

livingtoday

Issue 89 // Summer 2024-25

Good news. Locally. Mooroolbark & surrounds.



Poet & songwriter Jim Brown

Christmas events • Mooroolbark Umbrella Group Forum • Community house update

Hello from the Living Today team



I mostly love it when Christmastime approaches. It reminds me that the summer season holidays are near, that the annual trip to the MCG Boxing Day test match is approaching, and, if at all possible, to avoid that square kilometre radius around anything that resembles a large shopping centre.

I also mostly enjoy Christmastime for the carols we hear at this time of year. They can equally enliven me and cause me to run as far as possible. Not all Christmas carols are created equal. My favourite carols are the traditional ones that have lasted centuries with those melodies and words that somehow feel new each time. But – and not embarrassingly – I have been known to sing ‘Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer’ to my kids.

The traditional Christmas carols are some of the oldest songs on earth and perhaps no musical genre is more ancient than those festive songs you’ll hear this month. I think it is because many carols touch deeply into our human condition – peace and stillness along with joy and celebration at a time of the year when it seems it is anything but.

Carols are particularly touching because they also speak of a silent tension in the air. Whether we believe in the storied words in a carol or not we cannot but feel but silent and reflective in the face of the current events we are witnessing both at home and abroad. Many carols sing of peace on earth, and Christmas is a time to celebrate and speak of the peace we yearn for.

It is a time to remember that there is not always peace, and to turn our thoughts towards those who are caught up in wars and are vulnerable and marginalised as a result. At our best, Christmastime brings both celebration and yearning. As Jim Brown mentions in our lead article, “Our fractured, troubled world longs to experience true peace.”

Thanks to Croydon-Mooroolbark Lions Club we are happy to welcome back the Annual Community Carols at Hookey Park in Mooroolbark on Friday 6 December. Come one, come all to enjoy an evening of singing and Christmas cheer (see page 10), and don’t forget the annual Santa photos offered by the Mooroolbark Traders and Community Group. You can also read about the homecoming concert of ARIA award-winning jazz pianist and Mooroolbark boy Barney McAll and his recent performance at the Mooroolbark Community Centre.

Merry Christmas and a peace-filled New Year. We hope you enjoy this issue.

Matthew Gudze, Lead Pastor, Grace Communion Mooroolbark (sponsors of Living Today) on behalf of the Living Today Editorial Team

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mission statement

To contribute towards and to help to foster a growing community spirit within our neighbourhood. We seek to achieve this by:

- Highlighting the many positives within our community
- Encouraging partnership in community initiatives
- Contributing to the process of identifying and addressing community needs and concerns



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We meet every Sunday at 10.30am at the Mooroolbark Community Centre. Come along and enjoy a service and stay for a chat, with delicious tea, coffee and biscuits.

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Jim Brown : local poet

by Randall Bourchier

I came across Jim Brown – a local poet and songwriter – in the Eastern FM studios, where he shared poetry and song during an interview with presenter Robert Bonte. Jim, as I later learned, is no stranger to the media.

Born in New Zealand, after some years working as a primary school teacher followed by 11 years in the NZ Police Force, Jim began a new career as a television journalist for TV2. Although he had risen through the ranks to become the youngest detective inspector in NZ, Jim felt the need for a new direction following the sad loss of his wife to a brain haemorrhage.

Moving to Australia some years later in 1979, he continued his journalistic work, first for Channel 9 and later Channel 10. His appreciation for the rightly employed power of the journalistic word increased through his and colleagues reporting of the Lindy Chamberlain trial and her conviction for the murder of her daughter Azaria. Solid investigative journalism led to Lindy's claims that a dingo had taken her baby being carefully re-examined, which resulted in her eventual exoneration and release from prison.

And the poetic word? Jim's poetry lies within the rich tradition of the Australian 'bush poet'. He tells the amusing and self-effacing story of a long car trip with a journalist colleague who asked him if he liked Banjo Paterson. Jim laughs about it now, but to his subsequent horror he responded, "I like any kind of music."

The amusing gaffe led to Jim's growing enjoyment of the Australian bush poets.

Together with Michael Dickinson, he produced a television documentary: *Banjo's Australia* (1984). He was also involved in producing a later documentary about Henry Lawson. In later years, Jim turned his hand to writing similar verse.

His favourite of the poems he's written, and coincidentally the most well-known, is 'The Anzac on the Wall' inspired by a photo he has of an Anzac soldier. The poem draws the reader into sharing vivid moments of battle, heroism, compassion, mateship, hope, longing, love and loss centred around a young Australian Light Horseman who took part in the famously daring and successful charge of the 4th Light Horse Brigade at Beersheba in 1917.

It's a moving, haunting poem where Jim has woven together historical detail with memories of his rich and unforgettable experience of reading unidentified letters to and from soldiers at the front, which he'd accessed in Canberra's military archives during research prior to his covering in 2005 of the 90th anniversary of the Anzac landing in Gallipoli.

Jim regularly responds to invitations to recite his poetry at events such as Anzac Day. On the morning I interviewed Jim, he was about to leave for country Victoria to recite a poem entitled 'Balmoral Coral' at a funeral service for a Vietnam veteran – one of three veterans whose experiences inspired the poem. Recognised by military historians as one of the most strategically significant battles fought by Australian troops during the Vietnam War,

the battle at Balmoral Coral prevented the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces from continuing on to Saigon at that time.

The powerful poem depicts the horrors of battle faced by many Australian conscripts and regular soldiers. It describes the sometimes hostile reception veterans, already traumatised by battle, experienced on returning to Australia.

*I felt that I had done my duty,
and had done it with pride*

*But knew I needed healing,
I was wounded deep inside*

*Made worse by left wing protesters
who said we were to blame*

*They called us baby killers,
and we should all feel shame*

The poem closes with a poignant and hope-filled twist.

During periods when the Vietnamese forces regrouped for their next assault, the Australian soldiers buried many dead Vietnamese combatants in a nearby B-52 bomb crater. Years later, a mate who also fought at Balmoral Coral suggests they return to Vietnam to show grieving Vietnamese families where their loved ones were buried. Almost against his will, the soldier returns, persuaded by a fellow veteran:

*If we can find those Viet Cong soldiers,
their families will find peace*

*We should hand back their loved ones,
so their souls can find release.*

*And so we went together and
you know the strangest thing*

*To my surprise I felt at home –
my hatred lost its sting*

*I met a North Vietnam veteran
and I shook his hand*

*And shared the battle's memories
and learned to understand*

*How they respected Anzacs,
and our courage they knew well.*

*Unlike the Yanks we would fight them
through all the fires of hell.*

*And so I'm getting ready
to find the men we killed*

*And when we do I know
there'll be new bridges we can build...*

The healing of relationships, reconciliation, the helping hand of friendship transcending and burying animosity. How our fractured, troubled world longs to experience reconciliation, true peace, and neighbourliness locally, nationally and internationally.

I asked Jim for his thoughts about the importance of community, knowing of his involvement in several community organisations in Wandin where he lives. He reflected on potential personal benefits:

“I think community involvement would solve a tremendous number of problems people have, especially in their mental health, because involvement in a community group – relating to other human beings – takes your mind off your own problems, because there's always someone worse off than you.

“It's good for the human soul to share in relationships that build and grow, where people stand by one another when they're having problems. And even though I'm not religious that's exactly what Jesus was talking about in his story about the 'good Samaritan'. It's a masterpiece about how we should be as human beings – relating to other people, forgiving them, understanding them, trying to tolerate them, and working to help them.

“Community is the most important thing. The only thing that will keep this country strong is to have strong communities. When you watch countries divide like the USA – we don't want to go down that path – it's so important that we get involved in our local communities. Get to know people – have discussions with them – care for each other – do our part to help build thriving, caring community together.”

“

It's good for the human soul to share in relationships that build and grow, where people stand by one another when they're having problems. ”



Mooroolbark Umbrella Group

12th Annual Forum



by Randall Bouchier



Someone commented on Barney McAll's recent return to Mooroolbark for the Mooroolbark Umbrella Group's (MUG) twelfth annual forum: "The event was magnificent ... had real soul and moments of magic. Thanks!" And Barney himself wrote: "I had a ball! Thanks so much for the European/Mooroolbarkian professionalism and class."

If you weren't at the Mooroolbark Community Centre for the forum, you're perhaps asking: *Barney who?*

Barney grew up in Mooroolbark before going on to international acclaim as a jazz pianist, composer, arranger and session muso. Rather than repeat his accomplishments or attempt to capture details of his amazing discography, set yourself for a long read with a simple Google search.

During a wonderful October 17 evening Barney shared music and story. He reflected on his childhood growing up in Pembroke Road and attending Pembroke Primary prior to Pembroke High.

He reminded us of the creative energies he found himself surrounded by in Mooroolbark – people such as acclaimed jazz drummer Len Barnard (Galapagos Duck, and much more), who'd drop in with LPs for Barney to explore, Bruce Rowland (of *Man From Snowy River* film score fame) and Jocelyn Moorhouse (who went on to direct *Muriel's Wedding*, *The Dressmaker* and other films).

Blues musician Archie Roach lived for a time in Mooroolbark. Barney recalled Abba staying as guests at Bruce Rowland's home, and his mum cooking a vegetarian meal for Joan Baez when she was visiting Mooroolbark. This hub of creative energy is close to Bickleigh Vale estate, the product of the extraordinarily talented landscape designer Edna Walling. There must have been something in the water!

Using the big screen as a backdrop, Barney illustrated stories of his life with photos of Mooroolbark and his early life with family and friends. There was a sense of *déjà vu*, with photos of Barney performing years ago in the Community Centre – on one occasion winning the Express, Mr Bojangles Talent Quest in 1980 and later performing with a local band.

In between solo performances, Barney shared the story of his journey – heady days playing in New York with some of the greatest jazz musicians of their time, travels across the globe, and performances in front of huge, thousands-strong audiences or at intimate iconic jazz venues.

All in all, it was an amazing night which continues to live on in rich memory. For me, the evening's highlight was Barney's Mooroolbark improvisation – his virtuosity expressing his nostalgia and sentimental gratitude in what amounted to a love song to Mooroolbark.

Mooroolbark is not only the place of Barney's origins, but also the title of his most acclaimed album. *Mooroolbark* won multiple awards for best jazz album – 2015 ARIA Award, *The Age* Music Award, Australian Independent Record Labels Association Award and the 2016 Australian Jazz Bell Award.

Thanks go to Yarra Ranges Council for financial help and promotion, and to the MCC staff for their amiable and professional assistance on the night. A post on the YRC website read: "A most enjoyable evening. Barney has matured so much since the last time I heard him play. Umbrella Group, job well done!"

As well as bringing notable guests to Mooroolbark each year at the forum, since 2011 MUG has presented 38 awards to people who have contributed to the wellbeing and the common good of our town. This year, before Barney's presentation, three locals received Quiet Achiever medallions. I've briefly paraphrased the introductions to each award below.

Quiet Achiever: Lynne Burt

MUG executive member Andrea Higgins introduced Lynne Burt whose passion for the music education of children played out over a long teaching career, including many years before her retirement at Bimbadeen Heights primary school. She was noted for her training of choirs, her time given generously in extracurricular opportunities for her students, and attending musical conferences overseas at her own cost.

Former principal Leigh Johansen wrote of her: "Lynne immediately impressed. Her passion for music education shone through in her classroom where it was always a most interesting and welcoming place that children looked forward to going to, not only for their weekly music classes but also for the lunchtime music groups – choirs, marimba, xylophone and recorder groups."

A former student contributed: "Lynne was my favourite teacher at school. The music room was a place of colour and creativity. It was a place of joy and imagination."

Lynne's passion for music education obviously didn't end upon retirement – she continues to informally and formally mentor and teach other music teachers.



Quiet Achiever award winners (left to right): Lynne Burt, Oliver Beaumont and Tracey Langridge

Quiet Achiever: Oliver Beaumont

The second Quiet Achiever award went to local solicitor Oliver Beaumont who was introduced by another member of the MUG executive, Helen vander-Heyden. Helen reflected on Oliver's help in the previous year during the establishment of Mooroolbark's Community Garden. She commented: "Oliver's advice, support and friendship have been invaluable and I believe the garden would not be where it is today if it wasn't for his dedication and assistance in all matters legal.

"For over 20 years, Oliver has quietly, yet profoundly helped shape our community – by offering his time, expertise and heart to help make Mooroolbark a better place for us all. He has been a behind-the-scenes force supporting countless organisations, offering pro bono assistance and helping to ensure that our community initiatives thrive."

I remember when MUG was being established, Oliver worked closely with executive member Andrew Lang as we modified model rules to reflect that MUG was an "organisation of member organisations committed to Mooroolbark's wellbeing". I've also known of needy local residents to whom Oliver offered pro bono help at various times.

Quiet Achiever: Tracey Langridge

I introduced the final Quiet Achiever – Tracey Langridge. Tracey started volunteering after her children were born, helping with playgroups, school council, tuckshop, food bank etc.

You might recall that I wrote an article in the previous Living Today about Treasured Babies – a wonderful local volunteer group serving bereaved families across Australia. Tracey volunteers two days each week providing important administrative assistance.

Wednesdays are devoted to leading a team of volunteers in Habitat for Humanity's ReStore in Kilsyth. Habitat writes: "Tracey does a wonderful job managing the shop, ensuring volunteers perform their roles. She always has a friendly word to say and has a real heart for the community. She does a great job, and we are very grateful for her help."

In addition, she serves as treasurer for the Community Garden along with helping organise the Garden's monthly Sunday markets.

Tracey describes what is a common experience of so many who volunteer: "If you can give time or talents to help generously, that's what life's about! It's good for them; it's good for me!"

Keep your ear to the ground – make sure you don't miss future forums!



Community House establishment

by Renae Jones

Discover the Mooroolbark Community House – your new place for community connection!

Exciting things are happening in Mooroolbark! The Mooroolbark Community House is currently being established at the Mooroolbark Community Centre, and once open it will be a place for locals to connect, learn and grow together. This new space will offer a variety of social, educational, recreational and support activities designed to enrich our community life.

Having undertaken several roles in the Mooroolbark Community over the past 10 years, I've witnessed that a lot of people in Mooroolbark are looking for ways to connect with their community, whether through volunteering, joining a local organisation or sports club, or coming to free community events. We look forward to the Community House offering new opportunities for these connections to flourish and build on all the wonderful things already present in the Mooroolbark community.

To kick things off, we hosted an information night with the aim of recruiting people for the steering committee. We had a great turnout of local residents, all with great enthusiasm for this new venture. Some of them were

interested in the steering committee; others were interested in specific programs or events. We brainstormed ideas for the house, with arts, crafts, social groups and music being common themes.

The best ideas come from the heart of the community, which is why we're inviting you to share your thoughts on what you'd like to see at the Community House. What programs, workshops or events would make a difference to you? This is your opportunity to shape a space that truly reflects the needs of Mooroolbark. We'll be hosting two morning teas in November/December for the community to attend. If you can't get to a morning tea, we'll also be releasing an electronic survey or you can email us.

The house will begin to offer programs to the public in February 2025 and we can't wait to see you there!

Mooroolbark Community House is funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, and supported by the Yarra Ranges Council and Mooroolbark Umbrella Group. We are currently in the office Monday to Thursday 9am-3pm. Email us at coordinator@mch@mooroolbarkumbrellagroup.org



Christmas in C



Mooroolbark Community Carols

Friday 6 December, 7.00pm
Hookey Park

Get ready to kick off the festive season with the Mooroolbark Community Carols by Candlelight on Friday 6 December at 7.00pm in Hookey Park, Charles Street, Mooroolbark. Hosted by the Croydon-Mooroolbark Lions Club, this event promises an evening of Christmas cheer for the whole family.

Join us for a delightful night featuring local school choirs, a community choir and the talented musicians of the Croydon Brass Band. And guess who's coming to town? Santa will be there to entertain the little ones and spread some holiday magic.

Feeling hungry? No worries! The Montrose Scouts will be firing up the BBQ, serving delicious sausages, while the Mooroolbark Girl Guides will be selling popcorn for those craving something sweet. And for those in need of a warm beverage or a slice of cake, we'll have tea, coffee, soft drinks and cakes available too.

So, grab your picnic blanket, bring some tasty treats to share and join us on the lawn for a wonderful evening with your fellow Mooroolbark residents. This event is all about coming together in the spirit of Christmas, and we can't wait to see you there!

The Road to Bethlehem

9-12 December, from 6.00pm
Edinburgh College

The Road to Bethlehem, an interactive walkthrough play, will be presented again this year at Edinburgh College, starting from 6.00pm, with 45-minute walking tours every six minutes, starting from 7 pm, including this year an AUSLAN session.

Full of live real-life animals, amazing sets and lots of family fun for all ages, *The Road to Bethlehem* tells the story of the birth of Jesus. It has been running annually for over 25 years and has multiple locations across Australia. Pram and wheelchair accessible. Food available and kids' activities begin at 6.00pm.

Book your free tickets and for more information visit roadtobethlehem.org/event-details or get free tickets on the night for sessions after 7.30pm. Bookings open from November 25. Pram and wheelchair accessible.

roadtobethlehem.org



Mooroolbark



Christmas Light Show

13-24 December, from 9-11pm
Life Ministry Centre

Life Ministry Church welcomes you to the Christmas Light & Sound show for 2024!

The free event will be held from 13-24 December from 9.00-11.00pm every night at Oxley Stadium, 15-49 Old Melbourne Road, Chirnside Park. Shows run for 25 minutes, beginning at 9.00pm, 9.30pm, 10.00pm and 10.30pm. Picnic on the grass or watch from your car while tuning in to 89.5 FM. Free entry and light refreshments available. No smoking or alcohol permitted.

The Life Ministry Church lights began in 2006 with a desire to provide the community with a spectacular event that families can come and enjoy each year during the special season of Christmas. We also want to remind people of the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of Jesus Christ. Donations are welcome and will go to help support the Amari school in Uganda.

For more information and updates on shows, including weather updates, follow [facebook.com/lmclights](https://www.facebook.com/lmclights)

Santa is coming to Mooroolbark!

Various dates and times
Shop 16, Mooroolbark Terrace

Get ready to meet Santa and snap your own photos – for free! Santa will be making his way to Mooroolbark this December, and you're invited to capture the festive fun at one of our Free DIY Santa Photo sessions.

Bring your phone or camera and visit Santa at Shop 16, The Terrace Shopping Centre, where his elves have been creating a magical Christmas scene perfect for your photos.

Friday 6 December: Santa arrives in Mooroolbark! Photos at Shop 16 from 6.00pm before Santa heads to the Mooroolbark Christmas Carols at Hookey Park.

Saturday 14 December: 11.00am – 12.30pm

Tuesday 17 December: 11.00am – 12.30pm

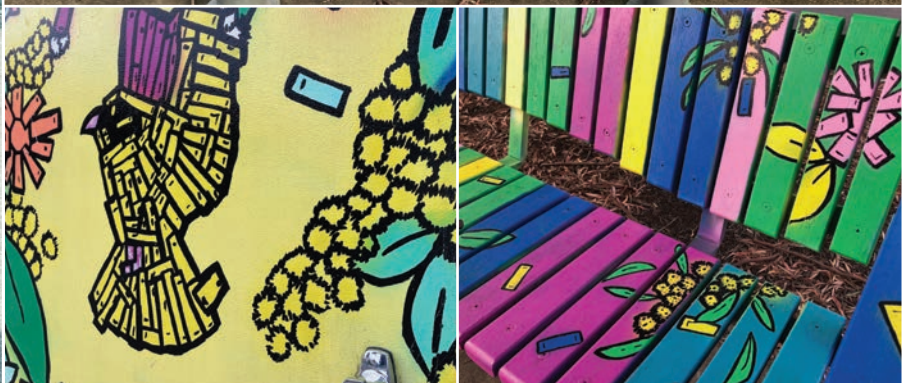
Saturday 21 December: 2.00pm – 3.30pm

Monday 23 December: 11.00am – 12.30pm

While you wait to see Santa, keep the kids entertained with Christmas activities provided by Mixed Makers Studio. They can also post their letters to Santa in Santa's Mailbox – just remember to include a clear name and address so Santa can reply!

Stay up-to-date with all the holiday cheer at www.mooroolbark.vic.au or on the Mooroolbark Facebook Page.

Let the Christmas magic begin!



The Kingfisher, Honeyeater and Floral Elements

Artwork by Tricia 'Vandal' Van Der-Kuyp



by Yolande Pickett

If you take a stroll through Mooroolbark, starting at Red Earth Park, wandering through the shops and finishing at the Mooroolbark Community Garden, you'll encounter a vibrant trail of abstract artworks created by the artist Tricia 'Vandal' Van Der-Kuyp.

A proud Wiradjuri woman and Melbourne-based **Bundadhaany** (artist), Vandal is known for her bold, colourful, and uplifting artworks that celebrate Australian flora and fauna. In 2019, her talent was showcased on a Melbourne Art Tram, and she has since contributed to community art trails across Victoria and published a colouring book inspired by her Aboriginal heritage.

In Mooroolbark, Vandal brought us *The Kingfisher* (on the Red Earth BBQ) and *The Honeyeater* (on the signal box near the former Three Beans Cafe) – joyous tributes to the Yarra Ranges' natural beauty. These pieces were connected by three bench seats, *Floral Elements*, forming an art trail along Brice Avenue. While two benches have since been relocated during recent pathway upgrades, don't worry – they've found new homes, extending the art trail to the Mooroolbark Community Garden.

Alternatively, why not start your journey at the Community Garden? You might even pick some fresh produce before following the art trail to Red Earth Park for a BBQ lunch with *The Kingfisher*!

A Mooroolbark Traders and Community Group initiative



The Journey

Part 6 of our ongoing kids story by Ross MacKay

"The soggy sandwiches!" I suddenly exclaimed while trying not to trip over the miniature elephants that had suddenly appeared on the path. "You never explained to me about why the soggy sandwiches were so important to all of this." I waved around indicating the various improbable things that were currently happening while ducking to avoid another custard pie that was inexplicably flying through the air.

"Um..." said Abythwrd.

"Yes, that, well..." said Nuttingale, suddenly very interested in anything that made avoiding eye contact with me more achievable.

We had been walking through the forest for a couple of hours since my sudden burst of bravado. That had turned out to be an effect of the Confusion Fusion Reactor – sorry, *Morag*. I had thought it a little weird that I'd willingly launched myself into an 'adventure' of certain DOOM when I had historically avoided any form of peril. I had once refused to get out of bed for fear of stepping on the Lego brick that had gone missing the night before.

Abythwrd and Nuttingale had very graciously offered to come with me. I had thought this very kind until they noted that they had nothing better to do and some entertainment would be nice since the telly was broken*. Even if it hadn't been, the confusion caused by Morag was generally more interesting anyway.

"It wasn't totally my fault," blurted out Abythwrd, "I mean, they were going to..."

We were suddenly interrupted by a loud cough from the bushes.

"Hello, is someone there?" I asked. This may have seemed a rather pointless question but there had been that sneezing sycamore tree we'd passed earlier.

"At last!" A wrinkly old man stepped out of the bushes. "I've been trying to get your attention for the past 5 minutes, I was beginning to wonder how loud I'd have to cough – starting to get a sore throat!"

"You could have just, you know, stepped out of the bushes and said hello," Nuttingale suggested.

A blank look passed over the man's face. "Yeah, well that wouldn't have been quite so dramatic would it? OH MY GOODNESS, LOOK OUT!" He leaped at me batting something away with a ferocity that seemed to indicate great peril.

"Sorry, a fly was about to land on your nose."

"Allan," said Nuttingale, "this is the old man I was telling you about. He's unfortunately suffering from Acute Dramatitis."

"A skin condition? What's that got to do with anything?"

"No not *dermatitis*! Dramatitis – it simply means he has a tendency to over-dramatise things or uncontrollably turn a simple situation into something overly dramatic. Like saying hello."

"OH NO, I think it's going to RAIN! Oh woe is me, Oh... no, it's passed"

"What, the rain? I didn't see any," I said

"Ah no, young lad, the bout of Dramatitis," explained the old man, "it comes and goes – a bit like when you have a cold – you might have a fit of sneezing and coughing but not all the time. Thank goodness for that – It's exhausting being dramatic all the time! Hello, my name's Herman."

"I'm Allan – so this Dramatitis, is that part of the confusion? Morag's doing?"

"Who on Aquatia is Morag?" said Herman, baffled. "No, it's to do with this Confusion Fusion Reactor thingummybob. Seems to have replaced all our usual illnesses – like cold and flu – with a bunch of ridiculous illnesses. Dramatitis being one of them."

"I had Shoutyitis last week," said Nuttingale.

"You always have Shoutyitis," muttered Abythwrd.

"What's Shoutyitis?" I asked.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS, YOU DIMWITTED HUMAN!?" screamed Nuttingale. "Oh, my, sorry it seems to be lingering and now I've got a touch of Rudeitis also. IDIOT!"

I turned back to Herman in the hope that maybe I could enlist his help in finding our way to Morag. "I was wondering if you might be able to guide us to Mora... I mean the Confusion Fusion Reactor?"

"Oh that's easy, just follow the river till you get to the Cave of Dripping Oozy Stuff."

"Where's the river?"

"You're standing in it."

I looked around. The path we were on was rocky and wound its way through the forest, but of a river I could see no sign. Unless...

"It's a dried up riverbed! So we are on the right track!" I said.

"Kind of... but the river is actually up there." Herman motioned to the sky. I looked up to find that about 10 metres above the dried river bed, flowed the river. It was impossible, but the river was flowing through the sky matching the path of the riverbed but separated by a gap of 10 metres. I could see fish in it.

"Ah, OK! So we follow this floating river till we get to the Cave of whatting what stuff?"

"Dripping Oozy Stuff, but that's not important right now – what's important is how to get into the cave – it's up there too!"

I followed the floating river with my eye and saw that in a short distance the river disappeared... into a cave... also floating in the air. It was impossible to get to – but I had to, it was the only way to get to Morag and sort this whole thing out. Most importantly to get back to Mum in the supermarket back home – *anything* just to get back to normalcy! But it seemed impossible!

"Impossible maybe," said Nuttingale doing that whole mind reading thing again. I wondered if maybe she had mind-reading-itis. "But impossible is what we specialise in these days. We'll figure a way for you to get up there even if we have to fire you out of a cannon."

"Or a slingshot," said Abythwrd with what seemed like far too much glee.

The wind began to whip up dramatically.

"The wind whips up dramatically!" boomed Herman, seemingly overcome with Dramatitis once again. "Change is afoot, BEHOLD he rises, DOOM will meet its match and the world as we know will NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN!"

"Oh ignore him," said Nuttingale, "but he's right about one thing – the wind *is* changing. I'd recognise that smell anywhere!... I think we're going to be OK... the *Winds of Coincidence* are coming!"

* grown legs and run away, but it amounted to the same thing.

Expect the Unexpected

Adapted from Greg Williams,
Speaking of Life



We typically don't like the unexpected. We don't like it when our car unexpectedly refuses to start, or our computer unexpectedly crashes. Worse, an unexpected loss of a job creates great turmoil and loss of personal confidence. And we certainly don't like unexpected health difficulties. But these are the realities we face, and we quickly learn to expect the unexpected along with all the frustration and heartache it can bring.

However, not all things unexpected are bad. An unexpected gift or pay rise can turn a sour day around in a hurry. I'm sure we can all remember with joy unexpected blessings that came our way, large or small.

So, here's a question: What should we expect from God? Is he full of unexpected surprises?

The Bible seems to present ... well, an unexpected answer to that question. We are presented with a God who is unchanging, yet at the same time full of unexpected surprises.

Listen to Psalm 107, the paradox of God's unchanging nature described by images of unexpected natural events.

You should praise the LORD for his love and for the wonderful things he does for all of us. Honour the LORD when you and your leaders meet to worship.

If you start doing wrong, the LORD will turn rivers into deserts, flowing streams into scorched land, and fruitful fields into beds of salt. But the LORD can also turn deserts into lakes and scorched land into flowing streams. If you are hungry, you can settle there and build a town. You can plant fields and vineyards that produce a good harvest.¹

1. Psalm 107:31-37 (CEV)

It's interesting how the psalm refers to God's love but then equates that with images of great reversals. It is apparent that God is bringing the unexpected. But did you notice the direction of the unexpected? It was always meant for blessing. We can expect rivers of wrong to run dry, while also expecting the deserts of God's children to blossom.

With God, there is always good news ahead. Rivers run dry, but he refills them. Deserts become springs of water. It's easy to look around and get discouraged by the state of the world, so God tells us to lift our eyes to him. He is the restorer of all things. He is the one who works his blessings in unexpected ways.

God loves to surprise with the unexpected – it's part of the mystery of who he is.

Speaking of Life is a public resource video on the Grace Communion International website: gci.org/videos/media-speaking-of-life/

This magazine is sponsored by Grace Communion Mooroolbark (previously known as Mooroolbark Christian Fellowship), a congregation of Grace Communion International. If you would like more information or pastoral support, our local congregational contact is Matthew Gudze on (03) 9737 0126.

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Love thy skater

by Max Jeganathan
Centre for Public Christianity

Max Jeganathan muses on skatepark etiquette and how caring for your fellow skateboarder rules the ramps at his local park

As spring continues into summer my family is embracing the joy of public parks. They come with epic playgrounds, elaborate bike paths and sometimes a skatepark.

The community skatepark has always seemed a bit high-risk to me. An unregulated labyrinth of concrete designed to break bones. However, with my kids' love of riding and scooting and my newfound commitment to free-range parenting thanks to Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation*, skateparks are now part of our outdoor repertoire. They've also become a surprising source of moral inspiration.

Skatepark folk span a broad diversity of ages, cultures, socio-economic backgrounds and experience. The biggest challenge that arises from this epic melting pot of competence is, of course, avoiding collisions. Yet somehow, it works. There are plenty of falls, but curiously almost no collisions.

I studied the ecosystem carefully using my meagre expertise in geometry and physics, without success. After reflecting for a little longer, I discovered their secret. It's an ancient piece of moral wisdom that I first came across in the Bible: everyone looks out for those who are less able and more 'at risk' than them.

Four-year-olds look out for two-year-olds. Twelve-year-olds look out for eight-year-olds. And the teens and 20-somethings look out for everyone. One particular skater summed it up. He was around 20. Long hair, backwards cap, fast and very skilful. On several occasions, he was (through no fault of his own) about to collide with a younger, less able skater/rider/scooter. Every time, he threw himself into a strategic crash to avoid the other kid. I thanked him for 'dodging the kids'. He smiled and thanked me back. He understood that skateparks only work when we look out for those who are more vulnerable than us. I'm pretty sure the principle extends to all of life.

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Skater image by monkik from The Noun Project

CELEBRATE *Christmas*

6.00-7.00pm, Tuesday 24 December

Service includes carols, skits & communion

Grace Communion Mooroolbark
125 Brice Avenue, Mooroolbark

All are welcome



For other local church Christmas services please visit their websites below:

Life Ministry Church
lifeministry.church

Mooroolbark Baptist Church
mbc.org.au

Mooroolbark Salvation Army Corps
salvationarmy.org.au/locations/victoria/v330/mooroolbark-corps

Mooroolbark Uniting Church
mooroolbark.unitingchurch.org.au

St Peter Julian Eymard, Mooroolbark Parish
spje.org.au

upcoming events



celebrate
mooroolbark 2025
festival

Sunday
16 March 2025
10am to 4pm

Hookey Park,
Station Street,
Mooroolbark

FREE
community
event

Enjoy a fun filled day with
entertainment
activities
food, stalls
and more

celebratemooroolbark.com



YARRA
VALLEY
Wool and
Handicrafts
SHOW

The Yarra Valley Wool and Handicrafts Show is back for its sixth year for 2025!

Our annual show is the perfect destination for discovering a diverse range of yarns, from hand-dyed skeins to unique fibres, all crafted by talented artisans from near and far.

Whether you're an experienced knitter, a crocheter looking for inspiration, or just curious about craft, there will be something for everyone.

For more information and the 2025 competitions please visit: bit.ly/3XLqCHW

Mooroolbark Miniature Railway (mmr.org.au)

4th Sunday each month in 2025 (except December), 11am-4pm, lunch break between 1-2pm when trains and the kiosk close. Train rides are \$3.00 each, with children under four riding free.

Community Garden Market



8 and 22 December and the last Sunday of every month 9am - 2pm, 8 Station Street, Mooroolbark (opposite Hookey Park)

Jellis Craig

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