

NEWVIEW

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Celebrating

Spiritual Gifts

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In this issue, we address the theme of 'spiritual gifts'. These have been the subject of some debate since the establishment of the Christian church - debate about whether or not Paul listed all the gifts, what they were and how they should be used. Belinda Clear provides us with her thoughts on how to recognise them and how they should be valued in our lives, as divine gifts which should be used for the benefit of others. Traditionally, spiritual gifts have been seen as gifts of leadership in the church through the deeds of preaching, teaching, interpreting, and governance, as mentioned particularly by Paul. However, Biblical references from the Old Testament can be found which celebrate a wider range of skills, such as craftsmanship (Exodus 35) and the ability to create music and words to enhance our worship. Hospitality is also given a special mention (1 Peter 4:9-10).

In putting this issue together I have been struck by how many of these nominated 'spiritual gifts' are at work in our church family, as well as some gifts which are not referenced in the Bible. Certainly we have evidence of hospitality through groups such as The Hub, Leisure Time, Playgroups and the provision of meals and contacts through the pastoral ministry. Creative gifts of craftsmanship are currently on display in our hall, and are regularly enjoyed in the embroideries and floral arrangements in our worship centre. And the gift of music has provided much inspiration, recently enjoyed in the Ecumenical Choral Service, but also shared regularly by our two choirs and our instrumentalists. In interviewing members about the significance of Gregory Fry's contribution to our church, a common theme was an appreciation of his creative use of new technologies to enhance our worship. Computers and digital technology don't score a mention in the Bible, but understanding of their possibilities for our spiritual lives must surely be rated as a spiritual gift. Tribute is paid to Greg's other gifts used for the benefit of others (pp.3,4).

Gifts of music and words are celebrated in reports of recent choral and cultural events (pp. 6, 11, 12) at our church, and some of our wordsmiths provide us with their work for reflection.

Our reports from the Inclusive Community (p.5) and The Hub (p.7) Missional groups bring us up-to-date with what has been happening in their work in our community, and we are also acquainted with the latest travels of David Williams' Frontier Services mural, which continues to inform other congregations and groups around the state. Ame Pocklington lets us know how the funds collected in the retiring offering before she and Megan Lowe departed for Baguia, East Timor were disbursed (p.10).

Additionally, this issue acquaints us with another long-standing partnership in our membership - Barbara and Malcolm Chamberlain - and we farewell another couple, the Jacksons, as they move to another church.

We conclude with a cheering item about an act of kindness experienced by Colin King (p.13) - a distinct contrast to the grim news relating to World Refugee Day (p.15) - and a book review (p.14) which we hope will be of interest.

Once again, all our contributors are thanked for keeping us informed.

Robin Pope

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Belinda Clear, leader of our Families and Children ministry, generously responded to a request for some thoughts about our theme.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Gifts ... something we like to receive, something we like to give other people on special occasions, something we say people have. Many times we hear the comment made to someone, "Wow, you are gifted at ...". Spiritual gifts are something, however, that we often find it more difficult to talk about. Spiritual gifts are defined as seemingly "natural" and/or "miraculous" abilities that are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Sounds kind of scary when it is put like that! The question really is: how do we uncover what our "spiritual gifts" are? We all have them. Gifts given to us from God, to help us live as God wants us to in the world.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes, "*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.*" (Romans 12:2) God has a plan for each and every one of us. We are given gifts from God, that help us to be a part of Christ's body in the world. God has a way of "nudging" us when we are not using our gifts in the best way, or when we are not using our gifts at all! Sometimes this is through that nagging feeling that something isn't quite right, or sometimes it is through the words of others. Challenging and testing the Spirit's nudging helps us to discover God's will for our lives.

How boring would it be if we all had the same gifts? It doesn't matter what our gifts are, all of them are important to God. It is often through experimentation and listening to the advice of others that we can discover what our "spiritual gifts" are. Sometimes they are things that we don't even see in ourselves. When you feel that unexplainable urge to tell someone that they did a good job, or that they have a real "gift" for something, perhaps that is God prompting you to tell that person something that they really need to hear.

Discovering our "spiritual gifts" is really about listening to the voice of God in others and following our heart. It is not an easy thing to discover what God wants us to do in our lives and it can change, depending on our circumstances at the time. Different opportunities can come along that lead on to other opportunities. Discovering our spiritual gifts and where we are called to exercise them is a journey that takes time. I encourage everyone to take some time to talk with God and other people around them, to discover where it is that God is calling you to exercise your "gifts" whatever they may be.

Belinda Clear

Further Reading on our theme of "Spiritual Gifts":

Benedikt, M. *God Is the Good We Do: Theology of Theopraxy.* Bottino Books, New York, 2007.

Fromm, E. *The Art of Loving.* Perennial, New York, 1989

Pailin, David A. *A Gentle Touch: From a Theology of Handicap to a Theology of Human Being.* SPCK, London, 1992.

And don't forget the internet: just put 'Spiritual Gifts' in your search engine for a range of ideas!

CELEBRATING CREATIVE GIFTS

Gregory's Gifts



At 10 am on June 30 Greg will conduct his final service at GWUC, and our congregation will bid him a formal (and undoubtedly also partly informal!) farewell. In the past weeks I have spoken with a number of GWUC members who have shared with me the significance of Greg's ministry to them, and it has inevitably brought to mind our theme of 'spiritual gifts', as it has been clear that Greg has some specialised gifts which he has generously shared with us and from which we have benefited. We wish to briefly acknowledge some of these here for those who will be unable to attend his final service.

Foremost amongst Greg's skills has been his expertise at multi media technology, which has brought a visual creativeness to our worship services which we had rarely seen before, and which has also shown the many possibilities of using information technology in worship.



His use of Leunig cartoons is fondly recalled in this context.



Under Greg's watch we have seen an expanded outreach to other church communities, especially to Beeac and other small communities through the broadcasting ministry. In addition, the availability of our services to local people unable to attend worship for ill-health or other reasons, has kept many people connected.

We have seen a willingness to experiment with worship service styles, in a bid to meet the changing needs of a 21st century congregation, and the puppets and other visuals have been especially welcomed at the 9.15 service and in the children's ministry, encouraging interaction and more active participation and engagement, as opposed to traditionally more static and passive styles. His familiarity with digital technology is so well-known, that as she passed on a list requiring his signature, Beth Hancock was heard to say to him apologetically, "Of course, you don't write any more!"

Many folk in leadership positions in our church have acknowledged the support and encouragement Greg has given them. Group convenors have received encouragement in their attempts to map out a direction for our community's many activities. In some cases this has resulted in people successfully attempting tasks they thought were beyond them. Elders I spoke to have recalled with gratitude the training program Greg led, which resulted in some stimulating discussions tackling the problems of stewardship and pastoral care.

Several people have remarked on Greg's ready wit: its aptness, spontaneity and speed. It is known to surface in just about any context, bringing a smile and a lightening of the heart.

CELEBRATING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Greg's practicality has been a point of shared enjoyment with others of similar bent and aptitude, particularly those interested in mechanical matters. His interest in the minutiae of car restoration has won many hearts, as well as admiration for the finished product! Again, the results of these skills have been generously shared with us. Who can forget the presence of the white Austin in the worship centre?



On a personal note, I was appreciative of Greg's practical assistance when I took on editing *NewView*. He gave me a private seminar on the new computer program and helped iron out the unexpected glitches in the production of the first issue.



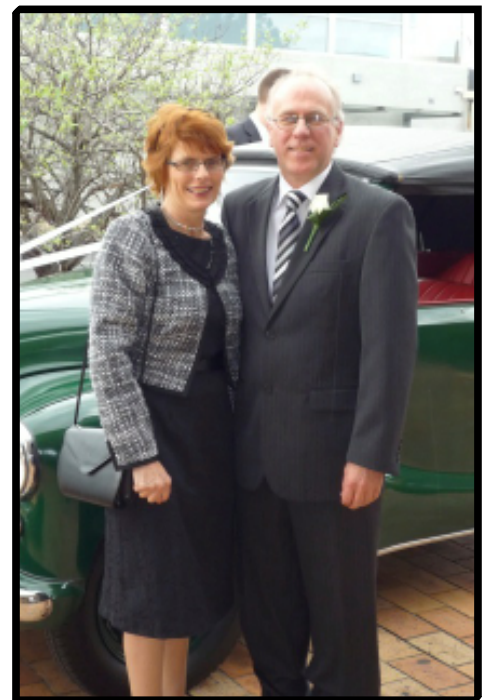
Greg has been noted as 'a growing man' - not in the physical sense, of course, but in a spiritual sense. He is recognised as a learner like the rest of us, exploring his faith and what it means in the living of everyday life. "I've just been reading this book," is an oft-heard comment during a service or discussion, when he is challenging or broadening our understanding to help it grow.

The weekly Bible Studies at his

house have been another branch of his assistance to our personal growth.

Greg's supportive and unheralded pastoral care has been acknowledged by those who have been recipients of his assistance in times of great need, when his quiet and unassuming presence and practicality have provided strength and support.

The Easter Sunrise Services at Crib Point have been appreciated and recalled by those who have attended, as a special way to celebrate the events of Easter Sunday. So has the hospitality shown at the subsequent breakfast at Greg and Judy's Hastings home. Their hospitality has been mentioned in conjunction with Judy's support of Greg's work and pastoral care. "They are a partnership," was a comment made to me several times. So we are indebted to both of them for the way in which they have used their gifts for us. We pray for every blessing on them in their future work.



Thanks to the Greenwoods for the use of their photos.

Robin Pope

CELEBRATING GIFTS of INCLUSIVENESS

Inclusive Community

Inclusive Community is one of our four missional groups. The members of the committee are Jan Clear, Alison Clarkson, Faye Wagon, Barbara Thompson and Marj Collins. We meet monthly at the church. We would love some new members, so if you are interested in joining us, please let me know.

Our aims are to work with members of the Communications committee and others in official positions within the church, to review and improve communication across all age groups and fellowship groups within GWUC, to make newcomers feel welcome, to support fellowship groups and church activities, to help to create new groups when they are needed and to oversee pastoral care within the church family.

When the Pastoral Care committee was disbanded in June last year, members of that committee were invited to join the Inclusive Community group. Some members have come to our meetings and we have continued to receive reports from prayer ministry, supportive care link, bereavement support, seniors' ministry, newcomers and welcoming convenor, pastoral team and those responsible for updating the roll. We also begin our meetings by sharing personal pastoral concerns and church pastoral concerns and praying for these people.

One of our success stories is Munch with a Bunch. We started this group to cater for those who dine alone and the Asian and Indian members of our congregation. We organise lunches at restaurants about once every six weeks and about forty people attend these functions. We also encourage people to attend special morning teas at the Hub, morning tea after 11am, club 2013 and special lunches particularly after combined services.

We had a very successful Craft Expo two years ago and we are looking forward to the expo this year. It will be held on the Church Anniversary weekend 15 and 16 June. Margaret and Faye have worked hard to gather exhibits and get volunteers to help in various ways so put the dates in your diaries and bring your family and friends to this special event.

We would love to hear from you if you have any ideas for new groups, seminars or special events that we can promote here at GWUC. We want all members of our congregation to feel that they are warmly welcomed, their ideas are important and they can contribute in some way to make this church family more inclusive.

JOHN KENEZ

Many people have noticed that John hasn't been attending worship and other activities at GWUC, for quite a while. John is living with his daughter in New South Wales and has no plans to return to Melbourne at the present time. We are writing to John and sending him greetings from GWUC, and we will let you know when we have any more information.

Jan Clear

CELEBRATING GIFTS OF MUSIC & WORDS

Monash Ecumenical Choral Service 2nd June

This year's service (the 30th?) was hosted by GWUC. Six local church choirs including Free Spirit and Uniting Voices presented examples of their work, and the superb congregational hymn-singing by the packed church was well led by our new Johannus organ, almost literally raising the roof in the process. The choirs' songs/anthems covered quite a range of styles, while one choir sang in Chinese with the English words projected on the screen.

A good number of visitors helped swell the congregation, as evidence of the wider interest this event generates. Next year's service will be hosted by St. Stephens and St. Mary's Anglican Church (Mount Waverley), sometime in May.

Geoff Willis

With God

In the rush of life
peace
in the stress of life
hope
in the love of life
joy
in the end of life
release.

P G Baker

Spring on a Saturday

Is it the Fete? Or coffee with a mate?
Is it a group searching for truth?
Is it the crab apples, wondrous in bloom?
Is it the cleaners who sparkle all rooms?
Is it the lady doing the flowers?
Is it the pianist practising this hour?
Is it one of our organist friends?
Or a lonely man making amends?
Is it our minister hurrying out?
Or is it the green leaves blowing about?
Is it the Spring showers of soft, falling rain?
Or is it a bride and groom, who in love, came?
Is it the quietness of the empty church?
Is it the children in classes, who search?
Is it our men, fixing and mending?
Is it the man who is mowing and bending?
Is it the tree ferns, dancing in breezes?
Is it hayfever, causing us sneezes?

Is it you? Is it me?
Where is our place in the scheme of things?
I hear God calling - Is that three rings?

Gael O'Brien

CELEBRATING SPIRITUAL GIFTS: Hospitality



Hospitality - Understanding - Belonging

The Hub is an activity of the Community Hub Missional Group.

At The Hub we continue to meet people from the community, and our relationships with these people are growing. As we get to know them better, we are becoming more aware of their needs. People come to The Hub looking for company, friendship, support and a community to belong to. We have the opportunity of being that community for these people.



Discussion at The Hub



Special morning tea

Our two special morning teas this year have both been very successful. Staff from The Body Shop at The Glen worked with us in these community events as we raised money for The Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal and the Cancer Council

Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. We continue to see more people from the community coming to these special morning teas. There is always a real buzz to be heard as people chat to each other over a cuppa and some delicious food.



Good Friday Appeal



Our prayer tree at the back of the church is there to be helpful to people who come in to the church to sit quietly and pray. They can write a prayer on a leaf, or just a name, and hang it on the prayer tree. You are welcome to stop anytime and read these prayers so you too can pray for these people and these situations.

Come and join us at The Hub for a cuppa, a biscuit or a chat some time. The Hub operates on Tuesday and Thursday 10am – 2pm, and Wednesday 10am – 12 noon during school terms. We would love to see you.

If you would like to know more about The Hub, or if you would like to help by being a volunteer at The Hub, or making biscuits, or helping in any other way, please contact Judith on 9803 8373.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

MEET MALCOLM & BARBARA CHAMBERLAIN

Q: Malcolm & Barbara, could we look into the past. Have you both always lived in this area? Which church did you attend before Union? And how long ago was that?

M: After our marriage in 1956 we purchased a house in Kennedy Street, Glen Waverley, a weatherboard house which became too small for our family of six (2 sons & 2 daughters). So in 1970 we moved to a bigger place in Pindari Street and lived there for 36 years, a total of 50 years in Waverley before moving to a retirement village in Rowville in 2006.

On arrival in Glen Waverley in 1956 we attended the local Presbyterian church located on our current church site which had been opened two years previously. In 1960 I became an elder, taught Sunday School for 20 years, sang in the choir, played cricket with the church team and was Team Manager for junior boys for six years.

Q: That is amazing. Sunday School for twenty years is a long time. How did you keep finding content for your lessons?

M: From the early 1960s, when I began teaching, the Christian Education Department of the Presbyterian Church had Sunday School teaching resource material which could be purchased for use in Sunday schools.

Q: I never realized you sang in the choir. When was this?

M: I sang at the Presbyterian Church and after Union, took part in combined choirs when Malcolm Cameron was organizing it.

Q: The church cricket team. How did that get started?

M: A cricket competition for church members was established before our Presbyterian Church was formed in 1954. It was called 'The Eastern Suburbs Churches Cricket Association' and our church joined the competition in the early 1960s. I became a member and played for some 18 years.

Q: Thank you. And Barbara. What were you involved with?

B: I was involved with PWMU and later CAFA and Leisure Time, taught Sunday School and have played tennis with the church club for the last 28 years.

Q: That would be the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union. What does CAFA stand for?

B: The Christian Adult Fellowship Activities (before Union)

Q: Then you moved here to Bogong Avenue. Would you both have been pioneers who started up different organisations. Could you tell me something about it.

M: With Union, our new church at Bogong Avenue was commissioned in 1991. Both of us continued our previous roles in church activities. I became involved in running Men's Fellowship in 1994 and am still doing this.

Q: Yes, I have noticed you setting up for this on the Tuesdays that I have been in church. How would you encourage more people to join?

M: All men (not necessarily church members) are invited to attend our monthly meetings which have an average attendance of 25 members. Perhaps this could be increased by advertising or an article in a *NewView* edition?

Q: It sounds like it might be the right way to go.

Barbara, what are you currently involved with outside of the church?



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

B: Outside activities include tennis, table tennis, line dancing, visiting and walking.

Q: You lead a really active life. I remember you also used to take part in Thursday morning exercise at church. You probably have similar activities at the Village, which, I imagine, would be more convenient, distance-wise. And yourself, Malcolm? Non-church activities, I mean.

M: Golf, bowls, walking, leading in a weekly devotions group at our village. For fifty years we owned a caravan and loved our camping. For twenty years we belonged to the Waverley Bushwalking Club and took part in four overseas trekking expeditions. Currently, we live in a retirement village and are active in village affairs while we enjoy the fellowship of our new friends.

Q: You are both so full of energy and are examples of how to stay young. It is wonderful that both of you have accomplished so much and yet you have done all this in your own unassuming way. I hope your efforts have been recognized and appreciated.

M: We both have many friends in church and like many people we receive great satisfaction in serving the needs of our church family.

Q: Would you like to tell us about your family.

M: We have four children and eleven grandchildren ranging from 7 to 25 years of age. All live within half an hour from our unit. We are happy to say that all marriages are rock-solid and all get along well together.

Q: That is so lovely. Thank you, Malcolm & Barbara, for making time to do this for *NewView*.

Footnote: I started attending GWUC in 1995. One Monday, I met Malcolm down the street and he recognized me from the previous day's church service, stopped to say 'hello' and had a little chat. It was a wonderful gesture to a newcomer, both to town and church. It left me feeling good and convinced me that GWUC was going to be my regular place of worship. That was nearly 20 years ago!

Cynthia Chin

FAREWELL TO THE JACKSONS:

GOOD-BYE AND THANK YOU

During the last month, **Joy and David Jackson** have transferred their membership to St. Andrew's Uniting Church in Berwick as they have shifted to Berwick. They will still come to the Hub, playgroup and other events sometimes and it will be good to see them at these times.

Joy and David attended worship at the old Bogong Avenue church and their children, Tania and Rohan, attended Sunday School and youth activities in that complex.

David was an elder here and took over preparing elders' rosters when Malcolm Chamberlain retired from elders. David was a member of Church Council and was Church Treasurer.

Joy was an elder too and taught Sunday School when the children were growing up. Since she retired from teaching, Joy has been a helper at playgroup, the Community Hub and Leisure Time.

We would like to thank Joy and David for contributing to life and activities at GWUC in so many different ways. We will miss them but know that they will become involved at Berwick and make valuable contributions there.

Jan Clear

DID YOU KNOW?

Here is an update on the continued progress of David Williams' mural on the work of John Flynn and Frontier Services. Here is another example of a spiritual gift used for the good of others!

Frontier Services Action and Support

Across the nation, corporations, groups large and small, churches and individuals are raising funds that are the vital thread of Flynn's mantle that supports the people who live and work in Australia's inland.

Since Glen Waverley's celebration last September that raised several thousands of dollars for Frontier Services, our 36 metre mural has been on display in churches and halls where many people have also been fund raising for this work. The mural is a teaching aid and gives vital information and enthusiasm to support the continuing services of this remarkable work.

David and Shirley Williams, as custodians of the mural, travelled with it to Echuca Uniting Church (4 days), Beechworth's Burke Museum and Chiltern's Star Theatre for one day at each venue where history buffs formed the audiences. In November the mural was displayed in the hall of the Greensborough Uniting Church for 4 days.

Since March this year the mural displays were accompanied by talks, an ABC radio interview, morning teas, luncheons, a formal dinner and special services at Myers Street Bendigo Uniting Church, Portland South Primary School, Portland Uniting Church, Bega Anglican Grammar School and Merimbula Uniting Church.

It is a great pleasure to meet many people who have supported and worked for Frontier Services, especially in various inland locations. With over 120 Community and Health Services being provided now across the vast inland, we are proud volunteers spreading the word and encouraging others to support this caring and life-giving work.

The "Mural with a Message" is available for any community groups, organisations and Churches so you are invited to tell others who can contact our Church Office (9560 3580) or direct to David and Shirley on 9803 1285.

David & Shirley Williams

And here is an update on the funds collected in the retiring offering for Baguia

Baguia Funds Expended

To: Community Outreach Group & GWUC Members

From: Amé Pocklington

So here it is, the \$1,500 worth of donations from GWUC (which Meagan and I took with us to Baguia) have so far been used for the following:

1. Transportation costs (2 trucks) of two water tanks for Baguia Primary School: \$500
2. Repairs to damaged furniture (chairs, desks) that were previously stored at Baguia Catholic Primary School and St Joseph's Catholic Junior High; furniture also to be shared with the Hae Coni school: \$210
3. Blackboards for various schools (Buibela: 1; Afalocai: 2; Osso Huna: 2; Hae Coni: 3; Afaguaia: 2; Baguia Primary: 3; Bubuha: 3): \$490
4. 15 sheets of corrugated iron to repair toilet roof at Bubuha Orimary ((Bubuha Primary is the recipient of one of the tanks from the Tanks for Timor project): \$98
5. Money to buy prizes for interschool Maths, English and Portugese competition (competition is between 7 schools, and prizes include books, pens, Tetum-English dictionaries, uniforms, balls etc): \$186

Just to recap, we decided to leave the money with a trusted community member (who is part of the Friends of Baguia committee in Baguia), as we did not have enough time to distribute directly to projects. This individual has worked tirelessly for Friends of Baguia over the years and has our complete trust and good faith. As you can see, the money has been used to benefit a wide range of different schools in the sub-district so that resources might benefit a broader range of people.

These are approximations for the costing of each item (costs that Meagan and I calculated with the assistance of the above mentioned individual in February).

Ame :)

DID YOU KNOW?

SOME 2013 FUNDRAISERS IN BRIEF

Book Sale (March)

Organised by the Gold FISH Group in early March, fourteen members of the group, together with lots of help from others, set up and arranged books which had been contributed by church members and the community, according to categories on the Friday afternoon. Early on Saturday morning, a queue was forming outside the church doors. These were early morning shoppers out to get their errands done and take in the book sale as well. Over in the kitchen, the Uniting Voices Choir was starting to organise Devonshire tea for the potential shoppers. It was great fun browsing through books, buying one's favourite authors and then coming out to have a comforting 'hot brew' and scones. At day's end some of the stock went on to assist another church's fundraising.



Thanks go to the Gold FISH Group & Uniting Voices Choir.

Chinese Dinner (April)

As usual this event was booked out and 150 happy people dined on spring rolls, sweet & sour pork etc, then sat back to enjoy a song and dance performance by the Peranakan Association. There was a quiz and auction, as well as a trading table. Information on the Peranakans was displayed as well as a collection of typical Peranakan attire and accessories. The night ended with community singing which was thoroughly enjoyed.

Thanks go to Vida Foo and her team.

(See page 12 for a full report on this event)

Monash Chorale Fundraiser (May)

This was organised by the Uniting Voices Choir and held on 26 May. The Monash Chorale provided a selection of American songs and the church shook with the beat of 'Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy' and 'The Beach Boys', and then the audience was lulled by a medley of Gershwin pieces and 'Shenandoah'. 'Alleluia' by Randall Thompson and 'Deep River' provided the touch of sacred music. All this was accompanied by a keyboard, guitars, percussion and a trumpet at different times. Alternating with these items was a youthful string quartet from Huntingtower School. The afternoon was a great success and ended with a typically delicious afternoon tea organised by the Choir. A thoroughly pleasant way to spend a wintry afternoon!

Thanks go to Uniting Voices and Monash Chorale

Cynthia Chin

PERANAKAN DINNER

GWUC CHINESE DINNER ('PERANAKAN' TO THOSE IN THE KNOW)

By the time Saturday, 27 April had arrived, 150 people had signed up for the Chinese/Asian dinner. By the end of the dinner, most people had learnt how to describe it as 'Peranakan'. For those people who missed out, please remember to book in the minute a similar event is announced in future.

The cuisine was, of course, Chinese – starters of spring rolls and prawn crackers, sweet and sour pork, Mongolian beef, mixed vegies and the one authentic Peranakan item, a mild nyonya chicken curry. Dessert included the standard jelly, fruit salad and ice cream combo accompanied by 'kueh dadar', a green pancake stuffed with dessicated coconut cooked in palm sugar, and moist coconut pie.



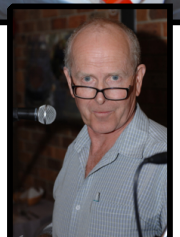
The highlight of the evening was, of course, the entertainment provided by the Peranakan Association of Victoria – a selection of

Peranakan songs interspersed by traditional dances and followed by a round of community singing which went down very well with the crowd. Throughout all this, the PAA lady members stood out in their colourful embroidered kebayas and sarongs (not to forget their beaded shoes/slippers), while the men were more subdued in their batek shirts.

An exhibition of 'things Peranakan' was put on. This included attire and accessories as well as a selection of books and information posters. The aim of this was to highlight this culture which is a cross between Malay and Chinese and is prevalent in countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and even Vietnam, and more importantly, the fact that several GWUC members are descended from 'Babas' (men) and 'Nyonyas' (ladies). Early settlers from China arrived in these countries and intermarried with the local women, resulting in this very interesting cross-culture called 'Peranakan'.



The evening also included a quiz which was set based on the information posters provided. There was great participation and this presented a challenge to most participants although it was all in the name of fun. A trading table was set up with an interesting array of Oriental items and other articles. And, of course, the auction which is always an integral part of our dinners with items generously donated by members of the congregation as well as friends of members.



A big 'thank you' is owed to Vida Foo, who is back in the Fundraising seat, and her team of helpers who so willingly gave up their time to give her a hand. Our thanks also go to the generous donors of the auction items. All of us had a wonderful time, so many thanks for your commitment.



Cynthia Chin



Thanks to D. Bailey for the use of his photos of this occasion.



AN ACT OF KINDNESS

The Lost is Found and a Random Act of Kindness

I attend GOMERS (the men's group), at Madeline's Cafe in Jells Park, every Monday if possible, and I did so some weeks ago. I wore my wedding ring, which I do not wear all the time as, working with my hands there is some risk of it becoming caught and damaged. Upon my return home, to my dismay, the ring was missing from my finger.

Now, I am not one for becoming greatly sentimental about things but my wedding ring represents the most important day of my life. It is something I value most highly and I was quite upset at its loss. So, after Jacqui and I retraced my steps several times and asked the staff at Madeline's to let us know if it was found and handed into them, I was not hopeful of retrieving the ring. A week went by and it was looking like an insurance claim and a personal loss.

The next Monday I again walked over to Madeline's for GOMERS, still searching the route for a glint of precious metal, of course to no avail. The staff greeted me by name when I arrived, and I thought that was nice. I ordered my coffee. When the coffee was served, as usual in a mug and saucer, I was astounded to see in the saucer, my wedding ring. The lost had been miraculously found.

It transpired that some kind person had found my ring in the grass, and considering that it might be of personal value to its owner, took it to Madeline's and asked if they could hold it in case it was claimed. I was, of course, quite amazed to see what I thought was impossible. I was also enormously gratified to experience the kindness and consideration of a stranger. I am very grateful to that person and heartened and impressed by the beautiful side of human nature.

Colin King

Clean Up in the Church

“Pray and Wipe” says the cleaning bottle
in the church kitchen cupboard.

We all know it should be “Spray and Wipe,”
But what a magical motto!

Pray and wipe your tears away,
Pray and wipe your fears away,
Pray and wipe your enemies away,
And replace them with the love Jesus has for all,
And pray it with a song.

Gael O'Brien

BOOK REVIEW

Rex A. E. Hunt & John W. H. Smith (editors and compilers) *Why Weren't We Told? A Handbook on 'progressive' Christianity*. Polebridge Press, Salem Oregon, 2013

Here is a book which can be the basis for following up many of those theological questions we might struggle with, by pointing us to the work of modern progressive theologians on the topics. It needs to be read understanding that 'progressive Christians take seriously the findings and emerging consensus of biblical scholarship that in his teaching and living the historical Jesus invited people to...a mode of living described as life within the ...kingdom of God' (Rowe, p.15).

This book does not claim to be a comprehensive coverage of any single question, but is a compilation of excerpts from mainly Australian, New Zealand and U.S. writers on a wide range of questions. Australian contributors include Noel Preston, Val Webb, Michael Morwood, Gregory Jenks, Lorraine Parkinson and Gary Bouma; while New Zealanders include Lloyd Geering, James Veitch, Keith Rowe, Margaret Mayman. The US is represented by John Dominic Crossan, Ian Lawton, Paul Alan Laughlin, Michael Zimmerman and others. A couple of contributions from Andrew Pratt (UK) and Bruce Sanguin (Canada) round out the international flavour of the progressive movement in theology.

The opening section, comprising nearly half the book, consists of 'cameos' of numerous questions which people of faith have raised. For instance, Rex Hunt gives a short summary of the chequered history of Christmas, from the records in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew and its pre-Christian celebratory origins, through to its appearance on the Church calendar in the fourth century, which until then had given more importance to Epiphany ('old christmas'). For me, the value of this book is in the 'further reading' it provides for a more detailed discussion of the questions briefly touched on in this cameo section. In this example about Christmas, readers are directed forward to titles by M. Borg & J. D. Crossan, C.A. Miles, R. J. Miller and S. K. Roll. It enables one to have a 'taste' of what modern scholarship has to say, and then to pursue further reading if more depth or detail is needed.

The 'cameos' provide a taste of writings on, among other topics, the problem of evil, on substitutionary atonement, on the nexus of religion and science, on belief and the creeds, on the resurrection, and prayer.

The next half of the book is divided into four sections, the first of which aims to 'reclaim the faith's free thinkers' who were, in their time labelled as heretics and suffered the dire consequences - from Marcion (85-160 CE) through to Arius (265-336 CE), and Galileo (1564-1642) etc right up to latter-day 'heretics'. We are reminded that the last heretic executed by the Roman Catholic Church in 1826 was convicted of deism - 'the view of God as creator of the cosmos, but not a responsive or interactive maintainer thereof'. And we meet Charles Strong, an Australian minister of Scots Church in Melbourne in the 1880s, who was removed from office. He had a 'disdain for religion that focussed on preparation for life after death, salvation and damnation, services and sacraments, the Bible and vestments'. (p110). Strong is now seen as a precursor to Bishop Spong and the movement away from dogmas and infallibility.

The headings in the following chapter on 'progressive' Christianity alive give a flavour of its contents e.g. 'Why I Can No Longer Say the Nicene Creed'; 'Not Forgetting the Children! A 'progressive' Christian Spiritual Curriculum'; 'What They Told us in Seminary, but We Never Got to Preach About!' - and so on.

Two shorter sections complete the book: some stories from 'progressive' congregations and a listing of resources (hymns, prayers/reflections, liturgies, blessings) for use in modern liturgies.

For anyone interested in exploring how modern 'progressive' theologians talk about their faith, this book is recommended as a useful starting point.

My thanks to Heather Wilkins for lending me her copy of this book! It is not held by Monash Library, but can probably be requested for their collection.

Robin Pope

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

World Refugee Day is held every year on June 20. It is a special day when the world takes time to recognize the resilience of forcibly displaced people throughout the world.

On June 7 the UNHCR announced that: 'UN humanitarian agencies on Friday called on donor nations to provide billions of dollars in additional funding to help millions of desperate Syrians inside and outside their country.

'The appeal, which covers all of 2013, comprises US\$2.9 billion for the UNHCR-led plan to help refugees in the surrounding region, and US\$1.4 billion for the OCHA-led humanitarian efforts inside Syria. In addition are a new US\$449 million government of Lebanon appeal and a US\$380 million appeal by the government of Jordan.

'...Civilians [are] bearing the brunt of the conflict in Syria. More than 1.6 million people have fled to neighbouring countries since the conflict erupted in March 2011, while some 4.25 million are believed to be displaced within Syria and many more are affected by the war.

'...[The] appeal was based on predictions that the refugee population would be about 1.1 million in June. The figure today is 1.6 million and growing. UNHCR now estimates there could be up to 3.45 million Syrian refugees by year's end. The OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) appeal estimates that 6.8 million people inside Syria will be affected by the conflict and in need of help.'

Meanwhile, in the past week Australia has learned that more loss of life of asylum seekers has occurred at sea, north-west from Christmas Island. It is presumed that more than 50 people have perished in this latest tragedy. The UNHCR says in relation to this:

'The reality of yet more lives lost on the high seas highlights the dangers of these journeys and the need to redouble efforts to find effective and humane regional solutions.

'UNHCR encourages States to continue working toward this goal through the Bali Process which, as recently as April, agreed to work towards practical ways of managing irregular maritime movements in a protection-sensitive regional approach.

'Regional cooperation, building on fair, efficient and robust national asylum systems, can help asylum-seekers find the protection they need without resorting to dangerous and exploitative boat journeys.'

No progress has been reported to date.

The Uniting Church Justice and International Mission Unit pointed out in its May mailout that we now have more children in detention than at any other time in the history of Australia. While many children have been moved into community detention, due to a spike in recent arrivals the number has increased dramatically in recent months, reaching numbers not seen before.

Rallies will be held in most capital cities of Australia to mark World Refugee Day. In Melbourne a rally will be held on Sunday June 16 at 12 noon in an effort to make known people's concern about: the detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru; the policy of mandatory detention for asylum seekers; and to advocate an end to the deportations currently taking place. A plea to our government and all political parties to honour the UN Refugee Convention will also be the subject of many speakers on that day.

At GWUC the event of World Refugee Day clashed with our Uniting Church anniversary celebrations, so we will mark the plight of refugees and asylum seekers on August 11, when David Spitteler, from the Asylum Seeker Centre at Dandenong will speak at all our morning services.

Robin Pope

for everything there is a season
and a time for every matter under heaven...

We record with sadness the deaths in the past months of members of our church family and we extend our love, support and sympathy to their families.

Ron NIGRAN

Olga ROWE

Ian MANN

Ung Win FANG

We celebrate the marriage of

Gregory Ian Andrew MATHEWS & Kerry Maree STACKPOLE

Ian Gregory Pottenger & Susan Joy KELLY

We record with joy the baptisms of

Richard Peter BERRY

Erin Ruby SAMBELLI