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# The Mustard Seed

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Armadale Uniting Church

*Edition 17: Lent 2015*

## From the editors...

Our theme in this edition of *The Mustard Seed* is "Reflecting on the past...". But of course we've taken the opportunity of including a discussion with Fiona so that we may get to know her a little better.

Bill writes about two different aspects of the Methodist tradition in London, and Dorothea reflects on the traditions of the Church of Scotland.

Interestingly, Fiona and Dorothea offer slightly different perspectives about growing up in the Church of Scotland, albeit at different times.

Ian Savage, chaplain at Prahran Mission, comments on aspects of his work there, and we set out some facts about Lent.

There are some photos from the Kooyong Road centenary in 1981.

We've also included a moving poem reflecting on the issues of disability.

— Bill Rush and Graeme Harris.

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## A chat with Rev Fiona Winn

It's been good to welcome Fiona to Armadale. We asked her a few questions so as to get to know her a little better.

1. It was interesting, in your first sermon at Armadale, to hear something of how you see the role of the Church. Would you like to outline again the role that you see for the Church in today's society?

*The Church, as the Body of Christ, is to live out and bear witness to the wondrous, forgiving love of God for the whole of creation and for all people; this love demonstrated perfectly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

2. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the Church in our society? Any comments?

*I suspect it is more important, in these turbulent times, to be **realistic** about the role of the Church in postmodern, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Australia. If the Church is the body of Christ then I will always be – not sure `optimistic` is the right word? – committed to, whole hearted and, above all, **hopeful** about the future of the Church. The Church certainly has something unique to offer which the world needs.*

3. You mentioned in your first sermon that you had had a career before entering the Ministry. Can you tell us a little about that?

*After a three year degree in French and Politics at St. Andrews, I trained as a Div. 1 nurse at the London Hospital*

*in the East End of London. I worked on a surgical ward and in the Intensive Care Unit there before I moved into palliative care nursing at St. Christopher's Hospice. While at St. Christopher's I was invited to join the ecumenical chaplaincy team and encouraged to apply for theological training and explore a call to ministry.*

4. What were the circumstances of your call to the ministry?

*My call to ordained ministry was a gradual process and very much to do with listening to what other people were saying to me; their insights and encouragement. Ordination to ministry was most definitely not a path I could ever have imagined for myself. I am most grateful to God for those who saw something in me, who mentored, influenced and accompanied me and who encouraged me to explore the possibility.*

5. We hear that you are on Standing Committee; can you tell us a little about this?

*Synod Standing Committee is the committee elected to make decisions and discuss issues regarding the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania in between the whole of Synod gatherings. Meetings are held in the Synod offices in Little Collins St. on alternate months and deal with a wide range of issues – property, finance, ministry, mission, theological education - lay and ordained – schools, agencies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian Congress – and much more. Intense and interesting!*

6. We know that you have a Scottish heritage, so may we ask what brought you to Australia?

*My husband's job!*

7. Are there things about Scotland that you miss?

*I miss family probably more than anything.*

8. What are your most memorable events in the Church of your childhood?

*Evocative, challenging, inspired and inspiring teaching and preaching. I looked forward to going to church on Sunday. Even as a child, it truly was a highlight of my week. Time to reflect and make amends and think about God and ultimate issues. I liked the atmosphere and the people there. Particularly I remember my baptism at fourteen in*

*the Church of Scotland and the reverence and solemnity of Communion services which were held only four times a year.*

9. We've heard that you may be introducing us to some new hymns (as well as using the "traditional" ones); what might we expect?

*There are some more modern, little sung songs in Together in Song. I reckon – with Rowan's help! - we could learn a few of those – if we don't already know them. Also there are some good contemporary hymns by composers like Graham Kendrick and Stuart Townend.*

10. What music do you listen to for relaxation?

*I listen to all kinds of music. (Alphabetically...) Bach, Eva Cassidy, Nick Cave, John Denver, Peter Gabriel, Carl Jenkins, KD Lang, Mahler, Meredith Monk, Mozart, Arvo Part, Schubert, Richard Strauss. I enjoy opera, lieder, chamber and Church music.*

11. Is there any sort of music that you really dislike?

*Christmas Muzak. I particularly dislike schmaltzified Christmas hymns.*

12. What sort of books do you like to read? What have you read recently that you've liked?

*I read widely and a whole variety of stuff! I particularly enjoy biographies, non-fiction, poetry. Recently I read The Goldfinch (Donna Tartt) – highly recommended; Blood Meridian (Cormac McCarthy) – not for the fainthearted but utterly compelling. I continue to wade through Game of Thrones (George RR Martin) – I've really enjoyed these and they're not my usual reading material. I'm on the third book. And I have just begun a biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.*



# METHODIST TRADITION IN LONDON

**Bill Rush**



Westminster's Methodist Central Hall (pictured at top right) was built as the result of a huge fundraising initiative to mark the centenary of John Wesley's death. The Fund was established in 1898 with the challenging aim of raising a million guineas from a million Methodists (when a guinea was the equivalent of the average weekly wage!). To maintain equality, each donor was allowed to donate one guinea and in return received an illuminated certificate. Children who donated one shilling were awarded a John Wesley medallion. All donors were invited to write their names on special pages which were bound into 50 volumes called The Historic Roll. The roll is over 17,000 pages long and is on display. A staggering 1,024,501 guineas was raised.

Central Hall stands on a site formerly occupied by the Royal Aquarium and the design chosen from 132 entries in a competition. The rules stated that the building should not be Gothic and should not resemble a traditional church, so that folk who had no connection with the Christian Church would feel comfortable entering. The final style was Viennese Baroque with Romanesque decoration. The exterior has no cross or obvious religious symbolism.

The main church, known as the Great Hall seats about 2000 with a beautifully decorated inner, self-supporting, dome (of ferro-cement) – the second largest of this type in the world – only surpassed by our own State Library here in Melbourne.

During the Second World War, the lower ground floor was the largest air raid shelter in England, housing up to 2000 people each night. One of the most significant events to have been hosted at Central Hall was the inaugural meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1946. It is still much used as a conference centre.

For 24 years, the Musical Director of the church was Dr William Lloyd-Webber, father of Andrew, who premiered his first musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, in 1968. On the Sunday I attended worship there in 2010, the service included a recognition of the National Day of Nigeria, with many colourful robes and headdresses in evidence.

This huge and impressive building is well worth a visit (nice cafe too!). The church still fulfills its primary function as a thriving Christian community in the heart of London (very close to the Houses of Parliament and just across the square from Westminster Abbey).

(right) Plaque commemorating first meeting of UN General Assembly



## LENT and EASTER SERVICES

### Lent

The Lenten theme for the Stonnington churches is **'Hard Places'** with a pilgrimage around the churches. So, for the **five weeks of Lent** each of the churches in the Stonnington region will offer a reflective service of about 30 mins. An appropriate Bible reading will be offered, silence, prayer, music...it may vary according to the Church.

Each of these weeks the services/reflective times will be at **10 am Wednesday and 7 pm Thursday.**

Week One at Armadale (25-26 February); Week Two at Malvern East (Serrel St) (4-5 March); Week Three at Gardiner (11-12 March); Week Four at Toorak (18-19 March); Week Five at Ewing (25-26 March).

### Palm Sunday – 29 March

The Stonnington Churches will have a combined service, with time and location to be advised

### Maundy Thursday - 2 April

Tenebrae at Ewing – and a fish and chip supper.

### Good Friday – 9.30 am 3 April 2014

9.30 am at Armadale (with the Stonnington ecumenical Stations of Cross to follow).

### Easter Day – 9.30 am 5 April 2015

9.30 am at Armadale.

# ALL ABOUT LENT

Compiled by Bill Rush  
mainly from the BBC Religions Site



Lent is the period of 40 days which comes before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday and is traditionally a time of fasting and reflection. Only a small number of people today fast for the whole of Lent, although some maintain the practice on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

## Why 40 days?

40 is a significant number in Jewish-Christian scripture.

- \* Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry.
- \* In Genesis, the Flood was brought about by 40 days and nights of rain.
- \* The Hebrews spent 40 years in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land.
- \* Moses fasted for 40 days before receiving the Ten Commandments.

## Why is it called Lent?

Lent is an old English word meaning “lengthen”. In the northern hemisphere, this occurs in Spring, when the days start to get longer.

## East and West

Both the eastern and western churches observe Lent but they count the days differently.

The western church (of which we are a part) excludes Sundays whereas the eastern church includes them. In the West, Lent starts 6 full weeks (of 6 days, because Sundays are excluded) plus 4 days before Easter Day (Ash Wednesday).

Eastern Churches (mostly Orthodox) start Lent on the Monday of the 7<sup>th</sup> week before Easter and end it on the Friday before Palm Sunday. In this tradition, Holy Week is a separate period of fasting. Moreover, many of these Churches use the Julian calendar, so the dates of Lent in these traditions can be different to the dates in the Western tradition.

## The colour purple

Purple is used in some churches on altar drapes etc. This colour is associated with mourning and so signifies the pain and suffering of the crucifixion. It also is a colour associated with royalty and celebrates Christ’s resurrection and sovereignty.

(Interestingly, purple is also used as the colour for Advent. This is because this period was once also a time of fasting and penitence. This aspect has largely disappeared in the West where the focus is on the joyful anticipation of the birth of Jesus).

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The message of Easter is that God’s new world has been unveiled in Jesus Christ and that you’re now invited to belong to it.

N.T.Wright



# The minister, Prahran Uniting Church?

## Ian Savage reflects on his role



From time to time the Prahran Mission in Chapel Street receives letters addressed to, The Minister Prahran Uniting Church. These letters end up in my pigeon hole. Of course there is no Uniting Church in Prahran – but I am Chaplain to the Prahran Mission, licensed by the Uniting Church and lead the Thursday lunch-time faith community worship. Numbers and people attending fluctuate wildly – but there is a core group who support one another and support the Prahran Mission community in prayer. There is also a weekly service at the Mission's Scottsdale residential program in St Kilda.

The Mission is a diverse community and my role is to engage spirituality wherever I find it or wherever it finds me. The Mission presents its most inclusive face at the Annual Meeting and prayers have been led by Jews, Muslims and Buddhists. However spirituality is about individual people and their journey rather than about faith traditions. From time to time a group has gathered to focus on sharing what we have discovered. A couple of years ago it was, 'My spiritual journey'. This year the focus is on life-giving insights or practices, 'Life to share'.

It is a fact of organisational life that you end up doing what you can get funding for! Over the past three years I have run a series of monthly excursions. We have visited Healesville, the Botanical Gardens in Cranbourne, the Melbourne Aquarium, Williamstown for fish'n'chips, Scienceworks, Werribee Zoo, Colingwood Children's Farm. The experience of including new people in the group, going to new places and doing new things has been life-giving – a spiritual experience!

During my time as Chaplain the faith community has booked its spot in the Mission calendar. Since 2011, with the help of Erica Myers-Davis, the Mission has hosted an Easter lunch on Maundy Thursday in connection with a competition. In the past it has been a themed art competition ('My spiritual journey', 'What gives me life'). Following the closure of the Stables art program, this year we have an Easter hat decorating competition. (Watch out for more details!). I also have a role in the Prahran Mission and City of Stonnington Christmas Day lunch – saying grace, and chatting to guests. (A video clip of the 2014 lunch has been posted on YouTube.)

It is important for the Prahran Mission to honour its roots in the ministry of the Church. We started in 1946 as the Prahran Methodist Mission and Christian Community Centre. Prahran Mission's presence at Armadale Uniting Church is a new expression of this ministry. Part of my role as Chaplain (The minister, Prahran Uniting Church?) is helping to foster this relationship. In 2013 and 2014 the Mission took part in a Commencement service with other UnitingCare agencies and the Uniting Church congregations in the city of Stonnington. Scottsdale residential program was originally a ministry of St Kilda Baptist Church. On Sunday 22 February this year, there was a service celebrating the relationship between Scottsdale and St Kilda and Elsternwick Baptist Church. I look forward to more services like these in the future.

# Growing up in the Church of Scotland



Aged about 4!

Memories of long ago in a “distant land”,  
by Dorothea Bogle

Now, there is little doubt that attitudes have moved on and we enjoy a much more relaxed, less formal approach to worship in Armadale Uniting Church than was ever the case at St Matthew’s Parish Church in Morningside in Edinburgh, the church which I attended in my childhood. This does not mean that we are any less reverent. On the contrary, now that church attendance is seen as less mandatory and more a commitment to being a follower of Jesus Christ, I sense a greater reverence in those few of us who have continued as “regular attenders”. As I looked at the children in church this morning, laughing and spinning around, I could not help being amazed – and relieved - at the changes which have taken place for the children in our Churches.

The most important C of S influence in my early days was the influence of my grandmother and mother, the widow and the daughter of a parish minister in Crieff, Perthshire. They were both strong women with a deep conviction and trust in God. They modelled faith in action and welcomed unmarried mothers into the household and showed a constant reaching out to help the community where we lived. They ensured that “grace” always preceded meals, morning and evening prayers were said as I knelt by my bedside and only appropriate activities were permitted on the Sabbath such as walks up Blackford Hill in the summer or colouring pictures beside the fire in winter.

St Matthew’s was a large city church and I remember tip-toeing down the aisles and sitting quietly between my mother and grandmother, each of whom held one of my hands during prayers. Services were very controlled by the minister and I never remember any congregational participation apart from the occasional Bible reading by an elder. I sat in awe of the minister high and lifted up in the pulpit. I remember much of the old Scottish “fire and brimstone” in sermons and an Old Testament concentration on sins. We children would be withdrawn to the large cold hall for the teachings and I used to wonder what “the grown-ups” got up to in our absence. Is it not so much more inclusive and welcoming to have our children within the church space and even receiving communion? At Sunday school we would be questioned on The Children’s Address to make sure we had been listening! Even the Christmas party was regimented as we lined up for sausage rolls and lemonade. The teachers were kindly and well-meaning I do not doubt but we were always relieved to see our parents when they arrived to take us home. Everything felt very SERIOUS.

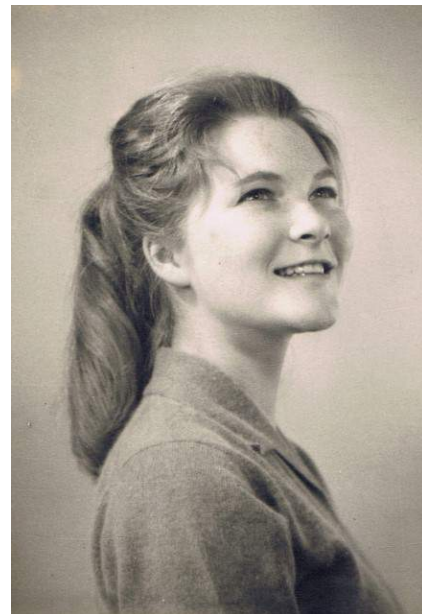
Sunday School led on to Youth Fellowship which was fractionally more teenage-friendly. At least there was often a young assistant minister who seemed more in-tune with our interests and concerns. Teenage questioning of The Establishment had set in along with a healthy reassessment of many previously ac-

cepted norms. It would have seemed disloyal to have questioned my grandmother or mother but help here came from an unexpected source.

My only maiden aunt and I spent most summers on St Columba's Isle, Iona, our very special place. The tiny island was imbued with a sense of calm and spirituality – the Abbey, the Nunnery, the ancient Celtic crosses the bog cotton and wild flowers on "the machair". It was here that I was introduced to The Iona Community – many young people with a real sense of mission and spreading the Word. I was caught up in their enthusiasm and intoxicated. Iona had been much blessed through the ages and now it was experiencing a resurgence of faith. It was infectious. This was the real mission, the joy of sharing fellowship and reaching out into the world. This is where the New Testament became real and meaningful for me.



I am delighted to have transferred to the Australian Uniting Church and hold the fellowship and caring of this small community as truly precious. I am especially happy to be involved with the Children's Ministry Programme and hope that I can contribute to making the "Sunday school" experience more meaningful and joyful than mine was in dear old cold, wintery Edinburgh.



St Martin's Cross. Iona (above), and a portrait of Dorothea in her teenage years (right)

#### **Contemplative Worship at Armadale**

This group meets in the church lobby on alternate Sundays at 7 p.m. It is based on Ignation meditative practice. For further information contact the Rev. John Bottomley of Creative Ministries Network. 9827 8322.



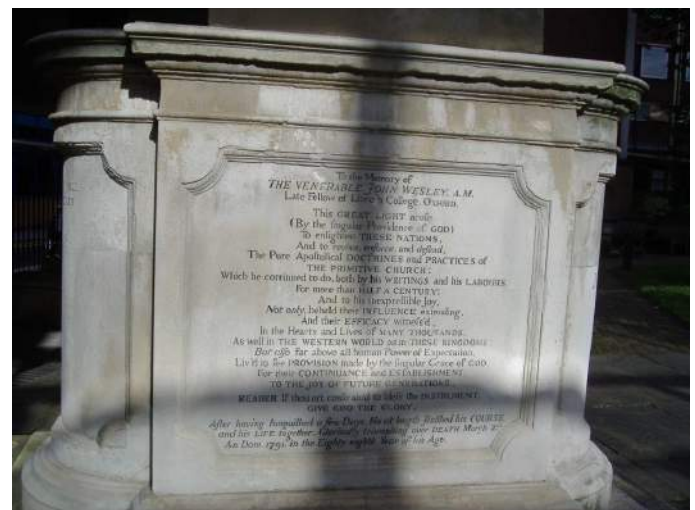
# WESLEY'S CHAPEL

Bill Rush

Spitalfields is an area in the East End of London, not greatly frequented by tourists.

However in 2012, two Melbourne friends and I explored the streets on foot with the help of a guide book. We discovered the colourful Bengali community there (the smell of curry in the air) art galleries, and the historic Christ Church, beautifully restored with the support of the National Lottery. In City Road we came across the Bunhill Cemetery, final resting place of Susannah Wesley, John Bunyan, and Daniel Defoe. Nearby is Wesley's Chapel considered by many to be the Mother Church of World Methodism, with the first service having been conducted in 1778. This is a fine Georgian building with a courtyard, set well back from the busy road. Next door is the small house where Wesley lived (when he wasn't travelling) and where he died in 1791.

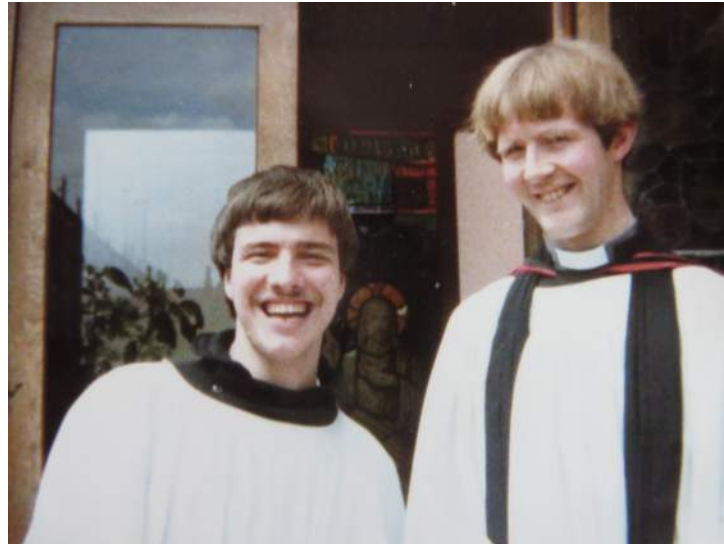
The interior of the chapel is light, with a gallery on three sides. Most notable is the lofty pulpit reached by a winding staircase from which the preacher is easily seen and heard by all. The gallery supports were originally ship masts donated by King George III. Later admirers replaced these with marble. Our guide thought that Wesley would not have approved of these or of some of the other later beautifications. I was surprised to learn that the communion rails had been replaced not that long ago and the new ones had been donated by Margaret Thatcher! As she had been brought up in a staunchly Methodist home no doubt she was an admirer of Wesley – and of his enthusiasm for thrift and hard work. There is a fascinating museum in the crypt with many items relating directly to Wesley himself and to the early history of Methodism.



John Wesley's burial place (left) and the inscription on his tomb (above).

# What's it like to be Disabled?

Pat Tolson's brother-in-law and his wife had a severely disabled adopted son, Terry. Pat visited the family in England a few years ago and was deeply impressed by Terry's strength of character and the care given by his loving parents. Terry sang in the local church choir before his death. A poem written by Terry is opposite. (Terry is on the left in the picture below.)



\* \* \* \* \*

After death something new begins, over which all the powers of the world have no more might.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## 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 little increase might be in order.

## Phone number

As we hope to be using Prahran Mission's communications facilities in the future, we will no longer have a landline at the Church (it was 9509 8958). Hence, to contact Rev Fiona Winn, please ring 0403 761 273 (or email [fionamwinn@netscape.net](mailto:fionamwinn@netscape.net))

## What is it like to be Disabled?

What's it like to be disabled? A question I'm asked,  
Though an answer is hard to provide.  
Does it hurt not being able to do simple tasks?  
Does it make you feel angry inside?

The question a fair one - I ponder a while  
In order an answer to find.  
A quick explanation delivered in style  
To settle the questioner's mind.

I trot out the old phrase "I just do my best":  
I think that this answer is kind.  
He tries to imagine his life with my legs;  
I'm just thankful I've not got his mind.

My friend, I can tell you till blue in the face,  
The anger of missing a bus.  
You could not imagine being last in a race,  
Unless you are one of us.

Now I am disabled and don't care a jot,  
I just lead my own simple life.  
I keep thanking God I've got what I've got  
Though as yet I'm still missing my wife.

What's it like being disabled? That question again.  
This teasing is very unfair.  
If I knew the answer, well, just think what then?  
Yes, I'd be a millionaire.

If you always try hard, and you give it your best –  
Yet still find that you tend to blow it.  
Try that bit harder and you'll pass the test,  
If you try hard enough you'll know it.

So the next time you see me out walking the street  
Should you question someone who's disabled  
Just try it yourself with a stick for a week,  
Then explain it – cos I'm quite unable.

Terry Tolson

# Centenary of Kooyong Road

The Centenary of the Kooyong Road Church (originally the Methodist Church) was celebrated in 1981. We came across some photos, and here are a few of them. Do you recognize anyone?



## Armadale Uniting Church,

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0421 049 374

Organist: Rowan Kidd  
[www.armadale.unitingchurch.org.au](http://www.armadale.unitingchurch.org.au)

**Regular service times (except January):** 9.30 am each Sunday.

**Children's program:** 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, during term time.

*During January, and occasionally at other times, we hold combined services with the other Stonnington region Churches, instead of meeting at Armadale.*