

TRANSCEND: NOVEMBER

Ascot Vale Uniting Church Newsletter 2015

60 Maribyrnong Road, Moonee Ponds

Services: Sundays 10 am

MENTAL PAIN

"Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also more hard to bear.

The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden."

- C.S. Lewis

In the appendix of C.S Lewis' book, *The Problem of Pain*, there is a note supplied by a medical doctor from his clinical experience. He draws a distinction between the effects of short attacks of severe physical pain and long-continued pain. With the latter, the alteration in the sufferer's behaviour is apt to be more noticeable.

Often great strength of character and resignation are developed within one suffering long term pain, with a corresponding humbling of pride. But sometimes there is an obvious deterioration in character and outlook. Long illness often has the effect of wearing down one's life to a slow remorseless grind. The doctor writes, *"The invalid gives up the struggle and drifts helplessly and plaintively into a self-pitying despair. Even so, some, in a similar physical state, will preserve their serenity and selflessness to the end. To see it is a rare but moving experience... the heroes are so many."*

The Bible tells of a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, a hero of sorts. Life had dealt him a crushing blow, physical and mental pain. Undoubtedly existence for him was a slow remorseless grind. There came a day when Jesus walked by on the road passing through Jericho, nearing Jerusalem. Jesus' mind would have been crowded with thoughts of what faced him in the city, the irrationality and meanness of priest and centurion, of Caiaphas and Pilate's Jerusalem; the inevitable cost- crucifixion- of denying imperial authority and of asserting the moral authority of something radically different, the kingdom of God. And there was the frequent stupidity of Jesus' own disciples.

Suddenly as if from out of a tomb, the tired but determined voice of Bartimaeus could be heard rising, calling out, *"My teacher, let me see again!"* His suffering body was an expression of where God's kingdom could be found, for in his helplessness and agony he evoked compassion in those with any sensitivity. So in every generation the one who suffers is a bearer of our salvation in some measure, helping us to participate more fully with a God who would show compassion through us. And Jesus' ability to be present, to process information, and to respond from his heart were spiritual gifts. Mark tells us that Bartimaeus, *"Immediately regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way."*(10: 46-52)

The framing is deliberate; here Mark returns to his theme: *to see* meant to see that *the way* involved following Jesus to Jerusalem for the confrontation. **The confrontation meant and still means confronting authoritarian rulers**, in Jesus' case the authors of imperial and religious domination, with the dream of God- of what the world could be like.

Seeing and following the way also meant and still means death and spiritual resurrection. Dying to our lower, fearful nature, living up to our true nature- divinity. The historical facts of Easter tell us that despite the death of a popular leader, passionate and dedicated communities of Christian leaders, with the same moral purpose, rose up. To survive and thrive in the face of our pain, we bear in mind that not even death on a cross could defeat God's purposes, nor contain what God has to say to us about life. No situation, however tragic, even death, can defeat the ends of God, and the good that God is working on with us; nor can they separate us from the love of God.

What does our faith have to say about the problem of mental pain? How is it somehow contained within the providence of God? With reference to mental pain C.S. Lewis wrote this:

“...it is easier to say “My tooth is aching” than to say “My heart is broken.” Yet if the cause is accepted and faced, the conflict will strengthen and purify the character and in time the pain will usually pass.

Sometimes, however, it persists and the effect is devastating; if the cause is not faced or not recognized, it produces the dreary state of the chronic neurotic. But some by heroism overcome chronic mental pain. They often produce brilliant work and strengthen, harden, and sharpen their characters till they become like tempered steel.”

That’s a spiritual power and intensity that everybody needs, because we have to handle our suffering or be handled by it. True power therefore is creative, not destructive. It’s adaptive and fluid, coming as a creative response to pain. It’s flexible, not rigid and obsessive. Spiritual intensity has no need of the ego or false pride. It’s a spiritual quality we develop, rather than an authority over others that somebody endows us with. When we look inside in self-discovery, not self-promotion, we find that our resilience and power are there waiting for us to build upon it.

We all have a Bartimaeus within us, that part of our personality and soul that is blind and begging. Blinded because our perceptions are limited by our self-interest, and at times we are cut off from our ability to feel anything. Begging because we acknowledge that we are broken, but still feel a thirst for deeper insight into life’s meaning and how to be a good person. And like Bartimaeus we call out for the understanding friendship of another.

The ultimate answer to suffering, religion insists, is found only in God and in the individual’s response to God’s love. To put it specifically, it is to have one’s innermost self assured that the finality of death, which is the logic of all suffering, is itself contained in a greater reality, in a more comprehensive finality of God Him/Herself. Always one’s God must be more than one’s thought about God, more than one’s private needs, demands or requirements. One’s God must be comprehensive enough to include the whole movement of life in its every dimension and outreach, including even death.

Such a God is conceived by religion as the Creator of Life and of the living substance, the atomic ground of all reality, and as the Creator of the biological conditions giving birth to life and of the time-space continuum. God is all and in all, an eternal presence, eternally present in this life and the next. Within this understanding of creation, God is also pervading it with the quality of God-self. This means that at any point in human history, no event in the life of a single person can be separated from what are, in fact, the ends of God.

The final answer to mental and physical anguish, and death, even to evil, is to be found in the testimony of the human spirit. That testimony may be found in the person who suffers and in the Biblical story of those who suffered. Here we find a God who confirms a person in their living and in their dying, whose purpose is to reinforce their life so-as to withstand all tragedies. Here we see a person who has found a God big enough to contain all violences and violations- the God of the Psalmist who guards their life and dignity. Like Bartimaeus, this person knows a God who cares for them and cultivates their spirit, feeling themselves not undermined nor deserted, but supported, sustained and confirmed.

Hope you feel that,

Rev. Ron Rosinsky





One in five Australians will experience a mental illness in the next 12 months, almost 50% of us in our lifetimes. If we can recognize the signs and do something about it early, we can reduce the impact that mental illness has on our lives.

Saturday 10 October was World Mental Health Day.

On that day Australians were asked to make a personal mental health promise to themselves and to share it on social media.

So far over 11,000 promises have been made on the campaign website.

The mental health promise that you can make now to yourself needn't be long, it just needs to be meaningful to you. Keep it short and achievable.

For more information see the **World Mental Health website**: <https://1010.org.au>



KID'S UNITING

Sundays during the church service

Join your teacher Caterina for fun and learning about,

- * The early church and ecology;
- * The importance of having a hero: 'All Souls Day'; and
- * Christmas preparations.

All children are very welcome

Worship Themes and Readings

8 November: Family Service- 'Mental habits that help us cope with wounds to the soul'

Psalm 146 ; Mark 12: 38-44- The Widow's offering

15 November: 'The ultimate answer to loss of self-worth and purpose'

Daniel 12: 1-4- Resurrection of the dead; Mark 13: 1-8 'Soul Groups' after church.

22 November: 'The immediacy of pain; but taking the broader view of our problems'

Daniel 7: 9-10; 13-14; John 18: 33-38-"What is truth?"

29 November: Communion and First Sunday of Advent- 'Anxiety sends us into extreme thinking and we miss the one thing...' Jeremiah 33: 14-16; Luke 21: 25-36

"What's broken can be mended. What hurts can be healed. And no matter how dark it gets, the sun is going to rise again."

"It's an odd paradox that a society that can now speak openly and unabashedly about topics that were once unspeakable, still remains largely silent when it comes to mental illness"

Glenn Close



CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS IN OUR GARDEN

Saturday 19th. December starting 5.00 pm at the church

Come along and enjoy a barbecue, musical performances and carol singing followed by a short service.

Further details in the next Transcend

Up to three cakes stalls next year?

I had originally thought we would have an election this spring and hold a stall at the church, but the change in conservative leadership put a damper on that idea. Recently I have taken a good look at my personal calendar and to be honest I don't feel I have the time and energy to lead a cake stall in November on Union Road. My apologies for those who had hoped to have one before Christmas.

Next year there will be local council elections on October 22, 2016 and if we are a polling station for this, I propose we have a cake stall/sausage sizzle fundraising event as we have done in the past. I gather there will also be a federal election next year so there may be a possibility for a second fundraiser at the church. I have enjoyed doing the June cake stall on Union Road for the last two years, so I would like to plan for that one as well.

Thanks to everyone for their support in the past for these events. It is always amazing what a small group of dedicated people can accomplish!

Candace

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.**

CHURCH PROPERTY OFFICER

The Church Council has appointed Dina as our church Property Officer.

Her duties will include:

- Dealing with the rental and use of our facilities**
- Overseeing building maintenance**
- Garden/Carpark maintenance.**
- Purchase of needed stores**
- Providing items for the budget**

We thank Dina for taking on this important role.

Please give her your full support.

Humanity

Does anyone know the 'limit' to stupidity?
'They' call me names - It doesn't sound too witty!
But 'they' did it and 'they' do it
After all - stupidity knows no limit.

If - being 'Black' is a shame *here*
And, that has become very clear
Than being 'White' must be a shame *there*
As to being 'Yellow' - Everywhere!

Yet - here, there and everywhere
cars are cars. For colour who does care?!
Yet, human beings - how very slack!
Are separated to: Yellow, White and Black!

So - is there any progress to speak about?
Ignorance, my friends, plays important part!
Decades went by - without any trace.
So, thank you for us all - intelligent human race.

You seem to have no segregation regarding your dogs,
You love them all - White, Black, and those with Yellow dots
Wild or tame - their colour might be Brown...
Yet to you all - I am just a clown.

*The following was written by my friend, Sudanese poet and a freedom fighter in exile - Ali Abdul Gayoum. The year was 1993.
Ali died a few years later, after re-entering his beloved Sudan.*



Dina

Donations to our Morning Tea Supplies

Thank you to the generous people who add to the supplies in our Morning Tea cupboard. They are very useful when, on the odd occasion someone rostered for Morning-tea cannot come. However, please hold back on the teabags. We recently found that we had sufficient tea bags for years to come. Some had reached their use-by date.

We will of course welcome UHT milk, Fair-trade coffee and packets of biscuits.

KEEPING THE CHURCH NEAT AND TIDY

Please assist in keeping the church tidy.

If your children play with toys, please ensure that they put them away before going home.



Social and Environmental Justice News:

from Spokesperson, Dorothy Howes

With your help, we collected 40 signatures to send to the Federal Government to urge that Nauru Offshore Detention Centre – where physical and sexual abuse has been rife - be closed. Thank you!

We also had copies of two different postcards to send to the relevant Ministers. One asked for Hazelwood Power Station (which is worn out, polluting, and no longer needed) to be closed. The other urged the Federal Government to ensure stronger laws and closer supervision, so employers in the fruit picking and other industries can no longer underpay and otherwise exploit young migrant workers. Our members took 10 of each of these postcards to send. Again, thank you for your support!

Please **don't forget** the **People's Climate March - 5.30 pm, Friday 27 November** in the **Melbourne CBD** (details of meeting point will be announced soon). This is a world-wide event, intended to convince all world leaders, including our own Prime Minister, to work to halt climate change. To do this, we need every possible person who is concerned about the future of the earth and its inhabitants to take part!

An Offer too Good to Refuse!

The SEJC, together with Church Council, would like to offer you the opportunity to help an asylum seeker family AND improve our church facilities at the same time.

Here's how: You may remember Davoud and Sanaz and their small daughter, who have twice this year attended AVUC. They are Iranian asylum seekers, who were happy to worship with us, although they are Muslim, because they felt accepted here. Davoud is a trained mechanical engineer and experienced all-round handyman; and he was, and is, looking for useful work to perform for modest payment so he can feel he is helping to provide for his family.

A member of our congregation has generously donated \$400, to enable us to pay him to build a cupboard to take the place of our name-badge table in the gathering space. Such a cupboard could give a lot more useful storage space, where we could neatly and safely store the nametags and other items during the week, and would at the same time considerably improve the appearance of the gathering space.

Both Dina, our new Maintenance Manager, and Davoud himself, have put in a lot of time planning and measuring up for the cupboard. However Church Council has decided we can only allocate \$200 for materials which Davoud has costed at \$550. We therefore need to raise another \$350.

Another church member has offered \$100 to start the ball rolling. Would any other congregation members feel able and willing to contribute?

A donation tin will be placed on the morning tea bench in the gathering space, and emptied every Sunday. Alternatively, please see Peter, our Treasurer, or me. We, and Davoud, would all greatly appreciate your help.

Dorothy

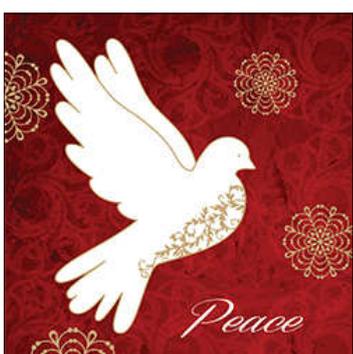
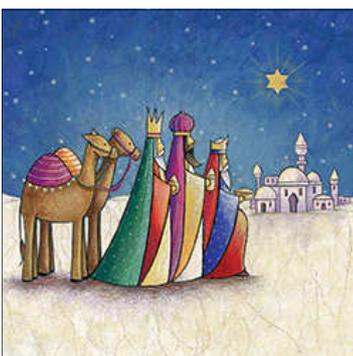
Loving Our Neighbours as Ourselves:

Parts of Papua New Guinea, our nearest northern neighbour, have had no rain since March; and heavy frosts have combined with drought to destroy crops. Drinking water is drying up, and disease and starvation loom for the local population.

UnitingCare has put out an urgent appeal in place of its usual Christmas appeal, for funds to send emergency food supplies and seeds which can be sown as soon as the drought breaks.

If you would like to donate, please see Dorothy or Peter, or put a labelled envelope in the offering bag.

SHARE Christmas Cards



All cards are \$8.50 for a pack of 10.
A mixed pack (10 cards, 2 of each design) is also available.

All proceeds from the sale of these cards will support the work of SHARE.

The SHARE Community Appeal funds UnitingCare, one of the largest providers of community services in Victoria and Tasmania, along with other worthy community service programs.

To order: Call **1800 668 426** or

<http://shareappeal.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Online-order-form-2015.pdf>

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE ELDERS?

The two bodies responsible for the overall running of the church are the Elders and the Church Council. At least half of the members of the Church Council must be Elders.

Elders do not have to be "old", although they are generally people with considerable experience in the church.

The Elders meet with the Minister every two months and the major focus of their duties involves:

- looking after the spiritual well being of the congregation,
- pastoral care of anyone in need.
- maintenance, updating and completion of the membership lists
- assisting the Minister with baptisms, communion, funerals and rosters.

Every person or family has an Elder assigned to them for pastoral care.

Your Elder, or any of the other Elders are available to assist you if needed.

Our Elders are: Dorothy Howes, Angelika Ranellone, Melita Long, Michael Long, Noel Lloyd, Dina Monaghan

Timeless Wisdom:

"We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through.

Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love ... and then we return home."

(Aboriginal Proverb)

As well as sharing our spiritual insights with other cultures, how much we have to learn from them!

TAKE CARE

Drivers, please take extreme care when entering and leaving the car park.

In particular watch out for children if reversing.

We often have small children at church.

Small children have little understanding of the danger posed by cars.

They can easily move into the blind spot behind your car as you reverse in the car park.

Parents please ensure that children do not play in the car park. There are plenty of other parts of the church grounds where they can play safely.

Escort them to your car when you are leaving.



St John's United Methodist Church invites you to its annual

Act for Peace Breakfast

Sunday 29 November,

commencing at **8.30am** (in the church hall)
with Act for Peace speaker, Ben Fraser, speaking
on his work in conflict-weary Gaza Strip, the
Philippines, Pakistan, Afghanistan, West Papua
and Zimbabwe.

(And at our 10am service we welcome Rev Ian Smith,
Executive Director of the Victorian Council of Churches.)



ACT FOR PEACE

CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE **actalliance**

Cnr Mt Alexander Road
and Buckley Street,
Essendon.

RSVP to church office
9370 9263 by 26 /11



Please look at the signs showing emergency evacuation information. They are near all of the doorways. Be familiar with their contents.

They show the location of exits, fire extinguishers, the first aid kit and fire blanket.

Also note that in the event of an emergency you are to exit via the nearest safe exit and assemble in the car park or on the footpath.

FROM THE TREASURER

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.

September Income and Expenses

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	
Offerings	\$ 1,697	Ministry	\$ 3,566
Fundraising	\$ 100	Property	\$ 5,672
Donations	\$ 900 (including \$650 from East Gippsland Tafe)	Other	\$ 512
Building users	\$ 6,341	Total Expenses	<u>\$ 9,750</u>
Other	\$ 356		
Total Income	<u>\$ 9,394</u>		

Finance Committee:

Some of the action items arising from the finance committee meeting held Thursday October 8th.

- Preparation of the 2016 budget will start in November
- Asset register to be compiled
- Check to be made of our Synod insurance coverage for church contents.

Next Finance Committee meeting will be in the second half of January 2016

Peter Macdonald—Treasurer

News from the Elders Meeting, 26 October 2015



1. Suggestion Box:

Here is your chance to have input into the content of our Sunday services!

We are keen to know what themes you would like to hear about in coming sermons, perhaps an issue relevant to our Christian living, or a passage or book of Scripture which you would like explained or discussed. Perhaps you know of someone Ron could interview, whose experiences would be interesting and insightful; or have some ideas about a different service format – for instance, where the congregation could be invited to contribute to a conversation on the day's theme. Most of us have favourite hymns which we enjoy singing or find helpful – why not share these and guide the Music Committee's choices?

A suggestion box will be placed on the table in the gathering space. Please do use it!

2. Christmas Picnic and Carols in the Garden:

Prompted by a great suggestion from Chris and Fiona, we plan an outdoor Christmas celebration, starting at **5.00 pm** on **Saturday 19 December**.

We envisage a BBQ, musical performances, short worship service and community carol singing, to end about **9.00 pm**.

Please keep this evening free for some great Christmas fun and fellowship!

Dorothy H.

