

# BANYULE BABBLE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF BANYULE  
ST JOHN'S HEIDELBERG ❄️ HOLY SPIRIT WATSONIA

MAY  
2024

Office: 1 Burgundy Street Heidelberg 3084 ph. 9457 1144

Ministers: Canon **Denise Nicholls** 0438 856 376 **Helen McAlley** 0447 372 972

Internet: [www.banyuleparish.org.au](http://www.banyuleparish.org.au)

email [banyuleparish@gmail.com](mailto:banyuleparish@gmail.com)

Editor (author of all unsigned articles): Peter McKay 9459 5852 [petergmckay@hotmail.com](mailto:petergmckay@hotmail.com)

## DENISE'S DATELINE

### Spotlight on Child Safety

This month I want to bring to your attention the things we do in our parish to ensure, as much as we are able, that all people are safe and free from harm.

Judy Thomson, known by so many of you, has been appointed our **Child Safe Officer** as well as her other role of **Family Safety Champion**. As a School teacher and Principal in her working life Judy has always been interested in the wellbeing and flourishing of children and also of families; so her appointment to both these roles is a great gift to our Church.

Yet **child safety**, and the **protection of women and children from family violence** is not simply a 'set and forget' – Judy's appointment does not mean that we can forget all about OUR PART in helping to keep Church as a safe place for all people. Rather, it means that we have a mechanism in place of a 'safe person' that any child or family member can speak to at any time.

We must all play our own part in ensuring that things are done in ways that are appropriate and give assurance and comfort to all vulnerable people. Child safety is EVERYONE's business, and everyone in our community must pay their part. So if you are unsure of anything, please DO speak to Judy Thomson or me.

You will see Judy's smiling face on the Child Safe posters at both St John's and Holy Spirit, along with her contact details. Judy has completed all the necessary training that, along with her own store of experience and expertise, means that she will know how best to help anyone in need. Judy will also come along to our youth activity soon so the teenagers can get to know her. (She is already well known by the *mainly music* families!).

Our Diocese wide commitment to upholding all the Child safe standards set by the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au>) means that ALL Anglican Churches must be compliant with all necessary check and licenses; this we do through training and accreditation of everyone involved with children and young people, our clergy, our *mainly music* volunteers, our Parish Councilors, Church Wardens, and of course our Child Safe Officer.

Next time you are at Church, check out the posters about **Child Safety** and **Prevention of Violence against Women**. These posters are there to let everyone know, us and all the users of our premises, that we value all people, and especially those who are vulnerable. It has been said that even having a child protection policy and poster on display is enough for a potential abuser to avoid our premises, for it shows that we are alert to keeping people safe from abuse.

Jesus said 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Mark 10:14-15

Denise



### *mainly music: May 2024*

The good news is that we no longer have a waiting list: less work for me. There are now only 11 families (16 children) on our attendance list. All who attend enjoy the sessions and participate well. In general, families appreciate a group that is welcoming, supportive, inclusive and fun.

Our format is a half-hour adult and children's interactive singing and movement music session, followed by children's morning tea, then play/reading activities. During the latter time, adults partake of a cuppa and calories, whilst catching up with each other and members of our team.

Families also value other benefits of our *mainly music* as they are looking for activities that provide:

- An environment for social interaction for both children and adults;
- Time for a parent/carer and their child to experience and build attachment as they have fun together;
- Growth of language development and communication.

I'll continue this theme next month, otherwise the Editor will sack me for taking too much space!

Rhonda Taylor

[Editor's Note: No way!]

### *Pentecost*

As usual, when the day of Pentecost is come (Sunday 19th May) we shall all be together in one place, *viz* Holy Spirit Watsonia, at 9.30 am, to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church, and the Patronal Festival of Holy Spirit. To help celebrate this, it is traditional (but not compulsory) to wear something red. There will be no service at St John's that day.



## This Month – May

**Wednesday 1st:** 11 am Iris Grange; 3.30 pm Strathalan

**Saturday 4th:** 9 am –12.30 pm Prayer & Planning Day at Watsonia

**Sunday 5th Easter 5/6:** 9.30 am St John's (all-age), 5 pm Holy Spirit

*Acts 10:44–48; 1 John 5:1–12*

**Thursday 9th Ascension Day**

**Sunday 12th Easter 6/7, Ascension 1:** 9.30 am St John's, 5 pm Holy Spirit

*Acts 1:15–17, 21–26; 1 John 5:9–13*

**Sunday 19th Pentecost:** 9.30 am Combined, **Holy Spirit**

*Ezekiel 37:1–14; Acts 2:1–21; John 15:26–27, 16:4b–15*

**Wednesday 22nd:** 10 am Holy Spirit Mothers' Union; 3.30 pm Regis Macleod

**Sunday 26th Trinity:** 9.30 am Combined, **St John's**

*Romans 8:1–12; John 3:1–17*

## Wanted

- Another churchwarden
- More *mainly music* volunteers
- Musicians



Denise with Fr Biby Abraham Kizhakkemuriyil, also known as Biby Achan, on his last day at St Peter's Knanaya. He is returning to Kerala.

Fr Biby had a difficult job. If you think our two centres are a way apart, Fr Biby was simultaneously Vicar of St Peter's Knanaya Church Melbourne, St Mary's Knanaya Syrian Orthodox Church Adelaide, St Jacob's Knanaya Congregation Brisbane, and St Stephen's Knanaya Congregation Gold Coast. He had to do a lot of travelling!

He is a very learned man. His studies have included:

- Bachelor of Commerce (St Thomas College, Ranni)
- Bachelor of Divinity (Malankara Syrian Orthodox Theological Seminary, Ernakulam)
- Master of Arts (Syriac) (Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam)
- Pastoral Counselling (Toronto University, Canada)
- Master of Arts (Psychology) (Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi)
- Chenda Melam [a type of percussion music] (International Centre for Kathakali, New Delhi)
- Master of Theology (St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam)

The new Vicar of St Peter's is Rev'd Fr Thomaskutty.

## Holy Spirit Mothers' Union

Our last meeting was on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 10 am. After our usual Cuppa & Chat, Val led our MU Service with two songs from *Covenant Songs*.

Minutes from our last meeting were passed.

The Autumn *Mia Mia* magazine arrived: thank you to Merrin from St James' Ivanhoe and Sylvia Webb from Melbourne Diocesan Branch.

Coral received an Easter Greeting to us from our Link Branch St Mary's Broughty Ferry Scotland. Thank you, Coral, for keeping up the correspondence.

**CORRECTION** from last month's report in the *Banyule Babble*: I had put our funds were sent to Karen Nursery School, which is correct, but the cattle feed is an M.U. Australian project; at times it is mosquito repellent or powered milk sent to country Australia. *Editor's note:* This was the Editor's mistake, for which he apologises.

The next meeting will be on 24<sup>th</sup> April; then 22<sup>nd</sup> May at 10 am.

*Elsie Storr*

## Prayer and planning meeting

On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May at 9 am – 12:30 pm at Holy Spirit Watsonia, Parish Council and Wardens will be holding a prayer and planning day for our parish. Everyone is welcome to attend this morning of prayerful planning and revisioning for our Church. A sumptuous morning tea will be provided. Please put your name down on the clipboard at the centres.

## Blokes Helping Blokes

The Editor had some mixed feelings about April's meeting of *Blokes Helping Blokes*. When he arrived, Glen rapidly wrapped up some joke or anecdote he was telling, to make sure it did not appear in the *Babble*. Then, the Editor was sworn to secrecy while Glen related something that had happened to him. Glen's experience cried out to be included in the *Babble* at considerable length, with the Editor's usual attention to unvarnished accurate recounting of the facts, but he was not allowed to, and he is obliged even to suppress the reason for this. Nor can he report the follow-up anecdotes and advice that Glen's disclosures engendered.

The Editor started getting the impression that his reporting was not always whole-heartedly welcomed.

Fortunately the rest of the meeting was not embargoed. After an earlier meeting in which members spoke/bragged about their prowess at sport, an anonymous person (surprisingly, not the Editor) had suggested, 'Perhaps we could talk about those of us who were hopeless at sport'. So the theme of the meeting was the sporting non-highlights of the non-sporting.

Jon Buttery started by referring to the psychological damage of having team captains pick people for their teams alternately, and always being the last to be chosen. It is a matter close to the Editor's heart, as he suffered the same thing at his primary school. Other Blokes had also found this, for themselves or their offspring, even from P.E. teachers, and noted the life-long effects on self-confidence.

As Neil Barras has been involved in physical education, he issued a global apology on behalf of all P.E. teachers for what they have done.

The Editor, upon whom somehow Glen's eyes seemed to rest as someone who might have a good deal of experience in the morning's topic, was persuaded to recount the occasion when he managed to hit a tennis ball down a chimney-pot on top of a two-storey Victorian terrace. This would have been a prodigious feat had it been aimed for, but unfortunately the Editor was aiming to get it over the net and somewhere in court on the other side, in which he failed.

*Continues next page . . .*

The Editor was playing tennis because his school required all students to play a summer and a winter sport, and that was his summer one. The school published a ladder giving the ranking in tennis ability of everyone in the school who played the game. It didn't matter which year the Editor was in, he was always on the bottom. Even in his last year, after all the years of practice, he was out-ranked by the most junior and most inept beginner.

The Editor's winter sport was hockey, which was popular among the intellectuals. The Editor played right wing, so the team became adept at playing on the left wing. (Well, relatively adept—it did not stop the team losing their matches by highly convincing margins.)

The Editor's school (which he is not naming here, though his own name can be found in lists in the school's own publication) did give prizes for academic achievement; but in his last year the school decided to abolish the academic prizes, which were seen as 'elitist', while still giving them for sports.

A possible rationale for this extraordinary inconsistency was the belief that ordinary people could not do well in academic competition, but that anyone could excel in sport if they trained hard enough. That this myth is totally unbelievable should be evident without saying, but Paul Smith provided further evidence of its falsity when he took up golf. While his playing companions sent their golf balls flying down the fairway, Paul sent his several greens to the right. Attempting to correct this with a slight left nudge sent the ball several greens to the left. After several years of practice with presumably increasingly exasperated fellow-golfers, Paul remained incompetent at the sport (traditionally described as 'a good walk spoiled').

Nowadays there is an attempt to eliminate competition in sports at the most junior level by not keeping score. The idea is that children will play for the love of playing only, and it will not matter if they are rubbish at it. The Editor is not sure who would want to exhaust themselves on a cold muddy field trying to get a ball off a lot of other people and get it between some sticks for fun, but he is aware that the breadth of human taste is amazingly wide. At any rate the Blokes generally thought that this approach was totally unrealistic and everyone still kept score secretly. They said that even if the scoreboard was empty, at the end one team remained in the centre of the oval lustily singing the club song, while the other quietly slunk away.

There was discussion also of women's sport, and how it was often unfairly treated as a poor cousin of the men's game, for example not being allowed to use the men's grounds. The Blokes felt strongly about this. Glen told of one ground where the male players were able to socialise and refresh themselves at the canteen after their game, but the women were not. He felt that the socialisation of the players after the game was very important, so he arranged for his people to make and supply sausage rolls (perhaps not the most appropriate choice?) for after the game for six weeks. This was so successful that they opened the canteen on a permanent basis, and it spread throughout the competition.

David Woods said that he was not an A grade cricketer, but not F either, but somewhere in the middle. He did also happen to mention that he was captain of his school's 2nd XI, which the Editor does not believe is a position normally given to middling players. (Also, David failed to mention his trophy for taking a hat-trick, even if it took him a week.) At any rate, he told us that on one occasion he was fielding in the outer and cut himself on the remnants of a beer bottle in the long grass, which tells us a good deal about both the students and the groundsman of that school. A year later he took a cricket ball to the head, and when they removed the ball they found under-

neath it, still embedded in his head, a sharp piece of glass that had been missed from that beer bottle a year previously. David reckons that God threw that ball at his head, which the Editor thinks is quite possible.

The Blokes are always keen for danger, and there was lamenting that they were unable to play on current Council playgrounds because they were insufficiently dangerous. Jon longed for the old long metal slide at Rosanna Parklands, which one could get a good speed on if one sat on a piece of corrugated cardboard. It was highly regrettable that it, and other metal slides, had been removed, and sometimes replaced with pathetic plastic ones, in the interests of safety. Glen however told us, in strictest confidence, that there was one playground in the area that the Council had overlooked, which still had a metal slide. (As to its location, the Editor's lips are sealed.)

Another sport that Blokes could fail at was fishing. Glen said he used to go spear-fishing. Ordinary spear-guns were too dangerous in his hands, so he used something called an 'Hawaiian sling', which was not a drink but a sort of catapult. His family used to spend their winters filing six-inch nails into spearheads, which must have annoyed teachers, employers, etc no end.

Sharks were a problem. Glen explained that divers kept a knife taped to their legs. If a shark approached you cut your fellow-diver's legs and swam quickly away. However Glen had a nasty scare when a large shark nearly got a friend because of the fish he was carrying. So his wife banned him from spear-fishing until he found a way to get his catch out of the water immediately he caught it.

Glen racked his brains over how to do it, but even racked, they failed to provide an answer. Then he was sent a dream. This was not Jacob's dream about a ladder, or Peter's about unclean beasts, or Kekulé's about the chemical structure of benzene, or even Patrick Senn's about a toaster. This one was about a canoe. Then, in real life, he found himself in some back-streets, in a quiet cul-de-sac where no-one went, where there was a canoe on sale, and the people told him they had been waiting all day—in this quiet street with no through traffic—for someone to buy it.

So he bought it, and modified it, and it became an excellent vessel for putting caught fish in, as well as other things.

Frank told us that he had a special ruler for measuring the length of the fish he caught, marked in 'fishermen's inches', about a centimetre long. This injustice reminded one of the Blokes about a shared assignment he had done with a female student. Both submitted the same assignment for marking, but she got a much better grade than he did. Obviously this still rankled; and it reminded Glen that in a similar situation he had got C— and she an A. The teacher, approached, said, 'She is a straight-A student, you are not', and refused to alter the mark.

Jon, as a teacher, said he apologised on behalf of all teachers.

It was time for Frank to tell us a joke. He was with us this time, but to avoid telling a joke he had nipped out to the Gents. So another Bloke told us about the termite who walked into a bar and asked, 'Is the bartender here?', but this was less satisfactory, as some Blokes needed to have the joke explained (obviously, it is because termites can't talk), whereas with Frank's jokes the punchline is very clear, and indeed you can see it well ahead.

The next *Blokes Helping Blokes* will be on 4th May at the Heidelberg McDonald's, 120 Bell St Heidelberg (or enter from Francis St), 8.45–10.30 am. All blokes are welcome! Enquiries: Glen 0487 852 808.

## Mission News

Our friend Rowan has reported in jest that he is glad to be past the Ides of March without being stabbed by Roman Senators. His jocularly suggests to the Editor that no-one has had the nerve to tell him that one of his predecessors (Eric Constable of St Andrew's) was indeed stabbed, fatally, on 29th June 1974. Or perhaps he does know, and is making a very oblique reference to those who know.

This year Ramadan (which moves forward about 11 days each year) overlapped with Lent and Easter. Each year All Saints' Jakarta holds an Iftar meal (fast-breaking meal after sunset during Ramadan) for the site staff, and this was Rowan's first. He comments, 'The site staff look forward to the opportunity to share a meal with us, even though in a hierarchical society such as Indonesia, inviting the site staff to join us in a shared meal is somewhat counter-cultural, as we are not their social equals'.

Rowan added, 'I had an opportunity to thank the staff for their care for me and the church property and to give thanks to God for friendships, relationships and blessings. I was encouraged to hear some hearty *Amins* (= *Amens*) from the site staff at the end of my prayer'. He comments that the staff are curious about him but can't ask him questions as it would be impolite in their culture, and asks for prayers for his relationships with them.



Holy Week services provided an opportunity for some deep conversations with church members and visitors. One cultural difference between the West and Indonesia is that Indonesian culture is mostly grounded in an honour/shame paradigm, while we mostly have a guilt/innocence worldview.

These terms come from the book *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* by Jayson Georges; the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2XNoAFtqOw> gives a useful summary.

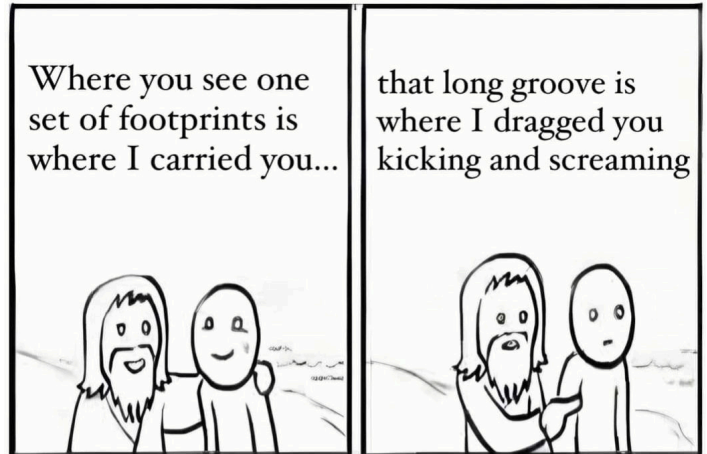
Rowan found Philippians 2:5-11 helpful:

<sup>5</sup>Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Rowan talked about how Jesus not only bore our shame for us, but how Jesus took our shame and exchanged it for his honour. Jesus, who knew no shame, became shamed for us so that in him we might become the honoured ones of God.

Another excitement was that a two-metre cobra was found by a security guard resting under a banana tree in the church grounds. The guards soon bagged it up and handed it to the local fire station.

Rowan thanks us for our prayers for God's help in finding them an intern for twelve months to assist with Sunday services as well as the youth and young adult ministries. They have now had some good applications, and he now asks for prayers for wisdom as they check references and do interviews.

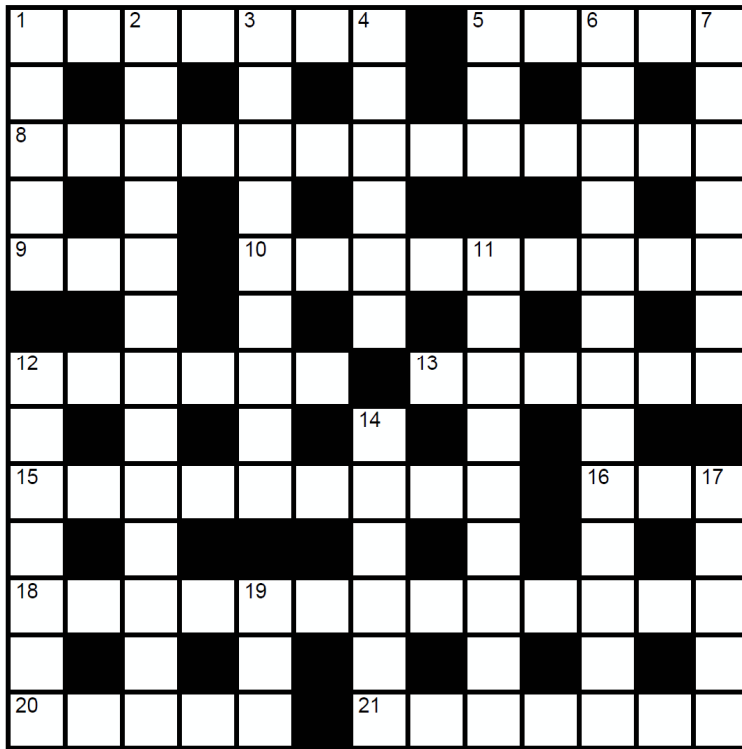


Submitted by Denise Nicholls



**Across**

- 1 Fruit farm (7)
- 5 Extinguish, as a candle (5)
- 8 Sacrifice that required a ram and money payment (5,8)
- 9 Land to which Cain fled (3)
- 10 Someone who provides consolation (9)
- 12 Disciples present at the Ascension (6)
- 13 Produce of 1 across? (6)
- 15 Something to beat your sword into (9)
- 16 Biblical prefix meaning "man of" (3)
- 18 Morality (13)
- 20 Reddish (5)
- 21 Extend over (7)



by Philologus

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**Down**

- 1 Accompaniment for a hymn? (5)
- 2 Through Jesus we can become this (8,2,3)

- 3 Assailants (9)
- 4 Discredit (6)
- 5 Have a vision (3)
- 6 Not clever (13)
- 7 Sculptures (7)
- 11 Unfair or cruel leader (9)
- 12 Tiberius or Claudius for example (7)
- 14 Stoneworkers (6)
- 17 Levitical doorkeeper (5)
- 19 Your, in the Bible (3)

G T Y R O L G L O R I F I E D  
 O S E E M S I L E G N A V E G  
 O O R C Y S P M O D S I W N I  
 D C L O V E S A L V A T I O N  
 N E J M L N C T R U T H G T V  
 E T Y M K E A N T A C F O R I  
 S N T U I L S N A A C U S I S  
 S E I N N T T N E T T L P N I  
 E P R I D N F T U P N N E I B  
 L R O O N E I I O O O E L T L  
 C A H N E G G U R S C S P Y E  
 A Y T I S O R E N E G S R E L  
 R E U S S I C O M F O R T E R  
 I R A K N O W L E D G E V O D  
 M O D G N I K Y C E H P O R P

**Bible Word Search – The Holy Spirit**

All the words listed below are in the puzzle – left, right, up, down or diagonally. Find each word and circle each letter of the words you find. After you have found all the words, the leftover letters form the **mystery answer**.

[https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws\\_HolySpirit\\_0.htm](https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws_HolySpirit_0.htm)

Authority, Comforter, Communion, Counselor, Dove, Evangelism, Faithfulness, Fire, Generosity, Gentleness, Gifts, Glorified, Glory, Goodness, Gospel, Invisible, Joy, Kindness, Kingdom, Knowledge, Love, Miracles, Outpouring, Paraclete, Pentecost, Prayer, Prophecy, Repentance, Salvation, Sin, Son, Teaching, Trinity, Truth, Wisdom

**Answers to last month's puzzles**

F	I	G	S	R	E	F	O	R	M	E	D
O	E	F	L	M	A	U					
R	A	B	B	O	N	I	N	U	L	L	S
E	E	U	D	I	A	T					
K	E	R	E	N	H	A	P	P	U	C	H
N											
O	X	G	O	A	D	J	E	M	I	M	A
W	E	I	I	S							
T	R	A	N	S	G	R	E	S	S	O	R
S	I	G	N	N	L	E					
K	E	Z	I	A	O	R	C	H	A	R	D
I	I	T	R	E	V	L					
N	U	M	B	E	R	E	D	D	E	N	Y

Bible Word Search mystery answer:  
**KEEP BELIEVING**

- Last month's anagram:  
 behorrt brother  
 accefiirs sacrifice  
 ablm lamb  
 aalrt altar  
 afilmy family  
 aimnoprtt important  
 aehrt heart  
 aceilps special  
 aeikmst mistake  
 effginor offering

Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

**Abram & Lot Anagram**

[www.dltk-kids.com](http://www.dltk-kids.com)



- aaacnn \_\_\_\_\_
- eilrsv \_\_\_\_\_
- aailmns \_\_\_\_\_
- dmoos \_\_\_\_\_
- elnost \_\_\_\_\_
- cdeikw \_\_\_\_\_
- ceersu \_\_\_\_\_
- einoopsssss \_\_\_\_\_
- afilmy \_\_\_\_\_
- eehps \_\_\_\_\_

## Easter Day

31st March 2024

John 20:1–18; Acts 10:34–43

Sermon by Lyn Pearson

### John 20:1–18

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. <sup>2</sup> So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'

<sup>3</sup> So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. <sup>4</sup> Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, <sup>7</sup> as well as the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. <sup>8</sup> Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

<sup>11</sup> Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb <sup>12</sup> and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

<sup>13</sup> They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?'

'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.'<sup>14</sup> At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?'

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.'

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'

She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher').

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' "

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her.

### Acts 10:34–43

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak: 'I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism <sup>35</sup> but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. <sup>36</sup> You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

<sup>39</sup> 'We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. <sup>41</sup> He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen – by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

I want to share two stories of two women:

**Connie**—My Uni friend: smart, vibrant, beautiful, interested in Christianity. We used to car pool for travel.

- She studied the Scriptures and came to faith in Jesus.
- Very encouraging to see the change Christ made in her life.

**Ira**—a young friend I met when I was overseas. She was also smart and pretty, good at English, and often would interpret for Christian workers, even interpreting at church.

- She thought what was being said was a load of rubbish, but it was a job to interpret and she did it.

In our passages today we read of a few people who are confronted with evidence, and they need to work out what to do with it, what conclusions to make of what they see, what they understand.

#### 1. Consider the evidence (Looking & Acting)

Here is another woman: Mary Magdalene:

a. In Mark 16 we learn that Mary, *with a couple of other women*, after the Sabbath go early in the morning on the first day of the week.

- Go to anoint Jesus' body with spices.
- John 20:2 Mary, after discovering the tomb empty, assumes the body of Jesus taken → runs to tell the disciples...she was fit I think!

b. John 20: interesting—John there first, peaks in and sees it's empty, but doesn't go inside. Peter blusters in...looks at the linen cloth and where it was, the separate head/face piece...then John decides to go in. *He saw and believed—but did not understand.* Vv 8–9: Peter and John saw the empty tomb, saw the grave clothes but they did not understand what was happening...They just went home. V 10 (even though Jesus had told them what was going to happen): bit of an anti-climax... nothing to see here. Let's go!

c. Mary stays. Why? We don't know why she stays...but she is crying. She was there right at the end at the crucifixion and went to the tomb to see where they laid him.

Told in Luke 23: <sup>55</sup> *The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.* <sup>56</sup> *Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.*

She is still not sure what to make of the empty tomb.

She must have been so emotionally worn out...7 demons cast out (Lk 8:2), inside group to Jesus' life and ministry for 3 years, supported them...she was there right the end. She doesn't know what is happening...and there she is crying...she had a closer look...

But as she is looking two angels are there.

Were they there before? We don't know...her assumption still is:

**"They have taken my Lord away and I don't know where they have put him"**

Almost simultaneously she turns and questions the man whom she thinks to be the gardener and repeats herself.

Let's look at the other passage in Acts. Prior to our reading, Peter is not sure what to do with what God shows him, what he sees in his vision.

d. Peter was asked to eat unclean food in Acts 10:

<sup>13</sup> *Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."* <sup>14</sup> *"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."* <sup>15</sup> *The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."* <sup>16</sup> *This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.*

- He says no I never! He would have heard Jesus teaching that it is not what goes into a man that makes him impure but what comes out!...but he does not know what to do with this.

In both passages there is a change: *Both Mary and Peter look and respond according to the way they think things should go.*

BUT something changes for them: they have deeper insight, a revelation.

#### 2. Divine eyes to see and understand (Looking and Understanding)

So what changed?

a. *Mary was not expecting to see Jesus.* She saw him die, she saw him being laid in that tomb and the stone being rolled in front of it.

So even when Jesus says, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?' (I wonder if he had a smile when he said this?) **she does NOT know him** with these words, her response:

*"Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."*

What changed?

For Mary it was **hearing the Lord call her name**, it was the personal and intimate encounter with the Lord: <sup>16</sup> *Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'* → she knew instantly it was her Lord.

*What's amazing: Jesus entrusted her with this news of his presence, of his resurrection. Instead of holding on, 'Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' "*

<sup>18</sup> *Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her. → SHE IS THE FIRST WITNESS.*

God had to open her eyes, to call her by name → THEN SHE UNDERSTOOD.

b. What about Peter in Acts? What changed?

- Remember this is **after Pentecost**: so he has been reinstated after his betrayal and he has the Holy Spirit;
- He needed the Spirit to tell him, to interpret for him:

*"Simon, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."* <sup>21</sup> *Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"* <sup>22</sup> *The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." ...*

... *"But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection ..."*

God was working in Peter, God was working in Cornelius and bringing about his purposes and plans. God had to show both of them, God had to lead them together ... we now get to our reading—

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak: "I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism <sup>35</sup> but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

(<sup>36</sup> You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

<sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—)

<sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

1. **Looking and Acting on the Evidence** (Mary and Peter)

2. **Looking & Understanding:** is God-given, requires his work

Today we remember and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

**RESURRECTION:** This is the centre of our faith.

What does that mean? If it didn't happen, if Christ has not been raised, we have wasted our time, our lives, our money ... but we can believe based on evidence.

Evidence that Christ was raised—

Peter, recorded by Dr Luke in the book of Acts:

<sup>39</sup> "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. <sup>41</sup> He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

There is evidence:

- One of which we have touched on today ... the story entrusted to women. In those days a woman's testimony not worth much. If the writer was trying to put their story in a good light, they may have wanted to omit this; but they were writing a historical account.
- The sighting of Jesus by many, including those willing to die for this belief: historically reliable evidence, in/out of the New Testament.
- Some who have set about to shatter the resurrection claim, to disprove it, have come to Christ (Frank Morrison, Lee Stroebel, John—the magistrate who came to a judgement that Jesus is Lord, the resurrection true and to put his faith in it).
- Some however, look at the evidence, and come to the conclusion it's true, but don't want to follow ... they need God's Spirit to work.
- **-THINK ABOUT THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW, THE MOCKERS "SAVED OTHERS, CAN'T SAVE HIMSELF"**

• **Connie**—I know it's true but I don't want to follow. She wanted to live life her way.

But for

• **Ira**—she had to follow when she knew it was true ... she has given up her life to serve him. She serves in her own country in Central Asia.

Both had the evidence, and one took hold of the promises of God, that 'everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name'; the other threw it back in God's face. I don't know what happened.

This Easter account is NOT a new story, but the fulfilment of the prophets of the OT; it is the good news handed down by eyewitnesses.

Handed down over time to us.

But what are we to do with these facts that we need the evidence for, and also our Spiritual eyes open?

**What do we do with the fact that Jesus is appointed as the judge of the living and the dead?**

#### Application

1. We need to know what this good news is, bring this good news to others, and support it going out in prayers and gifts.

(Legasse from Ethiopia: historical, theological, charismatic.)

2. We need to pray that people will understand: that God would open eyes to see and believe, because they can have the evidence, but unless they encounter Jesus through His Spirit, they will not turn to him.

(Thousands of thousands of Muslims are coming to Christ in many countries around the world. God is calling many to himself. Response to prayer and witness. Night of prayer in Ramadan: April 6–7.

Stan: God showed up in his spiritual quest: baptised today.)

3. **We need to entrust justice into the hands of King Jesus, the judge of the living and the dead.**

When there is so much pain, suffering and injustice going on, we need to do what we can to stand and act as the people of God and to trust that Jesus will judge rightly.

- We can get disheartened when we see lawlessness and disregard for human suffering.
- We must do good while we can (that is another topic), but also know that Jesus sees all, feels all.
- Rev Dr Munther Isaac was in the headlines, as the Palestinian pastor of the Bethlehem Church of the Nativity. The church had a nativity scene with baby Jesus under the rubble. His belief was that Jesus was with the suffering of each child under the rubble. Christ alone with his presence is their hope.
- For some Palestinian and Jewish peace-makers who follow the Prince of Peace, these brothers and sisters for them the reason they can keep on living, keep on trusting in Jesus, because he is acquainted with their pain. He is with them, with us.

#### Close our eyes:

Take a moment to reflect and pray for friends, neighbours, family, peoples, countries who need their spiritual eyes open to encounter Jesus and pray for opportunities and courage to share the good news that Jesus is ALIVE, he is risen.

<sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

#### My email this week:

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow!

Because He lives, we can entrust our lives into his hands,

Because He lives, we can entrust our world into his hands,

Because He lives, we can entrust our loved ones into his care,

Because He lives, we shall praise him.

Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Amen.

## Thomas

Watsonia, 7th April: John 20:19–31

Sermon by Helen McAlley

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!'

But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

<sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

#### IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

As a young person, I really wanted to be a Christian, but I had lots of doubts. Was the faith we learned about in the Bible true or not? If the Bible was not true, I didn't want to have anything to do with it. On the other hand, what if the message of the Bible was true? I did not want to miss out on having Jesus as my Saviour. It was difficult as so many around me did not believe.

God knew that it was in my heart to want to know the truth. As I continued to seek Him, I came to believe that the Bible was true and to receive assurance of salvation.

#### SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to those who were seeking the truth about Him:

'Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there any among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!'

This is a very precious passage. It reminds us in such a wonderful way how much our Father in heaven loves us and wants to bless us. And when we genuinely seek Him, He will reveal Himself to us.

#### THE EXAMPLE OF C.S. LEWIS

Many people have come from atheism to a belief in Jesus because they were seeking after the truth even if that truth were inconvenient. C.S. Lewis, the well-known twentieth-century writer, did not think it would be at all convenient for him to become a Christian. But he wanted to know the truth. He describes his conversion in his book *Surprised by Joy*,

the title of which is based on a poem by William Wordsworth:

'In the Trinity term of 1929, I gave in and admitted that God was God, and knelt down and prayed, perhaps that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not see then what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in all directions for a chance of escape?'

We can see here that C.S. Lewis did not at all want to become a Christian, but He believed that the gospel message was the truth and he did not want to live a lie.

**NOT ALL ARE INTERESTED IN THE TRUTH**

I believe many today are not really interested in seeking the truth as C.S. Lewis did. They want to be in control of their own lives and their own destiny. It is inconvenient for them to believe in God, so they prefer to think there is no God. The Bible says of these people, *The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'* (Psalm 14:1). This verse continues that such a person who says there is no God is one who is corrupt and does abominable deeds. They want to live a sinful lifestyle and are enabled to do so by saying that there is no God.

Maybe Jesus was thinking of this verse (we know He knew the Scriptures very well) when He told the parable of The Rich Fool (Luke 12:20). This man kept building bigger and bigger barns to store his crops. He loved a luxurious lifestyle and said to himself, 'You have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink and be merry,' but God said to him, 'You fool! This very night, your life is being demanded of you.' This man lived as if there were no God. He was not interested in seeking the truth or finding out what God required of him. He just wanted to live a selfish life of luxury with money as his god.

The apostle Paul wrote that God's work of creation gives testimony to the work and power of God and that those who do not believe in Him are without excuse (Romans 1:20). A Christian geneticist and mathematician was talking to a colleague about the amazing order in the universe and said, 'Isn't it easier to believe in God?' His colleague replied, 'Yes, but who would want to?' He did not want to believe in God so he closed his mind to the evidence. He was definitely not searching for truth.

**TWO TYPES OF DOUBTERS**

There are two types of doubters – those who are seeking the truth wherever it may lead them, & those who have closed their minds to the truth and no evidence will convince them otherwise.

**THOMAS**

As we come to think about our gospel reading today, let's think about Thomas. Was he, like so many, closing his mind to the truth because it was inconvenient, or was he genuinely seeking for God's truth? I think we can say that he was a genuine seeker and Jesus knew his heart. Jesus would not reveal Himself as Messiah to those who scorned Him and refused to believe in Him, only to those who were genuinely seeking Him.

And was Thomas much different from the other disciples? They all struggled to believe that Jesus was indeed bodily risen from the dead. When Mary Magdalene reported that she had seen the risen Jesus, they did not believe her.

How graciously Jesus dealt with those disciples. He came through the locked door and said, 'Peace be with you', greeting them in the normal Hebrew way, showing them His hands and side so that they could see His wounds and know for sure that it was really Jesus Himself there with them. How did the disciples react? They were overjoyed. Jesus breathed on them again demonstrating that He was alive and was giving life to them from the Holy Spirit.

For some reason, Thomas was not with the rest of the disciples on that first occasion. So, of course, they told him about it. Like the other disciples when they heard Mary Magdalene's account, Thomas said on hearing the story of his fellow disciples, 'Unless I see the nail marks on His hands, put my fingers where the nails were and put my hands in His side, I will not believe it.' Jesus graciously appeared a second time to the disciples the following week, and this time, Thomas was with them. Instead of rebuking Thomas as we perhaps might expect, Jesus said to him, 'Put your finger here; see my hands? Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop doubting and believe.' Thomas immediately recognised Jesus, stopped doubting and exclaimed, 'My Lord and my God!'

If Thomas did not want to know the truth about Jesus, he could have said something like, 'I don't believe you', but, when confronted with the evidence, he believed. The apostle Paul had an encounter with Jesus on the Da-

mascus Road. Because he too was a searcher after truth, he accepted Jesus as his Saviour. He could have found some other explanation of his experience such as that he was hallucinating or being tricked in some way, but he was genuine in wanting to do the will of God.

When Jesus presented Thomas with evidence for the resurrection, he gladly believed it, even though it was inconvenient. The early church was persecuted cruelly and all the disciples except John were martyred for their faith in Jesus. This of course included Thomas.

**LESSONS FROM THE STORY OF THOMAS**

What can we learn from the story of Thomas? Firstly, Thomas was honest in expressing his doubts. He did not pretend to believe what he found difficult. We too need to pray honestly about our doubts. We might say, 'Lord, I'm struggling to believe. Strengthen my faith'. Then we decide to trust and maybe remember the times in the past when the Lord has shown His faithfulness to us, and ponder the evidence in God's word, the Bible.

Sometimes we might feel like the man in the Bible whose son was demon-possessed. That father cried out to Jesus, 'I do believe. Help me to overcome my unbelief'. And we can pray that prayer too.

Sometimes it helps to talk about our doubts with another Christian whose faith is strong, and who may be able to help us gain a different perspective. It can also help so much to have another Christian pray for us in our areas of weakness.

Jesus met Thomas at his point of need and He meets us in our need too as we call upon Him. Can you think of a time when you doubted and God ministered to you and restored you to faith?

Thomas was a true believer in Jesus but he had doubts and needed reassurance. Jesus comes to us too in our doubts and fears and wants to reassure us too. We need to be honest with him and ask Him for the help we need. When we are sincere, Jesus will never reject us or condemn us. He knows our weakness and infirmities and He always want to help us.

**PRAYER**

Shall we pray: *Father, there are times when we do not find it easy to believe. Help us to always come to you with our doubts, confident that you will hear and restore us just as you did Thomas. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

**Parish Council Notes**

*Meeting of Monday 15th May*

**Welcome**

- Denise welcomed Belinda Hirschauer to her first Council meeting as Vicar's appointment.

**Ministry matters (from Vicar's report)**

- Easter numbers very good. Some new people welcomed more than once since.
- Denise trying to connect with possible helpers. Possibly sharing an assistant minister with another church? Encouraged by the support of Parish Council and all church members.
- Confirmed guest preachers:
  - Bishop Brad for Pentecost 19 May
  - Rev Patrick Senn 14 July
  - Rev Stephen May (BCA) 18 August
- Possible assistant for youth group first Sunday of month.
- Parish Council will hold a prayer and planning meeting at Watsonia, Saturday 4 May 9 am – 12.30 pm. Everyone welcome to attend.

**Finance report**

- Follow-ups and additions to come. The new XERO system still causing some angst.

**St John's**

- Car park site meeting 3 April with architect, civil & drainage engineers, arborist, Vicar, warden. Engineer has since submitted more detailed plans. Fences erected to protect trees.
- Structural engineer's bell tower report pending.

**St Andrew's:** Negotiations re sale continue.

**R.I.M.M.:** Updated and noted.

**Child Safety Officer, Family Safety Champion**

- Judy Thomson serves in these two roles and submitted a report.
- No notifications.
- Display Judy's photo next to info on policies.
- Denise to prepare *Babble* article on roles.

**Diocesan Professional standards**

- As PC members, Mercy, Glenn, Belinda need to do Levels I, II, III of safe ministry training. Can Levels I & II be done on-line?
- ADOM Compliance Calendar noted.

**Vicar's report**

- See **Ministry matters** above.
- I remain in good heart, despite being without a colleague (Praise God!).

- Oodthenong Ministry Conference 27–29 May.
- I will take 2 weeks holiday 3–16 July.
- Youth gathering at St James' Ivanhoe Friday 10 May – our boys to join in?
- Diocesan commitments:** Cathedral Chapter ea 2 months: usually 1 hour on Zoom; Cathedral Chapter Finance & Risk Management: monthly 1 hour on Zoom; Area Dean: monthly, + phone calls to support the clergy; quarterly 'O Team' meetings with Bishop Brad.
- Professional development/support:** Supervisor monthly, 1 hr by Zoom, parish invoiced; Diocesan coach about every 4–6 wks, provided free; spiritual director monthly, 1 pay.

**Wardens' report**

- Watsonia:** Extensive repairs & reno of vicarage almost complete. Bobcat for stormwater drainage repair booked 16<sup>th</sup> April; expect vicarage fit for rental after drainage repair. PC: Many thanks to Kaye and handyman for all their hard work.
- Heidelberg:** See **St John's** above. – NBN service to church and vicarage repaired.
- Rosanna:** See **St Andrew's** above.

*Minutes by Rhonda Taylor, précis by Editor*