



InSpire



NEWSLETTER OF THE STONNINGTON COMMUNITY UNITING CHURCH

Vol. 10, no 7

August 2024



Christian Building since Christ's Death

(See last page for the key to this etching by Kenneth Jack)

InSpiring

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Movement: Body Mind and Spirit¹

Some time ago I was walking behind an elderly man and became aware of his slow shuffle as he walked. I began to wonder why he didn't lift his feet as he walked. After a time of watching him, I become aware of my own way of walking. I didn't quite shuffle, but I didn't lift my feet as much as I did as a younger person. There are obvious physical reasons for this; loss of muscle strength; fear of tripping or falling; loss of balance and other issues that come with ageing and illness.

To get more information I consulted the source of all contemporary wisdom, Professor Google! Most of the information focused on the physical, which is reasonable. Yet I wondered, if for many, it was more than just physical deterioration.

When I retired in 2020, after 45 years in the Christian ministry I enrolled in a course in Anatomy and Physiology at RMIT. For years I had been interested in the "Body, Mind, Spirit" interaction. I found plenty of information on the Body and physicality; much on Mind, consciousness and the neurological. And some on the Spirit, faith, belief and religion. My interest was in how these distinct, yet interrelated dimensions of the human person, influence each other and begin to create a whole and healthy human being.

In the 1980s, one of my teachers was Professor Ed O'Sullivan (an easy name to remember) who was fond of saying, "We are not mature, we are maturing. We have not arrived, we are arriving." His philosophy was simple, we are beings who are in process. We are all moving toward ways of living. Of course, this is a hopeful and optimistic view of life. However, observation reveals that we also can be stuck or static on this journey. Sadly, through pain, suffering or a broken heart, we can regress.

It is interesting how we remember some teachers more than others. During the course with Professor O'Sullivan, he occasionally mentioned his wife's treatment for cancer and that the treatment was not as successful as they had

hoped. Ed was a creative teacher and had the ability to weave together life experiences with academic rigor. I think that Professor Ed gave me the conviction that life is about movement and that our movement in life must be within the Body, the Mind and Spirit.

What do I mean by Body, Mind and Spirit?

I start with what I *don't* mean by Body, Mind and Spirit. Body is not about dieting, perfect body size, shape, image or cultural stereotype. Yes, it does have to do with health and aspects of movement. It is our physical appearance, internal rhythms and the most visible part of us!

Mind is not primarily intellectualism or just cleverness. Nor is it only the brain. Simply, the mind is about perception. It is the seat of our reflection, identity, thought, consciousness and reason. Mind is beyond brain is a human organ. As the old song goes, "you can't have one without the other!"

Spirit does not need to be ethereal, other-worldly or supernatural. Spirit can be both positive and negative. It incorporates love and hate; trust and mistrust. But most importantly it is a belief in something beyond the self; connection with the other. A striving for meaning and hopefulness, and the capacity to identify the sacred in both the religious and the profane.

So, the human being is a combination of bones, muscles, blood, organs, and skin. It is also where a person feels emotions, joy, happiness, fear, anger, and pain. With a deep sense of meaning, purpose, hope, faith, wonder and love, within the life force.

Why is Movement Essential?

Modern thought has moved from a static, inert view of the world to a dynamic, progressive understanding. Within this view, human life is a process of continual change. And an interrelatedness to all things. The poet Wallace Stevens says, "*Nothing is itself taken alone. Things are because of interrelations and interconnections.*" Or the remarkable quote by John Muir the founder of Yosemite National Park, "*When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find*

¹ I have capitalized Body, Mind and Spirit for emphasis.

it hitched to everything else in the Universe.” This encourages us to recognize that Body, Mind and Spirit, while independent by definition are nevertheless a single undividable entity in the human person.

One part of the three can move the other two. It is often presented that the Mind/brain dominates the Body and in part that is true. However, mind over matter does not always work. The body has its own wisdom.² And the Spirit can motivate the Body through discomfort and pain, while giving hope in the midst of disappointment, disaster and despair.

But what about the significance of change and movement in life? The human body is intended to move. Otherwise, it will atrophy. There are debilitating diseases, aging, and confinements that can inhibit this movement. Nevertheless, the willingness to physically move, can be motivated by one’s Spirit. Likewise, mental health demands that from time to time we change our mind, beliefs, values and opinions. In a recent lecture by the Rev. Dr. Greg Jenks, he suggested that in every religious epoch, the Christian faith must respond in language, culture and movements appropriate to that era (my words.)

In this cultural era, movement, change and psychic growth is essential to motive us toward a hopeful future. We have begun to let go of the denigration of the body as expressed in Historical Theology. What I mean by this, is that we have begun to appreciate the wonder and complexity of the body, rather the emphasis on sin and corruption. Through progressive Christian thought, the world/universe can be imaged as God’s infinite body. And holistic religious imagination seems to be on the rise. Hopefully, the wall between the sacred and profane is slowly collapsing. The domination of Mind/brain can embrace the intelligence of the Body and the wisdom of Spirit.

Christopher Page

² *Body wisdom refers to the profound knowledge and insights that originate from within our physical selves. It goes beyond the cognitive mind and taps into the wisdom that resides in every cell, tissue, and organ. This intelligence communicates through sensations, emotions,*

SEARCH FOR A NEW MINISTER UPDATE

The Joint Nominating Committee searching for a Minister to fill our ministerial vacancy has met on a number of occasions. Unfortunately, as yet, there is no progress to report.

Dick Carter

STONNINGTON COMMUNITY UNITING CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

Joyce Jenkin

Progress has been made on the installation of the fountain beside the Memorial Garden. The fountain has been purchased and we are waiting for some electrical work to be done before the installation can take place.

Rosemary Grenness has continued to work on our website and has spent some time with Jane so that she is able to update items as required. Council continues to be very grateful to Rosemary who very kindly continues to provide her expertise freely.

The working party planning the public forum on homelessness has met with the two speakers and we are on track to host the event on 17th November. We thank Alison for her leadership on this.

Chris Page has spoken to the minister at the Glen Iris Road Uniting Church and a reciprocal visit will be organised.

We are compliant with the Essential Safety Measures required by law and the Synod and the report will be lodged with Presbytery shortly. Thanks to Doug Connell and Dick Carter for all they have done to make this happen.

and intuitive nudges, offering guidance and alerting us to our needs. From “The Soul Coach Embracing Body Wisdom: The Art of Listening to Your Inner Guide. Aug 6, 2023.”

SOMETHING FOR THE SPIRIT

Lorna Henry

Thanks to Michael Read, who brought to our July gathering the question “Why do conservative Christians think that an open mind is the devil’s playground?”

The answer given in the accompanying article was that - ‘At the core of each of us is our belief system’.

If, as in the case of some conservative and particularly fundamentalist Christians, your belief system is also your path to eternal salvation, then this is not a thing to be questioned or changed in any way. It determines not only who you are now, but where you will spend eternity.

Our discussion moved to personal experiences, and for nearly all of us, from childhood on, there have been changes in our understanding of the Christian message and therefore our belief system. We identified as ‘pilgrims on a journey’, finding our way through life, as we try to understand what the message and life of Jesus means for us in our world today.

Michael also brought a poem which ended with these words:

*Let me keep my distance, always, from those
who think they have the answers.
Let me keep company always with those who say
“Look!” And laugh in astonishment,
And bow their heads.*

For our August meeting, Dick Carter will talk to us about his visit to the US in May to attend the conference of the Westar Institute, where the key topic was Christian Nationalism. This is not a term we are familiar with in Australia, but the US is another country! At a time when American politics seems to dominate our news, Dick will report to us from the conference and help us to understand some background to what’s going on in the US, and the role that Christians (some Christians) play.

We will meet as usual on the third Sunday in August, Sunday 18th, 5.00-7.00pm at 5 Vickery St, East Malvern. You are very welcome to join us!

LIBRARY NEWS

Faye Pattinson

Another stimulating and fun Book Chat was held on July 18. As usual there was a wide diversity of books discussed. Below is a selection of the titles shared.

“**Understory: A Life with Trees**” by Inga Simpson. For ten years, Inga Simpson lived inside a forest. Each chapter of this nature writing-memoir explores a particular species of tree, layering description, anecdote, and natural history to tell the story of a scrap of forest in the Sunshine Coast hinterland - how the author came to be there and the ways it has shaped her life.

“**All Creatures Great and Small**” by James Herriot. Fresh out of Veterinary College the young James Herriot in 1930s, James thinks Yorkshire would offer an idyllic pocket of rural life in a rapidly changing world. However, the erratic behaviour of his new colleagues, Siegfried and Tristram, the incomprehensible farmers and herds of semi-feral cattle this is far from it. These stories are charming, heart-warming and laugh out loud funny.

And a book by our own Noel Miller brought along by Jo: “**A Collection of Inspirational thoughts & Affirmations Together with Other Interesting Quotations**” Over 60 years of his life Noel collected a host of inspirational thoughts and affirmations in a little black book which were a great comfort to him during his journey through life and which may be helpful to others.

The next Book Chat will be held at 10.30 am on Thursday 19th September. All welcome with or without a book to share. Come and enjoy the chat over a cup of tea or coffee.

AFTERNOON FELLOWSHIP

Lencie Harding

We were so fortunate to have our friend, podiatrist Rosemary Grenness, as guest speaker at the July 15, 2024 meeting.

Rosemary's topic was 'The vintage foot' and as she has done in the past, she gave us a most informative and enjoyable afternoon. It was a pleasure to have Alison Tokita's grandchildren, Macy and Ray join us. Both children were happy to volunteer their feet for part of Rosemary's presentation.

Rosemary has been a podiatrist for many years both in private practice here in Melbourne, and in country and interstate hospitals. She still works in the Podiatry Department at Swan Hill hospital when required.

Jan Riches thanked Rosemary and presented her with the gift she requested, a block of multi-coloured 3M post-it notes

Rosemary was happy for me to recommend her as guest speaker for Glen Waverley UCAF's programme next year. Glen Waverley's president Margaret Duncan was delighted with the recommendation.

SAMMY STAMP Lencie Harding

My Sammy Stamp box is now empty following last month's delivery to the Sammy Stamp volunteers at Trinity Brighton UC hall where I was made very welcome and given morning tea. The volunteers were pleased to receive 513.5g of trimmed and sorted stamps, 107.5g of untrimmed N.Z. stamps and a medium sized cardboard box of untrimmed stamps.

Thank you again to the Afternoon Fellowship ladies for their help with stamp trimming.

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

Well, winter is certainly upon us; however, Sammy Stamp is not standing still. Up to 25/6/2024 sales have reached about \$12,167 (same week last year, \$15,179). We have not received any new grant applications for approval so the yearly total remains at \$21,900.

Thank you all, out there for the philatelic items, etc. arriving for Sammy Stamp. It is much appreciated.

Please keep up the supply and forward to 44A Seventh St., Parkdale. 3195.

Allan Clark.
Convenor.

From Lencie:

When David Rogerson was in Melbourne in February, I asked him if he would be willing to prepare a devotion for an issue of *Net Work*. He kindly agreed to do this when he had time.

I thought he'd forgotten but when I opened my email yesterday, I was delighted to find an email from him with a devotion/reflection attached.

Change? What change? Reading: Matthew 4: 18-22

Reflection

I am writing this in the UK a week after a General Election that brought unprecedented change to the make-up of the House of Commons. Labour fought and won the election under the banner of "change" believing that it was time for this after 14 years of chaotic and sclerotic Conservative rule. Its campaign was, however, heavily criticised for failing to spell out the policies that would actually make a difference in our troubled country. Even now we are not sure what "change" means.

Perhaps there are parallels and lessons here for the Christian life. Becoming a Christian is about changing your life ... although, with the exception of the conservative evangelicals, we seem to be a little less confident in saying so today. Being Christians together (i.e. being church) is about effecting change in the world around us ... although here conservative Christians seem to grow silent and leave it to the more radical, activist wing of the church to speak and act for change. So, as we seek to encourage more people to become Christians and join our churches, is it sufficient to cry out for change; or do we need to be more specific about the practices that are required and will actually make the difference?

There is biblical evidence on both sides. Our gospel reading suggests that we do not need and should not expect to understand the length, breadth, height and depth of the changes that being a follower of Jesus will bring. We simply need to follow him. Put yourself into the shoes of those first disciples as they heard and responded to Jesus' call, and you realise just how incredible their response was. Peter and Andrew are going about their day job, casting nets and catching fish when along comes an apparent stranger asking them to "come with me" and all at once they drop what they are doing and follow him. How reckless! How bizarre! How contradictory to all good practice! What on earth were they thinking? Of course, we don't know. There was something authoritative in Jesus' demeanour or deportment or diction, something that compelled them to act. Something made them leap before they looked, and off they went to have their lives changed without a clue as to what it might involve.

So, there are times for impulsive decisions, for accepting change for change's sake, without any thought for where it might lead. But these are the exceptions. If you read on in the gospels, and indeed most of the bible, we are encouraged to think about the consequences of what we say and do and to reflect on our impact on the world around us. Our choices are rarely inconsequential. They matter. They can and do effect change. So, we need to be careful that we say the words and take the actions that make the right kind of changes to our lives, the lives of our neighbours and the life of the world. The kind of changes we seek and the policies and practices to bring them about matter intensely.

We could, perhaps, call it God's manifesto. It runs throughout the pages of scripture: the repeated refrain in the Old Testament to care for widows, orphans, foreigners; Micah's great call to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly; Jesus' commandment to love God, self and neighbour or, as the fourth gospel puts it, to love one another as he has loved us.

If love indiscriminate is our commandment how should we tackle immigration, taxation, welfare, health, education, native title, foreign affairs and all the rest? If love indiscriminate is our commandment how well have you lived this past week; and what are you going to change in the week ahead?

Hymn: Love divine, all loves excelling (TiS 217)

Prayer

Gracious God, source of all being, giver of life, the goodness and kindness within, between and beyond all things, we come in prayer to give thanks for the blessings that life has brought to us. Yes, there is pain and yes, there is suffering, but running through it all we have found the veins of grace and love, of beauty and compassion. We have encountered the divine; and we are glad.

Yet, as we are conscious of your grace and love bringing us love and joy, so also, we know that other people in other places are instead overwhelmed with violence, destruction and death. We weep for the people of Ukraine and the people of Gaza. We cry out for refugees and migrants, and those left behind to face hunger and persecution. Most of all we pray for change in this beautiful world, gifted to us and yet so egregiously marred by us. We change that we and all your creation may be changed from glory into glory, until in heaven we take our place, and until we are lost in wonder, love and praise. AMEN.

*Devotion for Network UCAF magazine
July 2024*



David Rogerson is a local preacher within the Methodist Church in the United Kingdom. He lives in Stirling in Central Scotland along with his wife, Ruth. They have been frequent visitors to Victoria and Tasmania since 1990 when David worked for Telecom Australia (Telstra) as an advisor on privatization and competition. In the mid-90s David and Ruth worshipped at Ewing Memorial (now Stonnington Community) Uniting Church in Melbourne. It is rumoured that members of the congregation still remember some of his sermons today!

FORWARD NOTICE

A Community Forum

“Homelessness and Housing”

A dedicated Working Group is planning a Community Forum on the topic of “Homelessness and Housing”, to be held on Sunday 17 November from 3.00 to 5.00 pm.

Confirmed speakers are Mr Noah Yang, CEO and founder of a support organisation for homeless people, “We are Mobilise”, and Ms Debbie Holmes, Director of the Avalon Centre in Malvern Rd.

Getting to Know the Regular Users of our Church

PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN NETWORK OF VICTORIA

[The Progressive Christian Network of Victoria Inc. – Promoting progressive Christian thought and practice \(pcnvictoria.org.au\)](https://pcnvictoria.org.au)

The Progressive Christian Network of Victoria is actually hosted by our church, and our wonderful webmaster Rosemary Grenness has posted an easy guide on our website:

[Embracing Change: Understanding Progressive Christianity \(stonningtonchurch.org.au\)](https://stonningtonchurch.org.au)

Actually, PCNV was seminally formed by Ewing people including Dick Carter, Lorna Henry and Greg Crowe in 2006 to:

- Promote progressive Christian thought and practice;
- Explore the implications of critical biblical scholarship and the emerging proposals of eminent contemporary theologians, scholars and others;
- Investigate alternatives to traditional religious beliefs and practices and new ways to understand religious faith;
- Affirm the significance of the life and teachings of Jesus for today.

Surely a central aspect of our identity at SCUC is our progressive character.

The most recent event of the PCNV was a presentation by one of Australia’s leading biblical scholars, Rev Dr Greg Jenks, on the topic “Reclaiming the Bible for Progressive Christians” on Sunday 28 July 2024 at 4pm. This time the meeting was held via Zoom.

His wide-ranging talk presented the Bible in many guises: as metaphor, as cultural product, as human artefact, and a late product that could only come into being after the invention of writing. One fascinating theme was the role of lectionaries – selections of significant biblical texts for reading in liturgical contexts that were developed for a time when most of the faithful could not read, did not know much Latin, and could not possess a Bible personally. That changed after the development of printing and the translation of the Bible into English and other vernaculars.

The talk was much more extensive than this, and fortunately it will be available on the PCNV website for open access. It is most worthwhile listening to!

COMMON THREADS

We had a good turnout at our meeting on Thursday 25 July, when we welcomed another new member who we initiated into the art of knitting squares. We again enjoyed a drop-in visit from Faye Pattinson.

Lots of handiwork was displayed and everyone applied themselves to working on individual projects.

Dawn showed us the rugs she had knitted and sewn up, and Jo displayed four rugs she made from KOGO squares. Jo and Alison delivered the rugs to KOGO during the morning and brought back armfuls of bags of squares to craft into rugs.



Next meeting: Thursday 22 August

MONTHLY CAFÉ CATCH-UP

Tuesday 13 August from 2 pm

Venue: Mr Sister Café



Our informal gathering over coffee on the second Tuesday of the month will again be at the **Mr Sister café at 81 Waverley Road**, on the corner of Douglas Street, very close to the church. This weirdly named café is a light and sunny venue and the coffee is good. Please feel free to drop in on Tuesday 13 August from 2 pm for a chat and a catch-up. They are open till 3:30 pm.



All welcome, regardless of age, gender, dietary preferences etc.

MEMORIES OF CHURCH MARKET DAY 2005

For me activities started on the Friday, when the big task of moving hundreds of items, affectionately described as 'trash' or 'treasure' from the manse shed to the hall commenced. I was lucky enough to be allocated the wheelbarrow with the flat tyre and a tray disconnected from its undercarriage. By comparison, Dick and Rev John Smith cut very professional figures with respectively their dolly-trolley and barrow complete with pneumatic tyres. At the other extreme was poor Jim who made trip after trip using only his arms and legs.

Market Day dawned overcast but spirits were high. By 9.00am the church was buzzing in expectation of the descending hoard of dealers. Ray Cramer and Harold Byrnes took up sentry duty as the doors opened at 9.30am. Trade was brisk, the laughter level was high and a certain degree of flexibility was given to the careful pricing policy.

Luke Leembruggen was doing big business on the electrical table, even garnering repeat business, as evidenced when one of his customers, for \$5, purchased a TV to replace a set, no doubt in the same price bracket, purchased at our last event which "was starting to lose it a bit".

Sales were slow for Marg MacKellar at the silverware department until some heavy

discounting was introduced. The result was magic. In no time buyers put aside their obvious reluctance to clean silver and promptly cleaned out our table of EPNS.

The stock at the jams and preserves stall was enormous as was the variety on the cake stall. Everything was labelled in accordance with tiresome bureaucratic formality and the quality of these comestibles was, as usual, amazing.....a great tribute to the cooks of Ewing. Late in the day, Ray Cramer was heard to say tentatively, "Can we go home?".....Bette's reply "not till the last pot of jam has been sold".

The kitchen was another popular spot with Jane Trafficante, Jill Rogers and Joyce Jenkin in smart aprons dispensing Devonshire teas with real (what a great idea) coffee. The only sanctuary for the day was the adjacent Margaret McKinnon room where the cuppa and a sit down could be enjoyed in peace and quiet at tables complete with floral decoration.

Youthful enthusiasm and marketing skills were well to the forefront at the pet stall. The hard sell at the end of the day in order to offload their stock was something marvellous. I came home with 3 bags of "decorated dog treats" for an ageing dog with elderly teeth. The Sandbach children and their friends are born marketers.

The children's clothing/toys/haberdashery group adopted an aggressive "discounting" approach by initially marking items "half price". This approach certainly moved their stock at a fast clip. Gentle Iva Young practically gave away a soft toy to a young deserving child.

Outside, braving the elements, were Dick and the Rev Smith flogging drum sets, bed heads, marble fire-placed, desks and double beds, all wreathed in smoke from the sausage sizzle manned by Keith, Peter and Claire. It was great tummy filling tucker and well patronized by all including our two friends from Balmoral, who enjoyed their morning.

Nearby we were offered sweet smelling soap by Judith, fairy floss and the chance to squash a jaffa (I ask you!!!).

Margie and her professional crew did a roaring trade from the plant stall. Huge buckets of lilies and lovely fresh plants were dispensed with relish from within a very attractive wood chip area nestling under green canvas. Gardening hints were dispensed freely.

Tireless Elfrieda Graesser and some bookworm helpers lugged boxes and boxes of books to the church vestibule to create a library like environment. Business was brisk, but many volumes were left unsold and earmarked for subsequent visits to the dealers, the Op Shop or the tip. In our garage are ten boxes, en route to the tip, the most popular topics being drama, murder or sex!!

Throughout the day a cheerful and chatty clown mounted on a ridiculous bicycle kept emerging around corners blowing a quack quack whistle, giving another dimension to the day. Late in the day this apparition disappeared at which time Ian Jenkin "arrived". He was greeted with "Ian, where have you been all day, you have missed such fun". Full marks Ian.

For me the financial result, although important, was incidental to the spirit and willingness to put in by the Ewing community and the fun we all had. Hopefully our feet, especially those belonging to our Minister, Dick and Paul Clayton, will be fully recovered and in good shape for another Market Day in 2006. **Sue & Richard Nelson**



CAFÉ CHURCH ON SEPTEMBER 29th

Are we walking on the old bones left by previous generations of Christians or are we making fresh music from the breaking wave of new life in Church and faith?

Cafe Church in September should be interesting. Our guest is Denham Grierson, a retired Uniting Church minister who Chris has invited to respond to questions you and I will ask.

If you think things are changing you are right, but if you think what is emerging is not simply the ending of traditional ideas but the joy of exploring living questions, in sustaining care and relationships, in discovering the new Life that seems to offer us a blessing in these difficult times, you are not only right, you are living in hope and being nurtured by wisdom.

Few in the UC have explored these themes with the penetration and creativity that Denham has offered in his ministries. A Christian Educator of note, a teaching Professor of Education at the United Faculty of Melbourne. Denham had 30

years in tertiary teaching and was offered positions in the USA but chose to serve in Australia. He was the Executive Director of the Ecumenical Statewide Victorian Council of Christian Education, with doctoral qualifications from Australian and American Universities.

Denham has published influential books with particular emphasis on the processes best able to enable “Transforming Congregations”, not to mention covered creative and progressive issues at what may be described as “Stories from the Edge of the Raft”.

Denham has now published 5 books of poetry exploring human experience and faith using common language and metaphors rather than the traditional language associated with Theology.

“Denham understands poetry to be the music of time. Not just now time but universal time, an enterprise that seeks to hold the elusiveness of our inner experience, the attempt to grasp sunlight that for a moment illumines the mystery of our being.” [a quote from the back cover of “Music from a Breaking Wave”]

Chris has asked him to share his views on the present predicaments of Church life, and what he thinks may be emerging in the future.

I will preside and interview Denham. It should be stimulating. Hope you can be with us at Cafe Church on September 29th. Bring a friend!

(Next month more on his publications and books).

Terry Trewavas

JUSTICE FOR REFUGEES

The following email was sent on 10 July to Grandmothers for Refugees. It comes from Kevin Sweeney, Convenor, Refugees Off PNG and Nauru Working Group. Kevin is a retired medical practitioner and has worked in senior management in health service delivery and medical education.

Getting the remaining refugees off PNG - July letter

Dear refugee advocate,

On July 19 it will be 11 years since Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced that asylum seekers who arrive by boat will never be resettled in Australia. This resulted in the offshore detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island in PNG, and on Nauru. There are still approximately 50 refugees and asylum seekers in PNG and they have now been trapped there for eleven years.

It has been revealed in a recent [Guardian article](#) that Australia is negotiating a new agreement with PNG to provide support for the remaining refugees and asylum seekers trapped in PNG. This is good news but it is only a small step forward.

Hopefully, it means that the refugees and asylum seekers will again receive essential supports and will not starve to death or be put out on the street. It takes the situation back to where it was before Nov 2023 (when the supports were withdrawn by the service providers in PNG). Let’s hope that the Australian Government manages this agreement better than the last one so that the funds are actually used to provide support to the refugees and that the supports are adequate and appropriate.

However, it does not solve the fundamental problem that the refugees and asylum seekers remain trapped in PNG, their physical and mental health is being harmed, some are seriously ill and need urgent mental health care that is not available in PNG, and that only some of them have any chance of resettlement in a third country – and this resettlement is proceeding at a snail’s pace.

We need to keep raising these issues with the Government and demanding a just and humane solution.

The most powerful action you can take is to write to key politicians about these issues.

I am writing to you to ask if you could write a letter or email to the relevant Ministers, and your local MP.

An individually written letter/email has more impact than a proforma letter/email.

You can write about any aspect of this issue that you like. To assist, I have provided a suggested focus for July and some dot points below. If you choose to use these dot points please rewrite them in your own words.

It would be wonderful if you could take up this call to action

Thanks so much for your help with this.

Regards
Kevin Sweeney
Convenor, Refugees Off PNG Working Group

Suggested focus for July

There are around 50 refugees and asylum seekers who have been trapped in PNG for eleven years. This is unjust and inhumane. They need to be brought to Australia while awaiting resettlement.

Dot points (you only need to choose a few of these to make a compelling letter)

- These refugees and asylum seekers were sent to PNG by the Australian Government eleven years ago and remain the responsibility of the Australian Government
- For eleven years they have been trapped in PNG
- The endless waiting and uncertainty has taken a huge toll on their mental health
- They have been unable to reunite with family and to build a new life
- They have been denied adequate medical care
- They have been subjected to violence, robbery and assault and continue to live in very unsafe conditions
- The Government of PNG has not been providing adequate support
- The local providers of supports in Port Moresby withdrew their services in November 2023 as they had not been paid by the PNG Government for more than 12 months
- The refugees and asylum seekers have had no food, money to buy food, electricity or gas, safe transportation or medical care provided since November 2023
- They have only been able to survive because of donations from concerned Australian citizens
- I understand that the Australian Government is now developing a new agreement with the PNG Government to provide support and funding for the remaining asylum seekers and refugees. This is a very welcome step and will hopefully alleviate their current dire circumstances. The Australian Government will need to manage this agreement better than the last one so that the funds are actually used to provide support to the asylum seekers and refugees and that the supports are adequate and appropriate.
- A small number of the refugees are being resettled in third countries, but this is painfully

slow and will take years for those who are eligible to actually be resettled

- Some are not eligible for NZ, Canada or the US and have no resettlement option
- Others are too ill to participate in any resettlement process
- Leaving them in PNG is actively harming their mental and physical health

Solutions

- Those who are seriously ill need urgent transfer to Australia for medical care
- Adequate supports need to be promptly reinstated in Port Moresby – and I understand that there are negotiations underway to try to achieve this
- All should be offered the option of being transferred to Australia while awaiting resettlement
- Those who have been approved for resettlement in a third country need to have their resettlement expedited
- This situation can be resolved by bringing them to Australia so that they are safe and can receive the support and medical care that they require
- This was successfully done in 2023 for those who had been trapped on Nauru for ten years, and it can be done for those in PNG

Contact details

The Hon Tony Burke, Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration

PO Box 6022

House of Representatives

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Canberra ACT 2600

tony.burke.mp@aph.gov.au

Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs

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<https://www.pm.gov.au/contact>

Deadline for the **September 2024** edition of *InSpire* is **Monday, 26th August**. Articles should be emailed to the Editor, Alison Tokita, at alison.tokita@aph.gov.au where possible, or they can be given in person.

A follow-up email was received on 27 July:

ASRC have started a new online petition calling for the evacuation of all refugees and asylum seekers off PNG and Nauru.

They plan to present it when they take a delegation to Parliament House on Aug 19.

Please sign the petition and circulate it through your networks so that we get as many signatures as possible prior to Aug 19 :)

<https://action.asrc.org.au/health-crisis>

Thanks - Kevin

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Please feel free to send me your news items and photos for *InSpire*.

We also welcome letters and 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!

CALENDAR AUGUST 2024

SUNDAY 4th	11 AM	EUCHARIST & COMMUNITY LUNCH
SUNDAY 11TH	10.30 AM	CHURCH SERVICE
TUESDAY 13TH	2.00 PM	MONTHLY CAFÉ CATCH-UP MR SISTER CAFÉ, 81 WAVERLEY RD
SUNDAY 18TH	10.30 AM 5.00 PM	CHURCH SERVICE SOMETHING FOR THE SPIRIT
MONDAY 19TH	2.00 PM	AFTERNOON FELLOWSHIP
THURSDAY 27TH	10.00 AM	COMMON THREADS
SUNDAY 25th	10.30 AM	CHURCH SERVICE



This is the key to the buildings in Kenneth Jack's etching, *Christian Building since Christ's Death*.

You will be able to read the fine print more easily where the print itself and this key are displayed in the Margaret McKinnon Room.

Kenneth Jack (1924 – 2006) and his wife Betty were long-time members of the Ewing congregation. He was a lecturer in art at RMIT. Ian Jenkins' history of the Ewing Memorial Church notes his service on the Board of Management (1963 – 1971) and as an Elder (1972 – 1980).

You can read his brief bio and see some of his paintings on this art market website:

[Kenneth Jack - Australian Artist in Focus – artmarkets.com.au](http://artmarkets.com.au)