



PARTICIPATE

IN LIFE • IN CHRIST

A Reflection for Lent

Leanne Sanders
President

As this year rolls on, we are grateful that, in South Australia our experiences of life are returning to something more like those we remember. This time last year, Covid-19 meant we were unable to physically gather as congregations and, while many of us enjoyed the alternative worship experiences offered, many people were glad to get back to meeting together. I have been grateful that the return has allowed me to commence my visits to our congregations. Where I've been able to visit, it has been a joy to share in worshipping God and in the breaking of bread together, and I look forward to continuing these visits throughout the year. If there's a particular date that you would like a visit, please contact me through the State Office.

As this news update goes out, we are of course more than halfway through the period of Lent, in our preparation for the Easter remembrances and celebration. And, I'm wondering how you have chosen to prepare yourself for this most special time in our calendar.

In the busyness of daily life, it's easy to let the preparation of our hearts slip by and, while we have no requirements around preparation, there is a particular blessing in doing what we can to draw closer to Jesus.

One of the practices I have been focussing on this year, is using my breathing as a method of drawing closer to God, incorporating the use of 'breath prayers'. As breath is essential to life, so too is our relationship with God. And breath prayers are, for me, a simple and effective way of meditating. You might like to try it: stilling your thoughts, reflecting

on God, and repeating one, or both, of these simple steps, or by trying your own:

- Breath in 'Yah' and hold, breathe out 'Weh', pause... repeat...,
- Breathe in as you pray the first half of a Bible phrase... Breathe out as you pray the other half... eg Breathe in 'Speak Lord'... pause, Breathe out 'Your servant is listening'... pause...repeat...

Whatever it is you have chosen to do to prepare your heart for Easter, may you find yourself, daily, growing ever closer to our Lord.

Stop, Listen, Refocus

Let go of the rush and noise

Wait patiently before God

Let the busyness of your body rest

Let the worries of your mind rest

Let the doubts of your heart rest

Hear God's call to holiness

Open the deep places of your heart

And allow your spirit to be restored

Busyness into peace

Worry into trust

Doubt into hope

In the stillness of this moment

Repent of what does not serve God

Admit to tensions that tell you

What needs to change

Let us journey together

Towards the cross

And move forward without fear

Into God's eternal purposes

(Christine Sine)



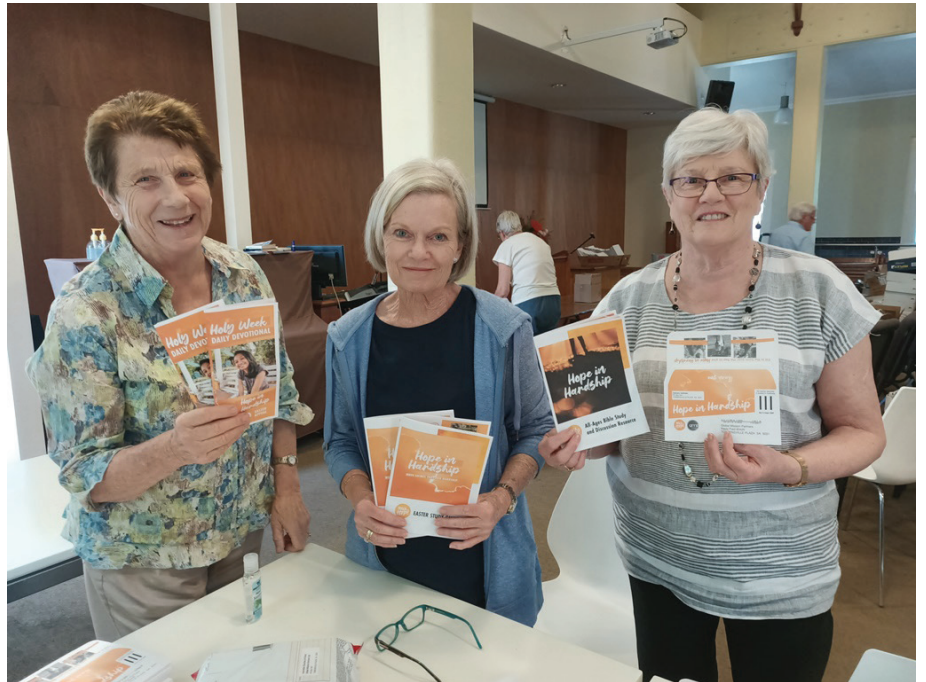
Pews for Sale at Happy Valley

An assessment of the Happy Valley Church Pews found that there are numbers surplus to requirements.

If you are interested in purchasing a Pew or two please **contact Des at coobarie@hotmail.com** and we will see what we can do.

Cost per Pew only \$10!

Hope in Hardship



Yulia ministers to remote villages in Indonesia. She travels on muddy roads on her dirt bike, sometimes slipping and falling on the journey. She must load her bike on a wooden raft to reach people either side of the Kapuas River, then she continues on foot. Even so, Yulia does not give up, because she knows that she has been called to share the love of Jesus here.



This Easter we are partnering with people like Yulia in prayer and practical support to encourage and enable them to persevere despite the challenges. You will find a series of Walk for Hope videos and devotional resources at www.walkforhope.com.au/

Volunteering at GMP

I'm really grateful for the cheerful team of volunteers

that regularly come into the office to assist with the GMP mail outs. They participate in a special way in God's mission as they parcel up the latest news of our partners ready for mailing to churches and supporters across Australia. Earlier this month the team packaged up the Easter Walk for Hope materials. While there is some serious work to be done, there is also a great sense of camaraderie and accomplishment as a team.

A small group of volunteers meet on the first Wednesday afternoon of each month for the In Partnership newsletter mail out, and a larger group gathers to help with the major publicity mail outs. The larger mail outs are held on a Wednesday three times a year starting from 9:30am and concluding around 2:30pm, with lunch and refreshments provided.

If you would be interested in joining the team of GMP Volunteers I would love to hear from you. Contact Val at the GMP office 8352 3466 or email val@gmp.org.au

Val Zerna

SA/NT Partnership Coordinator

Blair Athol Church of Christ

For many people, the Covid 19 crisis has been a 'struggle and a half' – and it has been so for our Church to some degree. However, at the same time, our Church at Blair Athol has been receiving many blessings. Our Board decided that we would seek out what God is saying to us during this pandemic time. The upshot is that we have been led into many changes which are proving to be very positive and fulfilling, not only for us as a church but for the community we try to serve.

FRIDAY CHURCH: At the beginning of Covid and when our attendance numbers for worship services were limited, we began 'Friday Church', where the worship plan for Sunday is followed, but more casually. The average attendance is around 10-12 people – comprising both regulars and 'newies'. We sit at tables, almost in a circle, which means we are able to have eye contact with most people. There is no sermon as such, but we discuss the Bible reading, its context and what we believe God is saying to us. The freedom of asking questions and the interaction has led to a more personal depth to worship. This interaction has also meant that we realise more how God is speaking to us as individuals, and it keeps us on our toes! Our 'prayers for others' have led to much deeper fellowship, love and care. There is a wonderful feeling of 'family' and at this stage we have no plans to discontinue our Friday Church when Covid restrictions are lifted.

FOOD HAMPERS: For years, the church has run a free community lunch on a Monday, called 'Free79' (a take on us being at 379 Prospect Road). Covid, of course, stopped that – but there was still the need. So now, instead of people coming for a meal, they are given a bag of food to take home. The food is available through Foodbank, Oz Harvest and 2nd Bite, and Port Adelaide/Enfield Council kindly donated



2,000 bags. A few wonderful volunteers sort the food into the bags, and between 60-80 bags are given out each week. Due to higher unemployment in the area, a more pastoral ministry and one-to-one care has opened up amongst those experiencing greater loneliness, domestic violence and homelessness. This is a wonderful and rewarding ministry but at the same time we find our church is really being stretched, as we are very short of 'experienced' Christians.

OP SHOP: Our Shop is on the same premises as the church and our major aim is always to share the love of Jesus with the customers. Subsequently, the shop has become a wonderful means of outreach and evangelism. We aim to ensure that whoever comes into the shop is made welcome respected. If people ask, it is strongly emphasised that the Op Shop is part of the church and all are welcome at any time.

So, because of the kindness and encouragement of our Op Shop volunteers, and the blessings of the Lord, many customers have become part of our church family - loved and accepted and so important to us.

Sadly, Covid meant we had to close our Op Shop (and collection bin) for a time however, the minute Covid restrictions were lifted our dedicated volunteers returned to tackle all the sorting, ready to re-open. In re-opening, it was decided that the hours would be reduced; with a careful watch on the numbers in the shop and a Covid Marshall on patrol! Even with shorter opening hours, we have not lost any customers.

Many thanks for the opportunity to share experiences within our special church and share of God's amazing grace towards us.

Janet Mugford
Chair



*LEADERSHIP FORMATION THROUGH A
DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY*



Sherpa leadership formation



Sherpa is a leadership formation program that is aimed at both seasoned and emerging Christian leaders. Through a series of retreats, participants creatively explore the biblical story and how they can deepen their walk with God, and strengthen their influence among those around them.

In early March, after being postponed in 2020 due to Covid, we ran a Sherpa retreat at Redcliff Campsite near Tumby Bay, with participants coming from local Uniting Churches, Australian Christian Churches, and Churches of Christ. Beginning on a Friday evening and finishing at lunchtime Sunday, it involved a mix of relationship building, group interaction, personal reflection and planning, and lots of food.

In response to the question 'what was the most impacting part of the retreat for you?', one participant wrote, 'Time to be still and silent, pondering God's story and my place in

it.'. Another wrote 'The Story Telling. It was a privilege to be able to enter into someone else's story, even if it was only a snap shot.' As they reflected on what they would do as a result of the Sherpa retreat, one person wrote, 'Set goals for spiritual growth and feel more likely to actually work on them because I can see their significance to the whole adventure', while another participant wrote 'Flipping anxiety and introverted-ness into a strength that God has given me to give space to others to be themselves and explore faith.'

There are plans to run another follow-up retreat on the Eyre Peninsula this year, as well as in other areas of the state. If you are interested in finding out more about how Sherpa can support leadership formation in your area, please contact **Adrian Blenkinsop on 0412 134 339 or ablenkinsop@churchesofchrist-sa.org.au**.

MOPS at Elizabeth Church of Christ



MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers) is an international program, run in more than 60 countries around the world. At MOPS women meet together to be supported, encouraged and equipped as they raise their children. Mums face unique needs, challenges and joys in this vital season of early mothering. At MOPS every mum is welcomed, accepted and encouraged to reach her potential and recognise her influence with her family and her world. Ladies meet new friends, enjoy a delicious morning tea, hear speakers on relevant topics, learn new skills and gain confidence in mothering. And all this happens child-free! While mums engage with the MOPS program, their babies and little kids enjoy on-site care and age-appropriate activities in the MOPS Kids program.

The Mothers of Pre-schoolers (MOPS) group held at Elizabeth Church of Christ has been running for 19 years and mothers enjoy meeting together on fortnightly Wednesdays during school terms.

We are blessed with a number of leaders from both the Elizabeth Church of Christ as well as other local churches. Each of these leaders bring a diverse range of gifts and experiences that help to

connect with our mums and love and support them through their mothering journey.

We have between 25 and 30 mums join us each fortnight. These mums come from the Elizabeth Church of Christ, other local churches and about one third come from our community with a non-church background. We also have around 25 kids and babies attend our MOPS KIDS program each fortnight. Our MOPS KIDS program has continued to be blessed with around 10 ladies from various local churches all volunteering their time. We are very thankful for each carer, as without them, MOPS would not be possible. Not only do the carers enable mums to enjoy some child free time, but they also share the love of Jesus with these children through games, Bible Stories, songs, craft and fun!

We continue to see the mission and heart of the MOPS program reach the mothers and families in our community. Our prayer is that each mum would feel the love and acceptance of our Heavenly Father when they walk through our doors. We also pray that they would choose to give their lives to Him and see the healing power of Jesus transform both their lives and their entire family.



Oasis

The Oasis program continues to provide accommodation for country people who need to come to Adelaide medical reasons.

Our 'Oasis' is a 2 bedroom unit at Brighton with excellent access to Flinders Medical Centre.

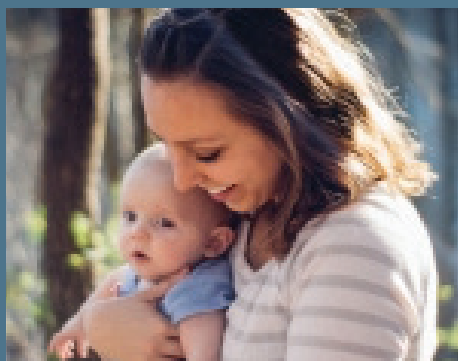
During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have chosen not to offer shared accommodation, which limits the number of guests we can serve. At the moment, Oasis is welcoming quite a number of high risk pregnancies, but only one at a time. However, there is a great need for more accommodation to assist those in difficult situations.

Since CareWorks moved from the original Clapham Oasis property, it has been necessary access other properties. We are most appreciative to the people and Churches who have made the continuation of this ministry possible. We need to grow this program, do you know of anyone who may have a home or unit close to Flinders Medical Centre or surrounding south western suburbs (eg Daw Park to Darlington to Marion or to the beach). If there is a property available or is only occupied occasionally, could CareWorks partner with you? How can we support you to support us in this ministry?

We are looking for God's guidance in this situation and ask that you pray with us in finding a way to expand this wonderful program.

If you feel you would like to contribute to this discussion, please contact **Cindy Cox at Careworks.**

The Mothers' Day Appeal



The Mothers' Day Appeal is an opportunity to give to mothers who are fleeing situations of domestic violence an expression of God's love and care by means of a small gift. The shelters have shared that some mothers have never received a gift on Mothers' Day and are completely overwhelmed that someone would offer them a gift of love, for someone WE will never meet, and who has no way of ever paying us back. On your behalf, CareWorks will deliver Mothers' Day gifts to families in Domestic Violence Shelters across the metropolitan area. These will be provided to children who in turn, will choose something to give to their mums. Your gift of shower gels, special soaps, body lotions, and hand creams will bring comfort and joy to a special mum. Of course, CareWorks can obtain the gift for you if you would like to send a donation towards this special project. Can you imagine an easier way of bringing a moment of happiness to a deserving Mum than by making a donation (\$20 - \$25) towards the Pamper Packs? You can give on-line at www.givenow.com.au/careworkssa or drop your gifts in to CareWorks office, 114 Henley Beach Road Torrensville, by Monday 26th April in order to give the shelters time to distribute the gifts before Mothers' Day.



Goolwa Church of Christ Where the River meets the Sea



Sited just 100 metres from the Goolwa Church of Christ is a sculpture by the artist Tony Bishop, titled "Whose Elbow?". The sculpture features a fishing buoy encased in a net formed by arms and elbows. Created in 2011, it came into its own in 2020 as the elbow became the normal way we greet each other. The name "Goolwa" means "elbow", and the town is aptly named, being situated on the elbow of the river.

The Goolwa Church, founded in 1902 & supporting the establishment of the Victor Harbor Church of Christ in 1929, has a long history of serving the community & welcoming others. In recent years the church suffered a painful setback, but despite the challenges of COVID-19, 2020 was a "turn around" year as the church experienced significant growth. Grant Simpson is now in his second year of ministry here and we feel like we are all drivers on the bus, that there are no passengers. It is very encouraging that everyone is involved in ministry in some way, and those

who are no longer physically able, are faithful in prayer.

During 2020, the Friendship Centre grew in significance as newcomers arrived seeking friendship and connections, and the leadership Team was strengthened. We acknowledged the leadership given by Pam McKinlay over many years to this important ministry.

In November a Service of Recognition was held for volunteer emergency service workers. The idea grew from the traumas of last summer and the involvement of several of our members: Geoff and Libby Braddock (Clayton CFS); Tricia Skewes (SA Ambulance Service); and Danny Smith (Surf Life Saving SA Pt Elliott). Each were interviewed about their roles, the challenges and rewards of serving with their organisations, and prayed for. We also acknowledged Michael Bugar and John McKinlay (retired CFS), and Raelene Smith (retired Surf Life Saving SA). A team of Pastoral Carers visit regularly in the Aged Care Home where we conduct services. During 2018-19 the church developed a BBQ Outreach Ministry in the Caravan Park. COVID-19 brought an end to that, but home groups are stronger than ever. Solar Panels have been installed on the church roof and have cut our electricity bills by thousands! We partner with other churches to support Emergency Relief & Pastoral Care Worker programs locally.

Goolwa is only one of two places in the world that offer a steam to steam experience, ie. you can get off a steam train onto a steam boat! The Goolwa Church of Christ is far from running out of steam!



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in South Australia
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