SPRING 2026 Issue: 123

THE ADVOCATE

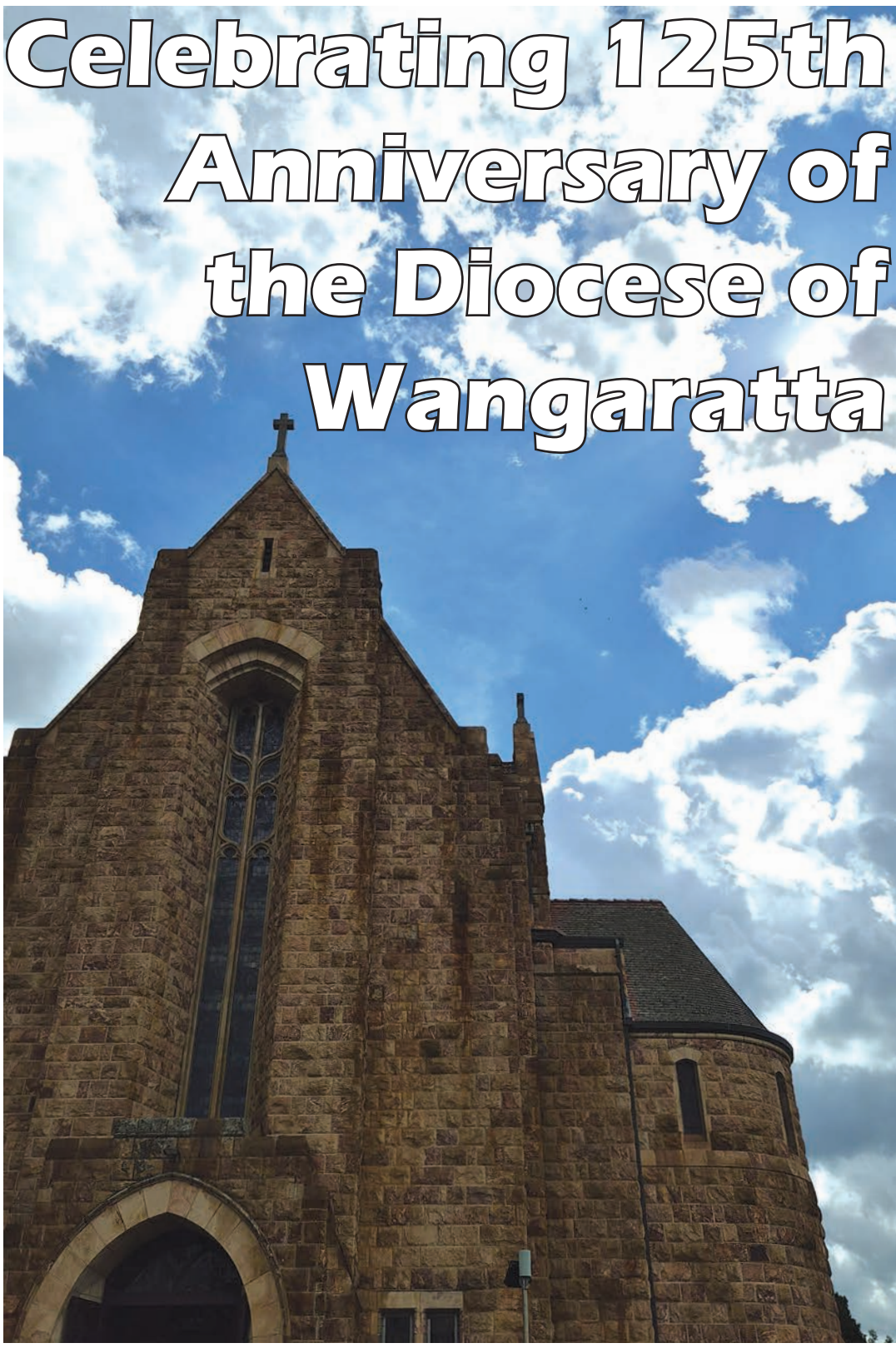
Celebrating the reconciling love and hope of the CROSS

The Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta I www.wangaratta-anglican.org.au









The 125th Anniversary of the Diocese has been launched!

By Caroline Burge

What an amazing day celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Diocese of Wangaratta – Faith in Action for 125 Years! After a week of rain threatening the celebrations, we were blessed with beautiful sunshine and a wonderful gathering of parishes from right across the Diocese.

Bishop Clarence officially opened the day, launching the 125th Anniversary celebrations and sharing the Diocese's Vision for 2026–2031. It was a significant moment as we looked back with gratitude on 125 years of faith and looked forward with hope to the years ahead.

Following the official launch, Suzie Don Leonard announced the Environmental Award winners and proudly presented a cheque to the Parish of Thurgoona.

There was plenty happening throughout the day. The Blessing of the Pets took place on the steps of the Cathedral by members of the Clergy, while guided tours of the Cathedral by members of the Cathedral parish gave visitors the opportunity to explore its beautiful interior and learn more about its history.

The many stalls organised and run by parishes around the Diocese offered something for everyone. There were cakes, scones, homemade jams and relish, craft, plants, bric-a-brac, White Elephant stalls and a great selection of Prayer Cards and Inspirational bookmarks showcasing the generosity and talents of parishioners. The sausage sizzle and BBQ did a roaring trade, keeping everyone well fed throughout the celebrations. Money raised from the stalls will go towards the Bishop's Home Mission Fund.

The day was filled with wonderful music and entertainment. The festivities got started with the amazing music of the Wodonga Brass Band; and throughout the day everyone enjoyed the golden voices of the Four Fathers from Yea; and the soothing sounds of the Recorders group. As the day continued, Michelle's Music had everyone up and boogying, adding plenty of fun to the celebrations! There was impromptu dancing by clergy and people alike, as well as joyful singing along to the music.
It was a wonderful day of celebration, friendship, laughter, music and faith and a reminder of the strength we have when our parishes come together.

We give thanks to God for the past 125 years of the Diocese of Wangaratta and for everyone who helped make this memorable celebration possible.

God bless all who attended, all who contributed, and our Diocese as we continue our journey together.

Faith in Action for 125 Years!

Bishop Clarence writes...

Dear Clergy, People and Friends of the Diocese

The Beauty of Spring, Creation and New Life:
This edition of the Advocate comes to you later than normal as the Spring edition, but this allows us to include some of the activities that took place at the launch of our 125th Anniversary of the Diocese of Wangaratta on 3 October. So, see this as late 'blossom' but also a reminder of what was declared 125 years ago alongside the Dioceses of Bendigo and Gippsland as we all became independent Dioceses. In essence, this reflected the life given to us in the beauty of Spring in 1901, creating three more Diocese s(creation) which signified new life and new opportunities.

Celebrations:
We all have our stories to tell, and as the three Dioceses, we will all celebrate together and separately over the next few months, reflecting on our past, rejoicing in the present and looking forward with hope for the future. My Synod charge was themed, 'The God of Celebration' pointing to celebrations over the next few months. It has always been my belief that a celebration equals a gathering as this is what we do whenever we gather for the Holy Eucharist. Of course, our faith has been actioned in the many ways in which we have expressed ourselves as a Church and as Christians and as the people of God in the Diocese of Wangaratta over the past 125 years. I pray that all our gatherings, connections and precious moments will be well supported and celebrated by all of us.

Opportunities:
Understanding the vast distances within our Diocese and following the launch of 3 October, our next major event will be our Service of Celebration on Saturday, 13 March 2027 when the Archbishop of Melbourne and Mrs. Louie Thorpe will join us for the weekend. Hopefully during the months of May to July, the three Dioceses (Bendigo, Gippsland & Wangaratta) will connect once a month in each Diocese to embrace a joint celebration. Details of this are still in the negotiating stage. We will conclude our own celebrations with our Synod from 21-22 August with a special Synod Dinner on Friday, 21 August which I hope many will attend. More details will follow in due course.

A gift to us from us:
Thank you to all Parishes and individuals who have worked tirelessly to raise money towards the Bishop's Home Mission Fund. Together, we have embarked on many initiatives, and our hope is to raise $125K for the purpose of supporting small Church development within our Diocese for a period of at least two years depending on the amount raised. I see this as a gift from us to us and that is why I am asking all our people and pastoral charges to give cheerfully towards this project. As this is a 'Mission Fund', it will be used to also establish more Mission Districts within our Diocese with the support of Priestly Ministry.

+Clarence



Celebration of Bishop John`s Legacy

By Rev Victor Adams

On Thursday 6 August, on the feast day of the Transfiguration, our diocese gathered at the cathedral to remember and give thanks to God for the life and ministry of Bishop John Parkes, our 10th bishop. This day was special as it was also Bishop John`s birthday. Although not with us anymore, we celebrated his legacy and the enormous impression he made on us all. At evensong, the music accompanied by Revd Dr Peter Pocock with the organ was incredible and moved us to the heavenly spheres, where Bishop John would be so proud and feel so affirmed to be remembered in such a special way. Bishop Clarence in his homily shared with us his profound joy and gratitude to have worked with Bishop John. Bishop Clarence reflected and reminisced on Bishop John's 11 years of episcopal ministry, his warm pastoral heart, his support for Anglischools, his unwavering stance against injustice and his churchmanship in worship and service to God. Evensong was followed by the dedication and blessing of the Anglischool's building in the Close on the cathedral precinct, in honor of Bishop John Parkes. Coming full circle on his birthday, with the people whom he loved, gathered at the front of the now 'Bishop John Parkes building`a place that would stand as a living testimony for his support to Anglischools, was all the more special as we stood with Margaret and Nell, Bishop John`s wife and daughter. Bishop John passed away on 3rd July 2025 after a long battle with illness and now rests in the merciful, loving arms of our God. We will continue to remember the 'larger than life bishop' with his infectious laughter, wit, theological expressions and open loving arms.

May his dear soul rest in peace and rise in glory!



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Printed by North East Media, Wangaratta, Victoria

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DETAILS

The Advocate Newsletter is published by the Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta and is distributed across the Diocese seasonaly.

EDITORIAL TEAM
The Reverend Helen Malcolm - Proof reader, Ms Fiona van Bree - Design and Production

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Reflection on Our Clergy Retreat

By Rev Wilfred Meyer

I was privileged to be invited by the Bishop of Wangaratta to join the Diocesan Clergy Retreat, held in the beautiful town of Bright, a popular holiday destination as one approaches the Snowy Mountains.

The setting for the retreat was truly beautiful. Our accommodation was situated alongside the Ovens River surrounded by lush green landscapes and the natural beauty of the area with scenic walking tracks alongside the river. The venue looked after us wonderfully, providing generous meals, comfortable accommodation and a peaceful environment in which to rest, reflect and pray.

Our retreat was led by Bishop John, the Bishop of Brisbane, who invited us to explore the Wonder and Awe of God. Through his reflections, he encouraged us to look again at various aspects of our Christian life and, perhaps most importantly, to ask ourselves whether we have retained that sense of wonder in our relationship with God.

The retreat was deeply rooted in prayer and worship. Bishop John began his reflections with a humorous and very human story about his addiction to Coke. He spoke about trying to give it up and moving instead to Pepsi, only to discover that sometimes life can become rather like flat Pepsi!

That image stayed with me. There are times when our Christian lives can become flat. The enthusiasm, joy and excitement that once characterised our faith can gradually disappear. We can become tired, distracted or simply caught up in the demands of ministry. We may continue doing all the right things, but somewhere along the way we can lose our sense of the awe and wonder of God.

The question Bishop John challenged us with was simple yet profound: Are we still living in awe and wonder of God? When we lose that sense of wonder, something within us becomes flat. And if we remain flat for too long, we can become spiritually lifeless. Our ministry can become routine rather than joyful, and our service can become an obligation rather than a response to the living God.

The retreat gave us space to step away from the busyness of ministry and to rediscover the God who calls, sustains and renews us. Through prayer, worship, reflection, conversation and fellowship, we were reminded that ministry flows most deeply from our own relationship with God.

As the retreat came to an end, there was a real sense that we had been re-energised and refocused. We returned to our various places of ministry with renewed strength and a deeper awareness of God's presence.

We live and minister in a fractured and hurting world. There are many challenges facing our communities and our Church. Yet the retreat reminded us that we do not face these challenges alone. We are called to be people who have encountered the wonder and awe of God and who carry that hope into the world.

May we never become like flat Pepsi. May we continue to be people filled with the joy, wonder and awe of God, allowing that wonder to renew our lives and strengthen us in our ministry.



The retreat concluded with a breaking of silence after Evening prayer on the Wednesday. Then we shared dinner around a unity table which led into collegiality and playing of UNO Card game, The next day we travelled back to our respective places.

(The Rev'd Wilfred Meyer and his wife Debbie, spent 3 months at Holy Trinity Cathedral as part of the Sabbatical Opportunity created by Bishop Clarence for Clergy serving elsewhere in the Anglican Communion)

Cathedral College Wangaratta Commissions Sixth Principal

By Luke Preston

Cathedral College Wangaratta celebrated a significant moment in its history on Thursday, September 3, with the formal commissioning of Mr Jeremy Godden as the sixth Principal of the College.

The special ceremony was led by The Right Reverend Clarence E. Bester, Bishop of Wangaratta, and brought together students, staff, families, alumni and special guests to formally welcome Mr Godden into the Cathedral College community.

AngliSchools Chief Executive Officer The Reverend Peter Laurence OAM warmly welcomed Mr Godden to his new role, reflecting on the significance of leadership within an Anglican school and the important role education plays in inspiring young people and strengthening communities.

Students played an important role throughout the ceremony, alongside representatives of staff, parents, alumni, College Council and the wider AngliSchools community.

College Captains Amelie and Rhani delivered a Bible reading from the Book of Romans, while representatives from the Junior, Middle and Senior Schools joined members of the wider College community in formally welcoming their new Principal.

Mr Godden responded by sharing his commitment to working alongside the College community and helping students reach their full potential across learning, the visual and performing arts, sport and service to others.

At the heart of the service, Bishop Clarence formally commissioned Mr Godden, declaring:

"In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit we now commission you, Jeremy, as Principal of Cathedral College Wangaratta."

The College community responded with an acclamation before a blessing was offered for Mr Godden as he commenced his leadership of the College.

One of the most symbolic moments of the ceremony was the presentation of items representing the many facets of life at Cathedral College.

Mr Godden was presented with the School Keys, Bible and Candle, School Roll, Prayer Book, House Shield and Down Ball, a plant and a Cross. Each represented an important aspect of College life, including leadership, faith, learning, community, achievement, service and the partnership between families and the College.

Mr Godden was then formally presented with his licence and entrusted with the care and leadership of the College community.

Bishop Clarence presented Mr Godden to those gathered as the newly commissioned Principal of Cathedral College Wangaratta, with the College community standing to welcome its new Principal.

Mr Godden becomes the sixth Principal to lead Cathedral College, following Pam McDiarmid, Neville Clarke, David Everett, Adrian Farrer and Nicholas Jones.

The Commissioning Ceremony on Thursday, September 3, was not only a celebration of a new Principal, but also an important moment in Cathedral College's history, recognising its traditions, celebrating its community and marking the beginning of an exciting new chapter under Mr Godden's leadership.





Timbertop Service of Baptism & Confirmation



By Sandy Mackinnon

On Friday 22nd August, Timbertop School was privileged to invite Bishop Clarence Bester and Rev. Victor Adams serving as his Chaplain, to officiate at the annual Service of Baptism and Confirmation in the iconic tent-shaped Chapel of St John the Baptist.

The huge A-frame windows of this remarkable chapel look out onto the forested hills surrounding the bush-campus of Timbertop, the Year 9 outdoor-focused campus of Geelong Grammar. It is significant that many students choose this special place to make their baptismal vows or be confirmed in their faith as, for every student, Timbertop is a place of enormous challenge and growth, mentally, physically and spiritually. Like St John the Baptist, whose wooden statue looks out over the congregation, Timbertop students leave the comforts of their normal lives and experience a year in the wilderness where things are pared back to the essentials and life is lived uncluttered by social media, luxuries, fripperies and distractions. For many of them, the realisation comes to them for the first time how important the values of Christianity really are. Here at Timbertop, compassion, forgiveness, the ability to say sorry, the strengthening of the will and the irrelevance of material wealth all really matter.

The twelve Confirmation candidates (three for baptism as well) attended the service with their families and friends and were able to enjoy a fine homily from Bishop Clarence which talked about variations on the VIP acronym, making the point that for Jesus, all people are VIPs… and explicitly in Christ's own words the youngsters in our community. The service was further enhanced by the Timbertop Choir singing 'Down to the River to Pray', doing so with sweet, strong voices.

Isolated though Timbertop is from the world at large, it is heartening on occasions like this to be joined briefly with the wider Christian community and to allow the students to get a glimpse of the Christian faith in action and service.

Chiltern Quiet Day – 'Morning has broken'



By Ven Canon Scott Jessup

'Tiny drops of stillness' fell gently through our day. Eighteen people joined Archdeacon Scott for a Quiet Day in the Forest at Chiltern on the 2nd of September. We experienced a reflective early morning walk in the bush - with psalms, scripture, poems and nature journaling. We were enveloped by the soundscape - the natural symphony of birds and frogs. We heard or saw over 30 different species of birds and discovered many different flowering plants including orchids and peas.

"The bushland has no spectacular beauty, no instant gratification - only an artless placement of colour, shape and shadow ... a purity of sound ... a fragrance of leaf and of earth ... and a quiet stillness. That is the true enchantment of the Australian bush. It reveals itself slowly to those who open their senses to it". 'Bush Seasons' by Joan Semmens.

'When we pay attention to nature, wonder is rekindled within us … wonder and awe at God's creation … with the art of attention we see the great web of connectivity - we see creation's loveliness and its beauty and also its scariness and harshness - but it is a rekindling of that life affirming, world affirming horizon for a relationship with creation … when we recognise awe and wonder we are also on the threshold of worship', Bishop Graeme Usher -Bishop of Norwich & Lead Bishop on the Environment CofE.

Gill Baker and David Mitchell memorial award

By Suzie Don Leonard

Gill Baker and David Mitchell memorial trust was set up in the Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta after both Gillian and David passed away 4 years ago, they were committed Diocesan advocates for the environment for many years and they left a legacy of encouraging people to be custodians of the land and look after our planet.

The Diocese of Wangaratta in partnership with family members of Russell Baker, Glenda Mitchell, Bishop Clarence Bester and Suzie Don Leonard set up the Trust Fund. The trust was established by the 4 Trustees with an Environmental and Sustainability Focus and the annual memorial award was launched at "Seasons of Creation" in 2024. Parishes in the Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta were invited to submit applications related environmental and Sustainability projects by the end of the financial year (30 June). Sbmissions were received from 2 Parishes: St John's Thurgoona, and St John's The Parish of Wodonga.

The Trustees met in August 2026, to consider the recipient of the Memorial Award based on 4 criteria:

1. Environmental Benefits: Did the project addressed environmental issues &/or improve sustainability
2. Community Involvement and Social Impact: Did the project involve and benefited local communities (including parishioners), raises awareness, and promotes public engagement with environmental issues relative to the size of the parish.
3. Return on Investment: Did the parish have the resources (e.g. cash, kind & time) required to complete the project relative to the environmental benefit and community involvement
4. Scalability &/or Replicability: could the project concept (the idea behind the specific project) be expanded, adapted, or replicated in other communities or contexts.

The 2 applications received were:

1. Mission District of St John's Thurgoona: Application was titled "Little Playgroup Community Garden" aimed at establishing a child friendly garden featuring native plants and seasonal vegetables, tended by the participants (approximately 25) of the weekly play group, aged 0 – 5 years. It encourages learning about nature, food sustainability and helps young people feel welcomed at church. It supported the principles of community engagement, environmental awareness and also succession planning. The application met all the 4 selection criteria
2. Wodonga Parish "Walk, Talk, Gawk": the purchase of binoculars to aid the introduction of parishioners and wider community to the natural environment through bush walking activities which aimed to identify native plants, birds, fungi, aimed at the 5th mark of mission of the Anglican communion.

Outcome: The submissions demonstrated learning, increased awareness, appreciation and positive contributions to the environment and sustainability.

However, only one winner was possible, and it was agreed that the St John's Thurgoona best fitted the selection criteria and was the winner of the 2026 Gill Baker and David Mitchell Environment and Sustainability Memorial Award of $2,000.

The applicants were thanked for submitting applications and the Winner, was congratulated. St John's Thurgoona will now identify a member from their parish to serve for one year on the Board of Trustees (as a voting Trustee) until the next award is made in 2027.

If anyone has good quality binoculars that you no longer use, please would you donate them to the Parish of Wodonga for their bush walks and environment discoveries??

The award was announced at the 125th Diocesan celebration on 3 October 2026.

Parishes in the Diocese of Wangaratta are encouraged to apply for consideration for the award by the 30th of June each year. For ideas on project options please do not hesitate to contact Suzie Don Leonard (the Trust Administrator on 0428575971 or suziedl@westnet.com.au for project ideas and support to make the parish application.

Blessed is She



By Rev Cathy Carden

At the end of August, the Reverends Cathy Carden and Cathy Turnbull had the privilege of attending the inaugural Blessed is She Conference for ordained women clergy, supported by, and held in the Diocese of Adelaide.

From the opening address from Governor of South Australia, Frances Adamson AC, through Bible Studies led by Rev'd Prof Emerita Dorothy Lee, Keynote addresses relating to the history of women in the ministry of the church; Anglican identity; lived experiences as a female Army Chaplain (Fight like a … woman-Rev'd Sarah Gibson); Archbishop Kay Goldsworthy AO's keynote 'For such a time as this', relating to Esther; and the inspirational and motivational speaker, Rosslyn Cox, encouraging us in how to 'Lead with courage, clarity and grace'; we had an absolute smorgasbord of exceptional teaching, contextual enlightenment and inspiration across the three days.

Of almost equal value was the opportunity to network and connect with the 80 women who attended the conference, including all 8 female bishops in Australia, who graciously mingled amongst us, listened and shared their experiences and knowledge.

The closing session with Dr Julia Baird, titled 'Of God, Dolly and Gloria Steinem… and the women who keep the faith' was particularly inspiring, as she encouraged us to continue on our journeys, to support, advocate and connect with one another, to be the change we want to see; as we lead our parishes, schools, hospitals and work places as women clergy. We are, of course, grateful that in the Diocese of Wangaratta we are encouraged to fulfil the ordained ministries to which we have been called.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Bishop Clarence and the Diocese in financially supporting us with our travel and accommodation in Adelaide, and for our parishes for giving us the time to attend. We would also particularly like to express our gratitude to Assistant Bishop Sophie and the conference organisers, who specifically reached out and subsidised costs to encourage and enable women from regional Diocese to be able to attend. It is hoped that these conferences will now be a bi-ennial event, and facilitate women connecting and supporting each other in ministry.

'A spacious place for God'

By Ven Canon Scott Jessup

Forty-three people participated in two Quiet Days held at Yackandandah and Euroa in July and August.

Kath White, from St John's, Wodonga, writes: It was a day to be guided into contemplative prayer, conducted by the Venerable Canon Scott Jessup, Anglican Vicar of Wodonga and Archdeacon of the Hume. Scott first introduced us to Holocaust victim, Etty Hillesum, a secular Jew in a Nazi camp, who resolved to retreat into the deepest recesses of herself. This developed into an awareness of God's embracing calm and the power of love, despite the horrors around her. When transferred to the Westerbork transit camp and then to Auschwitz, she was enabled by that deep centre of God's calm to refuse hatred and instead to see beauty and to embody love.

For us, the challenge from Etty's experience was to choose that same time to seek the innermost 'room' within ourselves, where all extraneous concerns are excluded and we are open to God's presence and enabling love.

The second guide to contemplative prayer was the use of words such as "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me/us" (the Jesus Prayer) repeated to the rhythm of our breathing, or "Maranatha - come, Lord Jesus". This repetition with focussed intent gradually centres the spirit and leads us into that inner space where we encounter God with our whole being.

A third guide to contemplative prayer was the attitude of the keen bird-watcher: to be still and present in a quiet place, waiting and watchful, with all senses alert, ready for any movement or appearance and open to whatever may come - an elusive kingfisher, a common sparrow or nothing at all. So with our prayer time: we wait prepared and expectant for however God might reveal himself.

After this segment, I sat outside in the car reading the Psalms. Psalm 130 puts it this way: "I wait for the Lord; my whole being waits, more than watchmen wait for the morning..."; Psalm 123 says: "I lift up my eyes to you... as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress..." and Psalm 131: "I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child I am content." I looked up from my reading and there in a low sparse tree were three king parrots, the male resplendent in vivid red and green and two subdued females, quietly foraging among the branches. I was content.



The Quiet Day ended inside the church with a short benediction and we dispersed to take up our lives again after this brief retreat into silence and prayer.

Winter Appeal Soup Luncheons

By Caroline Burge

Over the three months of winter, the Parish of Kilmore hosted three wonderful Soup Fundraising Luncheons as part of our Winter Appeal for Love in Action.

We had hoped to raise around $500, along with collecting tins of soup to help local people who are doing it tough during the colder months. Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners, we were delighted to far exceed our expectations.

Across the three lunches, more than $600 was raised, and over 130 tins of soup were donated. The lunches also provided a wonderful opportunity for fellowship, friendship and good conversation, with everyone enjoying a delicious selection of homemade soups prepared by our generous parishioners.

There was certainly no shortage of variety, with many different soups on offer and plenty of appreciative diners around the tables. It was a lovely reminder that sharing a simple meal together can also make a real difference in the lives of others.

The money raised, together with the donated tins of soup, was given to the local Broadford Love in Action group. The donations were handed over to the main organisers, Barbara and Bruce Radford, who work tirelessly to support people in our local community.

A heartfelt thank you goes to everyone who made soup, brought along tins, donated money, helped with the lunches, or simply came along and enjoyed the fellowship.

Together, we have shown that a warm bowl of soup, a generous heart and a caring community can go a long way towards bringing hope and practical help to those in need this winter.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the Winter Appeal such a wonderful success!

Photo below: Parishioners Sharon Peters and Rod Noonan with variety of soups



Celebrations at Wangaratta West & the Warby's

By Sue Wheeler

There was great celebration on Sunday 27th September at the Anglican Parish of Wangaratta West and the Warby's, which comprises St Michael's Wangaratta, St Paul's Glenrowan and St George's Taminick.

On the anniversary of Saint Michael and All Angels, a Sung Eucharist was held at St Michael's church in O'Leary St, to Licence and Commission Rev Alan Jarrad and Rev Kirsten Willenberg to be co-vicars in the parish for the next 6 months. Rev Alan is a previous rector at the parish, and has been officiating there while waiting for Rev Kirsten's arrival from New Zealand. They will also be ministering together at St John's Respect two days a week.

The service was officiated by Bishop Clarence Bester and the Archdeacon of Goulburn, the Venerable Melissa Clark. Rev Kirsten was presented with a welcome gift of a hamper of locally produced produce from the King Valley and North East region.

In addition, the day celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the dedication of St Michael's church, consecrated by the Right Reverend David Farrer on 29th September 2001. A celebration cake was cut by long time parishioner of the parish, 94 year old Joan Barbour.

The service was followed by a delicious morning tea for all who attended, and provided an opportunity for Rev Kirsten to meet people of the parish. We are blessed to have Rev Kirsten here at Wangaratta West and the Warby's and look forward to him ministering amongst us and within our wider community.

Photo below: The Reverend Kirsten Willenberg.



Baptism & Confirmation at Thurgoona

By Rev Maryann Leonard

On July 19th St John's Thurgoona were blessed with having Bishop Clarence and Michelle visit our parish. As well as being a pastoral visit, Bishop Clarence celebrated a combined Baptism and Confirmation Service. Nine candidates, who are all parishioners, came to be Baptised then Confirmed. Their ages were from eleven to twenty four years old. The Service was uplifting and joyful. Our newly created singing group sang angelically during Holy Communion.

But of course, we had to have a little bit of drama. Just as we were to process into the church, the power went out. Our service was bathed in coloured rays of sunlight coming through the windows and candle power. We had no music, but that did not stop us singing and even dancing! However, as we were hosting a luncheon for one hundred guests in a fabulous, hired marquee, a few silent and stealth parishioners heated up various side dishes at their homes during the Service, While the vVcar's Wife cooked a banquet on the BBQ.

Parishioners and guests were so grateful to be able to have extensive conversations and interactions with Bishop Clarence and Michelle. The very large and beautifully decorated mud cake by Lyn was delicious as well. The confirmees have taken place as adult members of our parish. Cannot wait for the next pastoral visit. This time with power?



St Cuthbert's celebrates 60th Anniversary

By Rev Roberta Hamilton

St Cuthbert's, Yarrawonga celebrated the 60th Anniversary of our 'new' building on 13th September. Our Bishop, the Right Reverend Clarence Bester preached and presided at what was a very joyful celebration of the last 60 years. We welcomed back many people who had an association with St Cuthbert's. Bishop Clarence was assisted by the Venerable Scott Jessup and Reverend Roberta Hamilton. Our bishop preached a wonderful sermon encouraging us to remember the nurture, formation and transformation that had taken place at St Cuthbert's, and that was still to come. As part of the service people had an opportunity to offer prayers for the future of St Cuthbert's. Our service was brought alive by the playing of our organist Peter Hammon who has served the church faithfully for many years. Our servers also made the day very special- both those who have been serving for a long time and our two newest recruits.

The service included the dedication of a new altar frontal made by the members of our newest congregation at Open Church, and the dedication of a banner depicting the local area and featuring St Cuthbert's cross, a project led by the members of our Ladies Auxiliary. The history team produced a folder as a gift for everyone with a brief history of the new building.

After the service we enjoyed a superb Afternoon Tea, with a beautiful celebration cake as the centrepiece. We were honoured to hear from two speakers, Howard 'Jim' Judd, who was on the original committee who built the church 60 years ago, and whose memory of that time is so valuable to us. The second speaker was the Reverend Jason Wright, Director General, Chaplaincy for the Navy, who was nurtured and formed in this church. Jason spoke of his journey and ongoing transformation. We also had a slide show of some historic photos during the afternoon tea. It was a very significant and enjoyable celebration for all of us at St Cuthbert's.

Photo right: The Reverend Roberta Hamilton.



Beautiful Taizé Services in Kilmore and Tallarook

By Caroline Burge



There are not enough words that can describe the experiences of the Taizé service held at Christ Church in September—the gentle darkness illuminated only by the glow of over 150 candles, the wonder and beauty of the moment, and the deep sense of peace and tranquillity that surrounded those present.

As the candles flickered throughout the church, those gathered were invited to slow down, be still and simply rest in God's presence. In the stillness, with the quiet repetition of prayer and song, the worries and busyness of the world seemed to fade away.

Taizé worship offers a very special opportunity to step away from the demands of everyday life and enter into a space of reflection and prayer. There is something profoundly sacred in simply being still, resting in God's presence, surrounded by light, silence and prayer.

The gentle music, repeated chants and moments of silence created an atmosphere where hearts could become quiet and minds could find rest. The glow of more than 150 candles added to the sense of wonder, creating a beautiful and deeply moving experience for everyone present.

It was a beautiful reminder that faith is not always about words or activity. Sometimes, it is simply about being present—being still, listening and allowing ourselves to experience the love and peace of God.

As Scripture reminds us: "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

This is the second Taizé service held in the parish, with the first being held in the gorgeous St Stephen's Church in Tallarook, which was another lovely quiet reflective service at one of our smaller churches in the parish.

For those who attended both services, they were truly memorable evenings of beauty, peace and prayer—a gentle reminder of the sacredness that can be found when we simply stop, breathe and rest in God's presence.

Photo above: Christ Church, Kilmore in complete candle light.

New Lay Minister for the Cathedral

On Sunday 2nd August Jillian Kimber was licensed in Wangaratta as a Lay Minister for the Cathedral Parish. Afterwards she expressed the profound sense of acceptance and humility arising from her growing connection to the Eucharist which Bishop Clarence acknowledged. It became clear to her that her journey right from childhood had brought her to this stage, giving her a deep feeling of love, lightness and purpose for what is ahead. She felt that the recent workshops in which she participated were very relevant for her own personal development and study. The service awoke a vision of a bigger plan, along with an acknowledgment of how special the cathedral has become to her, being a sacred place for finding one's inner peace, a feeling of connection and coming home.

Jillian looks forward with feelings of excitement, as well as some trepidation, to what is evolving in her continuing journey.

Please remember Jillian and all Lay Ministers in your prayers.



Bishop Clarence Visits St Paul's, Myrtleford

By Rev Canon Moira Evers



On Sunday July 26th, St Paul's, Myrtleford was happy to welcome Bishop Clarence on a very happy occasion with four Confirmations, one Reception into the Anglican Church and the licensing of two Lay Ministers for the parish.

Congraulations to Bevo, Rayne, Matthew and Anneke who were confirmed. Rayne is a Myrtleford local and graduate of Cathedral College, now studying at Monash University. Brother and sister Matthew and Anneke are frequent visitors, with their parents and beloved pooch Lola, to Porepunkah and happened to come along to Midnight Mass in December of last year. Having enjoyed the festive Eucharist so much they decided they would like to be confirmed at St Paul's. Matthew and Anneke are both at University and attend the monthly Youth Mass at St Peter's, Eastern Hill. Bevo is a long time resident of Myrtleford and so it was good that she could be confirmed in her home parish before we bid her farewell as she prepares to move to Officer to be closer to family.

Francis Lyford-Pike is a most valued member of our community and it was a delight that he asked to be received. Francis was a Roman Catholic Seminarian many years ago in Uruguay and has moved seamlessly into being a Liturgical Assistant at St Paul's. With his wife Elizabeth, Francis works hard to help make St Paul's a vibrant and welcoming parish through our various liturgies and, in particular, "Dinner Church."

Pat Braumann from Whorouly and Chris Flavelle-Smith from Bright, both members of Parish Council, received their Licenses to be Lay Ministers for the parish. This vital role will enable us to offer a greater capacity to provide services and pastoral care, particularly when the clergy are on leave.

As always, we thank God for our committed Lay People and will hold Bevo, Rayne, Matthew, Anneke, Francis, Pat and Chris in our prayers as they continue to walk in the Way of Christ.

Friends of the Cathedral Dinner

By David Newport

This year's annual dinner held by Friends of the Cathedral was considered one of the best yet. The dinners have been held since 2000 as part of the Friends' continuing work in raising funds for the cathedral.

This year's, on Friday 7 August, drew 60 people to Purbrick Hall for fellowship, a delicious meal and a sit up and listen talk about moral issues confronting the church by guest speaker Jeffrey Driver, a former Archbishop of Adelaide and Bishop of Gippsland.

The dinner is one of various fund-raising activities run by the Friends. This year also featured a popular organ concert by Christopher Cook on 1 May, while traditional home-made Christmas puddings are now being prepared to go on sale through the Cathedral Shop later in the year.

Funds raised by the Friends are dedicated to improvements in the cathedral. This year the Friends have given $20,000 towards work on improving the Lady Chapel lighting. Previous assistance included $15,000 for the sound system and $16,000 for carpeting.

Next year's dinner will break with tradition by being held a few months earlier than has been the case in the past. To save people a trip out in deepest winter, it is scheduled to take place at Purbrick Hall on Friday, 23 April.



A personal memoir – The Hon John Michael Batt AM

By Margaret Gibson

Justice Batt was a member of the Victorian Bar for over 64 years from 1961. He was honoured in 2026, awarded an AM in the General Division for, amongst other things, his significant service to the Anglican Church of Australia. He was Chancellor of the Diocese of Wangaratta from 2005 to 2010. He was very personable and, when not in wig and gown, very comfortable to get along with. During my time in the Bishop's Registry he was always Mr Batt, but when he joined the Pilgrimage to Israel in 2007, a pilgrimage organised by Bishop David Farrer and Revd Dr John Pryor, he soon became John. There were about 30 in the tour group, mostly Wangaratta Diocese parishioners, one other clergy and one theological student, but the playing field was level in no time at all.

His main distinguishing feature was dressing for dinner each evening, no open neck shirt for John, always long sleeve shirt and tie and jacket if the evening was cool.

In a conversation with him after John Parkes was installed as Bishop of Wangaratta, he remarked that we have a John (Bishop) and Margaret in the Lodge, a John (Chancellor) and his wife also named Margaret, to say nothing of John Pryor (Registrar) and me Margaret in the Bishop's Registry! It certainly says something about the era in which we were born.

Now that all three Johns have gone to meet their maker, I am sure there will be some very lively and erudite discussions. Oh to be a fly on the wall!

Rest in peace Mr Justice John Batt and Rise in Glory.



Nineteenth Session of General Synod

By Ven Mel Clark

The Nineteenth Session of the General Synod, known as 'GS19', was held in Melbourne from 9–14 August 2026. More than 200 delegates from the 23 Australian Dioceses were present to discuss and make decisions on issues in the Church.

One significant discussion and decision was around the First Nations leadership. Synod passed legislation strengthening the roles of the First Nations and Torres Strait Islander Bishop, and provided funding in the 2027 budget for a full-time First Nations (Aboriginal) Bishop. Synod also responded to NATSIAC's call to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14.*

Mission and church renewal were another major focus. Synod supported a new initiative called Vision36, which focuses on prayer, evangelism, discipleship, and church planting through to 2036. This was connected with reflections on the lessons of Hope25, an initiative which came out of the last General Synod.*

There was also much legislative and governance discussion. A new Special Tribunal Canon was passed to improve the handling of complaints involving bishops, along with constitutional amendments to encourage and enable greater cooperation between dioceses and provinces.

Other resolutions and discussions addressed safe ministry, social cohesion, gambling advertising, care of creation, neurodiversity in churches, chaplaincy, and the conflict in the Middle East.

Most pertinent for us in Wangaratta, the Synod also discussed continuing challenges, including pressures on rural and regional dioceses, historic sexual-abuse claims, and domestic and family violence.

Our church does sit in two distinct camps (conservative and progressive) but there was discussion and grace between the two. This being my first General Synod, and hearing about previous experiences of others, I was a little apprehensive about attending but, barring a couple of challenging moments and comments, overall it gave me hope.

The take home message for me was to just keep preaching the gospel of love in words and actions in our little part of God's world, and shake off the dust that would otherwise weigh us down.

*source: The Melbourne Anglican
Photo below: members of NATSIAC with Primate Bishop Mark (photo credit Church Times)

