

Beyond 2020 Vision

A publication of Morialta Uniting Church

March 2026

Welcome to our March edition. Our feature article this month is an article on the significance of Easter by Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon.

Being already in Lent, which this year coincides with Ramadan, we have published two articles about the similarities between the issues Lent raises for Christians and Ramadan raises for Muslims.

You can also read about several events coming up at MUC, as well as other items that may be of interest – including a summary of an article published in E-News entitled ‘SA Votes.’

The **deadline for the April Vision will be 3rd April**. Either drop your contributions in to the church office, or call/email Colin on 0427 122 106 or snout-n-about@bigpond.com



The significance of Easter

By Rev Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring after the equinox.

This year, Easter Sunday will be

on April 5. While people outside the Church may be grateful to have two public holidays, Good Friday and Easter Monday, these days are often disconnected from the history of the occasion.

Christians are inspired by the life of Jesus Christ. In some ways, this is most clearly expressed at Easter, going well beyond the arrival of a little baby (even as a virgin birth). We see a God who was not simply creating the universe and viewing it from a distance, but a Christ who truly experienced the dreams, challenges, costliness, joy, hope and possibilities of daily life.

There are times when life is simple and rewarding. But being true to our faith does not always deliver us rewards every day. The fullness of Christian life invites us to make choices. We will be tempted to take the easier options as though this is a justified privilege, but looking carefully at the way Jesus Christ chose and dared to live calls us to live another way. We see this especially at Easter.

Jesus lived so strongly and bravely that he had to be stopped by those who had the power to do so. They knew that his

example brought such humility, compassion and justice into society that the rich and powerful would be threatened by those who followed him.

There are, of course, people in our day and throughout history who have dared to live with this sort of costliness so that their people might be freed, given food, work and housing and offered ways of participating in society that were creative and just. People like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and many other men and women who cared so much about the wellbeing of the community that they stood up for justice and ended up in prison or were threatened by those whose power they challenged.

If we see that Jesus rose from the dead, after his crucifixion, it is to tell us that life is stronger than death, good more powerful than evil – even if we rarely see examples of that around us.

Christians and others who want to live with greater commitment to creating a just and loving world can reflect together on what might need to change if this is to be achieved. Together we have a better chance of being wise and brave. Together we can dream of a different world, especially as we face elections of governments. We can paint a picture of new hope for the future and hold on to each other as we take our stands. Easter can inspire us and lift our hearts, as we remember the costly commitment of Jesus Christ, the Human One.

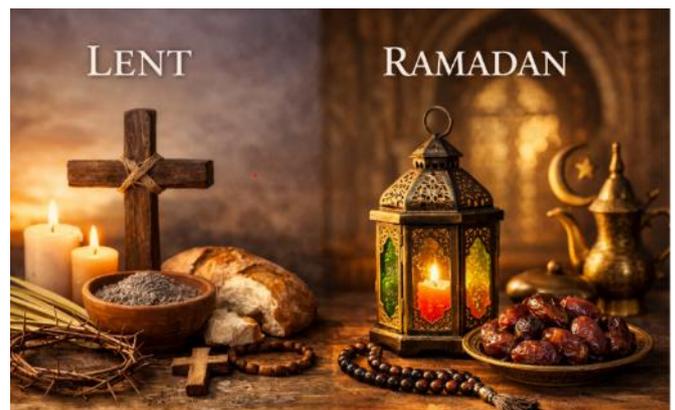
Reprinted from ‘Faith’ in the South Sydney Herald – a publication of the UCA

Lent and Ramadan – sharing the same space

Members of Morialta Uniting Church are used to sharing our worship space and facilities with our Muslim friends the Dawoodi Bohras. This year we also share the periods of Lent and Ramadan – times when both Christians and Muslims reflect on what it means to be generous, show kindness to others, seek forgiveness and forgive, and stand up for justice.

To help us understand more about Lent and Ramadan – we commend the following articles by Andrew Hamilton, a Jesuit priest and Susan Carland, a Muslim and a sociologist of religion.

We will celebrate together at the Harmony Day picnic in the park on 22nd March (see Report from Church Council).



When Lent meets Ramadan in a divided world

Adapted from an article by Andrew Hamilton published in Eureka Street



This year the dates of Lent and Ramadan coincide. While some Christians and Muslims see their faiths as opposed to one another, the overlap of Ramadan and Lent introduced by Ash Wednesday illustrates how much they share in their structure and in the way of life they commend.

Christians and Muslims differ radically in their core claims about the revelation that grounds each faith. The behaviour of people from each faith who have claimed licence for murderous conduct is inexcusable. Those qualifications, however, do not diminish the significance of what they have in common.

Lent and Ramadan, and the dates assigned to each, recall a founder who claimed a special and authoritative relationship to God and the central event in his life that vindicates this claim. Lent focuses on the death and rising from the dead of Jesus, which vindicated his claim to represent God. Ramadan recalls the revelation of Allah to Muhammad in Mecca in 610 and the communication of the Koran.

The continuing Muslim observance of Ramadan and the early structure of the Western Christian observance of Lent are also similar in shape. The timing of both is determined by the lunar calendar. The hoped-for effects of both are also similar. Both observances emphasise personal investment in fasting and in communal prayer and rituals that identify the believer publicly with their faith.

Both Ramadan and Lent emphasise generosity to people in poverty or disadvantage. It is one of the five pillars of Islam, which takes the form of a donation of 2.5% of accumulated wealth. The donation purifies the wealth of the giver and is especially blessed at Ramadan. Lent is also a time for Christians to follow Jesus in his concern for those excluded from a decent life. It is still reflected in the coming together on the Palm Sunday walks for refugees and in the collection for children's hospitals.

Public life today emphasises the priority of competition over cooperation, of greed over generosity, individual choice over the common good, and seeing the worst in other groups and individuals rather than the best. The conjunction of Ramadan and Lent, and the similarity of the values and relationships of each religious observance, stand against these aspects of our culture. They commend friendly curiosity, cooperation and mutual esteem between Muslims and Christians.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street.

Ramadan

Adapted from an article by Susan Carland in 'The Guardian.'

For Muslims, Ramadan is a commitment to self-discipline, generosity and peace. It commemorates a time when divine words crossed a metaphysical boundary into human language and crystallised as the Qur'an. In this month, adult Muslims abstain from all food, drink and sex from before sunrise until after sunset. In Australia this year, that makes for about 16 hours each day.

But fasting is not the point of Ramadan. Muslim religious texts tell us that if all we get from Ramadan is hunger and thirst, we've wasted our time. Ramadan is a harbour, not a desert. After 11 months of feeling battered on an ocean of conflict, chaos and pain, the annual Ramadan is a sheltered port in which to rest. "The noise and the cruelty continue to hum, but the increased ritual, community, and reflection gently blanket me, allowing for a more patient, more generous, kinder version of myself to grow."

Yes, Ramadan is physically and spiritually challenging, but it is also deeply rewarding and fulfilling, like running a marathon or delivering a baby.

Fasting from food, water and sex is done to show us we can gain mastery of ourselves. If we can control our instinctive reach for a snack through nothing but internal discipline, then we know we also have within our power the ability to control our other instincts that we all too easily indulge – anger, selfishness, gossip, contempt, spite, conceit. Ramadan is meant to make us good people – good Muslims.



Despite some politicians and section of media suggesting otherwise - there are good Muslims. Australian Muslims who are surgeons, doctors, nurses, teachers, counsellors, cleaners, volunteers, pharmacists, paramedics, police officers, firefighters, psychologists and veterinarians – who serve this country every day – are living proof. In fact, there is something else Australian Muslims may have to offer: a month-long disciplined commitment to trying to be a better person. Of guarding your speech, of generosity, of kindness, of seeking forgiveness, of standing up for justice, similar to how Christians are called to reflect during Lent.

Susan Carland is a sociologist of religion in the school of social sciences at Monash University

Food Bank

The Dawoodi Bohras have a table in the foyer for donation of non-perishable food items to support Food Bank. Please add to the table if you wish. Thank you.

News from the February Church Council Meeting

The full agenda of the February meeting is in the Church Council folder in the library, and the minutes will also be there once they are confirmed. In the meantime, here are some highlights! As always, if you have any questions, please talk to one of the members of Church Council.

1. **Synod meeting, 25-27 June: Nominations are urgently sought** from people interested in representing Wimala Presbytery at the meeting. See Bruce with your ideas, and you can nominate yourself!
2. Help needed: **during pre-polling** for the state election, i.e. Monday 16th to Friday 20th March, we will hold a bake sale and trading table in the foyer as a fund-raiser. **Rhonda is seeking bakers and stall minders** – please sign up if you can!
3. Important diary date: Sunday afternoon 22 March 12:00 to 4:00. With our Dawoodi Bohras friends we will be inviting the local community to a **'Harmony Week Celebration and Family Picnic for Eid'** in the Chapel St park. **Save the date and see Rev. Anne to get involved!**
4. **Kids' Club Day:** we have received a grant to help us run an exciting one-day program on the 2nd Thursday of each School holidays, starting with **23 April**. Jan Sillett is **seeking volunteer helpers** and for everyone to advertise to grandies, neighbours and friends; please help!
5. **Great news:** our own Colin Cargill has been appointed as a Wimala rep to the Uniting Foundation Grants Committee. Congratulations indeed!

Margaret Cargill, Deputy Council Chairperson

Celebrate Easter with us at Morialta UC

We are rapidly approaching the most sacred time of the Christian year - Holy Week and Easter! The Gospels are focussed on the final week of the life of Jesus, the tragedy and the triumph.

We begin on the 29th March, with a joint service with Kimba UC for Palm Sunday. Nine of our people will enjoy the hospitality of Kimba, and will (fingers crossed) send back images and sound from Eyre Peninsula. A true celebration of the beginning of the week in Jerusalem.

Thursday evening, back at Morialta, we will commemorate the Last Supper. Maundy is the same word root as mandate, and means commandment. Jesus commands us to love one another as he has loved us - a challenge for our time. We will gather in the church at 6 pm and share in an evening meal. The substance of the evening will recreate the Last Supper with a Christian understanding. As we end with hot cross buns, we will pass the hat and encourage all to donate the costs of the meal, and any excess will benefit Lent Event. Please let us know if you will attend and any food restrictions such as gluten free. It should be finished by 7.30, so still light for driving home.

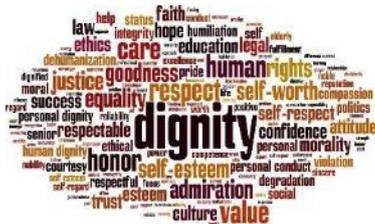
Good Friday we will meet at 10am to mourn with Christians throughout the world, but the good news will be celebrated on Easter Day at 10 am.

This is my first Easter with you all, and I am excited to celebrate with you!

Anne B



Dignity is non-negotiable



Adapted from an article by Carlos Rodríguez, founder of 'The Happy Givers NGO' based in Puerto Rico, on being salt and light for an elderly man.

Don Héctor was an old man. He was in hospital with pneumonia and a combination of my fear and my pride led me to avoid visiting him.

After a week of this internal struggle – of not being salt, of not being light – I went to visit him. He was so happy to see us, and he immediately began to share the reality of being an elderly person in a hospital in Puerto Rico. He hadn't had access to a shower for that whole week, and he took great pride in his appearance. I had this moment where his frustration became my invitation. I thought, "Okay, well, it's time to give him a shower."

I took off his clothes, asked the nurse to show me what to do, and led him to a shower. In what was quite possibly the most beautiful, the most awkward, and the holiest moment of my last year, I gave Don Héctor a shower. From the shame, it moved to a connection that was so meaningful to me. That in his most vulnerable moment, I was able to honour him.

There's nothing like being salt and light. As Father Richard Rohr has often said, "The best criticism of the bad is the practice of the good." And giving Don Héctor a shower and spending time with him was the good.

While there are so many good ethics and teachings and books, and there are so many good people speaking into microphones, there's nothing like just being present with the ones who need presence.

And so, for Don Héctor, who passed away a couple of weeks after that shower, and for every elderly person that we serve, and for every person in your community who is marginalized, who has been abandoned, who has been rejected, the invitation is to be salt and light. Salt, which both gives flavour and preserves, and light, which always shines brightest in the darkness.

South Australia votes

From the SA Synod's Justice Mission and Theology Management Team and Mission Resourcing Team

In the lead-up to an election, it sometimes feels like the issues we care most about become obscured by posturing and point scoring. It can be tempting to disengage – to confine our involvement to numbering boxes in a polling booth.

As the 2026 South Australian state election approaches, The Synod has released a resource pack that reminds us and gives us the chance to play an active role in shaping our society. This might mean staying informed about key concerns, sharing respectful conversations, or engaging directly with candidates. The resource is available either in hard copy or electronically by emailing or calling the office to request a copy.

The Uniting Church seeks a society shaped by justice, compassion, reconciliation, and hope – where all people and creation can flourish. Here is a summary of the Uniting Church Priorities for the 2026 SA State Election.

1. Standing against racism and building inclusive communities by challenging hate speech and misinformation; strengthening religious literacy and intercultural understanding; and supporting programs that foster belonging for First Nations and multicultural communities.

2. Aboriginal justice, truth-telling and self-determination through supporting South Australian truth-telling processes; strengthening Aboriginal community-led organisations; and addressing inequities and expand pathways for self-determination.

3. Raising the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 and investing in trauma-informed diversion and family supports.

4. Justice for refugees and people seeking asylum through ensuring access to housing, healthcare, education, and employment; and advocating for faster visa processing and family reunion.

5. Housing justice and cost-of-living pressures by increasing social and affordable housing; strengthening rental standards and homelessness responses; and reducing gambling harm with better regulation and support.

6. Climate justice and care for creation by committing to strong emissions reduction targets; supporting renewable energy and a just transition for workers; addressing harmful algal blooms and improving waterway management.

7. Peace, human rights and community cohesion by introducing a South Australian Human Rights Act; strengthening responses to hate speech and discrimination; supporting peace building and community led cohesion initiatives.

Polling day is Saturday 21st March.

Early Polling is available at Morialta UC from 8.00am to 6.00pm from Saturday 14th to Friday 20th March, excluding Sunday 15th March.

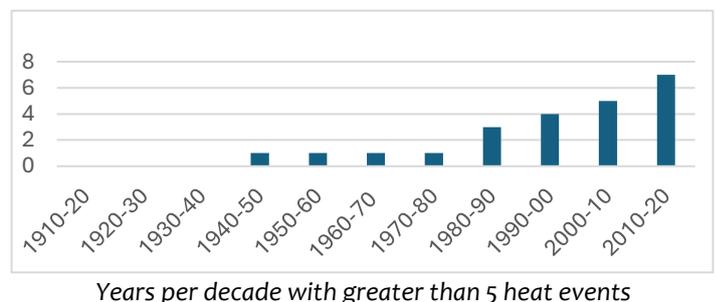
Australia is getting warmer

From the Australian Climate Council

The frequency of extreme heat events in Australia is increasing. Between 1910 and 2023, the number of days each year where the Australian area-average daily mean temperature was extreme is increasing.

Prior to 1940, the number days of extreme heat events was fewer than 5 per year. Between 1940 and 1980 extreme heat events on more than 5 days occurred in only one year during each decade. This increased to 3 years in the 1980s, and 4 years in the 1990's. In the first two decades of the 21st century, the number of years with more than 5 days of extreme heat events was 5 and 7 years respectively. Between 2020 and 2023 more than 5 heat events have been recorded each year.

Extreme heat events are defined as those days on which the daily mean Australian area-average daily temperature was within the warmest 1% of days for all the months between 1910 and 2023.



The insights of regular people like us

Roman Catholic theology has a name for the insights of regular people. It is called the '*sensus fidelium*'. It means that God's people, filled with the Holy Spirit, possess a natural wisdom regarding justice, truth, and goodness.

(from "A People's History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story" by Diana Butler Bass).

Friendship Group

From Margaret Clogg

On a balmy evening of 25°C, 19 members of the Friendship Group met at The Gums, Tranmere, for a Picnic in the Park to start their year.



The programs for 2026 were distributed and Margaret Clogg explained the meetings with emphasis on the July 16th meeting when 70 years of Friendship/Fellowship at MUC (formally Magill Methodist Church) will be celebrated.

Margaret closed the evening with a devotional about wisdom and love. A small group finished the evening with coffee at McDonalds.

At the Thursday March 19th meeting, Beverley Tredrea will speak about AKWAK and the importance of this organisation. Please bring your lunch if you would like to stay and continue fellowship with each other. Everyone is welcome!

Thanks to all those involved in worship

From Ruth Dunning

I was once again able to watch the Morialta service at 10am on Sunday, and as always, was left in awe at the expertise of the AV team in bringing it to us with such clarity.

In my case I get more from it by watching on-line than I would if I was actually there – the dialogue, the flowers, the close-up expressions, the musicians etc. I do enjoy Anne's sermons too – very meaningful and without me having to strain.

My newish big Sony TV does a good job and although I miss some words I feel I hear nearly as well as I did with the audio loop.

I haven't got a clue how it is all done but I mustn't display my ignorance too much!! I know that you (John Secombe) would have been the instigator though, and I am left wondering how many years it is now that you have been doing the job.

You certainly have good support with John D, Ray and all the others – I'll conclude with expressing my appreciation to you all.

The Apology sets the standard

Adapted from an article by Andrew Hamilton published in Eureka Street

The anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations is bittersweet. It remains a model and a reminder of what the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and indeed between all groups of Australians, should be. It has been a source of pride.

It stirred hope among Indigenous Australians that this relationship would shape the attitudes and conduct of Australian governments and people in the future. That hope, however, has been disappointed. They remain discriminated against and abused, as indeed do many groups in Australian society seen as different. The discrepancy between the gracious relationships choreographed in the Apology and the mean ones enacted in political and popular behaviour is marked.

In the Apology, the representatives of the major political parties and the Indigenous leaders did not shout at one another about the significance of the event. They came as leaders of the government and of the opposition and representatives of the Indigenous community to acknowledge and ask pardon for the racist thinking behind the removal of children from their families and for the lasting cost paid by the children and families affected by it. The Prime Minister made the Apology in person to representatives of the Stolen Generations. He was supported by the Leader of the Opposition.

In doing so, he recognised that all Australians are equally entitled to respect, and that the government is responsible for ensuring that all Australians are treated equally regardless of their race and history. First Peoples are not the objects of Australian policy but persons who have the right to be agents in their own lives.

In much social media and political speech in Australia today, attitudes to people in minority groups, whether Jewish, Muslim or Indigenous, are mean. Politicians do not try to engage but shout at one another. In social media, instead of respect we find abuse. Instead of a commitment to truth, we see the dissemination of lies.

The rhetoric is one of abuse, of polarisation, of contempt, and of demands for partisan laws. The exchanges between political parties are not directed at truth and reconciliation and the welfare of the people affected by past injustice, but point scoring.

The conviction and decency of the Apology must be rediscovered and replace the disrespect for people who are different. The Apology shows that this can happen.

The Apology was a step towards reconciliation. Despite the scars left by the conduct of the referendum on the Voice to Parliament and legislation directed against minority groups, the memory of the Apology can encourage hope in reconciliation.

For the full article go to <https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/the-apology-sets-the-standard>



Everyday People

Adapted from 'Radical Musings'



The world has been watching Minneapolis where there have been so many amazing acts of kindness and love by so many 'everyday people'.

- A beloved local donut shop 'Glam Doll Donuts' across the street from where Alex Pretti died turned into a warming house and medic centre for protestors building and maintaining the memorial site.
- A small church community cleaned up the mess of pepper balls, tear gas containers and trash so the neighbours didn't have to wake up to the memories.
- A local sex-positive adult-store 'The Smitten Kitten' completely transformed into a donation and distribution centre.
- A local pizza place 'Wrecktangle Pizza' raised over \$83K in less than a few days to support families that are sheltering in place.
- Tow-truck companies donated their services to clean up the accidents and abandoned vehicles left by ICE and the city is waiving impound fees.
- Social workers took in children who came home from school with both their parents "disappeared." ... and so it went on...
- Every restaurant, church, karate dojo, dance studio, school, barber shop, and other small business has created their own underground grassroots supportive network to protect their neighbours, get people to and from work, and raise funds to pay everyday bills.

That night on local news, there was a story about a fire in a horse float that was on its way to deliver three horses to run at the local races that evening. Some passers-by helped rescue the horses and led them to safety. Then a farmer with a big van appeared and he offered it to the horse trainer. 'Just take it and drop it back to me tomorrow when you're ready.'

After reflecting on the violence in Minneapolis and fires and floods in Australia, Rev Geoff Boyce wrote 'Everyday people', set to the tune of Jackson Browne's 'These Days'.

Everyday people!

If Minneapolis has got you down
Listen to the stories of those who've gathered round...
Bravely giving at their own expense
Sheltering the stranger
protect from viciousness...

Everyday people... opening their hearts
Everyday people ... Blessed be...
Everyday people singing songs of love and freedom
Comforting the hurt and grieving
Love is finding ways around the law
Supersedes what Empire's hoping for...

Everyday people choosing life of love
Everyday people... Blessed be...
Everyday people
If recent fires and floods have got you down...
Listen to the stories of those that gathered round...
Reaching out to help without reward
Looking out for neighbours, knowing what's in store

Everyday people help each other out
Everyday people... Blessed be...
Everyday people
If some crippling doubts have got you down
Listen to the stories of those that gather round...
Go and make a difference where you are
No need to be spectacular - don't have to be the star

Everyday people opening their minds
Everyday people... Blessed be...

The empty dark

By Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Oh let me, too, be willing to sit in the empty dark
and let the darkness enter me.
Let me not pretend to know how it will be.
Let me lose my plans, though it terrifies me.
Let me not imagine any better time
to practice than now.
Let me be the bowl that sings when touched,
the bowl that is content with its own stillness.
If I want answers, let me sit with my longing.

If I want lessons, let me find them right here.
And if it is dark, let me not run from the dark,
but lean into it.
And if it is light, let me long for the light
Let it enter me.
Let me not pretend to know how it will be.

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer is an American poet, associated with Colorado. She was Poet Laureate of San Miguel County, Colorado from 2006–2010, and was named Poet Laureate of Colorado's Western Slope by the Telluride Institute from 2015–2017.



Why are older people more vulnerable in heatwaves?

Adapted from an article by Aaron Bach and Fergus O'Connor, Griffith University published in the Conversation

It is important to understand why some people are more at risk during heat waves and the human processes to regulate temperature.

The heart directs blood toward the skin, delivering heat from the body's core to the surface where sweat evaporates off our skin to remove excess body heat. However, as we age, these processes become less efficient which means our bodies store more heat for longer.

During hot weather, the heart works harder diverting blood to the skin to shed excess heat, while still trying to satisfy the oxygen demands of other vital organs. During heatwaves, hospitals are overwhelmed with admissions due to underlying health conditions, such as diabetes and heart, lung or kidney diseases, not with people suffering from heatstroke.

Most older adults are likely to have at least one chronic condition and in long heatwaves these conditions can rapidly worsen.

Many medications can also interfere with the body's cooling mechanisms. Diuretics increase the risk of dehydration; beta-blockers and some antidepressants can impair sweating, as can anticholinergic drugs.

Conditions which affect thinking and memory, such as dementia, can also make it difficult for someone to assess their own risk and remember to drink fluids.

Signs to watch for in older adults are:

- being unusually tired or lethargic
- losing balance
- feeling confused
- feeling short of breath
- urinating dark or less urine.

Beyond the usual advice to stay hydrated, seek shade and reduce physical activity. Air conditioning remains the most effective defence against the heat. If you don't have air conditioning consider going to a shopping centre or library during the hottest part of the day.

In those with chronic conditions, watch for any worsening of usual symptoms. Heat exhaustion includes heavy sweating, nausea, headache, muscle cramps and hot dry skin and requires fluids and rest in a cool environment. If symptoms worsen – it requires immediate medical attention.

Set air-conditioning to 26-27°C and using a pedestal or ceiling fan. This will improve comfort and reduce electricity consumption by 76%.

Fans alone can help and wetting the skin or clothing in combination with a fan boosts body cooling. However, for older adults the effectiveness of fans begins to diminish between 33 and 37°C and above 37°C, fans may actually make the body hotter faster. So, for older adults, it's important to keep the skin moist or find other ways to cool down if using a fan when the temperature is above 37°C.

Something as simple as immersing your hands and forearms in cool tap water – for ten minutes every half hour – will lower body temperatures.

If you or someone you know has symptoms of heat stroke such as slurred speech, confusion, fainting, or hot, dry skin, call 000 immediately.

A story of renewal

The editor and extracts from "Bright Shining" by Julia Baird

When we lived in Tonga, we lived on a small island with a magnificent ocean view. As well as beautiful sunsets over the water, during the whale migration season, we could watch whales every day as they passed between 'Eua (our island) and Tongatapu (the main island).

Close up we could even see the 'flukeprints', the patches of calm left in choppy seas after a whale deep dives. It is like a moment of silence after a hug from a friend that warms us. The 1980s were a time of reckoning for whales and the commercial whaling trade. More than two million whales (of all species) were killed between 1900 and 1978 and the global populations had dwindled.

But the 'Save the Whales Campaign' shifted opinion. Many nations that had previously hunted whales began supporting activist groups like Greenpeace, and a worldwide



moratorium against commercial whaling was put in place in 1986. Today, nearly eighty thousand humpbacks glide along Australia's coastlines, up from fewer than five thousand in the early 1960s – a remarkable story of renewal.

The good news is that the humpback whale has been removed from the endangered species list, a rare conservation success.

We can save the planet – we just need to try.

Can animals make 'art'?

Adapted from an article by Susan Hazel, School of Animal and Veterinary Science and Jono Tuke, School of Mathematical Sciences, University of Adelaide published in the Conversation



According to Britannica, “art” is something “consciously created through an expression of skill or imagination”. Wikipedia defines it as a human activity. But are humans the only species that makes art?

If we regard art as something ‘beautiful and consciously created’ – animals consciously create things that look like art. “Art is not what you see, but what you make others see” – Edgar Degas.

While some forms of art are largely functional, such as mating or feeding, they still manifest in patterns and/or colours that make them beautiful to behold.

Sea and land snails create their shells by layering a calcium carbonate secretion that hardens once it leaves their bodies, producing all manner of stripes, swirls and oblique lines that resemble geometric abstractions in art.

In 1995, intricate and beautiful circular patterns were found etched into the sea floor off Japan. Later it was discovered that these “underwater crop circles” were produced by a pufferfish. Males create these circles by repeatedly swimming in and out while digging into the sand with their fins. The circles help attract a mate while the centre of the circle functions as a nest for eggs.



Apart from bowerbirds, a range of other bird species make nests that are as beautiful as they are functional. Hummingbirds make nests with contrasting green and white moss and

lichen, thought to be added for camouflage.

While many artists make sculpture from natural materials, such as stones or wood, beavers make dams using trees they fell using their large front teeth, as well as other branches, mud and stone. These dams change the flow of streams, converting them into slow-moving lakes that provide the beavers protection from land-based predators. The new lakes also create an ecosystem for lots of other animals, and can even help reduce flooding in human habitats.



Part of the mystery behind creation?

What is God?

Adapted from an article by Rev. Jim Burklo in ‘Progressive Christianity’

Five-year-old Jacob asked Rev Burklo “What is God”? Here is Rev Burklo’s answer:

On the playground at school, a girl saw another girl crying. She asked the sad girl what was wrong, and she told her that somebody said something that hurt her feelings. The girl listened to the crying girl until she calmed down. The girl who listened showed love to the other girl who was crying. So, God was there.

A boy found a dead bird on the ground near his house. He was sad that the bird died. So, he asked his mom and dad to help him bury it in the ground. After it was buried, the boy and his parents stood there and talked about how beautiful the bird was, and how sorry they were that it had died. The boy and his parents showed love for the bird. So, God was there.

A traveller was walking and found a man lying by the path. The man couldn’t stand up, he couldn’t help himself, couldn’t even talk. So the traveller helped him up, and put his arm around him and helped him get to a hotel that had a restaurant. The man had no money, so the traveller paid for his hotel room and paid the restaurant to give him meals until the man felt better. The traveller then kept walking on the path. The traveller showed love to the man who was hurt - a man he had never met before, and might never see again. So, God was there.

God was there, because God is love! There are many kinds of love. There is the little kind of love – like how you love peanut butter. Family love is a lot bigger. It is how your parents love you and you love them. It is how I love you, and it is how you love all of us.

God is more than all these kinds of love. God is love that is everywhere in the universe. The universe is another kind of love; part of the really big love we call God.

When you are kind, when you listen, when you help people and care about them – even people you have never met ... when you care for animals and for the earth – then God is there, in you and around you. God is the biggest love of all!

Rev. Jim Burklo is the Executive Director of Progressive Christians Uniting



God is Love -
Wikipedia