

# The Westerly



PPW& PWV Newsletter No.31 – 6th May 2022



## All Verdant Greening - Ascot Vale Church Gardens Rev Gordon Bannon

In 2004 the **Ascot Vale Uniting Church** in Maribyrnong Rd was burnt to the ground. As part of the rebuilding project, the congregation decided that the garden would be a key focus of local mission and witness. Since then, we have maintained a vision for ourselves as 'The garden church' but struggled a bit to realise the vision of developing the gardens into a public space for reflection, prayer and social action. During the Covid lockdowns of the past couple of years, I spent time exercising and exploring the local streets and found a real lack of public spaces where people could just come and rest in a place of beauty. This discovery spurred on the congregation to push on and complete the garden and open it as a space that could be shared by the community.



One of the ongoing challenges of the congregation is the public perception of the church building as a dead, burned-out space, rather than a alive place. So, with a bit of financial assistance from the Presbytery and a lot of energy from the congregation, the garden has been redesigned and now includes, a Peace garden (a meditation/prayer space with a simple labyrinth at its heart, two community garden spaces with raised vegetable beds, a Cloister Park open space with lawn surrounded by fruit trees and garden beds and at the heart of the garden we have the biggest garden feature in the Southern hemisphere (the old church towers).

**The vision is for the garden continues to be to create a space that is open to the public for community use, but which also has spiritual meaning and mission purpose for the congregation.**

(Cont. p.2)

## Greening the Church

# All Verdant Greening - Ascot Vale Church Gardens

Rev Gordon Bannon (Continued)

The Church gardens have now become a regular visiting place for many locals who now come into the garden rather than just walk by. The old church towers are a drawcard and an asset to draw people in and the church looks alive to passers-by, rather than derelict. In the future we dream of finding funding to enable the towers and garden to be used as an outdoor music and performance venue.

A couple of weeks ago we held a garden party and mini-fete to officially launch the new gardens. Our elder statesperson (Joyce Melbourne) cut a ribbon and made an eloquent speech to open the new space. Several hundred people attended the day and it was a great celebration.



Hildegard of Bingen (the 11<sup>th</sup> C Christian Mystic) said, *"The Word is living, being, spirit, all verdant greening, all creativity."*

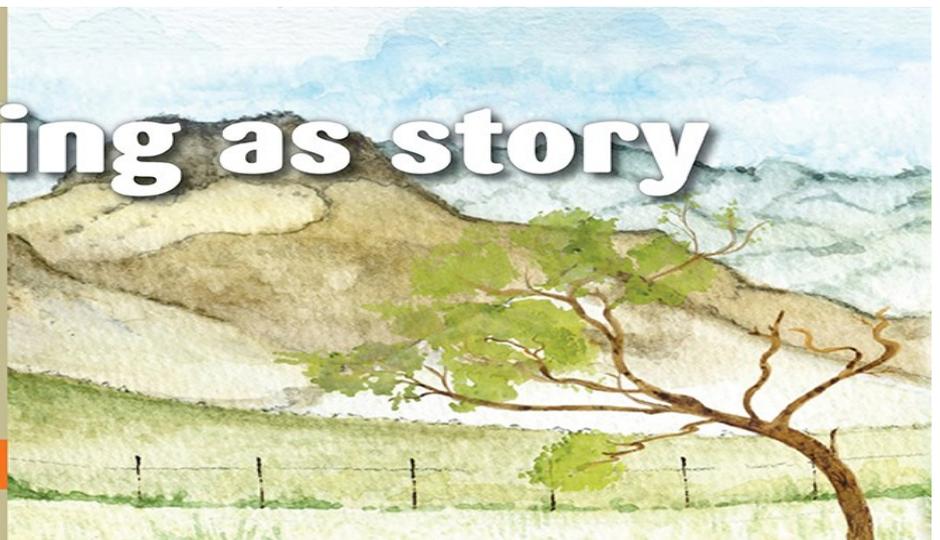
**Ascot Vale's garden-based ministry has its spiritual and mission heart in a theology of God's activity being evident in our garden practice.** We see our gardens as a 'little Eden' where we, and others can seek intimacy with God and nature. The Church gardens are a place of retreat and solace, a place of hospitality, and a place that challenges both the gardener and those who just sit and enjoy. The practice of gardening is connected to our spiritual life, but it is also missional action that prompts us to act in justice towards the earth. Through the act of gardening we come into cooperative relationship with the earth, and out of that relationship comes the response of compassion towards the earth. In meeting the needs of our own soul for nourishment and beauty, we are also better equipped to nourish and care for others.

## Preaching as story

**Preachers as  
Midwives of the  
Story**

**With Rev Deacon  
Denise Savage**

**Wednesday June 1, 2022**



# Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

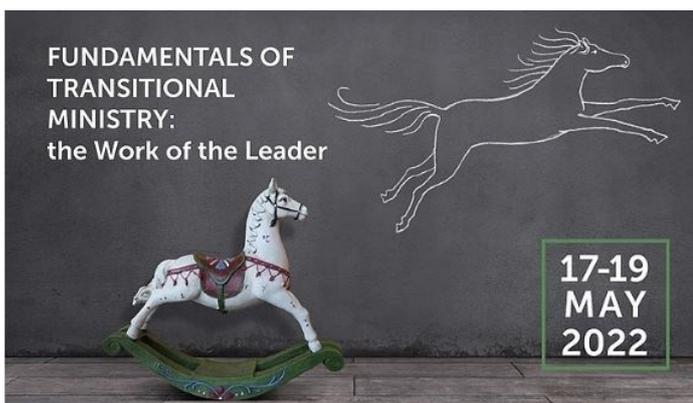
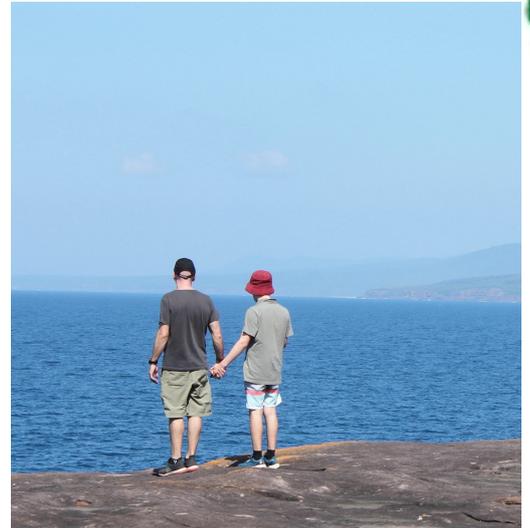
When I first turned up to the Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit to teach Tai Chi, most of the residents didn't seem interested. They sat slumped in their chairs, and it took some creative cajoling to convince a couple of them to have a go. Those that joined in seemed to like it, but tired of it quickly. Admittedly I felt a little disappointed.

When one of the nursing staff thanked me at the end of the class, I told her I wasn't sure that it had gone so well. Her reply was very sincere: "Don't let that put you off, please just keep turning up"

Since then, "**just keep turning up**" has become both a personal mantra and a piece of advice I give those wanting to know how to support someone suffering from mental illness.

Just turning up can mean the world to a person experiencing loneliness and isolation. Many deep in suffering don't feel worthy of our love and attention and see themselves as a burden, or "too much".

Turning up involves witnessing and honouring all that someone brings. It's how we see others through the eyes, and heart, of God. And it's in God's love that miracles are possible.



This is a three-day program designed to give you an introduction to the key concepts and practices of ministering with congregations and agencies in times of transition (isn't that most churches, especially since the upheavals brought by the covid pandemic? **How do we help communities navigate uncertainty and change?**). While FTM part 1 is a standalone program, it is also the first phase of training that leads to being qualified as an Intentional Interim Minister. Thus, it is useful for anyone in lay or ordained ministry who is dealing with change, transition and new opportunities, and also for those exploring a call to Intentional Interim Ministry. The FTM will be led by Rev Fran Barber (Continuing Education Coordinator) at the Centre for Theology and Ministry, Melbourne. FTM Part 2 : online August 9 & 16; in person, Aug 23-24 @ CTM.

**When:** Tues-Thurs 17-19 May, 9.30am-5pm

**Cost:** \$300 metro, \$260 non metro

**Where:** Centre for Theology and Ministry;  
29 College Crescent, Parkville VIC 3052

**Registrations close 12 May 2022**

# Politics of the Anthropocene

Neil Tolliday (On behalf of PPW Climate Change Task Group)

*This is my testimony as a Christian environmental activist. Although the politics of human-induced global warming is bleak, I gain great comfort in the companionship of people who give leadership to the climate crisis movement, including Christians of the world church, the Uniting Church and this Presbytery of Port Phillip West.*

## MY CONCERNS

God, who created the natural world, is good and as God's people we are called to responsibly manage the planet's resources. This puts Christian environmentalists in dialogue with politicians who are influenced by the carbon polluting fossil fuel industries: big oil, coal and gas.

We live in planetary climate crisis and many of us are anxious about the likelihood of a calamitous two degrees Celsius increase in temperatures during this century, as governments seem unable to act decisively. International Conferences of the Parties (COP) attempt to set goals into the distance.

The economies and governments of all nations are locked into dependence on the energy derived from fossil fuels which over 200 years have brought planet earth to a destabilised climate. Climate policies are disconnected from scientific reality.

The Australian Minerals Council facilitates the Australian government's close relationship with the coal industry.

Tom Corcoran, lobbyist for the oil companies explains that United States energy policy is rigged to enhance oil company profits. Fracking gas drilling leases are given unrestricted access to public and private land in order to make US energy resources secure. ("Are We Screwed?" Geoff Dembicki pp 213-4 publ. Bloomsbury 2017)

Canada depends on 2.2 million barrels of oil per day pumped from the northern Alberta tar sands at Fort McMurray. Canadian PM Harper's support for the Keystone XL pipeline to the Texas Gulf coast was frustrated by President Barack Obama's rejection of the project. The present Canadian PM Justin Trudeau follows Harper's oil policy.

Christians look to Australia, the world's largest coal and gas exporter, for climate policy. In this year's election, major parties throw a cloak of silence over the issues. Federal politics is corrupted by the unrestricted corporate donations to political parties. Waratah Coal spent \$83 million on owner Clive Palmer's party campaign at the last Federal election.

## MY HOPES

The divestment movement, energy generation by solar and wind, electric vehicles and the carbon absorption of forestry encourage me to fight for a climate change future.

*"May the creative Spirit of the universe inspire us, the caretakers, with hope."*





# Grand opening.

300-302 High St, Preston  
Saturday 7 May, 10am-5pm

Explore vintage fashion, quirky homewares and unique finds at our newest op shop.

Discover.  
Donate.  
Volunteer.

# Uniting



Fashion,  
jewellery,  
homewares  
and more.

Whether you're making a purchase, donating goods or volunteering your time and energy, you're giving back to your local community.

300-302 High Street  
Preston VIC 3072

  @UnitingOpShops  
[unitingvictas.org.au/op-shops](https://unitingvictas.org.au/op-shops)

Hi Everyone,  
Just letting you know that we are opening a new  
**Op Shop @ 300 High Street Preston**  
**7<sup>th</sup> May.**

This Op shop looks fabulous and we are very excited to be in the Preston area.

We are having a pre opening sneak peek on  
**Wednesday May the 4<sup>th</sup> 12-6pm**  
for Uniting and UCA staff ,  
volunteers and congregational members.

Drop in any time.

**Heather Thompson—**  
Senior Manager Retail

# How the Church's Songs Shape Us

Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood

*Rev. Dr. D'Arcy Wood will introduce hymns that enrich all Christian worship  
Hear invited choristers, accompanied by Bruce Macrae on grand piano*

**Sunday 12 June 2022 2.00pm**

**Stonnington Uniting Church**

**57-59 Burke Road Malvern East**

The Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian musical heritage has given all churches a rich resource for community singing

Dr Wood is a leader in church music in Australia

Celebrate this free event with the Uniting Church Historical Society

Register for Zoom link option by email: [ken.barelli@bigpond.com](mailto:ken.barelli@bigpond.com)

Enquiries: Ken Barelli – Mobile 0418 317 942



## CONGRATULATIONS TO WESLEY GEELONG

Recent actions have involved:

- Forming a Sustainability Group
- Committing to work in Clean Up Australia Day
- Creating a very active recycling hub
- Installing solar panels on the manse
- Putting up a climate change banner
- Embarking upon an energy audit
- Making plans to declare a climate crisis
- Committing to preaching each September 'The Season of Creation'

# Education Events

**May 7th**      **Uniting NEW Preston Op-Shop Opening @ 300 High St, Preston**  
10 am - 5 pm

**May 14th**      **PPW Presbytery In Council Meeting @ Hoppers Crossing & Online**  
9:30 pm



**May 17-19**      **Fundamentals in Transition Ministry @ Centre for Theology and Ministry**  
Rev. Fran Barber

**May 21st**      **PWV Presbytery Meeting @ Hamilton UCA**  
9:30 pm



**May 29th**      **Visual Exegesis @ Centre for Theology and Ministry**  
1:30-4:30 pm      Rev. Sandy Brodine

**June 1st**      **Preaching as Story: Preachers as Midwives of the Story**  
7-9 pm      Rev. Denise Savage (Deacon)



**June 12th**      **How the Church's Song Shape Us**  
Rev. Dr. Darcy Wood, Choristers & Pianist Bruce Macrae

**June 19th**      **UCA 45th Birthday Celebrations**  
@ Williamstown Uniting Church - Electra St. Rev. Dr. D'Arcy Wood

**June 24th**      **Burnout @ Wellsprings Centre, Ashburton**  
9.30- 4.30pm      Gordon Parker, Marcel Koper, Julie McDonald, Joan Wright Howie

**June 30th, 1st,4,5,6 July**      **Queer Theology Intensive @ Pilgrim College**  
J Inkpen & Penny Jones      [Pilgrim Theological College Handbook 2022](#)



## Visual Exegesis

How visual mediums inform and converse with written Scripture

**With Rev Sandy Brodine**

Sunday May 29, 2022