

The New-Normal Newsletter

Gordon-Pymble Uniting Church
Sunday 7 February 2021

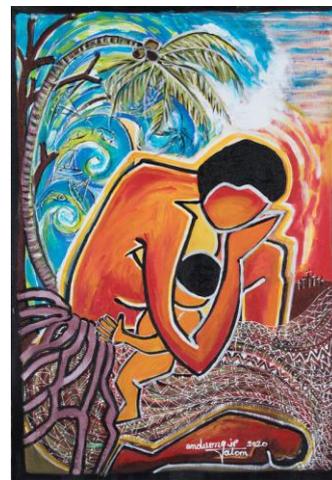


A message from Steve

Another sad week for our congregation as we lose two saints of the church. At the time of writing there is plenty of room for more people to attend Alec Connor's funeral on Monday, 12 noon at Pymble church. Please register at info@gpuc.org.au I have not yet heard anything about Bessie Meek's funeral.

Please keep our staff and volunteers in your prayers. We are currently "between" admin appointments (so there is extra work to do), realigning job descriptions, seeking to start new programs and always aiming to be as efficient as possible. Nicola, Courtney, Lesley and Sonja (our book keeper) are wonderful workers who give so much. Uphold them, me and our Church Council in prayer at the beginning of this year, while Covid continues to impact just about every decision we make.

It was nice to be back in person with the Tuesday Conversations crowd this week. Punch Discussion will start on 14 February, and the Friendship Circle gets back to Pymble on 15 February. Other groups are slowly returning, but as we have seen, we need to maintain our vigilance for the good of everyone. Thank you for your ongoing patience. Steve Aynsley



World Day of Prayer

A World Day of Prayer service will be held this year at Gordon Uniting Church on Friday, 5th March at 11 am. Gordon-Pymble Uniting Church is hosting the service, and the churches participating include Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian and Uniting churches of Gordon, Pymble and St Ives. The theme of this year's service is 'Build on a Strong Foundation', and has been prepared by the women of Vanuatu. Sureka Goringe, Executive Director of UnitingWorld will be the speaker. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, numbers are limited. If you wish to attend, please register at info@gpuc.org.au. Gordon-Pymble Church contact is Sue Conde – sue.conde@gpuc.org.au.

Lenten Studies

There are opportunities to participate in Lenten studies this year. These studies will be once a week for 6 to 7 weeks leading up to Easter, probably from the week beginning 14 March.

You can participate by attending the Thursday morning study group at Gordon. Contact Sue Conde.



Janet Scott and Paul Swadling are happy to lead a study at their home on Monday nights.

Heather McMaster is also prepared to lead a group and would be happy to hear from anyone interested and will then determine a time.

We will be using the study guide prepared by UnitingWorld for Lent event. This resource can be downloaded as a PDF using:

<https://www.unitingworld.org.au/lent-event-is-coming/>

Or a copy can be ordered from UnitingWorld.

Contact the above people to let them know if you would like to attend one of these groups

Thoughts & Prayers

Alec Connor and Bessie Meek's family and friends. Alec (100) had an amazing life from growing up in the central west of NSW, to being a prisoner of war, to being highly respected in business.

Bessie had moved to Gordon Church, after Chatswood South UC closed. She had a career in nursing. She regularly worshipped at Gordon and always had a positive outlook on life.

In both these cases faithful church members have been visiting on and off over the years and I want to acknowledge that wonderful pastoral care.

Lois and her family as they adapt to life without Ian.





MADOW has more good news.

In the newsletter last week, you read about the winner of the Griffith Council's 'Environmental Citizen of the Year'. This was Tennille Valensisi, the Co-ordinator of Hampers of Hope.

MADOW has been sending items for care packs and cash donations for carry bags to Hampers of Hope. Ours is a very small part of a sustaining and efficient program.

In a year that saw their services needed more than ever, the Griffith food charity was faced in 2020 with losing 85 per cent of their volunteers due to COVID restrictions. However, with tremendous support from the wider community, they pulled through managing still to deliver meals to vulnerable elderly, school breakfast clubs, church groups, Griffith refuges and individuals in the community experiencing hardship.

During the year they also helped source and deliver water, food and personal care packages to the NSW and Victorian bushfire victims and drought affected areas.

And more...

Here's what happens to the clothing, bedding and toy donations that you give to MADOW. Michelle Bordignon founded the Facebook group Griffith Helping Hands in 2017 which sees her source, collect, and distribute tonnes of clothing, bedding and household goods for people in need around the region.

This Australia Day she has been honoured with the Local Hero award, recognised for her endless dedication to helping those in need in the community.

"I was a little shocked to receive a nomination because I won Citizen of the Year back in 2015 when I was running the Carevan and Meals on Wheels. So when I got the nomination the other day it shocked me," Mrs Bordignon said. "It feels beautiful, it's really touching. The work has helped me a lot after losing our daughter."

Two years ago, Mrs Bordignon and her family experienced the nightmare of losing their daughter and sister, Stella, to suicide. "Stella was beautiful, a lovely kid. She had a very kind heart," Mrs Bordignon said. "I had to stop. I stopped for about four months because I couldn't think. But then I have to admit, I decided I'd start again because doing it was a form of mindfulness for me." Mrs Bordignon explained that sorting and organising goods and then delivering them to people who were doing it tough in the region gave her reprieve from her grief and lifted her energy for life again.

"Little things like that lifts your spirit. It doesn't fix your heart but it does lift your spirit," she said.

"There are a lot of people doing it tough out there. You don't see it but there is a lot and I think if we can help we should."

"What Michelle and her husband have achieved and what they continue to achieve is outstanding. Particularly what they do helping the disadvantaged in the community," Cr. Dal Broi, Mayor of Griffith, said.

"When a child predeceases you the hurt is unbearable. Michelle could've given up, but she didn't, she continued to work for the community." Michelle you deserve it and on behalf of the Council I want to thank you." Mrs Bordignon accepted the honour by thanking the Griffith community for the enduring support and reminding everyone to empathise with others.

"I have to say that I am very proud to be a born and bred Griffith person when we have such beautiful people in this town that help me all the time," she said.

"My mantra is kindness is everything. You don't judge. You just help."

And another...

Nicole Dehnert and Michelle Bordignon and Tennille Valensisi have been wonderful Griffith locals for MADOW. At the end of January Nicole told MADOW of how things spontaneously get done. (Many organisations share a common huge space – The Hub. So information is shared easily.)

Nicole mentioned to one of the Meals on Wheels staff that she was thinking of delivering bags of Sugar Plums (500 kilograms had been given to her from a local farmer) to the local Uniting Independent Living Units (Hyandra Village). And within 2 hours the girls, at Hampers of Hope, had the plums bagged up, labelled, in 30 packs with the name of the donor etc delivered to Uniting's Hyandra Village.

The next morning Nicole was out cycling and the son of a resident from Uniting's Hyandra Village thanked her for arranging the delivery of the plums. His mother was excited to receive such a gift.

Always lots of nice outcomes.



English Conversation Classes

Our first class was on Monday 1st February.

There are currently 12 enrolments with backgrounds in a variety of languages, Farsi, Mandarin, Japanese, French and Cantonese.

Craft Classes

Mondays 10-12.00pm at GUC.



Our knitters have been busy, knitting just under 50 beanies to be distributed by Wayside Chapel to the homeless. If you are interested in joining contact Lyn Kwong or Pru Tout the co-ordinators of this wonderful initiative.

Friday Community Centre

Commencing Friday 12th February

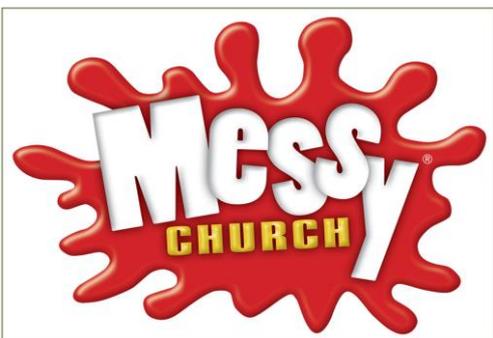
Registration is essential beforehand due to Covid restrictions

Contact lesley.burt@gpuc.org.au



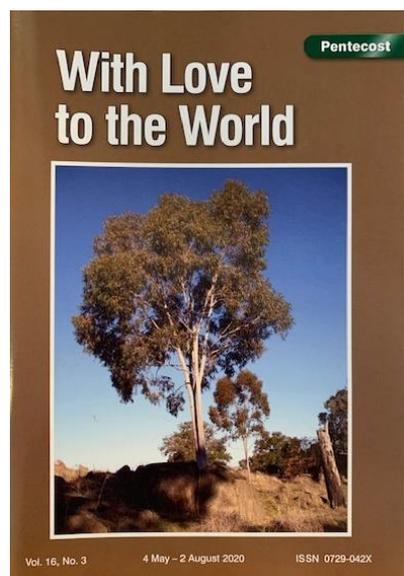
Unfortunately, after many years of leading our walking group, Ros Rossetin is retiring from this position. We would like to thank Ros for her dedication, motivation and leadership skills that has made the group so popular. I know that she and her bright sunny manner will be sadly missed. We are now looking for a volunteer that is willing to lead the walking group in 2021. If you are interested please contact Lesley on 0480 223 981.

At the moment we are researching ways that the Mah-jong can operate in a safe manner and we will be following up with them once we have a plan. Thanks for your understanding.



Messy went to the new Playground at St Ives Showground Saturday 6th February.

We had a picnic and enjoyed catching up and hearing news of our Christmas holidays.



WITH LOVE TO THE WORLD

The new copy of With Love to the World has arrived. You can pick up your copy at either site. If you have any questions please contact Ailsa Reichardt or Sue Conde.

With Love to the World is now also available as an app at either the Google Play Store or the Apple App Store, as well as in booklet form. The annual subscription is \$24 per year.

The Thursday morning Bible Study group follows the readings in WLTW, and new members are always welcome. We are meeting both at the church and by Zoom at present.



EXCITING NEWS!

Playgroup is back for term 1.

Playgroup Times are Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9.30 to 11.30am at Gordon and the new Baby Playgroup at Pymble on Thursdays 12.30pm

If you ever feel like cleaning some toys after a session you'd be more than welcome.

Check the notice board for the latest Covid Guidance notes from the Synod.



John Pender

Reverend Pender, of Berry, has been awarded an Order of Australia Medal for his life's work helping people give their lives meaning. "I wanted to work with people to help them become who they wanted to be and if they became better Christians and the church was better off for it, that was a by product," he said. "I was fascinated with how people cope with their life and give meaning to it."

Reverend Pender was born in 1938. He studied economics at university and went on to work in taxation. After a work transfer to Melbourne he became involved in his local Presbyterian Church as a Youth worker, and was encouraged to study for the ministry.

"My boss and father when they retired with a glass of scotch in their hands and a tear running down their face said they wished they'd done what they dreamed about in life," he said.

"And that's why I went into the ministry. It's bloody hard work but it's been worth it.



"To find what you're meant to do and nurture the talent you need to do it is one of the great challenges of our life."

Reverend Pender said his time as Dean of Students at United Theological College in Sydney was one of the most rewarding chapters of his career.

He said most students didn't need him to know all the answers - they just needed to know someone would listen.

Being a support to others taught Reverend Pender some fundamental truths about who we are as people.

"Most people have low self esteem, and if you can help them work on their self esteem you can help them to live," he said.

"There's a great wealth, a great courage within most people and the extent to which we can reveal it to each other gives us a chance for hope and peace." Although life was not all smooth sailing, Reverend Pender and his wife Margaret had a daughter and a son, who he remains "besotted" with. "I have the most marvellous son and daughter, they're both highly talented - much more talented than their father," he said. "Margaret had a career teaching the blind. When we married she was ten years younger than me and in love. "I was travelling all the time and that took great commitment on her part - I think if I offered her the same opportunity now she'd give me a different answer!"

Reverend Pender said he was "dumbfounded" when he was notified of his Order of Australia Medal. "It's not something that's usually within my ballpark," he said. "Who I am and who I've been is someone who has nurtured and facilitated relationships." That's been the highlight."

Article in South Coast Register

Other Honours

Rev Norah Norris AM was the first Presbyterian woman to be ordained in South Australia. After Church union, Norah served on the Assembly Commission on Liturgy from 1977 to 1991 and with Frontier Services in South Australia from 2006-2019. She is also a prominent ecumenist, as a Member of the South Australian Council of Churches for 40 years from 1970 to 2010 including as President from 1976 to 1977. Norah is a member of Scots Church in Adelaide.

Rev Bryan Gilmour OAM was the 14th Moderator of the UCA Queensland Synod from 1991 to 1992. Originally ordained in the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Bryan went on to placements at Logan Uniting Church in south Brisbane and was Chairperson of South Moreton Presbytery from 1989 to 1993 – a position he held at the same time as being Moderator. Bryan was also the Founding Chair, of the Gold Coast Multifaith Advisory Action Group.

Eric Easterbrook OAM got involved in Legacy in 1981 as a sideline to serving in the RAAF and working for the Department of Defence. He is currently the Vice-Chairman of Legacy Australia after racking up almost 40 years of service in the organisation which cares for war widows and their families. Eric is also Chairman of the Property Committee at Emu Plains Uniting Church and was a Volunteer Bus Driver at the Uniting Church Edinglassie Retirement Village in Emu Plains from 1985 until recently. His award also attracted local coverage in his community.

Catherine McKechnie OAM was an active member of South Australian Branch of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union for almost 30 years, serving as a State Council member and State President. Catherine is also Secretary and Treasurer of the Golden Grove Uniting Church and Convenor of the Women's Fellowship.

Gordon Druitt OAM began growing rice near Coleambally in the NSW Riverina in the 1960s. He went on to become the Vice-President of the Ricegrowers Association of Australia Coleambally Branch, a Director of SunRice Australia, and the Deputy Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board. Gordon has also dedicated much of his life to volunteer organisations in his area through Lions and Apex clubs, and he's a volunteer at Griffith Uniting Church.

WHY I AM RETURNING MY AO HONOUR

By Alistair Macrae



I have decided to join the ranks of Australia Day award recipients who are handing back their awards in response to the “upgrading” of Margaret Court’s Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) to the highest award of Companion (AC).

As an avid sports fan, I celebrated the awarding of an AO to Mrs Court, a suitable recognition of her outstanding sporting achievements.

I question, however, why it was deemed appropriate by the committee to upgrade her award. Her public comments in relation to LGBTI people – I won’t repeat them here – are damaging to significant parts of our community, and by no means represent the views of many Christians.

I was awarded an AO in 2017 for contributions to church and community. Hence, I feel compelled to take this action as a Christian leader.

One area that was not specifically mentioned in the citation for my award is my contribution to discussions within the life of the Uniting Church. Since the early 1990s, I have offered leadership to help the church address changing patterns and understanding of human sexuality and to respond in terms of the church's core values and beliefs.

As a result, in the Uniting Church a person's sexuality is no bar to membership or leadership, although all members and leaders are expected to exercise their relationships according to the highest standards of respect, mutuality and faithfulness.

More recently, I convened the group that resourced the Uniting Church in its deliberations about same-sex marriage. In 2018, the Uniting Church agreed to allow its ministers to exercise freedom of conscience in relation to celebrating same-sex marriage. Marriage rites were developed accordingly.

The decision recognised that members, in good faith, hold different views. Churches worldwide are wrestling with these issues.

It is utterly disingenuous, in this day and age, to claim that Mrs Court's sporting achievements can be separated from her highly publicised comments about LGBTI people.

I wonder what prompted the move to upgrade her and I wonder at the naivete (at best) of the committee who seem to be able to make this separation, apparently unaware of the hurt it will cause. Religious faith has private as well as public ethical dimensions.

As a minister and theologian, I am aware that bad theology kills people. Bad theology underpinned the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. Bad theology supported Hitler's racist ideology and the evil it produced.

Bad theology underpinned or failed to recognise the racist assumptions behind the destructive program of colonisation not least in this land. Bad theology continues to alienate and oppress sexual minorities.

The upgrading of Mrs Court's award will rub salt into these wounds.

Statistics relating to suicide and mental health issues among the LGBTI community are well known and should be of concern to the whole community, not least the community that claims to follow the teaching and life example of Jesus Christ. Jesus' life was characterised by openness and welcome to all manner of people excluded from full participation in their communities, often on religious grounds.

To its shame, the Christian church has often perpetuated teachings and practices that marginalise and exclude people. I long for the day when people will associate the Christian church with the spirit of welcome, inclusion and grace reflecting the God we worship.

Alistair Macrae, is minister of Wesley Uniting Church, Melbourne, and a past president of Uniting Church in Australia.

Visiting the Church: Please register your arrival/departure with a contact number and use hand sanitizer. You are encouraged to social distance, remaining 1.5 metres apart. This is part of the COVID 19 Safety Plan, legally required to keep us safe. At GPUC, following the NSW Health guidelines, we are asking anyone using our facilities **to wear a mask if they are in the public areas.** Thank you for keeping us safe.

During worship we ask for 3 singles or 2 couples per pew. Downstairs has a maximum of 66. Upstairs 20.

Please remember the safety of others. We want to be able to remain sharing in person.

Although we are unable to mingle after the service we are still having our Virtual Morning Tea at 11am on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

Topic: Sunday morning tea

Time: Oct 11, 2020 11:00 AM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84474736981?pwd=aDU2eGxySmoxZU9ZUkN6ZllvUFE2UT09>

Meeting ID: 844 7473 6981 Passcode: 992809

You can still Join us for **Virtual Worship:** [Click for our Youtube channel](#) to catch up with latest videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/gordonuniting>

For all the latest news, **visit our Website** www.gpuc.org.au

Contact the office at info@gpuc.org.au or 9983 9879

