

Christmas 2017



A REFLECTION AT CHRISTMAS from Peter Millar (Day 31)

- Now all this happened in order to make what the Lord had said through the prophet come true. "A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Emmanuel" which means "God is with us." (Matthew 1: 22 -23)
- "If God can work through me, he can work through anyone". (Francis of Assisi)
- Centuries of skill and science/ span the past from which we move/ yet experience questions whether/ with such progress, we improve/ While the human lot we ponder/ lest our hopes and humour fray/ God surprises earth with heaven/ coming here on Christmas Day. (a hymn for

Christmas by John Bell and Graham Maule of The Iona Community)

Most of us, even for a few moments, look back as Christmas approaches. It is a time when memories cascade through our consciousness. We think of immediate family, of loved ones who have died, of friends far off, of happy days and of sad ones, of the world around us. We can all add to that list. Our lives contain many journeys and some of these are powerfully woven together in our minds through the weeks of Advent and Christmas.

In rich countries billions are spent on Christmas presents – although, thankfully some people are beginning to think in other ways. Instead of buying stuff as if there was no

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Launceston Gathering 2017



tomorrow, many are trying to share more of what they already have in terms of money and possessions with others in need. That is a real sign of hope amidst the incredibly frenetic and wearying buying spree which starts months before Christmas Day and, in the UK at least, continues its all-consuming, and debt-incurring journey through the January sales!`

Against this backdrop of torrential buying another reality exists. In our globalised world, millions of our sisters and brothers will be spending Christmas thinking where their next meal is going to come from – if it comes at all. Each day we see the faces of these sisters and brothers on our screens. They are both distant and near. Alongside our food-laden tables are pictures of those who have nothing, not even a roof over their heads. And it is probable that as we listen to comforting Christmas music, they may be hearing nearby bombs exploding.

If the truth were told, few of us can comprehend much about the present world order and disorder. The political events of each new day are material enough for a hundred novels. In our hearts we all know that, and we ponder the human future in all of its restless confusion. Despite what some may say, our very planet – the source of all life and of such extraordinary beauty – is itself threatened as never before. From the coral reefs to the forest glades destructive forces are at work.

Everywhere within our fragile planet we recognise that there are no easy solutions. No quick fixes. No immediate healings. We are wounded and our planet is wounded. A friend called Anna Briggs who has experienced various sorrows in her own life, expressed how many of us feel in these inspiring words in one of her hymns: “We lay our broken world in sorrow at your feet, haunted by hunger, war and fear, oppressed by power and hate.” It is a simple truth that this Christmas there are many tears across the nations.

However reminding ourselves of the bewilderments, contradictions and fears of our own lives and the life of the world, does not in any way mean we are opting for negativity, for despair, for a retreat from fresh hope. In my own life I face an incurable cancer. It is a tough reality: I am wounded by my serious illness and often uncertain about many things because of it. That is just a fact. Yet it is not the only one. The other truth about my life at present is that I continue to have a light within me and a trust for the world. I am surrounded by the love of others and by the miracles of modern medicine. Even if laid low, there are still a hundred reasons for living, or maybe even a thousand as one of my heroes the late Bishop Helder Camara of Brazil used to say!

In Matthew’s Gospel we read that the child to be born of Mary will be called Emmanuel. That name is then explained as “*God is with us*”. The prophetic word, at first made known only to a handful of people in a remote part of a great empire is a name that is interpreted in many ways – as it has been through the generations. It is an 18th century hymn based on the ancient Advent Antiphons that speak of Jesus as “The Dayspring”

*O come, thou Dayspring,
come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death’s dark shadows put to flight.*

The name “Emmanuel” announces a startling truth that God is here with us whatever the situation.” God with us” through it all: that means in the darkness and shadows, as much as on the sunlit uplands. Various contemporary writers often express it as the God who weeps and sings with us. And it is for that reason that we can never separate the message of Christmas from the tears of our world. To do so is to impoverish the meaning of Christ’s coming to earth. The UK Prime Minister keeps saying “Brexit means Brexit” – which can mean anything. What IS true is that “Incarnation” (God with us) means

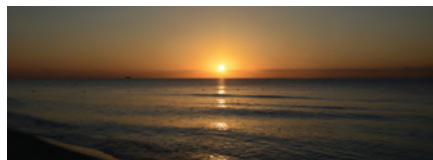
“Incarnation.” God at the heart of all that is until time ends.

John Bell and Graham Maule in these moving words:” God surprises earth with heaven coming here on Christmas Day” allow us also to grasp a further truth about this Emmanuel. For God always comes to us and to the world not framed by our limited imaginings, but in the mystery of constant surprise. It is truly this God of surprises who opens the doorways of transformation. The surprising God who today speaks to us through the lives of the broken and side-lined.

In the multiple uncertainties that surround us we are being invited by God to have hearts that can still sing about the goodness of life. And on this we are neither to give in nor shut up. Each of us is called to be a bearer of fresh compassion, of deeper awareness, of renewed imagination. And this Christmas if you have given in to despair (which is understandable in such times) allow yourself to reconnect with that tender love of Christ which resides in your own heart and mind. To be still within yourself and to know that you are accepted, healed and carry a light for others.

The words of Saint Francis are true today. We are all wounded, unsure and sometimes angry with God and the world, yet he believed that if God could work through him, he could work through anyone. The world needs many more wounded healers. We are people who have known betrayal, suffering, loneliness – you name it – but who are still able to take us to places of real good news. To places where hurts are healed and minds made new. To places where our own moans are laid aside and we learn again to reach out in love and forgiveness. To places where we can be reacquainted with laughter’s healing art. To places where we can speak openly of meaningful global justice and of an inclusive social vision. To places where our rich humanity, itself a gift, is valued and honored.

So that as the morning of Christmas breaks once more we can sing:



O Spirit, on us breathe
With life and strength renew;
Find in us love, and hope, and trust,
And lift us up to you. (Anna Briggs)

God of surprises, surprise us again
with the Good News of Advent and
Christmas -
that in suffering and hope,
in certainty and fear,
in silence and chattering
now and always,
you are with us.



Leader's Letter



Alex Scutt

The highlight Wellspring event in the period since our last Pipeline was, of course, the Gathering in Tasmania and I record my gratitude to the Tasmanian organising committee of Peter and Lorraine Riggall, Alan Bawden and Kathryn Richards who provided us with a very fulfilling and stimulating program. We were excellently and graciously accommodated at the Emmanuel Centre in Launceston with some outliers in a local motel.

Other highlights were when Patsy Cameron introduced two groups of participants to the history and cultural life of Aboriginal Tasmania and afterwards led the groups on a walk through Cataract Gorge. It was a highlight for everyone who took part. A group of twelve followed this up with a visit to a permanent exhibition dedicated to the Aboriginal culture of Tasmania at the local art gallery. Besta Peter, a refugee from Sudan and now a social worker at the Launceston General Hospital addressed the Gathering about her experiences as a refugee in Australia and her work at the Migrant Resource Centre in Launceston. Lisa Wriley gave us

a thought-provoking presentation about recycling and renewable energy and brought us all up to date with how each state is going on various state-based community recycling initiatives.

On Saturday, a trip to the Peter and Lorraine's covenant property at Dunbarton, about an hour from Launceston, and about 15 kms from Scottsdale allowed a quiet energy as people moved through the wildflower labyrinth dedicated in the name of Wellspring and later to enjoy lunch and a walk through the grounds of this beautiful family property. Worship throughout the Gathering led by various state groups, the welcome to new leaders and members, and especially the Sunday worship at Pilgrim Uniting Church grounded our Gathering in worship and prayer.

On a sadder note, on Friday 13 October, I joined many of our Community to celebrate the life of Margaret Allen who died a few days previously. Clabon and Margaret's faith community at the Uniting Church in Strathfield provided a prayerful environment in which to give thanks to God for Margaret's life through music, worship and prayer. It was good to be able to speak on behalf of Wellspring to mark the important place Wellspring had in her life and to share some of the tributes of people in Wellspring to Margaret's work as treasurer of Wellspring over a long period. I can provide a copy of the text of my speech to any who would like to read it. We extend

our condolences to Clabon, Hilary, Morag and the family. May Margaret rest in peace and rise in glory.

At the time of writing this letter (Hallowe'en and All Saints' tide), I am preparing to attend a landmark conference on receptive ecumenism in Canberra, run by the Centre for Christianity and Culture, Charles Sturt University and several other local groups. Under the theme of Leaning into the Spirit, it will be a time of flexing some real theological muscle, and hearing from international speakers from Australia, South Africa, Sweden, Iceland and several other places. I will be representing Wellspring, and will be able to report back at greater length over the coming months. Doug Hewitt will be attending in his capacity for the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church. Wellspring Council has agreed to support my attendance at that conference with airfares and conference fee and I thank them for supporting my attendance in this way.

Finally, of note is the appeal from the Iona Community who are seeking funds from their members and sister organisations around the world such as ourselves to support a major building program in the Abbey which will deliver a building fully fit for purpose. Without undertaking such



a project, the buildings on that small island will become unfit for purpose within a very few years. So many of us began our Wellspring journey with a journey to Iona, and accordingly the council has also agreed to contribute a

generous amount towards this appeal over the next year or so. There is more about this appeal from the Iona Community elsewhere in this journal. It remains only for me to wish you and yours every blessing for a happy and a

holy Christmas season, and may your Advent season be filled with hope and promise for a world ready to receive the Saviour.

Every blessing, Alex Scutt (Day 22)

Worship and Spirituality

Reflections on Launceston Gathering September 2017

From Mary & Mark Hurst (Day 28)

We have been to at least three Wellspring national conferences that we can remember and each one had its own character. The theme of the 2017 conference – struggle and hope – fit our time together with the presentations from Lisa, Auntie Patsy, and Besta covering different aspects of the theme.

Having three talented, passionate, articulate, gracious women speak was a gift to us all. So many conferences miss out on the contribution of women, so I thank the organisers for arranging for their presentations.

It is always good for us to re-connect with old Wellspring friends and meet new ones. The mix of scheduled events and free time over the weekend allowed for extended conversations and a relaxing and yet stimulating time.

Having planned national conferences for another organisation, we know what planning goes into these events. The Tassie planners did a good job and got us to our different off-site locations in time to make the most of each excursion.

The positive stories about Tasmania Aboriginals that we heard from Auntie Patsy Cameron will stay with us long after the conference. We particularly liked the way she conveyed the history through her own family stories. We were interested enough to go on and read her book *Grease and Ochre: The Blending of Two Cultures at the Colonial Sea Frontier* (Fullers Bookshop, 2011) and would encourage others to do the same.

From Heather Eckersley (Day 16)

David and I travelled from Brisbane with Helen Menzies. Our journey required a plane change in Melbourne and a second flight on a smaller Dash 8 aircraft. On arrival we were met

by Peter Riggall waiting to drive us safely to the Emmanuel Centre. This lovely retreat centre is staffed and run by Sisters of St Joseph and led by Sr Jenny Scully. This centre reminded me of the Old Friary in Brisbane, as it is another dedicated place of spiritual retreat under threat. During the weekend, I spoke with Sr Jenny and with Kathryn Richards about the struggle for survival of such places of refuge, prayer and nourishing relationships.

Meticulous planning and preparation for our gathering was obvious and our room was laid out ready to receive us with a comfortable bed, space, heating and a bag of goodies filled with all manner of things and decorated with the beautiful butterfly image painted by Lorraine - symbol of our theme of Struggle and Hope. The Tassie team had indeed put much care and prayer into their preparation for this gathering of people and place.

We helped a few others find their rooms and get a sense of the space, this was a good way to notice who was here and to begin to put flesh on the people in the photos from the Prayer Diary for whom we had been praying. The sense of being new and unfamiliar was strong and a sense of not quite belonging was very strong for me. Everyone seemed to know everyone else and we felt new and tentative. We explored the grounds a little and enjoyed the beauty of the labyrinth and the setting among lovely trees and shrubbery and daisies popping up in the grass, all quietly delightful!

We ventured out the gate for a walk around the streets to stretch our legs and get our bearings. The streets are





quite steep and afford wonderful views of the lush Tamar River valley. As we strolled along I admired many different flowering plants - azaleas, magnolias, wisteria, etc, that thrive here in these cooler conditions. It was a cool 16C on arrival. In Brisbane that day it was 37C!

After dinner we enjoyed Lisa's display of photographs of various meal options around the world. Each photo showed a family and their weekly food and the startling diversity from Africa to Japan to New Zealand to Europe. Lisa then went on to tell us about progress with recycling legislation in a state by state report. Her passion and enthusiasm were certainly infectious!

We ended the day with Evening Prayer led by the Perth contingent.

This liturgy was full of symbol and meaning and we were all invited to place any symbols we had brought with us.



Next morning the Queenslanders led us in Morning Prayer. Our liturgy used red as the colour of struggle and yellow as the colour of hope with beautiful images for reflection.

Then we ventured out in two groups to the Cataract Gorge to hear Dr Patsy Cameron share her indigenous heritage and wisdom. This time provided deep encounter with landscape and lived history. In the afternoon a visit was made to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery. There we saw an excellent interactive display of indigenous local culture including a video welcome by Patsy Cameron. This display had recently been presented for NAIDOC week.

Friday Evening Prayer was led by part of the New South Wales group and the focus was Creation and the gift of God with and among us. A lovely way to gather the rich threads of the days experiences of diversity.

Saturday Morning prayer was led by others from NSW before we climbed into the buses and travelled out to Dunbarton for another deep immersion in the landscape. This day we delighted in the hospitality of Lorraine and Peter and the years of struggle and hope they have invested in saving and restoring native habitat beside clear-felled areas of destruction.

In the afternoon, back in Launceston, we heard from Besta Peter, a Sudanese woman who has made a new home here with her family. Besta has contributed greatly to her local community and radiates much gracious beauty.

Evening Prayers were led by the South Australian contingent. After dinner, Wellspring Council members led us in celebrating change in leadership and a welcome to new members: Diane Speed and David and myself. We celebrated a moving Eucharist together too.

Sunday morning, we shared in a beautiful service at the Pilgrim Uniting Church where the folk there warmly welcomed us into their midst. The service was led wisely and gently by Jill Robertson. The children's talk about Stepping Stones seemed a very appropriate conclusion to a wonderful Wellspring Community Gathering in Tasmania in 2017.

From Cherry Miners (Day 12)

OUR MEMORY CIRCLES

Walking gently in sacred land
Full of memories for thousands of years
We carry our memory circles.
Twinings of creeper to make the circle
Adorned while passing the wattle and wild flowers
Stretched to make room for nuts and bark
Holes made for twigs and reeds and branches
Transformed by nature found on our path
A circle now of beauty and prickles and fruitfulness
A different circle, full of experiences; as are we.
Thrown into the rapid flowing water and whisked away
Gone from sight but still in our hearts
It will never be the same; nor will we.



From the moment we were welcomed at the Emmanuel Centre in Launceston, to the moment we departed we were blessed by the many people who had put so much time and effort into enriching our stay.

Great food and warm beds, a labyrinth to wander and a wonderful caring staff.

An impressive worship centre in the central meeting room where so many shared in times of devotion, encouragement and inspiration each day. The theme of 'Struggle and Hope' was in each of the group's meditations and in all our special events.

The reclaiming of farm land and weed-covered bush land to its original habitat will be a lifelong project and hard work for the Lorraine and Peter, yet Lorraine painted the beautiful symbol of the butterfly emerging from its cocoon, a message for all who think it is too hard.

As were the stories told by Aboriginal Patsy, who so graciously shared her knowledge and experiences and led us on a guided walk with our 'Memory Circles'. A truly inspirational woman.

Legend Lisa was with us again sharing how her life work is progressing, with care of this earth. She gave us a splendid round up of what each state of Australia is doing. Container recycling is progressing, banning of single use shopping bags, cleaning up of litter on land, on beaches and in the sea, attempts at zero waste, recycling 'everything', and creating beauty out of the rubbish! We gained a second wind to renew our efforts.

And maybe one of the greatest struggles of this era, refugees. We heard from Besta, a Sudanese woman, orphaned at 4 years, her struggle to become educated, her poverty, then when she was married with 3 children, her husband was arrested. When he escaped she fled for her life with her aunt and 3 small children to Haifa where she gained refugee status, then a miraculous reunion with her husband in Cairo. They spent



4 years in a refugee camp before an application to come to Australia was refused because her husband had been in jail. Then a friend sponsored them to Tasmania. They have 5 children, 2 at university, she is a qualified Social Worker, speaks 11 languages, he has a degree in business, a beautiful Australian family. She still supports the tiny South Sudanese school where she did her school work in the dust with a stick, and all people who are finding life hard. What struggle and hope!

We gathered with the Pilgrim Uniting congregation for Sunday worship to listen to more challenging words and magnificent music. Listening to passionate people is truly inspirational, and we were all inspired! Many thanks

to the Launceston organizers for a wonderful Gathering.

Pre-Gathering Tour, Alex Scutt (Day 22)

The week before the Gathering, nine of us from around Australia toured southern Tasmania and spent two nights in Hobart and two in Port Arthur. Bruny Island, a lunch with Roslyn Hunt (Day 25) at Wrest Point, a trip up to Mount Wellington were highlights of the Hobart sector. The natural beauty of the Tasman Peninsula and the historic site of Port Arthur were highlights of the two nights we spent in that area. The trip up the middle of the island through the towns of Richmond, and then Oatlands allowed us time to explore the only working wind-driven flour





mill in the southern hemisphere. It was a great time of exploration and togetherness, and it was altogether a wonderful experience for us all. Ingerid Meagher reported delightfully of coincidental meeting with a children's choir from Queensland at the Port Arthur Historic Site and an impromptu concert by a children's choir from Queensland in the ruined church at Port Arthur at the end of long day there. The choir was led by

Ingerid's daughter, who was touring with the girls on their own musical tour of Tasmania.

We had representation from many states: Stephanie and Alex from Victoria, Jane Pitman from South Australia, Anne Barnes from Western Australia, Neil and Margaret Holm and Ingerid Meagher from Queensland, John and Carole Burnard from NSW.

Peace and Justice

Life at Narla Village – a personal reflection - Peggy Harmon (Day 9)

I have been living at Narla Village, Belmont North, NSW, for over 8 1/2 years now. It is a picturesque spot, set among the gum trees and casuarinas. It was built by the Uniting Church, adjoining St. Luke's Uniting Church grounds.

Belmont is situated on the largest lake in the Southern Hemisphere, Lake Macquarie, which is part of the city of Lake Macquarie. There are several popular surfing beaches nearby, Redhead, Blacksmiths and Caves Beach, although I must say, most of us are past the days of surfing.

I live in a comfortable two bedroom unit, which means I can have family come to stay. This is very handy as I have a daughter living in London, another in Adelaide, a son in the Blue Mountains and my other daughter lives in the city of Newcastle, which is next door. Her home is in the suburb of Maryland. I now have three families, the other two are my Church family and my Village family. Keith and Helen Weavers also live here. They are a great asset to our church. They often help with services at St Luke's and also Narla Hostel.

In the heart of Narla Village is a beautiful Peace Pavilion. It was designed by a former resident, Merv Clare, now deceased. It is named Merv Clare Peace Pavilion and was opened

on 9th March 2002. The following plaques appear in it:-

PEACE

PATIENCE IS EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING IN OUR LIVES

LOVE

GOD'S LOVE FOR US IS BEYOND OUR UNDERSTANDING

HOPE

RESURRECTION GIVE US HOPE

FAITH

TO HAVE FAITH IS TO BE SURE OF THE THINGS WE HOPE FOR, TO BE CERTAIN OF THE THINGS WE CAN NOT SEE

TRUTH

WE MUST NOT ONLY BELIEVE THE TRUTH BUT ALSO LIVE BY IT

FORGIVENESS

FREELY FORGIVE OTHERS AS GOD HAS FORGIVEN YOU

Last September I tripped over a broom on my patio and fell into some pots. My next door neighbour came to my rescue and helped me up. There was blood everywhere. Not long afterwards my son and granddaughter arrived to take me out for lunch. Fortunately Catherine, my granddaughter is a doctor. She took me to the chemist and bought a dressing to put on my leg. We then went out for lunch. She told me to rest my leg the following day and then go to my Dr. the next day. I did this and my Dr. thought it would clear up quickly with second

skin. Unfortunately I was allergic to this so she arranged for Hunter Home Nursing to come and dress my leg. They tried various other treatments and I was allergic to all of them. Eventually they had to resort to old fashioned toe to knee bandaging. I ended up with two ulcers. After 12 months I had laser treatment on a vein and the ulcers quickly healed.

After the laser treatment I had to walk twice daily for a few days. Now I have continued my early morning walk as I enjoy it so much. I get up between 5 and 5.30 am, have a coffee and then do my devotions, which include my Wellspring Prayer Book, also With Love to the World. I see dawn breaking and it is a delightful experience to see the graceful casuarina take shape not far from my unit. The village begins to wake up. I find both Tim Winton's quotations and those of Father Eugene Stockton very meaningful in our Prayer Diary.

It is usually about 6.30am when I set out for my walk. I have divided the village into sections and pray for the people in a particular section each day. I admire their gardens, roses, azaleas, geraniums, pelargoniums, nasturtiums to name a few. I also see the glorious sunrise over towards Redhead. It is breathtaking.

It has impressed me the way certain people are doing God's work in our village. They are loving their neighbours, helping them and some

would be surprised that I believe they are working for God. We are close to creation here with lovely native trees and plants and many beautiful birds including kookaburras, magpies, lorikeets, finches, bronze winged pigeons, owls and many other birds. I enjoy seeing and hearing the birds when I am on my morning walk.

Once every six weeks we have a coach trip somewhere interesting. Our most recent trip was too the Newcastle Botanical Gardens at Tomago. This garden was established over 30 years ago and is now a very luxuriant mass of native trees and shrubs and undergrowth. There are well laid out paths, suitable for walkers and



Peggy Harmon

wheelchairs. We were booked in for morning tea and made most welcome. Afterwards we had an escorted tour with some of the volunteers. I was with a group who went to the Orchid House, where we saw wonderful flowering orchids from many parts of the world. Later we were driven to a country town, Raymond Terrace,

situated on the banks of the Allan River for lunch.

During the year we enjoy several spit roasts, also sausage sizzles, people play hoy once a fortnight and cards on Sat. afternoons. We also have exercise classes three times a week before breakfast. Those like me, who attend St. Luke's Church walk down the path on Sunday mornings to church. There are also quite a lot of us who go down to the Activity Centre at St. Luke's Community Hall on Monday mornings and enjoy various programs there.

It is very easy to feel God's presence in this place - it is like a little taste of Heaven.

THE ANABAPTIST ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND PRESENTS

TABLE FELLOWSHIP WEBINARS



Mark and Mary Hurst

The Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ) had a problem right from its beginnings in the mid-1990's – distance. How do you bring together people from two countries spread over numerous time zones? One of our core values is community. How do you foster community when people don't know each other and seldom get a chance to gather?

We tried several things over the years. One was holding bi-national conferences every two years. We missed a couple of years but have been pretty successful in meeting this goal. But the most we have ever had at a conference is around one hundred participants so many in AAANZ are still missing out.

Another attempt to get people together, in our earlier years, was phone conferences. Even people in out-of-the-way places could join in. But the participation rate was never that high. And it was mostly individuals on the phone hook-ups, not groups where people could get to build relationships with each other.

We decided a couple of years ago to just focus on the Sydney area and chose a site near Central Station where we held several Friday night sessions over a year. We had excellent speakers and films and good times of discussion but again the attendance was always small. We hoped to record these events and put them on our website so

that others could view them later but that did not happen.

Over the years we have also encouraged people to meet regularly with other like-minded people in their area, preferably over a meal. We call these groups Table Fellowship and have been part of one in our area for around ten years. This year, the AAANZ executive committee decided to put together the Table Fellowship idea with the conferencing through technology idea and started sponsoring Table Fellowship Webinars.

We have advanced from telephone link-ups to computers where people can see and interact with a speaker. We encourage people to gather with others in their local area around a computer, link-up with our webinar, take part in the hour-long event and then keep the conversation going over a shared meal.

Eventually we hope to record these webinars and have them on our website. Three webinars took place in 2017 and we hope to have them every

two months in 2018. Participants this year came from Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Alice Springs, Armidale (NSW), Brisbane, Canberra, and New Zealand.

Face to face contact is always the best for building relationships and community but where distance is an issue technology can help. We

depend on our younger members for the technological know-how but it is something that seems to come naturally to this social media generation.

So fire up your computer, call together some people and join others as we seek to build community around Australia and New Zealand.

(Information about AAANZ Webinars can be found at: <http://anabaptist.asn.au/table/>. We also announce them in the AAANZ Mailing, a weekly newsletter from AAANZ <http://anabaptist.asn.au/weekly-newsletter/>.)

Mark Hurst (Day 28)

Fair Trade Faith Conference

John Martin (Day 26)

While visiting family and travelling around Victoria and NSW earlier this year I stayed in Queanbeyan in order to meet up with a niece and her family in Canberra. They were away for the weekend so, rather than drive to their Church, I walked to the Queanbeyan Uniting Church near the motel. Unsurprisingly the subject of fair trade emerged in the coffee conversation after Church.

As I couldn't find any fair trade conferences to attend in Australia the idea of running one ourselves was emerging in my mind.

When I arrived home I sent the proposal to have a fair trade conference to a number of people. In that

document I included reference to my conversation and the enthusiasm for fair trade at Queanbeyan UC. I felt a bit guilty that I didn't have permission to mention them in a widely circulated document. I therefore emailed the minister, Steve Coster to apologise.

In his reply he raised the possibility of hosting it. The Church Council agreed and thus we are planning this event for Queanbeyan.

I caught up with my family when they returned from the weekend. Just imagine how different this may have turned out if I had not attended Queanbeyan UC. Corinne Nash from Bangalow, NSW is closely involved in the planning and being professional chefs, she and her husband, Brian, are preparing an extraordinary menu.

One of the keynote speakers, Jonathon Cornford is the son of Wellspring Friend, Doris Cornford (Day 16)

The Conference will include the inaugural lecture in memory of a former Wellspring founding member, Noelene Martin.

Saturday afternoon will be a Fair Trade Fair, a free event open to the public and just two weeks before Mothers Day.

Why is Queanbeyan a good location?

- Close to Canberra with a number of low cost motels.
- Three times a day rail service to and from Sydney.
- Close to Canberra airport.
- Good facilities with an enthusiastic core of people in Queanbeyan Uniting Church.

STEP THIS WAY



In conjunction with the
**Fair Trade Association
of Australia**

The First! Fair Trade Faith Conference

27-29 April 2018



FAIRTRADE

Venue: Queanbeyan Uniting Church Centre, NSW

What? Why faith groups should care about Fair Trade, how to get involved, other's experiences, inspiring speakers, Fair Trade suppliers on site.

How? Worship, panels, lectures, information, support, small group discussions. Fully catered. Book your own accommodation.

Cost: TBA. Coming Soon!

Contact: John Martin revj@aapt.net.au or Corinne Nash allthenashes@gmail.com

Enjoy an inspiring weekend in Queanbeyan
and reinvigorate or start your church's Fair Trade journey.

Who will be presenting?

- Dr Keith Suter, one of Australia's most influential global futurists and media commentator in national and foreign affairs. Keith is highly experienced in presenting complex global issues in a way that his audiences can clearly understand. Keith was one of Wesley Mission senior staff for many years and was a good friend of Noelene Martin, a dedicated advocate of Fair Trade, whom the Saturday evening memorial lecture is dedicated to. www.keithsuter.com.au/dr-keith-bio
- Dr Jonathan Cornford, co-founder of Manna Gum and author of Coming Back to Earth. or www.mannagum.org.au
- Plus other speakers and panelists from Fair Trade organisations and companies.



Gospel According to Mark

Janelle Macgregor (Day 29)

Verse 1 of Chapter 1 in the gospel of Mark reads: "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

The word gospel means "good news". In Roman times the good news sometimes announced a new Emperor. For example, some years before the birth of Jesus, the birthday of Caesar Augustus was hailed as 'good news'. Since Caesar was considered by the Romans to be a god, his birthday was thought to be a sign of good news for the world. Most often, though, the 'good news' announced a victory in battle.

So, what is Mark doing here, bringing good news into his story about Jesus – using it in relation to Jesus for the very first time ever? Mark doesn't

begin his gospel with the story of the birth of Jesus – he doesn't even mention it. Instead, his good news is an announcement of a victory and a new peace.

In the first century Jerusalem was a beautiful city. There were splendid monuments to Israel's history as a free and powerful nation, and monuments depicting its history under Assyrian and Roman rule. Jerusalem's jewel, of course, was the temple.

In the 67th year of the first century, the Jewish group, the Zealots, gained control of Jerusalem against the Romans conquerors. The Zealots, however, lacked discipline and training and adequate preparation for the battles to follow. The Roman leader, Titus, surrounded the city with four legions of troops – that's 24 thousand soldiers.

Titus was intent on recapturing Jerusalem for the Empire. That year he allowed Jewish pilgrims to enter the city to celebrate the Passover, but he stopped them from leaving. He followed up by cutting off food and water supplies to the city, and the subsequent siege lasted four years – four fairly bloody years.

With supplies cut off, the people inside the city soon began suffering from the privations. Small foraging parties escaped from time to time to access supplies but never in sufficient quantities to bring relief. The Romans built new walls and fortifications around the city and eventually sealed the people inside so that no one could leave.

After four years, when the people were weakened, the Romans attacked. They took over the Temple Mount. The walls of the Mount were set

on fire and, in the chaos, a Roman soldier threw a burning stick onto the old temple and it was completely destroyed.

The fire spread throughout the city and the Romans relentlessly hunted down Jewish resistance. Nothing and no-one was to be spared – the city was flattened, its population decimated. The Jewish historian of the time – Josephus – records that over one million people were killed during those four years of the siege and in the final destruction of the city.

Most of the surviving population of Jerusalem fled to places throughout Asia Minor and the Mediterranean. They were distraught, they were devastated, they were defeated, and they were displaced. Many believed they had either been forsaken - or punished - by their God.

By the end of the twentieth century, significant research tells us that the



Gospel of Mark may have been written just after the fall of Jerusalem. Thus, the fall of Jerusalem was a very fresh memory for Mark's audience. Some of Mark's audience may have been amongst those who lived through the siege and who ultimately fled the city.

Can you imagine what it was like for the people to hear the words we read - "The beginning of the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God"?

Mark's audience is hearing that, despite the fall of Jerusalem, despite the loss of the temple - there is a victory and a new peace, and that victory and new peace is the Son of God who will prevail over all things for all times! The people are not forsaken. They are not punished. God is with them in the good news about his son, Jesus Christ. It is in this victory over darkness, and the promise of the new peace to come, that we place our trust. It is in this victory and the new peace to come that we plunge our faith.

*Peace on earth
and goodwill
to all people
for all time*



More Gathering Photographs





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