

# GOOD NEWS

Advent, 2021

**Anglican Parish of Box Hill**  
1022 Whitehorse Road,  
Box Hill 3128

Vicar: The Reverend Shane Hübner

[www.anglicansboxhill.org.au](http://www.anglicansboxhill.org.au)

Email: [anglicans.boxhill@bigpond.com](mailto:anglicans.boxhill@bigpond.com)

## Good News? Yes!!

The good news is that Jesus Christ is with us - and that we can gather together again to worship and pray together - in the church building. It's so good to see smiling faces when we share the Peace! As the virus subsides for the summer months, and the vaccination rates grow daily, we can look with some certainty at the months ahead.

We Christians are reminded daily of the gifts of God around us and the privilege of living in a place where we have access to medical services and all kinds of support networks.

Many of us have struggled through the recent months but we are so grateful for the support and encouragement of our Vicar, Shane, and those who have kept us connected via phone, email visits and notes.

Let's share the Good News afresh - the love of God, the companionship of Jesus and the joy of the Holy Spirit within us.

*Editor of Good News- Rev'd Anne Kennedy*  
E: [robann29@bigpond.com](mailto:robann29@bigpond.com) M: 0429123478

## God gives us a future!

Our Parish Council has been reviewing the life and growth of our Parish as we emerge from two years of Covid. Prayer and discussions continue, but our Vicar has outlined some early initiatives for the parish in his recent Stewardship letter:

1. Continuation of regular services
2. A strengthened online presence
3. A new contemporary service
4. New study options
5. Renewed emphasis on environmental sustainability
6. Establishment of two Mission focus groups:
  - a. Chinese families with young children
  - b. Engagement with elderly single people

Now, as we are released from the Covid-19 restrictions, we can begin to look forward to a renewed focus on our work of evangelism and outreach. Our recent Stewardship Series has been a spring-board to help us envisage a new life as we work together for a better world, beginning here in our own parish.

As we embrace the warm days of Summer, let's thank God for his constant renewal of life through the changing seasons.



## News from Abaar Orphanage school in Bor town

We were very excited to hear that our school has its first students. The school is not complete (as is obvious from our photos) but it is being used to teach up to 400 children in grades 1-6 living in the village next to the school.



The story so far: We had 4 classrooms almost complete two years ago, but our fundraising efforts were halted during the COVID pandemic, and some of the funds we had raised were need to replace the roof of one classroom when it was damaged by extreme storms. Then last year much of Bor town was flooded when the levee banks on the Nile River were breached see - <https://floodlist.com/south-sudan-floods-august-2020>

Our school was not flooded, but a lot of infrastructure in Bor Town was damaged. Many villagers from the surrounding region relocated to Bor Town when their villages were destroyed in the floods.

In June this year we received messages from the Bor Orphanage Foundation to say that displaced villagers had asked if they could use our school buildings to run classes for their children for the next 12 months. We were delighted to be able to agree to this request, and put out an appeal to raise 1,700 USD to complete storm damage repairs and provide blackboards to make the classrooms ready for teaching. We sent the money last month and that work was completed before the wet season.

Many thanks to our generous supporters at St Peter's. Our fundraising appeal has raised \$13,500 to date, and a letter is being sent to members of the South Sudanese community to try to increase that amount. Jen Walker has also donated a beautiful handwoven shawl that we will raffle later this year.

We have received some photos - What does a school and classroom look like in Bor Town?



Some children have brought plastic chairs from home, others are sitting on paint tins



Upper sections of brickwork were repaired last month

More photos from the school will appear on our orphanage website:

<http://www.abaarorphanage-bortown.org.au>



Some of the girls seem happy to be at school



Outdoor education takes on a new meaning

We could look at these images and be filled with despair that children have such poor facilities - how can they learn in classrooms where they are sitting on plastic chairs or makeshift stools or empty paint tins, with no desk to write on? Or we can look at them and be filled with hope because they now have a classroom with a roof and a blackboard, and no longer have to be taught by the teacher sitting under a tree in the middle of the village.

What will we do with the remaining money that is raised?

We have quotes for the cost of building additional classrooms (nearly 23,000 USD for two classrooms - we hope to be able to get a lower quote through Reverend Joseph's contacts in Juba).

We have also searched for suppliers of classroom furniture, and we plan to buy sturdy benches and desks similar to those pictured below, either bought in Juba or made locally.



These desks seat 3 older or 4 younger students and cost 150 USD (about \$207 AUD) each.

Does anyone have contacts with a local Rotary Club or other service club that might be willing to make a donation towards the cost of school furniture?

Andrew and I would be happy to talk to service clubs.

Andrew Gai (together with Joseph and James) is running the fundraising appeal in the South Sudanese community. Andrew and I will also prepare a crowdfunding campaign and we are updating our website and Facebook page.

If you have been inspired to support us, please visit our web page or make a donation directly to our bank account at the ANZ Bank:

Account name      ABAAR Orphanage    BSB    013 225                      Account No    280731691

*Margaret Dooley - telephone 0438 129 161*

## Making an Impact on Planet Earth

Great to read about the work of Richard Payne - son of Margaret Payne and former FACS Dad - who was featured in a recent magazine for the Energy Industry.

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has backed RayGen (Richard is the CEO) –an Australian technology company with world-leading breakthroughs in solar and renewable storage – to construct a first-of-its-kind solar hydro hybrid plant in Victoria. The project is the precursor to an installation at AGL’s Liddell Power Station.

Richard has worked in this field since leaving Melbourne Uni, and has worked in several countries, including Germany where he and his wife, Jacinta, and daughters Madeline and Emma, lived for a few years. He’s passionate about the environment, beginning with the family home in Warrandyte and leading a new approach to both solar and storage that will have a major impact on power supplies in Australia and the world.

If you’d like to read the complete article - <https://en.calameo.com/read/000373495f6cb43b8a69e>

Whilst Richard is tackling renewable energy in our environment in a big way - we too can help by being aware of what, why and how we use our day to day resources.

Tip: replace paper towels with a special set of cloth towels - store the used ones in a small container or drawer in your kitchen and just wash and reuse.



**Reuse, Reduce, Recycle** - are we all doing our bit for the planet? Many schools have a “Green Team” which emphasizes those three words around the school every day, giving hints on how to live more sustainably, both at home and at school. Great care is taken with waste and recycling.

Are there things around our Parish, our community and our home that could be adapted to make it a more sustainable environment through using less resources? Start a conversation!

## Church House Update

As mentioned in the Churchwardens' annual report last year, Church House has been vacant since Fr Joseph and his family moved to Officer while the wardens and Parish Council considered the options available.

It was decided by the Parish Council to renovate the house with the aim to have it tenanted before Christmas. The Men at Work team got to work immediately, and even though restrictions have slowed the team down, great progress has been made.

Church House was purchased by the parish in the mid-80s. It was built in the mid-50s and typical of that era, that is, cream brick veneer comprising 3 bedrooms, combined lounge/dining room, kitchen with meals area, one bathroom and separate WC, and laundry. The parish added a study at the front and remodelled the front entry.

To bring the house up to date, the plan is to:

- Install new kitchen, bathroom, toilet and laundry.
- Replace all floor coverings.
- Reconfigure the sunroom and laundry to allow room for a second shower and toilet
- Open the wall between the dining area and meals area.
- Install new window coverings.
- Repaint inside and outside.
- Re-roof and re-clad the garage.
- Repair damaged window sills and cracked brick work.
- Rebuild back porch and stairs to the back door.
- We will also take the opportunity to fix some plumbing and electrical issues.

Demolition was completed with 8 cubic metres of rubbish removed so far. Asbestos was removed from the garage, sunroom, laundry, bathroom and toilet, and the bathroom, laundry and kitchen have been re-plastered, with tiling and cabinetry almost complete.

The old bathroom was gutted, and new cabinetry is being installed.



Garry 1 and Garry 2 work on the installation of the kitchen cupboards.

The new (second) bathroom takes shape where the laundry once was.



The demolition/construction team has been:

- Rob Kennedy,
- Garry Male,
- Garry Plumridge,
- Kim Cornish and
- Alasdair McKinnon-Love.

With restrictions, the team has been limited to no more than three on site, and some materials and timber are getting hard to obtain and prices are increasing. Our special thanks must go to Alasdair who has provided all the framing timber we need from his own accumulation.

We expect work to continue for the next two or three months.



## PANDEMICS

### PAST

A pandemic may be defined as an outbreak of disease which affects very large areas. Prior to the globetrotting 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century pandemics were not world-wide, but sufficiently widespread, and deadly enough, to qualify as much more than localized epidemics.

Three major outbreaks of the pandemic known as plague stand out in recorded human history; the “Justinian Plague” commencing in 541, the Black Death, commencing 1347, and an 1894 occurrence which commenced in Yunnan and spread worldwide, and during which the cause of the disease was identified. The source in all of these was an organism named *Yersinia pestis*, which originated in animals, probably thousands of years ago, and was spread by rats to humans. But before the 6<sup>th</sup> c plague the Roman Empire had suffered from two pandemics, the “Antonine Plague” – possibly smallpox- which lasted from about 165 to 189, and a devastating mid third century disease with Ebola-like symptoms in which up to 5000 persons a day died in major cities.

The Spanish Flu pandemic, beginning 1918, was caused by a variant of Influenza A virus.

Of course, writers vary greatly in their conclusions about how the Church, and individual Christians, responded to the challenges presented by these outbreaks. While in our current pandemic there have been concerted attempts to record the reactions of many individuals, written evidence from earlier outbreaks is limited.

During the 3rd c plague Cyprian was Bishop of Carthage. He was an exceptionally gifted rhetorical writer, and his vivid account of the disease has come down to us. Against those who claimed it was due to Christian apostasy from worship of the traditional gods he suggested the disease was God’s punishment on a corrupt society – an idea recycled in some recent claims. Cyprian urged Christians to hold fast, and - *not to lie prostrate with those who have no hope in God; but rather to rejoice, and to embrace the benefit of the occasion; that in thus bravely showing forth our faith, and by suffering*

*endured, going forward to Christ by the narrow way that Christ trod, we may receive the reward of His life and faith according to His own judgment!*

Cyprian himself was publicly executed, after refusing to sacrifice to the gods, on 14 September 258. Because 14<sup>th</sup> is the day chosen to celebrate the Holy Cross, we commemorate Cyprian on 13<sup>th</sup> September.

The “Justinian” plague, so-called because it took place under the emperor of that name, is now believed to have been an important factor in the disintegration of the Empire. An excellent examination of this is to be found in Kyle Harper – *The Fate Of Rome. Climate, Disease, & the End of An Empire* (2017). Because of the widespread loss of life much agricultural land and the accompanying infrastructure was abandoned.

Following the Edict of Milan (313) Christianity was a legal religion, and churches had gradually gained wealth and political influence. Much more importantly, as Harper succinctly notes “Christianity’s sharpest advantage was its inexhaustible ability to forge kinship-like networks among perfect strangers on an ethic of sacrificial love.” The church became a safe haven, both in the promise of resurrection, and in its provision of both nursing for the sick, and essential shelter, food and water for survivors at a time when there were few publicly funded resources.

As successive waves of the virus struck - it is estimated that 100 million people died overall - and the empire descended into civil war by 610, it is hardly surprising that “to those who had lived through it, it seemed like the final hour of the world was at hand.”

The apocalyptic hints in the New Testament, culminating in the Book of Revelation exercised a powerful grip on people’s minds. Collective and individual atonement for sin, especially the blatant greed of late antique society, was expressed particularly through the development of liturgical rogations. Rogation Days – the term is taken from *rogare*, to ask – which are still held annually in the many churches, are times to beseech God’s protection, with fasting and processions. Pope

Gregory “the Great” was elected in 590, following the death of Pope Pelagius II from plague.

*When he had finished speaking, Gregory assembled the different groups of churchmen, and ordered them to sing psalms for three days and to pray to our Lord for forgiveness. At three o'clock all the choirs singing psalms came into the church, chanting the Kyrie eleison as they passed through the city streets. My deacon, who was present, said that while the people were making their supplication to the Lord, eighty individuals fell dead to the ground. The Pope never once stopped preaching to the people, nor did the people pause in their prayers.* (Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks, X.1). Apocalyptic thinking also impelled missionary activity, including Gregory’s dispatch of evangelist monks to Britain.

A strong development also occurred of appealing to Mary and to the archangel Michael for help and protection. Icons became increasingly important in worship. Notable is the 6<sup>th</sup> icon preserved in the 4<sup>th</sup> c church of Santa Maria Maggiore (Saint Mary the Great) in Rome – the final destination of Gregory’s procession- known as “The deliverance/safety of the Roman people”.

The “great mortality” as it was called in Italy, arrived in Sicily from Asia Minor, where it had been noted in 1346. It spread rapidly throughout the cities; in Florence around half the population died. Isolation tactics were tried, sometimes successfully; Boccaccio’s famous *Decameron* is framed as stories told to pass the time and entertain themselves by a group of seven women and three men who had secluded themselves in a villa outside Florence to escape the plague.

In a third wave of the plague in Siena in 1374 Catherine, a young woman who had insisted on secluding herself to worship God until she received a vision directing her to engage with the outside world in accordance with the command to love one’s neighbour, gathered a group to help in aiding the sick, offering comfort and practical support to survivors.

Brother Raymond had been directed by the Church to move to Siena to oversee her activities; initially concerned for his own safety he was challenged by

her dedication to overcome his desire to escape, and became a strong supporter and active worker. Eleven members of Catherine’s immediate family died in the outbreak.

This was also the time known as the “Great Schism” with competing Popes. Again, it seemed to many that the end times had come. One response was the outburst of “flagellants”, groups who moved in processions of up to 1000 people, whipping themselves and chanting prayers and hymns. The movement spread through Europe, inciting scenes of violent emotion. Their criticism of the established Church for its sins came to be accompanied by virulent attacks on Jews as scapegoats for the pandemic, leading to appalling waves of murders. Finally, Clement VI demanded the arrest of the flagellant leaders, saying that they had been seduced by “that liar, the devil” and the movement collapsed.

More positively, there were active initiatives to fund and extend higher education, which had been severely impacted by the plague. Public hospitals began to be established much more widely, following the example of the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, founded in Siena around 1000 (and which, extraordinarily, continued as a public hospital until the 1970’s). Although the Siena hospital - which in addition to medical services provided care for orphans and daily food distribution for the poor - was under lay control from 1193 it was supported by religious confraternities and included a chapel where among many others Catherine would spend nights praying.

Localized plague outbreaks continued through the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, and there began to be advocates for strict quarantine – that is, isolation for *quaranta giorni* – 40 days, a number familiar from the Bible. It is startling, and fascinating, to read records of people being seized for minor infractions – lowering a basket to relations on a lower floor – or more deliberate methods of flouting restrictions – gathering for parties on a rooftop – parallel to today’s situations. Social distancing was also regulated, the prescribed distance being 6 feet (1.82m). Washing and disinfecting goods liable to be touched, and requiring documents for visitors

entering a town were other forerunners of later practices.

The so-called “Spanish Flu”, nearest to us in time, and abundantly documented, has many features with which we have become all too familiar – the spread through travel routes, the use of masks and isolation, the successive waves of infection. Also familiar is the difficulty of establishing statistics, especially of death rates, estimated to range from 17 to 100 million for this pandemic. Public gathering places, including churches, were closed in many countries. A group of Protestant ministers in the US recorded that they “cheerfully complied” with the regulations, but others sought to mount legal challenges.

In an article for TMA Colin Reilly estimated that the Melbourne death toll was around 4000 persons – the disease affected Australia less severely than many other parts of the world, and lockdowns were for a few weeks only. He notes a meeting held at St Paul’s Cathedral of Church of England, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Baptist Churches, the Salvation Army and ecumenical bodies which issued a statement encouraging compliance with public health directives and asking Christians to pray and *to maintain themselves without undue fear or panic in an attitude of quietness and confidence*. When churches were allowed to open choirs were prohibited, and masks had to be worn. Assistance to the poor through church agencies was increased, and public appeals for funding for this purpose were well supported.

Whether or not you agree with the writer of Ecclesiastes that “there is nothing new under the sun” (1:9), it is certainly instructive to look at the long history of pandemics. Dare we hope that the view expressed by Rev. Francis J. Grimke in a sermon in Washington on November 3, 1918 may also be true for us and our fellow Christians?

*The fact that for several weeks we have been shut out from the privileges of the sanctuary has brought home to us as never before what the church has really meant to us. We hadn’t thought, perhaps, very much of the privilege while it lasted, but the moment it was taken away we saw at once how much it meant to us.*

Contributed by Sophia Errey.



## ADVENT

***As we enter the Church Season of ADVENT, we know that we are preparing for the celebration of the birth of Jesus.***

On the four Sundays of Advent, you’ll see the Advent wreath at the Anglican Church. Around it will be four candles, three purple, and one pink. And in its center is a large white candle. That’s the Christ Candle.

Each Sunday of Advent a new candle is lighted to mark time. They represent Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. The third candle is rose or pink, which is meant to remind us to rejoice.

On the fourth Sunday of Advent, all four candles are lighted. Then, on Christmas Eve the Christ Candle is lighted along with all four Advent candles.

The Christ Candle represents the light that the Son brought into the world when he was born a little baby, God in the flesh. The fact that the Advent candles remain on Christmas Eve puts the focus on this special moment of birth, the moment of transition from prophecy to fulfillment.

On Christmas Day and the Christmas Sundays, the Advent candles are usually removed, but the Christ Candle remains. This reminds us that old things have passed away, and all has been made new.

May the light of the Christ Child fill you with joy and peace!

