

*St Mary's*



*St Mary's Anglican Church, North Melbourne*

**AVE**

***Advent December 2024***



*Our Lady of Good Counsel*

*Fra Pasquale Sarullo (1828 – 1893), Palermo, Sicily.  
Collection of New Norcia Mission, Western Australia*

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— In this Edition of AVE —  
*Advent 2024*

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Mother Dorothy has a message to the parish, followed by her reflections on major gospel treatments of the birth story of Jesus.

Robert takes us right back to early ideas not only of What Christmas was about, but especially of When it was and Whether that matters.

Andrew honours the the liturgical season with a reflection upon living the time of Advent in today's world

Two different parishioners have been inspired by postcards:

. Helen, is inspired by a card received a long time ago from Western Australia (which incidentally leads to our cover image on this present AVE). We also have notes about the place from which the card came

. And in the final piece Rhondda, inspired by a greetings card, ruminates upon Writing to the Dead

We learn of Tim's introducing Climate Fresk workshops, a climate education initiative supported by our Climate Action Group.

And Andrea, as a participant in the very first of them, gives impressions of the event.

Chips gives us a view of the past and the present of an important institution, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria

We have an account from Beverley of some musical initiatives which enrich the musical life of St Mary's, and we have a description from Sheila of some music events in another nearby parish

Our thanks to all contributors

*David Keuneman & Laura Tanata, editors*

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**Message from Rev Mother Dorothy Lee**

*Advent 2024-12-05*

It is lovely for me to be back at St Mary's as your Locum while you discern prayerfully your new Vicar.

I am again reminded of how rich a parish St Mary's is: not perhaps in financial terms but in terms of the many gifts which abound among you. And those gifts go along with a dedication and willingness to take on responsibilities and do the hard work of ministry which belongs, at the end of the day, to all the baptized. I am delighted to be part of this incredibly talented and gracious team.

In the meantime, we need to keep the Nominators (Incumbency Committee) in our prayers and also Fr Jan whose time with us finishes very soon, on the 15th December, praying for God's blessing on his future ministry.

So now we approach together the great Feast of the Incarnation and celebrate it, not only on Christmas Day, but for the twelve days of Christmas and also for the whole season of Epiphany which lasts through January to Candlemas on the 2nd of February.

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## **The Birth of Jesus in Two Versions**

*Rev Canon Professor Dorothy A. Lee*

The story of Jesus' birth in the New Testament is told only in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Neither Mark (the first Gospel to be written) nor John (the last Gospel) include any story of Jesus' birth and childhood: in both we first meet Jesus as an adult. Matthew and Luke, however, have independently decided to add birth stories to Mark's story of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection.

In one sense, Matthew and Luke have much in common in telling the story of Jesus' birth. Both tell, for example, of Mary his mother becoming pregnant before marriage through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Both present Joseph as a responsible adoptive father. In both Jesus is a descendant of King David. Both accounts are grounded in the Old Testament and God's covenant with Israel. Both locate Jesus' birth in the socio-political instability of the Roman world. And in both, he is born in Bethlehem of Judaea during the reign of Herod the Great (who died in 4 BCE) and raised in Nazareth in Galilee.

Yet, despite this common ground, the two Gospels are very different. Luke's story, which we focus on this year (Year C), has its focus particularly on Mary, with her courageous faith in the power of God's word: the first disciple in this Gospel. Jesus' birth story is paralleled by that of his relative, John the Baptist. And the two mothers meet in a moving scene where both are under the sway of the Holy Spirit: physically in their miraculous conceptions and spiritually in their vibrant faith (Lk 1:39-45).

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The mood of Luke's birth story is one of joy in the covenant fidelity of God, especially towards the poor, and the divine salvation as it extends to 'all flesh' (Lk 3:6). The Holy Spirit is everywhere, bringing the hope and joy of heaven to earth. Angels rejoice, women are made glad, shepherds proclaim, priests and prophets sing in joyful recognition.

Luke's birth story is suffused with the joy of the good news, with God's own joy. It is a joy that will overturn the structures and values of the world, as the Magnificat proclaims (Lk 1:46-55): welcoming outsiders, forgiving sinners, giving the poor true dignity, and challenging the powers-that-be. And this joy is not superficial. Luke knows of the pain of the cross, the 'sword that will pierce your heart', as Simeon says to Mary (Lk 2:35).

By contrast, Matthew's story contains strong themes of threat and unease. Four women appear in the genealogy, which is otherwise based on male descent, pointing forward to Mary herself and her miraculous pregnancy (Matt 1:16). The disquiet continues in the annunciation to Joseph, the main character in Matthew's birth story. At its heart is the joyful birth of the Saviour and Emmanuel (God-with-us, Matt 1:21-23), yet Joseph finds this news anything but joyful. A compassionate and righteous man, he is disturbed by Mary's pregnancy though reluctant to expose her. Yet Joseph listens when God speaks and responds with obedience, despite the cost to his honour and public esteem (Matt 1:24).

The story of the coming of the Magi, which is found only in Matthew, seems to be the exception with its vibrant note of joy. On arriving, Matthew tells us, the wise men 'rejoiced with a very great joy' when they see the child and his mother, bringing costly gifts and worship to the infant King (Matt 2:10-11). They prefigure the future coming of the Gentiles (Matt 28:16-20). Yet this too turns out to be a dark story, with the massacre of the baby boys due to Herod's paranoia.

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The baby Jesus escapes Herod's wrath by fleeing with his parents to Egypt as a refugee where he remains till the King's death. In the end Joseph is compelled to take his family to Nazareth in Galilee because of further danger (Matt 2:22-23). Once again, the Matthean birth story is shrouded in difficulty and threat.

The differences between the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are not just in points of detail that can be ignored not can they be forced artificially to make one consistent story. They are different and need to be left as they are, each in its own right, with its own plot, its own cast of characters, its own events. The story each evangelist narrates is a story of salvation, of God's entry into creation, but we need to hear each in its own right in order to grasp the depth and beauty of each.

Let us listen to the Christmas story this year in its full glory: with the light and the dark, the sorrowful and the joyful, the tragic and the festive. Both Gospels portray the incarnation as the appearance of God in mortal form, bursting into the world in order to transform its violence, suffering and brokenness.

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*Robert takes us right back to early ideas not only of What Christmas was about, but especially of When it was and Whether that matters.*

## **On the Date of Christmas**

*Rev Professor Emeritus Robert Gribben*

The media, while raking in the profits from increased pre-Christmas advertising, usually publish the odd article (and I mean it) explaining the origins of the feast. Of course, they mean explaining the origins of the decorations – remnants of Yuletide in Scandinavia, trees from Germany and Prince Albert, gift giving (possibly the magi, helped by poor co-opted St Nicholas), stars and tinsel (possibly the magi).

The tremendous truth, that at Bethlehem God's very self entered the creation out of love for it and for humankind, is narrowed to a focus on a Mother and Child, turned into a universal truth. It is rarely acknowledged who her Baby really is.

Of course, neither is he mentioned as a baby in two of the four gospels. And the two who do have themselves hidden the truth in symbol and legend – Matthew's astrologers, Herodian politics and the death of innocent children, and Luke's angels and shepherds.

It is John, however, who tells us what Christmas is about:

*“the Word became flesh; he made his home among us, and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth”*  
(Jn 1:14 NEB).

### **The usual Xmas story**

The very date of Christmas brings problems. As the media will tell us, it was a Christian overlay of a Roman festival, with the implication that this Christian imperialism means that the faith itself has little to say for itself.

It is true that for three centuries the Early Church seems to have no interest in fixing a birthday for Jesus. One or two Christian thinkers



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floated the thought: Cyril of Alexandria (ca 200 CE) dating it on 25th, but of April or May. But the beginning wasn't central to their thinking.

A brief glance at the four gospels shows that the climax of each was the death and resurrection of Jesus, with distinctive back stories, as it were. Mark (and in a way, John) began at John the Baptist's ministry; the other two clearly had two very different sources.

By the 4th C, two dates for the Nativity were observed; there was an early Roman calendar of its martyrs which began with such a date, 25 December. Jerusalem, Asia Minor and Egypt, the Eastern churches, were keeping January 6th, but not for the birth alone. The latter combined it with the adoration of the magi and Jesus's baptism, making three "epiphanies", moments when Jesus was revealed.

The Roman Emperor Aurelius is the source of confusion, because in the year 274 he took the common reverence for the sun in its various popular forms and made it a single imperial cult in the Sun's honour: *Sol Invictus*, the Unconquerable Sun. Other cults were demoted.

The emperor Constantine was a devotee until he began to favour Christianity, and he similarly imposed *Christianity* as the imperial cult after 312 CE. The Sun's day was 25th December, the then winter solstice. Of course, Christians too respond to the increase in warmth and light (in the northern hemisphere) and worship the coming of the true light. In the South, we do it as the sun indeed begins to blaze its brightest. But the Church could have done that on the basis of John's Prologue.

### **The "calculation hypothesis"**

In August 1971, I attended my first meeting of the international academic body for liturgical study and renewal, *Studia Liturgica*, and heard a paper by Dr Thomas J. Talley, professor of liturgy at the Episcopalian General Seminary in New York. A French scholar had provided the idea, but he put a new hypothesis on the agenda.

As I say, securing the date of *Easter* was the early Church's first priority. The Gospels placed the events in the season of *Pesach*,



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Passover, referencing different days. They worked from the date of *Pesach* (Passover) in the year of Jesus's death, 14th Nisan in the Jewish lunar calendar. The churches made their calculation from different, solar calendars. So it happened that the Easter date they arrived at was March 25 in the West (the Roman empire including north Africa) and 6 April in the East (Egypt and Asia Minor). But there is a further element in their calculation, building on an ancient rabbinical belief that creation and redemption should happen at the same time and that the great patriarchs died on the date they were conceived.

It had Christian supporters, like Tertullian and Augustine of Hippo. So, if March 25 is the day the Lord died, then he was also conceived on that day (later it became the feast of the Annunciation) and was born nine months later, on 25 December; and in the East the same logic led to 6 January. Thus, there is an integral connection between the two principal Christian feasts of Incarnation and of Redemption.

I have simplified the scholarly debate but am intrigued by the "Calculation hypothesis". I like its basis within the tradition which gave the Church birth, and in the thought of the early Christian Churches East and West. It allows, "the shadow of cross to fall across the manger", as I believe the Scriptures intend. There is little evidence that the Church took over pagan dates in the first three centuries. The "Calculation hypothesis" gives us a way to remove our celebration from the pagan overlays and allow them, often enjoyable as they are, to be the mere decorations that they are.

Let us come to Christmas with something of the awe Paul expresses in Philippians 2 before the divine self-emptying love at which "every knee should bend". And let us contemplate Mother and Child with Richard Crashaw (c. 1613–1649):

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That from his mother's breast He milk should drink,  
Who feeds with nectar Heaven's fair family;  
That a vile manger his low bed should prove  
Who in a throne of stars thunders above.  
That He whom the sun serves, should faintly peep  
Through clouds of infant flesh: that He the old  
Eternal Word would be a child, and weep;  
That He who made the fire should feel the cold;  
That Heaven's high Majesty his court should keep  
In a clay-cottage, by each blast controlled:  
That Glory's self should serve our griefs and fears:  
And free Eternity submit to years.

*Note:*

*If you want the full argument, see Dr Talley's book, [The Origins of the Liturgical Year](#), Pueblo Books, 2nd edn., 1991*

*or a later study, Susan K. Roll, [Towards the Origins of Christmas](#), Peeters Publishers, 1995.*

*A very succinct summary is our own Andrew McGowan's careful consideration recently online at [How December 25 Became Christmas - Biblical Archaeology Society](#).*

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*Andrew, a parishioner and choir member, is a medical researcher and practitioner in a major hospital. Here he reflects upon living the time of Advent in today's world.*

**A World Come of Age?**  
*Dr Andrew Gador-Whyte*

*As this old world grew on toward night  
You came, but not in splendour bright,  
Not as a monarch, but the child  
Of Mary, blameless mother mild*

(from the ancient hymn, *Conditor alme siderum*)

Advent Sunday begins our liturgical year with a recognition that we have been invited to share in the hopeful waiting of the Jews for the fulfilment of God's promise.

So it is, along with our Jewish sisters and brothers, and with a hope we have been invited into, that we read the prophet Isaiah speaking of God's identification with his people in the suffering servant and his promising to free them from exile. And, we also believe, we read here of God's healing of all humanity and of restoration of the cosmos through the undoing of sin and death, through the self-giving of the Servant.

Advent has traditionally been a time of repentance, both in preparation to mark Jesus' coming at Christmas and in preparation for his coming again at the close of the age.

We might think of the hymn, *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry*:

*Then cleansed be every heart from sin  
Make straight the way of God within  
Prepare we in our hearts a home  
wherever such a mighty guest may come*

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So Advent is not only a preparation to remember the birth of Jesus Christ, the saving work of God in coming to pitch his tent among us in our fragile bodily life. Nor is it only a looking forwards to the Second Coming, the final destruction of all evil, the general resurrection. Advent is also remembering *what time it is*. It is remembering that we live in "AD" - "in the year of our Lord"; that we live in the time between Jesus' coming and the final restoration of all things.

This is the age of the world when we live together as God's church for the purpose of the world's transformation. It is a time when we see the world through bifocal lenses - we see it and our own humanity as still not yet finally restored as it will be, yet we are learning to see all people and all things now in the primordial beauty to which they will ultimately be restored.

That is, we are seeing the created order as that which God claimed and redeemed in becoming part of it; subject to it, just as we are, in Jesus of Nazareth.

As the writer of Hebrews says about these in-between times of waiting, acting, praying, and hoping:

*As it is, we do not yet see all things put in subjection to Him, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering and death.. (Heb 2)*

All of the time in which we now live is Advent - an active, prayerful, hopeful waiting for the day of Christ. So history "AD" is a time when God gives us the grace of working with him (in synergy with him) for the transformation of the world, for the healing of the nations, for the conversion of the world from complicity in evil, for the coming of God's kingdom.

Our present history is a time when God has chosen to continue his work particularly through the weakness of a community of ordinary human

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beings that we call the Body of Christ. This is a community whose earthly reality God knows will be deeply imperfect, because it is filled with people living between their baptism and their final glorification together. And yet it is given the grace of living to connect and to clarify, to be a source of reconciliation through an authentic human existence in the world, to make the truth known in its own words.

So our Advent existence today is a recognition of the grace of God at work "redeeming the time". We do not see all things yet restored. We do not see history progressing to a golden age. Very often we do not see the hand of God at work.

We are grieving deeply at the year 2024 has been. Where has God been for the people of Gaza, Lebanon, Israel, Sudan, Ukraine, Russia, Myanmar? Trite responses will not help. But we pray fervently for our neighbours in all these places of horror and grief. We act in the ways in which we can act, genuinely but in recognition too of our limitedness, a recognition which nonetheless does not lead us altogether to despair of human action. And we dare to "hope against hope": we pray – perhaps especially in the Advent season – the prayer "Come, Lord Jesus".

This is the broken world Jesus was born into, the world in which he grew and in which he learnt what it is to be human in the ordinary way we all learn. This is the world to which Jesus became subject in the way we are all subject to it, as our common home. Being baptised is being drawn into a life of trusting God to be at work, even in this kind of world. Being baptised is to trust God that our work in that world can be an authentic working of God's grace through us to our neighbour.

The prayer and work which we do in the world, our committed action in this world, is to be a sign of that trust that God is at work redeeming the time. It is a sign of trust in God that he is working through our human integrity to bring his kingdom in, brought in a way that does not do violence to the world's (and humanity's) integrity, but rather works through its own agency and freedom. And perhaps through our

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neighbour's work in refusing to despair of this world, we may also witness the commitment of God to this world.

So these Advent times are times when God can be trusted to be working for the world's growth into maturity, working for humanity's growth into daughterhood and sonship, and into an adult exercise of judgement, into responsibility. The church is called to exercise that kind of freedom in the world, so that the world might imitate that relationship of adult child to "Abba, Father". The conversion of the world - a traditional summation of the laity's ministry - is a hospitality to the world, an invitation to our world to share the invitation which we have accepted, to sit at God's table as utterly dependent but as adult members of God's household.

One Advent prayer, based on the ancient hymn, is:

*Sweep clean the rooms of our hearts,  
that Christ may find a home in us.*

If we pay attention to repentance during Advent, it is only in order that our holiness of life together may be an invitation to our neighbour, a hospitality that invites our communities into a life of being "as Jesus is" in the world – a life for others, a life ordered towards the reconciliation which is God's gift in and through us.

Many will have read Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison*. In it he speaks about "a world that has come of age", in which taking God as an easy explanation for the events of the world no longer makes sense. He posits that it is a healthy thing that it is no longer possible in our culture to escape moral responsibility or to avoid an engagement with evil in the world by simply resting in the knowledge that God will ultimately sort everything out whether we act or not.

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I suspect that Bonhoeffer is not literally taking post-Enlightenment culture as progress in any radical sense, although I wonder whether he is nonetheless seeing the possibility that God's providence is at work even in the atheistic culture of this particular time.

That is, God can even make something of this culture which rejects God. All of us among the baptised who are steeped in that contemporary culture can partake of God's transformation of it into a "nonreligious" Christianity – that is, a worshipping, praying, active Christian existence that is consistently unsatisfied by any invocation of God's name that reduces our moral footprint.

So perhaps what Advent reveals is a world that is coming of age through the steady working of God's grace through its life:

An "old world growing on towards night" that has now been illuminated by the gift of a new child.

A world that has now been given this history as a time of grace in which it may grow, like Mary, into the role of parenthood of this Child.

*At your great name, O Jesus, now  
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow  
All things of earth, with one accord,  
Like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.*

*(from *Conditor alme siderum*)*



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## Conditor alme siderum

*In his article “A World Come of Age?” Andrew Gador-Whyte  
alludes to this seventh-century Latin hymn  
Conditor alme siderum*

*It has long been used as a Gregorian Chant  
in the Divine Office at Vespers,  
and particularly during the Season of Advent.*

*More can be found, including a sound track, at the following link:*

[www.gregorian-chant-hymns.com/hymns-2/conditor-alme.html](http://www.gregorian-chant-hymns.com/hymns-2/conditor-alme.html)

1. Córditor alme síderum, *Loving Creator of the stars,*  
aetérna lux credéntium, *eternal light of the faithful,*  
Christe, redémpstor ómnium, *Christ, Redeemer of all,*  
exáudi preces súpplicum. *hear the prayers of your suppliant.*
2. Qui cóndolens intéritu *You who, taking pity on the world*  
mortis períre sáeculum, *as it was perishing by death’s ruinous force,*  
salvásti mundum lánguidum, *saved the languishing world,*  
donans reis remédium, *providing a remedy for the guilty,*
3. Vergénte mundi véspere, *As the world’s eventide was falling,*  
uti sponsus de thálamu, *like a bridegroom from his nuptial chamber*  
egréssus honestíssima *came forth from the Virgin mother’s*  
Víriginis matris cláusula *most noble womb.*

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4. Cuius forti poténtiae                      *Before your mighty power,*  
genu curvántur ómnia;                      *all things bend the knee;*  
caeléstia, terréstria                      *those of heaven and of earth*  
nutu faténtur subdita.                      *acknowledge themselves subject to your will.*
5. Te, Sancte, fide quáesumus,              *O Holy One, we beseech you in faith,*  
venture iudex saeculi,                      *O you who will come as Judge of the world,*  
conserva nos in témpore                      *preserve us in time*  
hostis a telo pérfidi.                      *from the dart of the perfidious enemy.*
6. Sit, Christe, rex piíssime,              *O Christ, most loving King,*  
tibi Patríque gloria                      *glory be to You and to the Father*  
cum Spíritu Paráclito,                      *with the Spirit, the Paraclete,*  
in sempitérna saecula.                      *for ever and ever.*

Amen

Source: Abbaye Saint-Pierre  
de Solesmes,  
Liber Hymnarius  
(Solesmes, 1998)

Amen

Source: Translation by  
St. Cecilia's Abbey, UK  
[www.stceciliasabbey.org.uk](http://www.stceciliasabbey.org.uk)

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## A Postcard from Western Australia

*Helen McCallum*

Over twenty five years ago I received a postcard in the mail

*The picture on the card was a painting of the Madonna and Child.*



*The printed description on the back of the card reads...*

NEW NORCIA – Western Australia

Our Lady of Good Counsel

This famous painting was given to New Norcia's founder, Bishop Salvado, by St Vincent Pallotti in Rome in 1845. When the Mission was threatened by fire, Salvado prayed before the flames with this painting and the settlement was saved.

The painting now hangs in an elaborate frame given by Frederick Weld, Western Australia's 7<sup>th</sup> Governor.

The card had been sent to me by one of my young adult children, holidaying at the time in Western Australia. Written on the card is ...

*Hi Mum, spent Boxing Day in this Spanish Mission right out in the heart of WA's lush forests and beaches. See you soon, love*

*..... Didn't convert to Catholicism, interesting nonetheless*

I love this painting as it depicts for me the exquisite nurturing, caring and love shared between Mary and her son Jesus. The light, the colours and the bonded intimacy which the artist displays between the two figures all nourish my heart and my love for Mary and Christ Jesus.

The postcard has sat in a frame on my bedside table. It is still there.

*You might just make out, in the top corner, the folded-over edge of the 45cent stamp which had not been left quite enough room.*

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## The Cover Picture

*David Keuneman*

**Pasquale Sarullo**, nineteenth-century Franciscan friar in Palermo, priest and artist, is the painter of the **Madonna and Child on our cover** of this edition of *Ave*. His work was appreciated in his lifetime, enough for St Vincent Pallotti, the founder of the Pallotine Fathers, to gift this one to the **New Norcia Monastery**, founded by Benedictines in 1848, over 100 km north of Perth, Australia.

Named after Norcia, birthplace in Italy of St Benedict, the monastery was set up by Spanish Benedictines, headed by Bishop Rosendo Salvado, specifically as a mission to the local aboriginal population.

These days the history of the venture is not always looked back on with kindly eyes. Much has been debated about the treatment in later times of the aboriginal children; films and books have graphically portrayed the results of attitudes of the era.

We shall not revisit those debates here. But as our current 2024 summer arrives and the cricket season builds momentum, we note that the Spanish Abbott Salvado encouraged playing of the game of cricket, seeing it as physically and mentally enhancing. This led eventually to a **New Norcia Aboriginal Cricket Team** who from 1879 to 1883



New Norcia's Aboriginal winning cricket team in the 1880s. (James Manning Jr - New Norcia archives)

apparently beat almost every team they met, even as far away as Perth and Fremantle

This photograph shows several team members sporting beards of which W.G. Grace, the famous English cricketer of the era, might well have been proud.

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*Parishioner and St Mary's choir member Emeritus Prof. Charles Sowerwine has long campaigned for the preservation of built heritage in Victoria, especially in his role as Chair of the Heritage Committee of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.*

*Chips is often in the press commenting upon heritage issues (most recently in Cara Waters' article, "Hong Kong without the view": High-rise push dubbed high risk for city's future', The Age, 26 Nov 2024.*

*Here he gives us a view of the origins and of the present important work of the RHSV, a long-established institution in this state.*

### **The Royal Historical Society of Victoria**

*Professor Emeritus Charles Sowerwine*

In 1909, when the the Historical Society of Victoria was founded (it did not become Royal until 1952), Victoria had recovered from the 1892 Crash and was once again taking pride in its rapid development into a new centre of civilisation, as the white occupiers saw it. The founders of the HSV were mostly from the professions at a time when Victoria had no state high schools and only one university. They were an elite and knew it. They were also a largely male group. Susan Priestley has studied the origins of the RHSV and found there were 72 members in the first year, of whom only five were women. Interestingly, one of the five was Jessie Webb, who had lent her rooms for the society's meeting and went on to a brilliant career in the University of Melbourne history department.

Among the men was Henry Gyles Turner, already known for his pioneering History of the Colony of Victoria from its Discovery to its Absorption into the Commonwealth of Australia (1904). They were (mostly) men of their time who sought to make possible the writing of Victorian history which would fit Victoria into the triumphalist mode of white colonialism. The HSV was to take a prominent role in commemorating Victoria's centenary in 1934-35. Their original aims

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were setting up 'a sort of bureau of historical information' with a library committee to manage it, publishing a journal, establishing 'sub-centres' of the society and getting the co-operation of the Education Department 'to extend the work among State school teachers and scholars'.

Looking back 115 years later, one can see that the (now R)HSV's orientation has changed enormously. As the writing of history has turned to local history, history from the bottom up and inclusive in gender, class and race, especially of Indigenous history, the RHSV has turned with it. Instead of celebrating colonialism, it seeks to understand to facilitate work toward understanding the emergence of modern Victoria.

The original aims, however retrograde they may seem now, facilitated the emergence of today's comprehensive and inclusive approach to history. The 'bureau of historical information' is now a major repository of Victorian archives, including many works concerning the development of the City of Melbourne and an extensive collection of personal archives. The journal is the Victorian Historical Journal, one of Australia's leading historical journals. The 'sub-centres' have emerged spontaneously, as people across Victoria established their own local historical societies. There are now some 340 societies affiliated with the RHSV.

'Extending the work' is now an extraordinary range of activities. The RHSV organises History Month each October. It organises an extensive programme of lectures, seminars and exhibitions. Of particular importance in my mind, the RHSV made a substantial contribution to maintaining the study of Australian history as part of the VCE. With the general decline of Australian history in schools, publishers lost interest in textbooks for the subject. Following requests from the History Teachers' Association of Victoria, RHSV President Richard Broome organised a team to produce a complete history series and persuaded Cambridge University Press to publish it. Cambridge did this without charge and with profits going to Indigenous reading! The series comprises *Creating a Nation: 1834-2008* (2021), *Power and Resistance:*



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1788-1998 (2022), From Custodianship to the Anthropocene (60,000 BCE–2010) (2021), and War and Upheaval: 1909-1992 (2022). With these books, teachers were able to continue the subject. We can take pride that Victoria is now the only state in which Australian history is taught at this level.

The RHSV organises the annual Victorian Community History Awards (in partnership with the Public Record Office Victoria). The awards show off the great vitality of history from the grass roots across Victoria and the award ceremony is an inspiring occasion that brings together hundreds of historians and enthusiasts. There are twelve categories of award. In 2023, Carmel McKenzie won the Victorian Premier's History Award for *St Kilda 1841-1900: Movers and Shakers and Money-Makers*, a fun study of how St Kilda became the playground of the rich. Gus Berger's documentary *The Lost City of Melbourne* won the History Interpretation Award. If you haven't seen it, watch it on SBS on demand! Sadly, the government department whose subsidy made the Award ceremony a great occasion has been terminated: Creative Victoria has decided that history is not a creative industry! The RHSV will maintain the Awards but on a more limited scale.

The RHSV has become a publisher itself. We published several beautiful photo-essays using images from our archives. Forgive me for plugging three of our publications: *Melbourne's Twenty Decades* (2019), to which I contributed two chapters, *Remembering Melbourne 1850-1960* (2016), which displays the City's great buildings in 700 photos, many of buildings since lost, and *The Story of Melbourne's Lanes: Essential but Unplanned*. The RHSV Bookshop displays a large number of important books of Victorian and Australian history, both on line (<https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/bookshop/>) and in person at our headquarters (the historic Drill Hall, 239 A'Beckett Street, corner of William Street)

Some of you know I've been associated with the RHSV's Heritage Committee. While the RHSV had a long interest in heritage and indeed



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worked with the City of Melbourne for many years to highlight and preserve historic sites, the Committee was only formed ten years ago. I joined the Council of the RHSV in 2013. At that time we were receiving regular requests from our member historical societies for help as cherished heritage buildings were under threat. The task of responding fell to me. In 2015 and 2016, we faced several heritage issues: the state government asked us to participate in the drafting of what became the Heritage Act 2017; Lord Mayor Robert Doyle proposed the ‘renewal’ of the Queen Victoria Market; and cowboy wreckers demolished the 1857 Corkman Hotel. Council decide to create a committee of Council to speak for the RHSV on these matters and I have chaired the committee since its inception.

We have worked all this time on issues such as the Queen Victoria Market and the World Heritage site of the Royal Exhibition Buildings and Carlton Gardens. We have worked closely with Heritage Victoria and with the National Trust on more than fifty major threats to heritage sites and have supported dozens of our member societies as they fight to preserve their local heritage. We are currently seeking to encourage the state government to make heritage the basis, the anchor or focal point of the new high-rise neighbourhoods it is planning to create. This was the subject of an article in *The Age*, 26 November: Cara Waters, “Hong Kong without the view”: High-rise push dubbed high risk for city’s future’.

The RHSV is a welcoming institution. Please have a look at our web site (<https://www.historyvictoria.org.au>) or drop by the Drill Hall, 239 A’Beckett Street (handy to Flagstaff Station). And consider joining our 1,300 individual members as well as your own local historical society.

*Chips Sowerwine*

*Saturday, 30 November 2024*

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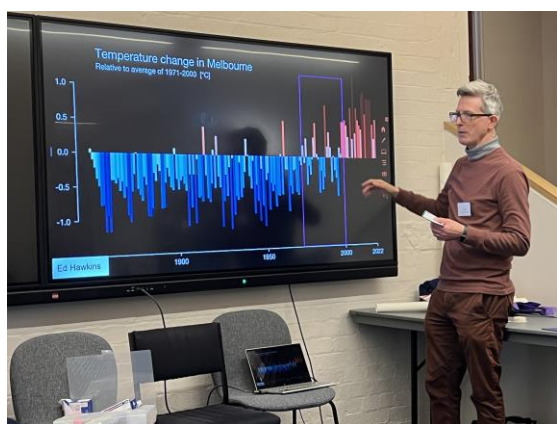
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*St Mary's parishioner and CAG member Dr Tim Pilbrow has been proactive in discovering, learning and using a French process of climate education.*

*Our CAG has become an active supporter and promoter of the process. We hope that the method becomes more widespread in the community.*

## **“Climate Fresk” workshops supported by Climate Action Group**

The Climate Action Group (CAG) of St Mary's has been actively supporting climate science education workshops. **Climate Fresk (La Fresque du Climat)** is centred around an interactive card-game and climate science education workshop based on the latest climate science from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). These workshops, conceived by a French organisation, are each led by a couple of trained presenters who lead a group of perhaps a dozen to twenty participants through a process of discovery and realisation.



Through working collaboratively to build understanding, participants move beyond feeling overwhelmed and paralysed by the complexity and enormity of our current climate challenges.

The invitation to the workshop says:

*“You want to help tackle climate change, but don't know where to start? In just three hours, the ‘Climate Fresk Workshop’ will transform your understanding of the complex factors underlying climate change and empower you to take action. “*

Tim Pilbrow has trained in being a presenter, and there are others in training and already trained. Supported by St Mary's CAG, two workshops have now taken place.

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The first workshop in the Barbara Darling Meeting Room at St Paul's Cathedral on 21 September 2024.

A second workshop was held at St Mary's Anglican Church, North Melbourne on Monday 2 December 2024

The latter, hosted by CAG was co-led by Tim Pilbrow and Erica Rabelo. Following the most recent workshop, Tim writes to the CAG:

*The workshop was a resounding success (and the refreshments contributed greatly to that!)*

*We had participants from as far away as Rosebud and Hastings, a few others south of the Yarra or out west, but just over half were from the inner north (Brunswick, Fitzroy, Parkville). They seemed open to the idea of potentially gathering again to look at local actions we could take on climate matters.*

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*And here Andrea gives her take on the very first Climate Fresk workshop which she herself attended as a participant.*

### **Participating in a Climate Fresk: a Fresh Approach**

*Andrea O'Donoghue*

*[venue: St Paul's Cathedral 21 September 2024]*

Proud to belong to St Mary's and to participate in Fresk – a bold new Climate Change Workshop/Game, founded in France in 2018.

Gratitude to Presenter Tim Pilbrow and team, to Audrey Statham and our Climate Action Group, and to fellow participants from St Mary's and elsewhere.

We were treated like the intelligent adults that we are, literally bringing our talents to the table:

Three tables of six people each, working out the Cause and Effect of Climate Change.

Appreciated for our contributions, for our learning and for our collaboratively playing along with our 42 cards in the pack.

Wait a moment! In the Douglas Adams phantasy novel *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the number 42 was the answer

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to Life, the Universe and Everything! Except they got the Question wrong! The Climate Fresk asks the **right** questions.

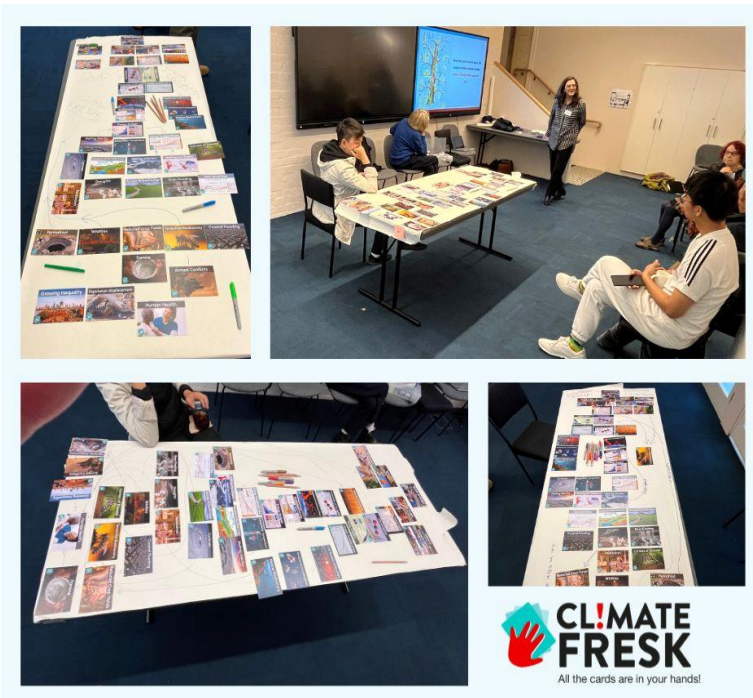
**Fresk** as in Fresco, wall paintings.

Our tables were horizontal walls for the Words of the Prophet.

We created a simple fresco around our sequence of cards.

I enjoyed again the taste of school group projects – and the taste of the goodies with the cuppa!

We learned a lot and gave a lot, coming through with Humour, Hope and Purpose.



Although it was held in a room at St Paul's this workshop did not have an overt religious component. Towards the end we were invited to take stock, work out what we could do and could achieve as individuals.

Always using our senses. Actively engaging. Placing our post-it notes

on good old butcher's paper! Deciding which character I was in the huge environmental Tree of Life drawing.

For three hours being part of a microcosm, a community of Faith.

For me Climate Fresk Workshop has become one of the highlights of our St Mary's observance and celebration of the Season of Creation in the year 2024.

Andrea O'Donoghue

30 September 2024

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## Hosting Musical Events

*St Mary's church has an encouraging acoustic, a generous space, an energetic music director, a welcoming music-loving congregation, a convenient inner-city central location. And in particular it has, thanks to the Storeys, the on-going use of a splendid piano.*

*Our **Organist and Director of Music, Beverley Phillips** encourages good quality concerts here.*

*For instance in September the Astra Ensemble presented a choral programme of composers Schoenberg and Ives*

*The most recent event however was a Piano Duet concert, played by Regina Thomae and Sonoka Miyake on November 23<sup>rd</sup>.*

*This programme comprised the monumental Fantasy in F minor by Schubert, and also Stravinsky's transcription for piano four-hands of his own orchestral ballet score The Rite of Spring.*

### ***Beverley writes:***

Following my move to the bush, about midway between Geelong and Ballarat, my 'music' loyalties outside Melbourne were rather conflicted. However, I have had many and extraordinary opportunities to participate in the various activities presented by 'Music at the Basilica' (the Catholic Basilica whose spire still can be seen from most points of Geelong, although developments might well crowd it in future years). So first a plug – if you are contemplating a trip down that way, or have visitors, check the Basilica's website and plan to catch one of the events. ([www.musicatthebasilica.com.au](http://www.musicatthebasilica.com.au))

But more importantly this ties into the recent wonderful performance that we hosted at St Mary's, a concert by the piano duo Regina Thomae and Sonoka Miyake whom I first got to know about at a Geelong music festival. As a performer myself in the festival I appreciate the opportunities I have enjoyed, and knowing how hard it is to build an audience, I try as much as possible to attend the other recitals. Unfortunately, I was actually unable to attend this particular piano concert due to a clash with our Parish activities; but I expected



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something impressive, and subsequently I heard what an extraordinary experience it had been for those able to attend.

I was able to talk with Regina later, and as a result we had the opportunity to present the concert at St Mary's. Many keyboard players will tell you that most of their life is spent practicing and performing solo. The opportunities for them to play keyboard duets and duos, even as in this instance for players of such skill, are few and far between. So we were glad to be able provide a venue, and privileged to hear the result.

The particular works that formed the programme were outstanding on their own and so beautifully matched with the grand piano. The warm, haunting, and at times mournful emotional depth of the Schubert Fantasy in F minor draws in the listener from the beginning and takes you on a journey through its four movements. Sonoka and Regina coaxed a beautiful ensemble of colour and sound from the instrument they had met only about an hour prior.

Then there was the Stravinsky. At all times, compressing an orchestral score down to keyboard poses challenges for a pianist as many a repeteur pianist will attest. Stravinsky gives no ground in his adaptation of his own Rite of Spring for four hands. Both performers are called upon to use the entire keyboard, with crossed arms and hands. As a spectacle, it was wonderful to watch Sonoka and Regina, so fluidly negotiate the score, with what seemed continual ease and flow. The rhythmic, percussive, dynamic control was mesmerising, let alone hearing that score on a piano rather than issuing from an orchestra.

I hope and anticipate, this will not be the last time we see these two performers in our midst. Also to be recognised is how much effort Laura put into the advertising, promotion and coordination with Geelong. The refreshment offered by our hospitality committee after the recital afforded much mingling and has led to conversations about possible further events at St Mary's. Our beautiful building and generously welcoming space and acoustic are recognised, and for me, there is always a sense of ageless prayer and worship present when you step inside.

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We do look forward more events in the new year.

Forthcoming event: In response to a campaign globally by the Society of Women Organists (UK) to present compositions by women on organs worldwide in the week of Womens World Day of Prayer, Laura and I are looking at presenting a programme of Harp and Organ music on the afternoon of Sunday March 9th. Hope to see you there.

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**Another musical initiative nearby to us.**

*Our parishioner Sheila Byard lives in nearby Kensington. She tells us below of another splendid concert initiative using a church over there.*

***Sheila Byard writes:***

For more than twenty-five years the Kensington Chamber Players have presented quarterly **Asylum Seeker Benefit concerts** at 76 McCracken Street Kensington, in partnership with the congregation Christ Church Kensington UCA. The most recent Asylum Seeker Benefit concert was held on Saturday 19 October 2024.

These Asylum Seeker Benefit Concerts are not ticketed - entry is said to be by 'gold coin' or 'whatever you can afford', and refugees are free. The post-concert 'supper' in the hall next door, is provided free of charge by supporters as a thank-you to the musicians who perform free of charge. All proceeds of these concerts go to programs being accessed by refugees and asylum seekers in the local community.

A feature of the concerts since 2001 has been a commitment to creating a better understanding of the experience of being a refugee, and to giving an opportunity for persons working in the field of refugee support to speak briefly about their work. At the most recent concert, one contributor who was particularly pleased to be back on the program was local singer songwriter Suzette Herft. It was Suzette back in 2001, with her own lived experience as a refugee, and her interest in supporting the then Hotham Mission UCA Asylum Seeker Project, who encouraged CCK & and Chamber Players to give the concert series its current focus.



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## Writing to the Dead

*Rhondda Fahey*

Among the books recommended by my Kindle this morning was a mystery novel called *Talking to the Dead*. I know nothing of the relevance of the title to the plot of this novel but I do have some experience of talking to the dying. As you keep vigil with those in that mysterious place between life and death, you are advised to talk to them about experiences you have shared, about how much you love them. Your advisors assure you that hearing is the last sense to go so you should behave as if they can hear you.

But after they have died and there is no brain activity to process any auditory stimulus, many people continue talking to their beloved dead. You see them in cemeteries, tidying graves and talking about what has happened since their last visit. You see them lighting candles, explaining or asking for forgiveness. My mind tells me that the dead cannot hear but my heart is less certain.

Writing is not so very different from talking and carries the same inherent problems of an addressee who can neither see nor hear. I sometimes write to my precious dead. Not frequently but when something happens that I think might interest them I write as I might if they were abroad, in a far country. There is no paper, no envelope, no postal address but I know that it is written in my head rather than spoken.


They say that no-one really dies while they are remembered. I will always remember J, who, died ten years ago, friend for life, god-mother to my son. This is about the events that preceded a letter that I wrote her recently. I would like to think she knows, but if I am to be objective the beneficiary of this letter is me and the benefit is that it keeps alive the memory of our friendship.

We had been friends for almost fifty years. We met at school in the year that used to be called Sub-Intermediate or Lower Fifth (yes, honestly), the equivalent of Year 9. J was very clever and we were both smarty-

pants and never stopped talking – every teacher’s nightmare and the total bane of an elderly lady, Miss B, who took us for Latin and English Literature. Her solution was to forbid us to sit together. Even in Latin, which in our last year attracted only three students, we were seated on opposite sides of the classroom with the hapless third girl in the middle.

Our mothers, who had never met Miss B before, fronted up to Parent-Teacher night. By chance they were separated by only one person in the queue waiting to speak to Miss B. J’s mother overheard as Miss B assured my mother that I wasn’t such a bad girl except that I had fallen under the terrible influence of J. Only the names were then changed as she began to tell J’s mother that J wasn’t such a bad girl except that she had fallen under the influence of R.

J’s mother was outraged and let the whole assembly of parents know. Miss B scuttled off in her chalk-stained gown. In the end the story became the sort of family joke which only needed to begin in order to evoke howls of laughter. I laughed again when I found the following greeting card, and immediately I wrote her

	<p>Dear J,</p> <p>Rosie could have made this card ** for us.</p> <p>Here’s to friendship and laughter and the enduring power of love.,.</p> <p>We should have been more compassionate.</p> <p>See you when the trumpet sounds,</p> <p>love, R</p>
<p><b>We’ve been friends for so long, I’ve forgotten which one of us is the bad influence</b></p>	<p><i>** from a greetings card by Rosie Made a Thing</i></p>

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**ADVENT edition of AVE December 2024**  
**St Mary's North Melbourne**

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*Our Lady of Good Counsel, Fra Pasquale Sarullo (1828 – 1893),  
Palermo, Sicily -- In the New Norcia Mission, WA  
(See articles A Postcard from Western Australia, and the  
accompanying information on New Norcia)*

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

**We meet on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the great Kulin nation. We acknowledge their leaders past present and emerging and we offer them our respects.**

*Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the parish of St Mary's, the Anglican Church, or its members.*

**Ave is available for download via the St Mary's Parish Website  
(bottom LH corner of the home page):**

<https://www.stmarys.org.au/>