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# The Mustard Seed

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Armadale Uniting Church

Issue 38, Lent/Easter 2022

## Lenten Greetings from Fiona

*'Things can only get better'* is a catch phrase of the optimist.

*'Things can always get worse'* is the cry of pessimist.

What is the word from the realist?

*'Do not be afraid, only believe'* (Mark 5: 36). *'I am with you always...'* (Matthew 28: 20)

*'Stay awake and pray'* (Matthew 26: 41).

Whatever we make of these last two difficult years and the difficult year now begun,  
we know there are concerns, well founded concerns,  
that life for the whole world may change in ways we do not want to begin to imagine.

What to do? Do we bury our heads in the sand? Whistle a happy tune?

Do we opt out, take to our beds, close the blinds,

pull down the shutters and avoid the world?

All understandable options.

Or do we face up to what's going on with concern and compassion,  
gather and hold each other in community, pray for ourselves and the world, for leaders –  
political and religious, local, national, international;  
feed on the sustaining words of Christ to aid us *in* this time of trial?

Lent 2022: we are living the journey to the cross, with a different sensibility in these continuing days of  
COVID, and the real potential for a significant world war.

Easy words, cheap grace, nice thoughts are not what we need.

So what do we need?

We need to understand something more of the cross, something more of Christ's suffering for us and for  
all creation because it is at the cross we find out about ourselves,  
who we really are, what we really need...

*'Always look on the bright side of life'* (Monty Python – The Life of Brian)

Really? Is this, are they, 'for real'?

This is a call to an increasingly popular negation and denial of the suffering and experience of many in  
the world, including yours. It is a call to fantasy and delusion.

There is no hope there. Christ does not treat us or the world thus.

Greetings from Fiona (cont)

Lent is a journey towards and into the mystery and awe of Christ's suffering for the world, which is a journey towards and into the suffering of the world.

We draw near to the cross and if we can bear it, we see there, in a man abandoned and alone, the hope of the world, hope for the world.

Can we bear this? With God's help, we can - and not alone.

In and through the Church we have each other; we have a story, a history.

We have Word and sacrament - the unsearchable riches of Christ - Christ crucified.

We have the gift of the same Spirit which raised Christ from the dead.

We have all we need.

So may we be, and become, en-couraged and en-couraging people in and for these trying times.

*'Do not be afraid'. 'I am with you always...' 'Watch and pray'.*

Blessings in it all.

Fiona

*'...suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us'. (Romans 5: 3b-5)*

March 2022

### **From the Editors.**

Time seems to fly between issues. This time *The Mustard Seed* contains two very interesting and enjoyable articles - one from Karen Brown and one from Karel Reus. Also (a complete surprise) one about me from Ian Thomas which has me blushing somewhat. Ian's memory is better than mine!

There's something about Simon of Cyrene, Alister McGrath, church membership, a prayer and a poem. That this magazine appears at all is thanks to your contributions - and to Graeme Harris and his computer knowledge.

Bill

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# Thank you Bill

## – A thankful tribute to our retiring Church Council Chair.

At the recent Armadale Uniting Church Annual Congregation meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup> it was announced that Bill Rush had declared his intention to stand down as Chair of the Church Council after some twenty years of continuous service in that role. Bill is to continue as a member of Council until his present term ends.

It is good for us to reflect on the significant contribution and impact Bill has had on the life, mission and worship of the Armadale congregation over that time. Bill has performed his role, always prayerfully, with kindness, generosity, commitment, dedication and a clear focus on maintaining a

public presence of a worshipping congregation in Armadale. During his tenure he has worked cooperatively and productively with eight parish ministers – Judith Watkins (the first female minister in the parish), Kylie Crabbe, Fiona Winn whose placements were determined by the call process; and others who filled short-term placements ranging from a month to 18 months – Chris Roberts, Martin Wright, Pam Kerr, Peter Beale, and Gillian Crozier – all of whom brought their own specific gifts to Armadale and Bill worked closely with all of them.



We have been through a period of local ecumenism and cooperation between the Christian Churches in the Armadale-Stonnington area; a very lengthy process of discernment and cooperation between the five Uniting Church parishes of Stonnington; the sad events of the financial crisis in the Uniting Church Victorian Synod and the subsequent poorly managed *Uniting our Future* project which saw the Manse in Denbigh Road sold off and an extensive renovation of our Church Hall which was made into offices for elements of Prahran Mission and Creative Ministry Network. Finally, a restructuring of Uniting saw those offices closed and the tenancy of the “purpose built” offices left vacant for more than 12 months until our current tenants Arrow Health came on board. Bill was front and centre in all of our efforts to remain afloat and viable in these difficult times – not to mention the upheaval of the last two years in the corona-virus pandemic.

Kylie Crabbe a former minister at Armadale Uniting Church sent the following comments. “I was always so grateful to Bill for his thoughtful and generous leadership during my time at AUC. He brought experience without undue attachment to how things had always been done before, care and support without in any way taking over (in fact, he might seem to stand deliberately at the side, but with a presence that made difficult things feel possible and a readiness to speak up when required), and a commitment to think things over prayerfully and carefully. I am confident that this vibe of leadership seeped into all our interactions on Council and helped to facilitate faithful conversation and decision-making. And, of course, his writing is a huge gift to all of us! With grateful thanks for his faithful work, and every good wish for the freedom of newfound time beyond the responsibilities of church council chair!”

The amount of time and personal energy Bill has expended on behalf of the Armadale congregation and the responsibility involved in some of these events has been enormous. The Grace of God the Father; our salvation through Jesus Christ, his Son; and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit have guided Bill throughout his long membership of the Church Council and as its leader. We are indeed fortunate that he is continuing to offer his many gifts to the congregation by continuing to serve as a Council member.

**On behalf of the Church Council and the congregation of Armadale Uniting Church -Thank you Bill. (IT)**

**STOP PRESS- At its meeting on 16 March, the Church Council elected Janet Anderson to be Chair.**

# Around Armadale



Fiona arranged for the Church to be appropriately set up for the Christmas Day service (left). And below, Chris Booth led us in worship on 13 March.



We were pleased to worship together again on 20 February (below)



That's right. Somebody called the cops on Jesus.  
Bystander looking at a sculpture of Jesus the Homeless. (USA).

# Karen Brown

*We've been very pleased to get to know Karen in recent times. We asked her to tell us a little about herself.*



I was born in Durban, South Africa in 1954 from Dutch parents Kees and Elly Goedhart. During my 12 years of schooling I attended 8 different schools in 3 different continents. My father was transferred to Holland, Baltimore USA and South Africa. I am one of 5 children and had a very happy childhood and look back fondly on my childhood years. I was very fortunate to call my Father my best friend and I miss him every single day.

I always knew that I wanted to become a physiotherapist and successfully completed my 4 year tertiary education in Johannesburg before moving to the UK, where I worked in the spinal unit at Stoke Mandeville hospital. Upon returning to Johannesburg, I worked at Baragwaneth Hospital in Soweto the largest hospital in Africa and third largest hospital in the world. I dealt with extremely interesting and complex cases not often seen. Such is the reason why British surgeons train for the battlefield in the A&E and Military medics learn craft by helping casualties of crime and traffic crashes.

In 1978 I married my husband, Peter Brown and had two beautiful daughters Christine and Michelle. I was very fortunate that I was able to volunteer when my children were younger at Cheshire Homes, which is a home for disabled adults. I volunteered at a horse-riding school where I taught disabled children to ride. I got great satisfaction watching the faces of the children transform into happy smiles when they realised that they were riding a horse.

I started my own physiotherapy practice where I became a domiciliary physio mainly for elderly patients. I treated patients in their own houses and loved watching the interaction between family members. I consider myself extremely fortunate to be invited into people's homes and to feel part of the family. I strongly believe that being able to be treated at home promoted quicker recovery for my patients.

In South Africa I was a member of St Mungos United Church, it is a dynamic church with 2 ministers and a large congregation. The church has a vibrant Sunday school for all ages until they were old enough to go attend Teen School which led up to their confirmation. Both my daughters attended Sunday School at St Mungos and have fond memories of their time there. Over the years the congregation became more diverse which I felt truly represents South Africa. I was an active member in the church, I was a member of the choir (which I absolutely adored) as well as a member of the church's life groups which met once a week to discuss various topics from the Bible using literature from authors like Rick Warren.

The one thing I am most proud of being a part of was the Church's thriving outreach program. The Diepsloot community is unfortunately a community that faces many uphill battles such as poverty, unemployment, no access to electricity or running water to name a few. As the St Mungos congregation in Diepsloot had nowhere to meet so the Church built a community hall. This hall served as a hub for the community where church could take place. During the week St Mungos started a nursery and primary school for the local children to attend. This served as a fantastic employment opportunity for the community. Once the schools were up and running a community vegetable garden was started. The vegetables grown were used to feed the children breakfast and lunch thus ensuring the children did not suffer from hunger or malnutrition.

To further assist the community the church started up a sewing and carpentry classes. These classes not only taught the local men and women new skills but also enabled them to sell their goods for money thus enabling them to support their families. It was through donations from the congregation, various institutions and businesses we were able to fund and expand this endeavour. When I left for Melbourne we had about 80 pupils of varying ages which were sponsored. St Mungo's played a huge role in my life and I miss the friends through the church very much.

In March 2020 my life changed, Covid19 meant that I had to give up my physiotherapy practice. I unfortunately have some health complications and was advised by my Doctor that I should give up working as going into people's houses proved a significant health risk. This was an extremely difficult situation to be in as I loved my work, and it was my 'raison d'être'. I had many conversations with family, friends and members of the church and decided that even though I had planned to move to Melbourne in the coming years. I should look to relocate sooner to be with family during this uncertain time. My husband had passed away a few years ago and with both my daughters now living in Melbourne, I sold my house, gifted my practice to a friend and packed up and moved.

As we all know, flying internationally at the beginning of the pandemic proved to be extremely tough. I was fortunate to get a flight, albeit a ridiculously expensive one to Australia. I flew for 3 days and went via Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Auckland and then Sydney. After 2 weeks quarantine, I flew to Melbourne to start a new chapter of my life.

I am so grateful that I live in the same city with my two amazing daughters and their husbands. But the cherry on the top was meeting my first grandson Charlie. He is the light of my life and I enjoy looking after him when my daughter is at work.

Now that Melbourne has relaxed most of its Covid restrictions, it's time for me to start making a life of my own. Becoming a member of Armadale and meeting some of the congregation is a giant step forward and I am so grateful that I have been welcomed with arms opened and already made a few firm friendships. I look forward to what this year has to bring.

## Website

Don't forget to keep an eye on our website. It's at  
<https://armadale.ucavictas.org.au/>

We try and keep it up-to-date, but we always welcome any feedback (you can send this to Graeme). We would also welcome any items of interest that you think might be suitable to be posted.

# Remembering Broome - 1942

*3rd March, 1942*

*Karel Reus*

I write this short account on the 3rd of March, 2022, the eightieth anniversary of the Japanese attack on Broome. This date marks my arrival in Australia as a refugee

I was born in 1938 in the town of Bandoeng, Netherlands East Indies. My mother was a kindergarten teacher. My father was a Flight Engineer with the local subsidiary of KLM (KNILM). We lived not far from the airport as a "normal" colonial family (mum, dad, me, servants and a large Alsatian dog called Wotan).

All of that came to an abrupt end on March 1, 1942 when the Japanese invaders arrived in Bandoeng. Of course the colonial community must have seen it coming, but there is some suggestion in accounts of this time that the invasion was accompanied by a sense of unreality - as if this could not happen. Many people even believed that the Queen would not allow this to happen. There are reports of people looking through their windows and seeing Japanese soldiers riding by on bicycles. I have often wondered since reading these if this could be the first bicycle-led invasion in history. I have archival pictures showing long lines of Japanese soldiers on bikes.

Here my account enters into the realm of mythology. There is no way for me to confirm the account of events that I have received from my mum and a few other sources. It seems that the flight crews at the airport received instructions to fly their aircraft to Australia immediately, lest the Japanese got hold of the planes. It appears that there was general agreement that this was the right thing to do, but the flight crews requested that they might first pick up their families. This request was refused, resulting in a stand-off between crews and authorities. The authorities were told that without the families on board there would be no flights. The story goes on that an attempt was made to draft the flyers into the Air Force, so that their refusal would then amount to mutiny with all of the dire consequences that this implied. The flyers still refused to fly, but eventually got their way. My mum told me that they were given an half-hour to fetch the families. So it came about that my mother and I were fetched from home and bundled onto a plane which took us to Australia without further delay. We had had a narrow escape, leaving Bandoeng under the noses of the Japanese.

That was not the last of the narrow escapes. It seems that the pilots were unaware that their radio



chatter was detected by Japanese fighter planes and the flight was attacked with a number of the Dutch planes shot down. We were lucky. We reached Broome on March 1, 1942 and the planes began to refuel at an airport woefully ill-suited for such emergencies. It seems we stayed in Broome overnight, and departed on March 2. Another narrow escape. On March 3 the Japanese attacked Broome. On that day over eighty Dutch died while their seaplanes were destroyed on Roebuck Bay and other planes were attacked at the airport. Those who died that day are now memorialised in a cemetery in Perth.

So, my mum and dad and I escaped three times from under the noses of the Japanese, and the planes made their way to Sydney. It is not clear how they found their way. One story is that they flew with the aid of road maps. What roads? They must have refuelled on the way. It seems that my plane (PK-AFK) stopped at Daly Waters and Charters Towers, but I have no detailed information about that. My mum and I seem to have stayed in Sydney where records show we stayed at Ushers Hotel while immigration formalities were completed. We received temporary refugee visas for the duration of the war. We lived up and down the east coast and in 1946 were told that we had to “go back where we came from”. That was not possible, so we went to Holland. Two years later we managed to get back to Australia.

So began our life in Australia. I must have seen my father again, but I don’t remember. My mum and dad were divorced within a few years, and I heard from my mum that he had remarried and had a new family. This means that I have some half-siblings. Some years ago I discovered that I have four half-siblings – a half-brother and three half-sisters. I graduated from being an only child to being the older brother of five.



(above) DC-2 PK-AFK here shown on a Dutch airfield pre-war. This is the plane that Kartel’s family escaped in.

(previous page) the invasion of Batavia (now Jakarta)



# WHO WAS SIMON OF CYRENE?

Simon of Cyrene is mentioned in three of the four gospels as the man impelled by the Roman soldiers to carry Jesus' cross from Jerusalem to Golgotha. His place of origin (in modern day Libya) has led many to wonder if he was black and of African descent. Mark and Luke say that he was 'on his way in from the country'(Luke 23:26), that is, the opposite way to the procession which was coming out of the city. Simon then walked behind Jesus probably bearing the cross beam. Generally, the main upright beam would be already at the site.

That the soldiers pressed Simon into service speaks for Jesus' extremely weakened state after his flogging. Was it pity that caused them to do it? We may never know. The soldiers had their orders but were unlikely to know of the prophecies concerning his crucifixion and death. Had Jesus died on the way the mob would have been denied their usual 'spectator sport' of catcalls as the crucified hung on the cross. The soldiers were expected to carry out their orders in full, not let one of the men scheduled for execution that day die before their orders were complete.

Mark provides the most information about Simon, adding that he was 'the father of Alexander and Rufus', men obviously well known to Mark's readers. It is speculated that the Rufus mentioned here may be the same man Paul greets in his letter to Rome, whom he calls 'chosen in the Lord' and whose mother 'has been a mother to me too'. Acts 2:10 tells us that people from Cyrene were among the crowd on the Day of Pentecost.

GotQuestions.org; Biblestudy tools.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Vote for me

Cars will be turned into flutes,  
sheep graze in public parks.

Trams will be lined with books,  
- prisons, wisteria-walled.

Politicians will sing in choirs,  
accountants taught to tango.

The old will have honour and cake  
and a licence for practical jokes.

The middle-aged will lie on grass  
and watch the procession of clouds.

The young will be loved and learn  
that to live is to be slowly born.

Bill R

# AGM and changes at the Church Council

We held our AGM on Sunday 27 February 2022, at which we received reports from the Church Council and Rev Fiona Winn (both are on the website) as well as the Treasurer's report prepared by Susie Condron. The meeting thanked by acclamation those who had contributed to the life of the Church over the past year, particularly Rev Fiona and Bill Rush.

As mentioned on page 3, we also heard that Bill Rush was stepping down as Chair of the Council (although he will remain a member) and that Margo Anderson and Susie Condron were not seeking re-election with the expiry of their terms of office. The election of new members of the Church Council subsequently occurred 13 March 2022, when Cheryl Mason was re-elected and Chris Kunaratnam and Karen Brown were elected. They join the continuing members of the Council, namely Ian Thomas and Janet Atkinson (as well as Bill). Fiona is a member of the Church Council ex officio.

Janet Anderson was appointed Chair of the Church Council at its meeting on 16 March. We congratulate her and extend our best wishes.

## Easter Services

**All at Kooyong Rd except as noted**

April 10<sup>th</sup> **Palm/Passion Sunday** - 9.30 a.m. *'The final journey...'*

April 14<sup>th</sup> **Maundy Thursday** 7 p.m. – Tenebrae and Holy Communion – *'A final meal...'*

April 15<sup>th</sup> **Good Friday** – 9.30 a.m. *'The final breath...'*

***Stations of the Cross – Central Park 11 a.m.***

April 16<sup>th</sup> **Holy Saturday** – 10-12 noon - Cleaning and Contemplation –  
*'The finality of the grave...'*

April 17<sup>th</sup> **Easter Sunday** – 9.30 a.m. Easter celebration with Holy Communion -  
*'Limitless life...'*

# Membership Matters

As a Christian community, we were very pleased on 28 November 2021 to welcome into membership two members and one member-in-association.

Fiona prepared some observations about membership of the Church. These are based on a discussion paper from Uniting Church National Assembly (March 2007):

‘Our understanding of membership of the Church comes from the New Testament.

Some of the key passages are: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 3:19, 3:6, 4:25, 5: 29-30.

Some of the emphases in these passages are:

- We are members of God’s family through being united with Christ by grace.
- This union is brought by the Spirit in baptism.
- Christ cares for his people.
- Membership of Christ’s body implies a new set of values and lifestyle.
- We are different, with different gifts and tasks, yet all belong.
- We all bring our various gifts and abilities for the one common purpose.

Note that this is quite different from the common understanding of membership of a society or club, in which a person decides to pay a fee and, in return, receives certain rights and privileges.

It is also different from being a member on the basis that we all agree about everything. Our unity does not arise from what we choose to agree on, but from our common baptism into Christ.’

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## AN EASTER PRAYER

David Adam

Risen Christ, as you appeared to Mary in the garden,  
to the disciples in the Upper Room,  
to the travellers on the road to Emmaus,  
be known among us.

Be in our homes, in our work, and in our journeying.

Christ, risen in glory, let us walk in your presence and peace.

Scatter the darkness from our hearts and from your world.

## **Alister McGrath – Scientist and Theologian.**

A one-time atheist, Alister McGrath was born in 1953 and studied mathematics, physics and chemistry before going to Oxford University and receiving first class honours in chemistry. Later he was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy degree for research into in molecular biophysics. McGrath accepts and promotes evolution.

Reflecting on his time as an undergraduate at Oxford, McGrath wrote “I was discovering that Christianity was far more intellectually robust than I had ever imagined. I had some major rethinking to do, and at the end of November 1971 I made my decision: I turned my back on one faith and embraced another”. Later, McGrath left Oxford to work at Cambridge University and while there studied for the Anglican ministry.

McGrath has been highly critical of Richard Dawkins, calling him “embarrassingly ignorant of Christian theology”. His book *The Dawkins Delusion?* – a response to Dawkins’ *The God Delusion*, - was published by SPCK in 2007. Both men had a public debate which you can watch on your computer or YouTube.

He has written over 50 books, many for lay people, including *The Big Question: Why we can’t stop talking about Science, Faith and God* 2015 (St Martin’ Press).

### **YOU ARE WELCOME FOR BREAKFAST!**

Women’s Breakfast On the first *Thursday* of the month. Contact Margo Anderson for details 0447 035 355

Men’s Breakfast On the first *Friday* of the month. Contact Graeme Harris for details 9504 8234

## **Armadale Uniting Church**

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Minister: Rev Fiona Winn  
Organist: Rowan Kidd  
ucarmadale@gmail.com

0403 662 786

<https://armadale.ucavictas.org.au/>

Regular service times: 9.30 am each Sunday, Holy Communion on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month.

Quiet Contemplation: 10 am each Wednesday.

Children’s program: 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month, during term time.

Usually on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday (where a month has 5 Sundays) we hold a combined service with other Uniting Churches in Stonnington, which are not always at Armadale. If the service is not at Armadale, no service at Armadale on that day. During January, the format of our services may vary.