

Anglican Diocese of
BENDIGO

The Spirit

175 OCTOBER 2026



Blessing of the Animals

The Bishop writes...

Dear Friends,

I have grown up in a family which loves words. Whether they come as part of a sophisticated poem or are simply punny, we delight in what words can conjure. So, at this time of year I have playing constantly in my head a few lines of rhyming doggerel my Mum would always say:

Spring has sprung

The grass is 'ris.

I wonder where

the flowers is.

It is not great poetry but for me it captures the sense of excitement or expectation which comes as we see new growth and new life springing up around us. It also manages to reference the reality of having to mow the lawn more often than one would wish. 'Ris indeed!

There are many things which we can learn as we watch (and enjoy) the blossoming of trees, the rising of the grass, and the ripening of crops around us. I thought I would share three which have encouraged me this year.

The first is pretty obvious when I think about it. This happens every year! Winter is followed by Spring. The bare trees are followed by the blossoms. The planted fields become green and then the canola blossom blooms. Regularity can cause us to forget the wonder and reliability of an event. New growth occurs year in and year out. Even more, it does not discriminate. The cherry blossoms are not reserved for good people's houses; the wattle does not only bloom in the well-run shires. It is everywhere and is evidence of God's kindness and general grace to the whole world. How amazing that God would bring life that all benefit from and are called to rejoice in.

*Did I plant the wattle,
did I cause the canola
seed to sprout, or
paint on the blossom?*

The second is a reassurance in times of stress and gloom. We are more aware of the trials and troubles of our own existence (e.g. we know more about the inner workings of the Federal budget and interest rates than ever) and the diabolical hurt around the world (e.g. we have to avoid graphic depiction of war and atrocity). This is overwhelming and is especially so because there is little that any one of us can do about it. Yet God does bring life and renewal. It is before our eyes. We may yearn for more. We should long for the completion of God's redemption of all things. But we must not miss the green shoots of what God is doing now. The Evil One would have us be forgetful of what God is doing and lose hope. The country bears witness to God's redemption in its own prophetic act year after year. Take heart!

Finally, it reminds me how small I am. All this new growth occurs without me doing anything yet I am caught up in



**Bishop
Matt Brain**

the midst of it! Did I plant the wattle, did I cause the canola seed to sprout, or paint on the blossom? I am in it, I cannot stop it, but I am invited to share it: to enjoy it (how often then do I give God thanks for this new life?), to work with it (how attentive am I to other places which show out God's activity?), and not ruin it (will I cultivate it and help it grow?).

Our part of the world needs no help to see 'where the flowers is'. How will this help you be reminded of God's trustworthy determination to bring new life?

Your servant in Christ,

tlatt

All Confirmed in Christ

Rev'd Val Barker-Pigott

It was a day of celebration at St. Marks in the Anglican Parish of Sunraysia South when Bishop Matt attended and confirmed three individuals of different nationalities and ages, a wonderful reflection of the parish.

Paul Croxton, originally from New Zealand, had Ros Cowcher, a regular parish attendee, sponsor him. Ros had been employed by Paul many years ago. Elijah Wright had asked his grandmother, Rev'd Val Barker-Pigott to sponsor him. And Oliver Natowan, who with his family had only been in Australia eight months at the time, was sponsored by his sister Christina Natowan.

It had been some years since there was a confirmation service at the parish and so the parish members celebrated this occasion with much joy.



Blessing of the Animals

Many churches across the diocese commemorated the life and witness of Francis of Assisi on Sunday the 4th of October. Francis (c. 1181 – 1226) is remembered for his special concern for creation and his particular habit of speaking with animals. On this day Anglican churches are invited to offer prayers of thanksgiving for the whole created order and intercessions for the right use of the resources of the earth.

It is also common for the congregation to be invited to bring the animals that are most special to them to the service. And of course, chaos often ensues! From a macaw at the Cathedral to Pluto and Sausage at Swan Hill and Winnie standing guard at the Communion table in Maldon, it is never a dull Sunday!

Prayers of blessing can be prayed; that this special relationship between animal and human may continue to be a source of comfort and joy. The occasion is a wonderful reminder of God's love and care as our creator and sustainer, and an affirmation of the importance of sharing in God's love for all of creation.



Holy Communion at
St Paul's Cathedral



Rev'd Roger Rich speaks to the diverse
congregation at St Paul's Cathedral



Rev'd Julie Worrall greets
a feathered friend at
Christ Church, Swan Hill



Jill and companion at Holy Trinity, Maldon



Winnie at Holy Trinity, Maldon



Margaret Harley with Pluto and Sausage at Christ Church, Swan Hill



Skiping Generosity

Every year in term three the children of Maldon Kids Club learn about God's generosity and undertake a physical challenge to raise money which they can then donate. In previous years the kids have set themselves a target of running laps around the church. But this year it was decided they would do something a little different. After some consideration they set themselves the challenge of doing a combined 1000 skips, and decided they would donate all money raised to the residents of the Maldon Hospital.

However... it turned out many of the kids had not skipped before! And so as the kids began to practice for their challenge they were surprised to find that skipping is actually quite tricky and rather tiring! But each week they did a little more practice as they learnt more about the God who has been generous to them so they can be generous to others.

On the day, the kids surprised everyone including themselves, achieving their goal of 1000 skips and revealing that they had raised over \$1000 for the Hospital residents! For the final week of the term the kids dropped in to the Hospital to present the residents with a novelty cheque for the grand total of the money raised (once it was explained to the children what a cheque was!).

Special thanks to Ansvar Insurance, who supported the Maldon Kids Club for term 3 through the 2026 Anglican Grants for Good. Funds received were used to help fund Kids Club for the term, including equipping the kids with skipping ropes and headbands and to cover the cost of an end of term party to celebrate the children's generous effort.





Rev'd Emily Payne

Daffodil Day Service

Meredith Chilver

Medical science has come a long way when it comes to cancer treatments. I have seen the changes over the last fifty years with my own family. My father passed in the early 1970's and only discovered six weeks before his passing he had prostate cancer - he unfortunately had no medications to help. Now my brother is going through treatment for the very same thing, but his experience is so different. With treatment and research he has much hope that all will be fine. There's hardly a person around who has not been impacted in some way, themselves personally, or their family or friends.

In recent years we at St Mary's Kangaroo Flat have held an annual Daffodil Day Service as an opportunity to draw alongside those in our wider community who have been impacted by cancer. This year we intentionally made it a service of hope – hope not simply in the medical advances behind cancer treatment, but the much greater hope we have in Jesus. We welcomed Rev'd Emily Payne, the local healthcare chaplain at Bendigo Health and St John of God Hospitals, to share with us. She reminded us from Isaiah 35 of the hope God gives his people: the hope founded on his promise to be at work in all situations, the reminder that

because he is working the suffering will not last forever, and the promise that he is at work to bring about fullness of life for all of creation. God's work – completed in Jesus – means even 'the desert and parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus (or daffodil!), it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice and shout for joy.' (Is 35:1-2). So, in the trial of cancer (or anything else), we were encouraged to put our trust, confidence, and hope in God: 'be strong, do not fear, your God will come' (Is 35:4).

Not only did the message of hope shine, our building itself shone with the amazing artworks of three local schools! We say a very big thank you to Kangaroo Flat Primary, Big Hill Primary and the Bendigo Special Development School. The students blessed us with their artistic talents to fill our building with so many wonderful drawings and craftwork. Our congregation also put in such great effort: handcrafting daffodils to pin to our jumpers, planting bulbs months earlier so they would be bursting through in the garden at just the right time, making special daffodil arrangements in flowerpots around the sanctuary, and baking yellow treats for the morning tea that followed the service. A big job, but with many hands we shared together an uplifting service and a chance to share our hope.



News from our Cathedral

Rev'd Darcy Vaughan

I spoke with Dean George Hemmings at Clergy Retreat.

Dean George, congratulations on your appointment at St Paul's Cathedral!

Thank you, Darcy. I think it has been about nine months now. And I just love it. The role of a Dean is very big and busy, and the life of a cathedral is very varied, but it's been great diving into it.

Fantastic. I get the impression that there is a lot happening! Are there ways that the cathedral is similar to the other parishes of our diocese?

Yes, in some ways the things that happen around the cathedral are the kinds of things that will happen around any parish church. We have regular services, we just probably have more than most parishes do. On a Sunday, we have at least four services, occasionally a fifth, and then six, if you consider the Korean church that meets onsite as well. So, that makes the weekend a

pretty busy time. And then we have a couple of midweek services and other gatherings. So, similar to what any parish will have, we just have more of it!

What are some of the differences that make the ministry of the cathedral unique?

I think part of our role is to show more of the spread of what worship and Christian life in church can be like. So, on a Sunday morning we have an 8am First Order Holy Communion service which is a traditional style

service with no singing, about as close to the Book of Common Prayer as you could get. And then we have a 9:30 service that's all singing and dancing! It's the choral sung Eucharist with the choir and the organ, our opportunity to embrace the fulness of things. And then we have our I Am service, which is a little bit contemporary, a little bit traditional, and it's also our bilingual service, so we do things equally in English and in the Karen language.

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And then, because all that wasn't enough, one of the things we've started is a 5pm service. That's a more contemporary style, which still holds to our rich liturgical heritage, but we have families, and in particular youth leading across that service.

And then we stretch further still, because once a month we do traditional coral Evensong, and a contemplative Taizé style service.

The cathedral holds a special significance for the city of Bendigo and for the diocese. How do you think about this?

The vision of St. Paul's Cathedral is to be the heart of Bendigo. Geographically, we're pretty much in the heart of Bendigo, the city. It's our vision to be the heartbeat of that city; to love them and to show them the love of God. And also for the cathedral to be the heart of the diocese. We have a special place to play in the life of the diocese. And that looks like being the home of diocesan services. But also, that we regularly pray for every parish in the diocese.

Finally, in what ways does the cathedral have a unique opportunity to engage with the wider community and share with them the good news?

We are looking to embrace the opportunity we have to be a place of welcome and wonder, witnessing to the worship of Jesus. One of the things that makes the cathedral unique is, we don't have to do much to have people come in the doors! Literally anytime the doors are open, people will wander in. I've had numerous people walk in with their shopping bags, saying "I came out of the supermarket, I saw the doors open and I have just always wanted to come in and have a look." People also come in looking for help or for solace or for prayer. We had a mother and child walking by on a Sunday morning, they heard the bells, and just came and stood in the back of the church for a while.

Once they're welcomed and they have that moment of wonder, we want to help people to wonder, not just at the beauty of the building, but at the beauty of the God who is the source of all beauty and joy.



Getting to Know Rev'd Ian Choi



Rev'd Darcy Vaughan

I spoke with Rev'd Ian after he had been ordained deacon and as he prepared to be ordained priest.

What was your life like in Korea before you first came to Bendigo?

When I was young, I wanted to major in science or engineering. But after going to a youth camp, I felt a strong call to give my life to God. So I chose to study theology. I started serving as a youth pastor in church when I was 23, while studying at university. Eventually, I was ordained as a pastor in the Korean Methodist Church. I mainly looked after the youth group. My main role was listening to teenagers' worries and helping them grow in their faith. I also led the worship team—growing the church band, directing the choir, and leading worship with my guitar and vocals.

How did God first bring you from Korea to Bendigo?

There came a time when I needed to find a new ministry position in Korea. Right then, a church in Sydney contacted me and asked me to minister to young adults. That was how I first came to Australia.

During my eight years in Sydney, I heard that many Koreans living in regional Australia couldn't attend church because there were no Korean churches around. I felt that going to serve them would truly please God. So, I spent about two years in Stanthorpe, Queensland, running a ministry for young people on working holiday visas. Later, while praying for a new place to serve after COVID-19 hit, I learnt about the situation in Bendigo and moved here in February 2022.

Why did you have to go back? What was it like for you and your family to have to return to Korea wait for a visa?

I thought starting a Korean church in Bendigo might be my last ministry, because I had been living in Australia on temporary visas since 2013. Thankfully, the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo and Bishop Matt helped me apply for a new visa, but I had to return to Korea to complete the process.

Normally, this visa takes about three to six months. However, for some reason, ours took one year and seven months. At first, I thought God gave us this time to rest and refresh, as we hadn't taken a proper vacation during our time in Australia. But as time went by with no news, we felt anxious and worried.

So, as a family, we talked about how to make good use of this time. We decided to learn things that could help our church in the future. My older son, Joshua, learned the bass guitar, and my younger son, Kevin, learned the drums. My wife taught

English to children from low-income families, and I learned church sound engineering. Although we didn't achieve anything huge, that time brought our family much closer and gave us an even deeper love for the church God entrusted to us.

Now you are back in Australia! What will your ministry here be?

First, my goal is to lay a strong foundation so the church can run stably again. We are now mostly ready for this.

Second, I will visit and care for church members who haven't been able to attend for a long time, as well as Koreans settled in this area.

Lastly, I will focus on next-generation ministry. I want to help our youth group grow well and rebuild our Sunday School program.

Can you tell me about the Korean community in Bendigo? What are some of the joys and challenges that Korean people experience living here?

There aren't many Koreans living in Bendigo—I think fewer than eighty in total. Currently, around thirty people gather at our church to worship. Most came to Australia to get permanent residency, and some are married to locals.

Like many immigrants, living in a smaller town meant feeling a bit lonely or isolated at times. But since our church opened,

we can gather every week and support one another. Just knowing we live near each other gives us great strength.

What are some of the great things about the Korean church in Bendigo?

Our church runs services in both Korean and English. More than 80% of our congregation can communicate in English, and we also have a live interpreter during the service. So anyone who feels more comfortable in English is very welcome to join us in worship and fellowship.

Also, we share a meal after worship every week. By serving various dishes, we share God's love with people who live alone or young adults working hard on working holiday visas. Anyone interested in Korean food is always welcome to drop by!

What are your hopes for your ministry and congregation in the next few years?

My biggest hope is for our church to grow into one that serves our diocese and local community, living up to Jesus' calling to be "the light and salt of the world."

I pray that our church will be a comfortable place for local Koreans to visit, where we can care for those in need and share Korean culture with the community.



A Ministry of Care

Rev'd Dale Barclay

Over the last couple of months, the Parish of Eaglehawk has recruited and trained a Pastoral Care Visiting Team. The team, in co-ordination with the Rector, will visit members of the parish, follow up new people, and undertake various other types of pastoral visiting.

On Sunday the 16th of August a special commissioning service was held in conjunction with a visit from Archdeacon Steve Weickhardt. It is wonderful to give people the opportunity to use the gifts and skills God has given them and increase effective pastoral care across the parish.



Editor's Notes

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Happy Day in Elmhurst

Rev'd Malcolm Thomas

On Sunday the 23rd of August a very happy occasion took place at St Mark's, Elmhurst, when eleven-year-old Johnny was confirmed!

It was a gathering of twenty five that filled the little church, including Johnny's family and our small, regular congregation.

Our Lay Reader, Jennifer Peacock, proudly led the clergy in with the processional cross lent by friends at St Michael's, Talbot.

Johnny, who was also baptised at St Mark's, answered the promises with confidence and sincerity.

Bishop Matt negotiated the 'potholes' in our service booklet with aplomb; and went down well with the children as well as those more senior in years!

A very proud day, not just for Johnny, but his parents too. Happily it was followed by a beautiful Indian feast!

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