



Nurturing our people in the Christian faith and reaching out to the local community in the power of the Holy Spirit.



No. 250
December, 2016

.....and they found the child...



**THIS SIXTH-CENTURY BYZANTINE RELIEF IS ONE OF THE EARLIEST
PORTRAITS OF THE INFANT JESUS**



'TIS THE SEASON...

My inner curmudgeon received a jolt recently when I entered a certain well-known supermarket to be greeted by the sight of Christmas tinsel strung about in wild abandon, as well as shelves full of mince pies and related Christmas fare. I thought to myself: *Hmpf! It's not even December, for crying out loud! Don't tell me we're going to have to put up with this nonsense already?*

It wasn't as though Christmas carols were blaring through the PA; neither was I being assaulted by demented elves trying to drag me into Santa's grotto for the obligatory photos, which then have to be purchased at inflated prices. But the fact that the store in question clearly saw the "Christmas season" as a time to make a buck, and sought to maximise on its profit-making potential by extending the "season" into November – well, it was kind of *depressing*.

I think it was the sheer *glut* of abundance on display that got to me as much as anything. Surely, I thought, all those Christmas puddings, chocolate wafers, and oversized turkeys were not going to be consumed on Christmas Day itself, never mind in the days and weeks leading up to it? Yet the shelves were literally groaning under the stuff.

Compare this to the circumstances of a woman who phoned me out of the blue recently. She was a victim of domestic violence, and although she was staying in emergency accommodation, it had no cooking facilities, meaning she had to buy meals from restaurants and take-aways.

But because she was on a pension, her money didn't stretch very far; and now she had no money and no way of buying food for herself and her three children.

We talked for a bit, then I took her shopping. Because she had a small bar fridge in her accommodation, I was able to buy her milk and orange juice, as well as fruit and breakfast things in addition to something for dinner. Afterwards, I was struck by the contrast between her poverty and the abundance by which she was surrounded. Ours is a society literally glutted with food – but it all might as well have been on the Moon, it was that far out of her reach.

The abundance of God is not about sheer quantity. It's about the kind of inclusiveness that makes this abundance available to all. Abundance is not about amount; it's about *generosity*, a largeness of heart that finds room even for the most neglected and forlorn. These are often the people who are also the most problematic to deal with; but as I once said on another occasion, if we as a church can't even find it in our hearts to let the homeless sleep on our porch out of the weather, what use are we to anyone?

In this Advent time, as we contemplate the generosity of God that joined us in our human life in the person of Jesus, let us use this notion of abundance to guide us as we also think about Mountview's future mission in the community. God's generosity extends beyond a particular time and place; ours needs to do likewise, not just in the "seasons" when such things are brought especially to mind.

Brendan

REFLECTION

*Dad & Daughter RCL Year A
Epiphany of the Lord
Matthew 2:1-12*

God from God, Light from Light,
Lord Jesus, we adore you.
Heralded by the light of a star, the very
Ruler of the cosmos, you enter our
world in the mystery of a baby and are
worshipped by the wise.
The mystery of Being incarnate in a
human child;
The essence of divine love, entrusted to
a mother's arms;
The light shining in the darkness and never
shut down, lying under the
starlight:
Lord Jesus, we adore you.

Strange events and characters herald
your advent; and the limits of your
territory suddenly expand to include
unexpected people from afar for you
embrace all manner of people in your life
and work and in your death you are
surrounded by the very least and the
lost.

Light and Joy surround all who
recognize you, and offer their worship
and their faith to you. We are lost in
wonder that this fellow human, this
preacher from Nazareth, this healer of
minds and bodies, this liberator of the
oppressed, this convicted man of the
cross, is Emmanuel, God with us.

May we bring to you what you delight
In: not gold and frankincense and
myrrh, symbols of royalty and
suffering: but ourselves and all our sisters
and brothers, because if they knew about
the wonder of your love,
they would want to be in it too. This is good
news for all the world, everyone
born into life with us. We cannot keep it to
ourselves, and if we have selfishly thought
that we could:

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

You are full of grace and truth,
You hear our prayers and shine the light of
Your glory in
to all the shadowed places
Of our lives. Heal, restore and renew us
As your people in the world.
We ask in your name,
O Saviour of the world. Amen.

Taken, with permission, from
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Profits from the sale of this publication go to

act for peace
relieve poverty protect refugees
prevent conflict empower communities

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we have observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet; *'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'*" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them went the star they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. Matthew 2: 1-12. NRSV.

PEOPLE ... comings and goings.

A grand daughter for **Lorraine Grant**. **Katelyn Isla** was born to **Danielle and Steve May**, sister to **Charlette**, grand daughter to **Lorraine and Noel (dec.) Grant**, on 22nd October. Little **Katelyn** was born with a very serious heart condition which required lengthy delicate surgery at the Children's Hospital. She has made a remarkable recovery remaining in intensive care for only two days. The surgeons are thrilled for the tiny lass. Her progress continued so well that she was able to be discharged quite soon and able to go home. Lorraine and the family are most grateful for all the prayer surrounding them, for they feel it was the power of that which has brought about such a lovely outcome.



LORRAINE AND KATELYN

Welcome to **Jubilee Essie Joanna**, new daughter to **Jo and Tim Menger**, a little sister to **Eva and Tarragon**. Although anticipated and ready for a "stop press", **Jubilee** was born just one day too late for the October *CONTACT*, where we had a page about that coming event. We acted on supposedly good info, but *CONTACT* got it wrong, saying that a baby boy was expected. We apologise for that error, and give the tiny lass a big welcome. (*CONTACT* management can rightly proclaim that not everybody can have an all-girl family.)



JOANNA AND JUBILEE



Most of us have in our lives been where the **Plumridge** family is now and will have some measure of how they are travelling. To **Michael, Chris and Simon**, grieving the passing of mother and grandmother, **Edna Plumridge** in her 96th year, we extend our sorrow.

Jess Brown has bounced back and is again comfortably resettled at Strathdon after a period in Box Hill Hospital. She was delighted to meet her great grandson, **Vincent**, who visited from Fiji.

She was about to go to her 80th Birthday celebration when **Phyl Coolledge** fell, incurring spinal injuries which have required repeat surgery on some vertebrae. Pain management is proving very difficult. Phyl's cheery smile will be very sadly missed for some weeks as she recuperates.

Just down the corridor in the Donvale Rehab was **Joyce Smith**, having had a hip replacement. She progressed very well and was soon back home.

PEOPLE 'SComings and Goings (continued)

Ray Kemke has returned home with a new knee. He is glad that the discomfort of the old one is passed.

Another move for **Bev Lacey**. She has moved to Advent Care, Central Avenue, Blackburn, and is settling in very well.

Bette McCorrison's medical reports are encouraging.

Lynne McKay was doing well after a hospital stay in mid-year. However, the last four weeks have not been as good as usual. Lynne has asked for people's prayers.



Deteriorating eyesight is making life quite difficult for **Joyce Suto**. She has offered some of her extensive library for sale, donating the results to the "Going Further Fund". Over Two weeks, \$110 was raised for the fund. Thank you, Joyce.

Although we say it about ourselves, we are keeping going under our difficulties. **John W.** is being troubled by recurring pain from the shingles episode of two and a half years ago. The damage from an adverse drug reaction appears to be very slowly improving. The specialist consulting physician is pondering where next. **Margaret's** G.P. is doing much the same regarding her hip bursa. Despite our limitations, we made it onto The Ghan.

Stephen O'Kane and **Merilyn Spratling** and their sons **Sean** and **Benjamin** have transferred their membership to Burwood Heights Uniting Church where they have an interest in the work of the UnitingCare East Burwood Centre. We thank them for their many years of involvement at Mountview and wish them well in their new congregation.

Darren and **Amy Cram** wish to advise that they have a new address: 3/158 High St Doncaster. 3108.

They have some other news to share. Darren sent this message:

"Amy and I are excited and humbled to announce that we will be having our first little baby come early April next year. Boy or girl ...? we won't know until birth, it'll be a happy surprise. In the meantime, plenty of "how to be a good dad" books to read up on. Amy is well, the morning sickness has eased off ... for now."



(CONTACT will advise readers of developments as they occur.)

Communion Vessels: Following a discussion, the Church Council agreed to receive the anonymous donations of new vessels for Holy Communion.

These are of clear glass/crystal so that the colour of wine may be seen in its redness as it is poured out, which cannot be done when using the opaque earthenware vessels.

Despite their elegance, these vessels have been chosen for their robustness. Should one be dropped, a breakage is not expected, especially on a carpeted floor, so preventing some risk in picking up the pieces.

CENTRE 81



As the Centre 81 year draws to a close for 2016, thanks must go to all the very willing and loyal receptionists who fill our roster all the year round, except for 10 days over the Christmas New Year period, when we take a short break.

This year we say goodbye and thankyou to Phyl. Coolledge and Jan Robertson, who have been a very valued part of Centre 81for a very long time.

As we all know, both Phyl and Jan have significant health issues, and we think of them with much fondness and wish them well going forward.

Thankyou to our Congregation and that of Christ Church Anglican in Mitcham, who have very regularly donated to the needs of the pantry.

As mentioned in a previous report, we were the recipients of a grant of \$2000.00 from Uniting Care—Sammy Stamp.

Following on from that, we were also very pleased to receive an amount of \$2000.00 from the Whitehorse Community Chest.

Again, this year, our Young Adults, accompanied by the younger children, collected donations of groceries from the nearby streets in our neighbourhood.

It has become an accepted feature of Halloween, and we are always surprised by the quantity of the goodies, and also the warmth with which the donations are given. (See opposite page for this report.)

The Spirit of Christmas is now very much alive in the Fellowship Room, with our volunteers being kept very busy with the sales of Christmas Cards/ Shortbread, and Decorations, also some lovely home made cakes, slices etc.

This year we are appealing for donations of "Christmas Fare", (as mentioned in the weekly notices), to either be brought to Church on December 4th, or delivered to Centre 81, any weekday morning between 10.00 a.m. and 12.30 p.m.

On Sunday December 11th, gifts for the recipients of our Hampers may be placed under the Christmas Tree at a given time during the Service. Gifts for teenagers are always in short supply, as are gifts for the Mothers and Carers. If you are able to help by putting a small gift under the tree, we would be most appreciative.

Our Hampers will be prepared and delivered on December 21st.
We will close until January 9th 2017.

Christmas Blessings to all from the Centre 81 Committee and Receptionists.

Jill Kidd

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Here's a quote from Father Bob Maguire relevant to Social Justice: "We may feel that what we do is only a drop in the ocean, but we need to remember that the ocean is made up of drops."

HALLOWEEN DOORKNOCK.

[The Monday Night Small Group has again done a systematic doorknock traditional for Halloween. However, it was preceded by a letterbox drop explaining the purpose of the collection—goods suitable for Centre 81's Christmas hampers. Here Simon tells of their experience.]

The collection was much the same as previous years - some members of the Monday Night Small Group and BUGGS/MUGGS used the celebration of Halloween to 'Trick or Treat' our neighbours and ask for non-perishable food donations. These contributions will go towards Centre 81, and will assist with Food Hampers which are given out to people in need at this time of year. We found that people were very generous and helped where they could, even if they weren't expecting us! On the other hand, we have found that our yearly collections have established a relationship with some caring folks, who leave us a large contribution ready-to-go and waiting by the front door. The children were especially thrilled to be given sweets as we collected on the actual day of Halloween this year.



HALLOWEEN COLLECTORS AND SOME OF THE PILE OF GOODIES

BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP....some quotations from well-known scholars.

“Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given to you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life to His service, you could not give Him any thing that was not in a sense His own already.” (C. S. Lewis in “Mere Christianity”).



Hugh Whelchel (2012), Executive Director of the *Institute for Faith, Work and Economics (IFWE)*, writes of the Four Principles of Biblical Stewardship:

Principle of Ownership - God owns everything. We are simply managers or administrators acting on His behalf.

Principle of Responsibility – Owners have rights; stewards have responsibilities.

Principle of Accountability – A steward is one who manages the possessions of another. We are all stewards of the resources, abilities and opportunities that God has entrusted to our care.

Principle of Reward - and one day each one of us will be called to give an account for how we have managed what the Master has given us. This is the maxim taught by the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:21). In Col. 3:23-24 Paul writes “We should all long to hear the Master say what he exclaims in Matt. 25:21.

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master’s happiness.”



Marcus J. Borg, in “Conversations with Scripture – The Gospel of mark” says: “Don’t feel guilty if your life has turned out well financially. Be grateful – it is something to be thankful for. But do ponder what it might mean to take seriously God’s passion for a transformed world – the Kingdom of God – as seen in Jesus. The question for those of us who have some wealth then becomes how do we use the wealth we have been given to further God’s passion for a different kind of world.?”

It is budget time again, when our thoughts are directed towards our stewardship in the forthcoming Congregational Meeting.

ASK BRENDAN

Why are there two Creeds and how does the Church choose which one should be used for a particular type of worship service?

Actually, the Christian Church has *many* creeds. A “creed” (which comes from the Latin *credo*, meaning “I believe”) is simply a statement of faith which is recognised as authoritative by the Church as a whole, or by a particular tradition within the Church. In the Protestant tradition, such statements are often referred to as “confessions of faith”. Thus, in addition to the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed, there is the Augsburg Confession (1530), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), and, more recently, the Accra Confession (2004). These last three are distinctly Protestant creeds, but draw on both the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed.

Early Christian tradition ascribed the Apostles’ Creed to Jesus’ first disciples because they were believed to have simultaneously co-authored it under the influence of the Holy Spirit (in rather the same way that they were said to have been able to speak foreign languages on the Day of Pentecost). The first explicit reference to the Apostles’ Creed dates from around 390, in a letter from Saint Ambrose of Milan to Pope Simplicius. Scholars believe the Apostles’ Creed was originally used as a catechumenal device – that is to say, as a means of teaching the faith to new believers. It was thus associated with Baptism, and formed part of the statement of faith which those to be Baptised needed to recite as part of their reception into the Christian Church. This link between Baptism and the Apostles’ Creed remains to this day in many Christian traditions; for example, *Uniting in Worship* preserves it as part of the Baptismal rite of the Uniting Church.

The Nicene Creed, (properly speaking, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, because it took its final form after Ecumenical Councils of the early Church that were held,

respectively, at Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381), shares a similar structure to the Apostles’ Creed, but includes more detail, especially with respect to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. These additions were made in order to resolve disputes within the early Church about the nature of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and their relationship to God the Father as Persons of the Trinity. The Nicene Creed holds the distinction of being the only statement of faith that is universally accepted by all the major Christian traditions (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, etc) – despite the fact that the Catholic Church declares that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son, whereas other Christian Churches (including the Uniting Church) declare that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father.

The Nicene Creed forms a regular part of the ordinary worship of the Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran Churches, but is recited less frequently in other Protestant traditions, especially those from a Reformed historical background. That being said, it nonetheless remains firmly part of these Churches’ liturgical and catechumenal traditions, and is often recited on “high holy days” such as Easter Sunday or Christmas Day. Often, this recitation takes the form of a question and answer, where the presider asks the congregation a “do you believe” question (the question itself being a recitation of a particular clause of the Creed), to which the congregation respond, “I do”.

Both the Apostles’ and the Nicene Creeds are also frequently part of personal devotion or prayer, each being a concise statement of faith that can be made in the context of individual worship. The Creeds can also be associated with confession and reconciliation, as a statement of turning back to God and as a re-affirmation of commitment to relationship with God and each other.

Brendan

THE CHRISTMAS CARD

Presented by
**BUGGSS &
MUGGSS**

Sunday
December 11th,
9:30 am.



Please come
and share this
special time
together.

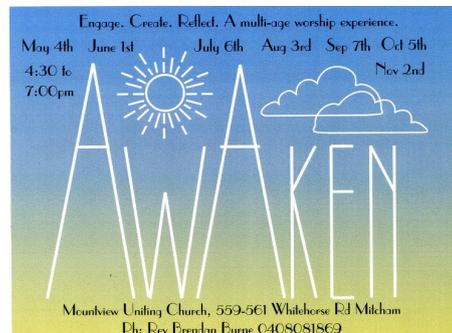
(This will be another one of those Sue Terrill specials.)



AWAKEN DATES FOR 2017

**AWAKEN Services will be held in 2017 at
The Avenue Church, Blackburn at
4:30pm. On Wednesdays on these dates.**

19th Feb	19th March	23rd April
21st May	18th June	16th July
20th August (see note below)	17th September	22nd October
19th November		



Please note the exception to this schedule is the August service, which will be a combined service at Mountview at 10am on Sunday 20th.

CHARITIES' CHRISTMAS CARD SHOP

THE CARD SHOP WILL NOT BE OPEN MUCH LONGER!

(It will close on Friday, December, 16th)

CHOOSE FROM APPROX 100 CARD DESIGNS. SUPPORT 16 CHARITIES

Prices range from \$4.00 each to \$10.00 for a pack of 10 cards.

*FAIRTRADE products supplement the range of cards with a lovely selection of **tree decorations** made in India and ceramic **nativity scenes** from Peru. Should you have adequate decorations for your own household, these interesting items make choice little gifts for friends or family.*

Fair Trade Products include **Small Gifts, Decorations** and **Miniature Nativities**.

These, along with **Gift cards** and locally made **shortbreads** could help with your shopping for Christmas.



WHERE IS THE SHOP? 81 Doncaster East Road – behind Centre 81.
It is open on weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

DISTRICT COMBINED SERVICES FOR 2017

The schedule for Combined Services is as follows:

26th Feb	10:00 am	Transfiguration	Mountview
13th April	7:30 pm	Holy Thursday	BNNUC
4th June	10:00 am	Pentecost	The Avenue
20th August	10:00 am	Awaken	Mountview
26th Nov	10:00 am	Christ the King	BNNUC
24th Dec	11:00 pm	Christmas Eve	The Avenue

Guest preachers are being arranged for many of these services.



CHURCH COUNCIL

“Awaken” completes its first year. The last “Awaken” service for the year was held on Wednesday, 2 November. This all-age “different” way of worship with segments of games, reflection times and participative dialogues plus a meal has continued to be stimulating and engaging. We offer our thanks to the ministers of Blackburn North-Nunawading, The Avenue Blackburn and Mountview and their dedicated support teams for their leadership of this event. Next year the “Awaken” events will be held at The Avenue Blackburn at 4:30 pm on the third Sunday of each month (from February), except that in April and October it will be on the fourth Sunday and, in August, on the third Sunday morning (10:00 am) at Mountview.

Welcome to Jubilee. We rejoice at the birth of Jubilee Menger, daughter of Jo and Tim and a sister to Eva and Tarragon. Jubilee is a regular worshipper with us and attracts lots of “oohs” and “aahs” from our congregational members.

Another youngster. Darren and Amy Cram have just announced that they are expecting their first child next April. We offer our congratulations to them both. Not content with that bit of excitement, Darren and Amy have also moved house (see the people pages of this issue), so it is all happening for them!

Supply Ministry. We are grateful for John Bottomley’s leadership during Brendan’s recent study leave and Sunday off. We especially appreciate his challenging messages and his thoughtful conduct of worship.

Monday Night Group Activities. Twelve of the fourteen members of the Monday Night Group enjoyed a recent weekend away at Rosebud. They again organised the Halloween collection of food for Centre 81’s Christmas hampers. This year they were joined by some of our younger members of the congregation who enjoyed their night out and helped enliven the occasion!

Faithful leadership. Dennis Cooper has decided to step back from his leadership of the Vietnamese Support Group and his participation as a Pastoral Partner. He feels that it is time for others to become involved. But, never fear, Dennis is not leaving, he can still be seen navigating the ride-on mower! Our thanks to Dennis for his many years of service at Mountview.

Farewell. Stephen O’Kane and Merylyn Spratling and their sons Sean and Benjamin have transferred their membership to Burwood Heights Uniting Church where they have an interest in the work of the UnitingCare East Burwood Centre. We thank them for their many years of involvement at Mountview and wish them well in their new congregation.

Five years already! The fifth anniversary of the Vietnamese Faith Community was celebrated on 6 November and was a significant and joyous occasion with a sumptuous meal. The guest preacher was the Rev Dr Apwee Ting who leads the Assembly’s Cross Cultural Unit and Holy Communion was led by the Rev Brendan Byrne assisted by Pastor Minh Bui and lay members of the Faith Community. A number of folk who were associated with the establishment of the Faith Community attended, including their first leader, the Rev Hung Ly.

Joyce’s Book Sale. Joyce Suto’s sale of books on 6 and 13 November helped raise \$110 for the Going Further Fund. Church Council acknowledges Joyce’s generous initiative in donating the sale proceeds to our Fund which supports the work of the NOCET Orphanage in Tanzania.

Missional Use of Property. Some significant meetings have been held with Wesley Mission Victoria on the possible future use of the Mountview House Site. Wesley is keen to approach the Government with a request for funding assistance for accommodation of people who are victims of domestic violence. This includes women and children seeking refuge and also older folk who have been subjected to elder abuse. There have been some significant meetings between representatives of Mountview and Wesley Mission in recent weeks as well as a meeting with the Synod Property Board. Both Mountview and Wesley are now working on documenting the proposal and will be seeking approvals from the Congregation, Presbytery and Synod. It is still early days but it is good to see some renewed enthusiasm. Further details of the scope of the project will be available in the new year.

Geoffrey Willis, Church Council Secretary

VISION a statement from Peter Cox, Mountview's Treasurer.

At a Leaders meeting held last month, we were asked which congregations have a vision statement and how often we reflect on our mission and directions. Mountview has recently been involved in preparing the *Form 1 Getting Started* component of the Property for Mission Workbook. This is in order to commence the process for our idea of establishing a safe house for women and children, or maybe a safe place for homeless people to sleep in their cars.

In Form 1, we are asked to describe our vision of what could make a difference to people's lives, their environment and relationships in our neighbourhood or community? Our response as so capably written by Geoffrey Willis and endorsed by Church Council is:

We feel compelled to share our facilities and our lives with those who are on the margins of our society. We believe that we have the resources (not just the facilities but also caring people) which should be used to make a difference in our community. We believe that God is challenging us to use what we have and who we are to enrich the lives of those who face hardship, those who have been hurt by others, those who experience dysfunctional relationships, those who seek friendship, those who need a helping hand to overcome a crisis. We believe that the church, especially when in partnership with its agencies, can make a difference in its community by reaching out to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Very powerful words and hopefully this Form 1 is the first step in implementing our vision. Robert Fritz, an American author wrote, "It is not what a vision is; it's what a vision does." What does a vision do? Vision is the ability to see. Helen Keller was asked, "Is there anything worse than being blind?" "Yes," she replied, "having eyesight but no vision!" Leaders imagine a preferred future. Vision is the stuff of the future. Vision is the vivid image of the compelling future God wants to create through us.

Leaders can stand up and say, "this is where we are going".
What kind of vision do we have?

Myopic - Leaders with myopic vision are so terribly nearsighted that they live only for today. Their vision of the future is fuzzy. They can barely see beyond their noses.

Peripheral - Leaders with peripheral vision are blindsided by side issues. These visionaries are hampered in moving forward because they catch the threatening images of lurking problems in the corners of their eyes. They are fearful of shadowy difficulties and people lurking on the sidelines who will defeat their efforts. These folks are easily distracted.

Tunnel - Leaders with tunnel vision see only what's straight ahead of them and assume that their slender view of reality reflects the whole world. They don't see other persons or other issues.

Panoramic - Leaders with panoramic vision see the big picture. They see beyond today. They see what is ahead of them. They see what is to their sides. They have a basic understanding of the key ingredients of a healthy church and know the steps that it will take to get them there.

Vision is perhaps the greatest need of leadership today, not just for us and the wider church but it pertains to any organization and government. How's our vision? Without it, we are like an unbridled horse. With it, we will be focused, moving toward the fulfilment of the dream. We pray that God will lead and guide us to take a collective step of faith, in the direction that he would have us go.

Peter Cox.



Sailing for Seniors

Narrowboating is often referred to as a 'contact sport'. At least, that's how the folk who take to the canals in narrowboats in the UK frequently describe it. Jan and John Gerrand have recently returned from a nine week narrowboat cruise on the British canal system and despite this being their sixth such adventure, their boat was inevitably involved in quite a few little bumps.

The deal when you hire a narrowboat is that you drive it yourself. Narrowboats are just 7 feet wide (hence their name) and the locks used to lift or lower a boat to a higher or lower section of the canal are about 7 feet 4 inches wide, leaving only a couple of inches clearance on both sides when entering the lock. Not surprisingly, it's easy to hit something on the way in. With an experienced narrowboat driver the bumps generally don't result in the crockery falling on the floor or the flower vase tipping over!

Checking inside to see that all was OK after a rather



Jan updates her travel diary inside the boat

imperfect entry into a lock we were reminded of how well these holiday style narrowboats are set up. The flowers and crockery were fine, and so too were the glassware, cutlery, toaster, gas stove, microwave, coffee maker, TV, radio, and everything else in this comprehensively equipped boat. Our boat also had two double bedrooms with en-suites so that we could accommodate another couple. Six different couples joined us at different times for up to a week. It was great to have their company as well as being helpful at times to put them to work as extra crew to operate the locks and bridges.

We started our cruise at Gailey, just north of Birmingham, and travelled generally northwards to Llangollen in Wales, Chester, Wigan, over the Pennine Ranges to Skipton, Leeds and Huddersfield, back over



Jan and John's boat moored at Llangollen in Wales

The Pennines on a more demanding route to Stoke-on-Trent and eventually back to Gailey. In all, about 600 miles and over 450 locks – a combination of wonderful rural British scenery, interesting villages and hard work.

The 2000 miles of restored canal in Britain accounts for more than half of the original canal network established during the industrial revolution 200 or more years ago, replacing horse-drawn heavy transport. Today the entire canal network is heritage listed, so you see it (and have to cope with it) as it was two centuries ago. It's well maintained by the Canal and River Trust, adhering closely to original designs, materials and safety standards. So there is some hard physical work to do and you have to watch your step.

Travelling at a maximum speed of 4mph is not a good way to visit many of the iconic tourist attractions in Britain. The wonderful compensation for this is that you get to see much more of town and village life. You meet lots of people and hear their stories. We were careful not to mention cricket on this trip, but we did find that most people had an opinion about



Working the locks on the Shropshire Union canal

'Canal culture' is another wonderful part of the experience. Even the old hands need help with their narrowboat on occasion, such as when they inadvertently get too close to the edge of a canal and

(Concluded next page)

Narrow Boating (cont.)

run aground. So at times you're helping and at other times you're being helped. It's a great way to meet other boaters who all have in common that they are dealing with this wonderful but old canal infrastructure.

We didn't set out to make this a pub crawl across Northern Britain. But our practice of ending the working day with a hot meal prepared by someone else did have us visiting some sixty pubs. Many of these were right next to the canal, with mooring places encouraging the canal community to drop in for sausages, mushy peas and a pint. We're total abstainers when it comes to pints and mushy peas. But we did enjoy meeting the locals and indulging in the occasional Cumberland sausage.

Maybe you'd like to try a bit of narrowboating yourself. Jan or John have all the maps and guides for the British canal network to help you plan, and they would be happy to share more about their own experiences.

(You will find John and Jan Gerrand's address details in your Congregational Directory)



Wrights in Western USA.

The name 'Las Vegas' usually conjures up images of gambling, excessive consumption, excessive behaviour and imitation architecture. Such matters were nudged aside at the MGM Grand Hotel in October when approximately 3,000 women checked in for the annual competition of Sweet Adelines International. Sweet Adeliners sing Barbershop Harmony, which is 'four part, unaccompanied, close harmony singing, together with colourful costumes and expressive choreography'. Songs represent popular music of the 20th and 21st century. Choruses and quartets entertain in their local communities, but also compete annually in regional and international competitions.

This year Gigi's chorus, the Melbourne Chorus (<http://www.melbournechorus.org.au/>) earned the right to be one of two choruses representing Australia in Las Vegas. There were many training weekends before the trip to the USA and some intensive rehearsing in Las Vegas right up to the last minute.

Thirty-four choruses were competing. Going into the competitions, the Melbourne Chorus was ranked 32, and was able to improve its ranking to 30. This was a commendable achievement given its relatively small size of 47 singers (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAh-lfwGB4M>). The winning Swedish chorus numbered 125 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pU9pVL9eig>).

The dates of the competition determined the timing of our trip to USA. We stopped in San Francisco briefly to meet with one of Gigi's brothers and his family, then flew to Billings, Montana, to start our road trip to Las Vegas and back to San Francisco. We wanted to visit a number of National Parks in the West, but we were aware that early snow could thwart some of our plans. However, we got away with it, just. Early on we did some driving and trail walking through falling snow, and had to change our driving route three times because of road closures. Over the four weeks we covered 3,000 miles (5,000 km) through six states, spending the third week in Las Vegas.



SIERRA NEVADA FROM THE EAST

The main parks visited in order were Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Bryce Canyon, Zion (before Las Vegas), then Death Valley, Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia. Hotels in Yellowstone we had booked almost a year earlier. Other accommodation we booked on the road via the internet, maintaining a careful eye on the weather forecasts. In general, days were mild and unusually warm for October.

(Wrights continued next page)

Wrights in Western USA (cont.)

Apart from Las Vegas, we also spent time in Salt Lake City (Utah), and Cody (Wyoming), named after William Cody – Buffalo Bill, and two places associated with skiing, Jackson Hole (Wyoming) and Mammoth Lakes (California). There were many highlights on the trip. The National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson was spectacular in location, architecture and content. The Whitney Western Art Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody was also fantastic, and part of a complex of five museums focusing on William Cody, Western art and history. Since Australia is such a flattened old place, we are always impressed by jagged, snow-capped mountain ranges around 12,000 ft. This we saw in the Grand Tetons and as we approached the Sierra Nevada from the east via Death Valley. During our visit to Temple Square and the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, the welcome and smiles of the Sisters and Elders were very warm. In Yosemite a jaw-dropping moment was the first sight of a sunlit El Capitan. It is an almost sheer rock wall of 3,000 ft, with specks of climbers hanging and sleeping overnight during multiday ascents.



CLIMBERS SPEND THE NIGHT PEGGED TO THE FACE.

Below the Hoover Dam on the Colorado River near Las Vegas, Peter did a kayak trip in a small group. Kayaks were launched at 7.00 am immediately downstream of the dam wall and power stations (after security clearance) and paddled downstream for 12 miles (20 kms) and 7 hrs, stopping at beaches and hot springs.



A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OF THE COLORADO RIVER

A highlight for Gigi was time spent with two of her high schools friends who came to see her in Las Vegas for a few days. The four of us went to a Cirque du Soleil performance called ‘Beatles Love’ and were enthralled by it.

Together, we were able to do at least one walk of several hours in most of the parks. The trails were never crowded and on a couple we saw only two other walkers. A souvenir we wanted to bring home, but could not because of TSA regulations, was our canister of bear spray. So, it is safe to approach us and ask questions about our trip. We will not mistake you for a bear and we would love to share more of our experiences with you.

Peter and Gigi Wright.



OLD FAITHFUL GEYSER, YELLOWSTONE

(Peter and Gigi joined Mountview only some months ago. We thank them for this their first contribution to CONTACT. Ed.)

Robyn and Peter Cox in Great Britain and France

This was my first trip to Europe and a return visit for Peter after 38 years. My first impression of London was that I couldn't hear any English accents or in fact, hardly any English at all. It is certainly a multicultural city! London was busy but staying opposite Lambeth Palace, we were able to do a fair bit of exploring on foot for the first few days including Westminster Abbey and the Parliament precinct, Hyde Park and Buckingham Palace. Apart from enjoying the sheer opulence of the state rooms in Buckingham Palace, the Queen's beautiful outfits from her public appearances over the decades were also on display.

Security was extremely tight everywhere. In fact my handbag has been checked so many times it will need to have its own counselling session! We had to be wary of pickpockets too with churches and museums being a prime target.

Once on tour we were kept very busy with early starts and very full days. Stonehenge proved to be far more interesting than I thought, having seen and heard so much about it. However I hadn't realised that over the centuries, thousands of pilgrims had made their way to Stonehenge. There were also many distinct burial mounds called barrows dotted around the landscape. We visited other pilgrimage sites including Woodhenge near Stonehenge and Castlerigg



As we toured around both Britain and France, we became more aware of the extent of the Roman Empire from 2000 years ago. .

Bath, Chester and York in Great Britain and Arles in France had many significant ruins including colosseums, columns, bath houses and amphitheatres

The people of long ago certainly knew how to build! The churches were ornately decorated with stories from the bible; some quite gruesome, others comical such as a cherub taking a tumble. We were impressed with the manner in which the major Cathedrals like St Pauls, Westminster, York Minster and Notre Dame handled tourism while still functioning as places of worship. Many closed early to allow Evensong services or held Eucharist and other services within roped off sections. Signage was prominent reminding people that they were in a place of Worship and to be quiet and respectful. We attended several Evensong services in various cities – as well as an organ recital in Notre Dame which was magnificent.

Lourdes evoked a range of emotions. After running the gauntlet of security, pickpockets and dozens of shops selling religious figurines, we reached the sacred grotto (pictured) where a vision of Mary was seen by Brigitte and miracles of healing have taken place. We respectfully filed past the grotto and held our hands on the water flowing down the wall. It was certainly a deeply moving moment. Further away people were collecting containers full of healing water. In the meantime volunteers scurried back and forth wheeling sick people to and from the grotto. Others carried gigantic candles, perhaps two metres long. Truly an amazing sight.



(Continued next page)

Robyn and Peter (continued)

A highlight of France was visiting Monet's garden. (pictured) .Volunteers and gardeners have done an amazing job at restoring and maintaining the lily ponds, garden and the house. Whilst in Southern France we explored the walled city of Arles. This is where Van Gogh spent some of his time painting. We came across the little market square where he painted 'café at night'; a print that we have (not the original!) but certainly adds more meaning. Similarly we drove by the mountain ranges depicted in some of Cezanne's paintings.



Spending a night in the walled city of Carcassonne was a unique experience. As evening approached the shops closed, tourists departed and quiet descended. This was a great chance to soak up the atmosphere. The town is surrounded by two ramparts. Dare I say God help the enemy who managed to scale one wall, only to be caught in no man's land and confronted by another wall. Walking along the narrow, cobblestoned streets and lanes and around the ramparts that evening, I couldn't help but wonder about the people who lived there hundreds of years ago.

Meanwhile nearby, there was an ancient path on which pilgrims travelled along. Wooden towers had been erected through the forest and bells rang out to help guide people to safety. Ah, now I know one reason why churches have steeples and bells!

So much more to share but we will leave space for other articles. We enjoyed exploring just one small corner of God's creation and look forward to more trips in the future.

Robyn and Peter Cox

ANOTHER TRAVELLERS' TALE all 2979 kilometres of it.

"Hullo! Where's the train?" was the surprised comment from hotel transfer car driver. "What are all these coaches and black limousines doing here? Also, there was a table on the concourse with a large sign saying, "Ghan check-in".

Here we were told that the train had to terminate at Port Augusta due to the track being flooded just north of Adelaide. Pointed out to us was a line-up of big black Mercedes limousines ready to take us and the other Platinum class passengers to Port Augusta, so just take a seat in the crowded waiting hall. Other passengers and the 50 train crew were to travel in coaches.

Despite the rather bumpy road trip around the floods, we were very well looked after with food and drink. We were most glad to have an electric trolley whisk us along the enormous Port Augusta platform to our carriage where a steward escorted us to our compartment – two plush seats by day and a pair of single beds at night, along with a delightful ensuite, plus ottoman, stools, fold down table, little cupboards and shelves tucked into the wall spaces, the whole beautifully panelled in what appeared to be walnut. The four 'Platinum' coaches plus dining cars for 'Gold' and 'Platinum' had been re-fitted only a few months ago. Some features are more than luxurious: they are ostentatious, in the style of the Pullman Classic coaches of American yesteryear.

Port Augusta's railway yards seemed to extend for kilometres and by the time we were really rolling, the sun was setting over the plain. Our coach stewardess gave us the procedures for the dining car and described the first "off-train" experience, which was to happen very early next morning, at a siding called Marla.

(Ghan Experience continued next page)

Ghan Experience (cont.)

Margaret chose to sleep in, but I was dressed early when I sensed that the train had stopped. At 5:30 a.m. I stepped down into darkness to be directed to follow a trail of tiny lanterns. But first, I stood and gazed in awe at the Milky Way spangling across the moonless sky, the picture on the October *CONTACT* cover. That outback starlit sky was for me the highlight of our journey. I have experienced it before, and in fact, up at Mootwingie, I took a newspaper outside, and when my eyes adjusted, I could read the headlines by starlight. Here it was again – my hand was quite visible in front of me.



WARMING HANDS BY A FIRE IS MOST PLEASANT

I followed the skein of lanterns to arrive at a picnic area with tables and benches. Small bonfires were ringed by people holding hands out to the warmth. Stewards moved around offering early snacks from the train kitchens (there are four) and warm drinks. What for all this? A glow along the eastern horizon. Marla, out on that great flat scrubby plain, was a good place to see a sunrise. It happened, but without a cloud in the sky, was far from spectacular.

But what the daylight did reveal was the enormous length of our train – with 32 coaches and two locos, “The Ghan” stretched for 774 metres (that is from Whitehorse Road along Mitcham Road to the Primary School!).

I had to walk back about 300 of those metres to our coach. My wonky legs and walking stick managed it.

An announcement: seeing the majority of passengers had snacked at the sunrise, “Breakfast was cancelled in favour of “brunch” spread over two hours”. We would be well victualled ready for four hours of activities in Alice Springs. There were many options offering, depending on special interests, such as a bus ride to Simpsons Gap, or camel rides or a helicopter flight. We chose a town tour.

On the train journey, various points of interest are mentioned, such as a monument displaying the one millionth railway sleeper from the line starting point at Tarcoola, the Finke River (it had water in it) and the S.A.- N.T border.



THE FINKE IS AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST RIVER, GEOLOGICALLY

What we noticed that as we moved northwards, areas of daisies and other wildflowers appeared. These increased as we neared Alice Springs, where there was a greenness – and the Todd River also was flowing!

From The Alice on, the rail line is of different construction, giving a smooth quiet ride. Our second night offered sleeping without clashing of buffers and some rocking around. However, on both sections the dining car conversations were disrupted more by happy laughter than by train noise. The food was excellent, with many options from which to choose (barramundi was one).



PURE
OPULENCE
DINING

(Ghan Experience concluded on Page 23)



President: Stuart McMillan

General Secretary: Colleen Geyer

LIVING STONES: OUR CALL FOR JUSTICE FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

13 October 2016

Dear Church Councillors,

The 14th Assembly in Perth last year resolved to establish an awareness-raising campaign on the plight of the Palestinian people.

This decision was a response to official requests from Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and the World Council of Churches. Importantly it was also a response informed by many Uniting Church members who have visited the Holy Land in recent years. Whether participating in ecumenical outreach programs, pilgrimages or their own personal travel, many Uniting Church members have come back to Australia shocked at the inhumane treatment of Palestinians in their homeland.

After his National Ministers' Conference in Jerusalem in 2014, ex-President Rev. Prof. Andrew Dutney shared moving stories of the "Living Stones" - to borrow the phrase from 1 Peter 2:5 - the members of the Palestinian Christian community who endure daily humiliation, intimidation and worse under Israeli military occupation.

As Christians we recall that we are all part of the one body of Christ and 'if one member suffers, we all suffer together with it.' (1 Corinthians 12:26) So in occupied Palestine and wherever else people suffer, we must not forget the oppressed.

This week, in accordance with the 14th Assembly resolution, we launch the Living Stones web page on the Assembly website <http://assembly.uca.org.au/palestine>. The Living Stones page contains a number of resources to inform and encourage you in your engagement with this important issue.

We commend the page and its resources to you and your Council members, and encourage you to build awareness in your Church and your community about justice for the Palestinian people.

Your prayers, support and solidarity for our Palestinian brothers and sisters in Christ are greatly needed. These prayers together with your continuing prayers for a just peace for Palestine and Israel are highly valued.

Stuart McMillan
President

Colleen Geyer
General Secretary

WARNING!

A REPEATED WARNING FOR COMPUTER USERS

In the August issue, we outlined a warning against blackmail hackers disguised as emails.

These are some of those doing the rounds..

- Australia Post.
We were unable to deliver a parcel to you.....
- Myer Delivery Service.
A parcel could not be delivered to
- Name.
Get into action. We will rank you.....
- Gabriella.
Fed Express #6798. We have sent you....
- Gerald.
Fed Express #4976. We have sent you....
- Name. (different from earlier)
Get into action. We will rank you...



Anything like these should be deleted immediately. **Do be tempted. DUMP IT.** Should you accidentally open it, don't worry - **just do not click on any link or box. Bin it.** On opening, an encryption software package is downloaded into your computer in seconds, awakening your anti-virus protection, but skilfully splitting into many tiny packages any one of which may avoid detection. Enormous damage may be done to your files in seconds.

Up comes a box, reading something like this,

We have disabled your computer. Pay us \$600 within 48 hours and we will launch a software package which will re-instate your files. Remit to +++++. In 96 hours, it will be \$1200 etc.

On checking, a possible rescuer is still available. Google "**Dr.Web cureit**" and follow the instructions. There is a fee for 'Dr. Web's' service, and there is no guarantee that every one of these spams can be cured. Unfortunately, whatever happens, money must be spent.

Most internet service providers are aware of these rogues and block them, but the hackers keep rotating changes and some do get through. Service providers cannot be too rigid, or genuine messages may be blocked. Ask yourself a basic intelligent question, "*How would Australia Post or Fed Express etc. get my email address?*" Hackers have computer programs running around the clock 'phishing', trying every possible combination of characters running into many millions. Some will score a hit, and it could be you or me.



CONTACT's messages come through "netspace" via 'iinet', which is TPG owned. We expect that many get blocked, but some, such as those above, are getting through. Our grandson 'guru', who maintains the computer system for a very large organisation, is not aware of a specific protection package. If there were one, it would need revision daily as these blackmailers are constantly changing their mode. We hope none of our readers get caught. **Be alert. Don't click.**

VIETNAMESE FAITH COMMUNITY CELEBRATES 5th BIRTHDAY

Many visitors came to the celebration of the Vietnamese Faith Community's 5th birthday on the evening of 6th November. The Rev. Dr. Apwee Ting, National Director of the Cross Cultural Unit of the UCA was the guest preacher.

The worship service singing was as the Vietnamese can do it – joyous and very loud. Each hymn/song was sung in Vietnamese and repeated in English to accommodate the range of people present, including those visiting from the Mountview Anglo Congregation. Rev. Brendan Byrne conducted the Communion Service in English, with Pastor Minh Bui translating for Vietnamese speakers.

Among the visitors were people who helped establish the Faith Community. Prominent here was the Rev. Hung Ly, the first pastor. He was a very happy man as he looked around the group. Rev Swee-Ann Koh represented the Synod's Intercultural Unit.

Following worship, the party began, and the group descended on the enormous spread arranged on the tables. Traditional Vietnamese dishes and rice sweetmeats were supplemented by western dishes. Prominent was a roast piglet of such relish that only the ears could be seen remaining. The feast offered an opportunity to use chop sticks for those skilled in their use. The ladies are to be congratulated on the splendid meal.

Piled up were birthday cakes – enormous, and tasty. Singing "Happy Birthday" was done with great joy.

May there be many more celebrations ahead for this Faith Community.



ABOVE: PASTOR MINH BUI, REV SWEE-ANN KOH, REV DR. APEE TING.
RIGHT: ONE TABLE READY: THE PIG IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE.
BELOW: SECTION OF THE GATHERING AROUND THE BIRTHDAY CAKES.



FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT.

Two seniors at the Bowls Club.: “Your glass is empty Ted. Would you like another?”
“And why would I want two empty glasses?” replied old Ted.



I know its early, Pastor, but I figured you'd be up early praying.

Politics is very much to the fore: : “Poli” a Latin word meaning “many” and “tics” means those “bloodsucking creatures.”

I was visiting my daughter and son-un-law last night and I asked for a newspaper. “This is the 21st Century, old man. We don’t waste money on newspapers. Here, borrow my iPad.”
That fly never knew what hit it....

The police came knocking on my door and said that my dog had chased somebody on a bike. I said, “You must be joking officer. My dog can’t ride a bike.”

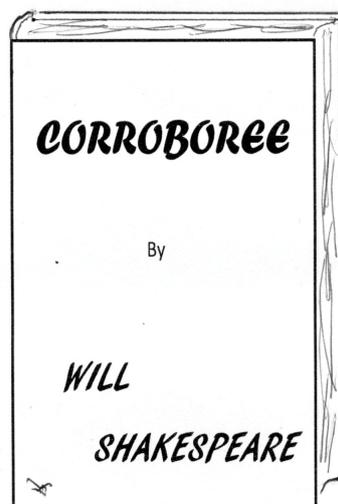
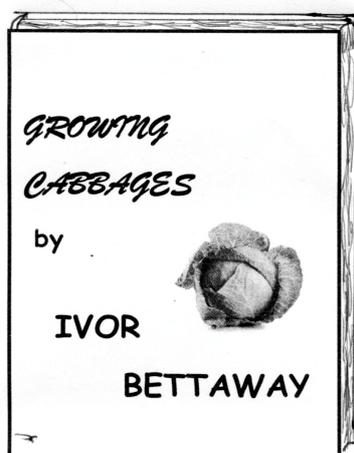
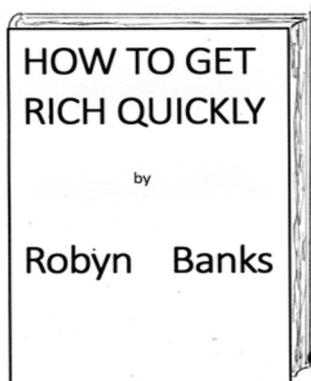
“Hey Dad! Is this insecticide good for mosquitoes?”
“No, Son. It kills’em!”

I used to be a banker, but then I lost interest.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

“Your Honour. This witness claims she recognised me in the Vegetarian Club. Sir, I have never met herbivore.”

Venison for dinner again? O deer!



Kirsten is looking for these books to add to our library.

LECTIONARY

Dec 4 Advent 2

Is 11:1-10
Ps 72: 1-7, 18-19
Rom 15: 4-13
Mat 3: 1-12

Dec 11 Advent 3

Is 35: 1-10
Ps 146: 5-10
Jas 5: 7-10
Mat 11: 2-11

Dec 18 Advent 4

Is 7: 10-16
Ps 80: 1-7, 17-19
Rom 1: 1-7
Mat 1: 18-25

Dec 25 Christmas Day

Is 62: 6-12
Ps 97
Tit 3: 4-7
Lk 2: (1-7), 8-20

Jan 1 Christmas 1

Is 63: 7-9
Ps 148
Heb 2: 10-18
Mat 2: 13-23

Jan 8 Baptism of Jesus

Is 42: 1-9
Ps 29
Acts 10: 34-43
Mat 3: 13-17

Jan 15 Epiphany 2

Is 49: 1-7
Ps 40: 1-11
1 Cor 1: 1-9
Jn 1: 29-42

Jan 22 Epiphany 3

Is 9: 1-4
Ps 27: 1, 4-9
1 Cor 1: 10-18
Mat 4: 12-23

Jan 29 Epiphany 4

Mic 6: 1-8
Ps 15
1 Cor 1: 18-31
Mat 5: 1-12

Feb 5 Epiphany 5

Is 58: 1-9a, (9b-12)
Ps 112: 1-9 (10)
1 Cor 2: 1-12 (13-16)
Mat 5: 13-20

Feb 12 Epiphany 6

Deut 30: 15-20
Ps 119: 1-8
1 Cor 3: 1-9
Mat 5: 21-37

Feb 19 Epiphany 7

Lev 19: 1-2, 9-18
Ps 119: 33-40
1 Cor 3: 10-11, 16-23
Mat 5: 38-48

Ghan Experience continued from Page 16.

Service also excellent, with our coach stewards waiting on table and joining in the repartee. While we dined, other stewards were making up beds – turned down ready, fruit juice nightcap and after dinner chocolates alongside. This travelling hotel was living up to its grand reputation.

We didn't know that overnight we had passed through Tennant Creek, for when we awoke at dawn we were well on the way to Katherine. From here on to Darwin had us looking at "open canopy savannah" – stunted trees interspersed here and there with termite mounds. A beautiful breakfast (we declined room service with breakfast in bed) had us ready for the next off-train excursion – a boat trip up Katherine Gorge.

It lived up to its reputation, helped by a glorious sunny day. Stepping off the barge to view the aboriginal rock paintings presented a dilemma for both of us. Ahead were 81 steps – two along for each one up. Margaret chose to rest on the barge. But for me, my one and only chance, so pulling myself along the handrail, I slowly made my way to the top. My camera recorded all for Margaret to see. It was by late morning, and warm, trudging up the long ramping pathway to the buses. It was a bit of a struggle. Back on board, another very welcome surprise awaited – two iced lemon teas on our table.

Nearing Adelaide River, the train slowed as we rolled passed the old terminus buildings for the post WWI two-foot-six gauge railway from Darwin port to Birdum. A little old loco painted up by volunteers rested in the yards. But the engineering feat of bridging over the river was there alongside us as we crossed the ravine. This terminus was most important in Australia's northern defences in WWII.

Those final kilometres rolled by into Darwin and what do you know? The Ghan stopped within one minute of the scheduled time after two and a half days of a luxurious travel experience. Awaiting right alongside our compartment was the mini-bus to transfer us to our hotel. This driver didn't ask, "Where is the train?"



Margaret and John Williams.

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