

NewView

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“How do we keep our balance?...In one word: **tradition**...we have a tradition for everything”. These are the opening words of the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. But how true they are for many of us! We do things because that’s the way we’ve always done it, and that’s what we are comfortable with - until one day we realise that there are newer and possibly better or more appropriate ways to function. Life is full of such adjustments; some of them are coupled with some pain in relinquishment, others with the joy of accomplishing things differently.

Literature abounds in profound warnings about being blindly wedded to tradition. The bust of Mark Twain in the Hall of Fame for Great Americans at New York University has these words inscribed beneath it: “Loyalty to petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul.” Similar cautions are offered by Benjamin Disraeli (“A precedent embalms a principle”) and T. S. Eliot (“A tradition without intelligence is not worth having”).

The church is laden - often bowed down - with traditions from times past, and this can be both a help and a hindrance. The familiarity of known words and rituals can be both comforting and inspiring to some, but can effectively shut out others. Peter Baker’s poem “Comfort Cages” (p.3) speaks of this dilemma.

In this issue we also look at the traditions of music (pp.4-5), and the use of stained glass windows in our worship spaces (pp.6-7). Neil Peters (p.2) writes of the need to keep a balance between the old and the new, in retaining what is of significance to us (and this varies from person to person), but also in making “space for the new things to emerge”. Alison Clarkson and Jan Clear (p.8) come to similar conclusions, while Bill Norquay (pp.10-11) writes an impassioned plea from his concern that the church will become irrelevant if it does not succeed in identifying and naming the good news in a language and way that speaks to today’s world. Heather Wilkins’ story (pp.13-14) illustrates how tradition can form a basis for our lives, but demonstrates that a time comes when we are challenged to review the relevance of our position. Which traditions a community will retain and which will be abandoned is clearly a delicate balancing act, requiring a great deal of forbearance and perhaps even compromise at the individual level.

As usual, this issue reminds us of the wide range of activities that GWUC has provided for people to feel a part of the wider church family. We have reports on Australia’s Biggest Morning Tea at The Hub (p.9), a dinner organised by the Adult Group with the Families and Youth ministries (p.14), the Adult Group games night (p.15) and the Lenten Bible studies (p.17). Thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue to keep us in touch with life at GWUC.

Robin Pope

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TRADITION: VALUING THE PAST AND EMBRACING THE NEW

I appreciate and value many of the traditions of the Church. Many of our traditions are meaningful and genuinely help people in their faith and in their worship of God. One of the challenges we face as a Church is how we can value the old, the traditions of the Church, and at the same time give both space for, and permission for new things to emerge and grow.

As an ordained minister of the Church, one of my roles is to guard the 'faith' that has been handed down from the apostles. This doesn't mean we can't ask questions or individually hold different points of view. Clearly we are at different points in our journey and understanding and we accept one another and each other's position with respect. As a minister I am charged to preach and teach within the broad spectrum that is the faith of the Church.

One of the practices I have is to begin nearly all services with "The Lord be with you", with the response "and also with you". For me this has become a ritual, a tradition. I do this because this greeting was one of the earliest greetings of the Church. Using this greeting reminds me of our heritage and in a way connects what we do with the church that has gone before us over the centuries. For me this ritual has great meaning and significance.

You will realise by now that I nearly always wear an alb. I choose not to wear the alb for informal services or youth/young adult services. The white alb is a sign of baptism, so lay people who are baptised can wear them. The coloured stoles are a sign of ordination. The alb is a reminder that this is not just Neil Peters standing before you, but Neil Peters, a humble servant who has been called by God; however the stole indicates he has been set aside by the Church to serve as a Minister of the Word. I am not any better than anyone else. I have simply been called, a call confirmed by the church, to serve in a particular capacity and I feel the weight of that responsibility. I do not take it lightly.

I enjoy singing many of the old hymns. The words are often rich in meaning. One of my lecturers once said that many people in churches learn their theology from singing the hymns. But I also like new hymns and I like more modern songs as well. Different styles of music speak to and engage different people. Some of the modern worship songs are repetitive which reflects a style of writing songs which seeks to engage and draw people in to the worship experience. I know some don't find this style helpful while others value it.

The challenge for many congregations is how to value the traditions of the Church and at the same time allow for, encourage and give space for the new things to emerge. I remember attending a seminar once many years ago. The presenter said, "Take a look at your church notice sheet and if you could see yourself attending every activity of your congregation that week (not physically going but you would be happy to attend) then you are only reaching out to people who are just like you." A variety of activities and a variety in our worship styles offers us greater opportunity to reach out to the diverse community that makes up Glen Waverley and surrounds. For me, having different styles of service is not simply about meeting personal preferences for worship. I believe the reason to offer a variety of services is to grow the church.

Rev Neil Peters

IN THE TRADITION OF HAFIZ

In the tradition of poetic expression across the major world religions the Sufi mystics of Islam have made a significant contribution. Hafiz was a fourteenth century Sufi poet although not as well known as Rumi. While many of Hafiz's poems addressed the search for God, he also often included a challenge at the end of his poems. In 2006 I followed this approach and style including the following examples.

Responsibility

The hardest thing
is to accept
that I am
and God is.

That ultimately,
the creation is
the responsibility
of the Creator.

I am not responsible
but I can
rattle the can.

© P G Baker

Comfort cages

Life's journey
is a series
of comfort cages

until the moulds
are broken,

letting God
in and out.

© P G Baker

Day and night

When no sleep comes
the Spirit
has work to do;

listening to the sounds
drowned by day's noise,
finding the spaces
lost in day's rush.

Knowing God
in candle, moon and sun
one light one God,
now the day
and night are one
see the candle
in the sun.

Bliss
is being part of
soft sounds and thin spaces
twenty-four seven,

now go to sleep.

© P G Baker

MUSICAL TRADITIONS in WORSHIP

Just last week one of my friends who has no formal connection with the Church did one of those ubiquitous Facebook quizzes. This one was 'Which Biblical Character are you?' My friend learned that she was Hannah, a woman renowned for her perseverance. "Who's Hannah?" she asked. I took great delight in recounting the story of Hannah and Samuel and Eli from the Old Testament. I also told her that she sang in gratitude for her answered prayer, and it was upon her song that Mary the mother of Jesus based her famous canticle, the "Magnificat", when she discovered she was pregnant. "Oh," she said, "How does it go?" Well, that floored me for a bit, but I went on to explain that while we have the words, the actual music was never written down. But Mary's exuberant song of trust in God has been set to music by many thousands of composers over the centuries, in Africa, Europe, Asia and the countries in the Americas. In our own European tradition the first versions written down were in plainsong, then as musical styles developed, the canticle wore new clothes according to the musical traditions of the culture – from folk melodies through Baroque, Classical or Romantic musical settings to the present day, ever growing and changing and speaking in new ways.

And that set me thinking about the music we make in church. We have inherited a very rich tradition.

Until 400 years ago the Church sang only words from Scripture - psalms and other canticles. Sometimes the music was so elaborate that the meaning of the words was completely obscured. Music had become more important than the Scripture. So one of the popes decreed that music in church must be sung with only one note for each syllable. Thus church music was changed for ever. Since then words and music have complemented each other, the music enriching the text and bringing it to life.

About this time, church leaders began to realise that people really remembered the words they sang. Theologians, priests and poets began writing their own texts - hymns, which were put to music, and used in the worship of God, and also for teaching Christian doctrine (and spurious dogma!) to their largely illiterate congregations. Some of the music was borrowed from the secular songs of the day - even bawdy pub songs! - and some hymns had music especially written for them. This was the beginning of congregational singing and it wasn't long before hymnody found its way into the hearts of worshippers everywhere.

The styles of hymnody reflected the various traditions within the Church. Lutherans loved the German chorales (A mighty fortress is our God – TiS 103); Presbyterians still electing to sing mainly Scriptural texts, put the Psalms into poetic meter (The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want – TiS 10); Catholics continued with plainsong (O come, O come, Emmanuel– TiS 265); Methodists and other non-conformist traditions rejoiced in theological verses by the Wesley brothers (And can it be, that I should gain – TiS 209), Isaac Watts (When I survey the wondrous cross – TiS 342) and many others. Anglicans emphasised theology and poetry (God is love, let heav'n adore him – TiS 153). More recently Pentecostal congregations embraced chorus singing focussing on personal experience and accompanied by syncopated rhythms (The power of your love – TiS 685).

MUSICAL TRADITIONS in WORSHIP cont.

And now we have access to so much church music - from our own experience, our worship traditions, CDs and videos, television and the internet - that perhaps it's a good time to look again at what we sing Sunday by Sunday.

With so much change in our society, when we come to church it is easy to want only the "good old hymns", the songs we learned in earlier times, loved because of their associations and sung with the fervour of our convictions. The "Old Time Religion" makes us feel good. It's good to keep in mind though, that the Holy Spirit is inspiring people of this generation, as in all generations, to write new hymns and make new music. The psalmist encourages us to "sing a new song" as well as the old. Theology is continually evolving too, and our hymnody needs to reflect that. Some old favourites contain theology that is outmoded and lacks relevance to our contemporary culture. And there are some pretty significant hymn writers and new traditions we ignore at our spiritual peril. Hymn writers like Brian Wren (UK/USA), Shirley Erena Murray (NZ), Fred Kaan, Fred Pratt Green and Timothy Rees (England), John Bell (Scotland), Elizabeth Smith and Ross Langmead (both from Melbourne). *Together in Song* is a wonderful collection of the best of the old hymnody and new voices from around the world.

Theology sung is theology remembered. So what we sing must be true and have meaning for us. We need good hymnody to help us grow spiritually. It is often the words of hymns that come to us in times of crisis, so we must ensure that our faith won't let us down when the crunch comes for us in our personal lives.

I'm aware that the 400 year old problem is still here but in a new guise. In some places music with popular appeal seems to be taking precedence over the words that are sung. Perhaps it has always been the case. But we will have to leave it to God to inspire the next generations of poets and musicians to determine how the tradition of church music will continue.

I would like to leave you with Brian Wren's words. He has written beautifully about the place of tradition in the life of the Church in his prayerful hymn "We are your people;" (TiS 468).

Glad of tradition,
 help us to see
 in all life's changing,
 where you are leading,
 where our best efforts should be.

Elwyn Pederson

ANOTHER TRADITION: STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Stained glass windows have been a traditional feature of the architecture of Christian churches since the early Middle Ages, but the production of coloured glass for use in special objects has been around for millennia. Samples from both the ancient Egyptian and Roman empires can be seen in museums today. Over the centuries better processes were devised. By adding different metallic salts to the glass constituents a range of colours could be produced, and small pieces of the various colours, held together by strips of lead, were used to create patterns or pictures, contained within a strong rigid frame. We are all familiar with this type of stained glass window which has traditionally been used in churches, with Biblical scenes as the subject. A second method was to paint the scenes or patterns on to clear glass and then to fuse it by heating in a kiln.

By the early Middle Ages it had become an important means of instructing the uneducated populace about Biblical stories. Canterbury Cathedral has a famous surviving 13th century window known as 'The Poor Man's Bible'.

As church architecture became more daring and larger windows were built in various styles to let in more light, the shapes began to vary. The famous 'rose' windows (such as those at Notre Dame Cathedral) were also built in the 13th century.

A later style of architecture known as the Gothic was more elaborate, and the late Gothic, or Perpendicular Gothic (14th to 16th century) produced taller buildings supported by flying buttresses, with fan vaulted ceilings and huge slim vertical windows separated by thin stone



Poor Man's Bible in Canterbury Cathedral



King's College Chapel

tracery. King's College Chapel at Cambridge (late 15th century) is a breathtaking example, as is Bath Abbey. The effect of these windows was to create a sense of awe, and to remind worshippers that they were in the presence of God.

From the 16th century stained glass was also used in the mansions of the aristocracy and in public buildings. It can be found in many public buildings and churches in Melbourne, most notably, in the stained glass ceiling of the Great Hall of the National Gallery of Victoria. It is still in use today in homes, as decorative windows and Tiffany lamps, although the subjects and styles are much more varied.

At GWUC we are fortunate to have some fine examples of more modern styles. We see these each time we enter the worship area, but you may not have attended to their significance, so the symbolism is explained here (This is copied from the pillars at the rear of the worship area).

On each side of the sanctuary are small windows which are modern in form. They were designed and built by the Rev. Ian W. Johnston while he was stationed here when our minister was on long service leave. He used a new process that he had learned, which produced three-dimensional structures rather than the traditional flat panels of stained glass.

On the north side of the sanctuary are the three 'annunciation' windows, with Mary as their subject. We 'read' the sequence of Mary's story from *right to left, from the centre outwards*.

In the window on the right, we see the face of Mary with the face of the Angel Gabriel, when Mary receives the news of her motherhood with amazement and joy.



ANOTHER TRADITION: STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

The second of this set symbolises the loyalty of Mary. She is bound to her loyalty as though by a seal placed upon her heart.



The third of the 'Mary' windows (on the left of the three) depicts the face of Mary, overshadowed by the Cross.



On the south or right side of the sanctuary are three windows about the "Passion" of Christ. We 'read' these from left to right.

The first shows the head of Christ with the crown of thorns, symbolising his patience and courage against the world's violence.



The middle window shows the hand of Christ, with nail imprint, reaching out to us from amidst the turbulence.



The third of the windows shows the risen Christ, still wearing the marks of suffering endured for us; yet as a figure of triumph.



The three slim sanctuary windows were created by Derek Pearse, using a different production method and incorporating Christian symbols. We look at these from top to bottom.

The centre panel depicts cosmic creation culminating with moon and stars. Emanating power with the dove symbolises the Holy Spirit. The earth has a stylised flower with seed symbolising regeneration. The triangular lines when extended enclose the sanctuary. The fire represents the flame of Pentecost, and the Tree of Life gives us nourishment. Air (in blue and grey) represents the breath of God, and water, our baptism. Finally, the fish, which was the symbol of the early church.

The left, or south window (not pictured) has a golden radiance emanating from PX, the initial letters of our Lord in Greek. Blue, pink and green create an atmosphere of peace and joy. A fiery cross has wheat entwined at the base, and bread (wheat) and wine (grapes) represent the elements of communion. The golden chalice contains juice from the true vine, the emblem of the Lamb of God. An exotic passion flower emerges from the fertile earth and nutritious ears of wheat respond to the benign breeze and light.

The right, or north window shows rays falling on A(lpha) and O(mega), then comes the crown of witness and life, followed by luminous colours anticipating the Ascension. The seven doves represent the gifts of the Spirit: awe, fortitude, knowledge, wisdom, counsel, piety and understanding.



Top centre



Lower centre

R. Pope

TRADITIONS within our CHURCH COMMUNITY

Many activities in our church life have come from the traditions of the three churches that formed the Uniting Church - the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches - and other activities have become new traditions. During the last few years we have seen traditional committees of our church replaced by our missional groups and a smaller church council.

Pastoral Care

During the past twenty years, expectations for families and the pace of modern life have changed dramatically. While we care for everyone, the way in which we do this has altered to include group pastoral care as well as individual care. The tradition of care remains paramount but the way in which it is delivered must change and will establish new traditions, such as the Pastoral Partners program.

The tradition of the family caring for senior members has become more difficult, in many cases because of the changes in society. Today many older people are moving to retirement villages and care facilities. Maybe there is more that we can do, besides having devotions, to support these people. It is still valuable to hear about and learn from the life experiences of our seniors.

Use of Technology

Educational institutions traditionally encouraged reading of textbooks, writing notes from lectures and sitting for exams. These days schools and universities encourage more interactive learning and people talk more freely about their thoughts and ideas. Maybe we, as a church community need to be more willing to discuss what our faith means to us, in a world where less than 50 % claim religious affiliation.

It is exciting to see the updating of our website and facebook page and how people are coming to us following their exploration of modern technology as well as through the traditional means of communication.

Worship Styles

Traditional worship practices have had to change and move with the times so that we can provide a variety of styles, blending the traditional with the modern.

In this multi-cultural society, our mission is to reach out to the community around us rather than expecting people to come to us, all the time. This may mean adapting our traditional ideas and being open to new cultures. Those of us who have been facilitating the English classes have been able to share our faith and traditions with participants and they have shared with us.

Traditions are important to remember and celebrate but we also need to move forward and be prepared to support change.

Alison Clarkson and Jan Clear

COMMUNITY HUB



AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA AT THE HUB



On Thursday 22nd May around 150 people attended our special Australia's Biggest Morning Tea at The Hub. The blue and yellow colour theme of the Cancer Council was seen in the tablecloths, balloons and serviettes and yellow flowers, and helped to make The Hub such a bright welcoming place as they entered the church. There was a great atmosphere and it was very crowded, but it was good to see so many people from our church and from the community supporting this event.

Mini buses brought a large group from the Chinese Community Social Services Centre in Burwood. They had read about the morning tea in the *Waverley Leader*.

Staff from The Body Shop joined with our Hub volunteers as we worked together on this very busy morning. Special thanks to all who helped with baking or helped on the day. This was truly a great community event.

COOEE

Cooee is the name of a group that meets on a Friday lunch time each week.

The people in this group continue to offer support, company and friendship to each other while they have lunch and spend time together. They enjoy sharing events that have happened during the week.

They love to laugh; it's always good to laugh!

They like to use their minds, and keep their minds active by playing Scrabble. They are aiming to achieve a combined score of over 500 at Scrabble!



If you, or someone you know, would like some company on a Friday, why not call in at the church and enjoy the company of Cooee? You will find them in the fellowship area from 12 noon until 3pm.

GWUC members and people from the community are all welcome to attend. Bring your own lunch, and tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided.

Judith Greenwood

This is my concern...

Future Viability through Maturity of Faith

Michael Baigent wrote many books about Christianity, mainly from a historical perspective. His research was incredible and he delved deeply into ancient manuscripts that few have had the opportunity to examine. In one he makes what I thought was a brilliant statement:

The viability of any religion relies on the maturity of its adherents.

Can Christianity be viable if it clings to the child-like notions that we learnt in Sunday School? Are we still living in the simplistic beliefs that gave us that groundwork of our faith or have we grown and matured in our faith? Churches are losing numbers in droves because thinking people cannot accept the beliefs we learnt in childhood. In Sunday School we used to sing, "Gentle Jesus meek and mild, look upon a little child". We grew up with an image of God as a grey-haired gentleman on a golden throne, passing judgement and answering prayers, with winged angels fluttering above to the strains of the Hallelujah chorus. We used to sing of heaven being "Ivory Palaces". Do we still believe this? Is this our image of God? We created an image of Jesus that appealed to children but just how real is it? The real world out there is scoffing at this image.

We quote scripture to support this image but ignore other scripture that contradicts it. We apply the scriptures to today's conditions when they were written for vastly different social conditions. In Luke, chapter 22 reminds the disciples that Jesus had sent them out without a bag or purse; in verse 35 he tells them now to take a bag and purse and in verse 36 tells them to get themselves a sword, if needed sell a cloak to get one. Is this meek and mild? When Jesus was arrested and Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, they were armed. Hardly the meek and mild image; his followers were armed and he encouraged it. He abused the religious leaders of the time as "vipers" (Matt 23:33); he threw the moneychangers out of the temple – again not very meek or mild. We must remember the earliest Gospel was not written till 30 years after the crucifixion and the last one about 70 years after; on top of that early copies vary dramatically.

At the time of Jesus Rome was supreme. It ruled the Holy Land brutally. Judea was a hotbed of political instability; Judaism was split into many groups, some favouring appeasement with Rome, some violently opposed, and everything in between. They were allowed their own king (Herod) but he had had his own family murdered so they could not overthrow him. Joseph was of the house of David and was a carpenter. We were told Jesus was the son of a lowly carpenter, but in those days a carpenter was not "lowly". Joseph was an artisan and well up the social tree. With his lineage recorded back through David to Adam he was also well up the royal tree. Calling Jesus the son of a lowly carpenter is like calling Princess Anne's son Peter Phillips a lowly carpenter. Any scion of the House of David would have attracted the attention of the Roman authorities, particularly a well educated one who attracted the masses.

We know Jesus' family moved to Egypt just after his birth and came back when he was about 12. He was highly intelligent and very well educated as he was found discussing scripture with learned men

This is my concern...

Future Viability through Maturity of Faith cont.

of the temple who were amazed at his understanding. At the time Annias in Egypt was a major seat of Jewish learning. We know that when he began his ministry he was very well educated (many claim in Egypt), was a Rabbi or teacher and he taught in the synagogues. He belonged to a group called the Nazarenes (nothing to do with Nazareth). A well-educated Nazarene, of high birth, who attracted the masses and upset the religious leaders made enemies on every side of the political, social and religious divide.

We have been told that the Jews had him crucified; had the Jews wanted to dispose of him he would have been stoned to death. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment. While some Jewish leaders encouraged the arrest it was a Roman operation. Over the millennia the Jews were made the scapegoat (the Nazis used it as a propaganda tool). Even the Gospels blame the Jews, and for good reason. Judea was at boiling point when Mark was written in about 65AD, so the writers were careful not to pour oil onto the fire by blaming the Romans (as it was the Romans who persecuted Christians). The early church went through some tumultuous times; dogmas and creeds were developed and leaders declared any doctrine other than their own as heresy. In 180 AD Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons (similar to today's Pope) declared anyone who disagreed with the church doctrine was a heretic and must be executed.

We are as God made us, with all our frailties and imperfections. We are not a fallen being that must strive to the impossible perfection of God. Jesus told us how we should live with each other and handle the difficulties of this world without retaliation. Where possible love one another and use our faith to help us cope with the problems we face in the world. We come into this world and are the product of our environment (good, bad or in between); we have the choice and that choice is dictated by how we think. Jesus told us how we should think and act; ours is the choice.

In 1603 an Italian philosopher priest was burned at the stake in Rome for declaring the universe was infinite. A little later Galileo was imprisoned in the Vatican for claiming the earth was not the centre of the universe. Michael Morwood, a priest who was defrocked and excommunicated by the Catholic Church, has written a book called *It's Time*. It is a current day wake up call to Christians; please get a copy and read it. I do not expect all to agree my thinking - several hundred years ago I may have been burnt at the stake. In Wesley's time my house would have been burnt down (we have fire alarm and insurance).

This is not about "my" faith, or a statement of my faith; it is an appeal to the wider church to question and think beyond the dogmas of the past. If we continue with immature doctrine that does not relate to the real world the church will continue to wither and possibly die. Our faith needs to grow beyond the simplistic creeds of the past and give us guidance and strength to live in today's world. If it doesn't, the church will become another anachronism of times past.

Bill Norquay

Getting to Know You: Heather Wilkins



Heather Wilkins' life has been one of both dislocation and continuity in tradition.

A hint of her later peripatetic years emerged soon after Heather was born in 1927 in Leeton NSW. While she was still a baby the family moved to Berry, on the south coast, where her father worked for the Department of Agriculture. The influence of her father's Lutheran roots, and her mother's Wesleyan background shaped the life of the family, and of Heather's world view. The youngest of four children, Heather was closest to her brother, as they lived a long way out of town and there were no other playmates nearby. The distance from school meant that Heather was delayed from starting until she was 7. At this time when programs tailored to meet individual needs were still some 30-40 years in the future, she was simply expected to catch up the missed teaching without any special assistance. The consequence was that she always felt thereafter that

she "lacked the basics", so school was not particularly enjoyed. High school in Nowra required a bicycle ride to the train station, the train journey to Nowra and then a bus ride to the school - a far cry from today's school children who are so often ferried by car to the school door!

Heather enjoyed English and needlework; the ability to make things has been a continuing interest over the years, for until about 4 years ago she ran a market stall at which she sold items she had made. At high school she did bookkeeping and after her Intermediate level (Form 3/Year 9) exams she left home at about age 15 and moved to Wollongong to attend business college for twelve months. Employment at the Commonwealth Bank in Wollongong followed, so she stayed on in Wollongong, obtaining accommodation with a family glad to receive the rent.

Life followed a familiar path, attending church, teaching in the Sunday School and participating in the youth group activities - until 1953, when the familiar pattern of her life was overturned. In September she had met Ken, who was in Australia for two years on secondment from the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy to the Royal Australian Navy; he was working at the air base in Nowra. In May 1954 they married and in November, on completion of Ken's secondment, they went together back to England. So began their years of frequent relocation. After 18 months spent in Cornwall, Ken decided to sign up with the RAN, and they returned to Nowra in 1956. That year their first son Philip made his appearance 2 months earlier than expected and required careful nursing. When Ken transferred from the navy to the air force, he was posted to Sale in 1958.

Heather quickly established a means of social survival. Having spent her childhood years in a church community, and again finding friendly folk in the church at Wollongong, she began the custom of searching out the local parsonage, and enquiring about the church services and activities. In Sale she joined the Ladies Guild of the Methodist Church, and there in 1960 the family was enlarged with the arrival of Mark. 1961 brought a transfer to Melbourne and another new church, with Sunday School now added to the list of church activities. In 1963 they moved again, from Beaumaris to Glen Waverley, and Tim, their third son, was welcomed into the family. The new Methodist Church on Springvale Road had not long been opened, and here she made the acquaintance of the Broughtons and Dawn Forbes. But the new friendships were disrupted again in 1965 with a transfer to Sydney where new contacts had to be established.

In 1969 Ken was posted to Varese in northern Italy, where they spent the next 3 years. Heather remembers these years as pleasant (especially the travel to other European countries) but largely disconnected from

Getting to Know You: Heather Wilkins

local life. Most contact was with other expatriates; the children attended an international school, and a monthly Anglican church service was the only English worship service available. Little contact with local Italians occurred. It was with some joy that they returned to Glen Waverley in 1972, to pick up the threads which had been broken 7 years earlier. Philip and Mark were enrolled at Glen Waverley High and Tim attended Mount View Primary. With the boys now older, Heather became involved in assisting with the youth group at the church, with other parents such as Wendy Pratt, Brian Broughton, Geoff Hocking and Richard Nixon. The youth camps held in the Dandenongs were a highlight and Heather was pleased when her son Tim later took on a role of youth leadership.

While she remembers with fondness her various activities in the Methodist church, Heather welcomed the uniting of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches in 1977. She has always enjoyed meeting new people and getting to understand them, but she attributes her father's rigid anti-Catholic stance to her curiosity about what it was like to be a Roman Catholic. While on the Inter-Church Council she made the acquaintance of two Catholic ladies. These acquaintances soon blossomed into friendship and the beginning of a continued association with the Catholic community. She soon found that like other Christians they too had their questions about their faith, and they have journeyed together in this exploration.

Heather's own faith had arisen largely from habit: an upbringing centred on the church, and continued association with many churches over the years. Over the last few decades she has found opportunities to address the many questions arising from a previously unquestioned faith. She first attended a series of workshops run by Michael Morwood (an ex-Catholic priest) at East Ringwood Uniting Church, and these were followed by the Living the Questions discussion groups held at GWUC with Beth Hancock; and later, discussion sessions at Mount Waverley UC. A visit by Bishop Spong and then the establishment of the Progressive Christian Network of Victoria have given other chances to explore what it means to be Christian in the twenty-first century. At a recent PCNV meeting, Heather felt that Dr Noel Preston's statement that 'God is the mystery in which all life is embedded' effectively summed up the basis of her faith, which has arisen from tradition but has since been shaped by experience and understanding.

Heather regularly attends the 8am contemplative service at GWUC, but by no means confines herself to that weekly event. Her Catholic friendships have brought active association with the folk from the Mt Waverley Catholic church who run Spirituality in the Pub at Notting Hill Hotel. At one of these meetings Heather heard another excommunicated priest speak of his problems with the Catholic hierarchy and he and some followers have since formed 'Inclusive Catholics'. She sympathises with their drive for justice and their urging for the inclusion of women priests and acceptance of divorcees and homosexuals within the Roman Catholic church. Their goal of a more inclusive church which welcomes *all* people has led them to hold a mass twice a month at Glen Iris UC which Heather regularly attends in support of their quest. She has formed some wonderful new friendships there.

At 86, Heather shows no sign of slowing down. Her family (now including five grandchildren) is widespread, from Melbourne to Natimuk in country Victoria, to Dubai. Most days Heather can be found at the church, helping out with Leisure Time or at The Hub; clearing the asylum seeker boxes of donations or attending to the Honey Money which raises money for asylum seekers; attending the Friday Morning Lectionary Group or the meetings of the Community Outreach Missional Group. She is one shining example of the many people who form our diverse congregation of faith, often unnoticed but living out their faith with compassion and dedication. We salute you, Heather!

Robin Pope

Some GWUC Social Activities

Inter-Generational Dinner

On the evening of Friday May 2 about 90 people met in the hall for the Inter-Generational Dinner, a family night organised for people across all generations. The ages ranged from about 5 years (Jasmine) through to 92 (Margaret).

Belinda and Alanee had organised a range of activities for the evening. Beginning with a warm-up activity which required us to "Find someone who..." had a Seniors card/ had particular football loyalties etc etc. This was an effective ice-breaker, ensuring we mingled and got to know a little about each other.

A delicious three-course meal, catered for by the adult group, was delivered efficiently and enjoyed by all. You can see the happy band of Barbara, Jan, Laurel, Faye and Jo at work in the kitchen! Our thanks to all those who worked so hard.



Various stages of the meal were interspersed with other activities, such as building a house with a pack of playing cards. This required some ingenuity due to the slipperiness of modern plastic cards, but once some bright spark realised the benefit of folding the cards, we were up and away. The engineers were not the only ones skilled at this task! Making the tallest tower with said cards or with only three pieces of A3 paper provided another challenge.



Our hearty thanks to all those whose work made such a happy, friendly night.

Robin Pope

More GWUC Social Activities

ADULT GROUP

The Bulletin notice for the June meeting was brief - “meal of soup” and “ non-threatening table games”, so gave little hint of the pleasures in store for us. On arrival at the Church, we saw a long table in the foyer, the fellowship area set up for a meal, the

servery piled high with trays of mugs, and teams Boldiston, Lemke and Wagon busy in the kitchen. All was soon revealed.



After we were all seated (about 45 people in all), we were served generous samples of four delicious home-made soups, with savouries to accompany. Leaflets on each table told us the history of soup, gave us the recipes, and some jokes and anecdotes to enjoy. After salad sandwiches, wraps or rolls we moved to the foyer and spent over an hour with games, like pick-up-sticks



and Rummikub (again, Wikipedia told us their history) and puzzles, both easy and extremely frustrating.

The evening of good food, lots of fun and fellowship finished with a cuppa and cake, and a resounding vote of thanks to all those involved in the organisation of a great night.

I'll finish with a quote from the “soup” leaflet - I've given a couple of alternatives to think about.

Soup is a lot like a family [church]. Each ingredient enhances the others, each batch has its own characteristics, and it needs time to simmer [be together] to reach full flavour.

Alison Barr

On a Lighter Note

Know Your Hymns

Dentist's hymn	Crown him with many crowns
Builder's hymn	The church's one foundation
Weatherman's hymn	There shall be showers of blessing
Tailor's hymn	Holy, holy, holy
Golfer's hymn	There is a green hill far away
Politician's hymn	Standing on the promises
Obstetrician's hymn	Come, labour on
Optometrist's hymn	Open my eyes that I may see
Doctor's hymn	The great physician
Tax officer's hymn	We give thee but thine own
Librarian's hymn	Let all mortal flesh keep silence
Lawyer's hymn	In the hour of trial
Electrician's hymn	Send the light
Estate agent's hymn	I've got a mansion just over the hill
Dry cleaner's hymn	O for a faith that will not shrink
Census taker's hymn	All people that on earth do dwell
Shopper's hymn	Sweet bye and bye
Gossip's hymn	Pass it on
Traffic engineer's hymn	Where cross the crowded ways of life

And for those who travel the roads at

60 kmh	God will take care of you
100 kmh	Nearer my God to thee
120 kmh	This world is not my home
140 kmh	Lord I'm coming home
160 kmh	Precious memories

Compiled from lists contributed by Glenda Cox and Alan Cook

FAITH DEVELOPMENT: BIBLE STUDY

LENTEN STUDY REPORT

Alistair Macrae's Lenten study "Finding Light in Darkness" is written with the awareness that the church is in decline. He urges us to engage in "movements of renewal, deepening discipleship and transformative social engagement". One pathway he puts forward is the Uniting Church agency Uniting World, which has established relationships with 35 churches in Africa, Asia and The Pacific.

The study centred on passages from the Old Testament. A theme of "vocation" ran through the course, stating that we are called, or "chosen" to demonstrate God's love to others as God has, in many ways, shown us.

Some highlights:

- We are asked to become "agents of blessing".
- Experience the "heroism of love".
- Make space for our lives to be "eloquent of love".
- The depth of the journey awakens our soul to new life.
- By understanding the concept of "wilderness", we can find resources in times of quiet and disengagement.
- We do not know the wilderness that others experience.
- Disciples of Jesus can be
 - 1 Absurdly happy
 - 2 In constant trouble
 - 3 Never alone.

The 2014 Lent Event is supporting Uniting World's overseas community development and relief projects by

- Training mid-wives in South Sudan;
- Developing women's empowerment in Indonesia;
- Providing education in North India.

The study was a well spaced set of units which gave us the chance to share, challenge and reinforce our faith.

Colin King

The Agony and the Ecstasy

"Where are they?" he screamed
 Fearfully looking around, trembling, unable to breathe.
 Looking for the armed guards, the submachine guns,
 the medical team and the lackeys
 Who kow-towed at his whims and fancies
 Not knowing his next frenzy; knowing what happens to
 His "enemies" - whoever crossed his ways.

"Where are they? he cried in fear, bathed in sweat,
 A slow trickle of warm smelly water wetting
 His million dollar London-made trouser length suit,
 The one that they dressed him in,
 Unresisting, when the undertaker,
 (the very best, imported from the west)
 Broke his arms and legs to dress him to look his best
 Before they closed his lead-lined gold-plated casket
 To be drawn by white horses, whilst people
 (the fools!) lined up along the roads facing 'him'

"Where are they?" he cried, falling to his knees,
 Faeces fouling the air around him.

Nothing but silence.
 But in the silence
 They crept around him,
 With delighted smiles on their faces.
 At last they had him without his 'braces'!
 Each wanting his pound of flesh, prolonging his agony;

To flash before his eyes, the total sum of the agony of beings
 Who were denied justice, denied their rights;
 The agony of loved ones snatched by him whilst vying for
 power

In his mad craze of owning the whole world, with the
 protective

"Enchanted" strings tied around his wrists
 By the priests who claimed to control the **Infinite**;
 Who in their delusional minds thought
 By their frenzied chants, mutilated bodies
 The **Infinite** would bow to the finite;

Who conveniently "forgot" to tell him the truth - or
 Delusional, they themselves forgot, The Truth -
 It profits no man that he gains the whole world
 Yet loses his soul.

Rohan Wickramaratne

Book (Essay) Review

Paul Toohey, *Quarterly Essay*, Issue 53, 2014,

“That Sinking Feeling: Asylum Seekers and the Search for the Indonesian Solution”

It is handy to know that Paul Toohey has been a Walkley Award winner for his first Quarterly essay on the Northern Territory intervention, as it demonstrates that his investigative journalism has credibility beyond the world of Schwartz Media, which publishes *Quarterly Essay*. Often seen as a left-wing publication, Peter Craven believes that Morry Schwartz's politics and publications are perhaps not as left-wing as some think. “He wants to be loved by the liberal establishment. He's not left wing in the way Rupert Murdoch is right wing,” Craven claims. Schwarz's chosen correspondents are paid to write their essays.

In this essay, Toohey has turned his attention to the asylum seekers attempting to reach Australia by boat from Indonesia. His investigation takes him to some of the hotspots in Indonesia, where the asylum seekers gather together in readiness at Cisarua, and at Cidaun, one of the departure points from the coast of Sumatra. There he acquires an insight into the world of the asylum seeker in Indonesia. There are those who have registered with the UNHCR as refugees, receive a living stipend from the International Organization for Immigration (IOM) and wait hoping for the one in ten chance of being resettled. Some of these have already lost loved ones in the dangerous sea crossing and are determined to wait for the official selection, rather than risk more loss. Others have registered but still seek quicker, alternative means, believing the wait may *never* be rewarded. It is apparent from Toohey's contacts with both travellers and people smugglers that the more money you have, the quicker you find passage. The divisions between ethnic groups, the cultural clashes, the pervading sense of hopelessness and desperation, the greed of the ‘fixers’ are foregrounded in the stories of individuals he interviews. He also notes that there was a common perception of Australians as ‘kind’, and that the asylum seekers don't see themselves as invaders, but as valuable additions to our country.

Throughout the essay, Toohey points to the positions taken by recent Australian Prime Ministers. It is clear that he feels Paul Keating's approval of Suharto's 31 year regime was mistaken, but he sees John Howard's more distanced position as failing to recognise that with the overthrow of Suharto in 1998, Indonesia had moved towards genuine democracy. It seems to me, however, that Toohey does not recognise the significance of the actions of the military in East Timor around the time of its independence. These contributed to Australian perception of Indonesia as militaristic. Howard's position is represented as following these popular Australian perceptions of Indonesia. Media interest in the events of the Bali bombings, the Australian Embassy bombing, and the two hotel bombings have helped to reinforce public opinion about Indonesia as a breeding ground of terrorism.

However, Toohey notes that from Howard onwards, our Prime Ministers have missed valuable opportunities to establish a workable position with Indonesia regarding asylum seekers - and this despite what he sees as having been a generally warm relationship between the two countries. No potential Prime Minister has ever campaigned on a policy of compassion for people arriving by boat, and Toohey claims that the events of the Tampa crisis helped return Howard to power, and enabled Howard to get the Border Protection Bill and the “Pacific Solution” accepted,

Book Review

whereby the asylum seekers were taken to Nauru for consideration of their refugee status, rather than to Australia. When boat numbers dropped - due also to a drop in refugee numbers globally - Howard claimed his policies 'worked'. When Rudd won the 2007 election, disquiet at Howard's policies was emerging, and Rudd ordered off-shore facilities to be closed. Toohey observes:

Instead of finishing something, he started something (p.36).

The boat numbers slowly began to build, and by the time Gillard took over in 2010 she "got the worst of the boats" (p.36). He regards her attempts at a solution as misguided at best, pointing to the "East Timor Solution" as a diplomatic fiasco. The following "Malaysia Solution" was unconscionable, since Malaysia had an appalling human rights record and their slack visa control was a large cause of the traffic into Indonesia in the first place. Gillard did, however, offer to Tony Abbott the opportunity of a bipartisan approach on the issue; but he refused, judging the chance to take political advantage of the matter preferable to contributing to a real solution.

Such was the state of the Australian Parliament. All the talk about deaths at sea and concerns about Malaysia stood second to Abbott's political interest (p.43).

Toohey asks, "Why did neither Howard, in his better times with Indonesia, or Labor, from 2007, seek a one-on-one solution with Indonesia?" (p. 49). He implies our parliament lacks "men".

Rudd's reinstatement in June 2013 saw the introduction of his PNG Solution. His statement that, "As of today asylum seekers who come here by boat without a visa will never be settled in Australia", was a complete about-face on his earlier policy. Tony Abbott's three-word slogan, "Stop the boats" in the run-up to the election again brought the major parties close to agreement except for the matter of towing back the boats. But again our political leaders failed to address the issue, and relations with Indonesia sank to an all-time low with the election of Abbott, the tow-back policy and the breaching of Indonesian borders. The revelations about the bugging of the Indonesian President's phone (instituted in Rudd's time) ensured that 'dark times were ahead' (p.89).

Abbott's media blackout on the detention centres in Nauru and Manus, the riots caused by the frustration of the detainees at the lack of progress in processing their claims, and the blame-shifting which is currently being played out are further evidence of our government's inability to arrive at a decent solution. Toohey sees Abbott as having "good campaign politics but poor long-term policy". He points to Abbott's recent flirtation with Malaysia (whom Abbott had described as a ruthless abuser of human rights and cruel to asylum seekers) as a poor move, placing Malaysia ahead of Jakarta as a "key partner in regional and bilateral affairs against people smuggling". He says,

If you tried explaining to a child the difficulties we had with Indonesia, a country that did not threaten us or seek to make our lives more difficult, and had experienced among the most peaceful democratic revolutions of modern times, you'd struggle (p.91).

With Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's lengthy stabilising term as Indonesian President coming to an end this month, Toohey thinks we have lost our chance with Indonesia. Our governments have been too mistrustful and too dismissive of its importance to us. He sees Indonesia already turning towards China and away from Australia.

His disappointment at the failure of our political leadership to arrive at an Indonesian solution is palpable: "Dead children demanded [it]", he writes, remembering the small bodies he saw being brought ashore at Cidaun. I am compelled to agree.

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 support and sympathy to their families

Douglas Stewart Cowling

Lloyd Vincent Hon

John Wyburn Boucher

We celebrate the marriage of

Joshua James Wieden and Sarah Louise Lorimer

Neil Paul Skilton and Rebecca Ann Weterings

Graeme Kingston Schober and Roberta Mary Rooks

We rejoice with the following members of our church family:

Fred and Donna Vanclay who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary;

Neil Leister on reaching his 60th birthday;

Mona Macklin who celebrated her 90th birthday;

Joel and Kerry Leister who welcomed baby Benjamin Samuel to their family;

Irene Marriott, back worshipping with us again after her fall earlier this year.