


NewView

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Xmas day, a day to remember.

Ensure that the extended family gathers in the house with the big backyard and the BBQ for the xmas lunch to cook on. Decorate everything with flashing lights, reindeer and cutout Santas from the supermarket. Expensive gifts for everyone are best bought on credit - easier to return if you keep the receipt. Get plenty of soft drinks for the kids and grog for the grownups. By about 3.30 pm, the grownups should all be slightly drunk and full of food, and will be wondering why this day, which seems to promise so much, is really no different from all the others. Time now to pick a fight...

Or is this one closer to you?

Christians and godly people who remember that on this momentous day God broke into her or his story, know that our celebrations, no matter how lavish, are but a pale thanks for the gift He gave to us. Emmanuel, God with us, a Heavenly babe sent from God to forgive and save all His children.

We celebrate this gift with joyful carols, often from midnight, singing again the story of His birth. We recall the promises made of a Messiah, but we also know now that His is the Kingship of salvation, love, mercy and forgiveness. Not of war, conquest and restored greatness, but of service to others, no matter how humble. We go on to a church service full of joyful singing, then a family get together, where we continue to celebrate Him.

When thinking about the real meaning of Christmas, we are fortunate to know some of His story, set out for us in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. But we also need to think with some sympathy of those ordinary people who knew nothing of this child's future; He was just another baby, a bit inconvenient at census time. He was born to a Jewish family in an ordinary home in Bethlehem, and laid in a manger, an animal feeder, because the inn in the village was too full to take them.

None of the people there knew how extraordinary this child would become, except His mother Mary and earthly father Joseph and the heavenly choir which praised God. Perhaps the Magi had an inkling of His greatness, thinking He might be the king they had awaited, foretold by the prophets, who would restore Israel to the greatness it had once known.

But surely no one at the time guessed that He would turn his back on earthly kingdoms for Himself and ask us instead to accept the reign of love. Yet it is just that amazing grace which has inspired millions of people over the centuries to bring Him all of themselves, and to serve others to the utmost.

This edition of *NewView* tells us how many in our congregation have served others and continue the long-established tradition of bringing their gifts of service to Him, at Christmas, and throughout every day. We also read in the magazine of how God has made straight the way many times for those who focus their daily lives on Him. So our preparation for Christmas begins in Advent when we reconsider how well we serve Him in our daily lives, and how we believe His words and ask that they shape all we do.

Laele Pepper (by invitation)

Neil's Musings on Advent

You would not be surprised to know that a lot of my preparing for Christmas revolves around the life of the congregation and ministry. Lynn capably manages a lot of our home preparations for Christmas and drafts our annual Christmas letter.

Advent seems to have become a more important aspect of the life of the church. Advent comes from a Latin word meaning 'coming'. We often speak of Advent as a time of expectation and preparation for the One who is coming - the Christ child whose birth we celebrate on Christmas Day.

When I grew up in the church I don't remember recognising the season of Advent. I know Christmas was a big celebration with a full church and there was probably a build up to Christmas Day, but I can't recall the term 'advent' at all. Many churches now mark the season of Advent with an Advent Wreath and candles that can mean different things. They often represent hope, peace, joy and love.

I personally appreciate the season of Advent as a time of reflection on the significance of the birth of Jesus Christ. December is a really busy time with special gatherings and it is so easy to be drawn into the commercial aspects of Christmas. There is so much more to Christmas than presents and rich food.

I like to take time to reflect on Jesus - Emmanuel - God with us. What does it mean for me that God came to us in the person of Jesus and continues to come to us through the Spirit? What difference does that make to me in my life and in your life? I feel tremendously reassured knowing that God journeys with me in my life. I have come to know that God is not distant, but close and nearby. A close and intimate relationship with God is possible and real. Whatever the challenge or opportunity, whatever I am doing, I know that I am not on my own. I have people around me and God's presence is near.

I hope you will have a thoughtful Advent, not too busy, and a blessed Christmas.

Rev Neil Peters



Wesley College Students Support Empty Christmas Tree

On Friday 9th December the Year 4 social justice captains from Wesley College Glen Waverley campus delivered 8-10 large bags of gifts for the Empty Christmas Tree at our church. The students asked for gifts through the school newsletter and received a wonderful response. The students, with a teacher, brought the gifts to the church where they were met and thanked by Alanee. This partnership through the Empty Christmas Tree gift appeal supports both local families that our church supports and families involved with UnitingCare Broadmeadows. We also thank members of our congregation for their generous giving of gifts.



Christ's Mass

For about a thousand years from the fall of the Roman empire in about 350AD until Martin Luther nailed his theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg, Europe was dominated morally by the Catholic Church. Almost every day was a celebration of the life of a saint, and there were many. Even these days, Catholic countries such as France have calendars full of saints' days, many of them unknown outside France, some well known, such as Ste Jeanne d'Arc.

Those saints not given Holy Days (hence holidays) were remembered on the Feast of All Saints, November 1st. The eve of this holiest of days became known as Hallow E'en, immortalised by Mussorgsky in his *Night on Bald Mountain*. Not by pumpkins and lollies for roving children. Many of the saints' days were marked by the saying of Mass for the souls of the dead.

What then of the greatest saint of all? The agreed upon birth day of Jesus was marked by a very special Mass, known as Christ's Mass. People exchanged the sign of peace given by the early church, and celebrated the birth of a special child. This was also the time when gifts such as jewellery or money were given to the church to distribute to the poor. We all know the story of the corruption of the church by some of its clergy in the Middle Ages, but many good things that we know today stem from those times too, most notably medical help and charities.

So what has this celebration of Christ's Mass become? You have only to visit a shopping centre from November onwards to see for yourself. The opportunity to sell more stuff has been linked to the German custom of gift giving. The decorations of holly and ivy, or in warmer climates, Christmas bush, have been swamped by tinsel and twisted garlands. The celebratory meal remains and for many people it is a family get together, a sharing by all of us of hospitality and love.

Many of us Christians and others will also take the opportunity to share in the goodwill of the Season by thinking of others. We will choose to buy and give small; we might use plans which give money to the poor in exchange for cards which go on the tree; we might volunteer our time or gifts to support the needy. We might support any of the good causes espoused by the churches we know of. We might even boycott the shops (!!!) - daring suggestion.

However we do it, let us put the Christ child back where He belongs, at the centre of our Christmas.

Laele Pepper

Lost in Preparation

Hark! The malls are frenzied again,
Santa Claus comes down the lane,
Baubles and presents by the score,
Turkey, seafood and puddings galore.

Harry is drunk when he appears,
Gran and Ethel haven't spoken for years,
Deck the halls with season's angst,
Last minute panic we're amongst.

It came to pass in Herod's day,
Swathed in cloths the baby lay,
Mary and Joseph in shelter mean,
A manger lowly by the inn,
Not on earthly pomp relying,
God, the angels glorifying,
Listen, how do we celebrate,
This great gift we underrate?

As we sing our Hallelujahs
Forgive us Lord, for what we've done,
Over-drunk and over-spent,
Turned from others, and the Son you sent;
You who lay your glory by,
So that we no more may die.
Come! Victory in this our Christ.
Turn and kneel - behold our God!

Anne Cook, 2016

Christmas Traditions

Christ-mas as we know it is a recent invention. When Queen Victoria married Albert, her German prince, she took on many of the German customs he brought. Decorated trees and homes and the exchange of gifts within the household were all German customs and added charm to the celebrations. We do not know when the special meal began but old recipe books from Elizabethan times mention some traditional festive foods still eaten, such as frumenty pudding and marzipan.

Mince pies are sold in shops and made at home at Christmas. There are early versions from the 16th century, when some dried fruits we know were not available in England. I have modernised the instructions but not the ingredients:

Real mince pie

700 gm lean mutton or beef mince.

Mix in 100 gm suet, 50 gm raisins, 50 gm currants, 50 gm stoned prunes, chopped

Also 1/2 tsp ground cloves, 1 tsp ground mace, 1/2 tsp black pepper and a pinch of saffron.

Make pastry in the usual way using 450gm plain flour, pinch salt, 100gm lard, 150 ml water and 60 ml milk (or as needed).

Mix all filling well then pack meat mix into a shortcrust pastry base formed to cover bottom and sides of a loose-bottomed tin. Moisten the top edges. Cover with a pastry lid and firmly press in place. Use pastry scraps to decorate the top. The tin should be 20 cm diameter and 5 cm deep.

Bake at 220 degrees C for 15 mins, reduce oven to 180 degrees for further 75 mins. Remove sides of tin, brush with a glaze of equal quantities of butter, sugar and rosewater, and return to oven for 15 mins. Serve cold on a Christmas buffet.

I have also found how the modern Christmas pudding developed from the old plum pottage of earlier times. We began to talk of plum pudding as we know it (no meat), in the late 17th century. This plum pottage was made especially in Scotland into the 19th century. Here is the 18th century recipe for plum pottage, rather sloppy we would say, but still very fruity and alcoholic.

Plum Pottage

Make a meat broth of 1 kg shin beef and 1.1 litres water. Simmer beef for about 2 hours. Strain and reserve stock. Add 125 gm fresh white breadcrumbs to 850 ml stock and soak for hour. You could substitute 75 gm sago and simmer the stock for another 15 mins.

Add 200 gm mixed dried fruit, a very good pinch of each of nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, cloves and salt. Bring to the boil. Add 75 ml sherry and 75 ml port and simmer uncovered until the fruit is plump, about 15 mins. Serve hot in individual bowls with the juice of an orange or a lemon poured over it.

This recipe was served at a Christmas feast in Scotland in 1715 as a first course. Perhaps it got the retainers into a festive mood?

Laele Pepper

Recipes based on: Brears et al (1997), *A Taste of History, 10,000 years of Food in Britain*, English Heritage, London.

TEDDY – THE GOLDEN OLDIE

When the house is dark and quiet
And we have gone to sleep,
Old Teddy comes to life
And through the curtain peeks.

He does lots of naughty things
Like climbing up the drawers,
Then runs across the top of them
And slides down to the floor.

He hears the dome clock's steady tick
And slides on polished boards.
He hang-glides from the light shade
And bangs in all the drawers.

He tries on Granny's jewellery
And looks into the mirror,
Oh, Teddy, you look funny
With all your dingle-dangles.

Christmas-time he likes the best,
He runs around the tree
Knocking baubles off the branch
And eating Santa's tea.

Old Ted can find some chocolate
From twenty feet or less,
He tucks into the box
'til his face is quite a mess.

But we let him 'cause he's old,
He's 70 this year,
A "Joy toy" from the 40's
And Pop's old friend from then.

*Gael O'Brien
December 2016*

Christmas at The Hub



Photos in Nativity Dress-ups

During the last week of November children came to our church to dress up in Nativity costumes and have their photo taken. This activity was run by The Hub volunteers and two young enthusiastic helpers, Steph and Felicity. Photos were taken of children from 65 families. Many belong to our Playgroups, some were children and grandchildren of GWUC members, some were from the Mini Maestros group that meets at our church during the week, and others came from the wider community.

We had a very busy time as children chose which character they wanted to dress up as in the Christmas Story. Parents and grandparents commented that it was a great way for their children to know and remember the real story of Christmas. Special thanks to Geraldine for being our great photographer. These are just a few of the lovely photos. You can see more on the Community Hub Mission Group notice board.

Judith Greenwood



Advent Study

Pamela C. Hawkins, *Prepare the Way: Cultivating a Heart for God in Advent*,
Upper Room Books, Nashville Tennessee, 2016

Pamela Hawkins is an author, artist and pastor living in Nashville Tennessee. A highly qualified theologian, Hawkins' ministry centres on a love of the Gospel and a commitment to the unconditional love of God.

The study is set out so that it can be used in a small group setting or as an individual study. The program runs over a four week time span with a schedule for each day, embracing an aspect of Advent each week. The four subjects are: The Way of Peace, The Way of Justice, The Way of Fearlessness and The Way of Faithfulness.

We were in the Monday evening group, and we reviewed the study under four headings: the structure, the weekly subjects, the readings and the connection of the four subjects to the purpose of Advent.

The structure of the study was simple and clear and comprised a layout which was repeated each week. While this offered an uncomplicated format, it was important to vary our approach each week to avoid a repetitive pattern for each session. Included in the material is a small group leader's guide which is very helpful.

The weekly subjects were thought provoking and asked us to really think about our journey through Advent. We did question the choice of 'Justice' for week two and suggested 'Hope' as a good alternative.

The readings were not the easiest to work through, especially the Old Testament readings from Isaiah. However, with some re-reading and discussion to put things in context, we came to terms with most of those readings.

We found the weekly subjects connected quite well, though we did wonder about 'justice'. The four subjects we focused on were aspects of Christian commitment where we really had to be honest and self-critical. This presented the opportunity for open discussion about personal experiences and made us think about our devotion to 'The Way'.

We found that some of the expressions, being from the US, were a little difficult to understand, but this was not a great problem. The prayers were incredibly poetic and relevant, with a gentle, meditative structure which gave the study an engaging quality.

Prepare the Way was an excellent choice and would be recommended for a personal devotion or one for small or large groups.

Colin King

Getting to Know You: John & Rona Pooley

John's birth in 1937 in Tallangatta hospital was the beginning of a country boyhood that he loved. His early life on family farms was full of activity and governed by the rhythms of the land and its accompanying work. He still remembers, though, the spanking he received after leaving the tap of the water tank turned on during the 1938 drought! His early years were marked by shifts from Bethanga to Greta and in 1947 to Warracknabeal, with changes of school needed at each move. After an unsuccessful attempt to establish a farm on unproductive land in Greta, his father eventually acquired a farm in the Wimmera which was everything he had hoped for. As the only son John had expectations of eventually taking over this farm from his father, but his dad's failing health obliged him to sell the farm while John was still a boy, and those particular dreams were not able to be fulfilled. Perhaps, though, these early years of farming life may have helped John be so adaptable to the changing circumstances his future held. Farmers accommodate many factors beyond their control such as the vagaries of climate, disease incursions on stock or crops, fluctuating markets and fuel cost variations, and John showed similar tenacity in adjusting to many events beyond his control.



In 1952 with his parents and two younger sisters Jennifer and Ruth, John moved to Geelong and on completion of school obtained a job as a trainee spare parts salesman at Blakiston's, a division of International Harvester. His life was full of activity with involvement in the Methodist Church youth group, the Bible class, and the tennis and basketball teams. He also played football for the Geelong under-18 team. But after two and a half years at his job, his desire to return to the country led him to enrol at Gordon Institute in a Diploma of Wool Classing. His students years there were similarly full, with continued church involvement and playing football for the Gordon Institute team as well as being a representative on the student council. In 1958 he graduated with marks which placed him in the top three of his year and in 1959 he travelled to the Longreach district to work as a wool classer in woolsheds in Winton, Blackall and Barcaldine.



John had thought his achievement of qualified work in the country would determine his future, but fate intervened. He had met a young woman at a church Easter Camp in 1958 and his thoughts turned to sharing his life with her, and the realisation that a travelling occupation such as wool classing would often leave her on her own. The decision to leave wool classing and marry Rona came as a surprise to his parents, who had been largely unaware of the attachment. In 1960, age 22, John and Rona married in the Murrumbeena Methodist Church.

Rona was a town girl. Born Rona Hallett in 1939, she had lived in only one house until her marriage, in Murrumbeena Road. Rona attended Murrumbeena State School, but in 1946 she fell ill with scarlet fever, which developed into rheumatic fever, and nearly a year of her schooling was lost. She recalls being in hospital in Caulfield with many other frail-looking children, but it was only later in life that she realised that these children were probably survivors from Nazi concentration camps in Europe. She remembers that on D-Day when the end of the war was

Getting to Know You: John & Rona Pooley

announced, the teachers cried - a remarkable event for a child! - and they were each given an orange to take home in celebration. Another war-time memory is of the transformation of her father, a member of the Home Guard, when he donned his gas mask. She fled from him, screaming in fear!

On completion of her primary schooling, Rona moved to Malvern Girls School until she reached Proficiency Level, when was sent to Zercho's Business College, where she remembers the teachers were very old - one had even been her mother's teacher! She would have liked to continue her education, but did not query her parents' decision to give her younger brother Keith the opportunities she too would have liked. On completing her course at Zercho's she worked as secretary for the chief shipping clerk at William Holyman, a commercial shipping line from Tasmania, until her marriage to John in 1960.

She too had been involved in her local Methodist Church, teaching in the Sunday School, singing in the choir and participating in youth group activities. Rona's grandfather was a master builder who had built the Murrumbeena home for Rona's parents, with a maisonette attached. The maisonette provided a good start for the newlyweds. Rona's parents transferred to Devonport when her dad obtained a position there with Briscoe's Wholesale Hardware, and soon John also got a job with the same company as a commercial traveller, based in Wangaratta (where Robert Elkhuizen's father was a customer).

The children soon arrived: Shayne was welcomed in 1962 while they were still in Murrumbeena; Jonathan (Jon) came in 1964, after the move to Wangaratta; and Bronwyn also entered the world there, in 1967. In Wangaratta they attended the Presbyterian Church, and Rona made some good friendships with other young mothers who were also facing the unexpected challenges of motherhood. They supported each other by sharing their failures and successes by composing humorous letters beginning, 'They never told us that ...'

In 1969 Briscoe's, John's employer, was sold and he was retrenched. They moved their family back to Melbourne and bought the house in Glen Waverley which they still occupy. The children attended the Black Flat Primary School (corner of Waverley and Springvale Roads) and then progressed to Glen Waverley High School.

The family found a new community at the local Presbyterian Church, where the children attended the Sunday School. As the children grew they joined scouts and guides, and John and Rona became involved in leadership, John in scouts and Rona in brownies and guiding. When their son Jonathan joined the Air Training Corp as a cadet, John joined the parent committee, then became an administrative officer, and subsequently rose to the rank of Flight Lieutenant of 16 Flight. Finally he moved on to headquarters as administrative officer for Victoria, overseeing all cadets. He held this position until 1986.

Rona and John were keen to provide their children with further education and each grasped what was offered. Shayne is now an advertising executive in Singapore, while Jon and Bronwyn both have executive positions in banking.

In the 1970s Rona joined the Scotsglen Singers, her membership continuing, with a short break, until 2002. She also joined the church choir under the baton of Iris Pederick. Family influence is apparent in her interests here, as her mother had a great love of music, particularly opera, which she had passed on to her daughter. Rona has a vivid memory of attending a performance of *Tosca*, memorable for its finale, when Tosca leaps to her death. On this occasion Tosca reappeared above the wall after her suicidal jump, apparently due to a too-highly sprung safety mattress below! Rona's

Getting to Know You: John & Rona Pooley

mother also insisted that she be given training in elocution and drama, and the skills she acquired have turned out to be lifelong assets. For a short time Rona took singing lessons in order to improve her musical skills, and was awarded a place in the solo section at an eisteddfod.

John found employment at a couple of places before he joined Stanley Rogers Westminster China as a rep, selling their silverware imported from Sheffield (England). He was promoted to warehouse manager, managing the two large wholesale and retail showrooms. Then John was asked to manage the building of a silver plating plant here in Melbourne, which enabled the company to expand their business further and take on apprentices.

With the children successfully through school Rona returned to work in 1984, working at Steele's law firm for 7 years, followed by a position at Coady's law firm for 12 years. It was during those years that they became amateur beekeepers, joining the Agriculture Society in Victoria. Because their 15 hives were based in Howlong in NSW, they registered as beekeepers in both NSW and Victoria. Their best year produced 200kg of honey, but they remember that it was hard physical work, necessitating regular long drives to Howlong to harvest the honey and check the health of the hives. Surprisingly, when their queen bees needed to be replaced, new ones were ordered by post from Queensland! They continued this interest for nearly 15 years.

In 1987, after 15 satisfying years at Stanley Rogers, John moved to Viners International, another firm which also imported silverware. But history was repeated when this firm was also sold, and he needed to look elsewhere for employment. His organisational skills eventually found a new avenue in 1988 at Waverley Industries, where he was second-in-charge of the workshop. He was able to oversee the expansion of their work into new contracts, and during his time there was instrumental in instituting the Monash Council paper recycling system, which initially used the young people as runners. He was also involved in establishing other systems for new contracts, and in ensuring safe practices in the workshop.

In 1995 he left Waverley Industries to set up his own business as a handyman, 'John'll Fix It', with a private client base of his own and assisting real estate agents with maintenance of rental properties. He finally 'retired' in 2000, although his skills have continued to be utilised by the Glen Waverley Uniting Church, especially the Property Committee where he has served 16 years. Each morning he checks the support systems at the church, as well as purchasing the paper products for the public facilities. He also acts as a funeral steward, and provides transport for seniors as required. Since 2003 he has been researching his family history, and has joined the Genealogical Society for this pursuit.

Rona has also expanded the range of her activities since retirement. She fulfilled her desire for a better education by doing VCE English in 1999, achieving an A+. She has joined the Treble Tones choir and has more recently used her skills as their compere, and to provide monologues to enrich their programs. She has also become their historian, spending many hours sifting through records and setting them out into a coherent narrative. She is a member of Probus and another regular use of her early training in elocution is as a member of the rostered team that brings us our Bible readings in our Sunday worship services.



With five grandchildren ranging from 25 to 6 years, and their many other activities, their lives reflect their interests and skills, and the enduring respect and love they have for each other which has been the foundation of their long marriage. We thank them for sharing their stories with us and wish them many more years together.

Robin Pope

Getting to Know Our Church: Men's Fellowship

In 1992 Men's Fellowship began after the completion of our existing church building in December 1991, when the Methodists and Presbyterians were finally able to worship together under the one roof.

Ian McCreedy and Stan Bergmeir started men's fellowship and led the group for three years, at which time Ian died and Stan left the district. In 1995 Kevin Balson and I took over the leadership: Kevin led the meeting and devotions and I looked after the cuppa and the guest speakers. Sadly, Kevin passed away in 2006 and I have continued as leader since then.

Many of our members have been speakers, and some such as David Williams, Bill Morgan, Graeme Frecker, David Simpson and David Fraser have spoken on many occasions. Other church members who have addressed us have been Evelyn Fleming (Strathdon) and Dorothy Simpson (National Trust). We have made donations to organisations which other speakers have represented, such as World Vision, Prahran Mission, and the Friends of Baguia, Timor Leste. A special mention should be made of the Mercy Ships, for which we raised \$1060 in conjunction with the 8am service, and through a sale of John Nunn's carpentry tools.

We owe thanks to Peter Claridge who has been the keeper of the rolls for many years, and is about to retire from this task. In 1999 we had 60 members on our roll, and we currently have about 25 attending regularly. Thirty members have died since our inception.

Over the years we have assisted with a variety of parish activities. For years our members ran the second-hand toy stall at the church fete. Another event we assisted was the Children's Easter event, when children were bussed in from local schools. With the assistance of members, Bill Norquay organised the construction of the caves used for the story dramatisation, and members assisted on the day.

We have made occasional visits to other sites and groups. One visit we recall was to Prahran Mission. Some of our members join in the yearly UCAF luncheons.

When the need has arisen, we have organised rosters to assist in the care of members who have been ill and whose partners need time to perform other duties. We provided twice monthly assistance for Henk Elderink, and also for Gill Treseder during their illnesses.

We have also raised money for Parish Project Funds with specific activities. In 2001 a slide night raised \$635; in 2007 an apple drive raised \$240. A later orange drive organised through one member's contact in the market was less successful. When members went to collect the oranges we learned that the agent had quit a month early and there were no oranges! However, we were given a \$5 donation!

Each year we have a Christmas break-up in December, which is a fun day. John Battison used to supply two Lions Christmas cakes for this occasion. Another special occasion was our celebration in 2015 of Bill Morgan's 100th birthday, when David Williams presented him with a painting.

Our cuppa break gives us the opportunity to share fellowship and a yarn or two with one another. In 1992 the names of members rostered to do cuppa duty included some members who are still current: Bill Morgan, Ross Lennon, Alan Lemke, John La Fontaine, Ray Wagon, John Stone, Keith West and others. We introduced a left-over milk and biscuit buy-back in 2011 after one member complained about the stale biscuits! We reimburse the church for our use of the tea and coffee facilities, by collecting 50c from each member attending. The 2011 Annual Treasurer's Report records:

'...with regards to the future planning of your treasurer to maintain the highest returns from our funds I contacted Dr Parkinson, Head of the Federal Treasury, and he replied,

"Dear Malcolm, The macro economic effect of the fiscal contraction is probably less than 1 per cent. That's a ball park figure - 1% of GDP. The fiscal consolidation is 3.1% of GDP; the economic contraction is 1%. Regards, Peter Parkinson."

'Gentlemen, in view of this personal reply from the Head of the Federal Treasury I have decided to maintain our cuppa levy of 50c. Malcolm Chamberlain, Hon. Treasurer'

I have enjoyed my 22 years as co-leader and leader of the group and my wish is that the new leader team will reap the pleasures that I have had over the years.

Malcolm Chamberlain

The 200th Anniversary of the Arrival of American Missionaries to Jaffna, Sri Lanka (Ceylon)

In 1806 Samuel Mills, with four others, made a vow to start a foreign missionary service, after being saved from a storm during one of their prayer meetings, when they took shelter in a haystack. Hence the name 'Haystack Five'. This led to the formation of the American Board of Commission for Foreign Mission (ABCFM) in 1810.

The missionaries were all from affluent families in Massachusetts and were highly qualified. The first batch of four sailed to India in 1812. They reached Calcutta after four months but were not allowed to stay, as England was then at war with America. Three went to Bombay and Samuel Newell and wife Harriet sailed to Mauritius, as she was expecting a baby soon. On the way, the baby died two days after birth and a short while after reaching Mauritius, Harriet also died. Before her death she told Newell, 'Tell my brother that there is nothing but religion worth living for'. Harriet was a poet and after her death, her letters sent to the ABCFM and her family during their journey were published as *Harriet's Memoirs* and she was looked upon as the first American missionary martyr. This led to a tremendous upsurge of interest in foreign missionary work.

Newell later sailed to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and visited Jaffna in the north on the way to India and on his recommendation the ABCFM sent missionaries in batches to Jaffna. The first batch that set sail to Sri Lanka in 1816 included Edward Warner and James Richards. The missionaries set up mission stations in different places in Jaffna, which served as centres where they did evangelical work and started schools and dispensaries. A few years later, both Warner and Richards developed tuberculosis and they were sent to Cape Town for convalescence. Warner became seriously ill and just before he passed away he told Richards, 'Is this death? Yes, it is death. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly. Today I shall be with Christ. Tell Richards; tell the brethren of Jaffna to be faithful unto death'. Richards returned to Jaffna and died there a few years later.

The second batch of missionaries included Dr Scudder MD, the first of the three fully qualified medical officers to visit Jaffna. He had wanted to study theology, but his father insisted that he should do medicine. One day, when he was doing his ward rounds, he saw a patient reading a book titled *The conversion of the world - or the claims of six hundred millions*. He read the book and then and there a call came to the depths of his soul, 'Come over and help us'. He joined the second batch and when in Jaffna he commenced distributing religious tracts written on 'ola' (palm) leaves, as there was no printing press at that time. During this period, all his three children died of dysentery. He wrote in his diary, 'Within a short period we have lost three children. May our loss be made up by spiritual children from among the people in Jaffna'.

The third medical missionary to visit Jaffna was Dr Samuel Fisk Green MD. He commenced learning Tamil from someone conversant in the language before he left the States. He arrived in Jaffna in 1847 and started the first medical school in Jaffna - the first in south Asia as well. He translated medical text books into Tamil, including the famous *Gray's Anatomy*. The teaching hospital was later named Green Memorial Hospital in his honour.

The missionaries also started the Batticotta Seminary in 1823 for boys to produce local preachers but it was closed later and started again in 1872 as Jaffna College, an institution for higher learning. The missionaries also started the first girls' boarding school in Jaffna in 1824, the Uduvil Girls College, the first in south Asia. My ancestors and I are from Jaffna, the place the American missionaries chose to do their work. I had my higher education at Jaffna College and my wife at Udivil Girls College.

The arrival of the American missionaries in Sri Lanka and their dedicated evangelical service with personal sacrifices vastly strengthened the propagation of the faith. Their interest in the education and health of the people enhanced their acceptance in the community.

On September 24th this year the Sri Lankan Tamil Christians from Jaffna celebrated the 200th anniversary with a well-attended Thanksgiving Service at the Koornang Uniting Church, Murrumbeena. Representatives from the Victoria/Tasmania Synod and the Anglican Church also addressed the gathering.

Source

Thiru Arumugam (2009), *Nineteenth Century American Medical Missionaries in Jaffna, Ceylon: with special reference to Samuel Fisk Green*, South Asian Studies Centre, Sydney (with permission).

Aru Wijay

Getting to Know: Church Activities



This is a selection of the lovely arrangements by our flower power ladies during the year.

We can always use new volunteers, including men; this is a unisex skill. So for anyone who is interested, please contact Lesley Lamble 9802 1237, or add your name to the roster list near the office window.



Book Review

Andrew Newberg & Mark Waldman (2010), *How God Changes Your Brain*, Random House, New York.

On first impressions from the cover it sounds as though this book may be some fundamentalist theology from an American televangelist. Far from it. It is written by two leading neuroscientists who have spent their lives tracking the workings of the human brain with cutting edge (no pun) technology. It has long been known that the brain is divided into a number of highly specialised sections each having specific functions; how we act and react depends on how our brain is 'wired' through many factors starting from birth through childhood to adulthood. There is a section of the human brain (I don't think it occurs in animals) called the Anterior Cingulate which is a small structure which helps us achieve a balance between our feelings and our thoughts. If you have a larger Anterior Cingulate you may experience greater empathy and be less likely to react with anger or fear. If it malfunctions your communication skills are compromised and you will not sense what others are thinking or feeling. It is critical for empathy and compassion.

Humanity's greatest enemy is anger, which generates anxiety, defensiveness and aggression in people and results in the 'fight or flight' reaction in every living organism. Our brains have inbuilt reactions which read the world around us and react to it; but brains can be modified. The writers have found that there are things we can do to 'rewire' our brain to activate our Anterior Cingulate. Loving religious belief is a great help while extreme hard line religious belief has the opposite effect. One of the greatest helps is Prayer or Meditation (it does not have to be religious but it seems to help) as it changes the way the brain reacts and the Anterior Cingulate becomes more active in our train of thought. There are other simple things we can do, such as trying to adopt a pleasant expression on our face when we meet someone. When we encounter a scowl or a sour look our brain automatically (we have no choice) puts up a barrier and goes on the defensive, whereas a smile or pleasant expression lowers the barrier. Nothing sours the brain like a negative attitude, so keep a positive mental attitude (even in bad times). These are just a couple of points - you need to read the book to really understand.

In reading the book it is refreshing to find highly intelligent academics who don't try to rubbish spirituality or religious belief. Towards the end of the book they give a wonderful statement which I quote below. This is a very thought provoking book and several of the Friday morning group have bought it and are enjoying it and thoroughly recommend it.

'One day I was thinking about God, and I had a startling revelation that the relationship was strangely analogous to the relationship with my dog. I do not mean this in a literal sense, but more as a metaphor. It occurred to me that when it comes to communication, God is to man as man is to dog.'

I played with this idea for a while, contemplating the enormous differences between species. Our lives are thousands of times more complex than that of a dog, we have so many more relationships, so many different ways of behaving and responding to others, and so many different thoughts and feelings when compared to the life of a pet. We understand our pets, or at least we think we do, but I am certain that dogs have little understanding of us. They cannot comprehend what we do at work, how we drive the car, or how we know when and what to feed them. Dogs clearly have emotions and thoughts but these are extremely limited when compared to the average human being.

Even if dogs could begin to understand what we were thinking, it would be impossible to explain it to them since they have only a minimal understanding of our language. For the most part, all they usually understand are their name and a limited number of commands such as "Sit, Stay and Fetch". We may like to think they understand us, but what they probably hear is "Blah blah blah Rover, blah blah, food". There is no way to explain to them why work is difficult, why you feel frustrated with one of your friends, or why you're excited to be going away over the weekend with just your wife. Fortunately, they do understand basic behaviours. They can tell if you like them, or whether they have done something wrong. But this is usually the limit of their understanding of us. Everything else we do is essentially a mystery to them.

How can we ever hope to understand the infinitude that is God? It is probably a million times more difficult than a dog's ability to understand us, but the analogy seems to fit.' (p. 241)

Bill Norquay

All That Dogs Do For Us

On November 20, the Free Spirit choir travelled to the Heatherton-Dingley Uniting Church to participate in their annual service of thanksgiving 'for all that our dogs do for us'. We were warmly greeted by both two- and four-legged friends (some sporting fashionable scarves) and took our place in the worship centre. Many people attended from distant places in order to honour their four-legged



family members,

some of whom offer much-appreciated companionship in the home, and others who are working companions providing independence and safety to their owners. The usual form of a worship service included songs chosen and adapted to show recognition of the part that dogs play in our lives.



Free Spirit was glad to lend its talents to this end. In singing 'The Sounds in God's World' the basses added a convincing 'woof, woof' at appropriate junctures, and the words of 'Guide Me O My Great Redeemer' were transmogrified into 'Guide

Me, oh, my loyal companion'. Many of the canines present energetically contributed their voices to the singing. Our anthem 'A Christmas Canine Concerto' (essentially 'The Twelve Dogs of Christmas') was rendered with enthusiasm accompanied by aural headgear and appropriately syncopated barking. One Golden Retriever present displayed an admirable ability for maintaining reasonably accurate tempo with the choir.



The congregation heard about the experiences of John Rayment, a puppy raiser, and from Colleen Knowles, who had travelled from Geelong with her guide dog Freeman. We were encouraged to consider supporting the important work of dogs such as Freeman. Rev Barbara Allen, a dog owner, provided us with many salient reminders of our indebtedness to dogs, and the part that they play in many human lives.



The joyful celebration concluded with the singing of an adaptation of 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' and we all retired to a refreshing morning tea and bowls of water, and photos to mark the occasion.

Robin Pope Photos: Linda Li



From the Justice and International Mission Unit

The November issue of *JustAct*, included an article titled
Dignity for People in Aged Care

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need' Acts 2: 44-45

...The communities that followed Jesus after his death looked after after all the members of those communities, which is a tradition Christians have maintained through history. It enabled all to be cared for regardless of how wealthy they were.

Our current Government is instead allowing the profits of private companies to come before the care and dignity of its citizens. Instead of collecting enough revenue to provide people with adequate care, these services are increasingly being run on a private basis through poorly regulated markets. This means people with complex needs are particularly vulnerable. It also perpetuates the assumption that only the wealthy should have adequate access to services like health care, aged care and education. More recently the Aged Care sector has suffered cuts and the levels of care will have to drop as a result. This is a choice the Government makes, it doesn't have to be this way.

The Federal Government has recently proposed to reduce funding by up to \$18,000 per year for older people with the most complex health needs. The cuts are targeted at older people in care with the highest care needs due to disability or illness. Under the proposed cuts, critical health needs such as wound and skin care, arthritis treatment and end of life care will be under direct threat. In total \$2 billion would be cut from government funding of aged care over the next four years, through cuts to the Complex Health care part of the Aged Care Funding Instrument.

Two years ago, the current Federal Government cut the subsidy it paid to provide extra care to people with dementia in aged care homes, known as the Dementia Funding Supplement.

...The cuts to the aged care funding will help private for-profit corporations take over more aged care provision, as those needing aged care will need to pay for it. Previous funding cuts...have already seen for-profit corporations...increase their fees. For-profit aged care homes often have lower numbers of staff to help increase profit at the cost of quality of care.

The Federal Government does restrict how much can be charged and for what [but] could do more ...The cuts will have the greatest impact on aged care homes located away from major cities.

What you can do:

Write polite and respectful letters

The Hon Sussan Ley MP
 Minister for Health and
 Aged Care
 PO Box 6022
 House of Representatives
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT 2600
 Salutation: Dear Minister

The Hon Ken Wyatt MP
 Assistant Minister for Health
 and Aged Care
 PO Box 6022
 House of Representatives
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT 2600
 Salutation: Dear Minister

The Hon Scott Morrison
 MP
 Treasurer
 PO Box 6022
 House of Representative
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT 2600
 Salutation: Dear
 Treasurer

The Hon Julie Collins MP
 Shadow Minister for Health
 and Aged Care
 PO Box 6022
 House of Representatives
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT 2600
 Salutation: Dear Ms Collins

Points to make in your letter

- Express deep concern at the Government's priorities in seeking to cut funding for the support of people with the highest needs in aged care.
- Ask that the Government abandon all plans to cut the Complex Health care part of the Aged Care Funding Instrument and that it restore the funding cut for people with dementia made two years ago, through the Dementia Funding Supplement.
- Point out that there are many less important areas this funding could be found from. You can choose from any of the following:
 - the 7.7 billion given away to multinational mining corporations in fossil fuel subsidies each year;
 - the billions of tax revenue being given away to multinational oil and gas corporations through loopholes in the Petroleum Rent Resource Tax;
 - the \$195 billion to be given to military equipment manufacturers over the next ten years;
 - the money given away to wine businesses through the poorly designed Wine Equalisation Tax; and
 - the tens of billions given away to wealthy people every year through superannuation concessions, the capital gains tax discount, negative gearing and the abuse of discretionary trusts to cheat paying taxes for the benefit of the community.

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

Bemen Singham

Bruce Graham Walker

David Symes Anderson