



Anglican Diocese  
of Bendigo

# The Spirit

monthly

february 2017

issue 126



**Ordained:** The Revd Simon Chan was ordained by Bishop Andrew Curnow at St Paul's Cathedral, Bendigo in December 2016.

## From Singapore to Bendigo: Chinese ministry strengthened

**Gordon Lingard**

Saturday 10 December 2016 will always be etched in the memory of Simon Chan Kok Kwong as he celebrated with friends and family, his ordination to the Order of Deacon in St Paul's Cathedral, Bendigo.

Simon was born and educated in Singapore before coming over to Bendigo first sensing a call into full time ministry in 1989. Two years later he resigned from the Singapore Navy in order to answer that call.

The service, led by Bishop Andrew, on what was a beautiful summer morning, was a joyful occasion and somewhat unusual in that some of the service was conducted in Simon's native language Chinese.

The sermon entitled *The Minister of the Gospel* (from John 21:15:22) was given by the Revd Canon Robert Vun. He reminded the congregation that the ministry motive did not begin with a love for people but a love for God. Only then could our ministry assignment be focussed on people, a sacrificial ministry to the flock. The third and final point in this lively and compelling message concerned the ministry focus - always Jesus lest we become distracted.

Simon has already begun his ministry here in Bendigo at Christ's True Light Church in the Parish of East Bendigo with his wife Iris. We pray that they will enjoy a very blessed and fruitful ministry.



**Deacon:** The Revd Simon Chan with wife Iris and Bishop Andrew Curnow

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# The Bishop writes

That can also lead to another factor and that is where lay people can often get put in a role where they just continue year after year as no one else wants to take on the responsibility. Or it can mean in larger parishes that a particular group of lay people becomes quite dominant - even to the point of controlling - and this often becomes the breeding ground for conflict.

These are not criticisms, but more my observations over a long period of time as a bishop. Let me hasten to add, I can write also at length about clergy, but in this article I want to concentrate on lay leadership in parishes.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse is bringing the Church to a whole new understanding of the way we go about ministry and how parishes might function as safe churches. This is also bringing about significant changes for clergy and lay leadership in parishes. Part of the strategy to encourage a new culture has been the development of Safe Church Awareness Workshops. Over the past two years nearly 400 people from around the diocese have attended them and been given a new understanding about the context of ministry.

Now the diocese is rolling out the next stage of the process at forthcoming AGMs with parishes being asked to elect churchwardens and parish councils for three years, which in turn is connected to the whole authorisation process for any lay person serving in a role in the name of the diocese.

To help facilitate and encourage the development of this next stage, two special training days have been organised for churchwardens and parish councillors:

- At Christ Church Swan Hill on Wednesday 29 March
- At St Mary's Kangaroo Flat on Saturday 1 April

Please see further information on page four, or contact the Registry.

In addition to this the Registry Staff are working on a number of major projects

around an information technology upgrade. This will involve a new diocesan website in the next two months and a dedicated website for Eddington Cottage with online bookings.

**T**here is also major work being done to improve information management in the Registry. This will mean that on Wednesdays from 25 January until 12 April, the Registry will not be open between 8.30am and 1.30pm. Thank you for your understanding!

**O**n another front we have a new Editor, the Bishop's Executive Assistant, Sarah Crutch. Sarah has already been instrumental in putting *The Spirit* together each month, but now takes over as Editor as the Revd Andrew Eaton moves from the Parish of Maryborough to the Diocese of Newcastle.

Blessings,

**The Spirit**

Monthly newsmagazine of the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo

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The Spirit is published in the first week of the month (excluding January).

**Advertising rates** are available from the Editor. All advertisements are accepted at the Editor's discretion; acceptance does not imply endorsement of the product or service.

**Contributions are welcome**, and will be edited. Email contributions are preferred. Anonymous articles will not be considered for publication.

**Photographs** should be sent in digital form to the general email address above. Full size, 'raw' files are necessary. Physical photos are normally not returned.

The Anglican Diocese of Bendigo and the Editor are not responsible for opinions expressed by contributors, nor do these necessarily reflect the policy of the diocese.

Contributions for the next issue must be submitted by **Friday 17 February**.

Dear Friends,

**W**elcome to *The Spirit* for 2017!

When I trained for the ordained ministry in the early 1970s there seemed to be an assumption that all parishes were the same. There might be differences in location, size and style, but basically there was a sameness to much of parish life.

Now many years later I can say clearly that all parishes are certainly not the same and as bishop I recognise a lot of differences between parishes in tone, culture, openness to change, morale and even their spiritual resilience. Parishes are very much a reflection of the people who populate them and who are the undergirding parish community.

We are all products of our time and age, and the same is true of parishes. Some are conservative, some are very open to change and new directions, while others just want to keep doing things the same way year in year out. Some parishes are very resilient while others can get the wobbles very quickly during periods of vacancy.

A major influence in some parishes has been the clerical leadership they have had over many years and this is clearly seen where parishes have had the benefit of clergy who stayed for long periods of time. Many rural parishes in this diocese have had frequent changes of clergy. This means although over time some clergy may stand out more than others, their influence as a result of frequent changes, often only three years or less, is pretty minimal. As a result, over time these parishes become much more reliant on lay ministry.



**Duet:** Joyce and Grace performing



**Baptised:** Simon Chan performing the baptism of Li Junyuan



**Music:** Singing at the Christmas lunch

## Christ's True Light Church shines over Christmas-New Year period

**Simon Chan**

Christ's True Light Church celebrated Christmas with a BBQ lunch at Bendigo Club on 11 December 2016.

A total of 80 adults and seven children came together and sang carols joyously.

The programme included singing, carol and musical duet performance, quiz, door gifts and prizes. Of course, Christmas isn't Christmas unless it comes with the message of the gift of Jesus Christ to the world.

This Christmas Day was special for the 10.30 am congregation of Christ's True Light Church (CTLC).

Members witnessed the baptism of five brothers and sisters-in-Christ after they completed the Alpha course and baptism class which was essential for laying the foundation of their faith.

As a family in CTLC, we pray that together with our new brothers and sisters, we will continue to let our flame burn brighter for Christ.

Christ's True Light Church started the new year with a combined covenant service on 1 January 2017 at 10.00 am.

Both English and bilingual congregations had a meaningful service as they made a covenant with God and lit up their candles as an act of oneness in Christ - "Let our flame burn brighter".



**Baptism:** The five candidates



**Burn bright:** Covenant service



From hurt to hope



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### Spiritual Care Volunteer Training Program

A course to become good listeners and to provide quality spiritual care as volunteers or pastoral carers.

#### Saturday 11 February 2017

Unit 1: *Why are we here?*  
An exploration of the role of spiritual care volunteers

#### Saturday 18 February 2017

Unit 2: *Our Stories, Our Journeys, Our Spirituality. Practise in being present and active listening*

9.30 am registration  
for 10.00 am start

St Luke's Anglican Parish Centre  
494 Napier Street, White Hills

#### No cost involved

Lunch & tea/coffee provided

#### Registrations limited

Angela Lorrigan: 0418332094  
Evelyn Robertson: 0418303489  
Wendy Young: 0419516046

## Parish Leaders Workshop

To assist Parish Councils transition to the new three year cycle and have a better understanding of the role of churchwardens and parish councillors, the Registry has organised two special training days for parish councils. Clergy, as part of Parish Council, are also welcome to attend.

In this interactive workshop we will explore the role of parish lay leaders, as well as give you an opportunity to meet with other parish leaders.

### Training Day 1

Wednesday 29 March  
Christ Church, Swan Hill  
10.00am – 2.30pm  
Morning tea, lunch and  
afternoon tea provided.

### Training Day 2

Saturday 1 April  
St Mary's Kangaroo Flat  
10.00am – 2.30pm  
Morning tea, lunch and  
afternoon tea provided.

All attending will need to have a Churchwardens pack or Parish Councillors pack, which are available from the clergy. Please register for the workshop by sending an email to [reception@bendigoanglican.org.au](mailto:reception@bendigoanglican.org.au).

## Safe Church Awareness Workshops

### Saturday 25 February

Christ the King, Maryborough

9.30am - 4.00pm

Please arrive by 9.15am to sign in

### Saturday 4 March

Holy Trinity, Flora Hill

### \$30 per person

This will be charged to your parish after the workshop. Please pay the parish directly for your attendance.  
BYO lunch

### Saturday 18 March

St Margaret's, Mildura

### RSVP

Bookings close Wednesday prior to workshop date.  
Pre-registration is required  
Places are limited

### Enquiries

Heather Marten  
[mdo@bendigoanglican.org.au](mailto:mdo@bendigoanglican.org.au)  
5443 4711

### Registration

[reception@bendigoanglican.org.au](mailto:reception@bendigoanglican.org.au) or  
(03) 5443 4711

## Eddington Cottage

Holiday accommodation for clergy and parishioners  
153A Point Lonsdale Road, Point Lonsdale

### Availability:

27 February - 4 March  
20 March - 25 March  
29 March - 5 May

### Rates:

Clergy \$120 p/n  
Lay \$170 p/n

### Booking enquiries:

Ring 5443 4711 or email [reception@bendigoanglican.org.au](mailto:reception@bendigoanglican.org.au)

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*In Loving Memory...*



**Play:** St Arnaud music students visit each year to play the pipe organ

## Developing tradition: music brings church and community together

**Heather Blackman**

Several years ago the Old Cathedral in St Arnaud received an Arts Council Grant to help restore our pipe organ. The grant included a clause which stated that young people would be given the opportunity to play the organ.

In order to honour this we approached the music department at St Arnaud Secondary College to see if they would like to organise a visit for their instrumental students to use the organ.

This includes the students learning about the history of the organ, then learning a prearranged piece of music before the visit. The visit is worked into their music lessons during term two.

The students are welcomed by parishioners and before they play the students view the inner workings of the organ. Each student is given the

opportunity to play their pre-learnt piece of music.

The students put a great deal of time into learning the music and revel in the sound that they produce while playing.

"This excursion has become a tradition for term two instrumental students," music teacher Anthony Briggs said. "The students look forward to the visit and say that they will always remember playing this pipe organ".

The parishioners enjoyed the small concert and appreciated the school group giving the pipe organ a work out.



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### Ron Stone has joined Mount Alexander Funerals



After many years of leadership, service and ministry in the Anglican Church of Australia, Ron decided on a change of career.

Ron is well known in Bendigo and the surrounding region. He brings with him much experience in caring for people at critical periods in their lives, and has a particular interest in post bereavement follow-up and support.

If you would like Ron to assist at your time of need, or you wish to have him visit after a bereavement, please call our office on 5447 0927.



195 High Street, Kangaroo Flat



Anglican Diocese of **BENDIGO**

The Diocese of Bendigo expects the highest standards of professional service from its Clergy and Lay Ministers.

**IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT**

Please call (free) **1800 135 246**

A phone call to the above number will mean that your complaint will be handled by the Director of Professional Standards.

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This is an independent, objective procedure adopted by the Diocese of Bendigo.

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## Eaglehawk parishioner Citizen of the Year



**Recognised:** Judy Hasty with Jennifer Andrews (Young Citizen of the Year). Photo: Glenn Daniels, *The Bendigo Advertiser*

Judy Hasty from the Parish of Eaglehawk has been named Eaglehawk's Citizen of the Year.

Judy is an active member of the Eaglehawk community and has been a dedicated member of the parish for many years. Judy was involved in providing ministry in the wake of the Black Saturday bushfires through outreach centre Our Place along with arranging other activities during that time.

She has led Sunday School and youth groups at the parish and is actively involved in visiting those in the aged care facilities in the area. Judy has also been involved in the coordination of the Saltworks program which assists many disadvantaged people in the Eaglehawk community.

Her ongoing contributions in the Eaglehawk community make her a deserving recipient of Eaglehawk's Citizen of the Year.

## Men's Shed renovations opened at Nyah West

The Nyah West Men's Shed renovations were opened by Bishop Andrew on Monday 19 December. There was a lovely crowd attending to join in the celebration and stay for lunch.

Visitors included volunteers from the Op Shop that operates from the same Nyah West building and people from the Swan Hill and Lake Boga and Balranald Men's Sheds.

The renovations incorporate a kitchen, lunch room, office, toilet and a mezzanine storage area that has been so stunningly crafted it gives the look of a 'Men's Palace' rather than a 'Men's Shed'.

- Jan Harper



**Opened:** Nyah West Men's Shed members at the opening

## Trentham Flower Show



**First prize:** Judy Hansford with her collection of cut flowers

St George's Ladies Guild Trentham held a Flower Show in the Trentham Neighbourhood Centre late last year. "This is such a Trentham thing to do!" gushed local landscape professor, Jim Sinatra - and it was, celebrating the end of winter and the glory of God's creation.

After a long cold and wet winter, our gardens were still confused but there were plenty of flowers to enter in the numerous categories: posies, roses, single beautiful flower, branching beauties, and Christmas centrepieces.

One of the most popular categories was the green arrangement, and the grand prize was awarded in this category. Prizes had been collected from supportive local businesses, there was a stall with garden related items, and of course Devonshire tea was served.

- Peta Sherlock

# Around the Parishes

## New members received into the Anglican Church

On Sunday 4 December Jill Buttle and Naomi Fountain (Registrar of the Diocese) were officially welcomed into the Anglican Communion by Bishop Andrew Curnow at Holy Trinity, Flora Hill.

They are both part of our 6.30 evening congregation, but have come from different faith backgrounds. Jill had previously been a part of various Uniting Churches across Victoria, while Naomi is a relatively new comer to faith in Christ; she had spent her first few years as part of Connect Church here in Bendigo.

We congratulate Jill and Naomi on being received into the Anglican Church.

- Trevor Bell



**Received:** Naomi Fountain, Bishop Andrew and Jill Buttle

## Trauma Teddies made for children in need



**Aid:** The *Knit and Natter* group making the Trauma Teddies

The talented guild members of the Woodend-Trentham parish have teamed up with the local Red Cross to make Trauma Teddies.

These teddies are distributed by the Red Cross to young children during times of stress, illness or after natural disasters to aid in their emotional recovery. They are made just the right size for children of all ages to hug tight when they need to.

The Red Cross members of Woodend needed some extra hands to assist in the sewing up and stuffing of the teddies so the local Anglican Guild stepped up. There were many teddies made at the first session and all were given their own name and little blessing of love as they were put together.

The *Knit and Natter* group meets every month on the third Wednesday and guests are always welcome.

- Melissa Clark

## Historic pipe organ at Talbot dedicated

A decent crowd in good spirits gathered on the 17 December 2016 at St Michael's and All Angels, Talbot to welcome Bishop Andrew who came to bless the fully restored grandfather Fincham pipe organ.

The small but dedicated congregation have spent years of hard work raising funds through a stall at the Talbot market under the effervescent leadership of local Ken Smith.

The service reached great musical heights thanks to organists Ian Steed, Greg Asquith, and accompaniment on trumpet by Dr Gavin Cuff. The organ enjoyed its first full recital at an *Organs of the Goldfields* event on 16 January 2017 to much acclaim.

- Andrew Eaton



**Dedicated:** Parishioners with the Fincham pipe organ at Talbot

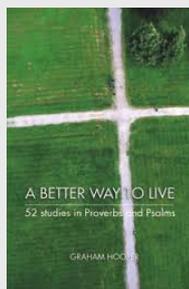
# Book review

*A better way to live:*

*52 studies  
in Proverbs  
and Psalms*

*Graham Hooper*

(Acorn Press, 2016) pb,  
ISBN 9780994616623



**Eddie Barkla**

**G**raham Hooper is a consultant and former senior executive with a global infrastructure company, and has worked in over 20 countries across the world. He regularly speaks and writes on the daily life challenges to the Christian faith.

Graham presents Proverbs and Psalms as revealing of authentic alternatives to secular and materialistic life styles. Together they reveal God's way; a life of faith instead of doubt and fear; a life in relationship with God rather than religious observance; a life modelled on the word of God rather than the standards of prevailing culture.

In short, Graham challenges the reader to "the call to be different", a theme he sees right through all the books of the Bible. He has come to appreciate that Proverbs and Psalms complement each other: he describes the book of Proverbs as of the head, and the Psalms as of about the heart - both requiring a united response.

What I liked was the simplicity of reading, each study being only 2-3 pages, and the ease of language, yet with insightful context. There are helpful summaries between sections, with reflective questions to be pondered. Calls to application are made regarding our daily living in the sight of God, whose character and desire for relationship in every aspect of our being comes through.

A study group or family with young faith seeking members could use this book over a year, leaving it on the table to read through and absorb one study per week.

I warmly recommend this as a very useful book, one that you could use over many years, not one you just read and place on the library shelf.



**60 years:** Paul and Diana Smithers celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary.

*Photo: The Sunraysia Daily*

## Diamond celebrations for Sunraysia South parishioners

**Megan Frankel-Vaughan, The Sunraysia Daily**

**P**aul Smithers knew Diana was the one for him when he first saw her 61 years ago. The Mildura couple celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on 12 January.

Diana's brother and Paul went to school together and lived in the same neighbourhood, although the pair never met until Diana was 19 and Paul was 24 when he visited her house to see some of their family slides.

Paul said he remembered vividly being shown slides and being "quite taken" by a picture of a woman wearing a hat and dress. When he asked his friend who she was, he was met with the reply "that's only my kid sister".

Diana said the couple's relationship was guided by God. But she said the couple could also talk openly and if they had problems they could communicate them.

"We've got a lot of consideration for one another," Diana said. "It has to be 150 per cent give - you don't take - and when you both give, things work. "And you should never forget why you got married - it's so important to look back."

**‘We're both committed Christians and that made a tremendous difference to our marriage**

He said Diana walked in, wearing the same hat, and the rest was history. "I don't know what it was," Diana said. "We just went from there."

She remembers Paul picking her up for outings and each time would give her a gardenia - a flower she had in her wedding bouquet the following year, and also the variety of flower that lines the garden of their Mildura home.

"We're both committed Christians and that made a tremendous difference to our marriage and relationship and has for 60 years," Diana said.

Paul said being open to learning new things was also important, as was never going to sleep worried or angry. "Don't let things fester ... you have to get it out of your system," he said.

The couple moved from Melbourne to Mildura about 10 years ago, looking for a "quieter life", where they continue to share their love of music and play the occasional game of golf together.

Paul and Diana had three children and have nine grandchildren and seven great grandchildren, with another two due this year.



**The Weickhardt Family:** Alyssa, Vanessa, Steve and Zoe Weickhardt

## Reaching out to the Strathfieldsaye community

### From the Bush Church Aid Society

**W**hen Steve Weickhardt and his family moved to Strathfieldsaye with BCA in 2011 the Uniting Church and Anglican Church had been gathering together for worship once a month. His first four years were spent merging those two congregations. Today Steve is eagerly looking towards building on his current ministry.

Strathfieldsaye is a dormitory suburb just ten kilometres away from Bendigo. Within ten minutes' drive there are large established churches with strong youth and kids' ministries. Interestingly, the local population 'church attendance rate' is higher than average, but over 500 people leave Strathfieldsaye to attend church elsewhere each Sunday.

Early in 2011 we kicked off a monthly 'Family Church' on Saturdays at 5pm. After a year that became fortnightly and in 2013 it became weekly. Sadly four families moved away within a couple of weeks of each other and we made the decision to stop running that service. We learned a lot from this first attempt at planting a new congregation. I wouldn't call it a failure because it lasted for four years. I'm calling that a learning stage, a stepping stone.

Our 9am congregation has grown since we came here and is the anchor that allows us to experiment around

young families ministry. That is what my BCA role is in Strathfieldsaye – to provide a stable service for the 9am congregation and find ways to connect with young families.

Strathfieldsaye currently has a population of 6,500 and is set to reach 10,000 in the next couple of years. There is overwhelming opportunity for ministry with young families because of the sheer number of them. We estimate that three quarters of local households are families with children in primary or secondary school.

**A**t the moment we are experimenting with our programs. Each year we run holiday programs in April and September with a lot of support from our BCA link parishes.

*I'm saying to the church – wouldn't it be good if we were the community hub?*

We get between 40–50 kids for the holiday program, over half of whom are unchurched. We also hold a weekly playgroup with about ten families.

In the middle of the January school holidays this year we ran a boredom buster night. We put on a BBQ (bring your own meat), provided salads and drinks, put the Wii on the big screen and had playgroup toys out. Parents chatted together and chilled out while the kids played.

My dream is to run that type of event regularly next year and build community. We will have some intentional prayer, kids' songs and stories. It will be a time for families to gather and hear about God. If it all comes off like I hope, it will be very exciting.

**C**urrently there is no community meeting space in Strathfieldsaye. The schools aren't near the shops, the town hall is further away, as are the sports fields. It's all separate.

There is no heart of town. I'm saying to the church – wouldn't it be good if we were the community hub?

Our worshipping community is about 25–40 people. If we could double that, it would fill the worship

area. And if 30–40 locals formed a younger congregation, we would be a great platform for sustainable long-term local ministry. My goal over the next two years is to develop this new worshipping community created out of the holiday program and playgroup outreach.

With BCA support in prayer, funding and on the ground, this is all becoming possible under God's hand and guidance.



Contributed by Ian Howarth

The meaning of Lent for many people over time has become about giving things up. Giving up chocolate or alcohol are often chosen as the subjects to remove from one's diet. Lent study groups are also popular and important opportunities to reflect in what is a great season leading up to Holy Week and Easter.

Yet what else is there that can be done in Lent? In other words, perhaps

to take something else on, rather than simply giving up things or sticking to the old and tried methods of living out the Lenten Season.

Some years ago now GBRE put out a series called 'Ashes to Easter' with focused reflections on Lent and Easter with a symbol that could be used each week to go with the Bible readings for some deeper reflection.

Intentional reflection during Lent which may include symbols can be a great help. Whatever we do in Lent

needs to be something where rather than simply arriving at Easter without preparation, we do take stock and make space in our lives to both grow closer to Christ and be more aware of our place in God's mission.

Whilst we cannot ultimately transform ourselves, there are actions and activities like this which might help promote some changes in our lives. Then we can proclaim, as in the words of St Augustine, with gusto: "We are an Easter people, alleluia is our song."

## Lent 1: Clay

A reminder that we are moulded and shaped not only by our own actions, but also by Christ. Sometime my wife Allison and I have made playdough instead.

## Lent 2: Oil

Of the many uses for oil it is also in anointing a reminder of our calling to be whole and in mission. What is our mission? Where might it be leading?

## Lent 3: Water

As well as remembering our baptism, think about what we thirst for. Is it for love and a deeper relationship with Christ and community, or is it something else?

## Lent 4: Light

Light is essential to sight. Our faith in Christ is a like a light we are to shine in any darkness. Where is the darkness in our community? How might we help to shine Christ's light?



**Symbols for  
Year A  
might include:**

## Lent 5: Wine

What results in being wine comes through processes of both growth and destruction. This can help us reflect on the cycle of life to death and new life, the centrepiece of the Lent to Easter mystery. What prompted growth in our spiritual journey? What now might need to die in order to prompt further growth?

## Palm Sunday: Palms & Palm Crosses

Joining in the unending hymn of praise from those whose thank you to God as Jesus entered Jerusalem connects with the church throughout the ages. None of us are isolated Christians, separate from one another, but deeply connected over distance, time and space.



## Easter Day: Empty Tomb and/ or Paschal Light

There are many ways symbols can be used for Easter as a reminder that Jesus Christ is both risen from the dead and an integral part of our lives as Easter people.

## Cycling by faith:

*Riding a bike is like life - if you stop moving forward you have the tendency to fall off*

**Eddie Barkla**

Cycling is about repetition. It asks the body to learn what is needed to move forward, and repeat that action, and develop the strength and endurance to keep going.

It requires heart, discipline and endurance, but the outcome is new opportunities, opening new doors and widening one's horizons. Cycling, like faith, is freedom.

Developing the Christian faith requires repetition too. If we trust God that when we seek him, when we keep knocking at the door, he will welcome us and not deny us, then the habit we need to develop is to keep seeking him with the desire of our hearts. This of course requires discipline, strength and endurance to become a habit.

But the outcome of our hard work and God's grace in seeking us first, is freedom. Once we know we are loved by God and grow in relationship with him through Jesus Christ, we are set free. We become like cyclists on the open road with all the time in the world and a great support vehicle urging us on.

Jean Gribaldy, a cyclist, writes: "Cycling isn't a game, it's a sport. Tough, hard and un pitying, and it requires great sacrifices. One plays football, or tennis, or hockey. One doesn't play at cycling." Perhaps like cycling then, our faith is not something to be taken lightly, like a pleasant hit of tennis with friends, but something that requires much harder work, for greater reward.

Unlike cycling, however, our endeavours in faith are dependent on someone else — the Spirit of God's love, grace and mercy to draw us deeper into relationship, and greater freedom, that we find in him through Jesus.

Looking forward to seeing you on the road soon God willing.

Melissa Clark | Parish of Woodend-Trentham

## In the depths of conversation...

On Tuesday evening in the Rectory at Woodend, we have our Conversation Group.

Everyone is welcome to come along and share their stories of faith, talk about how God influences their lives, share their favourite pieces of scripture, and most importantly, ask questions in a safe circle of fellow pilgrims.

Since the first meeting in September the group has covered topics ranging from prayer, the Trinity, euthanasia, marriage, the reformation, stories of our own personal encounters with God, and how Jesus comes into our everyday lives, amongst many other topics.

It seems to me that the questions and conversations about who Jesus is for



the 14th century, was the knowledge that Jesus, who is infinitely exalted and alone is worthy of our worship, is also utterly simple and friendly.

“...knowing that Jesus loves her doesn't make her a better person at all, rather if she is able to love Jesus more that will make her a better person”

each of us are the conversations that most capture our imaginations, fill our hearts, and cause us to have the most questions of them all.

It is somewhat easy (though not always) for us to look at the historical Jesus using the account of the gospel writers, and particularly Luke's two accounts to Theophilus, and maybe even to step outside of scripture and look at Josephus' writing, in order to find how this man named Jesus lived and died.

It is a great deal more difficult to look at how this man is also fully divine and, two thousand years after his birth, is still the driving force in so many of our lives.

We have turned, several times, to the writing of Julian of Norwich for assistance in our conversations. Julian offers us the opportunity to visit with Jesus through her experiences and visions and opens for us a way of seeing Jesus that our usual reading of scripture may not.

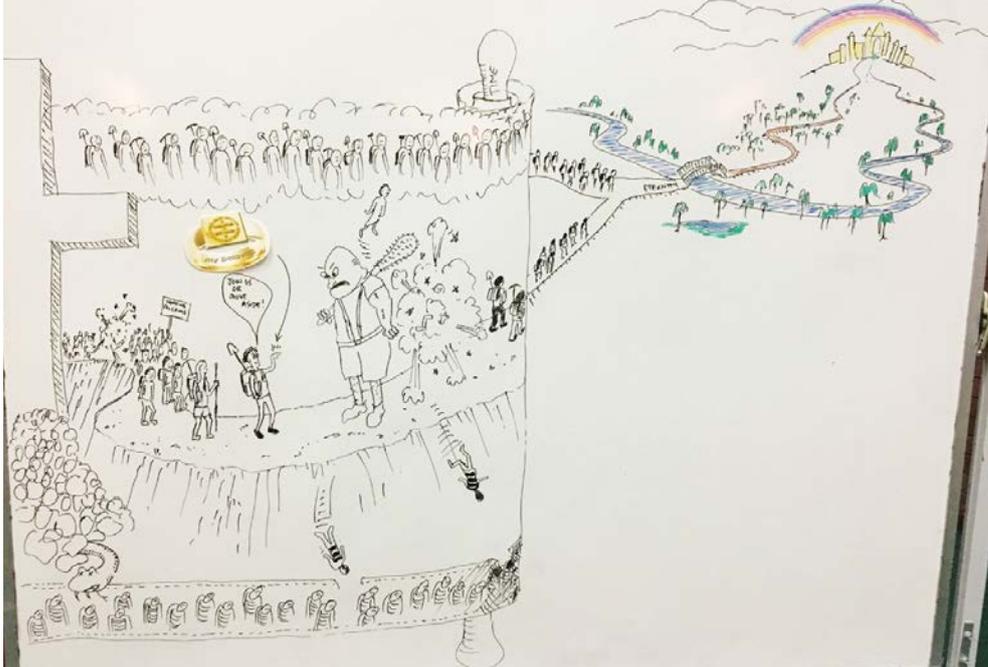
One of the revelations of Julian, about which she wrote in her book in

That Jesus wants to enter into such a tender relationship of friendliness is one of the enduring themes of Julian's writings.

Julian would be the first person to assure us that her knowing that Jesus loves her doesn't make her a better person at all, rather if she is able to love Jesus more that will make her a better person.

I like to think that our conversation group enables us to enter into a deeper friendship with Jesus as we welcome Jesus to open our hearts and minds to him more and more. Our spiritual foundation grows when we explore together and that unity helps us through our week until we come together on Sunday mornings to share in the blessed feast together.

We can search for historical assurances of Jesus all we like, and in that search we become a part of that history, but it is the ongoing friendship and love of Jesus that we strive for and that sustains us as we travel the path of life together.



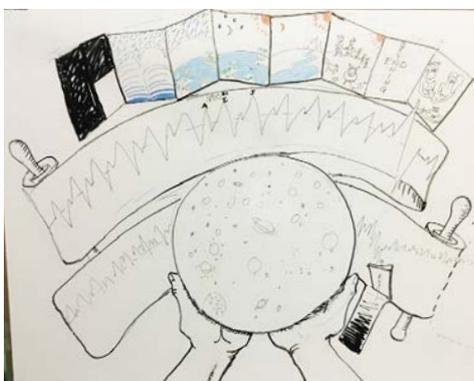
**Illustrate:** Terry Hunter's drawing of the sermon series 'God's Big Story'

## God's big story: looking at the bigger picture

**Trevor Bell**

Over the later part of 2016 at the Parish of South East Bendigo a series of God's Big Story was the focus in the sermons.

During the first and last weeks of this series local artist Terry Hunter was imagining the story and expressed it by drawing on a white board. These photographs show Terry's impressive drawings - it's amazing the gifts that are within our churches!



### Diocesan Executive

Monday 6 February

### Council of the Diocese

Tuesday 14 February, Golden Square

### Safe Church Workshop

Saturday 25 February, Maryborough

### Ash Wednesday

Wednesday 1 March

### Safe Church Workshop

Saturday 4 March, Flora Hill

### Parish Leaders Training Day 1

Wednesday 29 March, Swan Hill

### Parish Leaders Training Day 2

Saturday 1 April, Kangaroo Flat

### Got an event coming up?

Send the details to [thespirit@bendigoanglican.org.au](mailto:thespirit@bendigoanglican.org.au)





Steve Geyer June Andrew

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