

Anglican Diocese of  
**BENDIGO**

# The **Spirit**

173 MAY 2026



**An Easter Baptism**

# The Bishop writes...

Dear Friends,

Part of being a human being living in time and space is that we have shape.

We have a physical shape. The world around us is full of all sorts of shapes and they often reflect the dominant activity the thing engages in or the environment it is found in. Think of the long, lanky basketballer, or bricklayer with thick, muscled shoulders or a lizard able to slink through crevasses, or the bulbous 'blobfish' which does just fine in the high pressure of the deep ocean even if it looks like a blob close to the surface.

We are also accustomed to the shape which time gives us. We are moving from Autumn to Winter in our part of the world with the changing weather patterns which prompt different activities, dress and even physical landscape.

This is true of our Christian lives. Christianity has a certain 'shape', and Christians will themselves be shaped by this pattern. The shape of life which we take on as disciples of Jesus is inescapably made by the tensions which arise between Jesus' death on the cross, resurrection to new life, and return to bring his way into glorious, full expression.

Not long ago we moved again between Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. Yet you will be reading this edition of *The Spirit* caught, as it were, between the joyful reality of Jesus' resurrection, which is the assurance and first fruits of our own, and the inescapable reality that we do not yet experience this in full. Indeed, Ascension Sunday and Pentecost underline the fact that the risen one has left us and we must wait to experience the fullness of what he achieved.

This experience of waiting shapes us profoundly. Many of the questions we navigate each day, whether significant or quite ordinary, would be much easier to answer if Jesus and the fullness of God's kingdom were here, or if Jesus had not been raised and we were left to our

*We discover just what a disciple's shape should be. We can sum it up in one word: **humility**. Humility should be like the clothes we wear.*

own devices. Living in tension between the events which changed everything, and their fulfillment is the primary shaping force on us.

There is a little gem hidden in one of the passages for the Sunday sandwiched between Ascension Day and Pentecost. That week we come to the end of the readings working their way through 1 Peter, and in chapter 5 verses 5 through 11, we discover just what a disciple's shape should be. We can sum it up in one word: *humility*. Humility should be like the clothes we wear. Yet Peter goes on further to describe what humility looks like in practice.

Peter reassures us that even though living in the light of God's kingdom will often require sacrifice, and pressure from others, God will, in fact, lift us up in due time. This reassures me that the decisions which align with Jesus' way, but cost me now, will be vindicated. This is especially good if we are ridiculed or held down in the present.

We are to be people who know their dependence on God. Not as servile people, held low, but those who are comfortable to cast their anxiety on God knowing that God cares for them. I love the promise of God's willing love.



**Bishop  
Matt Brain**

Alertness to the trickery of God's enemy the devil should be a hallmark. Our alertness should then give fruit to resistance. We do not need to go any way other than that which pleases God, so when we spot and then cease to follow a way that does not reflect the life which Jesus brings we resist!

Finally, we persevere. Continuing on as followers of Jesus can feel tiresome and without reward, yet God will restore us...in a little while. God will come through for God's people even if we are not aware of the fullness of God's timing. Perseverance in following is the substance of faith.

What shape does a Christian take? Well, they are people confident in their vindication, dependent on their comforter, leaders of the resistance and those who persevere knowing that their time will come as it is in God's hands.

Your servant in Christ,

*Matt*



Clergy enjoying a bike ride in Echuca

# A conference of faith and science

*Darcy Vaughan*

In April the clergy of the diocese gathered in Echuca for their annual conference. This year the speakers were Rev'd Daniel Lowe and Rev'd Dr Chris Mulherin from the Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology (ISCAST).

Chris began by opening up a broad discussion of the ways that science, technology and theology can inform one another, as well as identifying the limits of each discipline. Consideration was given to the increasingly popular refrain that 'science has disproved God'. Chris helped clergy to consider how they might productively engage with those who hold such a view. He advocated for a dynamic dialogue between Christian faith and the sciences, allowing each to contribute to our understanding of the other.

Daniel developed these ideas further, encouraging clergy to consider the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on our lives and how we as churches ought to live with this increasingly prevalent technology. Time was also set aside for clergy to contribute to a workshop, identifying ways that AI impacts our churches and ministries. These issues will be addressed by a diocesan policy which is currently being developed. This policy will provide guidelines regarding the proper use of AI in our churches.

Daniel and Chris also led the clergy through slow contemplations of Psalm 19, which begins with those wonderful words: "The heavens declare the glory of God". Through the psalm clergy were brought to appreciate the wonder of God revealed through creation, and ultimately revealed

in the person of Jesus Christ and through the gift of God's word.

A bike tour of Echuca, many chats over coffee and dinner together each night provided important opportunities for fellowship. Morning and evening prayer and a final service of Holy Communion provided additional spiritual nourishment. Hopefully the clergy left the conference refreshed as well as inspired to continue contemplating the relationship between the church and matters of science. A heartfelt thank you to Christ Church, Echuca for their hospitality. And to Daniel and Chris from ISCAST for generously sharing their time and expertise. If this is a topic that interests you, please take a look at the ISCAST website ([iscast.org](http://iscast.org)) which has plenty of useful resources for you to explore.

# Holy Week around the diocese

*Phil Zamagias*

The Walk of Witness brings together people from almost all of the Echuca Christian churches on Good Friday. It is coordinated through the Echuca Moama Ministers' Association of which Rev'd Phil Zamagias is the Chairman.

This year around one hundred people gathered at the Uniting Church to begin a series of fourteen Bible readings matched with prayers and supplemented with songs which told the story of the passion of our Lord.

The crowd then proceeded down the main shopping street of Echuca, stopping at Christ Church Anglican, and then on to St Mary's Catholic Church, before returning to the Uniting Church for the concluding readings and a gospel message. This year it was Phil's turn to MC the event and preach.

The aim of the event is to be a witness to the community on Good Friday, reminding everyone of this sacred day which Christians hold so dear. Onlookers are usually quite surprised to see such a large crowd walking behind a person carrying a wooden cross! As the group travels down the main street, it is common to hear people remark; "Oh yeah, it's Good Friday today." Some even join in as they realise what is going on!

As a final act of fellowship, the assembled crowd was offered morning tea in the Uniting Church hall, featuring hot cross buns of all varieties.

The Walk of Witness is supported by the local newspaper, *The Riverine Herald*, which publishes stories before and after the event. It is a valuable expression of Christian unity in Echuca and shines the light of Christ to a needy world.



## Angela Lorrigan

The resurrection of Christ is a momentous event in human history and, as the Easter vigil reminds us, in the history of God's relationship with God's people. However, it is an event which is revealed slowly. The accounts differ, but all those to whom the resurrection is revealed come to the realisation slowly. There are angels, but the sky is not riven with them. There are no wise men who have predicted this event and are there to offer gifts and praise. Mobs of shepherds do not run to the tomb to 'see and believe'. In fact, initially there is a sense of everyone running away from the scene!

But the resurrection announces itself with increasing certainty. It is no coincidence that the initial revelation is at dawn. The resurrection is revealed like the rising sun. At first there is a glimmer of light, of hope, shining on the edge of night. Then the light gathers strength. As the birds mount their chorus, all of creation wakes and the light cannot be denied or ignored. The new day has begun!

It is very difficult to reflect and honour the extraordinary occasion of the resurrection in liturgy, but the Easter Vigil and New Fire service is a good attempt. By the light of the Easter moon, the faithful gather to kindle a fire in the darkness. The fire is spread to the Paschal candle, then to the candles of the faithful. As the sun begins to appear, the light gathers strength. In the darkness of the church, the history of God's faithfulness is read and sung



aloud, and the light continues to grow. Finally, the sun rises, the new day dawns and light fills the sky and the church. The faithful proclaim: "He is risen, He is risen indeed!"

This is what took place at St Paul's on Easter Day. We are very lucky in Bendigo to have clear days around Easter, and clear skies, when this dawning light is dramatic and unmistakable. Next Easter, if you are able, try and experience this. It is a powerful and enduring reminder of God's faithfulness through time and of His raising of Jesus from the dead.



## Val Barker-Pigott

Easter 2026 was indeed a celebration of life at Sunraysia South as we journeyed through Good Friday to Resurrection Sunday. On Good Friday afternoon the PALM Church came together to share in The Way of the Cross. Most of the workers were required to work this year however those who came together walked around their caravan park remembering what their Lord Jesus had gone through for them and solemnly participating in a meaningful service.

Easter Sunday saw the baptism of twelve-year-old Elijah in the Murray River early in the morning. Such an exciting and meaningful experience for all who came as witnesses to this occasion. Elijah travels to Robinvale every Sunday evening to assist with technology at the PALM Workers worship. It was only fitting then that brother Mostyn from the Solomon Islands prayed over Elijah after his baptism, followed by his support person Patrick.

Following the baptism we came together to worship and celebrate the Lord's resurrection with Holy Communion. Elijah walked the candle of light in representing the light of the world Jesus coming and taking away the darkness. What a joy to celebrate with people from different countries and cultures but one God and Lord for all.

# Changing season for MinisTree

*Fiona Preston & Tracey Wolsley*

As we write this article, we do so surrounded by the colours of Autumn bursting outside. So many of the streets in Bendigo are lined with deciduous trees that provide a vibrant spectrum of brilliant yellow, gold, orange and candescent red. It is a beautiful season, one to enter into and enjoy while it is here for we know winter is just around the corner. The seasons come and go and as they do they speak to us in different ways. Beside enjoying the brilliant colours of Autumn, we watch the leaves slowly and gracefully fall from the trees. They show us the art of letting go, of surrendering what was to make way for what will soon follow.

In the wake of Covid lockdowns in 2022, Rev'd Fiona Preston initiated a new ministry in Bendigo which was named MinisTree. MinisTree was an intentional ministry of compassion, pastoral care and practical support to rough sleepers and those who were experiencing homelessness. Over the years, and with Rev'd Tracey Wolsley who served alongside Fiona from 2023, many significant and beautiful relationships were built with the most vulnerable people of the community. Sometimes, there was cause for celebration, as when people received much needed medical treatment, a place to stay or employment.

It was not within our power to provide housing, and we could not wave a magic wand and make everything better. But thanks to the support we received from Bishop Matt, parishes within the diocese and faithful supporters, each week we were able to go out onto the streets and give what we could: food, socks, shoes, water, prayer, love, compassion and hope.

In the face of the enormity of need there were many times it felt that we were like Old Mother Hubbard, going to the cupboard only to find it was bare! Like the disciples in the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 (Matthew 14.13-21), we were daily reminded of our limited capacity to meet the immense need before us. Nevertheless, God in God's mercy took what we had, took us, and used us to bless a broken world. We became known as the 'street angels', a name we hope indicates that somehow, in some small way, God took on flesh in the form of two ladies in green shirts. We sought to share God's presence as we sat on the pavement, under a tree, outside a shop, on a park bench, in the hospital, in the library, on the steps of the church to listen, to care, to love and to share the very, very good news of salvation that is ours in Christ.

Going back to the Autumn leaves, the beautiful colours of that new season are made possible as chlorophyll in the leaves breaks down in cooler weather. This in turn allows masked pigments, carotenoids, to become visible as vast shades of yellow, while new pigments, called anthocyanins, create brilliant reds and purples. In other words, with the change of season, the green disappears and something else follows.

Following a prayerful time of discernment, MinisTree as we know it has come to a new season and we have laid down the green and will no longer be on the streets serving the rough sleepers and those experiencing homelessness as we did. We continue to give thanks for the support received over the past four years. We also give thanks for the many agencies and organizations still working in the 'homeless' space. Between the now, and the not yet, we quietly trust God.



MINISTREE  
BENDIGO

# Reflecting on reconciliation

*Darcy Vaughan*

What does reconciliation really look like? And what steps could our diocese take to turn the vision of reconciliation into a reality? These are some of the questions being asked by the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group with the goal of developing a RAP for our diocese. The group's creation was inspired by last year's Provincial Walkabout and the call from first nation elders for the diocese to have the courage and confidence to take further steps toward reconciliation.

The development of a RAP was given wholehearted support by Bishop Matt Brain and Indigenous Ministry Officer Rev'd Canon Shannon Smith. After some initial conversations the group, consisting of Rev'd Hannah Gregory, Rev'd Lauren Lockwood-Porter, Rev'd Darcy Vaughan and Archdeacon Tracey Wolsley, decided that it was important for this journey to begin on the country that first nations people have inhabited for so many millennia and continue to care for today. And so, a 'visioning session' for the RAP Working Group was arranged at the Community Gathering Space at Larni Yirrip Campground, Big Hill.

Larni Yirrip, which means 'home of the Ironbarks', is a beautiful cultural space which has been designed around

traditional Dja Dja Wurrung values, with cultural landscaping and stories, and large gathering shelters. The Working Group invited some of the senior leaders of the diocese to join them at Larni Yirrip. All in attendance were asked to bring with them two items; one that represented where they've come from, and another that represented their hopes for the RAP process.

The time began with lighting the campfire and preparing tea and damper, with an acknowledgment of the Dja Dja Wurrung and with prayer. Shannon prayed that; as they gathered around the campfire inspired by the Christian faith which had been passed down through so many generations, they would have on their hearts the first nations peoples whose culture and stories have been shared around the fire for so long.

Those present displayed the items they had brought along and reflected on all they brought to the process. Some shared how their family stories began somewhere else. Others acknowledged the great privilege they had been afforded. Others spoke from firsthand experience of the exclusion and judgment of Aboriginal people within Anglican churches. Each person then shared the hopes they brought to this process of developing a vision for our Diocesan RAP. Acknowledgment was also made of the steps towards reconciliation already taken by the diocese in the past.

More structured discussion was held regarding the theological underpinnings of the diocese's commitment to reconciliation and the biblical imperative for this to lead to action. And some early attempts were made to articulate what exactly a vision statement could be for a diocesan RAP.

The process of developing a RAP is facilitated by Reconciliation Australia, an independent not-for profit organisation established in 2001. Reconciliation Australia is the lead body for reconciliation in the nation. The Working Group has registered the diocese to develop a 'Reflect RAP', the first of four types. A Reflect RAP helps to prepare an organisation to engage in reconciliation meaningfully, nurturing understanding and relationships which will form the basis for further developments. This Reflect RAP process is expected to take twelve to eighteen months. The RAP Working Group looks forward to inviting the diocese into this journey at this year's Synod. Time will be set aside for further exploration of what a RAP means for our diocese and to commit this process to God in prayer.

The time at Larni Yirrip concluded around the campfire. All stood in silence, feeling the warmth of the fire, hearing in the silence the distant buzz of traffic, and nearer by, the calls of Magpies and Cockatoos and the leaves in the Ironbark trees. A final question was posed: what could it mean for the church to gather around the campfire, called by Jesus and reconciled with first nations people? The visioning session concluded in prayer, asking for God's blessing and guidance as the diocese seeks to walk with Jesus in justice, truth and grace towards reconciliation.





The Rev'd Kelly gang!

## A home grown harvest

### *Darcy Vaughan*

A key indicator of a healthy diocese is the ordination of 'home grown' clergy. On this basis there is good reason to feel very optimistic about the future of our churches.

Saturday the 21st of March was a remarkable case in point, with three candidates being ordained by Bishop Matt at St Paul's Cathedral, and all three of them 'home grown'!

Karlie McGrath from the Parish of Mooroopna was ordained deacon. Rector of Maroopna Rev'd Simon Robinson expressed his joy that their mate Karlie had been called by God to holy orders. He reported that half their mob had made the trip to St Paul's Cathedral for the great occasion. "I felt so blessed that so many of my church family travelled to Bendigo to celebrate with me" Rev'd Karlie reflected. "It was a real blessing to stand alongside Matt and Sam and begin our different roles together."

Matt Gallagher from the Parish of South East Bendigo was also ordained deacon. When asked if there was a standout moment in the service for him, Rev'd Matt reflected "for me the moment that felt particularly meaningful was when 'the church' responded in one voice to confirm their reception and welcome of me to serve in this new way. It reminded me that God is calling me to serve and care for his people." Rev'd Trevor Bell confirmed this sense of calling from South East

Bendigo, adding that "we are excited to see the continued growth in Matt's leadership, and we at Holy Trinity look forward to the things that God will do in and through Matt."

Rev'd Samuel Kelly, who has been ministering as deacon for the parish of Rochester-Lockington, was ordained priest. Samuel's ordination was attended by his two brothers who have also been ordained in the Anglican church. "The laying on of hands from the priests in the diocese was a standout for me, and it was particularly meaningful to me that my brothers, Reece and Jacob, were able to take part in that process." Rev'd Phil Zamagias, Rector of Christ Church, Echuca, was elated that Samuel, who began as a student minister four years ago, had grown and matured into this calling: "Seeing the Rev'd Samuel Kelly being priested recently and entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the Parish of Rochester and Lockington will stay with me as a highlight of my ministry. Seeing God develop Samuel's gifts over those years, under the direction and enabling of the Holy Spirit, gives me great hope for the Anglican Church as God raises up new ministers who are willing to commit to a lifetime of ordained ministry."

We join Phil in giving thanks for all these new ordinands and join together in praying for their ministry of service among us.



Rev'd Karlie and the mob from Maroopna



Rev'd Matt with his family

# Keys of Gold returns

This July, Anglican churches across the diocese will be filled with music as Keys of Gold returns from 3 to 26 July 2026 for four weekends of bold, joyful performances.

At St Paul's Cathedral, Bendigo internationally renowned organist Thomas Heywood leads a standout series of concerts beginning with Long 'Live The King (of Instruments)!' on Sunday 5 July at 3pm, a thrilling showcase of the cathedral organ at full voice. The Australian Boys Choir arrives on Saturday 25 July at 3pm for 'Benjamin Britten – Antiphons & Anthems', before the festival closes with the crowd-pleasing 'Let's Go to the Opera!' on Sunday 26 July at 3pm; a lively finale packed with familiar melodies and theatrical flair.

At Christ Church, Castlemaine 'Coronation Classics' forms part of the Castlemaine Double beginning Saturday 11 July at 11am, bringing together the Bendigo Chamber Choir under Michael Bottomley, while Holy Trinity Church, Maldon welcomes cellist Yelian He for the luminous Celestial Sounds on Saturday 11 July at 4pm, where organ and cello meet in rich musical conversation.

These concerts offer a chance to experience remarkable music in buildings that have long shaped local life — familiar spaces, filled with fresh sound and new energy.

For the full program including other Anglican churches hosting performances and tickets visit [www.bendigofinemusic.com](http://www.bendigofinemusic.com).

*Image courtesy of Nic Hamilton Photography.*



# New service and new life for Mildura

*Joe Varghese*

Our 5pm church service began two years ago with a simple desire to see the gospel reach Mildura. From the beginning the service has been held together by a faithful, Spirit-filled team. Our wardens and councillors have been a real strength and support along the way.

The journey has had its challenges. There were times when things felt small and uncertain. But we held on to the truth that with God all things are possible, trusting that God is at work even when we cannot see much happening.

It is not a big crowd. As a pastor, I have had to face the temptation of wanting more people and measuring things by numbers.

But this service has been shaping us in a different way. It has reminded us that God works in His own time, and what He builds, He builds well.

Now it is good to see kids learning about their Saviour through Sunday School activities. That has been a real encouragement to us. And after the service, we gather for dinner. When we enter the St John's room we are greeted by the flavours of cuisines from different parts of the world. It brings people together in a simple and joyful way. Food unites.

A friend of mine, Andrew Tonkin, shared this on Facebook last week:

"Two years ago my friend Craig and I were invited to help launch a new evening

service at St Margaret's Anglican Church by leading the worship for a few services. There were six people in attendance at that first service. The following week there were eight people. A few weeks later there were twelve. Fast forward to last night and there were 38 people at the service, including nine children, with a number of regulars away. And the cultural diversity is incredible. We have people who originally are from Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Iran, Bangladesh, Iraq, Canada, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and a few of us white Aussies.

It is a wonderful blessing to be a part of this church and call Fr Joe my friend."

We are thankful for what God has done and we continue to trust Him for the days ahead.



# Inauguration of the Primate

*Shannon Smith*

It was a great day in Goulburn attending the inauguration of Bishop Mark Short as Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia at St Saviour's Cathedral. Many bishops and clergy gathered from right across the Anglican Church of Australia. It was a little more exciting for me as Bishop Mark led my discernment back in the early 2000's when he was Archdeacon and Priest In-Charge of Turvey Park. It was a privilege to be invited by Bishop Mark to participate in the service and read from the New Testament.

## Walkabout 2026

The proposed dates for this years Walkabout are October 26th-30th.

We'll be leaving from St Mark's Golden Square and heading north.

Our proposed stops:

- Dharnya Cultural Centre (Yorta Yorta)
- Warangesda Mission (Wiradjuri)
- Lake Mungo
- Yelta Mission
- Perry Sandhills
- Rufus River
- Swan Hill Pioneer settlement

Stay tuned for further details to follow.



## The Deadly Grannies

*Shannon Smith*

The Deadly Grannies group is more than just a weekly meeting; it is a sacred invitation into a circle of profound strength and sisterhood. Rain, hail, or shine—even when the rest of the world pauses for public holidays—these six women remain steadfast. Their unwavering commitment to one another is a testament to the deep bonds they share and the vital importance of the space they hold. For me, being invited into this group has been a transformative experience. It is a sanctuary where:

- Culture and spirituality are honoured and woven into the fabric of every conversation.

- Traditional and non-traditional activities bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and modern life.

- Safety is the foundation, allowing for the honest sharing of 'women's business' without judgment.

As I navigate my own path as a grandmother, this circle has become my wellspring of wisdom. In their presence I am learning that grandmotherhood is not just a family role, but a collective responsibility to preserve culture and nurture the next generation. I am deeply grateful to sit, share, and grow within the warmth of the Deadly Grannies.



## Editor's Notes

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*Photo of Bishop Matt on page 2 credit of Bendigo Advertiser.*

# Shining Christ's light

*Darcy Vaughan*

Many of our churches find ways to serve their communities over the busy Easter weekend. For the congregation of St Andrews, Quambatook this means getting up close and personal with some of the most powerful (and noisy) tractors in the country!

For the little town of 'Quambie' the Tractor Pull on Easter weekend is the biggest date in the diary. And for over thirty years the church group

has helped out by feeding the masses; first on the main BBQ, and in more recent years amongst the machines and drivers on the pit area BBQ. "It's a great community event" reported Ian Fisher, who has served with the church on the BBQ over many years. "It was a glorious day and another successful event." How good it is to see Christ's light shining amidst the tractor backfires!

*Image courtesy of Kerry McFarlane Photography.*

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