



Anglican Diocese
of Bendigo

The Spirit

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Issue 151



Ordained and inducted: Joe Varghese with his wife Mincy



Peter and Jeanette Blundell

Northern Mallee ministry celebrates new beginning

Aaron Riley

People came from near and far to join together to celebrate the Ordination to the Priesthood and induction of the Revd Joe Varghese as Priest in Charge of the Parish of Northern Mallee on Saturday, 1 February at St Margaret's Anglican Church in Mildura.

It was truly a spectacular occasion, both spiritually and physically as the church turned red for the day, complimenting

the decor of the church itself.

Fr Joe was ordained by Bishop Matt Brain, witnessed by members of the Northern Mallee and friends visiting from far and wide.

Prior to the ordination and formal induction, Bishop Matt formally installed Peter Blundell as Archdeacon of St Arnaud. Bishop Matt offered a prayerful blessing to Archdeacon Peter and wife Jeanette, as they minister

to a much wider part of our diocese. Parishioners from the Swan Hill parish joined us on this wonderful occasion.

We were joined by local and visiting clergy from other dioceses supporting both Fr Joe and Archdeacon Peter.

The people of the Northern Mallee welcome Fr Joe and wife Mincy, and pray that their ministry among us will be fruitful to the glory of God.

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The Bishop writes

...and tweets  @MattBrain1

Dealing with the spread of COVID-19

We live in an uncertain and worrying world. This has really come home as the effects of the COVID 19 coronavirus have begun to bite. And these effects will be with us for a long time yet.

The usual pattern of relaxation, socialising and even our access to the customary treats will change in many ways. Making sure we have enough toilet paper will probably trump ensuring that we have a good range of chocolate eggs! Indeed, just this week we have hit the pause button on our public services and have had to shut the doors of our buildings. So how are we to deal with this? On the one hand we ache for some sort of comfort and word of encouragement, and our usual pattern of finding both is compromised.

The first thing for us to remember is that in some ways this actually brings us closer to the way that many throughout the world must live. Life is uncertain and very often unkind. Each day I receive an email update from an organisation that tracks the lives of persecuted Christians from around the world. I am reminded daily of the instability they face. Similarly, the sudden upheaval caused by the recent fires is reminiscent of that which communities who live hand-to-mouth face when floods sweep through. The forces that toss and turn us can be too big and overwhelming. Our vulnerability is exposed.

But Easter gives us a special opportunity because it is so much more than we usually expect. The family, the parties, the chocolate, the chance to get away from it all, and even the grave and joyous celebration of our church services only touch the surface.

The first Easter stands as a beacon of hope for a time such as this. When Jesus was picked up and carried like a rag doll tossed in a gale, passed from one corrupt ruler to another, subject to humiliation and even death; we see him take on board our life for us. He stood in

our place, the one who was capable of resisting all that makes for brokenness in life subjected himself to its power. His suffering and death was as one who represented our own. It is right that we see Jesus representing each of us as individuals. It is true that our own personal culpability before God is drawn into his living and dying. But it is no less true that the ache and pain of a world that groans (Romans 8) is also gathered up into Jesus' experience. What a huge thought! The one through whom all was made willingly empties himself (Phil 2) to bear the weight of all that does not reflect God's good creation.

So that first Easter, the surprising events not even three full days after those powers had done their worst, are a beacon of hope. Jesus did not stay dead. He was raised to new life. God the Heavenly Father 'reached down' to pluck him from the grave (Phil 2). His representative death gave the possibility of a representative life. A life full, unhindered and replete with satisfaction. As with Jesus' death, this is true personally and spiritually, but it is also true in laying before us the hope of the restoration of the world that God has made. It means that while life may change as we cope with the impact of the virus, the effect is not ultimate. We may be people of hope in-and-through the crisis.

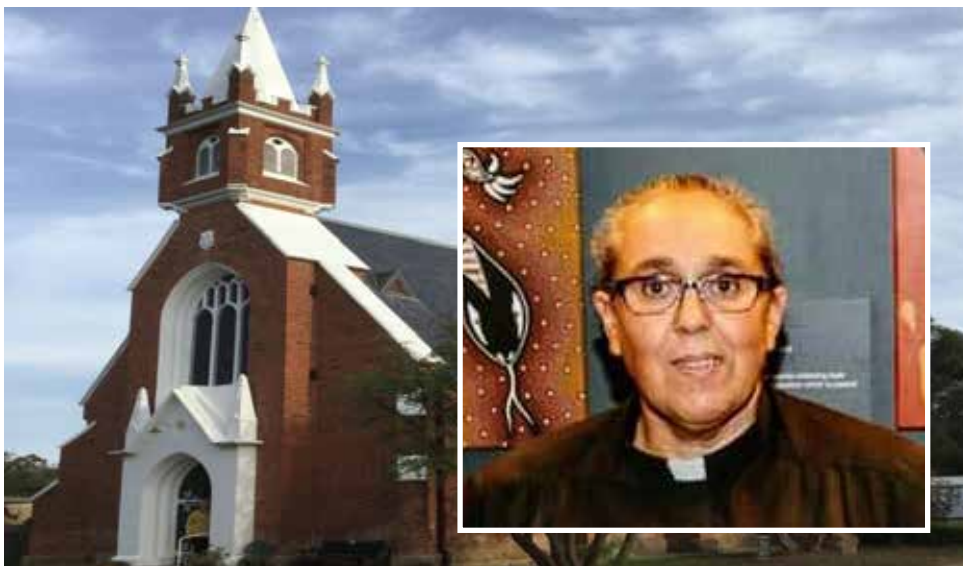
And this is the promise of Easter. Vulnerability gives way to power. Fear gives way to hope. Distress gives way to satisfaction. The promise has been made...will you accept it?



tlatt

The effect of the COVID-19 coronavirus will be with us for some time. It will force us to change many of our regular patterns of gathering and acting as the people of God. Yet it would be a mistake for us to think that this is the end of church...or even that we are suspending church. There are many things that we can do given that this change is forced upon us. Here are five top tips for making the most of the change.

1. Adopt 5 people to be your personal care group. Not that they will care for you, but that you can care for them! Imagine how much you can achieve if you set aside 15 minutes each day to call one of your group on the phone, and then spent Saturday and Sunday praying for them. Each of your group would have a call a week and the assurance that someone loves them enough to check in regularly.
2. Write a letter (yes the old fashioned thing) to one person a day doing 3 things: telling them that you have prayed for them (you have to pray for them first of course), telling them of a bible verse that has encouraged you and why, and then asking them if they have anything that they'd like you to pray for thus inviting a response!
3. Go for a walk up and down your street each evening and pray for the households you pass. Ask God to fulfil their needs and draw close to them in their anxiety. You may even like to slip a note in their letter box to say hello and ask if all is well and would they like a phone call to say hi.
4. Find a small group that you can talk with, even if it is simply your family group or people you can connect with on the phone or via the computer. Ask your minister what a good book about following Jesus is and read it together discussing each chapter as you go. You could also talk to Rev Canon Heather Marten at the Diocesan Office (03 5443 4711) about the diocesan Australis Certificate. You might like to start some bible and theology training and Heather can get you started.
5. Work with your congregation to start a parish pantry, so that when folks need food you have the capacity to share something with them in the name of Jesus. Non-perishables like tinned food, pasta and UHT milk are great. So are cleaning and hygiene products.



Appointed: Shannon Smith is the new Curate for St John's Heathcote

Heathcote welcomes Shannon Smith as new minister

Heather Zakrzewski

St John's Heathcote has had a wonderful start to 2020 with the arrival of our new parish priest, Revd Shannon Smith. During the previous year we have been without a priest, but receiving ministry support from retired relief clergy for which we have been very thankful.

Shannon began work in the parish on 1 January 2020, with the celebration of her new ministry held on Friday 17 January. We were delighted and thankful to welcome Bishop Matt and Dean Elizabeth, along with many clergy from the diocese who came to welcome Shannon. Some of Shannon's clergy friends and other supporters from Melbourne also made the trip along with representatives from other local churches and of course our parishioners.

Bishop Matt encouraged us all to stay committed and faithful to the task of living and sharing the Gospel, as he used a few unusual and amusing examples to help share the message. A misprint in the order of service designated our new name as "the Parish of Shannon" which Bishop Matt read out, causing many smiles but also helped Shannon to feel welcome and at home.

We all enjoyed a delicious supper in the Bunbunarik Community space, which was once the old rectory, and had a great time of meeting and talking together. Shannon has been very proactive in exploring Heathcote and district with her family and in visiting many of our folk in their homes. We are getting to know one another and Shannon's kind and friendly approach and faith in Christ is a blessing. Praises to God for hearing our prayers.



Ordained: Bertram Mather

The ordination of Bertram Mather

On Sunday the 9th of March Bishop Matt ordained Rev Bertram Mather as Deacon into the Anglican Church of Australia.

Bertram comes to us from the Uniting Church having been ordained originally in the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka. He is serving at Holy Trinity South East Bendigo as the Pastoral Care Minister.

Bertram said that he is looking forward to serving the Lord through in the South East Bendigo Parish. He has journeyed in ministry for 35 years. Bertram wants "to be a useful and fruitful agent to extend God's Kingdom". Bertram's broad ministry experience includes significant pastoral work during conflict and war. He continues to study, pursuing a higher degree in pastoral ministry.

Bertram's wife Stella is a dental surgeon by profession and works at the Royal Dental Hospital in Melbourne. She travels daily to Melbourne to work.



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Thank you: Bishop Matt joins with parish representatives to say farewell

Golden Square says farewell to Glenda and Terry Templer

Rhonda Dallow

The Anglican Parish of Golden Square held a very moving service on Sunday 19 February to farewell Revd Glenda Templer as Parish Priest and Revd Terry Templer as Assistant Priest.

Bishop Matt Brain conducted the official laying down of office for both, with blessings and gratitude for their significant contribution to the people of St Mark's.

When Glenda first came to St Mark's over 10 years ago it was to guide the congregation through a move to temporary premises as the church underwent refurbishment. Bringing the congregation back into the church was a significant point in the life of the parish. Since that time the congregation has grown and changed. St Mark's has always been known for its hospitality and warm and welcoming community of faith, with Glenda encouraging us and leading the way.

Glenda's initiative introducing Pop Up Church was a success for the many

children who attended with their families. She has assisted the parish in so many ways; working at garage sales and garden parties as part of the parish fundraising activities, visiting the older and more frail parishioners in their homes and conducting the many baptisms with patience and humour. Her ministry has been done with a welcoming smile to everyone.

Glenda has served the parish with gentle patience and endless compassion. The congregation will certainly miss her quiet support and heartfelt worship. We will certainly miss Terry for his kindness and his loving sermons – but also for his little jigs during some of our more upbeat hymns!

The whole congregation express their delight at having had the privilege of these two wonderful people leading our worship over the past ten years. The people of St Mark's wish them both every happiness in whatever may lie ahead for them.



Confirmed: Four teenagers were confirmed by Bishop Matt in Echuca

Four confirmations and a commissioning at Echuca

George Hemmings & Jacob Kelly

Bishop Matt joined members of all three congregations at Christ Church for a combined service of celebration, confirmations and a commissioning.

Four teenagers who had been part of a group exploring the Christian faith through Youth Alpha were confirmed as part of the service.

Jacob Kelly, the Bush Church Aid supported Student Minister at Christ Church, led the prayers for the candidates. During the service the Revd Glenis Traill was also commissioned for her new role as an Honorary Associate Priest in the parish.

Bishop Matt not only conducted the confirmations, presided at communion and joined in the actions for the kids

song, he also took up the challenge to preach from Ecclesiastes 7 and deftly unpacked how it teaches the futility of thinking we have life all sorted apart from faith in Christ.

The service was well attended with well over 100 people present and was followed by a BBQ lunch, which was only marred by the lack of tomato sauce!

Laneway Festival brings crowd to Christ Church

The Parish of Echuca held a laneway festival drawing in over 500 locals in the lead up to Christmas. There were up to 30 stalls including food vans, a sausage sizzle, ice cream and slushies along with six live music performances.



Inglewood celebrates first confirmations in 20 years



Confirmed: Mandy Cragg, Bill Mitchell, Roxanne Sargent & Alice Leech

The parishioners of Inglewood were excited to celebrate the confirmations of Mandy Cragg, Bill Mitchell and Roxanne Sargent on Sunday 16 February, as well as the reception of Alice Leech into the Anglican Communion.

Bill's story is special: he started life as a Presbyterian, which closed, so he went down the road to the Methodists. They became the Uniting Church and closed, so he moved another block to the Anglicans. That only leaves the Catholics, but hopefully that won't be necessary! Roxanne and Alice were also previously members of the Uniting Church, but Mandy is a born and bred Anglican!

The parish gave a warm welcome to each of the new candidates and thanks Bishop Matt for a great service and sermon.

- Malcolm Thomas

Bell tower restoration underway

An impressive structure of scaffolding has been built around the bell tower of St Paul's Cathedral as work to repair the rendering and brickwork begins.

The external fabric of the facade of the bell tower, including repointing, replacement of rendering and recasting of concrete rosettes and other ornamental features.

Although the scaffolding is obstructing the front entrance to the Cathedral, regular worship is still continuing inside the building with access from the side.

The congregations are looking forward to having their much loved building restored.

- Contributed



Restoration: St Paul's Cathedral surrounded by scaffolding

Parish says thank you prayer for retiring parishioners



Farewell: Beth and Bill Crutch

At the conclusion of our AGM, the Parish of Charlton-Donald joined in prayer to thank our Lord for our brother and sister in Christ, Bill and Beth Crutch. There was acknowledgement from each congregational representative in the reports tabled for the work that they have undertaken tirelessly over many years.

Following the offering of prayers by the Parish, Beth and Bill were presented with a framed copy of the prayers. Additionally, an embroidered table cloth (with the words Parish of Charlton-Donald) and two catering boxes of local Kooka's Cookies were also presented. There was a little self-interest here - biscuits for when we call in on our trips to and from Bendigo.

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive - Acts 20:35

- Judi Bird

Around the *Parishes*

Archbishop makes surprise visit to St Arnaud

The hot weather came through St Arnaud on Sunday 29 December so instead of having a customary 5th Sunday meal at church we had spiders (creaming soda and ice cream) to keep us cool.

After the Sunday service, when most people had gone home we had surprise visitors Archbishop Philip Freier, Joy and family. They had been hoping to join a service in the area, but on a fifth Sunday service times change. For those of us still there it was good to catch up. Walter Lardner, our church historian, was delighted to give Archbishop Freier a tour of Christ Church Old Cathedral.

- Jan Harper



Tour: Walter Lardner, Jan Harper and Archbishop Philip Freier

Baptisms start journey of faith



Faith: Ella and Lily are baptised by Jan Harper

It was a joyful morning service on Sunday, 9 February when Ella and Lily were baptised. It was a wonderful celebration for our church and for the family.

With so many layers of support behind them, including parents and godparents, extended family, friends, the church and the love of God encircling all, Ella and Lily step out securely on their journey of faith.

- Jan Harper

Hey, Hay and Hearty at St Paul's Birchip

On Friday, 14 February we had our usual worship service (Hey there to one and all and Hey there to our Lord), then we had a Hearty feast of fish, chips, pavlova, ginger sponge and vanilla slice, then the Hay - a locally produced and edited movie (by talented congregational member, David Bell) to explain the invention which assists in loading hay bales.

The Mallee was blessed this year with sufficient rain to produce excellent crops. There are thousands of hay bales on display in paddocks everywhere. Weighing nearly half a ton, the round bales are usually moved by some kind of mechanical loader. But what if you only need one or two bales to feed a couple of domestic animals? Well, Geoff Smith had the answer. He invented a simple device for loading round bales onto a trailer. Geoff had the device, a trailer and a haybale on display to provide a demonstration. Sharing our gifts and talents - what a special night.

- Judi Bird



Inventor: Geoff Smith with his hay bale loader



Mothers Union welcomes new members

Ronda Gault

2020 is a year of change for Mothers Union in our diocese as we embrace the world wide MULO focus which has been introduced over the past two years. There is no change to our aims and objectives, but the focus is on listening, observing and then taking action: to discern, what and where and to whom, we can offer support and practical help.

We have welcomed two new members to our Executive Committee: The Revd Peter Dyke who has graciously accepted Bishop Matt's invitation to become Mothers Union Chaplain with our much loved Revd Linda Osmond stepping down after nine busy years in this role. Revd Peter, a long time member of Mothers Union, has jumped right in with Lady Day just a few weeks away, and is straight in to the tasks ahead of him.

Evelyn Mortimer from Swan Hill, who attended our Retreat at Rochester in October 2019, has joined us to take on the role of looking after the diocesan members' needs and keeping them informed. A group of members from Eaglehawk, led by Jenny Rainsford, are going to manage MU publications.



Rob Bath

Red Alert – Does the future have a Church. I remember Gil talking about this book. It was planned about 15 years ago and now finally we have it in print.

Gil has had vast experience in pastoring and encouraging local churches over the years so his observations and thoughts have much relevance for the Church universal and local today.

He spends time surveying how the world has changed in the last 200 years both theologically (No absolutes everything is relative) and culturally. Many of the changes that took place in the 1900's where previously Christians with a strong faith had a concern for the needy in society and were heavily involved - abolition of slavery, hospitals, trade unions, orphans, homeless and welfare of animals. Many of these are now taken up by Govt agencies with a complete secular agenda squeezing out Christians from grass roots ministry and decision making

The bulk of the book tells how the church leadership can respond to these changes especially at a local level. A local pastor is seen as a facilitator encouraging every church member to use their gifts and abilities with the challenge that our worship is 24/7 and not just Sunday am (Romans 12:1). When the local church meets on a Sunday it is a family reunion.

"To go home saying 'what a wonderful speaker', 'what marvellous worship', 'what an uplifting experience' when we have done little or nothing to listen, encourage and support each other is

a gross distortion of what a Christian gathering should be."

Experiences are shared about situations during the week, time of prayer for concerns and also how God has answered prayer during the week. A repeated verse in the book is Hebrews 10:24-25

Comments are made that the Church gathered becomes the church scattered so that Sunday or when the time the whole group meet is a time to catch up, give praise, pray, hear corporately from Scripture with appropriate application for Monday - Sat worship of each "family" member

The vexed issue of music is dealt with in a chapter titled "From discord to Harmony making the most of our music". Gil writes about the change in people's preference with the note that in the 50's and 60's we sang songs, the 70 - 90's we listened, now we watch songs, consequently some churches turn the songs element in their time together into a rock concert - dim the lights, band out the front, music rather loud and nobody sings. Gil gives some practical advice to the leaders of music that would enhance and encourage the body of Christ instead of disharmony.

The last two chapters I found very challenging and encouraging. The chapter "Tough times ahead the need for real courage". Acknowledging that the secular world seeks to limit church and Christian involvement in the world because we do not accept their modus operandum. If you stand for biblical truth you are labelled either a bigot or an extremist. The call is to stand firm and be courageous. The last chapter "An attitude of gratitude - living in the grace of God". It is summed up in these words and I quote "Nothing is more important, for any church than this: that all its members marvel at the grace God extends to them. This is a daily reality. As followers of Christ, to live in an attitude of gratitude is a daily calling - something for which we are forever grateful to him"

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In Loving Memory...



Milestone: Over 140 people filled St John's Dunolly to mark its 150th anniversary

Dunolly celebrates 150 years of worship

Heather Blackman

St John's Anglican Church Dunolly celebrated a Eucharist for its 150th anniversary, with Bishop Matt Brain officiating for the service held in mid-December.

The service attracted 140 past and present parishioners leaving standing room only. Music was provided by the St John's organist, Esme Flett, who was accompanied by the Dunolly Brass Band. At the completion of the service a long-term parishioner and warden, Trina Kay, along with her husband Gary, were farewelled from the parish as they move to Bendigo to retire.

After the service many in the congregation moved to the hall to view the displays of the historical boards and wedding dresses from past brides. A fabulous array of food was set out to finish the event. This provided a great opportunity for reminiscing and fellowship well into the afternoon.



Farewell: Heather Blackman thanks Trina Kay for her time in the Parish of Maryborough-Avoca

Summer reading reviews

by Angela Lorrigan

One of the things I love about being in a book club is the huge variety of books that are read over the course of the year. This expands the mind but it also expands the pile of books on the bedside table. In a busy life, it is hard to keep up with all this reading.

So, when summer comes and book club is in recess, it is time to read the books on the bottom of the pile. I took the opportunity this summer to read *Damascus* (Christos Tsiolkas – Allen and Unwin, Oct. 2019) and *Cardinal* (Louise Milligan – Melbourne University Press, Updated Edition, July 2019).

I had been anxious to read *Damascus* ever since I heard Christos Tsiolkas interviewed on Radio National. He spoke about the extensive research he'd done for the book and this piqued my interest. I must have waxed on about this a bit at home because I was given two copies for Christmas!

The central theme of the book is the life of St Paul, but this is strongly interwoven with a vivid picture of life in the eastern Mediterranean in the first Century and the competing and conflicting beliefs centred on the emergent Christian faith. Alongside a thorough reading of St Paul, Tsiolkas has digested a considerable amount of Thomasine literature. As a consequence, Thomas is depicted as the twin of Jesus.

Another character who features is Timothy, whose affections are divided between Paul and Thomas. Accordingly, Timothy is torn in his belief. Faith in the divinity of Jesus and certainty of a world beyond death offered by Paul competes with Thomas' rejection of the Resurrection and divine nature of Jesus.

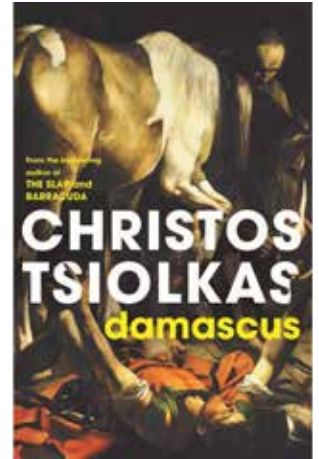
The strengths of this book are Tsiolkas' willingness to research deeply and to depict the gritty realities of life in the time and places of St Paul; his exploration of male relationships, the closeness that comes from working and travelling together, which sometimes has strong homosexual implications but at other times is far more ambiguous;

and his ability to show that the church stumbled and staggered through its early stages, trying to come to terms with and articulate what it believed. We can infer the latter from our reading of the New Testament but Tsiolkas brings it to life for us with believable, human characters.

On the negative side, the structure of the book can be confusing. One of Tsiolkas' talents (evident in earlier works) is his ability to 'carve up' the narrative into parcels that are not dependent on a chronological structure. In *Damascus*, this may have been taken too far, such that the overall storyline is lost and the reader can be left confused. The book also spends a lot of words describing murky first century settings and violent behaviour with copious description of bodily fluids. Frustratingly, these descriptions sometimes submerge the story and there are times when the reader feels they are struggling to retrieve the text from the bottom of a septic tank!

“Throughout its pages, the vulnerable, nascent faith is seen as a light in the darkness for many, where the powerless and poor found acceptance and generosity”

For all that it presents alternate views and gory images, *Damascus* is very kind to Christianity. Throughout its pages, the vulnerable, nascent faith is seen as a light in the darkness for many, where the powerless and poor found acceptance and generosity. A wonderful and welcome alternative



to the brutal practises of the Greek religions and their Roman derivatives that governed life in the world that Paul encountered. If you can brave the septic tank, this book is worth it.

Scroll ahead 2000 or so years and the Christian faith is no longer a powerless outsider, it has spread throughout the world and developed power structures of its own. This, of course is the setting for Louise Milligan's book, *Cardinal*.

This is the story of George Pell. The book tracks his life, from his days at school, through seminary and as he rose through the ranks of the church to become a cardinal. Then it follows the events that led to his trial and eventual conviction, on 13 March last year, on five charges of sexual assault.



Ecumenical response to Gippsland bushfires

Alison Goetz

On 27 January, late on a blessedly cool and cloudy afternoon, Christians and Christian leaders from near and far in Gippsland gathered at St Mary's Catholic Church in Bairnsdale. The Christian ministry team representing most denominations had convened an ecumenical service after the east Gippsland bushfires.

The response to the opening sentences, which asked "Why, Lord?" and confessed our confusion and trembling uncertainty spoke what was in every heart: "Where are you, loving God? Come to us now and weep with us as we face the harsh realities of this time."

The scripture readings were equally appropriate and consoling. Instead of a reflection or sermon, Brenda and Michelle shared stories of Mallacoota. The first was the Rev Jude Benton's story. Jude is the priest in charge of the parish of Croajalingalong and she and her husband, Andy, are based in Mallacoota. The second was that of Rowena Harris, the remote area chaplain with the Uniting Church's Frontier Services, who is based at Swifts Creek. Rowena was visiting family and friends in the area for a well-earned rest. The stories offered different perspectives of events but they declared faith and trust in God in the face of terror.

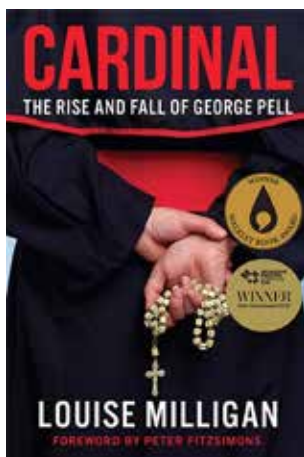
This moving, uplifting and inspiring service granted desperately needed comfort and strength and courage to continue, not faltering in our faith. Playing no small part in delivering said strength were the wonderful volunteers of both Rotary and Lions clubs who provided and cooked a hearty barbecue dinner for the convivial, after-service gathering on the forecourt of St Mary's. From there we went in peace to love and serve the Lord.

This book is meticulous in its pursuit of fact. Although Pell's career is documented through the lens of the revelations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse, this book is not a biased attack on the person of George Pell. Every piece of evidence relating to his life, what he may or may not have known about other clergy, what he may or may not have done, is turned over and examined to determine its validity. When what she hears or sees is equivocal, she says so. Milligan does not draw conclusions from scant evidence.

In her research, Milligan has also gone to extreme efforts to gain the trust of critical witnesses and for all of her precision with facts, she relates their

stories with sensitivity and compassion. In that sense the book is perfectly balanced. However this is a difficult book to read. The stories contained therein are gut-wrenchingly sad. Children, whose innocence and future happiness was snatched from them, sometimes instantly, sometimes in a confusing chain of events that unfolded over years. But even worse, is to read of all the adults who should have believed these children, protected them or enabled justice for them, who instead, turned a blind eye or assisted the perpetrators to continue to offend. The list of adults includes teachers, police and parents as well as clergy. There are some brave and admirable exceptions but by and large this is a story of betrayal.

If ever there was a book that should make us think, as Christians, of our duty to speak up against evil, even when it is where we least expect it, this is it. The contrast between the first century church that Tsiolkas depicts and the power machine that we read of in Milligan's account is astounding and should be deeply disturbing to any Christian. Not easy summer reading but Cardinal should be on the reading list of anyone who cares enough about religious organisations to be critical of them and hold them to account.





Parish fair brings community through church gates

The Parish of South East Bendigo recently held their annual parish fair seeing more people than ever flock to Holy Trinity.

There was food, music, entertainment, children's activities, home made cakes and preserves, home grown fruit and vegetables, clothing, books and a plant nursery. The parish was thrilled to welcome neighbours and friends for a wonderful evening.



Steve Geyer



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