



Newsbeat

NEWSLETTER FOR THE PORT PHILLIP
EAST PRESBYTERY

**CRANBOURNE'S
FOOD TRUCK
MINISTRY**

**STONNINGTON:
HYMNS OF THE
21ST CENTURY**

**REFLECTIONS
ON 17TH
ASSEMBLY**

**TRANSITIONS FORUM
AT HAMPTON
UNITING CHURCH**

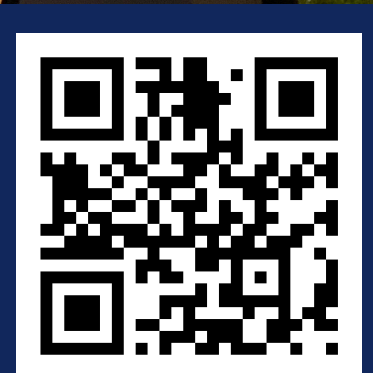


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FROM YOUR COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER:

I have a routine, commuting to uni: I take the train some of the way, and walk the rest of the way from Melbourne Central to the campus. Recently, though, I've guiltily started renting those orange e-scooters I'm sure you've seen littering the CBD. In my defence, it's so easy. You just swipe your phone over a QR code, and like magic you're whizzing away.

And my goodness, it's fun.

It all went wrong last Monday. Navigating a steep incline, and nodding like a cool person to a pair of passers-by, I mistook the accelerator for the brake. It happened so fast. I flew down the hill at speed, shooting off the scooter, and crashed headfirst into a tree.

If you were at Melbourne Uni that day and happened to give a flustered lady the benefit of turning away as she staggered around untangling herself from a scooter, picking bits of bark out of her hair - thank you. The only lasting injury was to my ego.

It's led me to wonder, though: How often does technology appear in our lives, promising to make things easier and speedier, only to grossly over-complicate everything?

How often *do* we mistake the accelerator for the brake?

Preparing this month's edition of *Newsbeat*, I was reminded again and again of the need to slow down. In our interview about Deep Spring Counselling, Ailsa Drent speaks about the deleterious effect the fast-paced life is having on our mental health. Rachael Wass of Meaningful Ageing Australia discussed the spiritual benefits of being in nature during her panel segment for the Transitions forum. We're doing too much too quickly, and the effect of all this hurry is becoming well-documented by the experts.

The Message Bible translation amusingly presents Jeremiah 2:25 thusly: "Slow down. Take a deep breath. What's the hurry? Why wear yourself out? Just what are you after anyway? But you say, 'I can't help it. I'm addicted to alien gods. I can't quit.'" I confess the orange scooters may have become my own capricious alien gods.

If you're hooked on anything that makes time zip by too quickly for you, consider this your sign. Grab a cuppa, put your phone on Do Not Disturb, and settle in for a cosy read of this month's *Newsbeat*. Let's hit the brakes for real together, and reflect on what a great July it's been.

Naomi Cardwell.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, PORT PHILLIP EAST PRESBYTERY



Warmth and Welcome

Spend an evening on the beat with the Cranbourne Uniting Church's Food Truck and the team.

By Naomi Cardwell
Photos supplied

The night I join the Food Truck volunteers, it's cold, dark, and drizzly. The truck itself, a converted fire truck, is lit up like a Christmas tree, with a whole side open to reveal an ingenious setup. There's everything a mobile kitchen needs - microwave, urn, hot food storage, soup tureens, and an entire dry goods pantry from which patrons can "shop" for free. It makes this little patch of car park in Cranbourne seem magical, serving hot meals, jolly banter and plenty of good cheer.

Brenda*, one of the patrons, is there for dinner and to pick up some groceries for the week with her high-school aged daughter Amy*. The two tell me they're caught in a difficult

in-between stage following a relationship breakdown, scarcely getting by while they wait for property and income settlements so that they can re-start their lives.

Recent research published by the University of Melbourne demonstrates that their precarious position is one shared by many single-parent families in Melbourne, where forty percent of single mothers facing financial stress were found to eat less and skip meals to save money. "We're going to be okay soon, and it could be so much worse," Brenda tells me, "but right now I'm just stretched so thin". Many of the people I talk to echo similar sentiments: it could be worse. "Imagine if we were in Gaza right now," Pete* says as we tuck in to dinner. "We've got it good, and I've got a lot to be thankful for".

Pete had a serious medical incident requiring major surgery several years ago, and lost his casual job during the difficult recovery. "I had savings, so I was lucky, but that's disqualified me from (eligibility for)

Centrelink payments,” he says. Without an income, Pete has stretched every dollar of his savings until they have finally run out. It’s with mixed emotions that he tells me that now the tank’s run empty, he finally qualifies for government assistance. “My health will never be the same, and I’m too old now anyway for physical labour,” he says. “But I managed to keep my car through all this, so it could be so much worse”.

Pete is one of the few people who drove to the Food Truck tonight. The location is carefully chosen, with this seemingly random car park located at a major regional bus interchange. Another patron I chat to takes the bus for an almost three-hour round trip to come to the Food Truck on Monday nights.

He beams when he notices there are jelly snake lollies available from the pantry this week, as well as the usual practicalities like fruit, veg, pasta, tinned soup, rice, and weet-bix. “How lucky are we!” he exclaims, and I have to grin back. The jelly snakes are a hit with everyone, in fact, and it strikes me how heartening a treat must be, when your week’s food supplies are subject to fluctuating availability.

Tony Duncan at Cranbourne Uniting Church says that this ministry is as much a part of the church as the Liturgy itself: they see themselves as “a church that runs all week.” It takes a host of volunteers in the background to ready the truck’s various amenities - June saw a big blanket and sleeping bag initiative ready for winter.

“It’s a misnomer, though, that the people who come to the Food Truck are all homeless,” one volunteer tells me. The cost-of-living crisis has stretched many households to

the absolute brink, and loneliness and mental health troubles drive others to seek the truck out as a means for company. I listen over a cuppa as the volunteers list off dozens of patrons by name, speaking about them as you’d speak about dear friends. It’s clear to me the volunteers know their patrons by heart - their whole hearts.

“We’re not trying to get them into the congregation,” Tony stresses. Meals at the Food Truck are free in a true sense - free of cost and free of obligation. The thing all the volunteers want to communicate to me is that everyone is welcome. “We get a bit worried if our regulars don’t turn up,” one volunteer says, filling me in on the story of one man they haven’t seen in a little while. Watching him scan the bus stop as a load of passengers disembarks, I’m reminded of the Good Shepherd’s anxious preoccupation over his one precious lost sheep.

The night I visit, it’s raining enough that the volunteer’s feet are saturated from the puddles. Nobody seems to even notice. As the crew call out in genuine delight to see another of their regulars arriving, I can’t say I mind either. There are different sorts of warmth, and I know which kind lasts the longest.

**names changed by request*

Donations of food or funds to help support the Cranbourne Food Truck are always appreciated, but the team are especially in need of drivers with a Light Rigid drivers’ licence to join their monthly roster.

Volunteering is fun, friendly, and shifts are only a couple of hours long. Your help will make a huge difference in ensuring the Food Truck can continue to serve our community.

Please follow the QR Code supplied for more information.





Reflections from 17th Assembly

By Ennis Macleod

Photos: <https://uniting.church/assembly>

The UCA in its reporting can often render the extraordinary boring. So with its summary of the national Assembly of the UCA that I attended: “Over six days from 11-16 July, more than 200 members from around the country came together on Burrumattagal land to do the business of the triennial Assembly.”

“Doing the business” indeed! Assembly confirmed to me that the primary business of the UCA is WORSHIP. Joyful, creative, engaging being-together in the presence of God and celebrating the gifts God has spread among us. That worship ‘pleasing and acceptable to God’ is great when we acknowledge the diversity we

bring. First and second peoples, multilingual, multicultural, multigenerational, multi-theological, multi-gendered. As Paul says: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” Rom 12:1

Also some other business was done. I’ll talk about that in three parts. You can read the rest on the Assembly website.

First, the new president, Rev Charissa Suli, lead the meeting sensitively, and authoritatively. She epitomises for me what strength there is in second generation UCA members, whilst the president-elect, Rev Dr Paul Goh, reminds us that the UCA continues to be enriched by its members from the international community of the Church. How rich we are to be composed of people new to Australia, and people who have grown from the land in Australia.



Secondly, sad for me was the need for the part of the UCA devoted to the first peoples of Australia (UAICC, aka Congress) to beg for resources from the rest of UCA. At Assembly, where we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Covenant between Assembly and Congress, I was moved by one of the speaker's powerful challenge for the church to do better in our commitments to be in true relationship with the First Peoples of this land.

For example (and this is coming from me, not from the formal Assembly meeting), in addition to the 10% from the sale of lands we have committed to, every church could pay a regular amount to those on whose land we meet, or to Congress with whom the whole of the UCA is in covenant. What I can report is that Congress is in good heart.

Thirdly, the Assembly makes links between the UCA's past and its future. We acknowledged the winding up of the Uniting Church Adult Fellowship National Committee after 42 years. We celebrated the 30 year anniversaries of not just the Covenant, but also the Manual for

Meetings and the National Council of Churches. We affirmed three ecumenical documents as part of a new category of statements or confessions of faith from other churches from which the UCA might learn. In addition, the UCA continues to be committed to Net Zero Emissions; affirms the life and faith of transgender, intersex and gender diverse people in our Church; and, after much debate, moved to take the next steps in the work of Act2 in reimagining the future shape and life of the UCA.

All in all, as a first time Assembly attendee, I was pleased to find that it was not the dry, divided, disapproving gathering of elites that I had feared, but a lively, life-giving, respectful gathering of the Body of Christ committed to trying to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church.



To read more about Assembly 2024, follow the link in this QR code.



A VICTAS UNITING CHURCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENT

Hymns of the 20th Century



By Naomi Cardwell

Stonnington Uniting Church hosted a delightful retrospective of 20th Century Hymns by the Uniting Church Historical Society.

The weather blusters away outdoors, sulky skies drizzling on - but we don't mind. Tucked up at Stonnington Uniting Church, it's warm, cosy and beautifully lit, with the light twinkling as it filters through the stained-glass, giving a Christmassy atmosphere to the place.

We're gathered for

Hymns of the 20th Century, a showcase curated by Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood with pianist Bruce Macrae for the Uniting Church Historical Society.

Following last year's exploration of 19th Century choral music, this year's event explores the story of the "boom" of congregational singing following World War II.

It's a special treat to be led through the program by D'Arcy, whose storytelling weaves the music and its history together, so that we learn about a period, a style, or a notable

composer and then experience their work in turn.

D'Arcy conducts the choir as well, producing a program that's at once richly informative and deeply enjoyable. The choir's voices are warm and sweet, and we in the audience are encouraged to sing along or sit and take it all in as we please.

Bruce's piano accompaniment is sensitive and full of delightful touches, wrought on a gorgeous shining black grand piano. Several of our number join in on Zoom from their homes too.

A highlight is learning to sing in a round for *The Lord is My Light*, a meditative composition of the Taizé community, under D'Arcy's direction.

The words pass back and forth between the sides D'Arcy has divided us into, reverberating and gathering strength and resolve with each pass. The effect is a kind of cumulative magic.

It feels as though we've built something together that's taken on a life of its own, the notes lingering and mixing together in the vaulted space as Bruce's piano part weaves through

our syllables, responding, fainting, playing.

But there are so many highlights. Ken Barelli, president of the Historical society, rightly observes in his thanks to D'Arcy at the end that the real challenge in a project like this is choosing "what to leave out, rather than what to leave in" - and I am very much glad this is an annual event. I can't wait to come together again next year to hear more and learn more.

In the meantime, the VicTas Uniting Church Historical Society's next event will be on Sunday, August 11th - another music-focussed presentation, but this time in discussion form.

Christian Unity and Christian

CHRISTIAN UNITY AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP HOW FARES THE UNITING CHURCH?

Speaker: Em Prof Robert Gribben

SUNDAY 11 AUGUST 2024 AT **2.30PM**

FREE EVENT AT:

North Balwyn Uniting Church
17-21 Duggan Street Balwyn Nth

Or for a Zoom link, email:

ken.barelli@bigpond.com

For enquiries call Ken on

0418 317 942

VICTAS UNITING CHURCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Worship: How Fares the Uniting Church? will be a free event hosted by North Balwyn Uniting Church and available on Zoom also.

Worship presenters, especially young worship leaders, are encouraged to attend - as are all who are interested in the musical life of our Church.



The guest Choir, led by Rev D'Arcy Wood.

The Meeting Place Welcomes Nell Potter

On July 14th, we gathered at The Meeting Place, Murrumbeena, to commission Nell Potter as the Church's new Community Engagement Officer.



Rev Andreana Reale began with a fantastic sermon about the futility of “selling out” to earn metaphorical gold stars rather than living authentically, as God made us. The Bible is filled with radical figures who committed themselves wholly to a life in deep relationship with God, she reminded us, and who were all supremely and awesomely unconcerned with keeping up with their respective Joneses.

It was exciting to meet Nell next, and hear about all the adventures upon which her own calling from God has taken her. A practicing artist and lifelong advocate for the environment, justice, and poverty alleviation, Nell's zeal is infectious.

She's travelled on mission and justice trips to Zambia, Palestine

and Columbia and studied Theology and International Community Development.

Nell comes to Murrumbeena from North Balwyn Uniting Church, where she served for sixteen years, enjoying a loving relationship with this special community who became her family in Melbourne. Prior to this, she worked in the Justice and International Mission (JIM) unit of the VicTAS Synod on its Micah Challenge campaign, engaging with churches to lobby Federal Parliament.

In 2017, Nell spent three months living in Palestine's West Bank as a human rights monitor for the World Council of Churches. A passionate storyteller, Nell spent her time there conducting interviews, documenting the

human rights violations she witnessed and reporting on what she experienced for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. Shortly after her return from the West Bank, Nell accepted a position as Executive Officer for the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Network, where she still serves part-time. In this role, she works to raise awareness, undertake advocacy and show solidarity with Palestinian Christians and peace activist organisations, both Israeli and Palestinian.

Nell joins Murrumbeena Uniting Church for three days per week in her new role, and says she can't wait to forge new connections between The Meeting Place and the vibrant community it serves.



Pause and Paint

An icon-painting workshop for teens.

A two-day school holiday event for teens to learn the ancient art of icon painting. Across the two days you will learn the skills you need to draw a face in perspective as well as the opportunity to try painting using the style artists used over 500 years ago using the same type of materials: dry pigments in egg tempera. The workshop will be led by UCA icon painting teacher Peter Blackwood. There will be opportunities to pause and pray and reflect each day as you paint. Participants can also pause and walk the labyrinth on site at the church, or to enjoy an icon exhibition. If you enjoy art and like thinking about faith, then this is for you.

When:

10am-4pm

Thursday, October 3 and Friday, October 4.

Where:

Scots Uniting Church,
187 Burgundy St Heidelberg.

Cost:

\$20 to cover art materials and morning and afternoon teas. Lunch can be brought, or purchased at the Sycamore Tree café on site, or at other nearby shops.

Transport: Scots church is 200m from the Heidelberg train station, and accessible by bus.

To find out more contact sandy.brodine@victas.uca.org.au
Younger Generations Tas Facebook page.

Sign up:

Register at:

or the <https://events.humanitix.com/pause-and-paint>



Transitions Forum

On July 9th, DaySpring hosted a special forum on transitions in ageing at Hampton Uniting Church.

It goes without saying that ageing and dying well are tough subjects to sit down and chat about. But, as the old saying reminds us, life's two certainties are death and taxes. The young all hope to live long into old age, and however far along we make it, dying is an experience all of us will share - in common with Jesus himself.

Dayspring's *Transitions* forum on 9th July gave the opportunity to speak frankly and ask questions about our hopes for our journeys into older age, and our expectations about death. Held at Hampton Uniting Church, the forum featured three panellists and a "roving mic" for questions and contributions.

Rev. Dec Clare Brockett, Director of Mission at Uniting AgeWell, opened with a beautifully poignant discussion which situated older age in its own present tense, not as a time 'before' eternity, or 'after' career and family milestones.

She reminded us that Seniors are God's own children, saying, "we continue to be made in the image of God until the day we die...(this) is not contingent on our ability to walk or talk. It's made on the fact that we are human. Our need for a little help, forgetting things, having an illness - none of that detracts from our place as God's reflection."

Clare's moving and thoughtful message set the tone for the seminar, emphasising the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of age or ability.



Nick Carr of Dying with Dignity Victoria.

Dr. Nick Carr of Dying with Dignity Victoria then shared his own personal background, beginning with a patient named Beverly. By taking charge of her own death and entrusting Dr. Carr and her healthcare team with the responsibility of telling her story, Beverly profoundly altered the trajectory of Nick's

life. Now he devotes himself to advocacy for the autonomy and dignity of patients who seek out Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD).

He sensitively took questions about the stringent and manifold safeguards in place around VAD, and the role the process plays in alleviating anxiety for those who choose it.

He recalled one gentleman who, having completed his arrangements for if he should need VAD, sat back, satisfied, and said, “Good. Now that I’ve got the dying sorted out, I can get on with living!”

Rachael Wass of Meaningful Ageing Australia spoke last, movingly reminding us of the wonderful opportunity that



Rachael Wass, Meaningful Ageing Australia.

retirement and ageing provide, to nurture our spiritual wellbeing.

She described some soul-affirming practices we can all undertake to strengthen our sense of belonging and interconnectedness with the world, the life, and the people we love. Evidence shows, for instance, that even an hour per week spent in nature has a profound effect on our wellbeing.

Where it’s not possible to get out and about, Rachael recommends bringing nature indoors - a sprig of eucalyptus, a handful of sand, some flowers. Spirituality, she says, is so much more expansive than just attendance at Church. It’s communion with God and God’s Creations, and a deep sense of belonging within them.

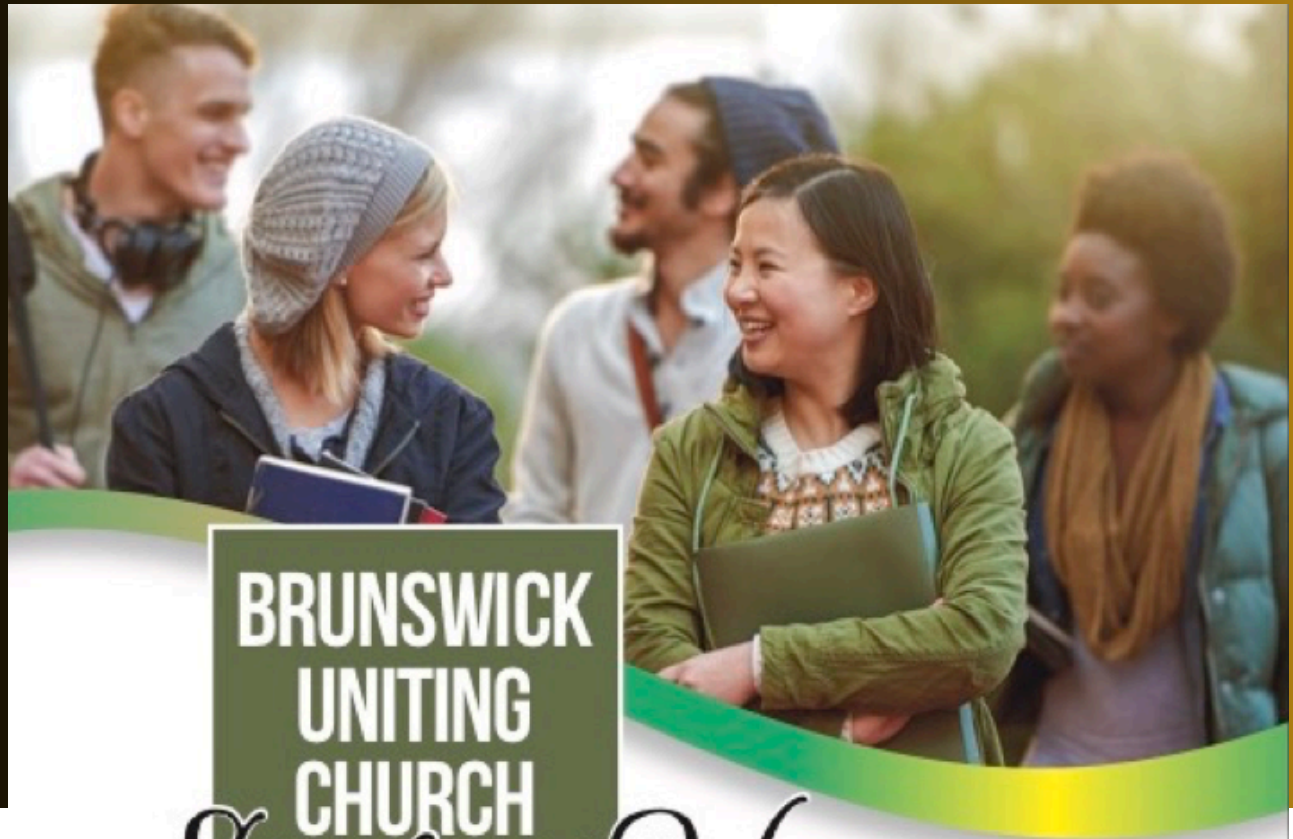
There were plenty of questions at the forum, some of them difficult, and lots of laughs together too, followed by a delicious afternoon tea together. This was a profoundly deep and very moving subject, but I can’t think of anywhere safer and healthier than Church to have these conversations, under the quiet reminder of the Cross, among the company of dear friends.



Clare Brockett, Uniting AgeWell

“We continue to be made in the image of God until the day we die...(this) is not contingent on our ability to walk or talk...”

Our need for a little help, forgetting things, having an illness - none of that detracts from our place as God’s reflection.”



**BRUNSWICK
UNITING
CHURCH**

Student House

Moving to Melbourne for Tertiary Study?

Are you interested in being part of a Christian student house in Brunswick?

Our program provides affordable housing close to universities and public transport in Melbourne's inner - north. Students explore their faith with other young Christians and actively participate in the life of Brunswick Uniting Church.

If you are interested in joining our vibrant community, and need more information, visit our website:

[www.brunswick.unitingchurch.org.au/
student-house-program/](http://www.brunswick.unitingchurch.org.au/student-house-program/)

Or contact the student house support worker
Rev Cath James at studenthousebuc@gmail.com



Honours for first Cornish College Principal

By Dennis Freeman

Photo Supplied.

Cornish College is honoured to announce that former Principal of the College, Kerry Bolger, has been awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division in the 2024 King's Birthday Awards, for 'Service to Education'.

Kerry was the Founding Principal of Cornish College when it opened in 2012, until he retired at the end of 2015. Prior to this, he was Head of Cornish Campus, St Leonard's College, for over 20 years and is the recipient of numerous state and national awards for educational leadership.

Together with Dr Marcia Behrenbruch, he developed a visionary model of teaching and learning, linking

'education for a sustainable future' with an inquiry-based pedagogy in the early 2000s. His ground-breaking leadership in that area continues to underpin and drive the ethos of Cornish College today.

To quote Kerry "Although I am honoured to have been nominated and have received the award, I see it as a wonderful recognition of all that the Cornish team has achieved over many years – I am just the lucky one privileged to work with an amazing team of people".

We are absolutely delighted that he has been recognised with this prestigious award.

"I am just the lucky one privileged to work with an amazing team of people"

Kerry Bolger, OAM



Sanctuary at *Deep Spring*

By Naomi Cardwell

Photos Supplied

I chatted with the staff of Deep Spring, a low-cost counselling service at St. Martin's Uniting Church, Beaumaris, to learn about their mission.

Settling in for a cuppa and a chat at the Deep Spring counselling rooms at St. Martin's Beaumaris, I feel immediately at home. The rooms are comfortable, fresh, and filled with light.

While there are generous windows, only a troupe of magpies singing in the tree-tops can see in from outside. The rooms provide a safe space, private and cosy, without feeling shut-in.

I'm chatting with Ailsa Drent, a psychologist at the low-cost practice, and Geoff Hinde, who



serves on the managing committee.

What's the catch? is the question I secretly want to ask. Since Melbourne's lockdowns, our need for mental health services has boomed, and psychologists who are experienced and available seem to be rare birds indeed. To find a low-cost service with no waitlist is a boon. "We're meeting a community need," Geoff explains. With St. Martin's

support, low-cost services have been at the centre of Deep Spring's ethos for more than twenty years.

I ask whether the service is only for Christians, or if it seeks to persuade people into the faith.

The answer is an emphatic 'no'. "We're not here to convert anyone," Geoff explains, laughing. "Our own spirituality is just built in. It's part of who we

are.” We need to slow down to process our struggles, Ailsa says. Modern life simply doesn’t afford us the time and space to do so.

The “grind” of a fast-paced, technologically saturated world is rapidly taking its toll on Melbourne. “We’re a big city that’s learnt to be too busy,” she says, citing technology’s purported convenience as one that’s riddled with hidden costs - our sleep hygiene, for instance, and the time it takes for us to do the mental work associated with resilience and creativity.

“We’re creatures (of the natural world), but we’re dissociated from that.” Anxiety, depression, or struggles with work-life balance often result.

The team at Deep Spring deploy a blend of evidence-based clinical practice as well as old fashioned wisdom, with Ailsa’s homemade biscuits often featuring among her arsenal of problem-solving

strategies and listening skills. “It’s a process, not a destination,” she says, and while some clients move quickly through the problem-solving process, others come and go as they need to over several years.

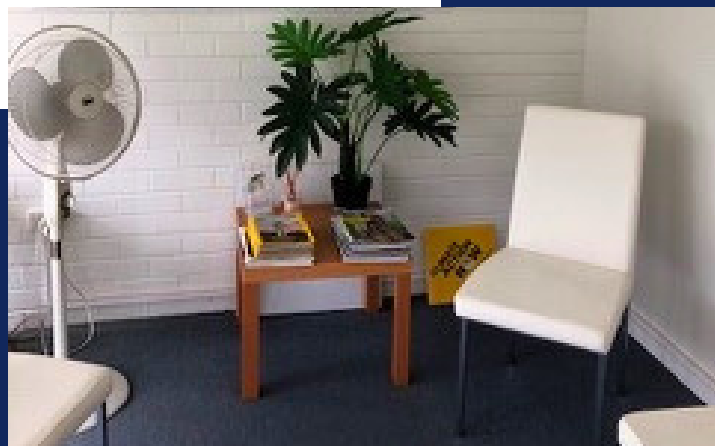
Patients can self-refer or obtain a referral from their GP: “Just ring up,” Ailsa says, and the team will get the ball rolling. Munching on biscuits, surrounded by birdsong as I leave, I feel as though I’ve found a hidden secret. Help is at hand, and it’s more accessible than many might think.

“We’re creatures (of the natural world), but we’re dissociated from that”

—Ailsa Drent



To read more about Deep Spring, follow the link in this QR code.





The Write Stuff

By Naomi Cardwell
Photo from Murrumbeena Uniting Church website.



I joined Rev Andreanna Reale and the Creative Writing Group at Murrumbeena Uniting Church for an inspiring afternoon practising “The Art of Letting Go”.

Sometimes a change of scene and some great company are all you need to help get your writing unstuck.

The Meeting Place, Murrumbeena Uniting Church, is fast becoming one of my favourite places to hang out, with its beautiful stained-glass windows, natural light, and peaceful creative energy.

A diverse group of writers at all stages has

gathered this afternoon. Some attendees are working on their memoirs, others are developing their poetry, and there’s even an aspiring novelist among the group. Rev Andreanna Reale starts us off with a few warm-up exercises and some reading to get our creative juices flowing.

There are plenty of tables for us to settle at when we’re ready to write, and tea and coffee if we need it. We help each other develop our work and chat through feedback and problem-solving as we’re comfortable.

It’s such a cosy pleasure to think and talk about

the craft with writers and storytellers from all walks of life, and in spite of my nerves I feel instantly at home.

All of us benefit so much from being together. Writing isn’t that different from any other craft, really. It takes practice, it’s best done in a group, and it’s a pleasure to share the triumphs (and toils!) of one’s projects with others. Best of all, it’s one of the cheapest hobbies out there: all you need is a notebook, a pen, and your imagination!

Whether you’re a novice writer with a project you’re hoping to start, or a seasoned wordsmith

who knows the value of workshopping, Murrumbeena Uniting Church’s weekly creative writing workshops are a sanctuary – safe and inspiring all at once, and full of helpful and delightful company.

The Murrumbeena Creative Writing Group runs on Wednesdays from 2-3:30pm. All are welcome and no experience is needed! Suggested donation is \$5. Please see the facebook link below:



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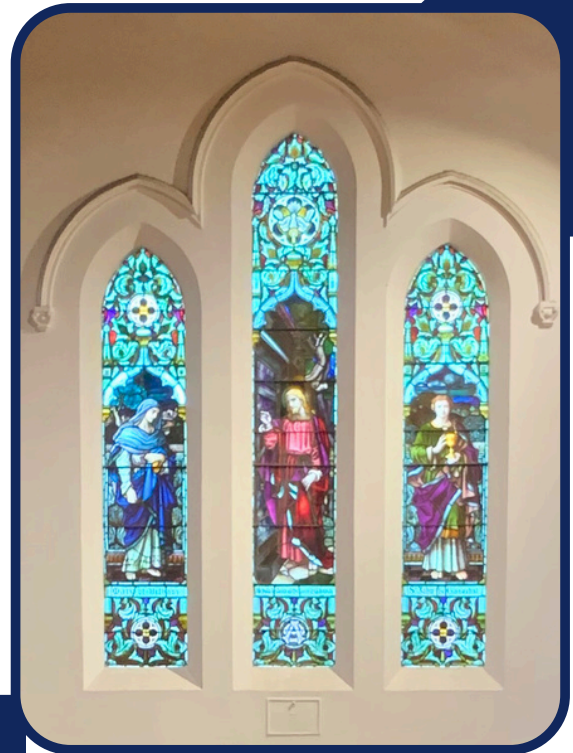
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*Stained-glass windows at Stonnington
Uniting Church.*