

The Westerly



PWV & PPW Newsletter No.16 – 16th Sept 2021



Seeing Creation Differently – a reflection on Genesis 1:26-28 for the Season of Creation.

By Rev Ian Ferguson

Lately I've been trying to get photos of a native bird which seems to thrive in my part of Brunswick – a little fast-moving beauty boringly but descriptively named the Whiteplumed Honeyeater. Mostly my attempts have consisted of lurking in my backyard with my new ultra-zoom lens waiting for them to visit, often in vain. And through this waiting I've become aware of the fact that the phrase "my back yard" has absolutely no meaning to the Whiteplumed Honeyeaters of Brunswick.

From my yard I can see the larger trees in the local area sticking up above the rooftops. And I often hear and then see Whiteplumed Honeyeaters (and many other birds) zipping from tree to tree, flitting between houses and over fences which for them are nothing more than occasional perching places on the way between trees. For Whiteplumed Honey Eaters, Brunswick is not a series of properties, it is a bushland, and the boundaries which contain us (particularly during lockdown) in no way constrain them. **They see Brunswick differently to me and they are helping me see my home, my lockdown prison, as part of a larger and more diverse habitat.**



When God creates humankind in Genesis 1, God says, "Let us make humankind in our image; and let them have dominion over everything on the earth." Has this story given us a distorted view of the world and our place in it? Has it allowed us the illusion of control over the earth as something we can contain and manipulate with impunity? Yes, it probably has, but only through misinterpretation.

In the ancient world of this creation story, to be the image of God and to have dominion is language that referred to kings. The story is saying, God makes humankind as her representatives in creation, to be regents or governors, to have divine dominion on her behalf, to rule as God would rule. Now, we may be ready to move on from royal metaphors to more "ecologically republican" images, but before we ditch Genesis 1, let's ask, how does the bible picture God's rule? Does the biblical understanding of the "Kingdom of God" truly give us license to exploit creation?

When Jesus strides onto the scene hundreds of years after this creation story was written down, the first thing on his mind is dominion. "The time is fulfilled," he proclaims in his first public statement, "and the kingdom of God has come near!" Divine dominion, God's reign on earth, that's what Jesus is all on about. But, spoiler alert! – it doesn't end well for him. His divine dominion is crushed and killed by human dominion, by human rulers and authorities. He is crucified by the same power, the same dominion, that we are using to crucify species and ecosystems today.

In the end we see that divine dominion is not about power over the earth, ownership, control, exploitation. No, the Holy Commonwealth which has come near in Jesus Christ, is a reign of total self-giving love in service of the earth and all its creatures. A reign to save humanity from itself and to help us align with our true calling in creation – **to be lovers of the world just as God so loved the world.**

So repent and believe in the good news", says Jesus. I hear a challenge in this to change my way of seeing and being in the world around me; to see the world as a Whiteplumed Honeyeater might see it; to see Brunswick, my home, as a bushland habitat, and to live in it with repentant love – **love for God and my neighbours of every species.**

Sacred Earth

Nature; medicine to my Soul

By Susan J Hobbs (Horsham UCA Pastor)

My soul travels with me;
on my journey of life.

Sometimes my soul laughs and dances,
sours and sings with joy.

Yet at other times there is sadness,
numbness, grief and pain.

Nature, all around me as I move on.

Often easy to ignore and take for granted.

Then at others.

Oh what healing it brings.

Times to be quiet and reflect.

Times to look with open eyes and heart.

Times when God breaks through into my reality.

Nature; you are so beautiful.

So vast, awe inspiring and healing.

Medicine to my ailing spirit.

Your touch is gentle and refreshing; yet so powerful.

The way sun falls across a fence or tree line.

The play of shadows and light.

A shaft of light between clouds ~
lighting up one part of a vast scene.

Mountains, hidden by mist and emerging.

Cliffs standing tall and vast.

Ever changing and never changing.

Sunsets and sunrises, constantly evolving; entrancing.

Rich greens of numerous shades,
shapes and sizes glistening after rain,
refreshed and heartwarming.

The flash of a red robin on a fence line as I pass.

The wood swallows white tail feathers as it flits by.

The RedTailed Black's distinctive call embedded in my
memory as I listen for it.

The never ending show of flowers,
both everyday and unique, native and exotic.

The scent of eucalypt,
rose or conifer to bring back memories intense.

And the tree trunks.

Standing tall and wide.

Infinite shapes and shades.

Fascinating textures and colours.

I can look at you for ages.

Some people like to capture nature in pictures,
with just the right light and composition.

I prefer to capture nature in my soul.

Feeding me, healing and nurturing me.

That I may travel on enriched,
whole and able to give and live.

Oh; there are many things that do me good.

Prayer, music, friendship, love and laughter.

But right now and at many times,

God's creation in nature around me is the medicine I
need.

Season Of Creation 2021: UCA President Rev Sharon Hollis has shared a video message inviting Uniting Church congregations to participate in the Season of Creation from 1 September to 4 October. During September, Christians worldwide take part in acts of worship and action focused on how we live in relationship with and care for God's creation. "The season of creation is an invitation to look closely at creation, to see and know that all creation is part of the *oikos*, the household of God," says Rev Hollis "We show our love of God by caring for the earth and by being passionate advocates for this broken, beautiful, scarred and glorious creation." See resources, videos, prayers, liturgies climate action plans and forums <https://uniting.church/season-of-creation-2021/>.

Editors Note: Hi everyone, I am the Rev. Linley Liersch—Mission Development Strategist and Education for PPW and editor of the newsletter. If you have local events, poems, photos or book reviews or you would like to provide more widely you can reach me on Linley.liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au. Sometimes links for events will be visible (as above) and other times links are embedded under pictures. So click on the picture next to the story and it should take you to the relevant website.



Mental Health Matters

REV. FI BOTCHER (DEACON AT SUNSHINE MENTAL HEALTH)

In the Sunshine Adult Acute Psychiatric Unit, each morning begins with a community meeting in which an “ice breaker” question is asked. Last Tuesday, the question was: “Can you share a positive experience of being alone?”

One after another people responded: “Walking along the beach” said one, “Sitting in the sun with my eyes closed”, said another as people nodded enthusiastically in response. “Sitting under a tree in my mum’s garden, listening to the birds”, “Walking in the bush”, “Surfing”, “Watching my dog run in the park”.

As I listened, my mind went back to a beach track I’d walked along earlier in the year. I had stopped to watch some tiny wrens chirping and darting amongst the bushes. Then, as I turned around slowly to take in the loveliness of that place, I realised - with a giddy squeal - that I was almost face to face with a koala (pictured)! “Ah, praise be to God!” I whispered.

The poet Mary Oliver wrote: *“I could not be a poet without the natural world. Someone else could. But not me. For me the door to the woods is the door to the temple.”*

God’s heavenly, sacred Kingdom on Earth. Amen.



Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul (Book Review)

by John Philip Newell published Collins 2021

By Rev. David Carter (Chairperson, Presbytery of Western Victoria)

If you have ever had the opportunity to visit the isle of Iona, and stay with the Community for a week-long retreat you will have a significant memory from your faith journey.

Celtic Christianity is, perhaps romanticised, but its practices and commitments are a creative and imaginative alternative of practicing the Christian way.

John Philip Newell was one-time Warden of the Iona Community. He has written several thoughtful books of prayers and reflection on the great emergence which is shaking under the ground of traditional Christianity.

His new book, Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul, is a delight. I listened to an audio version and the narrator with a rolling brogue is fantastic interpreting the words of Newell with many colours and intonations.

“This book is about reawakening to what we know in the depths of our being, that the earth is sacred and this sacredness is at the heart of every human being and life form.”

Nine people - from Pelagius to George MacLeod - populate his stories and exploration of incarnation entwining earth and heaven. He offers mini-biographies of Christians who worshipped, witnessed and served from the edge.

Some chapters introduced me to people I had never heard of, like Alexander John Scott (an inspirer of the imagination), and others I knew a little about, like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (priest and cosmologist). Well worth your time reading, digesting and sharing with others.



Education Events

September 24th
9:30—12:30 pm

Pastoral Care Seminar No.7—Dealing with Criticism



September 29th
6:30—9 pm

PPW Ethical Ministry Training (Code of Ethics)



Oct 6th

Preaching & Art of Preaching

7–9 pm

Mel Perkins & Linley Liersch

Oct 8th—10th

Western Victoria Road Trip

Horsham Warrnambool & Ballarat



Oct 12th

PWV Ethical Ministry Training (Code of Ethics)

9:30—12:30 pm



Oct 12th

Synod Intercultural Forum Seminar

9:00—12:30

Meet the First Peoples of Gondwana

Oct 13th

Synod Intercultural Forum Meeting

Synod Intercultural Forum Seminar 9—12:30pm Oct 12th

Rev. Dr. Garry Deverell *Trawlwoolway man from northern Lutrawita (Tasmania), an Anglican priest, and the Vice-Chancellor's Fellow in Indigenous theologies at the University of Divinity.*

Garry will be speaking on:

Who are the First Nations/First Peoples of this country, and what is our traditional spirituality or way of life? What happened between First Peoples and colonists in the period 1788-1960? How were the churches involved? What is the result of this history when it comes to First Nations health, well-being and socio-economic status? What do modern-day Indigenous people want? Who are the 'Second Peoples' and how can they be good allies in the Indigenous struggle for something resembling justice?

Synod Intercultural Forum meeting 10—12:30cpm Oct 13th Zoom

The 2021 General Meeting of the Synod Intercultural Forum. All those who want to engage with intercultural ministry and enhance the intercultural vision of the Uniting Church in the Vic Tas Synod are welcome to the meeting.

Meet the First Peoples of Gondwana

ONLINE SEMINAR

About the seminar

"Following Christ, walking together as First and Second Peoples, seeking community, compassion and justice for all creation."

We invite you for a walk with **Rev Dr Garry Deverell** to listen and engage with his story and reflections as an Indigenous person.

Garry Deverell is a Trawlwoolway man from northern Lutrawita (Tasmania), an Anglican priest, and the Vice-Chancellor's Fellow in Indigenous theologies at the University of Divinity. Garry has ministered in parishes, hospitals, welfare organisations and

academic institutions for 30 years. Many of those years were spent in the employ of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania. He is the author of two books, *The Bonds of Freedom* and *Gondwana Theology*, and is a regular contributor to radio programs, podcasts, and conferences on Indigenous matters.

Garry will be speaking on:

- Who are the First Nations/ First Peoples of this country, and what is our traditional spirituality or way of life?
- What happened between First Peoples and (mainly European) colonists in the period 1788-1960? How were the churches involved?
- What is the result of this history when it comes to First Nations' health, well-being and socio-economic status?
- What do modern-day Indigenous people want?
- Who are the Second Peoples and how can they be good allies in the Indigenous struggle for something resembling justice?

When: October 12 **Time:** 9am-12:30pm **Where:** Zoom (will be given on registration)

Fee: \$20 (inclusive of Eventbrite fees)

Register: [Click here](#)

October, 8-10 WESTERN VICTORIA PRESBYTERY ROAD TRIP



CELEBRATING MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Western Victoria Presbytery is excited to host the Synod Intergenerational Ministry team on a road trip around the Presbytery.

Everyone involved or interested in ministry with children & families, youth and young adults is invited to gather at three different places over the October 8-10 weekend.

It will be an opportunity to be together, celebrate what God is doing in the midst of our young people, share our hopes and challenges for the future, and be resourced in children & families, youth and young adult ministries.

[Click here to register.](#)

For further information, please contact Rev Trevor Bassett
trevor.bassett@pwv.victas.uca.org.au or 0408 058 793.

Horsham Uniting Church

Cnr Pynsent and Urquhart Streets,
Horsham 3400

Friday October 8th | 7pm-9pm

Warrnambool Uniting Church

115 Koroit Street,
Warrnambool 3280

Saturday October 9th | 2.30pm-4.30pm

Ballarat Central Uniting Church

103 Lydiard Street,
South Ballarat 3350

Sunday October 10th | 2.30pm-4.30pm



equipping Leadership for Mission



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



Presbytery
of Western
Victoria

