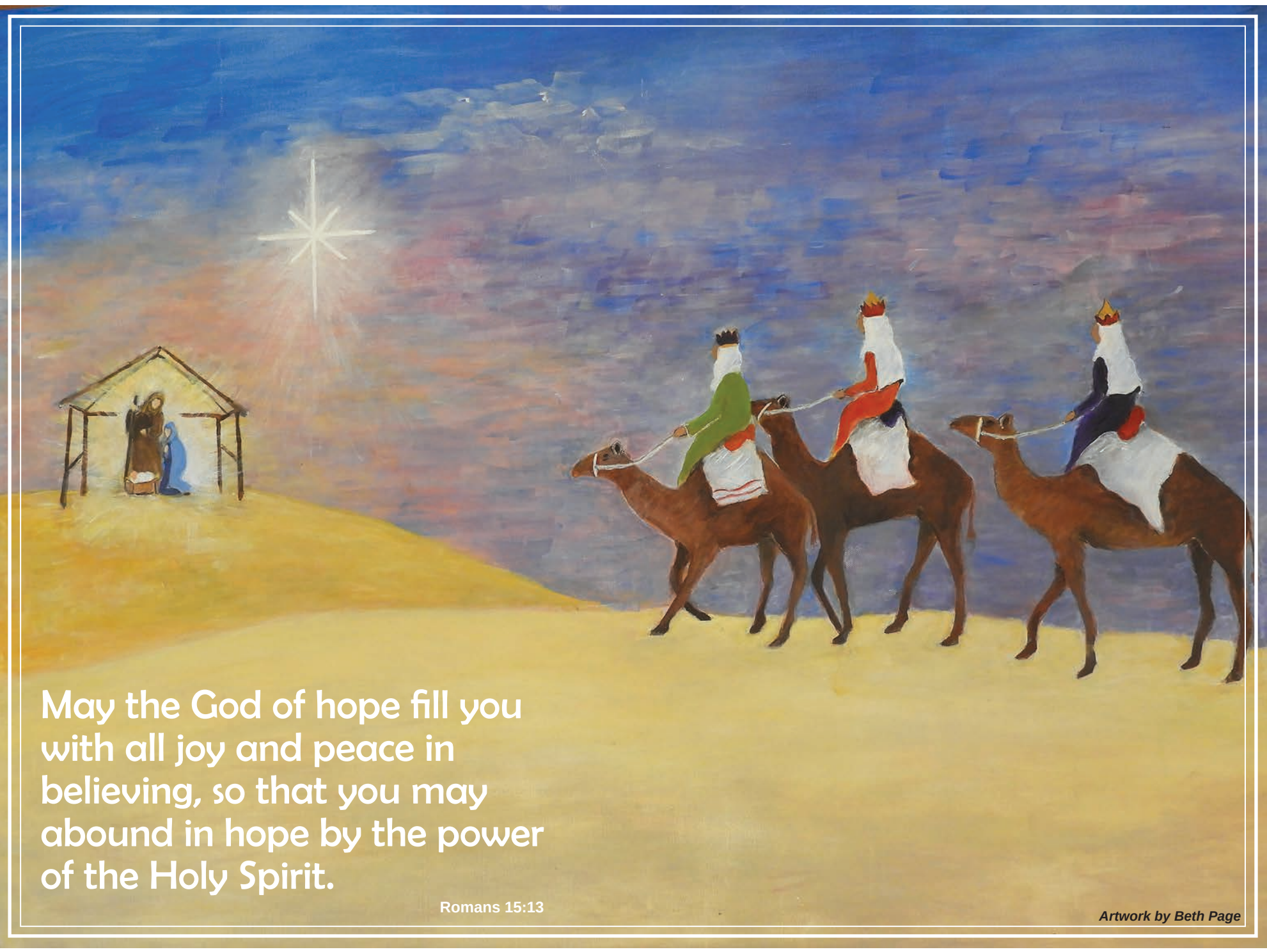
THE ADVOCATE

Inspired by God's love, through worship, prayer and scriptural reflection, we seek to live our Christ-centred values by meeting the needs of our communities through serving and accepting others.

Issue: 098 | Newspaper of the Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta I www.wangaratta-anglican.org.au | December 2020



Artwork by Beth Page

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The Right Reverend Clarence E Bester

Theme: The God of Surprises.

Introduction, Welcome and Expression of Thanks

Today is my sixth Synod in the Diocese of Wangaratta and my first Synod as the 11th Bishop of Wangaratta and I welcome you all to this first session of the Fortieth Synod. I especially extend a hand of greeting to those who have joined our ranks since our last Synod, from overseas and locally, in The Rev'd Jerome Francis from the Diocese of Cape Town South Africa, The Rev'd David Kerr and The Rev'd Emily Payne from the Diocese of Melbourne, together with their families where they have accompanied them. Welcome also to lay Synod representatives and others who are joining for the first time.

It is a rather strange Synod because of the uncertainty in preparing for today as to whether we would be able to meet in person or would have to use the Zoom application. It is a strange Synod because we have no other special guests to welcome and Synod has really been in progress for a few weeks with all our pre-Synod Zoom meetings. It is a strange Synod because we were due to meet in May, then in September and now we are finally meeting today.

The God of Surprises

I have chosen as my theme for this Synod Charge the concept of 'The God of Surprises', as I begin to share my hopes, dreams, thoughts and vision for my own episcopal ministry and hopefully on how we can collaborate together as the family of God in the Diocese of Wangaratta over the next few years. I base this on Mark 4:35-41 and specifically verse 41 – 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'.

This passage refers to a time of great uncertainty and fear for the disciples. They were faced with a great challenge in what they thought was about to happen to them. They thought that they were about to die and accused Jesus of not caring. At that moment they lacked faith, even though they often journeyed with Jesus, experiencing Jesus' transforming and all-embracing love. What a surprise to them when Jesus uttered the words, "Peace! Be Still" and all happened according to his words. Here they discovered that, with Jesus in their midst, all will be well, for God is always present even when we think that God is asleep.

Continued on page 4

Inside the Advocate this month .....

Wedding McConnan - Little

FROM the BENALLA STANDARD FRI 25 MAY 1923

A very pretty wedding was celebrated in Holy Trinity Church, Benalla, when Rae Victoria, youngest daughter of the late Hon. W. Little, M.L.C. and Mrs. Little, of Benalla, was married to Edgar Don, youngest son of the Rev. A. C. McConnan, of St Andrew's Church, Benalla. The greatest interest was taken in the event, many being unable to obtain admission to the church, which was full to its utmost capacity. During the day, a number of the friends of the bride had been busy decorating the chancel and aisle.

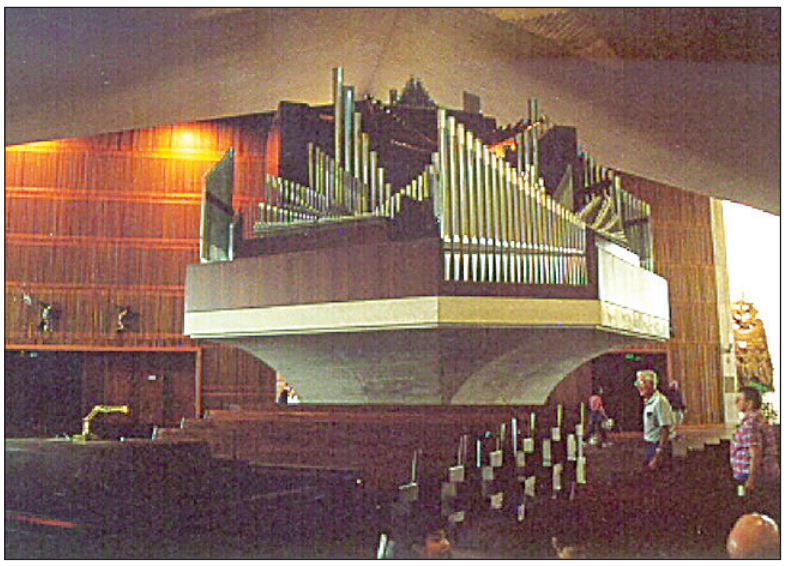
The bride was given away by her brother, Mr A. V. Little and looked charming in a beautiful gown of white georgette over crepe-de-chine, with silver shadow lace; a charmeuse train hanging from the shoulders, lined with rucked georgette and finished with a hand-made spray of pink and silver. The veil (which was lent by one of the bride's friends) was gathered into a chaplet of silver leaves finished with a spray of orange blossom over one side and she carried a sheaf of white roses. The bridesmaids (the Misses Evelyn Little and Elsie McConnan) were attired in very effective dresses of deep primrose crepe-de-chine, with black satin hats and they carried shower bouquets of autumn tints. Mr. Leo. Whiting, of Kerang, was best man and Mr. Sydney Say groomsman, both having been comrades in the A.M.C. with the bridegroom during the late war, where they served with the ambulance corps. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. N.D. Herring, assisted by the Rev. A. C. McConnan and the service was fully choral, the members of both Holy Trinity and St. Andrew's choirs taking part.

Upon the conclusion of the ceremony, a reception was held in the Parish Hall, adjoining the church, and after the congratulations and good wishes of the guests had been conveyed, about sixty sat down to the wedding tea, the catering for which had been entrusted to Mr. Weatherill.

Their future home will be Kilmore.

The Joys of International travel

BY PETER BURNS



I have taken 16 International Tours over a period of 20 years – 2020 is the first time I have missed a year since 2006.

I have travelled far and wide, having set foot on all seven continents (some many times).
My first trip was to North America. I, as a member of the International Society of Poets, was invited to present at a symposium in Washington D.C. I decided (reluctantly) to accept the invitation and subsequently booked two tours in the United States and Canada prior to reaching D.C. for the symposium.

On arriving in L.A., I spent time at Disneyland and other places of interest before embarking on a coach tour. Our tour consisted of 33, of whom 28 were from the Netherlands, two from France and three Australians (I spent my time with the former, a very friendly mob).

This tour took us through San Diego, Tijuana (Mexico), Phoenix, Montezuma's Castle, Grand Canyon (magnificent, but too big to really appreciate) and the Painted Desert then to the Navajo Nation's Monument Valley Park. It is one of the most majestic and spellbinding places I have been.

Onward to Glen Canyon, Bryce Canyon and Las Vegas, where I alone (being the only lover of opera in our tour group) was serenaded with an aria by a magnificent soprano.

Onward to Death Valley, Yosemite National Park where we saw the giant Sequoia trees. Then to the beautiful city of San Francisco to see the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz and St Mary's Cathedral.

Now heading down the coast to L.A. we stopped at Carmel with its many little Art Galleries. In one such gallery I was to see some of the works of my now favourite artist (Thomas Kinkade). Finally back in L.A., we saw the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the Chinese Theatre and Universal Studios, before jetting off to New York. But that is a story for another day.

***Top Photo**: Navajo Nation's Monument Valley Park. **Photo Below**: Pipe organ at St Mary's Cathedral*

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Printed by North East Media, Wangaratta, Victoria

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DETAILS

The Advocate Newspaper is published by the Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta and is distributed across the Diocese in the 1st week of every month (excluding January).

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Editorial deadline is the 16th of each month (excluding December).

Contributions and photos are welcome (please limit to approximately 300 words) for consideration for publication dependent on space and content with the understanding that they may be edited. Pictures should be provided as a high resolution JPEG (200dpi) or Tiff if possible

SAFE CHURCH

The Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta has zero tolerance for abuse. We are committed to providing a safe, respectful, welcoming and positive environment for children and adults from all backgrounds.

If you have experienced abuse or suspect abuse may be occurring in a church setting or by a member of the church you should report this as soon as possible to the Director of Professional Standards on 1800 377 842 (1800 DPSVIC) or email professionalstandards@wangaratta-anglican.org.au.

For more information on our Safe Church policies and procedures contact the Safe Church and Systems Officer on 03 5721 3484.

Mansfield Parish welcomes the Ven Catie Inches-Ogden

BY TRISH GILSON

It was with great joy that the parishioners of the Anglican Parish of Mansfield welcomed The Venerable Catie Inches-Ogden as our Parish Priest on Saturday, 21st November at a ceremony on the grounds of the Rectory at St. John's Church, Highett Street. Her licensing as our Parish priest also coincided with her licensing as the Area Dean of the newly created Central Deanery of the Diocese of Wangaratta. The Right Reverend Clarence Bester, 11th Bishop of Wangaratta officiated at the ceremony, which abided by the Safe Church protocols to protect the community from Coronavirus.

The service was followed by a social gathering at Magnolia House where parishioners and guests enjoyed a convivial couple of hours.

On Sunday, 22nd November, the Venerable Catie celebrated her first service with us under the marquees on the Vicarage lawns. This marked the beginning of regular services with her and, as the virus restrictions are lessening, services will be once again inside the Church. A happy synergy for us all.

The Venerable Catie comes to us with a rich experience in Church appointments. As well as work in Parishes, she has been a school chaplain and has had extensive experience as an army chaplain, both here and overseas. She has charmed us with her easy manner and delightful sense of humour.

We welcome the Venerable Catie into the extended Mansfield community including Bonnie Doon and Jamieson.

Induction of The Reverend Victor Adams

BY JOAN SMITH

At a 6.0 pm Evening Prayer Service held in the grounds of St Margaret's Anglican Church, Cobram, parishioners and guests gathered to witness the Reverend Victor Adams being inducted as Priest in Charge of the Parochial District of Cobram by Bishop Clarence Bester, Bishop of the Diocese of Wangaratta.

It was fitting that the induction was held on Advent Sunday which is the beginning of the new liturgical year. Bishop Clarence, in his address, spoke about the new arrangement, of sharing a Priest between Numurkah/ Nathalia and Cobram being an opportunity for God's people to share in spreading the Good News and being ready for any particular moment.

Sharing a Priest will mean we will exercise a collaborative approach whilst retaining our own identities, as well as a common identity of members of the Diocese of Wangaratta. Our identity is in Jesus Christ our Lord who brings newness and renewal. Jesus conveys a message of faithfulness, about being faithful in the tasks entrusted to us and in the business of God amongst our busyness of everyday life. We need to be ready and prepared, sticking to the agenda of ministry and service. Bishop Clarence encouraged parishioners to work together in sharing the ministry of pastoral care. The challenge of dividing time between Numurkah/Nathalia and Cobram will require all parishioners to give Victor their absolute support.

The Bishop thanked the leadership teams of both Parishes and expressed gratitude to the Parish of Numurkah/Nathalia for being willing to share their Priest and teacher. He also thanked Shepparton Parish for sharing Rev. Victor and for supporting him and his family.

The Commissioning was followed by the Call to Mission with symbols of ministry being presented to Rev. Victor. At the conclusion of the Service, church Warden Neville Gloury welcomed Rev, Victor and his family and welcomed guests who were representing the community.

Principal of Cobram Anglican Grammar School, Keith Willet then welcomed Rev. Victor to Cobram and spoke of the importance of the link between St. Margaret's and the school. He presented Victor with a pen, to write sermons with, a ruler to keep him on the straight and narrow, and a school scarf. Head of Anglican Identity, Shay Doyle presented Victor with a framed copy of the School prayer.

Lou Hamon from Numurkah spoke about the journey we will make together in the shared ministry, always seeking God's guidance along the way. He wished Rev. Victor, Elizabeth, Ruth and Nathan all the best for their ministry with us.

Joan Smith, on behalf of St. Margaret's Guild presented Victor and Elizabeth with a basket of fruit and said that members were looking forward to sharing hospitality with them.

Rev. Victor responded, thanking all for the warm welcome. He is looking forward to the shared ministry and working with the school.

Several parishioners and guests enjoyed fellowship and a meal at the Sporties in Barooga after the service.

from the Bishop

Dear People and Friends of the Diocese

If you had asked me about my hopes and dreams for the future this time last year, I would have told you about the great celebrations we were expecting to have as a family looking towards 2020. I would have told you about our anticipated family holiday and connecting with friends around UK, France and Germany and visiting places and Parishes where I used to work. Things do not always happen the way we plan but, significantly, we can still celebrate those events in different ways, even though we could not be physically present. It has been a year full of challenges, changes and caution with bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, with lockdowns and restrictions. Easter has been different and our acquired knowledge of the zoom application has kept us wonderfully connected . We now reference the new normal and look forward to business 'unusual' as we await a new year with new possibilities. Once again, we do not know how the future will unfold, but we are still able to celebrate amidst the uncertainty and look forward in hope for what the future might bring.

Not too long ago we were not sure what Christmas would look like for us, with the restrictions that have been in place for such a long, but necessary, time. Now there is a surety that what we have been able to do over so many decades we will be able to do again, by connecting to friends and loved ones over the Christmas period throughout the country.

For those of us who have relatives in other parts of the world, it will still be a sad moment as, in some parts, there is still this growing fear with the escalating of Covid-19 infections and cases. I do ask that we continue to pause daily at 12noon as we remember all those places and people affected and as we call to mind our own situation here in Australia. While we live we breathe and while we breathe we live and I pray that our appreciation through every breath we take and every step we make will be complemented by our great appreciation for the life with which God blesses us.

Enjoy the celebrations around Christmas and take time out to relax, refresh and re-energize as we await the year 2021, praying that we will embrace the opportunities amidst the uncertainties, see the light in the darkness, appreciate the cosmos amidst the chaos and work for a better tomorrow that will bring healing, wholeness and empowered service to all.

Continue to experience the wonder, joy and beauty in Christmas as we celebrate God's gift of God's son, Jesus Christ, to God's world.

Blessed Christmas from me and my family to you and yours.

+ Clarence

HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL WANGARATTA, VICTORIA

CATHEDRAL ORGANIST

The Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Wangaratta is seeking to appoint a suitably qualified organist to accompany the Cathedral Choir and the two Sunday congregations and occasional other services.
This appointment will commence as soon as possible for the suitable candidate.
Remuneration will be negotiated.
For a job description please e-mail: wangarattacathedraloffice@bigpond.com or phone (03) 5721 3719.
Closing date: 31st December 2020

HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL
THE CLOSE
WANGARATTA VIC 3677

Synod 2020 - Presidential address

Continued from front page

At my ordination as a priest I was reminded that I never cease to be a Deacon and therefore I never cease to serve. Over my almost 25 years of ordained ministry, I have always held to the belief that Christ is best served in serving others. Here we refer to all those whom we encounter on life's journey, especially the lonely, the poor, the vulnerable, the emotionally challenged, the stranger, the refugee and those who feel that they do not belong, because they are, or feel, different from others.

I have experienced this God of surprises throughout my entire ministry. I have witnessed and experienced many transforming moments in the exercising of a ministry of availability, visibility and presence. As a Priest, I believe that my task is to lead people into a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God and with one another. Yes, I will celebrate the 'sacrament of great unity' in the body and blood of Christ, baptise and preach and even be a focus of unity within my own congregational setting, but there is no better moment than bringing comfort to those who mourn, friendship to those who are lonely, acceptance to those who feel rejected and a lighter moment to those who feel the heaviness of what life and our present day context sometimes cause. I have often said that I do not want to be remembered for successful fundraising events or building achievements within a Parish or Diocesan context, but hopefully for making someone else smile or feel special, even if just for a moment.

The God of surprises continues to act to this day and, as God's agents of transformation and change, if we allow ourselves to be open to experience this, we will be surprised by what will happen when we continue to engage in this ministry of availability, visibility and presence and prioritise the things that are most essential in our ministry. In a saying attributed to St Teresa of Calcutta 'Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love'.

Having ministered in South Africa for almost 19 years and, despite having spent time in the UK, Germany and France and being convinced that God was calling me to the northern hemisphere, in 2014 I was once again surprised. I knew many people in well respected and influential positions, but what a surprise when a previous Diocesan Archdeacon of the Diocese of Wangaratta responded to me less than an hour after I had written to the former Bishop of Wangaratta and my life was never the same again!

I was offered two further interviews in the 'land down under', including another ministry opportunity in a picturesque coastal setting within the Bunbury Diocese. I was well on my way but, once again, this God of surprises led me to the bush, among the gum trees and rivers and far away from the ocean which I love. Michelle sent me on a mission to find a place with a beautiful beach with surfing opportunities, but, upon return, having found that place, I was once again surprised when she told me that 'God made the bush, the outback and the lilies of the field' and that is where we needed to go. Another surprise, even though the three boys voted NO!

It should be no great surprise that the one whom the wind and sea obey is the one who we should obey in turn, allowing ourselves to be surprised by the one who calls us to loving service in faithfulness and humility. A saying that I have always held close to my heart… "Trust in God's purposes for sending you into the unknown"... would send me in another direction. It is the unknown, the unfamiliar, the uncomfortable, the uneasy which will bring about the surprise of your life. Having then just been told that it was not the custom within the Australian Church to elect a person from within the same Diocese as Bishop, God once again surprised me when I was called minutes later with the news that I was elected as the 11th Bishop of Wangaratta.

Here I am today, walking every day with this God of surprises, who does not only call, but is also the God who strengthens us for ministry and service in and to the world. Here I am, still deeply and whole-heartedly committed to my work as a Deacon, a Priest and now as a Bishop within the Church of God in Australia, a place which was never, ever on my radar. In preparing for the Enthronement service, it was suggested that I include a saying of St Augustine which, among other things, said… 'For you I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian'. My privilege, joy and delight is what I am with you and not for you. Here I am, still deeply and passionately in love with God, God's people and God's Church and all those whom I encounter daily. I do not know what surprises are in store for me, or for us as a Diocese, in what is to come, but I continue to trust the God of Surprises who is with us and who will sustain us through the changing circumstances of our lives.

Challenges and Developing our Ministry Plan of Action

I have discovered that the Diocese has had two strategic action plans, the second of which I was a part at its tail end. Various activities for the regeneration of growing the Church, with initiatives like back to Church Sunday, the National Church Life Survey, different measures for church vitality and the vision and mission statements were often embedded in long, wordy and hopeful statements which, for many, probably became difficult to understand. I can justify this statement because, as the previous Archdeacon for Ministry Development, I assisted some of our Parishes to re-work, re-engage, re-write and re-develop their strategic plans and to turn them into simple Ministry Action Plans.

Statements are good, plans even better but, unless executed with objectives, actions, timeframes and outcomes connected to them, the best statements and plans will have no effect. The reality is that our Mission as the Church of God is always evolving, but even so, we know that we share in God's mission and Jesus' ministry as fully expressed in the challenges that Jesus set for his disciples and all of us. The calling, training and equipping of the twelve disciples (Matt 4:18ff; 9:9; 10:5ff; Mark) the calling and return of the seventy (Luke 10:1-12, 17-20) and the dominical command (Matt 28:19) are the very foundations on which our mission and ministry need to be built, as well as the central aspect of our faith as expressed in the wonderful commandment to love God and neighbour (John 15:12-17) as previously defined.

Reflecting on the sermon I preached at my Installation and Enthronement, I believe we should always endeavour to keep things simple and real by being available, visible and present. A Church Community that does not embrace the community in which and for which it exists, despite the challenges, is a disengaged church and does not reflect the concept of how a Parish in an English context refers not only to a territorial entity, but to the people of its community. The concept of Parish in this way resonates deeply with me, as the South African Theologian, David Bosch, suggests that 'the Church is the experimental garden of the new humanity'. (Bosch, Konig & Nicol 1982:15 Open Letter to the Dutch Reformed Church) William Temple, one-time Archbishop of Canterbury, also said 'The Church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members.' ('Letter from the Archbishop of the West Indies' in Theology (1956), vol. 59. Understanding this, we can clearly see that the role of the Church and that of its mission is overwhelmingly for the sake of the world.

This intrinsic and interactive connection should present us with a pattern for our collaborative ministry, mission, outreach and evangelistic approach. It is not so much about a program of Back to Church Sunday, Renew, Alpha, Decade of Evangelism, Partners in Mission, Intentional Discipleship, which was the latest Anglican Communion developed program, or the Lambeth Conference, now 2022, theme: "God's world for God's Church". It is about keeping it simple, keeping it real, making it achievable and returning to the basics. It is not something that needs to look good on paper or a poster, but something that can be achieved when we offer a ministry of hospitality, humility and simplicity.

The reality is that we have complicated the system of gospel sharing and good news- bearing. It seems we have focussed so much on establishing procedures and protocols in our ecclesiastical arrangements, that we have placed maintenance above mission, money above ministry and meetings above worship. I believe that we also seem to be placing a greater emphasis on things temporal than things spiritual, as we leave the latter to the individual and focus on the former as a collective. I would like to encourage ways of further developing our spiritual growth, both individually and collectively.

It is my hope, as a Diocese that has been challenged and watched by the Diocesan Financial Advisory Group (DFAG) in regard to our viability and sustainability, even as we remain on the watchlist, that we do what we need to do in order to show that we can and will make a difference. There is no doubt that there will be challenges, but I have often said that challenges create opportunities and, if we show we can move beyond mere viability and sustainability, and prioritise those important missional approaches even within challenging times, the God of surprises, through our concerted efforts, will bring about an even greater surprise.

As one who is a bishop for you, I would like to walk with you, talk with you, pray with you, worship with you as we engage in a mission strategy to re-develop, re-design, renew, refresh and refocus the ministry within the Diocese so that we can 're-birth' our ministry. This will not happen overnight, it will take time, but I believe that it can be done. Here I am talking about a simple plan, but one that can be effective and which will be able to define an achievable outcome in each of our contexts. It will have to be business 'unusual', like the 'new normal' we often reference. What we need to do is to ensure that we become part of the 'growing process' and not just aim to manage decline. It would also mean that we will have to move away from the 'I' syndrome and work hard towards the 'we and us' syndrome because we are all in this together. We cannot remain just Parochial, we will have to think Diocesan, missional and look beyond ourselves; what we have and how we have been doing things for the past many decades needs to change. As the Church exists for the world, we need to understand that, in our context, we need to exist for one another and be partners in mission as we remain faithful to the God who calls and equips and the God who continues to surprise us. This work will not be my doing alone, but what I hope we will achieve together.

What Parish Clergy need to consider, is that they are licensed by the Bishop to a Parish - it is this Parish, congregation and community that they serve and where they exercise their ministry to foster the work of change and transformation, advance the gospel and make the difference in the lives of all those whom we encounter within life's journey and all those who are entrusted to our care. The work within the Diocese will only be strengthened because of what we are able to do in the Parish and Parish Community. I know that many of our number value offering opinions on various social justice and other related issues, but even this should happen grounded in the context of where we serve and alongside those whom we serve. There is a lot to do, but charity begins at home.

In saying this, I am not suggesting we do not tackle issues that deeply affect us, but I hope that this will be a process of sharing our energy through the work of our Social Justice Committee which started with great 'gusto' a few years ago. The membership was high and now we only have four people trying to cover so much. Here we have an opportunity to go back to the drawing board and do what we can with our available human and other resources.

The reality is that our congregations are tired, many of them elderly and we have seen that, in some cases, when certain people leave a congregation due to retirement or down-scaling, the future viability of that congregation is threatened. Two of our Churches will probably be deconsecrated soon and we will need to have intentional conversations on how the ministry of each Parish or Parochial District will unfold and develop over the next few years. Many love the concept of the building and the maintenance thereof and will put lots of energy and spend lots of money on buildings, without conceptualising a ministry action plan focusing on growth areas.

Here we need to navigate a plan of action as, for many of our congregations, the survival kit over the last few months has been 'Jobkeeper'. I fear that, as from Easter 2021, it will be an entirely new 'ball game'. Strategies will have to develop so that we can move from 'surviving' to 'thriving' mode, as we express our ability to make the difference.

Episcopal Ministry

As bishop of the Diocese, it is my hope, intention and sincere prayer to ensure that we remain together, as I am called 'to maintain the Church's witness to the resurrection, protect the purity of the gospel, proclaim Jesus as Lord, guard the faith, unity and discipline of Christ's Church' among other things. I am deeply aware of my commission in the exhortation and examination, especially as teacher of the faith, chief minister and pastor and my answers of 'I will' to the many questions I was asked before my consecration. I am also aware of the charge given to me at my ordination as a Deacon and Priest on which I often I meditate. Even in that glorious and humbling moment of being set aside for this special episcopal ministry, I hold dearly to the questions that were asked at the beginning of the service of installation and enthronement, to which I answered:

'I am Clarence, a servant of Jesus Christ, and I come as one seeking the grace of God, to travel with you in God's service together.

I am Clarence, sent as bishop to serve you, to proclaim the love of Christ and, with you, worship and love him, with heart, soul, mind and strength.

I am Clarence and I come knowing nothing except Christ and him crucified and in weakness and fear and in much trembling.'

So dear friends, I preach Jesus and none other, this is my agenda!

A full copy of the the presidential address can be found on the Diocesan website. Go to https://www.wangaratta-anglican.org.au/news/

Christmas Service Times

HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL, WANGARATTA

Christmas Eve
6.00pm Family Worship
11.30pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day
8.00am Holy Eucharist
10.00am Holy Eucharist

BEECHWORTH

Christmas Eve
4pm Children's Christmas Service, Christ Church Beechworth.*Come dressed as your favourite Nativity Scene character*
6pm Christmas Eucharist, St Jude's Eldorado
11.30pm Midnight Mass, Christ Church Beechworth
Christmas Day
9am Family Eucharist, Christ Church Beechworth

BENALLA

Christmas Eve
6:30pm St Aidan's, Swanpool
9:00pm Holy Trinity, Benalla
Christmas Day
9:30am - Holy Trinity, Benalla

CENTRAL GOULBURN

Christmas Eve
5.00 pm St Paul's Avenel
7.00 pm St John's Nagambie
Christmas Day
9.30am Christ Church Seymour.

MARYSVILLE

Sunday 20th December
10am A service of Lessons and Carols, St Thomas's, Buxton
Christmas Eve
11pm Midnight Mass, St Thomas's, Buxton
Christmas Day
9am Christmas Family Eucharist, Christ Church, Marysville.

MILAWA

Christmas Day
9am Holy Eucharist with carols at St Paul's Milawa

NORTHERN ALBURY

Wednesday Dec 23
7:30pm Quiet evening prayer (for those finding Christmas difficult) St. James, Lavington
Christmas Eve
6pm Family holy communion St. Mark's, North Albury
8pm Holy communion,St. Paul's, Jindera
8:30pm Holy Communion St.James' Lavington,
Christmas Day
9am Holy Communion St John's Thurgoona

RUTHERGLEN CHILTERN

Christmas Eve
8pm St Paul's, Chiltern - Holy Eucharist
11:30pm St Stephen's, Rutherglen- Midnight Mass
Christmas Day
8am All Souls', Barnawartha- Holy Eucharist
9:30am - St Stephen's, Rutherglen- Holy Eucharist *Attendance at each service is limited due to social distancing requirements, so please book in advance to secure your place: phone or text - 0418254158.*

SHEPPARTON

St. Augustine's, Shepparton
Christmas Eve - 5.30pm Crib Service
Christmas Eve - 11 pm Midnight Mass
Christmas Day - 8.30am
Christ Church, Murchison
Christmas Day - 9.30am
St. Paul's, Rushworth
Christmas Day - join Murchison
St. Luke's, Dookie
Christmas Day - join Shepparton

WANGARATTA

Christmas Day
9.30 am Moyhu
Christmas Day
11.00 am Whitfield

WANGARATTA WEST

Christmas Eve
5.00 pm Children's Service
8.00 pm St Paul's Glenrowan
Christmas Day
8.00 am St George's Taminick
9.30 am St Michael's Wangaratta West

YARRAWONGA

Christmas Eve
7pm ZOOM Service please email Fr Neil at priest@yarrawongaanglicans.com for an Invitation to join this service.
9pm St Cuthbert's, Yarrawonga, Eucharist.
Christmas Day
9am St Cuthbert's, Yarrawonga, Eucharist.
Limit of 55 at 9pm and 9am service. Please book a place to avoid being turned away at the door.

YEA

Christmas Eve
7.00pm and 11.00pm St.Luke's
Christmas Day
9.30am St.Luke's

If the church you wish to attend is not listed please contact the individual Parish for their service times. **Churches may have limited capacity at services under the COVID restrictions. Please contact the Church you hope to attend in the week commencing 20th Dec to see whether you need to book in for a service.

From our Schools

Christmas 2020 at Cathedral College Wangaratta

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 1:1-7

Cathedral College Christmas Card - 2020

Each year at Cathedral College we have a Christmas competition in junior school art to create the artwork for the schools Christmas Card. This year's art work was done by Jessica Campbell in Year Four. Mary & Joseph with the baby Jesus. The angel announces the long-awaited Emmanuel, God is with us; the shepherds are guided by the star to Bethlehem bringing gifts

Advent

The four themes of Advent are Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. At the centre of Christmas, at the centre of these four themes, is the child "Jesus". It is in Jesus that God has uniquely revealed God's nature to us; Jesus is the long promised "Emmanuel" – God is with us.

In the person of Jesus, we can see and meet with God, who is a living God, present all the time. Christmas declares that God joins our journeys through life.

This Advent and Christmas, as we will listen to the Word of God in scripture through his messengers - the angels, the shepherds, the wise men, Mary and Joseph and as we praise in song God's goodness and God's great love for us, let us remember the many blessings that we have been given as Christians and not to treat this Christmas as just another holiday weekend.

A Fitting Farewell to the Class of 2020

BY STEFANIE BLANCH

"Learning is experience: everything else is just information" A Einstein

No one expected 2020 to present so many challenges to our Border community. But, together, we have built courage and resilience, and learnt to appreciate the important things.

Our Year 12 students in particular have weathered what the year has thrown at them. They have embraced opportunities to celebrate as a cohort, rare as these opportunities have been and they have accepted changes with admirable grace.

This year, we have already received the incredible news that two of our Year 12 students have been recognised for their very high results in their major works. Ethan Goodacre has received a nomination in Drama for 'On Stage'; Tom Summerfield has received a nomination for 'Encore' at which the best of the Major Work Projects in Music are performed. We congratulate Ethan and Tom and their dedicated teachers, Mr Glenn Mancer and Mr Brett Spokes. Hattie Evans also took out a major award at the Rockfest Band Competition, being announced as the Best Solo Artist of the Year.

While we are yet to receive HSC results for 2020, it is the character displayed by our student body, parents and teachers this year that has been truly inspirational. They have approached the end of the year with an admirably calm stoicism that has been an amazing example to the rest of our student body.

After some uncertainty around what celebrations would take place this year, we were thrilled to farewell the graduating class with their final chapel service and assembly, followed by a Guard of Honour that saw them exit the College.

We are incredible proud of these students, and they leave the College knowing they are ready for anything. The Roman philosopher, Seneca the Younger, said that excellence withers without adversity. The Year 12 cohort of 2020 has allowed their excellence to thrive through this adversity and will remain an example for years to come.

It's a Great Relief to be Back...

BY KEITH WILLETT

The 2020 school year has certainly been different for all across the globe over this past year. And like most schools, we at Cobram AGS completed many days engaged in remote Teaching and Learning.

Our Foundation to Year Two students and our VCE cohort were at home for 61 school days. Year Three and Four 66 days and Year Five to Year Ten missed the most face to face schooling with 72 days. That is nearly 15 weeks of the school year spent away from the campus.

While many have spoken about the challenges associated with COVID-19 my strong sense is that for the Cobram AGS community there were also many triumphs. A great example of this was the solidarity, collaboration, creativity and professionalism shown by our staff. The announcement of remote Teaching and Learning 2.0 had the potential to throw all into a state of despair. As Principal I was humbled and appreciative of the efforts of our teachers as we revised our strategies to accommodate the needs of our families and students across Term 3 and into Term 4. There is no doubt that the learning experience for all teachers was huge as we continued to refine and adjust our approach to delivering curriculum.

Chris Hargreaves is a highly experienced and respected teacher of English. When prompted to reflect upon her pandemic teaching experience Chris responded with:

'the most difficult elements of remote T & L for me were the difficulties with communication. Trying to converse via a chat room was no substitute for being face to face' Chris noted her concern about the 'disconnect' between herself and her students. For Chris 'the most rewarding aspect of COVD-19 was being able to re-establish relationships with my students, especially the Year Nine group upon our return to face to face, however, there is also a little sadness as with the end of the year looming we cannot build upon those relationships as we would in a normal year.'

Jacinta Robbins teaches at Year One and Two level and is also a parent of three children:

'The most challenging aspect for me during *Remote Teaching and Learning was balancing planning, teaching, assisting my three children with their studies at home in addition to being mum and wife. The hours seemed endless and the uncertainty of whether or not my students were learning and completing the work while maintaining good mental and physical health concerned me at times. The most rewarding aspect for me was seeing the gorgeous smiling faces of our students when we returned. They were so happy to be back at school and to be reunited with their friends. It was also a relief to feel like an actual teacher again.'*

Upon our return to face to face schooling we were quick to seize upon any opportunity to celebrate the social elements of being at school. Operating in a COVID safe manner was a little restricting but this did not stop our book parade being a huge success. Following much planning we formed an appropriately spaced 'conga line' and paraded around the school. There were many costumes and heaps of fun was had by all.

An extra initiative was an afternoon of activities which we conducted on November 2. This afternoon involved all students across the school and again there was great reward in seeing our young people simply enjoying each other's company and friendship.

Of course there remains much work to complete as we prepare for 2021. Transition days for new students have been compromised and we work hard to make up for any missed learning due to COVID-19. As a school we look forward to completing 2020 and will reflect with a range of emotions and observations. For me, the Principal I can only acknowledge my appreciation and admiration for the manner in which our families and staff have collaborated for the best possible outcomes in very different and challenging circumstances.

Community Garden at Kilmore

BY CAROLINE BURGE

During the first year of the ministry of Rev André DuPlooy in the Parish of Kilmore, he spoke often of creating a Community Garden in the grounds around Christ Church and the Parish Op Shop. He talked of involving the local community, and growing vegetables for those in need; to create projects where people could come and work together in fellowship. It was a wonderful idea and it was a wonderful dream, and was always there in the background as something to do "one day".

With the endless months of coronavirus lockdown during this past winter, a similar idea was born by members of the local community and, with the power of social media, the parish was approached about the possibility of using the church land in Kilmore. God works in mysterious ways, as contact was made by a member of the community to the Parish Publicity Officer and Church Warden who knew of Rev André's dream and, a few phone calls later, the dream became a reality.

Whilst COVID meant that no public meetings could be held and no venturing out to check out the land and the space, the dream grew and as soon as lockdown restrictions ceased, a meeting was held at Christ Church between community members and parishioners to plan to make the dream come to fruition. The ideas came thick and fast - Who to involve? Who to seek help from? Community groups to join in? Involving local schools. The excitement and enthusiasm were great. How wonderful to be able to make the church so much part of the community with all things bright and beautiful.

Following the meeting, the group walked around the church grounds to look at the spot chosen for the new Community Garden and were then given a 'guided tour' of the Rectory Garden. Rev Andrê and Patty have worked tirelessly in the Rectory garden since arriving and, with restrictions during winter, the garden space was transformed with fruit trees, vegetables, succulents, shrubs and annuals.

Watch this space - we will be reporting back with the wonderful happenings of the new Community Garden at Christ Church, Kilmore.

***PHOTO BELOW**: Front garden of the rectory*

"Anglo-Catholic, though not too spikey, I hope"

BY STEPHANIE N.J. CHAPPLE

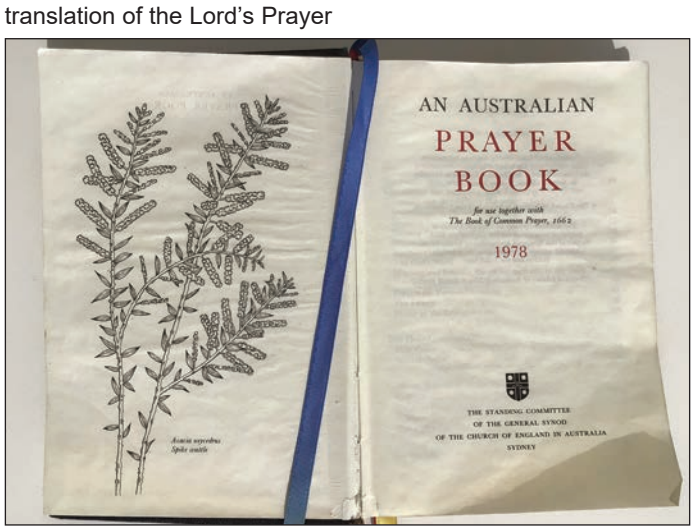
The recent need for home prayer during the Covid pandemic has at last forced me to trade in my battered 1978 Australian Prayer Book for the 1995 version in current use, so that I can follow morning and evening prayer online.

While the newer Prayer Book for Australia is much easier to read, the 1978 version is conveniently pocket-sized, and certainly a more beautiful book. I've long been curious about the wattle on its front cover and the drawing on the title page, labelled: "Acacia oxycedrus Spike wattle". Could it be a pun?

"Spike" and "spikey" are old slang for Anglo-Catholic. Dorothy L Sayers, whose books should be on the shelves of all whodunnit-loving Anglicans: "I took the opportunity to tackle the parson, a fellow by the name of Perry. He turned out to be an earnest and cultivated middle-aged spike from Keble." (The Documents in the Case, 1930). As for "spikey", W H Auden trying to explain his liturgical practice in a letter of 1941: "Anglo-Catholic, though not too spikey I hope", and Evelyn Waugh in a diary entry, "It is a beautiful old [church] and is very spikey. It has got some very Roman candles …"

The development of the first Australian prayer book was controversial. The enterprise was led by the evangelical Bishop of Parramatta (later Archbishop of Sydney), Donald Robinson. Clerical creativity flourished. Experimental liturgies were unleashed on parishes. Bishop Robinson landed on the front pages of national newspapers after an awkward attempt at a new translation of the Lord's Prayer (e.g. The Sun, 14 September 1966: "Sticks out like granny's teeth: Why I rewrote the Lord's Prayer"). Satisfying Anglicans along the evangelical to Anglo-Catholic spectrum must have seemed an impossible task.

When the new prayer book came up for approval at General Synod in 1977, difficulties were expected. Evangelical Robinson reputedly broke the tension with a joke about the "spike wattle" on the title page, aimed at his Anglo-Catholic brethren. It worked, and the prayer book sailed through with near-unanimous approval.



Looking Down the Valley

BY REV'D DR EDWIN BYFORD

Quite what we will be doing this Christmas may still be a mystery, but what we all know is that it will be different from the recent past. Last year I completed my column for the December edition of The Advocate on 20th November. There were fires about but no imminent danger and I had never heard of Wuhan. My column was about celebration and companionship. That now seems an eternity ago.

The first Europeans to come to this continent with the explicit intention of staying were at sea somewhere off the southern coast on Christmas Day 1787. David Collins, the judge advocate for the new colony, commented that the sea was too rough to permit much enjoyment. It was not much better a year later in the colony of New South Wales. Manning Clark comments in the first volume of his A History of Australia (page 118), "the year drew to a close with food supplies and health causing grave anxiety … the faint hearted were tempted to despair, or to dismiss as a cruel mockery or a malicious irrelevance the Reverend Richard Johnson's message of peace on earth and goodwill towards men on the first Christmas Day" celebrated by the new arrivals on this continent. The survival of the colony and the survival of explicit Christian celebration within it was very precarious for several years. For the colonial clergy their vocation was extremely difficult. The people sent to New South Wales by the authorities in London displayed next to no devotion to the message and ministry of the established Church of England and conversation with the Aboriginal people of the land was extremely limited. Despair may well have been the order of the day when it came to the prospects for the Good News of Jesus Christ, our Lord, being celebrated.

British emigration to the Australian colonies was not driven by the religious enthusiasm that had motivated the British to emigrate to North America through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nevertheless, quiet and diligent ministry among the faithful and not so faithful bore fruit until the Good News became an integral part of Australian life. The stories of Christmas gatherings in the dust and heat of this "wide brown land" are legion. Somehow a mid-winter celebration of the birth of the Saviour of the world had been transported to the dust and flies of summer in Australia.

With the colony scarcely surviving, a situation that remained the case for several more years, Richard Johnson's message of peace and goodwill may well have sounded like a malicious joke. Through this last year that same message may have still sounded like a malicious joke. Last Christmas, or its immediate aftermath, was lost to the fires and then came COVID 19. Blame and recrimination seem to have been the order of the day rather than peace and goodwill. Whether, like Johnson, we rely on the King James Bible for our account of the message of the angels, or we turn to a more modern translation, we come face to face with our own commitment to that message. Peace and goodwill involve a great degree of commitment, self-discipline and probably sacrifice on our part.

Christmas is celebrated with a great deal of sentimentality. Christmas nativity scenes have been around since they were first developed by Saint Francis of Assisi eight hundred years ago. They highlight the vulnerability of the birth of the Lord of all creation. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, angels and shepherds have all become an integral part of how our celebration plays itself out and rightly so. Like a good icon, our nativity scenes point to the greater reality that is there represented. Part of that reality is that we are the agents of peace and goodwill for the baby whose birth we celebrate.

To be an agent of Christ Jesus, our Lord, involves significant commitment and even great courage. The Church cannot be accused of false advertising, for the twelve days of Christmas include the holy days of many martyrs — Saint Stephen, The Holy Innocents, Thomas Becket. Christians do not look at the world through rose-coloured glasses. We are probably the ultimate realists. Peace and goodwill need commitment and courage.

The arrival of the first fleet and their Christian faith on this continent may not have been particularly auspicious — a colony of sailors, misfits, criminals, carpet baggers, time servers and one chaplain, established by the Admiralty — strangers to everything pertaining to this Great South Land. The traditional celebration of Christmas made little sense at the summer solstice but it has become our Christmas. It belongs here and with devotion and courage on the part of the faithful it can become a celebration that points beyond the summer to the reality of salvation in Christ Jesus for all who call Australia home.

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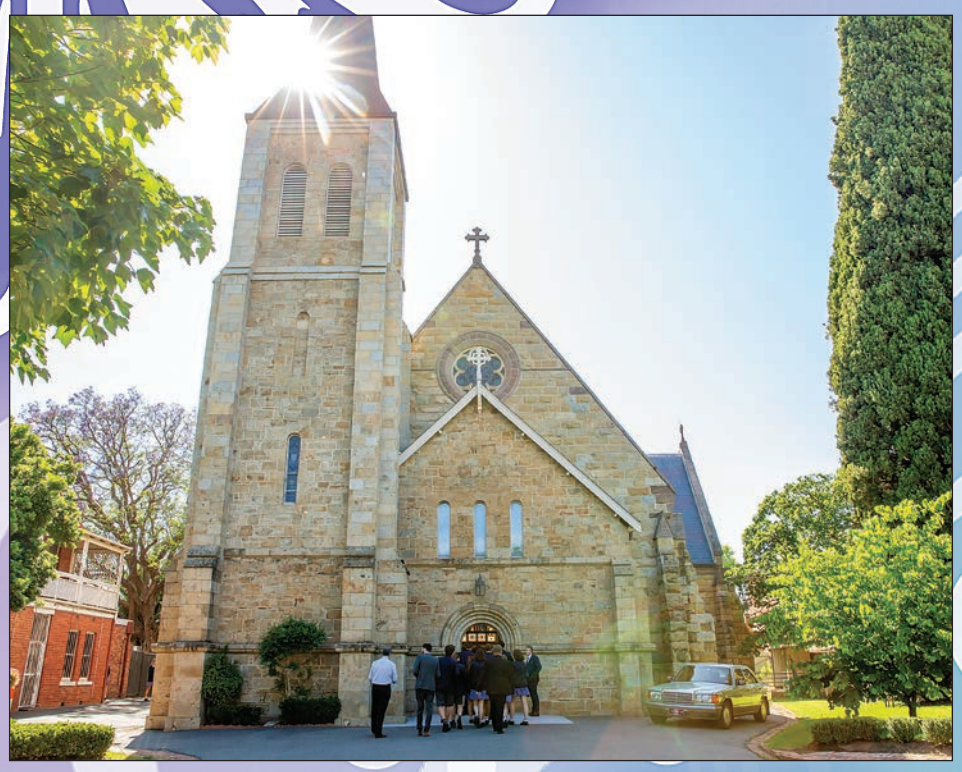
People & Parishes

Induction of Victor Adams as Priest In Charge of the Parochial District of Cobram

Cobram Anglican Grammar Yr 12 Book Parade

Induction of Emily Payne as Priest In Charge of the Parish of Northern Albury



Trinity Anglican College Yr 12 Final Service