


# NewView

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Are you old enough to remember the annual celebration called 'Harvest Thanksgiving'? When I first started considering our theme of 'thanksgiving', childhood memories of this occasion surfaced. I recall staring with interest at the bales of hay, sacks of wheat and the fleeces that were brought to church for display, so strange to a city-bred child.

This issue of *NewView* has sparked a number of responses on the theme, and their variety is a potent reminder that we have many many things for which we should give thanks. We live in a peaceful country (notwithstanding the attempts of the current politics of fear to convince us things are otherwise) and, as our national anthem says, 'our land abounds in nature's gifts', providing us with choices unknown even to our mothers. We mostly live in comfort, untroubled by the constant fear of violent death that citizens of Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan or other countries face, and many of us have a lifestyle which is marked by choices which are hardly matters of life and death: what we wear, what we eat, where we go, how we spend our work-free hours, who we spend time with, how we dispose of our income.

Those of us who are committed to following The Way that Jesus showed us are aware that with those freedoms come responsibilities in making those choices. We are also aware that while material things are important, we should give special thanks for the intangibles: loving family and friends, the sacrifices of those who made our lives possible (as Heather Hon writes), the work of those who have preceded us (such as Margaret Williams and Bill Morgan, and the deaconesses), the contribution of the volunteers who try to give back to our society something of what they have received (play groups). Neil reminds us of the influence of multiculturalism which has shaped our society and contributed to a greater understanding and tolerance of people whose traditions and faith are different from our own.

It is timely to remind ourselves of the many things for which we give thanks, for many of our social pillars are under threat. If we sink into complacency we will see much of what we value disappear. The Australian version of democracy is not without its shortcomings, but it is worth defending. We have a responsibility to follow current debates so that we can determine our own path through the maze of opinion. We are fortunate in having the benchmark of the 'golden rule' by which to make our judgments: Do [un]to others as you would be done by.

*Robin Pope*

## Neil's Musings

### TWO CELEBRATIONS THAT REFLECT THE REALITY OF AUSTRALIA TODAY

On Saturday afternoon 23 May I had the pleasure of joining a full church at Glen Waverley Uniting Church for the Synod's Cross Cultural Unit's Celebration giving thanks for it being 30 years since the Uniting Church Assembly declared that the Uniting Church was a multicultural church. It was a time to celebrate the contribution of many different migrant ethnic communities to our church.

The gathering was colourful, loud, and the people full of enthusiasm for their culture, the church and for God. The Aboriginal community opened our gathering with the sound of the didgeridoo and two welcome dances. Other communities represented were the Sudanese, the Filipino, Indonesian, Korean, Fijian, Cook Island, Samoan, Chinese, Tamil and Tongan communities. The celebration really captured the diversity of the Uniting Church and the rich diversity that is the People of God.

No fewer than eight choirs or singing groups participated in the celebration singing in their own language. Most choirs then taught one of the songs for us all to join in with, which was a lot of fun and sometimes quite challenging. The prayers and the call to worship were led in one language, not always English, and the responses were typed up in every language represented in the celebration so we could offer the prayer or response in our preferred language all together at one time. It reminded me of the work of the Holy Spirit at what we know as Pentecost as it is recorded in Acts.

We are fortunate that we have the space and the equipment and the willing volunteers from our congregation to make such a celebration possible for the Uniting Church. I value the rich diversity of our church. I rejoice that despite our differences and different life experiences that we were all brothers and sisters in Christ coming together with open and welcoming hearts to celebrate and worship God.

On Sunday 7 June, at the Fairfield Boatshed on the banks of the Yarra River, Alanee and I had the privilege of conducting the marriage service for Amy Spark (a member of our congregation) and Zak Eichenbaum. This was the first time that I have been invited to conduct a multi faith wedding. Legally I had to have the essential elements of a Uniting Church marriage service. We carefully used some of the wording and symbolism of a Jewish marriage service. This was important to Zak and Amy and their families.

Amy and Zak stood under a wedding canopy. The idea comes from Abraham's tent and symbolizes the new couple's home. It was helpful that there is a shared heritage in the Old Testament. The Bible reading came from Genesis. A couple of short prayers and a blessing came from the Jewish marriage service. At the end of the service Zak smashed a glass which symbolizes that, like the promises made by the bride and groom, this is irrevocable. As well as the legal and church documents, Amy and Zak signed a stunningly colourful Jewish marriage contract which captures the weight of the commitment that Amy and Zak made to each other.



# Thanksgiving

Alanee and I were pleased to meet the legal requirements, the Uniting Church requirements and the hopes of Amy and Zak and their families. The wedding reception began with loud circular Jewish dancing. It was great fun and it was amazing to see both families get into the dance along with many guests. I am used to such fun at the end of the night, not at the beginning of the night. We wish Amy and Zak God's rich blessings in their life together.

*Neil Peters*

## State Youth Games

State Youth Games is held at Lardner Park in Warragul by Youth Vision Victoria (a Church of Christ organisation) and around three thousand young people and seventy seven youth groups attend. This year some of our group who attended SYG experienced their tenth Glen Waverley Uniting SYG, with just over 40 youth and young adults attending from Glen Waverley and from Koornang, with Kelly joining us again this year.

It is a great weekend away. We have a great campsite with lots of undercover stalls that keep us dry! We always have an amazing team who go up early on Friday to set up our tents, so when we arrive Friday night it's all ready for us with hot soup waiting. A huge thank you to Lynne, Ben, Walter, Sarah, Steph, Ben and Loz for doing it this year.



On Friday night there is always a big rally with all three thousand people squished into the huge Baw Baw pavilion for the opening ceremony of dance, drama, worship and speakers.

Saturday we wake up early and begin our first round of morning sports. This year we played Ultimate Frisbee, Dodgeball and Netball...then back for lunch. In the afternoon we played Dodgeball, Indoor Soccer, Volleyball, Table Tennis and the Billy Cart Race. Caleb won the Table Tennis and Ben dominated the Billy Cart Race, with Ben and Nick's simple yet effective billy cart design, complete with all important radio!



The night sees us all fed around the campfire and off again to the night rally and night activities and late night camp fire conversations.

This year Felicity entered 'SYG has got talent' and she came second!!!!

On Sunday we wake up...and do it all again! Our morning sports were Touch Football, Ultimate Frisbee and Volleyball and our afternoon sports Lawn Balls, Basket Ball, Soccer and Thunder Hockey. We won thunder hockey (for the third time!)! Sunday night's dinner was again delicious and the rally was challenging...A few of our younger guys might have drifted off to sleep...

We had a great time at SYG. We are so fortunate to have such a wonderful and easy going group, that are a pleasure to take anywhere!

*Alanee Hearnshaw*

# Thanksgiving for Sacrifice

## Thanks Robert

This year on 25 April we celebrated the centenary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli. The night before I was checking my email and found that I had received a photo by email. It couldn't have come at a better time as it was the photo of Robert James Todd ... but maybe I should start at the beginning.

Growing up I wasn't a big fan of Anzac Day. It wasn't a focus at school, and possibly because no-one in my immediate family had served in the war, I didn't feel much of a connection with what was going on. It seemed to me that marching to celebrate a war was a misguided thing to do. Whatever side you are on, war brings death and destruction, and I wasn't interested in celebrating that at all.

I was fortunate enough to spend most of 1995 travelling overseas. During my travels I spent some time in Gallipoli. It was then that my attitude began to change. Not my attitude to war, but my understanding of why it is so important to remember. We spent hours walking through the rows and rows of graves, graves of young men on both sides of the fighting line, young men who had sacrificed so much to fight for something they believed in. These young men had been caught up in a conflict that they didn't bring about, but who answered the call of their country and went to fight. I was struck by the age of so many, some my age - and here I was looking at their graves in a place that had claimed their lives. Suddenly it seemed important for me to remember too.

Earlier this year I began doing some family research and came across a gentleman called Robert James Todd. Robert is Elizabeth's great great grand-uncle. He was born in Ballarat in 1888. Like so many others Robert heard the call and enlisted.

This excerpt is from a letter that Robert wrote to his mother (taken from the book *Dinkum Oil* written by A M Taylor):

*I've been thinking it was no wonder that the Children of Israel left this land. We have had some awful weather, and the dust was so thick that one could see but a few feet in front of you at times. There is no evading it. Everyone, it is said, has to eat his peck of dirt; but I fear I have had my peck and some other fellow's share, too. And the sun! It seems to shrivel one up. And the thirsts! They are big ones. The nights make up somewhat for the discomforts of the day, for they are lovely. Were it not for the nights, Egypt would be unbearable. We have a lot of flies to keep us amused ...*



Robert James Todd

Robert's mother got his letter days before he landed on the beaches of Gallipoli. He landed, and died, on 25 April 1915. With all the confusion, Robert's death wasn't confirmed until two years later and his remains were not found until 1923. The 'greatly weathered' mementos found with Robert's remains were returned to his grieving family. By this time Robert's father had passed away, never knowing the whereabouts of his son.

In a sense we are lucky as Robert is buried in a marked grave at Lone Pine. Many were not so fortunate in being identified. I would have walked past Robert's grave when I was at Gallipoli and not even known who he was.

So to Robert and all the others I am thankful. We are truly blessed in Australia and have much to be thankful for. We too often take our freedom and way of life for granted. It is good to remember what it cost some and the sacrifice they made.

Heather Hon

# Thanksgiving

Our GWUC community has had cause to give thanks for quite a few celebrations over the past months. Some of them are listed below (apologies for what we've missed). Of particular significance has been the 70th anniversary of Bill Morgan's ordination, to which Graeme Frecker has paid a special tribute below.

We noted with joy that

**John Thomson** turned 90

**Mavis Ambrose** turned 90;

**Judy and Murray Lowe** celebrated 30 years of marriage;

**Heather and Alan Robeson** celebrated 40 years of marriage;

**Herb and Evelyn Fleming** celebrated 49 years of marriage; and

**Barbara Thomson** was awarded the Sir John Monash leadership award for her work in the Monash community.



*ABOUT BILL MORGAN :*

*This man stands tall  
yet bows his head  
in prayer and supplication.*

*He holds his ground  
and speaks his faith  
to them who would decry him.*

*His sail is set  
to catch the wind  
of the spirit that impels him.*

GBF 2015

for Rev Bill Morgan on the 70th anniversary of his ordination April 2015

## Getting to Know You: Margaret Williams

The world into which Margaret Williams was born in 1923 did not offer a female many life choices and society's customs largely predetermined her future path. She would go to school, receive a basic education, take a job (not a career) until she married (her natural destiny), when she would relinquish her meagre income to become financially dependent on her husband; then she would have children and devote the rest of her life to raising them. The strict nineteenth century beliefs in the 'natural' spheres of influence still prevailed: the male was head of the household which he supported through his work in the outside world, and the female's domain was within the home. To step outside these expectations was to invite censure or even social ostracism. Terms such as 'house-husband' were still half a century in the future, and the very concept was unthinkable for that time.

Of course there are always exceptions and variations to a rule, and Margaret was fortunate to have a mother who provided that variation. An able woman, her mother had worked in the office of her father's plumbing business, developing management skills crucial to its success. She had clearly inherited some of her father's skills and energy and was probably fortunate to have an outlet for them. Margaret was the eldest child, followed by two brothers, and her mother ensured Margaret had a good foundational education by sending her to Methodist Ladies College. Margaret admits, though, that her main interests at school were not academic; she much preferred to sing in the choir and participate in sports, especially basketball and baseball.

Margaret recalls spending most childhood holidays at her maternal grandparents' home, on a double block right on the beach at Rosebud. There were then few houses and fewer people, and the beach environment was a welcome change from Glen Iris for the 6 week long school break over Christmas.

In 1939, the year World War Two broke out, Margaret finished her schooling. She obtained work as a comptometrist, a job she ardently hated, she says, since her preference was to be outdoors rather than being hunched over a desk in an office. After a year or two she moved to a much more desirable occupation, as a sports mistress at Firbank Grammar, a position she held for three years.

Meanwhile, at Rosebud her mother had met the Williams family, whose father had built houses there, and where they also spent holidays. Mrs Williams played the organ at the Rosebud Methodist Church, had met Margaret's mother and invited her for afternoon tea at her Ringwood home. Perhaps there was some matchmaking going on, for Laurie, who had served as a dentist with the Australian forces in the Solomon Islands, was now home from the war. He and Margaret married in 1946, and only six weeks after their wedding, Laurie left for Chicago to take up postgraduate studies in dentistry, leaving Margaret at home. When she learned soon after his departure that he had been awarded a study scholarship which would help with financial support, she decided to join him. Her life had not included any experience of travel outside Victoria, but faced with a goal and determination to achieve it, she set about finding out how to obtain a passport, and passage by boat to Vancouver, and then a two day train trip to Chicago. This was an early indication of her later life's *modus operandi*: where she saw a need, she was not discouraged by her lack of knowledge or experience, but simply set about finding out how to become informed,



Margaret, aged 4 years

## Getting to Know You: Margaret Williams

Margaret had employment in several jobs while Laurie studied for twelve months, then they set sail for England where he procured a job in Leeds. But Margaret was now pregnant and her father wanted her home for the baby's birth, so he organised their return to Melbourne. There Kaye, the first of their five children, was born in 1948, followed by Phillip in 1949, Nerida in 1952, Raoul in 1955 and Deane in 1962. For the next eight years after their return they lived with Laurie's parents in their large Ringwood home, which Laurie's father sub-divided to provide separate accommodation for the young family. By the time they moved to Charlotte Street Glen Waverley in 1956, they had three children. The house they moved into at 10 pm on Christmas eve was in an open paddock, with no paths and no made road, and the younger children fretted that Father Christmas might not know where to find them for his important overnight delivery. Margaret, with her parents-in-law due for Christmas lunch the next day, possibly had other things on her mind as well!



Margaret and baby Phillip

Had Margaret followed the trajectory of most women of her time, she would have found plenty to occupy her at home, as wife and mother of five children. But Margaret had joined the MLC Old Collegians on her graduation from school, and became involved in committee work there. Over the years she had become concerned that the MLC Council had, at best, only one female member, and Margaret felt this to be inequitable for a board of management of a girls' school. As she had done earlier, she set about finding out how to solve the problem. Speaking to those who could provide advice and carefully preparing the groundwork, she went to the 1962 Methodist Conference to present, and speak to, a motion that provided for 'at least 6 women' to be on the Board. It was carried - not without some consternation! - and the governance of the school was thereby changed, altering the dominance of male ministers. She had to follow up by finding overnight six women to nominate for the vacant positions created. Recent news reports document further changes to the constitution of MLC, with the breaking of the governance ties with the Uniting Church, the expanded representation on the council and the power to elect or remove the board. But Margaret is not resistant to change, which she sees as inevitable and necessary. 'We need change to keep us alive,' she commented.

Margaret was elected to the Council herself after several years, a position she filled for 27 years. She eventually broke new ground by becoming the first female to fill the role of Chair of the Council. During this time she was a driving force in having the MLC country campus at 'Marshmead' established. This isolated 114 hectare property located in the Croajingolong National Park was opened in August 1991. Marshmead continues to be an integral part of the MLC educational experience, providing a one-term outdoor educational program for Year 9 students, focusing on sustainability, fitness and an appreciation of the natural environment without access to internet, TV or mobile phone. In recognition of her leadership in this project, the main building on the campus, which has since been further expanded into a large administrative centre, bears the name 'Margaret Williams Centre'. Again, this was a new endeavour which was outside Margaret's previous experience. It was a major management effort which was achieved by her ability to identify and enlist the support of those who could assist to fulfil the dream.

MLC was not the only focus of her activity outside the home. When she and Laurie came to Charlotte Street in 1956, they joined the Methodist Church then located in Waverley Road. Some

## Getting to Know You: Margaret Williams

other current members from those days are Audrey Allen, Shirley Wise, Amy Proe, Geoff and Joyce Fall, and Graham Pottenger. She joined the choir, became a member of the Leaders' Meeting and a representative on the Quarterly Meeting. Those early days of Waverley's development were marked by a spirit of community and co-operation she recalls with joy, remembering especially the community effort to prepare the church for Shirley Wise's wedding. In 1962, the church relocated to the new site on the corner of Springvale Road and Kingsway (now the site of the Ibis Hotel). Another memorable event was the establishment of the Uniting Church, with the union in 1977 of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Margaret remembers the significance of the Methodists moving as a group up Kingsway, joining with the Presbyterians at the corner of Bogong Avenue and then marching together as one body down to Treseder Hall at Glen Waverley High School. As with her association with MLC, Margaret has served in the Uniting Church in various roles, especially on the Stationing Committee which she served on for 'many years'.

In reviewing her life for this article, Margaret has been amazed at what she has able to achieve over her many years. A hallmark of her story is that she has not been afraid to face a challenge, and when confronted with a problem she simply 'gets on with it', not worrying about lack of experience or even knowledge. Her considerable organisational and management skills were developed 'on the job', an example to those of us too timorous and fearful of failure to tackle new things. Her support of her *alma mater* must provide her with a degree of satisfaction, knowing she had a hand in bringing about significant changes for the improvement of the school, and similarly in her roles within the Methodist and then Uniting Churches. Her 61 years of marriage to Laurie ended with his death in 2007, but the bonds of the family remain strong. Although frustrated by the physical limitations of old age, she is closely supported by her five children, enabling her to continue to live independently. We acknowledge her energy and her achievements and the wisdom her experiences have brought. Thank you for sharing your story with us, Margaret!

*Robin Pope*

*If there is someone whose story you would like told, please speak to the person and/or Robin Pope*

### Why should you go to church?

There are certain things in life which gain in value from being experienced with others.

An orchestra can play well on its own, but an audience adds something valuable to the performance.

A football team can play happily with the gates shut (and no crowd to watch) but a match really comes to life when spectators are present.

Christian worship is like that...

We can worship alone.

Sometimes it is even good to do this.

**But** what a difference when two, three or more of us worship together!

Yes - we need the church,  
And the church needs us!

from *Marching Orders*, by William Barclay.

*Contributed by Warren Greenwood*



# Thanksgiving

## Deaconess Margaret Allen gives thanks also:

Something that brings me joy is being a member of a committee which manages 'Catherine Richie House', a holiday house at Mount Martha for Uniting Church ministers, lay people and friends.

This lovely house was purchased 24 years ago and for nearly 20 years I was convenor/secretary. I spent much time with the late Valmai Schmidke trying to make it comfortable and clean for all its guests.

In 1942 Annie Burwell left a property in Upwey, known as Koala Cottage, to the Presbyterian Deaconesses for a 'rest home'. As it was unsuitable for this it was rented out; in 1972 it was sold. The Presbyterian Church and then the Uniting Church invested the money wisely, and in 1991 there was enough money available to buy a property on the Mornington Peninsula. On 19th December 1991 the Deaconesses of the Uniting Church took occupancy of 10 Glamis St, Mount Martha.

It consists of a house and flat, each self-contained with separate entrances. The house will sleep 12 people and the flat accommodates 3. The flat is ideal for a couple who want some time away. It is fully furnished and you need only bring your linen etc. Most people like to spend a week there but it can be booked for a weekend, or Monday pm to Friday am.

This is an invitation for people at Glen Waverley Uniting Church to have a holiday that is inexpensive and comfortable. The booking officer is Carolyn Blakemore (ph. 9886 4451). Her husband, Rev Deacon Gavin Blakemore is Treasurer of the Committee. Carolyn will supply you with a leaflet and all the information necessary. Please contact me if there is anything further you need to know (ph 9801 5594).

Now with Eastlink and Peninsula link it takes only 50 minutes travelling time and you have the Mornington Peninsula to explore (and a comfortable home to enjoy). I am thankful to be able to continue as a committee member of this homely place.

*Margaret Allen*

## Playgroup

Playgroup is continuing to be a successful outreach program. We now have 80 children and 69 adults attending over four days.

The need to form another group is very much on our agenda, as the waiting list is growing, as is the need for three new leaders.

On June 13, six men from our church community volunteered to help spread wood chips around the slide and the play equipment. Many thanks go to Warren Greenwood, Wolfgang Krahn, Mike Patterson, Neil Leister, Ian McMillan and a little helper from our playgroup, Thomas Leister.



Thanks also to our Property Committee for providing the wood chips to keep our playground safe.

We have a great team of leaders who are dedicated to this program and who know they have the support of the congregation who upholds them in their prayers.

*Bev Richardson*

## Understanding the Relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam (2)

Further to my last writing in *Newview* several people have made positive comments and shown interest in further information. Below are some further extracts from the Quran. In reading these texts you get a different image of God or Allah, one who can guide or misguide at his will, which is a concept that is foreign to Christians. However, reading this you find that a great deal is tied in with the Jewish and Christian doctrines. There is much that could appeal to those who wish to grasp at specific dogmas such as the fundamentalists of all religions. The same use could be made of many of the texts from other sacred writings, including the Bible.

The fires of hell and eternal punishment to unbelievers and polytheists are very common threads right through the doctrine that I have read. It also speaks very strongly against elevating prophets, priests, rabbis and Messiahs to the level of God, likening such elevation to polytheism. As such the elevation of Mary by the early Roman church and praying to Mary or the early apostles and saints would have been a complete anathema to Islam. In "Repentance" 24 it speaks very strongly against materialism and love of wealth.

As indicated in my last article the headings are the chapter or book names and are my insertion; however the texts are all lifted straight out of the book and pasted in. These are in italics to differentiate between my writing and opinions.

### Livestock

*65. Say, "He is Able to send upon you an affliction, from above you, or from under your feet. Or He can divide you into factions, and make you taste the violence of one another. Note how We explain the revelations, so that they may understand."*

*125. Whomever God desires to guide, He spreads open his heart to Islam; and whomever He desires to misguide, He makes his heart narrow, constricted, as though he were climbing up the sky. God thus lays defilement upon those who do not believe.*

### The Elevations

*27. O Children of Adam! Do not let Satan seduce you, as he drove your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their garments, to show them their nakedness. He sees you, him and his clan, from where you cannot see them. We have made the devils friends of those who do not believe.*

### Repentance

*5. When the Sacred Months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them. And capture them, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every ambush. But if they repent, and perform the prayers, and pay the alms, then let them go their way. God is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.*

*24. Say, "If your parents, and your children, and your siblings, and your spouses, and your relatives, and the wealth you have acquired, and a business you worry about, and homes you love, are more dear to you than God, and His Messenger, and the struggle in His cause, then wait until God executes His Judgment." God does not guide the sinful people.*

*30. The Jews said, "Ezra is the son of God," and the Christians said, "The Messiah is the son of God." These are their statements, out of their mouths. They emulate the statements of those who blasphemed before. May God assail them! How deceived they are!*

Bill Norquay

## Some Books about Islam

At GWUC we have a collection of books relevant to our spiritual journey which is a largely under-used resource. There are two little books which might be of interest to those who have enjoyed reading the extracts from the Quran that Bill Norquay has provided in this and the previous issue of *NewView*. We have to read any books about particular religions recognising that speaking of a religion in generalities ignores the variations that occur within any large group. However, these books could be a useful starting point for investigation.

**Danielle Robinson, *Simple Guide to Islam*, Global Books, Folkestone England, 1999.**

**[Call no 975 ROB] 120 pages**

This little book was inspired after conversation with a well educated Muslim revealed he held some strange perceptions of Christianity, and then realising that similarly, Christians may well have misunderstandings of Islam. The chapter titles provide an outline of the topics it covers:

- Muhammed, the Messenger of God
- Islamic History
- Islam Architecture
- The Quran and Hadith
- Prayer - Salat
- Pilgrimage - Hajj
- The Muslim Yearly Cycle
- The Muslim Life-Cycle
- Denominations and Sects

**Patrick Sookhdeo, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam*, Christian Focus Publications and Isaac Publishing, Ross-shire Scotland & Pewsey, Wiltshire England, 2002.**

**[Call no 975 SOO] 112 pages.**

This book is written with a view to engaging in dialogue with Muslims about their faith, in order to 'help Christians share their faith more effectively with their Muslim friends'. While some readers might have reservations about the intent (despite the caution to approach 'peaceably and humbly' and to 'avoid words reminiscent of warfare or colonialism'), the information about Islam is nevertheless useful.

- The origins of Islam
- Islamic Teaching
- The Quran
- The 5 Pillars of Islam
- Women in Islam
- Sunni and Shiah
- Sufism - Islam Mysticism
- The 'Gospel' of Barnabas
- Sharing the Gospel with Muslims
- Care of Converts

Robin Pope

# Palm Sunday Protest:

Read the warning before you ingest the contents of this item: This may cause upset.

On Palm Sunday, March 29, Melbourne was one of many cities and towns in Australia which witnessed a demonstration of the concern of ordinary citizens for the way in which our current major political parties are treating refugees, especially those seeking asylum and locked away out of sight in detention.

Many different organisations including churches, support agencies, unions, and schools, as well as a cross section of ages in mums, dads and grandparents together with their children were among



the thousands who gathered. We all cared enough about our country's current policies to give up a sunny Sunday afternoon to make our feelings known. Glen Waverley Uniting Church was represented by a tiny group who travelled in to the city by train to join the protest march.



A spirit of common purpose prevailed amongst those who covered the lawns of the library and surrounding paths as they listened to musicians and speakers. We heard a number of people who spoke passionately about the need for Australia to take a different approach in its treatment of those seeking a safer life elsewhere. A nameless worker from the detention centre on Nauru (nameless because of possible repercussions) spoke of the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers there: the conditions under which they lived, the lack of basic services, the loss of identity and the psychological damage that detention causes. Now, new laws provide up to two

years' imprisonment for those workers who 'blow the whistle' on conditions in detention centres or speak to journalists!

# Justice for Refugees

Reverend Andrew Dutney, the President of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church spoke on behalf of our church, and a statement from Reverend Ian Smith, Executive Officer of the Victorian Council of Churches was presented. The thrust of all the messages we heard was that we should be finding life in compassion and inclusion, and a 'fair go for all'. Many children came under the banner of their school, or with parents, their placards expressing concern for those other unknown children in detention who have no freedom, and no future.



After hearing a raft of speeches the marchers headed off down Swanson Street, and over the Swanson St Bridge to the Victoria Gardens. We stretched the length of the CBD, closing off the road and halting traffic at the intersection at Flinders Street Station. Anyone in the city that day would have seen the size of the protest, estimated at about 15000 people.

Further protest in song, dance and speech occurred in the Gardens.

Since then, of course, the mantra of 'We stopped the boats' has been trumpeted, with complete disregard for Australia's obligations under the Human Rights Convention - to which Australia is a signatory - and the deliberate concealment of details of what is happening under the fabricated cloak of 'operational matters'. This is escalating the concerns of any who value freedom of speech, transparency in government and respect of human rights. These are issues to which we all, as responsible citizens, need to give some thought, and to make our feelings known to our elected representatives.

The ends (that is, no boat people arriving) do *not* justify the means. Boat people shouldn't be turned around and sent back. Boat crews should not be paid to return their human cargo. Let us not be part of any group who 'lets bad things happen because good people stay silent'. History of the twentieth century has plenty of examples of the dreadful consequences that can ensue for innocent people. We must insist that our government works in co-operation with other nations to address the root causes of these dangerous mass migrations, and to bring pressures to bear on those governments who persecute minorities and force them to flee. We should not be blaming the victims and portraying them as terrorists...or freeloaders. Regional, and global solutions are needed and we look to our leaders to lead, in genuine consultation with other nations.

Let the ballot box also be our voice.

*Robin Pope*

## Indefinite Detention - on our behalf

The following was issued by the Justice and International Mission Unit of the Uniting Church in April 2015:

### **Detained Forever without Knowing Why**

Everyone has a right to liberty, humane treatment and a fair go! The Federal Court of Australia says:  
*[T]here can be no question that the right to personal liberty is among the most fundamental of all common law rights. It is also among the most fundamental of the universally recognised human rights.* Minister for Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs v Al Masri [2003] FCAFC 70 at 87

Australia is holding more than 30 people in indefinite detention for undisclosed reasons. These people are recognised refugees who cannot return home due to the dangers they face there. But Australia will not release them from detention due to secret claims made against them by Australia's spy agency ASIO. They have not been told the grounds for their continued detention and so cannot challenge the accusations against them. After more than five years in detention, these people have suffered "serious, irreversible psychological harm" - according to UN findings - and some have been suicidal. The UN says they should be released.

The UN has found Australia is continuing to violate a number of their human rights, including:

- the prohibition on inhuman and degrading treatment
- the prohibition on arbitrary detention and
- the right to challenge their detention.

The identities of these people may remain secret, but the violations committed against them have been examined and condemned by the highest possible international authority. In 2011, 46 of them complained to the UN Human Rights Committee in 2 joint submissions known as FKAG et al v Australia and MMM et al v Australia, They are 42 Tamils from Sri Lanka, including 4 children, plus a Kuwaiti Bedouin man and 3 Burmese men of the Rohingya ethnic minority. The children and some of the adults have been released, but over 30 remain in indefinite detention.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

Write polite and respectful letters to:

Hon Peter Dutton MP Minister for Immigration and Border Protection PO Box 6022 House of Representatives Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600 Email: <a href="mailto:peter.dutton.mp@aph.gov.au">peter.dutton.mp@aph.gov.au</a> Salutation: Dear Minister	Senator George Brandis Attorney-General PO Box 6100 Senate Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600 Email: <a href="mailto:senator.brandis@aph.gov.au">senator.brandis@aph.gov.au</a> Salutation: Dear Senator
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## Indefinite Detention - on our behalf

Hon. Julie Bishop MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [julie.bishop.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:julie.bishop.mp@aph.gov.au)  
Salutation: Dear Minister

We would also like you to send a copy of your letters to:

Hon. Richard Marles MP  
Shadow Minister for Immigration and  
Border Protection  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [richard.marles.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:richard.marles.mp@aph.gov.au)

Hon. Mark Dreyfus  
Shadow Attorney General  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [mark.dreyfus.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:mark.dreyfus.mp@aph.gov.au)

Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP  
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:tanya.plibersek.mp@aph.gov.au)

### POINTS TO MAKE IN YOUR LETTER:

- Australia's rejection of the UN findings is very disappointing, given the injustice and suffering at stake
- Given the Prime Minister's recent comments about being '*sick of being lectured to by the UN*', you could point out that you are **not** sick of hearing the UN's contribution to the protection of human rights in Australia; and that you welcome it and want Australians to act on the UN's concerns
- Call on the government to release the remaining refugees; offer all the complainants rehabilitation; and pay them appropriate compensation.

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*

*Helen 'Nell' Agnes Priddle*

*Mona Florence Macklin*

*Joyce Myrtle Agnes Chivers*

*James Clifford Grenfell*

*We celebrate the marriage of*

*Boyd Alexander Donald McPherson and Emily Kathleen Carr*

*Izak Leon Eichenbaum and Amy Joy Spark*

*We record with joy the safe arrival of*

*Hayden James, son of Kat and Jason Mann*