
The Mustard Seed



Armadale Uniting Church

Edition 18: July 2015

From the editors...

Our theme in this edition of *The Mustard Seed* is "Worship". But of course we've taken the opportunity of including a few other matters as well.

Fiona asks us to consider what we think about when we hear the word "worship". Bill tells us about the "Mystery Worshipper", and Karel reflects on "worship" New York-style. We also look at the place of music in the worshipping community.

We pay tribute to the work of the Armadale UC Fellowship over the years, and reflect on Rev Dr Max Champion's final service at Mt Waverley.

Also included are some photos by Rob Ahin from his recent South American trip, including some of notable cathedrals there.

— Bill Rush and Graeme Harris.

Worship

Rev Fiona Winn

When you hear the word `worship` what comes to mind?

A Sunday morning service? Hymns and prayers? Bible readings? A sermon? Do you think of a place? A church? Do you think of creation? Do you think of people? Do you think of God? Jesus Christ? The Holy Spirit?

The truth, of course, is that worship is not primarily about us. Worship is primarily about someone else; the one we, Christians – and others – call God; the one whom Christians, because of Jesus Christ, know and name as `Father`.

Worship is not confined to one particular time or to one particular place; nor is it restricted to one group of people; one style; one nationality; one culture; not even, I would suggest, to one faith.

Worship happens in time and beyond time. Worship is about the past, the present and the future. It is about meaning and hope, assurance and reassurance. It is about the whole of life – living and dying – and life beyond. It is about wonder. It is about wondering...

In this issue

Editorial	1
Worship ... Rev Fiona Winn	1
The Mystery Worshipper	3
I Believe?	5
Worship, New York Style	6
Prahran Mission's Winter Breakfast launch	7
Armadale UC Fellowship	8
South American photos	9
Rev Dr Max Champion	11
The Place of Music in the Worshipping Community	12

We all worship something. Beyond religious faith, there are those who worship money, power, material possessions, education, sport, a 'good time'. That which we worship is that which we value above all else - what we live for and what we might even be willing to die for.

You see, essentially, worship is about *love*.

Imagine - Sunday morning worship is all about *love*!

The building. The space. The music. The stillness. The images. The stained glass windows. The font. The table. The cross. The welcome. The grace. The hymns and songs. The prayers of adoration and confession. The word of forgiveness. The peace. The sermon. The offering. The remembering of others and their needs as well as our own. The notices. The word to send us out. The blessing. The post-

lude. The cuppa, cake and conversation afterwards. The people.

It is all about love.

And this love, our worship, is not just for an hour on Sunday morning. It is for every second of every minute of every hour of every day. And it is not just for us. It is to share with everyone – especially with those who don't love us and those we find it hard to love.

As Christians, we worship and we wonder, because we have heard and come to know that, in Jesus Christ, God loves the whole world and God loves us – even us. We are full of gratitude; 'lost in wonder, love and praise'...

'O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.'

June 2015



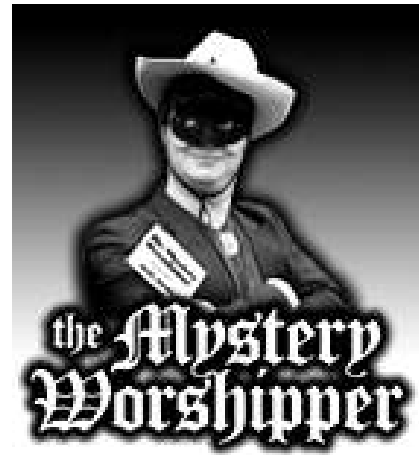
The Pentecost service

Next of kin/contact details

Please consider giving Fiona contact details of your next of kin/contact details, so that they're available if a situation arises where contact needs to be made with someone on your behalf.

THE MYSTERY WORSHIPPER

Bill Rush



Some years ago, I contributed to the “*Mystery Worshipper*” online site which involved me visiting a church, not necessarily of my own denomination. It’s part of the “Ship of Fools” website, at <http://ship-of-fools.com/mystery/index.html>.

I had to adopt an anonymous name, then pass on my written observations to headquarters for publication on the net. I could either leave a Mystery Worshipper Card with the congregation or send an email so they would know where to find the report.

Most Mystery Worshippers seem to come from the UK and USA, though some live in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Some reports arrive from more exotic locations. On occasion, churches feel that the report on their worship was unfair, so there is opportunity for them to comment. Maybe on that particular day, the minister had been taken ill at the last minute and someone had to hurriedly fill in with little time to prepare. Maybe half of the congregation were away on a retreat. Maybe the visitor was unaware of the congregation’s outreach to the community.

Once I discovered a report of a Uniting Church which I knew a cousin of mine attended so forwarded it on to him. His congregation were very interested to see how their worship was perceived by a neutral party – and in this instance, by a person from another denomination.

It was a fairly positive assessment, though not entirely. I don’t know any changes were made as a result.

The job of a Mystery Worshipper is to answer a number of questions such as *How did the service start?* Often in traditional churches the leader begins *In the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, or Good morning all.* In more evangelical or Pentecostal churches, one might hear *Hi (or G’day!) everyone. My name is Barry – or something of that sort.* The Mystery Wprshipper is asked to time the sermon to the minute, then summarise and assess its content and delivery. Other questions asked are *What about the service was like being in Heaven?* (beautiful choir?, the reverent atmosphere?). Also, *What about the service was*

Fruitful and acceptable worship begins before it begins.

Alexander Maclaren

like being in the other place? (the person in the row behind sniffed through the service? The singing was abysmal?). More importantly asked is *Did you feel glad to be a Christian?* Usually the answer is yes – though not always. Comment is also invited on the welcome received, and any after gathering (brewed coffee or instant? china or paper cups?).

I suppose this sort of exercise is a bit like giving a theatre review which some might not think appropriate. It can also be slanted towards the Mystery Worshipper's particu-

lar prejudices. If a reviewer likes incense, he or she is unlikely to find it at Armadale Uniting. If he or she likes mostly informal prayer and youth band music, a cathedral liturgy would disappoint.

In my experience, a visitor can pick up a vibe from the church attended. Some, more than others, convey a real sense of prepared, active and reverent worship. It would be interesting if a Mystery Worshipper joined us one Sunday and passed on his or her observations.

* * * * *

Christian worship is the most momentous, the most urgent, the most glorious action that can take place in human life.

Karl Barth



St Sava Cathedral, Belgrade. This is built on the Vračar plateau, not far from the centre of the city, on the location where St Sava's remains were burned in 1595 by Ottoman Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha. The exterior has been finished but work is still proceeding on the interior.

I Believe?



*The following is an abridgement of the introduction to a booklet entitled *The Apostles' Creed* by Bruce Barber.*

Bruce was a former Dean of the United Faculty of Theology in Parkville.

I believe ... says the Christian worshipper, beginning to say the Creed – but does she? She, or he, will go on to say some things which almost certainly he/she does not believe if *believe* is understood in the ordinary sense of accepting some statement as being an accurate fact. Is the alternative then only to say *I do not believe this, but I do believe that*, and so set up something like a balance sheet with debits and credits, each side of which can be added up to see which has the most items? Is there any other way of understanding the words *I believe*?

Terms like *the love of God*, his *grace and truth*, *new life in Christ*, *joy, peace, hope, Spirit* – these are words answering to and expressive of the rich concrete reality of the Church's life — at least that is their intention. So when we say *I believe*, we do so by starting with something we all know; that Christianity is first and always essentially a style of life, not an intellectual hurdle race ... we are really saying *I find myself at home within this community attempting to grasp this style of life I want to share, and I do share in this life of which this ancient creed is a symbol*. One is not asked to affirm any more than this.

For example when we say *I believe in God*, we are not asked to say in the same breath anything about a particular idea of God. That would destroy the point of the Creed. For then one would have to go on and ask *whose idea of God would that be?* That of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Wesley, Billy Graham? – to cover some representatives. To be sure, some of these ideas will be more true than others, but none of them nor any combination of them need be. We are asked to say *that* not *how* we believe; we are confessing that God and we belong together, not subscribing to some specific formulation of Christian belief ... the point is not that there ought to be a creed or ought not to be, but that there is and has always been a creed which gathers up the distinctive existence of the church in all its richness.

It is important to recognise that the ancient creeds, though they may appear to us to be so positive, so final, so unrelenting, so stark, are really concerned with ruling out what is false than with stating everything one must believe ... the Creed allows many beliefs about how it was that in Christ God acted for us and our salvation ...it knows that no explanation of him will be entirely adequate; but it refuses to let us say that such a divine action in history did not or could not take place... As we move through it, the Creed will invite us to say many things. But in fact, it will be saying only *one* thing, although from a number of different perspectives. The one thing is the centrality of Jesus Christ.

All this means is that when we say *I believe* we are endorsing the faith of the Church through the ages. Therefore, although we are making a personal confession, we do not have to carry that whole burden ourselves. We have permission to wait until our growing experience of life points to words previously puzzling, filling them with meaning. We, as individuals, do not necessarily have to make sense *now* of any particular statement. But we are invited to confess the Creed today in hope, knowing that we take our place in a reality extending through times and places and experiences beyond our imagining.....

Worship, New York Style

Karel Reus

My companion and I were wending our way down along the streets of the south-western part of New York City. We had wandered around the site of the resurgent *World Trade Centre*, spent a little time in the graveyard of the nearby *Trinity Church* for a moment's reflection, after which we sought out the terminal for the *Staten Island Ferry* on which we would take a free ride. Approaching *Bowling Green Park* we came across a sight of biblical proportions. It was a scene that would have done *Cecil B. DeMille* proud. A golden calf, no less, complete with a cast of thousands. Well, more a bull than a calf, but eagerly sought out by bus-loads of tourists eager to touch it, to photograph it, and to be photographed to prove that they had been there. I have learned since that touching it, caressing it, mounting it and kissing it will, so they say, bring luck.

The *Charging Bull*, was created by *Arturo Di Modica*, at a personal cost of US\$360,000, and was given by him to the people of New York at Christmas time in 1989. *Di Modica* trucked it in, and deposited it in front of the

New York Stock Exchange, uninvited and unwanted. It was, and remains, a piece of *guerilla* art. The police impounded it, but public demand finally caused it to be placed at its present site not far away, which the City insists is temporary but looks increasingly permanent. The *Charging Bull* arrived during the 1987 stock market crash, and symbolised renewed hope. It was a message well-received and well-understood. Now it ranks high as a tourist destination, some claiming that it gets more visitors than *The Statue of Liberty*.

It would be stretching things a bit to say that the *Charging Bull* is worshipped, although if this is not worship what is? It is, however, a testament to the power of symbols and their ability to impress into imaginations a great idea. In this case the idea is "the market" and its long-term ability to bring salvation. We, in *The Church*, have a host of symbols at our disposal, but we have tended of late to hide them under a bushel. Perhaps it is time to bring them out of the closet, use them as *guerrilla* art and capture imaginations.

...they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it...

Exodus 32:8



Prahran Mission's Winter Breakfast launch

The 24th annual series of Winter Breakfasts
was launched on 19 May 2015



Neil Cole

Prahran Mission launched their annual Winter Breakfast series as a breakfast function at Functions on Chapel, a nicely restored venue in the Prahran Town Hall complex. About 150 people attended, with a good number of Stonnington councillors and staff present as well as numerous sponsors and other supporters—including a table and then a few more from AUC

There were a number of speakers, with the keynote speaker Neil Cole, formerly a State Labor cabinet minister and now playwright, whose mental health issues became a matter of some controversy. He gave some candid views including some not-very-subtle comments on his “political enemies” (including, apparently, quite a few on his own side of politics).

The breakfasts provide a hot meal to those who need it. Sometimes it’s their only hot meal for the day.

* * * * *

Presbytery Representative

Armadale is entitled to have a lay representative at meetings of Presbytery. At present, this position is vacant. If you’re interested in assisting in this way, please speak to Bill or Fiona.

Contemplative Worship at Armadale

This group meets in the church lobby on the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 7 p.m. It is based on Ignation meditative practice. For further information contact Jon Adamson 0400 168 714 .

The Armadale UC Fellowship.

After many years, the Armadale UC Fellowship has decided to redeem the various investments which it has administered over the years (mainly derived from bequests by both Methodist and Presbyterian members). Yvonne Smith wrote about the UCF - and particularly the role that Lesley McMullin played in it - in the September 2014 issue of *The Mustard Seed*,

The money formerly invested has been distributed to a variety of causes, including Frontier Services, Uniting World, Mission Liaison Group, Shalom College, Pahrhan Mission, Share, Uniting Church Adult Fellowship, the Bible Society and Armadale uniting Church.

In previous years, donations were made to charities such as these from the interest income, as well as from the proceeds of the UDV's activities such as its trading table.

We pay tribute to the faithful work of the UCF over many years, and especially the role that Yvonne Smith as President and Betty Terrell as Treasure have played in recent times. Their devotion and work is an inspiration to us all.

We also express our gratitude to them for their generous donation to the Church. It's hoped that the money received will be able to be used in a specific way so as to serves as an on-going acknowledgement of the role of UCAF over the years.



Betty (left) and Yvonne (right)

* * * * *

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. Or, if you don't use the envelopes at present, could you consider asking Betty T for a set?

South America

Rob and Ann Ahin recently spent some time in South America. Here is just a small selection of the photos that Rob took., including some of some of the great cathedrals and religious statues. Rob tells us that something like 80 - 90% of South Americans are Roman Catholic but he and Ann found that, particularly in the country, they also haven't forgotten their ancient roots and still keep the ancient traditions alive almost to give greater weight to their spiritual life.



Left—archway on to a narrow, steep laneway, Quito, Ecuador



Above - Lake Quilotoa, Ecuador



Left—the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue, on Corcovado Hill, Rio de Janeiro.

At right - the Inca site Machu Picchu, Peru. This extensive site is believed to have been constructed as a royal retreat in the 15th century initially for for Emperor Pachacuti, but was abandoned in 1572 and not rediscovered until 1911.





La Basílica, Quito, the largest church in South America.

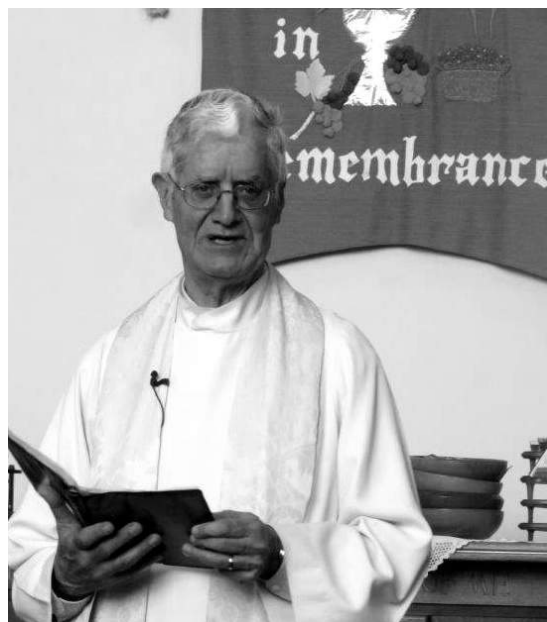
Metropolitan Cathedral, Buenos Aires, former parish of Pope Francis, the current pope.



The "Flying Madonna" on a hillside overlooking Quito.

Rev Dr Max Champion -

Final Service at St John's, Mt Waverley



Max was the Minister at Armadale for much of the 1990s and his commitment, good humour and passion are fondly remembered by those who were here then. His wife, Ruth, was also actively involved in all the Church's activities (as well as holding a full-time senior position and bringing up four children!)

After Armadale, he was called to St John's Mt Waverley, where he has been the minister for the last 14 years. He recently retired from full-time ministry at St John's, and representatives from Armadale attended, along with a large congregation, to hear his last sermon there (on the subject "It's Time"!) as well as the speeches acknowledging his many contributions and to wish him well. These were followed by lunch.

However, we confidently expect (and hope) that Max will still be "on the scene" making contributions to the Uniting Church and in relation to broader theological matters for many years to come.



Presentations were made to both Max and Ruth.

The Place of Music in the Worshipping Community

Some extracts from Guidelines for Worship – Uniting Church of Australia Assembly

Thousands of years of experience and practice have left the church in no doubt as to the essential part of music in the life of the Christian community. Music ...is a phenomenon connected to the work of God because it invites us to touch what is deepest in our souls, and release within us a divine force.

We cannot be reminded too often that our chief calling, not only in worship, but also in the totality of life, is to worship God.

If we regard worship as the core function and goal of a worshipping community we must claim the close secondary function, that of joining with God in God's mission – as disciples of the serving, crucified, yet risen Jesus Christ. Worship and discipleship are inseparable.

How often do we put our confessional words into song – telling it like it is before God who is grace? ... How often are the psalms of lament read in our churches? ... These ancient words offer us a prayer language which we ourselves might not dare to offer God.

Congregational singing is a witness to our belief that worship is based not on the adequacy of our own efforts, but on the saving, gracious character of the One we praise. God who forgives sins certainly forgives wrong notes! ... our music is a sign that the saving grace of Christ is freeing us to do what we were created to do – to give ourselves with complete abandonment to God.



Armadale Uniting Church,

86A Kooyong Road,
ARMADALE Vic 3143

Minister: Rev Fiona Winn
0403 761 273

fionammwinn@netscape.net

or

armadaleuc@bigpond.com

Organist: Rowan Kidd
www.armadale.unitingchurch.org.au

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

Children's program: 4th 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.