecost or Whitsunday, the 50th day after Easter**. It marks a legendary event when people from different parts of the earth broke into many tongues, yet understood each other. The Astra Choir is also multi-lingual in this mobile concert, travelling



concert, travelling between secular and sacred domains. The music spans nine centuries, from the mediaeval celebrity Hildegard of Bingen to new

works from composers in Melbourne, Footscray and Geelong.

Starting in Footscray's spectacular and deserted mall of Metro West, mediaeval pilgrim songs mix with chants, meditations and modern choruses through the afternoon. For the second half, the concert moves down Paisley Street to the Baptist Church, where music combines the choir with pipe organ and electronics.

Composers in the Mall: Hildegard, anonymous Pilgrim Songs from 14th-century Spain, Josquin des Prez, Friedrich Delius, Edward Elgar, Gianandrea Pauletta, Pauline Oliveros, and world premieres by Kym Alexandra Dillon and Allan Walker.

Composers in the Baptist Church: Giovanni Gabrieli, Johannes Brahms, Elliott Carter, and a world premiere by Troy Rainbow.

The Astra Choir conducted by John McCaughey is joined by Yo-yo Su (baritone saxophone), and organists Linda Kent and Kim Bastin.

Note: Astra celebrates its 80th anniversary in

2024! | Astra (astramusic.org.au)

COFFEE SOUL-SEARCH

Tuesday 14 May from 2 pm

@ Fergus Coffee, 301 Wattletree Road

With the colder weather, we are experimenting with a different venue for our informal gatherings over coffee, still on the second Tuesday of the month. Please feel free to drop in on Tuesday 14 May from 2 pm for a chat and a catch-up. Fergus Coffee has been recommended by a few habituées. It is located in Wattletree Road, near the corner of Tooronga Road opposite the little plant nursery. They close at 3 pm, so we won't be able to linger so long... You can visit <u>contact@fergusdafe.com</u> to see the menu. All welcome, regardless of age, gender, dietary preferences etc. Alison

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

In between editing the April and May issues, I was lucky enough to spend three weeks in Japan. The purpose of the visit was to see my ailing 102year-old mother-in-law, but it coincided with the cherry blossom season, so please allow me to share a couple of photos with you. Gladly, her condition is now stable and we spent some precious hours together.



Street scene in Meguro, Tokyo



Revellers in Ueno Park



Anegasaki Shrine, near to my mother-in-law's place in Anegasaki, Chiba Prefecture.

Please feel free to send me your news items and photos for *InSpire*. We also welcome articles, so if you feel inspired, do write about any topic of interest to you to share with our readers. *Letters to the Editor are also welcome*. We can also promote your events at a modest or no fee!

Deadline for the **June 2024** edition of *InSpire* is **Monday, 27th May.** Articles should be emailed to the Editor Alison Tokita where possible, or they can be given in person.

CALENDAR MAY 2024

SUNDAY 5TH	11 AM	EUCHARIST & COMMUNITY LUNCH
SUNDAY 12 TH	10.30 AM	CHURCH SERVICE
TUESDAY 14 TH	2.00 PM	COFFEE & SOUL AT FERGUS COFFEE 301 WATTLETREE RD
THURSDAY 16 TH	10.30 AM	ВООК СНАТ
SUNDAY 19 TH	10.30 AM	CHURCH SERVICE
MONDAY 20 TH	2.00 PM	AFTERNOON FELLOWSHIP
THURSDAY 23 RD	10.00 AM	COMMON THREADS
SUNDAY 26 TH	10.30 AM 5.00 PM	CHURCH SERVICE SOMETHING FOR THE SPIRIT