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# The Mustard Seed

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Armadale Uniting Church

Issue 42, July 2023

## **Greetings from Fiona**

Greetings.

It is hard for me to write that this will be my last `epistle` for Mustard Seed and for the near-and-not-so-near Armadale congregation. After seven (for me) truly wonderful years with you, I intimated to Janet, the Chair of Council, at the beginning of 2023, that I planned to retire towards the end of the year.

So the time has come to begin to enact the necessary changes. Various events since January have only served to confirm for me – and therefore, as I understand discernment, for the congregation too – the rightness of this decision in terms of timing and going.

As was said to me recently: `You`re doing the right thing. You`re making space for someone else.` I do believe I am making space for someone else – and making space for something else. All of which will be revealed in God`s good time.

It is time to prepare for all that is yet to be - which is both daunting and exciting.  
We are not alone...as the Spirit has led, so the Spirit will lead...

As I look back and reflect on the past several years, I am grateful for so many things: for the resilience, faithfulness, and great good grace of the congregation, as well as the wisdom, insight and humility of those who serve currently – and who have served - on Church Council while I`ve been with you. It has been a joy, a real joy, to work alongside and with such committed, wise, and gracious people.

And we`ve had our challenges.

We have come through the uncertainty of COVID, managing to congregate on Zoom, continuing to worship and wonder together, supporting each other, welcoming other people among us – even online.

And while we do still need to be mindful, as memories of restrictions and lockdowns recede, we have returned to worship in person, with a continued commitment to the place where we gather, to each other and to the wider community – which is, I believe, the charism of life together as followers of Jesus Christ, heirs of God`s enduring and everlasting covenant love from generation to generation – good news, indeed, for all creation.

And, ultimately, that's all we have to offer the world: the great Good News of Jesus Christ. How the world needs to hear, see, taste and touch something of this Christ. This is the call on us all, individually and together, as those who profess to follow Him. May we, in our different ways, continue so to live, work and witness.

As I begin to prepare to leave, thank you for loving me - and challenging me.  
It has been a privilege.  
You will continue in my heart and my prayers.  
Every blessing.  
Fiona

`...to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him,  
bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God`.

July 2023

### From the Editors

For the past 20 issues of the Mustard Seed, a message from Fiona has featured on the front page. Sadly, this time will be the last. Her pastoral reflections have always given us something worthwhile to think about and been an aid to our growth as Christians. Characteristically, her words have been informed by wisdom, commonsense, and a love for Jesus. We have lots to thank Fiona for before she leaves. This is just one of her gifts to us.

This issue contains a variety of material which we hope you will enjoy. Some history, travel, theology, great photos, and more. The editors thank all who contributed.

– Bill and Graeme

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### YOU ARE WELCOME FOR BREAKFAST!

**Women's Breakfast:** On the *second Friday* 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

# Neighbour Day

We had Neighbour Day on 26 March. Rowan and Hugh both contributed musically, and there was a simple craft activity for children. Arrow Health arranged a sausage sizzle and there was morning tea and a chance to meet our neighbours - and for them to meet us. Thanks to all concerned.

## ***FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS***

We pray for our community –  
that snapshot of humanity,  
with all ages, backgrounds,  
education, employment status,  
politics and religious viewpoint,  
who are our neighbours  
in the streets where we live.  
We pray for all of them;  
not only those we know by name  
and chat to through the day,  
but also less familiar faces  
about whom we know so little  
and pass by with just a smile.  
Bless their homes and families,  
and let your love and peace  
so shine within this community  
that smiles turn into conversations,  
and strangers become friends.  
We pray this through Jesus Christ,  
The Prince of Peace. Amen.

*Thanks to Cheryl Mason who found this poem.*



Many young writers make the mistake of enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope, big enough to send the manuscript back in. This is too much of a temptation to an editor.





# Got Questions?

What does it mean to affirm that Jesus is Lord?

Generally speaking, a lord is someone with authority over others: to say that someone is 'lord' is to consider that person a master or ruler of some kind. In Jesus' day, the word was often used as a title of respect toward earthly authorities. When the leper called Jesus 'Lord' in Matthew 8:2 he was showing Jesus respect as a healer and teacher.

However, after the resurrection, the title 'Lord' as applied to Jesus became much more than a title of honour and respect. It became a way of declaring Jesus' deity. It began with Thomas' declaration when Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, 'My Lord, and my God' The statement 'Jesus is Lord' means that Jesus is God. He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18)'. He is our only Sovereign and Lord (Jude1:4). He is, in fact, the Lord of lords. (Rev 17:14). Jesus referred to himself as Lord many times, In 1 Peter 3:15 we are commanded, 'In your hearts' honour Christ the Lord as holy'.

Amazingly, the Lord Jesus left his exalted position in heaven and came to earth to save us. In his incarnation He showed us what true meekness looks like. Just before his arrest, Jesus used His power and authority to teach us humility. 'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you should wash one another's feet'. (John 13:14). The last will be first, according to our Lord. (Matt 19:30). In saying 'Jesus is Lord' we commit ourselves to obey Him. Jesus asked 'Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?' (Luke 6:46).

Jesus is Lord. He is more than the Messiah, more than the Saviour. One day, all will submit to that truth. (Philippians 2:9-11}

Abridged from *Got Questions?* on the internet

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## CREDO

*Daniel Berrigan (1921-2016)*

I can only tell you what I believe; I believe:  
I cannot be saved by foreign policies.  
I cannot be saved by the sexual revolution.  
I cannot be saved by the gross national product.  
I cannot be saved by nuclear deterrents.  
I cannot be saved by aldermen, priests, artists,  
plumbers, city planners, social engineers,  
nor by the Vatican,  
nor by the World Buddhist Association,  
nor by Hitler, nor by Joan of Arc,  
nor by angels and archangels,  
nor by powers and dominions,  
I can only be saved by Jesus Christ.

To be a Christian in our present society is a conscious act of resistance. (Peter Hitchens).

# *AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO*

## *(354 – 430).*

With the exception of the biblical authors, perhaps no other person has had more influence on the Western Church and its theology, than Augustine. Thomas Aquinas quoted him heavily when he composed his famous *Summa Theologica*. When Martin Luther and John Calvin were accused of teaching a new doctrine, they pointed to Augustine as an example of one who taught the things they were teaching. In his writings, John Wesley's thinking was also influenced by Augustine.

Augustine was born in North Africa to a pagan father and Christian mother named Monica. At that time, this area, (roughly present-day Tunisia, Algeria and Libya), was largely Christianised and a major source of wheat and olive oil for Rome. It was also an area where veterans from the Roman army were given land at the end of their active service.

Although Monica was well known for her devout faith, Augustine was anything but a Christian in his early years. As a boy he stole from his neighbours and skipped school. His adult life was characterised by a string of mistresses, one of whom bore him a son called Adeodatus. Spiritually, Augustine spent his time following Neo-Platonism and Manicheism, both anti-Christian philosophies.

Despite all these things, Monica spent years praying for her son. Eventually, when working in Italy, Augustine came to admire the preaching of Bishop Ambrose of Milan because of Ambrose's skill as a rhetorician. In time the message of the scriptures also began to hold sway. One day as Augustine was in a garden, despairing about his lifestyle, it is said he heard a child's voice saying: *Tolle lege!* (Take it and read it!) Hearing the voice, Augustine began to read Romans 13 and then and there placed his faith in Christ. He was baptised by Ambrose.

Augustine became Bishop of Hippo in 395 and exerted enormous influence on the church. He argued with the British monk Pelagius who denied original sin and who taught that a person could be saved by his own moral striving, apart from God's grace.

Augustine's work on the Trinity became very influential in Christian theology. His famous *Confessions* is one of the earliest and most important autobiographies ever written. In it he reasoned that as time itself was created by God, the Creator exists both within time and beyond it.

In 410 Rome fell to northern invaders. In Augustine's *City of God*, he reminded the Church that although the kingdoms of the world may rise and fall, the kingdom of God will never end.

Wikipedia, United Methodist Insights, Ligonier.org,etc

April Blackwell leads a Christian Meditation group at the church on Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm.

Sessions usually conclude about 9 p.m. For further information contact April @ 0419 807 892

To reduce Christianity to good behaviour is to miss the point.  
Alban McCoy

# Around Armadale



(left) Chris Booth led us in worship on 19 March 2023 and for a number of Sundays in May and June. A number of us participated in the Headstart walk on 6 May 2023 (below).



We constructed a prayer chain over a number of weeks. We started it during Lent, and continued it for a number of weeks afterwards (below left). We've installed new electric heaters to replace the old gas ones. We certainly felt the need for these! (below)





# GALAPAGOS 2023

Our trip to the Galapagos in April this year was a wonderful adventure – a kaleidoscope of strange animals and birds coupled with walks and snorkeling every day. Every day was a new adventure on a different island with people we quickly got to know and share the excitement of the experience with. We started the adventure when we were picked up from the airport in Quito late at night.

The next morning we were flown to Isla Baltra in the Galapagos Islands, where the airport was located. Even there we encountered lava finches and land iguanas while we waited for the bus. We then caught a ferry to Isla Santa Cruz where we were taken into the highlands to see the giant tortoises that the Islands are famous for. On to Puerto Ayora to meet the boat which would become our home away from home for the next week....

We visited 7 islands over a week, encountering green turtles, beautiful reef fish and even snorkeled with sea lions and Galapagos penguins, which was a real thrill. The birdlife which swirled overhead and around us was another highlight. Hawks, frigate birds, blue and red-footed boobies and red billed tropic birds were just some of the parade of beautiful birds we saw.

All in all we had a marvelous time. It was a fantastic experience and one which will remain a highlight of our travels.

Rob and Ann Ahin







Together, we can build a remarkable country, the envy of the rest of the world.

Lowitja O'Donoghue

# WAS SHAKESPEARE A CHRISTIAN?

William Shakespeare, the English language's greatest writer and the world's greatest playwright, died on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1616, at the age of 52. There has certainly been speculation about his personal religious beliefs, particularly about whether he was truly Protestant. Some scholars want him to be Catholic. And, of course, some scholars of this post-Christian era want him to be an atheist. Whether Shakespeare was a Christian was a question people in Elizabethan England would not ask. People considered themselves born Christian. People grew up accepting the beliefs of their parents and community.

There is not the slightest doubt that Shakespeare would have believed that he was a Christian. He attended church with his parents from an early age and was educated at Kings New School in Stratford. The curriculum was based on Latin and reading the Latin authors from which Shakespeare quoted liberally. With strict teaching, pupils learned key Bible verses by heart, memorized creeds and catechisms, and took part in daily Christian liturgies.

Shakespeare attended church. Cynics say he had no choice, as do those who want him to be secretly Catholic. But there is much evidence that he appreciated the Book of Common Prayer. The words of the Church of England services appear throughout his plays. The impression is that he took an intelligent interest in the words and was familiar with the liturgy.

This is even more true of the Bible. Biblical stories and allusions were a rich source for him. A thoughtful reader with Biblical knowledge will sense in his plays far more than mere forced familiarity with the Bible, The plays contain over 1000 conscious uses of Scripture and other unconscious uses of Biblical words by a person who loved and read the Bible.

Shakespeare heard the Bishops Bible read in church and clearly quoted its phrases. It is abundantly clear from his plays that he owned and read his own Geneva Bible. To Shakespeare, his beloved Bible was a major source of imagery which he used with the ease of a person totally familiar with it.

Abridged from Was Shakespeare a Christian? (Eternity News).

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## Offerings

We're grateful for the level of support that we receive through weekly offerings, but have you thought about the amount you contribute? If it hasn't increased for a while, perhaps you might like to consider whether a small increase might be in order. Some of us use envelopes or make direct credits. Envelopes are available on the table as you enter the Church, and you can speak to any member of Council about making direct credits.

Our spirituality is oneness and an interconnectedness with all that lives and breathes, even with all that does not live and breathe.

Mudrooroo

# REMEMBERING GERRIT PETERSCHLINGMANN (1936 – 2023)

*As mentioned in the last issue of The Mustard Seed, Rev Gerrit Peterschlingman died in February. Here, Bill R sets out some memories about him.*

In the early eighties, after some years of non-attendance at church, I read an article in The Age newspaper about the Reverend Gerrit Peterschlingmann and the Armadale Uniting Church. I was intrigued and decided to pay a visit one Sunday morning. This was the beginning of a long and happy friendship with both Gerrit and Ruth.

I soon realised that Gerrit, apart from his strange surname which I found hard to remember, was different from the ministers I recalled from my young Methodist/Presbyterian days. While orthodox in belief and insistent on dignified liturgy, Gerrit was impatient with overt religiosity and over long prayers. He was of course Dutch, European, and rather autocratic in ministerial style - and in those days, something of a novelty in the recently formed Uniting Church.

Gerrit was genuinely interested in all sorts of people including neighbours and shopkeepers. Apparently, when flying overseas on one occasion, he spent a lot of time talking to various people as he walked up and down the aisles engaging in conversations. One person who was trying to sleep, called out “For heaven’s sake, shut up.” He did enjoy a good chat.

On another occasion, I went with Ruth and Gerrit to Williamstown. As we walked along the esplanade, Ruth and I lost sight of Gerrit. Eventually we discovered him in conversation with some very tall Ethiopian immigrants. In a sense, he saw the world as his parish.

Gerrit had a great sense of aesthetics, loving both art and music. As a theology student, he had the option of studying church architecture as an optional subject and he used this interest to good effect when the Armadale Uniting Church went under extensive alterations in 1984. Using his tailoring skills learnt as a young man in Holland, he made the large wall hanging with gold cross and the communion table folds with symbols, all still in use there today.

As a child of the war, and living in occupied Holland, he had many stories to tell. His mother, who was a great influence on his early life, would take him to services at the Dom – the Utrecht Cathedral – where he was very intrigued by its imposing organ and the sounds it made. Later, and self-taught, he learnt play the instrument himself. J S Bach was his favorite composer.

A man of many talents, Gerrit’s pencil sketch of the church exterior is still on the cover of the church directory today.

Bill Rush

Footnote: Gerrit oversaw the extensive renovations to the church in the 1980s. He wrote about them in the Advent 2011 issue of *The Mustard Seed* (available on the AUC website at <https://armadale.ucavictas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sermons/2019/12/aaaMS11-Advent12-fnl-for-cpd.pdf>)

The beautiful thing about writing is that you don’t have to get it right the first time, unlike, say, a brain surgeon. Robert Cromier



# *From the archives*

The AUC News sheet for August-September 1999 reported on the final days of the Denbigh Road church. See <https://armadale.ucavictas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/newsletter-9-Aug-99-p2cmpd.pdf>

It was sold for \$1.05 million to a developer who constructed the apartments that now exist within the external fabric of the building.

The final Service of Worship occurred on Sunday 15 August 1999, when the preacher was Rev Claire Tanner, grand-daughter of long-serving minister at Denbigh Rd, the Rev Scott Tanner.

The organ was sold. Apparently there was keen interest from many parts of Australia. The successful bidder was St Michael's Roman Catholic Church, Wagga Wagga.

Nine of the large stained glass windows were moved to Kooyong Road, but the pews and other furnishings were auctioned.



## **Armadale Uniting Church**

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ARMADALE Vic 3143

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Organist: Rowan Kidd  
[ucarmadale@gmail.com](mailto: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.