

TRANSCEND: DECEMBER

Ascot Vale Uniting Church Newsletter 2015

60 Maribyrnong Road, Moonee Ponds

Services: Sundays 10 am

Christmas Day 9.30am

Christmas: The Season of Ingathering

The experience of ingathering, of pause, of collection, of recollection is to be prized above all others. In this sophisticated life-style of ours we may miss our depth and the true meaning of our life, for often we are engaged in countless duties and activities that have very little significance to us. We may rush forward, headlong into busyness, like hit and run drivers while our soul is left bleeding in the street.

Christmas is a time of ingathering, of searching and of re-appraisal. There must always remain in everyone's life some space for the celebration of those events of the past that bear their fruit in the present- those events in which the human race seems to catch it's breath, and to give a long look forward and backward. Such events are surrounded by a quality all their own, and yet they seem to gather into themselves the essence of all human striving and the meaning of all hope.

What's the mood and heart of Christmas? It's more than a mere date on a calendar. It's the experience of ingathering and striving for kinship in our relations. I know that the experiences of unity in human relations and honouring what is deepest in another are more compelling than the ideas, the fears, and the prejudices that divide. Despite the tendency to feel my race and kin superior, my nation the greatest nation, my faith the true faith, I must beat down the boundaries of my false pride and exclusiveness. *"Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'."* May my sense of solitariness be enveloped in a sense of kinship with others, of contact with fellowship, of radical equality with respect for all.

Theologians say that when the psalmists and prophets spoke of God, they spoke not of a superhuman person in the clouds, but of depth; of the deeper things in life speaking to the deep places within us. That's why the symbols of Christmas are so important, they speak to our hopes and fears, and they reach into our subconscious mind with a word of hope...and peace.

The symbols of Christmas, what do they really mean? In straw and starlight a desperate mother and father and their newborn baby are in a stable. There was no room for them at the inn. They had to travel to Bethlehem, because of the imperial decree that all should return to their ancestral towns so they could be counted for tax purposes. When Jesus was born the common Jewish working man and woman were being milked to death by taxes, imposed by the Jerusalem priestly class and by their Roman overlords. Higher taxation was the weapon of choice that spearheaded an aggressive change to a commercial agrarian economy. The Jerusalem wealthy took the surplus crops and produce from the farmers, and inevitably their land through ever increasing tribute, backed by the sword of Pilate. Many good people lost their ancestral lands and their future; they became tenant farmers, or worse, beggars. Into this world Jesus was born.

Even in the grimness of that world, of stable and foul smell, came life's answer to death and injustice. Christ was born! The cry of life in the newborn babe when, forced from it's mother's body, claims it's right to live. **Life keeps coming on, keeps seeking to fulfil itself, keeps affirming the possibility of hope.** Christmas is the Presence of the Eternal Spirit, the 'Ancient of Days'. It's the movement of life in the defiance of death and destructiveness, and the assurance that love is sturdier than death, that right is more confident than wrong, that good is more permanent than evil.

I shall look well to those realities, to those possibilities this Christmas. Join me. Therefore I will light the candles of hope and friendship this Christmas. They must burn all the year long.

Merry Christmas, and all the best for 2016,

Rev. Ron Rosinsky

Christmas Day Dinner at the Manse

Come and join Ron and Isabella and their children for a family Christmas.

What: Dinner, **please bring a plate if you can.**

With good food and friendship and Christmas carols

When: **6 pm Christmas Day**

Where: The manse, speak to or email Ron for the address.



KID'S UNITING

We are making puppets and other features for our **Christmas play on Saturday, 19 December.**

The older children are practising their musical performances for the same night.

Our last Kid's Uniting for 2015 is Sunday, 12 December. A big thanks to all of our wonderful parents, children and especially teachers for making this year a successful one.

Join us on **Sunday 7 February, 2016** when Kid's Uniting re-commences.

Worship Themes and Readings

13 December: Family Service- 'The Subtleties of Pride' Luke 3: 7-18 **11:30-12:30: Last meeting of 'Soul Groups' for 2015**

19 December: 5-9pm- Christmas barbecue and Carols in the garden - see flyer

20 December: 'The Invisible Ones Reconstitute the World' Luke 1: 39-55

25 December: 9:30 AM Christmas Morning- 'Light the Candle of Kinship for 2016' Luke 2: 1-20

27 December: Guest Preacher, Rev. Adrian Pegler

3 January: 'Keep Open the Door of Thy heart' Matthew 2: 1-12- The visit of the wise men

10 January: 'The Necessities of Our Peace' Luke 3: 15-17; 21-22 Baptism of Christ

17 January: 'Accept Our Fact'

24 January: 'The Quest for Meaning'

31 January: Guest preacher, Mr. Bruce Missen lay preacher and Chairmen of Church Council- St. John's Essendon



We Wish You A Merry Christmas

Ascot Vale Uniting Church

Carols in the Garden

Saturday December 19

5.00pm for puppet show and barbeque

7:30pm for Carols

For to us a child is born... and he will be called... Prince of Peace.

COMBINED CHARITIES CHRISTMAS CARD SHOP IN ESSENDON

North Essendon Uniting Church is running a Combined Charities Christmas Card Shop where you'll find great cards to give to loved ones this year, along with helping support those in need with money raised assisting various charities.

Thursdays and Fridays 9.30a.m. - 4p.m. and Saturdays 9.30a.m. - 12.30p.m. The Shop will close Thursday 17th December at 12.30p.m.

132 Keilor Road Essendon North 3041 Telephone: 9379 3326

Soul Groups

'Soul Groups'- A Program of Spiritual Formation and Personal Growth
The group has been discussing the book:

'Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life', by Karen Armstrong

**1, 15 November, 6 December: Study Topics: *'How Little We Know;
How Should We Speak to One Another'***

**The Group meets after the Sunday Service 11:30-12:30- in the multi-purpose room.
This is an informal group and anyone interested is most welcome to come along.**

TREASURER'S REPORT

Offering envelopes

Plenty of Offering envelopes for the period June 2015 through May 2016 are still available on the front table at the entrance of the church.

Please take a set, alternatively see Peter Macdonald or Ted Jennings.

Direct Credit

Several members are now using direct credit, using electronic funds for offerings.

If you are interested please see Peter Macdonald.

October Income and Expenses

Offerings	\$ 1,790
Fundraising	\$ 0
Donations	\$ 100
Building users	\$ 0
Other	\$ 0
<u>Total Income</u>	<u>\$ 1,890</u>

Ministry	\$ 3,566
Mission & Service	\$ 1,375
Property	\$ 2,727
Water Tank	\$ 3,000
Other	\$ 275
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>\$ 10,943</u>

Income for 2015 through October \$50,219

Expenses for 2015 through October \$91,895

Deficit for 2015 through October \$41,676

2016 Budget

Church budget for 2016 is currently being prepared for review at the next Finance committee and church council meetings

Finance Committee

Next Finance committee meeting will now be the first half of February 2016.

Other matters arising from the last finance committee meeting include

- Compilation of Asset register.
- Check of our Synod insurance coverage for church contents

Kind Regards,
Peter Macdonald - Treasurer

2016 MOONEE VALLEY FESTIVAL

The Festival will be held in Queens Park on Sunday 28 February between 10am and 5pm.

There will be community displays, business exhibits, stage and roving performers, kids activities and amusements, food and market stalls and interactive displays and demonstrations.

The City Council invites local community groups and organisations to participate.

There are a number of ways to be involved including operating an information or display stand or presenting an activity or demonstration that relates to your organisation.

Groups can be provided with a marquee and furniture for their display.

For further information contact Clarissa Ibrahim at the Council prior to January 8th.

ph: 8325 1862 email: CIbrahim@mvcc.vic.gov.au

NEWS FROM CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING held Nov. 25th.

1. Water Tank: many thanks to Dina, who has arranged for our 10,000 litre rainwater tank to be installed this week. The tank will supply our garden, and should in the long run result in considerable savings for the church through reduced water rates.

2. Pergola: the proposal for a pergola between the original façade and the new church will be revisited next year.

3. Cupboard in the Gathering Space: A very generous donation has been made anonymously by one of our members, to allow us to employ our Iranian asylum seeker friend, Davoud, to build a multi-purpose cupboard which will replace the existing name-tags table.

Thanks to the generosity of other members of the congregation, another \$100 has been donated, and this will allow the project to go ahead in the new year. Heartfelt thanks to you all!

4. Direct Debit Offering System: Our Treasurer, Peter, reports that this is working well. The opportunity for people to contribute regularly and easily, even when they cannot always attend service, apparently explains an increase in our offerings. Thanks to all who participate.

5. New Jerusalem Church: This large group of enthusiastic Spanish-speaking Christians from Latin America now meets regularly on Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons in our church.

They greatly appreciate our facilities, and their contribution in payment for hire of the space adds significantly to church income.

(Footnote: several of our members responded to an invitation last Saturday to share in their fellowship meal, and thoroughly enjoyed their excellent and abundant food and their warm welcome!)

Dorothy Howes, Church Council Secretary



The foundations for our rainwater tank which is due to be installed on December 4th.

Generous donations by the Melbourne Heart Centre have enabled its purchase.

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'Transcend' is published monthly
Articles and photos are welcome.

Email to the Editor
Robin Waltrowicz
avuniting@hotmail.com



Social and Environmental Justice Update:

People's Climate March:



At least three members of our church joined with 60,000 other people on Friday 27 November, in what was the largest climate action in Melbourne's history; and in fact the single biggest climate march worldwide on that day! Throughout Australia about 150,000 people were on the streets to advocate for strong measures to combat climate change. Our leaders may sometimes seem slow to respond to the current climate emergency, but we believe that the movement for change is gaining irresistible momentum. Thank you for your prayer support!

"Perhaps we should have tried Egypt" postcards, produced and supplied by the Uniting Church's Justice Unit. They are addressed to the government, and imagine the Holy Family behind bars in Australian detention. The message states that we *can* protect our borders while still providing support for desperate people at the same time. It suggests practical and compassionate actions Australia could take to address the asylum seeker situation. Thank you to those of you who already signed and sent 12 of these postcards. For those who haven't yet, more are on the way!

Seeing Things from Both Sides – a personal view

It seems that one Melbourne Council has recently agreed to a request by a Muslim group to ban the playing of Christmas carols in public places, because (they claimed) Christmas carols are offensive to Muslims.

Like many others, I am indignant at this denial of our freedom to express our faith. But at the same time I think we must acknowledge that not all white Australians are willing to allow others the religious freedom we want for ourselves. We should feel just as indignant when we hear that a group in Bendigo want to deny Muslims the right to build a mosque. No form of religious intolerance is acceptable in our society.

We sometimes hear it argued that our cultural heritage is Christian, with the implication that Christian customs should be the ones that prevail. But if we look more closely at our history, we must acknowledge that from very early after white settlement, Australia has had a multi-cultural, multi-faith heritage. Muslim Afghan camel drivers traded in the outback from the 1800's, ancestor-worshipping Chinese flocked to the goldfields in the mid 19th century, and of course our Aboriginal predecessors had and retain their own spiritual beliefs. So no one religious group can really claim precedence. All should have an equal right to express their faith.

Interestingly, Muhammed preached religious tolerance and mutual respect between his followers and Jews and Christians.

In the Qur'an he says: "Say to the people of the Book: we accept faith in that which was sent down to us (the Qur'an) and that which was sent down to you (the Torah of the Old Testament and the Gospel). Our God and your God is one. So compete with one another in the performance of good deeds. To God shall be your return, and He will inform you concerning the things in which you had differed." (Surah 29:46 and 5:48, quoted in "The Prophet of Islam: Muhammed", by Sam Deeb and Steven Scholl)

Dorothy H

GWENETH EVELYN HOCKING

5th May 1924 - 29th November 2015



A lifelong Methodist and member of our church, Gwen Hocking died on Sunday evening aged 91. Gwen was a member of AVUC dating back to the inception of the Uniting Church, and beyond that, to the Methodist church on the Avenue in Ascot Vale. Gwen served our church in many ways, in particular as an Elder and Church Council member including as Chairperson. In hard times when our church was burned down, Gwen was there to help and support what we were doing. Her children recalled her unwavering faith, and good works. She played tennis till she was eighty, and was a foundation student of Penleigh and Essendon Grammar. She maintained a lifelong commitment to the school in fundraising and educating her family. She was a very good singer in church and was a foundation member, life member and supporter of the Essendon Choral Society. In recent years Gwen used a motorised wheel-chair, but continued to live her life with courage and determination. Her funeral was held at our church on December 3rd.

School and kindergarten term dates for 2016

Term 1: 27 January (school teachers start) to 24 March (as 25 March is public holiday) *

Term 2: 11 April to 24 June

Term 3: 11 July to 16 September

Term 4: 3 October to 20 December (Tuesday)

* The first day of Term 1 is a student-free day in all government schools to allow for appropriate planning to take place for the arrival of students. Each year government schools are provided with four student-free days for professional development, school planning and administration, curriculum development, and student assessment and reporting purposes. The remaining three student-free days are determined by each individual school, so contact your school for details

Public Holidays 2016

New Year's Day	Fri 1 Jan
Australia Day	Tues 26 Jan
Labour Day	Mon 14 Mar
Good Friday*	Fri 25 Mar
Easter Sunday	Sun 27 Mar
Easter Monday	Mon 28 Mar
ANZAC Day*	Mon 25 Apr
Queen's Birthday	Mon 13 Jun
Friday before the AFL Grand Final	Fri 30 Sep
Melbourne Cup	Tue 1 Nov
Christmas Day	Sun 25 Dec
Boxing Day	Mon 26 Dec

Daylight saving will finish in Victoria on **Sunday, 3 April 2016**, when clocks will go backward one hour at 3am.

Mother's Day Sunday May 8th 2016

Father's Day Sunday September 4th

A CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. Joseph was originally from... (Luke 2:3)
2. Who told (made) Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem? (Luke 2:1-5)
3. What did the innkeeper say to Mary and Joseph? (Luke 2:7)
4. A manger is made of stone or wood?
5. Which animals does the Bible say were present at Jesus' birth?
6. How many angels visited the shepherds? (Luke 2:10)
7. What did the angels say/sing? (Luke 2:14)
8. A heavenly host- is it an angel choir or angel army?
9. Was there snow in Bethlehem?
10. What is Frankincense?
11. What is Myrrh?
12. Who was there when Jesus was born?
13. Why did the wise men stop in Jerusalem?... (Matthew 2:2)
14. The wise men found Jesus where? (Matthew 2:11)
15. How old was Jesus when the wise men found him ?
16. What did St. Paul say about the Nativity Story



Answers below

A clean cut

Consider the task of cutting a wooden plank cleanly in half.

Here are some of the methods we could use to do this.

Use a hand-saw and clean the cut by hand with sand-paper.

Use a hand-saw and clean the cut with a powered belt-sander.

Use a powered circular-saw, cleaning the cut manually with sand-paper.

Use a circular-saw and power-sander.

Focus a laser-beam at the plank, no sanding required.

We can see that mere human beings can cut a plank in many different ways.

I think it follows that the creator of all life would easily be able to create a human life in more than one way. Does it always have to be done in the way we usually expect?

Personally I find it harder to believe that the creator of the entire universe could **not** start a human life inside a virgin than the reverse.

However regardless of what we believe I thank God he loves all of us unconditionally.

Have a very merry Christmas.

Noel (Elder)

1. Nazareth
2. Caesar Augustus
3. Nothing
4. A stone feeding trough.
5. None
6. An angel company
7. Glory to God in the highest
8. Army
9. Yes it is high on Mt Hebron which always has snow.
10. A special perfume
11. A spice used in funerals not for cooking
12. The shepherds were there the night Jesus was born. The magi came months later
13. To ask the ruler Herod about the new King.
14. In a house
15. He was between 12- 24 months.
16. Paul never mentions the story

ROSTER UP TO JANUARY 2016

Date	Leader	Com-munion	Duty El-der	Music	Welcomer	Reader	Morning Tea
December 13	Rev Ron		Noel	Maria	Robin	Chris	Angelika & Chris
December 20	TBA		Dina	Candace	Ken and Jenny	Ken	Ken & Jenny
December 25 Christmas Day	Rev Ron		Michael and Melita	Dorothy	Michael and Melita	Candace	Marycon & Dorothy
December 27	Rev Ron		Angelika	Dorothy	Peter	Angelika	Angelika & Dina
Jan 3, 2016 Communion	Rev Ron	Dorothy	Dorothy	Rob	Cally	Cally	Fiona & Judy
January 10 Family Service	Rev Ron		Noel	Maria	Ken and Jenny	Michael	Ken & Jenny
January 17	Rev Ron		Dina	Dorothy	Robin	Chris	Chris & Barbara
January 24	Rev Ron		Michael and Melita	Maria	Michael and Melita	Barbara	Marycon & Angelika
January 31	TBA		Angelika	Candace	Peter	Peter	Dina & Fiona



The night before Christmas and Santa's a wreck.
 How to live in a world that's politically correct?
 Four reindeer had vanished, without much propriety,
 Released to the wilds by the Humane Society.
 The runners had been removed from his sleigh;
 The ruts were termed dangerous by the E.P.A.
 And people had started to call for the cops
 When they heard sled noises on their roof-tops.
 Second-hand smoke from his pipe had his workers
 quite frightened.
 His fur trimmed red suit was called "Unenlightened."
 And to show you the strangeness of life's ebbs and
 flows:
 Rudolf was suing over unauthorized use of his nose
 And as for the gifts, why, he'd ne'er had a notion
 That making a choice could cause such commotion.
 Nothing of leather, nothing of fur,
 Which meant nothing for him. And nothing for her.
 Nothing that might be construed to pollute.
 Nothing to aim. Nothing to shoot.
 Nothing that clamoured or made lots of noise.
 Nothing for just girls. Or just for the boys.

Nothing that claimed to be gender specific.
 Nothing that's warlike or non-pacific.
 No candy or sweets...they were bad for the tooth.
 Nothing that seemed to embellish a truth.
 And fairy tales, while not yet forbidden,
 Were like Ken and Barbie, better off hidden.
 For they raised the hackles of those psychological
 Who claimed the only good gift was one ecological.
 No baseball, no football...someone could get hurt;
 Besides, playing sports exposed kids to dirt.
 So Santa just stood there, disheveled, perplexed;
 He just could not figure out what to do next.
 He tried to be merry, tried to be gay,
 But you've got to be careful with that word today.
 His sack was quite empty, limp to the ground;
 Nothing fully acceptable was to be found.
 Something special was needed, a gift that he might
 Give to all without angering the left or the right.
 A gift that would satisfy, with no indecision,
 Each group of people, every religion;
 Every ethnicity, every hue,
 Everyone, everywhere...even you.
 So here is that gift, it's price beyond worth..

**"May you and your loved ones enjoy
 peace on earth."**