

The Westerly



PPW& PWV Newsletter No.40 – 21st November 2022



WHAT'S THE CLAUSE WITH SANTA CLAUS ?

Rev Malcolm Frazer (Warrnambool UCA—Hopkins Region)

(SPOILER ALERT - If you still believe in Santa don't read this)

I know it's Advent. But the reality is we're facing the Christmas crunch, and that man in the red suit is everywhere. He's been in the shops since September. As preachers we face a minefield when it comes to Santa. I've been warned off many times not to say anything that might destroy the magical myths that the majority of parents like to tell their children about Christmas. Of course it's not just about the Coca Cola invention of Santa. It's the whole commercial Christmas crassness. Which poses a big challenge for us as Christians who are wanting to share the real person that Christmas is all about. So, how might we approach this Santa/Jesus conundrum?



As parents Anne and I made a deliberate choice not to promote Santa with our kids. We told them the presents came from Mum & Dad, not Santa. ("Why should Santa get the credit anyway!") But seriously, the real reason was that we wanted them to know Christmas was about a real person, Jesus Christ. If they grew up with fantasies of Santa and the tooth fairy we didn't want them to then think that this Jesus is just another concocted story. So we told them about Jesus, and we told them about Saint Nicholas where the Santa story came from. But we also had to tell them to be careful not to tell their friends that Santa didn't exist and to respect what others had been told. It wasn't easy. Especially for Anne taking the kids to the shops where Santa was everywhere, and then to every breakup gathering, there was this Santa again. There was a lot of explaining to do. But this whole clash of Christ and culture is a part of the world we live in.

How might we share our faith in this Santa season then? My cautious suggestion is not to take Santa head on. You'll lose. There's too much danger of putting too many people unnecessarily offside. But that doesn't mean that we have to avoid the subject and the clash altogether. As always, we take the culture that we are in seriously, and within that cultural context we then point to the One who is at the centre of our life and faith, the true reason for the season. We talk about Santa Claus, but we shift the focus to the One who is bigger and who gives out the best presents of life and love and the presence of God, with us all, always.

Have a jolly good advent and Christmas folks. And let's preach the person and presence of Christ.

HOPE

WHAT'S THE CLAUSE WITH SANTA CLAUS ?

Rev Malcolm Frazer (Warrambool UCA—Hopkins Region) CONT.

To illustrate the point here's a Christmas song that you can listen to in the link below that I wrote to Jingle Bells. Feel free to perform it if you wish. But don't forget the raspberry at the end. Ho Ho Ho.

<https://soundcloud.com/malfraz/christmas-smells?in=malfraz/sets/kids-songs>

CHRISTMAS SMELLS by Malcolm Frazer 2011

Jingle Bells something smells What's this all about ?
Lollies, presents, parties ? "No" I wanna shout !
Look look to the baby, This baby born for us
Who came to give us real joy His name is, Je-sus

**Christmas bells, something smells, Get back to the cause
Cause the real Christmas story, Is bigger than Santa Claus**

Santa's going "ho ho ho" Cash registers "ding"
Lots of credit, dollars spent, But can a poor man sing ?
All those hungry people, Poor and in such need,
While we all overstuff our guts and live a life of greed.

**Christmas bells, something smells What's it all about ?
The real Christmas story Makes me wanna shout !**

Carols singing "la la la", "Hark" we love to hum
But save me from this shopping mall, where they play ad- nauseum.
Jingle Jangle Rudolph, Summer snowmen mush
Get me out of here mate, I hate this Christmas rush

**Arrr, Christmas bells, something smells, Get back to the cause
God the one who made us, Is bigger than Santa Clause
Yes, God the one who loves us,
Is bigger than Santa Clause – Ho ! Ho! (raspberry)**



From the Editor: If you missed an edition of The Westerly back editions are available at [Newsletters – Presbytery of Port Phillip West \(ucappw.org.au\)](#). Next Edition in two weeks. Any submission are due the Monday before publication. Always happy to receive your stories, poems, book reviews, photos, and theological reflections from across both our presbyteries. Rev Linley Liersch Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au.

Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

"Who's cooking for us today, Fiona?" I knew that there was another question behind Jim's words. "Me again Jim", I replied. There was a heavy silence as I continued to unpack groceries. "Have you heard from Tony?" said Jim quietly. "No, I haven't".

I introduced you to Tony in Issue 38; a man suffering from severe depression who had found friendship and belonging in the men's shed.

"I thought he liked it here", said Jim, "we like him". Another pause. "Do you think he's OK?".

This is one of the hardest parts of walking with people who live with complex mental health issues; you will rarely see them "fixed".

"I don't know", I offered, "I think he loves it here, but he's in a lot of pain, and we're just a small part of his story. I hope the time he's had with us matters - that we've made a difference in his life somehow."

Sometimes I joke that my job title should be **"Hope Peddler"** because I believe that every seed of Hope matters and that sometimes just planting the seed is the incredible miracle we witness.

I must believe that whenever we share God's love, the impossible becomes



In the Jewish Passover feast they leave an empty chair reserved for Elijah's return. In our churches we have often have elders chairs placed either side of a chair for Christ, the host at every holy meal.

How do we in our worship leave seats for the people who should be at the table? Who do we hold out hope for others in need? [Rev. L.L.]

Volunteers for Sunshine Men's & Women's Sheds programs

We are looking for some reliable volunteers to assist Fiona Bottcher with the **Men's and Women's Sheds** programs at Sunshine Uniting Church (corner of Withers St. and Devonshire Road, Sunshine). The Sheds programs are social support groups for participants, accepting people whatever their background. **Tasks:** Can be flexible and adapted to your needs and abilities but might include - Opening and setup of the space. Shopping. Welcoming and talking to participants and others showing interest in the program. Assisting with meals and activities for the day. Some administration tasks. Cleaning and tidying up. **Skills:** Willingness to help. Care for people in the community. Current Working With Children card. **Hours:** 9:00am to 3:00pm one day per week. If you have questions or are interested, please contact Fiona Bottcher 0421 027 467 or feigh.b@gmail.com or Bruce Missen 0419 004 329 or bruce.missen@ppw.victas.uca.org.au

CONCERNED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE BUT NOT SURE HOW TO HELP? **BECOME A LOCAL CLIMATE CHAMPION!**

It helps you feel so much better to be doing something positive, and this will help the Uniting Church to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2040 at the latest.

We believe that local Climate Champions have an important role in motivating their congregation, agency or school to action, but **you would not be on your own.**

Whether you are in Western Victoria or Port Philip West presbyteries, we would support you, offering ideas, advice and a listening ear.

Here are some of the ideas we have for the role (but you may have others):

- ⇒ Meet with other Climate Champions to share good news stories, ideas, and find support and encouragement. Possibly meet together for coffee and a chat.
- ⇒ Share important information you glean (from us or from others).
- ⇒ Help your home congregation, agency or school apply for a Five leaf Eco-award [Five Leaf Eco-Awards | Ecumenical environmental change program for religious organisations \(fiveleafecoawards.org\)](https://fiveleafecoawards.org/)
- ⇒ Keep in contact with us and ask for assistance if you need to.
- ⇒ Some places of ministry have already got their Climate Champions up and running and Brunswick Uniting Church has a climate action plan. To find out more go to <https://brunswick.unitingchurch.org.au> and click on the Climate Crisis Earth button

From the **Climate Action Task Group:** Richard, Sue, Chris, Kate, Jeanne and Neil

Here is how you get in touch with us:

susanannestrong@hotmail.com 0437 741077

cstorie65@gmail.com

0409 521 998

As a member of the Uniting Church ...

you are invited to join our Uniting Church Historical Society.

The Society wants to enrich all church members with a better understanding of our unique heritage.

By better appreciating the identity of this church, you can be more confident to talk about the church and invite people to join it. The Society facilitates the promoting of interest in our buildings, the contribution of our people, and the value of our theology.

You can also share your story and that of your church through the Society.

The Society promotes the use of Synod Archives Centre, 54 Serrell Street, Malvern East 3145 and

Phone 039 571 5476

Please see our membership leaflet on the Synod website;

www.victas.uca.org.au/resources/finance-and-archives/Synod-archives and scroll to the Related Documents.

Enquiries: VicTas UCHS Membership Officer Clive Jackson, Phone 039 569 9178

NEW CHILD SAFE Training

Rev (Deacon) Jeanne Beale – PPW Presbytery Safety Officer

The following message is from the Culture of Safety Unit, in the Vic/Tas Synod:

We are very pleased to announce that we are now able to make the new and updated safe church training available across the Synod. This has been developed nationally within the UCA for training across Australia, and we encourage all appointed leaders to complete this training.

1) ONLINE TRAINING MODULE: Our **preferred option** is that people register for the online training module, with UnitingLearning. We will then work to upload people to the online learning system, and let them know via the email each person will provide on the form. This system will then provide each leader who completes the training with a training certificate. Individual training form: <https://victas-666919.workflowcloud.com/forms/b66dcaeb-be80-413e-a23b-1e1bbbb0d17e>

2) LOCAL IN-PERSON GROUPS: A second option is for a local group to organize themselves to train as a group. If you let us know that you are planning to work as a group, we can provide you with leader's resources, a participants' manual to resource the group training, a link to a downloadable PowerPoint resource for group presentation, and a template to record attendance. We ask then that groups who complete the training keep local records of completion of the training, and provide us with a list of attendees for our records, and so that we can issue attendees with a completion certificate. A Form for recording attendance can be found here: <https://victas-666919.workflowcloud.com/forms/a3ea9dcb-b972-47f8-810e-72e7cce1983c>

3) INDIVIDUAL COMPLETES WORKBOOK: A **third way** of completing the training – and our least preferred option – is for an individual to work their way through the material in the workbook on their own, and contact us if they have any questions, and when they have completed the training so that we can send a certificate. For individuals to access this training, please use the individual training form above.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions, or to raise any safe church matters with us.

Please contact Russell Williams Russell.williams@victas.uca.org.au - administrative officer at the Culture of safety unit, who is working to keep our records up to date, and to support the unit, and the Congregations of the Synod with admin questions and WWCC updates.

Yours in Christ,

Morag Logan – Culture of Safety Manager cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au

Message from Rev (Deacon) Jeanne Beale – our PPW Presbytery Safety Officer

If congregations/faith communities/local UCA agencies or regional groups of places of ministry would like me to come and facilitate option 2 above (or to instruct a local representative as a facilitator) I would be more than happy to support you in this way.

As sessions start to get organized, I will advertise them here so that anyone from neighbouring places of ministry can join in. I have acquired 30 copies of the manual for a session to be held at Sunbury in the new year, however you can ask for copies yourself from Russell Williams mentioned above.

To contact me for any support with this please call Jeanne Beale 0432 284 279



National Emergency Medal

VCC Emergencies Ministry volunteer Chaplains and staff have been recognised for their unstinting service during the 2019-20 Black Summer Bushfires by being awarded the National Emergency Medal. The devastating bushfires were declared a nationally-significant emergency for the purpose of the National Emergency Medal on December 2, 2020, per the National Emergency Medal (Bushfires 2019-20) Declaration 2020. More than 200 VCC EM Chaplains were deployed across northern and eastern Victoria in to 14 relief/recovery centres at affected areas such as Sale, Bairnsdale, Corryong and Mallacoota during January-February 2020. The National Emergency Medal is administered by the Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat at Government House which provides secretariat support to the National Emergency Medal Committee.



Honours for VCC EM bushfire service

Service during this nationally significant emergency will be recognised through the clasp, 'BUSHFIRES 19-20'. The National Emergency Medal Committee determined the following criteria:

- Service must be in the protection of lives and property; or in the service of interests that are not their own; in direct response to the emergency (including support that enables or facilitates the emergency response).
- The minimum duration of service that a person is required to have completed to qualify for sustained service is five days (whether consecutive or not) each involving service in direct response to the declared emergency and must be completed during a specified period

The Governor-General may approve an award for sustained service, on the recommendation of the Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat. Sustained service is awarded to those who have rendered sustained service in the declared nationally significant emergency for the purpose of the Medal

In April 2021 VCC Emergencies Ministry provided the Governor General a list of volunteers whom we believed satisfied the criteria above and in August 2022 we received a list back of personnel they approved. These esteemed awards are to be presented in October-November and will include a short pre-summer briefing.

Hi everyone, We recognise some people whose names are on the list on the next page. You may recognise more than us. Congratulations to the UCA Chaplains and Personal Support volunteers on this list.

Name	LGA	Name	LGA	Name	LGA
Jenny Anderson	Wangaratta	Sion Gough	Melbourne	Christopher Parnell	Shepparton
Carolynn Andrews	East Gippsland	Mary Grant	Towong	Jacquie Postlethwaite	Wellington
Vanessa Ash	East Gippsland	Stuart Gray	Mansfield	Steven Postlethwaite	Wellington
Lovella Ashley-Coop	Colac Otway	Linda Harvey	Frankston	John Randles	Macedon Ranges
Karen Austen	Hume	Heather Hayman	Wellington	Eileen Reardon	Wodonga
Lynne Beaty	South Gippsland	Bradley Hayman	Wellington	Grace Reynolds	Ballarat
Lesley Baker	Indigo	Robert Hayman	Wellington	Bruce Robinson	Glen Eira
Gillian Baker	Wangaratta	David Hodgins	Wodonga	Jay Robinson	Glen Eira
Andrew Banks	Macedon Ranges	David Holloway	Wodonga	Thomas Rose	Whitehorse
Denis Bell	Kingston	Anneri Humphris	Casey	Christopher Russell	Whitehorse
Jackie Belot	Wellington	Susan Ingleton	Wangaratta	Lyn Russell	Whitehorse
John Bennett	Colac Otway	Andries Jooste	Mornington Peninsula	Tony Ryan	Wyndham
Patricia Blanks	Bendigo	Alan Kelb	Wodonga	Valmai Scully	Frankston
Jane Boswell	Shepparton	Mark Kelly	Baw Baw	Kim Simon	Wellington
Janet Boyce	Baw Baw	Rhonda Kissick	Towong	Judi Smith	Banyule
Brenda Burney	Latrobe	Mandy Lake	Frankston	Arita Smith	Latrobe
Ros Cairns	Banyule	Judith Lake	Wellington	Barb Smith	Surf Coast
Don Campbell	Knox	Warren Laycock	Geelong	Russell Smith	Wangaratta
Jill Campbell	South Gippsland	Graeme Mancer	Alpine	Lynda Stuart	Moonee Valley
Ian Cayzer	Frankston	Denis Martin	Indigo	Stuart Stuart	Moorabool
Susan Collis	Baw Baw	Alan Mathews	Frankston	HeaChin Tan	Stonnington
Deirdre Crawley	Baw Baw	Jenny McGuirk	Banyule	Max Tennison	Casey
John Davis	Wangaratta	Ann Meates	Maribyrnong	Heather Toms	Latrobe
Rhonda Douglas	Geelong	Robin Meates	Maribyrnong	Breck Tonkin	Wellington
Robert Downing	Frankston	Paul Meredith	Casey	Susan Turner	Bendigo
Michael Downing	Frankston	Terry Mervin	Surf Coast	Marie van der Weert	Hobsons Bay
Liz Dumps	Yarra Ranges	Marianne Messer	Surf Coast	Michelle Walker	Geelong
Mark Dunn	Moreland	Rhondra Milner	South Gippsland	Peter Whitefield	Melbourne
Judy Ellison	Moorabool	Bruce Missen	Moonee Valley	Kaylene Wickham	East Gippsland
Kaylene Evers	Port Philip	Bronwyn Molloy	Dandenong	Jenny Wicking	East Gippsland
Phillip Fairbrother	Wellington	Peter Morris	Latrobe	Gay Wilding	Macedon Ranges
Robyn Ferroff	Hume	Edmund Murphy	Wyndham	Peter Wilding	Macedon Ranges
Cheryl Forrest	Maroondah	Jill Murray	Wangaratta	Brenda Williams	Melbourne
Mark Gaffey	Wellington	Michael Nally	Mitchell	Ray Wyld	Bayside
Jennifer Gordon	Bass Coast	Julie Neesham	Wellington		

Work experience with the Justice and International Mission Cluster

By Charlotte Oates Pryor

A week working in the CTM office has been an incredibly interesting and enlightening experience for me as a Year 10 work experience student. Not only have I been greeted by a team of amazingly kind and open people, I have been welcomed and accepted by them.

I learnt a lot in the week from the incredibly diverse research I have conducted, the meetings I have attended, and experts I have spoken to. I explored topics including right-wing churches' presence in politics, modern slavery and women and children seeking asylum.

Every day has brought a new and significant matter to light, many of which I have barely given a moment's notice to before. Working in the social justice area for a week has given me not only a good idea for a potential career path but a broader view of the issues people are facing everyday around the world.

I am so incredibly grateful to Mark Zirnsak, Tim Molineux and the entire CTM staff for all of the opportunities and insights they have offered me throughout this week.



November Education Events

22nd Nov	UNITING AGM
3– 4:30pm	
25th Nov	Celebration of the Family Violence Resources (CALD Lang.)
11–1 pm	@ Canterbury UCA RSVP: Russell.Williams@victas.uca.org.au
23-25,28-30 Nov	Nurture and spiritual Guidance of Children—Intensive
	Beth Barnett @ Pilgrim Theological College
29th Nov	Ethical Ministry Refresher
9–12 noon	Booking: https://www.trybooking.com/CDSGJ
2nd Dec	Synod Disability Action Plan—On-line & Wesley Place
1–4pm	Level 2, 130 Lonsdale St, Melbourne and online