



Aireys Inlet



Anglesea



Bellbrae



Torquay

SHARE WINTER APPEAL

Winter is certainly here now. Winter is also a time of real need for many families and individuals who are forced to seek assistance for food, warm clothing and meeting power bills. The Share Winter Appeal enables the Uniting Church through its agencies to help meet this need.

Envelopes for the Winter Appeal are available at each of our churches. Please take one, read more about the needs of people and consider making a contribution. Envelopes can be placed in the offering plate or mailed directly to SHARE.

Some Torquay News

Our Beaut Beanies group recently donated \$600 to Save the Children from the proceeds of a market stall. Save the Children's CEO, Paul Ronalds, has sent the following acknowledgement.

Dear Beaut Beanies, It's so heartening to know we have your support — I know what it means to the children and families who need it most.

Thank you for your donation of \$600. Without your generosity, life for children experiencing unimaginable adversity might be far more difficult than it already is.

We are living in a time where agencies like ours are stretched more than ever before. Humanity is facing a number of significant challenges simultaneously and, as always, it's the children who suffer most. Because of your support, we can continue to provide ongoing protection, healthcare and education so that children experiencing hardship can begin living like children again.

Beaut Beanies, you're playing a crucial part in giving children renewed hope. Once again, please accept my heartfelt thanks.

On Saturday and Sunday 12th and 13th August Bellbrae people will be once again participating in the surf coast arts trail. Devonshire teas will be available and we hope to also keep the op shop open for the weekend as well.

Our Sunday service will be a Taize service at 9am.

All are welcome.

Today
Anglesea
No Service
Aireys Inlet 10.30
Torquay 9.30
Bellbrae 11.00
Worship Teams

Next Week
Anglesea 9.00
Aireys Inlet 10.30
Robert Packett
Torquay 9.30
Bellbrae 11.00
Ron Manley



Bellbrae Bric-A-Brac and Book Stall
Sorting each Tuesday
from 1pm – 4.30pm
helpers are very welcome.
Opening times
Thursday, Friday 10am–4pm
Saturday 10am–1pm

Items for this news letter to peter.heath@me.com or phone 5263 2297
Bible Readings Genesis 29:15-28 - Psalm 105:1-11, 45b - Romans 8:26-39 - Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Alan Stafford and the Uniting Church Emergency Fencing Team (continued) from last week

The work involved volunteers sharing time with farming families who were doing it tough. As we spoke, Alan became emotional as he tried to help me understand the significance of conversations that happened over morning teas. Sometimes it would take days before hurting and confused landowners could tentatively share their tough feelings. Time and again a ministry of presence had a healing effect. A heart of compassion is a powerful healing force in Community building.

Kindness begets kindness and builds bridges. The presence of the team would often bring neighbours together – neighbours who previously did not really know each other. The impact of the fires, soothed by the compassionate presence of the team, brought people out of their private worlds to necessarily depend upon one another. Farmers who were isolated in their post-fire grief were linked in friendship and support with others. As a result, communities were renewed and hope found good soil from which to spout new life.

Determination in the struggles

Alan was quick to say that it had not always been a smooth road. From a church perspective, the initiative was challenging 'the system'. The church had not done this sort of thing before. Who was responsible? How to manage donations and money? What about risks and safety issues? On a more personal level, the volunteers weren't trained to cope with grieving and frustrated farmers. And the area of need was expanding across presbytery boundaries.

Mending fences, mending lives

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Community building - Standing up for justice

Alan and the team learned from affected landowners about the added concerns of exploitation and bureaucratic processes. Alan suspects that some tradespeople and service providers did not always treat those needing help well. And, in some instances, their ethics were indeed questionable.

Alan is a big man (I'm six foot and he towers over me) and he knows how to stand up for himself. There was many a time when he stood up for the people he was helping. From his stories, Alan suggests with a smile that: "the threat of media involvement often resulted in a more helpful response".

Humility in service

Alan is quick to say how much all this has meant to him. He is deeply humbled by the experience and insists he has received so much more than he has given. He has made many new friends and it has made a difference to his own outlook on life.

Yet Alan also knows that he has brought his own particular contribution to the project. He has offered his gifts – farming skills, a tough determination, contacts from his working life, experience in community involvement, and (as he demonstrated to me personally) "a weird sense of humour". Benalla Uniting Church has embraced this wonderful outreach. It is now their mission too. It reaches out beyond their immediate local town context. They are ready to touch more lives when the next inevitable bushfire comes. To quote Alan: "I believe there has been a greater power involved in what we've been doing", following Christ from the church carpark to a burnt-out farm, seeking the wonder of community, the power of compassion and the tough stand for justice, pursuing God's mission with so many surprising partners.

Now that's a story!

David Withers

