

Anglican Diocese of
BENDIGO

The Spirit

170 OCTOBER 2025



Running to be Generous

The Bishop writes...

Dear Friends,

This edition of *The Spirit* shares stories of people engaging in all sorts of ministry. This is a wonderful thing as one of the dangers of Anglican publications is that the impression can be gained that the person in the purple shirt and fancy robes is the highlight. One of the articles even shows where I get to share these fancy robes round a bit!

One of the great things about Christianity is the belief that God wants all disciples to take their part in the life, ministry and activity of the church. Another way to say this is that all Christians can and should be engaged in ministry. We see this shine through scripture in several ways.

Paul often talks about his 'fellow-workers' (see Philemon 1:24 and Philippians 2:25 for example). Even someone gifted and anointed by God to do a great task had others who worked alongside him in ministry. Again, we see letters being addressed to others who played a number of different roles in the growing church; like Priscilla who was one of the very first pastors, or Lydia who hosted (and probably bankrolled) the first gatherings in Philippi.

We also see the different images used to picture the new thing which God was doing by building the church assume a sense of collaboration. Whether it is as a body (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12) or a building (e.g. 1 Peter 2) the members or stones which make up the whole play a distinct role within God's work.

One theme which I have been pondering lately is where all who have joined in God's work through Christ are set aside to do 'good' (e.g. Acts

9:36, 1 Peter 3:13, Ephesians 2:10 and many others). In each case it seems to me that to be a Christian means fundamentally to be freed up to work like God works. And this is good.

So where do the ones who wear the different collars and funny robes fit? Well, the clergy are not the essence of the church, but for the well-being of the essence of the church. Our particular job is to help the whole people of God do their thing. The way we are to work together is expressed in a tiny snippet of a prayer from our Evening Prayer service. It says:

*“Clothe your ministers
with righteousness
and make your
chosen people
joyful.”*



Bishop Matt Brain

So, as you read this edition of *The Spirit* I wonder where you can see different people taking up their different parts of the whole work of God. How can this fuel your sense of thanksgiving to God? Where can it inspire you in what you have to offer? Where do you see a need that with a bit of encouragement and support you could have a go at helping to meet? Who can join with you as a 'fellow-worker' on God's mission?

I have heard it said as someone was reflecting on Peter's sermon in Acts 10:38, "Jesus '...went about doing good...' why am I too often content to just 'go about?'" I pray that you may see something in this edition of *The Spirit* which causes you to thank God, or inspires you to do good in God's name.

Your servant in Christ,

Matt



Athena Whiltshire with
Bishop Matt

'Kids Rock' With the Bishop

Sue Allen

Kid's Rock is the after-school kids gathering of the combined churches in Pyramid Hill. Children attend each week for games, craft and to learn more about Jesus. The Kids Rock kids and their families were invited along to a Sunday service to experience firsthand what happens in the church building and what church is all about. This special visit happened to coincide with a visit from Bishop Matt! Bp Matt asked if one of the kids would like to try dressing up as a bishop and Athena Whiltshire eagerly volunteered. This gave Bp Matt a chance to explain to the kids what his mitre, crozier and stole were all about, and to speak about why we have church and about Jesus who is the reason for it all.

Maldon Kids Running for Starlight

Darcy Vaughan

How could a bunch of primary age kids be generous to help those in need? This was the question put to the children of Maldon Kids Club, who had been learning what the Bible has to say about God's generosity and the call for us to also be generous. The kids decided to do a fundraiser so they could make a generous donation to people in need. After some discussion they were determined to try and

run 101 laps around Holy Trinity, Maldon (combined, not each!) to raise money for the *Starlight Foundation*. The kids made posters to cheer one another on and donation tins to collect money. They even made themselves a banner to burst through for the start of their run! On the day the fifteen kids outdid themselves, running the 101 laps around the historic church with energy to spare! The kids raised a total of \$662.20 and received a special thank you letter from one of the Starlight 'Captains' for their efforts.



Tired but proud at the
finish line

16 Days of Activism

Suzannah Walsh

In Australia 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence and 1 in 15 men. Globally, 1 in 3 women experience physical and/or sexual abuse in their lifetime.

For more than 30 years communities across the world have campaigned for a safer and more just world for women with the *16 days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence*. The 16 days begin on the 25th of November with *The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women* and end on the 10th of December with *Human Rights Day*.



16 Days of Healing through Prayer and Action

As Christians, we know that prayer is powerful and knowledge is empowering. Please join us in praying each day for peace and justice to prevail. To download the Prayer Booklet and intercession resources go to: bendigoanglican.org.au/family-violence. Take action by:

- Attending events during the *16 Days of Activism* hosted by your local council.
- Promoting awareness of family violence. Share posts from the 16 Days Facebook campaign. Search 'Ten Commitments to Prevent Violence: Australian Anglican Program.'
- Having conversations with your family and friends about:
 - o Consent and respectful relationships. See respectvictoria.vic.gov.au
 - o The roles and responsibilities of men in families & society. Go to jss.org.au/programs/research/the-man-box
 - o Watch the film *On the Basis of Sex* (PG) about the life of US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg with your grandchildren and discuss gender inequality (one of the most significant drivers of violence against women).

Preparing to Respond

Jacob Kelly

How can I prepare myself to respond to Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)?

There are three key things you can do to enable yourself to respond to DFV in a way that is considerate and helpful.

1. Prepare yourself to receive a disclosure.

A disclosure that someone is experiencing DFV will often come at an unexpected time and from an unexpected person. People will make a disclosure at the time and place they feel safe and DFV doesn't discriminate by gender, race, class or circumstance.

2. Prepare yourself to believe a disclosure.

One of the biggest fears people experiencing DFV have is that they won't be believed or taken seriously, or that by saying something the perpetrator of violence might find out and increase the violence they experience. If someone decides to disclose to you that they are experiencing violence believe them, take their concerns seriously and do not share what you are told with others (except as outlined below).

3. Prepare yourself to respond to a disclosure.

Tell the person that you believe them and are concerned for them. Make them aware of DFV services and organisations that can offer professional help such as 1800 Respect (1800 737 732), the Orange Door (see website for closest centre and contact information) or Victoria Police to receive professional advice about responding to or escaping the violence. Offer the use of your phone to access these services if time and circumstance permits (their phone may be controlled or compromised by the person using violence). Offer to support them in any way possible while they work out a plan to address the violence they are experiencing and give them permission to contact you again. Do not share what the person has told you with anyone else (except in the process of contacting the above DFV services). And never address the situation directly with the perpetrator of violence – this will likely make the situation worse for the person and could place you or the person in danger. Note: If the disclosure comes from a minor (under 18), you will be considered a mandatory reporter and are required by law to report this to child protection (13 12 78. Call 000 for life threatening concerns). If you are a clergy or professional, there may be further obligations required of you by law.

What if I think someone I know is experiencing Domestic and Family Violence?

If you believe someone you know is experiencing violence, the best resource available to you is the 1800 Respect Hotline (1800 737 732). This hotline provides advice to people experiencing DFV and guidance to those who are supporting them. This means that you can call and receive advice no matter how minor or severe your concerns are.

Next, it is okay to ask someone if they are experiencing DFV. Do this in a safe and private time and location. Express that you are concerned for them, that you are there for them, believe them and have their best interests at heart. If they decide to share with you that they are experiencing violence – listen without interrupting, avoid making judgements, giving advice or attributing blame, and take their fears and concerns seriously. If they don't disclose violence to you, respect them and don't push for more information. They now know you are a safe person to talk to and if they ever need help, they know that you will believe them.

What if I am experiencing Domestic or Family Violence?

If you are experiencing DFV then please know that you are not alone and help is available. There are people who will believe you and assist you. We recommend contacting 1800 Respect (1800 737 732), Safe Steps (1800 015 188) or The Orange Door (see website for closest centre and contact information). If you are in immediate danger, call 000.

What if I might be engaging in or using Violence in my relationships?

If you have read this article and think that you could be engaging in DFV, then please reach out for help. Help is available and change is possible. Not only is it possible, it is best for you and those you love. Places you can look for support are your doctor, your pastor, a trusted friend, and men's support helplines such as Mensline (1300 789 978), Lifeline (13 11 14) or 1800 Respect (1800 737 732).



Faith, Hope and Love Conference

Val Barker-Piggot

At the Anglican Church of Australia's *Faith, Hope and Love Conference* we learnt what the church is doing in response to Domestic & Family Violence in our faith communities. Representatives from 19 dioceses around Australia attended along with other denominations and some from New Zealand. Three of us from the Anglican Parish of Sunraysia South attended and were actively involved in various parts of the conference.

For the first time a Men's Summit was held for men only. The Ten Commitments of the Anglican Church were explained. The program *Communities that Care* was launched. This program is aimed to equip Christians to be alert to domestic and family violence and to become active bystanders. I participated on a panel with three other community workers regarding what is needed in rural and regional areas which is sometimes different to urban centres.

Our group came away with a deepened passion to keep this matter on the agenda in our community. We want to let the community know that we as a church will not step away but will step toward and speak out against Domestic and Family Violence. And we want to be able to provide a safe space for all those impacted.



Sonia Hadenfeldt, Val Barker-Piggot, Patrick Pigott

Thankful for all of Creation

Julie Worrall

Our dog, Ddraig (three year old white boxer) called all animals and 'paw-rents' to be blessed at Christ Church, Swan Hill on Sunday the 5th of October as part of our observation of the Season of Creation. Along with the blessing of animals, which took place in our regular Sunday morning Eucharist, we had special prayers for the whole created order and thanked God for all the organisations who work to maintain and care for the environment and animals. This included the World Wildlife Fund, RSPCA, Earth Watch, as well as local animal shelters. The animals were very well behaved, and even began chatting to one another during the service!

Pictured below: Rhonda Brown with Coco. Hunter, Beate & Achilles with Joey. Sylvia Bail with Horace. Heather Blackman. Dianne Wells with Hermantrude. Julie Worrall with Berty. Jack Lowe & Billy Lowe with Bob.

Hunter Brunhoever with Joey and Julie Worrall.





Bendigo North Parish Fair

Hannah Gregory

Bendigo North had a successful parish fair on Saturday the 4th of October at St Luke's. There were a variety of stalls including facepainting, snow cones, popcorn and lucky dips. The cake and produce stall was a huge hit; you could get a Devonshire Cream Tea in the morning and a BBQ in the afternoon!

We were grateful for the support of some young people from

Girton Grammar School who helped us tremendously. We held an art competition for White Hills Primary School who created pieces of art on the theme of 'Hope' in line with the Hope25 campaign. They were displayed in the church and were given prizes through the generous support of KFC and Dominoes. It was a great time of getting to know some more of our community as well as raising funds for the church refurbishment. All together we raised just over \$5,000.

Out and About

Christine McWilliams

The Elmore Parish incorporates Elmore, Goornong, Raywood and Colbinabbin and therefore not every church has a service every week. Plans had been made for St George's in Goornong to have one Communion service and one Morning Prayer service each month. Recently however, the decision was made to replace Morning Prayer with a 5pm Communion Service, followed by dinner at the Drover's Arms Hotel. This is because we want the church presence in the Goornong community to be more than a sprinkling of cars in the church carpark twice a month. We want the community to see us 'out and about' and to see that the church is a relevant and living part of the community.

Those attending have enjoyed getting together for a meal following the service. Hopefully over time we will become a regular and expected table booking for dinner, becoming a little more enmeshed into the Goornong community as our presence becomes obvious and as we connect with others enjoying an evening out.





Kennedy (far left) with members of the Strathaven congregation

‘Inside Evangelist’ Kennedy Baker

Angela Lorrigan

Making the decision to enter an aged care facility because of a degenerative physical condition is something that no-one wants to experience, and yet it happens often. When discussing my ministry visiting aged care centres in Bendigo I have often been met with the response; “I’ll never move into one of those places.” I really wish people wouldn’t say that. Partly because for most people who find themselves in this position, it is an unavoidable necessity. But more importantly, because it negates the useful contribution that so many people in aged care make to the community. One such person is Kennedy Baker.

Kennedy came to live in Strathaven because of the progression of Parkinson’s Disease. When he moved there, he took with him a lifetime of experience of management and management consulting and a gift for looking at communities and figuring out how they work. He also took with him his Christian faith.

Not long after Kennedy moved into Strathaven, missing regular

participation in the Eucharist, and seeing the need for this in others, he, in partnership with David Winter and Tom Glazebrook (both now deceased) organised a monthly Anglican Communion service. This service has grown into a very special phenomenon. It provides prayerful and practical support to its members and, among other things, helps them deal with the regular loss of good friends to death, the impact of which is often lost on those outside aged care communities.

In fact, it is the reluctance of people to contemplate ‘entering the wormhole’ that was one of the main drivers for Kennedy when he initiated the Anglican service, and also when he offered his services as a member of the Palliative Care Committee. Kennedy describes death as the ‘wormhole’, seeing an analogy with the wormholes of physics, which connect different parts of spacetime.

Since coming to Strathaven, Kennedy has made time for himself to contemplate his own death, and through this he has arrived at a point where his faith gives him extreme confidence and comfort. This he says

is one of the benefits of his situation; unlike many others who are still running around keeping up with busy lives avoiding thoughts of death, he has had “proper reflection time” and is “increasingly of the view that this is necessary to think very hard about the change that will occur.”

As a result of his contemplation and reflection, Kennedy wants to share with others the message of certainty offered by the Gospel; “people talk about hope, but Jesus offers certainty, there is not the slightest doubt, ‘my Father’s house has many rooms, there is one for you.’”

It is this certainty, a result of his time of reflection, that has allowed Kennedy to show great initiative and leadership as a Christian and as member of the Strathaven community.

*‘My Father’s house
has many rooms, there
is one for you.’*



Recent ordinands receive gifts from the diocese at Clergy Conference

Sr Mabel: A Leitchville Legacy

Simon Rip Robinson

She is a woman on a mission. Short, dressed simply in grey, ready to work, she moves through the crowded cattle sales at Leitchville. Her eyes are on the lookout for who might need a hand, a friendly face or a bit of tender-loving-care, especially the women and children that have been dragged along to this dusty scene. She also stands ready to baptise those who have embraced the Christian faith and share the Church's message of hope.

A different scene; the same woman. She takes her place on the podium in the city of Bendigo, alongside the Governor of Victoria, some earl from the old country, the Bishop of Wangaratta and the Archdeacon of Bendigo. And yet they are her words that are reported; her words that are remembered. Her name is Sister Mabel Bostock, Deaconess in the Church of England, first woman ordained as a deaconess in the Diocese of Bendigo, and first woman placed in charge of a parish: the Parish of Leitchville.

Can you believe that the year is 1925? Sallying forth from the corner of Bowlands road and the Murray Valley Highway in her white horse and gig, Sr Mabel travelled the district, often setting up for Sunday School at the Gunbower Island school. Her ministry was cut short when, in 1928, following the death of her mum in England, Sr Mabel was recalled to care for her ill sister. According to her correspondence with Leitchy locals, she then went on to the mission field elsewhere.

And they are her words that are reported, her words that are remembered.

Fast-forward to the 3rd of September 2015, 90 years to the day that Sr Mabel was ordained. We found that same practical, can-do spirit combined with articulate, memorable speech present in the panel of women that gathered to honour the occasion at Latimer the Martyr Anglican Church, Leitchville. Five dynamic women in holy orders enthralled the gathered diners as they shared generously from their experience, Q&A style. And that same can-do spirit was also clearly alive in the lay women who lavished the crowd with their generous hospitality!

Now here we are today, on the lee side of Sr Mabel's anniversary, and we find that we still have a large cohort of inspiring women in holy orders helping to lead the diocese from street ministry to the second-most senior role as Dean of the Cathedral and Vicar General. We thank God for Sr Mabel and her trail-blazing ministry.

The above is based on unattributed historical sources.

Strengthening Ties

Val Barker-Piggot

Bishop Rickson from the Diocese of Southern Malaita and Sikaiana is currently on a six-month sabbatical in the Diocese of Riverina. The aim is to strengthen ties between the two dioceses and to support the PALM Workers from Solomon Islands. Bishop Rickson was attending St John's, Wentworth and I was invited to bring some Solomon workers along to meet him.

Patrick and I decided we would offer to do the 500km round trip to transport any of the congregation from Robinvale who would like to meet the bishop. We had two men who were able to take the day off; Mostyn and Peter are the two main musicians for our PALM church service, faithful Anglicans from Malaita Province. They didn't know the Bishop prior to meeting him, but I have never seen two adult men so excited as we drove the hour and a half there! We then spent some time with the bishop's party touring the Inland Botanical Gardens and sharing lunch before we transported the men home again. The trip turned out to be absolutely worth it.



Mostyn Anise, Bishop Rickson, Peter Bennie, Delbin (bishop's wife) and Val outside St John's, Wentworth

Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival

Simon Chan

This year's Mid-Autumn Festival was on the 6th of October. On Sunday the 5th of October Christ's True Light Church celebrated with a service followed by lunch. The festival is also known as the Festival of Reunion as it

is a time for families to gather together. Those who live or work far from home will return to be with their loved ones. Families will celebrate by eating together, admiring the full moon, eating mooncakes, and children will carry lanterns. It is a picture of harmonious, loving families, living in love and peace together.



Spring blossom face painting

Congratulations to all the *BAD LEGO LEGENDS*

for all the amazing entries to the Lego Genesis challenge.
Here's just a few, check out the Diocesan website for all the great creations.

BAD BISHOP'S PRIZE

chase franklin
DAY 3:
Land & Plants

LEADING LADDER

kaitlin bath

DREAMIEST BUILD

kate moffitt

GREATEST GARDEN

sonny treloar

Stay tuned for the next Lego Competition coming early 2026!



Eager gamers playing Boggle

Editor's Notes

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Fun and Games

Richard Bath

St Paul's Anglican Church in Axedale is part of the Parish of Heathcote, but hasn't had a church service since 2012. In the interim the local *Axedale Quilters Group* have used the main church building. Earlier this year while I was visiting them a nearby neighbour came over and asked if the local community could have a board games night there, perhaps once a month.

There are quite a few isolated people and families in the area, and it seemed that this would be a great way to interact and build

community in the town. After a couple of conversations, the parish agreed to host these nights and also put on a free BBQ.

The parish hosted it's first Board Games Night with no idea how many would turn up. But we were pleasantly surprised with several families and individuals joining us – nearly 30 all up! It was a great evening with many conversations and competitive games being played. The intention is to run these nights once per month on the first Thursday from 5:30pm. Perhaps in the not-too-distant future there might be the occasional church service at St Paul's too. Stay tuned!

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CALL 1800 135 246**

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