



THE ROCK

Official Newsletter of

ST. John's Uniting Church, Millowl, Phillip Island

www.cowes.unitingchurch.org.au

Easter 2024 Volume 69

St John's Acknowledges the Boon Wurrung as the First Peoples of Millowl

Reflection - Through the wilderness

Many times in our lives we encounter phases of disorientation. We might move house, change jobs, become parents, suffer illness, retire, or be grieving the death of a loved one. These events shift us from being sure of the rituals and rhythms of life, to feeling like we are in the wilderness, for a time, sometimes a long time and it can be a difficult place. As we emerge we are changed, and we find a new way of being, a reorientation to living as our world takes on a new order and meaning.

In our lives of faith, before we enter Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter, we are invited to walk in the wilderness of Lent for forty days. Lent can be a time of deliberate disorientation. We take on a new discipline, or give up something, to disrupt the usual order of our days and allow us to be present to the Spirit as company and guide. This year we are walking with the Psalms. We're invited to make creative responses to our daily praying of the Psalm through music, art, words, dance or whatever other expression we choose. Meeting each week in study groups allows us to share our wilderness experiences and responses and to learn more about the Psalms and their place in a life of faith.

We will meet over a meal on Maundy Thursday, creatively sharing our journey.

Good Friday remembers the biggest disruption and disorientation for us in our Christian tradition: the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus. Extinguishing the light of the world. The triumph of violence and fear over love. The corrupting force of earthly power over God's will for the world. Along with the women around Jesus, we wait and wait at the foot of the cross in the wilderness of despair. This year we will bring our lament to the cross: the crisis of our planet, the continuation of war and violence, the persistence of poverty and the perversion of abusive political power.

Through Holy Saturday we will wait, leaning into the keening of grief and loss.

On Easter morning we will emerge and celebrate as children of the resurrection. Having walked through the wilderness of Lent, we can begin again (and again) to be reorientated to living in the mystery of surprising love that will not be defeated. May it be so, Amen. **Rev Jennie Gordon**

Services at St John's Sunday

8.45am Contemplative Service Circle, 10.15am Sunday Service

& anytime on-line via our Website Service

Good Friday 9am & Christmas Day Service 9am



The Rock is the official newsletter of St. John's United Church, Cowes. Its purpose is to provide a readable, informative & challenging read for the members of St. John's congregation, our Shearwaters (holiday members) and other interested friends. Members and friends are invited to contribute articles by the deadlines listed below. Late submissions may not be possible to publish.

Articles to be submitted, with pictures, to news@cowesuc.org.au or posted to PO Box 600, Cowes, 3922

The views expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Minister, St John's Church Council or the Editor

Printed by Vibe Printing, PO Box 239, Cowes, Vic 3922. 0407 266 271. phillipislandvibe@outlook.com

Pentecost 2024 Edition - Deadline: 16th June - Published: 7th July 2024.

Advent 2024 - Deadline: 06th October - Published: 27th October 2024.

Easter 2025 - Deadline: 09th February - Published: 09th March 2025.

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Ron Owen Clive Smith André Whitton Linda Livett



Psm Warren Faye Haslam Janet Owen



Reverend Jennie Gordon (Jennie) Jim Murray Church Council Consultant

Church Council is happy to report that at our October meeting we co-opted Faye Haslam back onto Council for twelve months. We farewelled Ken Linton and welcomed Clive Smith back and Pam Warren joined us a new member.

Our new meeting agenda that we decided to trial at the start of 2023 proved to be very successful with our smaller committees providing important and informative information to Church Council. We will continue with this format until the end of June when we review it and decide whether to continue with this system.

We invite all members of our Congregation to attend any of the meetings to see first-hand what is discussed and accomplished and maybe join us as a contributor or become a Church Councillor.

Jennie held a Safe Church Training session after the council meeting in January. This was received well by all who attended, and it confirmed how important it is for us all to understand our responsibilities as a member of St Johns Congregation. There will be another opportunity to attend a training session at a later date.

Ann Reynolds CC Secretary

Shearwater Sunday

They 'fly' in and land here, where they return to their nests (ok – to their holiday homes) for various times each year. Our annual Shearwater Sunday on November 5th was a wonderful celebration. It was great to meet many Shearwater members who make up a significant part of our congregation. There were many who couldn't make it, but sent apologies, most of them we've caught up with in the months since.

Our Shearwaters are an important part of our community, just by being present and connected, and bringing news and greetings from their home congregations. Some of them were also involved in the service. A reading of Junette Schoell's poem, '*Shearwaters, Grossard Point*' was a beautiful way to begin worship. Suzanne Swan brought our gospel reading and Margaret McKay led us in prayer. We all enjoyed catching up over a delicious BBQ lunch.

Jennie Gordon



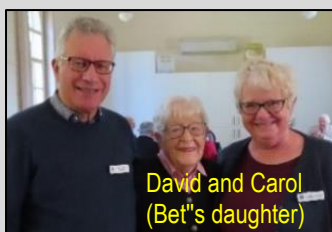
Jennie with Ed and Junette Schoell



Julie Houghton, Allan and Suzanne Swan



David and Carole Macnamara, Alison & Keith Head



David and Carol (Bet's daughter)



Cathie Robie and Margaret McKay



Hilary, Glenys (Morrie's daughter), Morrie Spooner, Hamish

Community Meal Food Distribution

Each week a group of our Community Meal Volunteers collect bread from Bakers Delight and bread, fruit and vegetables from Coles and Aldi. A group of hard working volunteers use some of this produce to create the wonderful Community Meal each Monday night during the school term. Some of this produce goes towards the superb Christmas Dinner that was served on Christmas Day last year.

Each Monday afternoon Judy Rogers and Brian Baker sort through the remainder of the food for distribution to those attending the Meal and to those who come specifically to collect fruit and vegies. Each week the fridges are full of crates containing an assortment of food.

The tasks include sorting the items into categories as one crate can often contain many different types of fruit and vegetables. We need to assess the quality and condition of each item. Anything not considered fit for distribution is put aside for the pigs and chooks. Large items are cut into smaller sizes, unbagged in some cases and sometimes we repackage into small bags or containers to ensure that as many as possible can access as much as possible. While some fruit is not in perfect condition, it is suitable for stewing or making chutney.

From time to time we will receive a large supply of eggs, and usually there is at least one or more broken ones in each carton. We need to sort them into 6 packs and throw out the soggy cartons.

The food is then placed in some sort of order in the foyer for collection. Many may not be aware that the food is still collected during school holidays and sorted in the same manner but placed in the Church Hall for distribution at around 4 pm



Brian Baker

Continues over page...

St Johns Uniting Church Community Meal put on a Christmas feast to remember.

The tables were all set, done up like Christmas Day, because it was! A team of more than 15 volunteers had worked for days preparing, cooking, baking and making. After the morning worship service, there was a quiet pause, a few reflective moments of wonder, and then our dinner guests arrived, and the party was on.

Christmas lunch, coordinated by St John's Uniting Church Community Meal was a wonderful celebration; a big and noisy event, where everyone who came had a place at the table. Friends and strangers merged into table groups of chatter and chomping.

Approximately 60 people were seated and served: nibbles, charcuterie board, seafood entrée, roast meats and vegies with salad for main course and then the quintessential Christmas pudding with custard, and chocolates for those who still had space. Each one left with the gift of a Christmas glass with hand-made biscuits and a blessing.



Comments as guests were leaving, and those we have received since are notes of deep appreciation. "Probably the best Christmas dinner I've ever had!" "Thank you to all who gave their time to make this special day wonderful!" "You gave me somewhere good to share this day, it's not an easy time for me."

This meal was made possible by a generous donation from the Phillip Island and San

Remo Rotary Club and the immeasurable contribution of time and talents of the volunteers. Planning had been going on for weeks. Some spent almost all of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day working in teams to prepare the food and the space. PICAL took bookings and allowed us to use their new kitchen, frequently traversing through the gate between our properties.

Thank you all.



The church was open, candles lit, and some took advantage of the quiet space, while others not connected with the meal wandered in and simply sat in the stillness. It was particularly hard to celebrate the birth of Jesus this year, with so much struggle and violence happening in and around his birthplace and other places in the world, including those closer to home.

This Christmas meal was a beautiful reminder that when we gather and make space at the table, when we listen to each other's stories and share in delicious food so carefully prepared, we are blessed to be celebrating life together and sharing the gift of love, the essence of Christmas.

**Rev. Jennie
Gordon**
St John's
Uniting Church,
Coves





When Clive first asked for expressions of interest in Kids Hope I thought “I can do that!” Fast forward to my first meeting with my student, and the thought changed to “oh my goodness, what have I done?!!” It was daunting. But, I’d done the training, had the support of Clive and the team, and most importantly I knew people were praying for us.

And now I’m really glad to have had the opportunity to meet and work with two young boys. My first student would spend all his time video gaming if he could, so I focussed on outdoor activities, and we discovered a shared interest in geology. I was very sad when he moved away, but I hope he remembers our time together fondly. He’ll always have a place in my heart.

My second student has proved to be considerably more of a challenge. In many ways school is the least of his worries, my goal is just to let him know he’s special, to love and care for him, and to give him a sense of self-belief so he can make up the lost academic ground when life is kinder to him. Every week we usually share a laugh or two while we talk and read and play games or try to beat our record number of throws and catches to each other; we spend some time on schoolwork (which he has a number of strategies to try to avoid!) and sometimes do jigsaws or other sneaky ‘thinking’ activities where I can give him lots of positive reinforcement. On bad days when his problems are overwhelming, I’ve just sat with him in the garden.

While we’re travelling, I email him every week. I’m very fortunate to have shared a mentoring timeslot with Lyn, she very generously takes an interest in my students while I’m away and helps them read those emails. And while I’m here she’s a great support, she’s taught me so much!

Although my student’s behaviour is sometimes quite difficult, he’s very special to me. Our time together is usually rewarding, and Clive and the rest of our team are very supportive and encouraging. I’d recommend the experience to anyone; even if you can’t work with a child, you can be part of our work by praying for mentors and praying for our students – goodness knows they need all the love and prayer we can give them.

If you’re interested in joining our team or becoming a Kidshope Prayer Partner, contact **Clive on 0419 103 942.**

If you would like to donate toward our annual subscription, contact Ruth Macintosh for details.



Helen Black

Tidal River Dec 2023

Clouds clear and white gracefully dancing on the river’s surface.

Waves, their white foam, teasing the sands edge.

Among the bushes, the tea tree flowering, white blossom, moving in the wind.

The dusk brings the scraping sounds, it’s another friendly visitor, a younger wombat this time.

We have learnt. Eskys are stacked. Rubbish is in the bins. Only clean dishes in the tubs. Will I survive the night storm, the wind and rain? So warm, so still, so quiet, inside my little cave a first time in my new swag.

There’s movement in the morning camp.

I unzip, poked my head out, wet all around me and I am cozy dry, to my surprise.

And so I sip hot tea. Sheer luxury!

Nerida Melsmith





Lesley Oakley

Phillip Island Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR)

'Asylum seekers, who are either stateless or can't be returned to their country of origin due to persecution, cannot be detained on an indefinite basis.'

This statement is the core of the ruling of the Australian High Court on the 6th November 2023. Until this ruling, Australia was the only country in the world that allowed for indefinite immigration detention. The average length of stay has been 708 days. In the U.S.A. it is 37 days and in Canada it is 22 days.

These countries have a Bill of Rights which protects the right to liberty and ensures that an arrest or detention is not arbitrary. In Australia these rights are included by reference in the Constitution. They have been ignored by successive governments in the name of security and community safety. Stories of terrible experiences and conditions in detention have been known for years.

'People in detention have been held in shocking conditions, including inadequate medical care, and left for years with no certainty, no access to the outside world, permanent family separation and no hope for the future. (This) ruling provides a pathway to dignity and safety for people in detention.'

Hannah Dickinson, Principal Solicitor, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

No-one is arguing for the release of people who have been assessed as a danger to the community and preventative legislation is the answer, but the argument that labels them all as rapists and murderers is illogical, prejudiced and ideological.

A refugee previously held in closed detention for more than seven years, who wishes to remain anonymous, said,

'Being in indefinite detention is a trauma I cannot forget. It is something terrible for any human to experience. In the middle of the night, I still wake up from nightmares and I find it hard to go outside because I feel anxious and depressed. I saw a lot of people in detention self-harm because they lost hope. Detention isolated me from my family and permanently impacted my relationships with my loved ones. Being in detention for so long has institutionalised me and makes it hard to live in the community again. But I am surviving every day and grateful for freedom.'

Refugee support does not translate into ignoring the need for a balance of the right of freedom for refugees who have offended and the safety of the Australian community. Those who pose a threat to the community by re-offending should be subject to the same legal process as Australian citizens who are sentenced to a term of detention and then entitled to release.

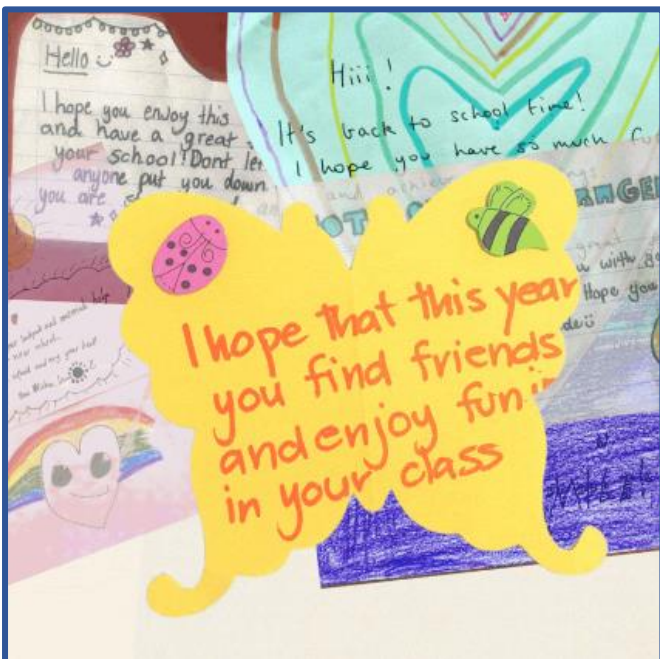
RAR groups in Victoria have continued to support Afghans attempting to find a country to accept them for settlement. There is increasing despair for their success whether they remain in Afghanistan or have fled to countries like Pakistan or Iran, where they are still in danger. Harsh treatment of women and girls, and Hazaras, by the Taliban continues unabated. An horrific report of the Taliban setting alight a bus full of Hazara passengers emerged recently. Words fail in response to this unbridled and unbelievable persecution.

The early days of school can be one of excitement and challenge. For children of migrant and refugee backgrounds there are additional challenges. These include language, culture, learning and education level and racial discrimination. And for their parents, financial pressure as well as *'all of the above'*.

The Refugee and Migrant Children's Centre (RMCC) based in Sunshine is for children and parents who are finding their way in the Australian school system. Some children commence with little or no education before they start school. They may have lived all their lives in a refugee camp. Their parents may not have had much education and certainly not in English. Children are usually placed based on their age level which may not correspond with their academic level.



RMCC offers mentoring, after-school activities and homework support, life skills, internet access and professional development to staff in schools who have migrant and refugee children in their school population. There are over 2,000 children from refugee and migrant backgrounds starting school every year.



RMCC have come up with a lovely idea of encouragement for these children - an easy way for people like you and me to write short

notes of support and caring that are given to children starting school. These notes of encouragement can be handwritten and illustrated and sent to RMCC, 21A Sun Crescent, Sunshine, Vic, 3020. Advice is to keep it simple and short and decorate it if you so wish. Examples: 'You don't have to be the best, just do your best'; 'Be brave, be kind, be happy, be you'; 'When things get tough hang in there! You can do it. Be happy'.



Donations of food and other goods are regularly taken to Friends of Refugees in Springvale. Thank you all for your generosity. The Bells group has enjoyed 'hi-vis' over the summer with many gestures of support in passing.



Plans for our garage sale in Rhyll over the Easter weekend are under way. Any donations for this fundraiser will be gratefully received. Speak to Lesley for details

With reports and pictures coming in from the many conflicts around the world it's hard not to be desensitised to it all or to be overcome with despair. Making a contribution, however modest, makes a difference to those in need and to us as givers.

The Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra of Cologne



From the Age 8/10/2000 Tour Group

This orchestra have performed at St Johns since 2000. The Chamber Orchestra consists of graduates of the most important German conservatories. Very gifted young players, who have finished their studies and wish to experience the reality of a practical musical life playing chamber music and symphonic repertoire at high level before entering their careers as soloists or as member of some philharmonic orchestra.

The program of the chamber orchestra includes works by Bach, Tchaikovski and Mozart, and are especially chosen to harmonise with the acoustics of churches and cathedrals, as well as concert halls.

The January 2024 performance represented a rare opportunity to hear some of our Victorian graduates and Germany's most talented and gifted young players, while they are on tour in Australia.

Bet Francis



Victorian & German Graduates



Christmas in July

This has been a way for me to raise the money for the postage of the shoeboxes we pack for Operation Christmas Child in September. In the past I have prepared a full Christmas dinner for 50 but now feel unable to do this and the cost makes it less profitable too. So this year I am anticipating having a **games afternoon** and afternoon tea. It is good for us to get together and have fun. I hope that you and your friends will join us at this fundraiser. There will be more details closer to the middle of July.



Lyn Francis



Coming Soon Dates for your Diary

Lunch at the Golf Club (Cowes) for the Birthday of the Uniting Church of Australia
12 noon 22nd June (or near too that date).



Singularity sings at St. John's on Sunday June 23rd at 2pm, Proceeds will go to RYDA. A rollicking, humorous, musical afternoon can be expected.



Games Afternoon & Afternoon Tea fundraiser for Operation Christmas Child – Samaritan's Purse Australia in July.

Gardens & Grounds Update Summer 2023-24

The Garden Maintenance Team have been very busy over the summer months. From September up to December the team has been working on smartening up the garden beds which surround our Church buildings.

Planting and pruning were completed in September (see previous Rock) and edging commenced in October. Many thanks to Colin and Kerry Francis and the Baker family for supplying the edging materials for these projects. The large beds now have smart new pine edging whilst the smaller Warley Avenue/Chapel Street corner bed has a new durable rubberised edge. Willing helpers made these projects possible.

At the February 2024 morning, we worked on the Memorial Tower bed and replaced the old, rotted edging with the same durable material used on the corner bed. In addition, we topped up both small beds with pebbles to hopefully reduce weeds! If you can spare an hour or two, please come along: first Monday of every month 9.30am until 12 noon.

Faye Haslam



Building Maintenance

Ron Owen



Walls of church were painted in 3 days by Paddy Mulcahy, and the church set up and refreshed for the Sunday worship. A great effort and much appreciated

Back wall fascia board and gable of church hall painted by Brian Snashall-Woodhams with Ron Owen there as safety observer.



The Big Fella poem-747

If you have ever woken in the dark on a long-haul flight and had to go to the back of the plane you will know what this is about.



*Draped as ghosts.
these Casperian travellers' journey
uniformly facing forward
individually packaged in private baggage
Masked lone rangers.
borne by silver stallion above.
everyday crumpled costumes
humanity prepaid delivered by
technology.*

Doug Williams



The Story: Nativity play

The Christmas Eve service this year was a little different. We explored the biblical basis of the Christmas story we know so well. And we laughed. A LOT! While Matthew and Luke ‘argued’ about what



happened and when, Jennie raced around collecting the various appropriately costumed characters, only to return them to their seats when one or other of the gospel writers said they weren't needed yet. It seemed the only thing they agreed on was that Mark thought the whole birth story wasn't important at all, and while John did think it was important, he did his "poetic thing". And it



turns out that some important parts of that story we know so well – for example the pivotal roles played by the innkeeper and the donkey – don't actually appear in the Bible at all!

My daughter Cate and I got to raid our dress-ups and play the forlorn donkey and innkeeper who were left out. It was great fun! And in the end we were comforted when reminded that this story keeps on unfolding; we're all part of the story of God with us.



Helen Black

Wednesday Discussion Group

The topics explored by the members of the discussion group are varied and thought provoking.



Here we are exploring another culture, early Chinese, with the help of a book scroll brought in by Terry Norquay: *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*

(*Qingming Shanghe Tu*).
Qingming means 'Peace and Order'.



One small section of the Scroll

A handscroll painting by the Song dynasty painter Zhang Zeduan (1085–1145) and copied many times in the following centuries.

An exquisite 12th century scroll originally painted on silk, depicting the many activities and people involved in celebrating the river festival of the then capital of China, Beijing

The scroll is 5.25 meters long, and in its length, there are 814 humans, 28 boats, 60 animals, 30 buildings, 20 vehicles, 8 sedan chairs, and 170 trees.

Most of it is so tiny that (as you can see) it needed a magnifying glass to truly appreciate the details.

The grand opening of Berninneit

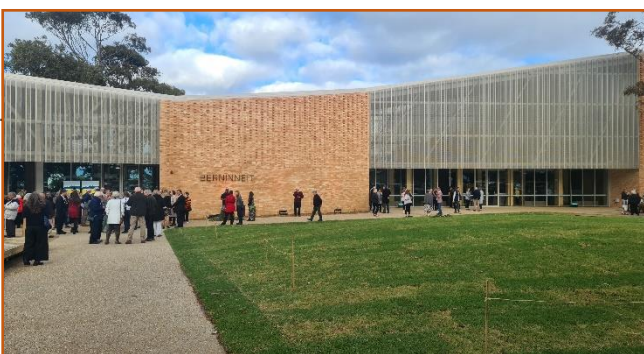
Berninneit: Our new Cultural, Arts and Library precinct. The pronunciation is easy. Think of toast, you burn 'n eat. Many of us applied for a seat at the official opening, but here's some of our members who were fortunate to attend the spectacular evening! Talk to Kerry, Jenni or Jayne to hear all about it!!



Sitting outside on the large timber platform waiting for the opening to see the new building are Jayne Mitchell and Jenni Wills.



Berninneit is the name of our new gathering place. It is the first state building to be designed and built to be passive, that is it does not require heating or cooling. A substantial saving in the future! The protruding brick work was designed to mimic the cliffs around our foreshore, but high enough to deter climbers!



Inside a cavernous hallway leads to all parts of the building and serves as a reception centre for this event. My hair provides a colourful highlight in a more natural, subdued colour scheme.



Lyn Francis

My Memory Bank - Forgetfulness

"Where's your um, that, um, the um, you know."

"That thingy you play games on!"

I realise he is probably talking about my I.Pad, but there is no point contradicting him in explaining that I write stories, do banking, follow up emails, contact friends in various ways, etc. You get the picture.

My "thingy" got me thinking about memory and what it means to have it or lose it.

Now, here's the boring part. Memory is described as a process of encoding, storing and retrieving experiences or knowledge.

I'm pondering this thought as I wander into my bedroom. I stare at my pillow and see the indentation of my head. A memory pillow. Wow what stories that could tell. I lay my head on it every night, so what secrets does it hold.

I've cried into it. I've laughed into. Thrown it in fun and bashed the living daylights out of it in frustration. This pillow has travelled with me or been left alone for days. Can you imagine what this pillow might say if it could talk?

I'm going to imagine that it does, because it is going to help me when I become forgetful. Yes, it holds all my memories.

I will unlock it. I'm not sure how yet but I'll figure it out. That is if I remember this little bit of chit-chat.

Noeline Evans





For the past four to five years I have been a subscriber to an online newsletter that is called *Future Crunch*. It was started by 3 friends who were sick and tired of only hearing bad news in either newspapers or television news. As we know, if it bleeds it leads. They decided to scour all the verifiable news sources they could throughout the world that contained good news. I have found the weekly online newsletter a fillip to me and knowing that the annual subscription I pay goes to worthy causes and is transparent, encourages me.

There are no issues with me reprinting the snippets of information they have published as I have ensured that any attributable sources have been acknowledged.

We need to hear good news that is factual in nature. Below is a selection of some of the snippets from the last few months.

Crime rates in the three biggest cities in the United States have plummeted this year. In [New York](#), murder rates are down 9.7%; [Chicago](#) has recorded an 8% drop in homicides and a 15% decline in shooting victims; and in [Los Angeles](#), violent crime is down 7.3% and the homicide rate has fallen by 24.4%. Why aren't news organisations reporting this?

In 2012, Nigeria partnered with [UNICEF](#) and aid agencies from the UK to improve access to learning for girls in six states in northern Nigeria. After ten years of implementation, girls' enrolment has skyrocketed from 1.76 million to 2.87 million, a 64% increase; gender parity increased from 0.73 to 0.97; and the proportion of girls completing primary school increased from 57% to 87%.

Egypt has become the first country to achieve 'gold tier' status on the path to elimination of hepatitis C. The country has diagnosed 87% of people living with the disease and provided 93% of those diagnosed with treatment. "Egypt's journey from having one of the world's highest rates of hepatitis C infection to being on

the path to elimination in less than ten years is nothing short of astounding." WHO

Ecuador has officially established the Camino del Jaguar ("Path of the Jaguar") Conserve to protect 213,758 hectares of the country's most biodiverse and threatened forests. The new area is home to 1,258 species of invertebrates, 2,225 species of flora and will improve the quality of life for the 12,000 families living within its boundaries. [Andes Amazon Fund](#)

Renewables have covered more than half of Germany's electricity consumption this year. From January through September, the amount of renewables in the electricity mix rose to around 52%—almost five percentage points higher than the same period last year. This is a big deal. Germany is the sixth-largest carbon emitter in the world.

[ZSW](#)

A combination of conservation and anti-poaching initiatives has resulted in the first increase in rhino populations in Africa since 2012. The latest survey estimates a population of 6,487 black rhinos, up 4.2% from 2021, and white rhinos now number around 16,803 animals, an increase of 5.6%

Bhutan has just completed its second national survey of snow leopards, covering more than 9,000 km² of habitat across the northern alpine landscape of the country. The population is up to 134 animals, an increase of 39.5% from the first survey in 2016, when 96 individuals were counted. [WWF](#)

A big conservation victory in the Caribbean - Antigua and Barbados have transformed the third isle of Redonda from desolate rock to a wildlife haven for dozens of threatened species including seabirds and endemic lizards. Piloted by a local NGO, the project launched in 2016 with the removal of goats and rats, resulting in "an exponential rise in native species." [BBC](#)

Some amazing news from [UNICEF](#), the world's largest vaccine buyer. They've just signed a long-term agreement with the world's biggest vaccine manufacturer to supply the new R21 malaria vaccine through to 2028. They expect to start immunising kids in mid-2024. This is huge—half a million children die of malaria every year

The European Commission, the European Investment Bank, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation just announced a \$1.1 billion package for one final push on

polio. The funds will cover polio vaccinations for nearly 370 million children annually and deliver vital health services to children, along with the vaccinations. 'We are about to wipe polio off the face of the Earth.' [Reuters](#)

Over the last seven years, Kenya has trained over 1,200 nurses, with a big emphasis on midwifery and maternal and neonatal care. [It's working](#). The [most recent data](#) shows that mortality for under-fives in Kenya has more than halved, there's been a significant uptick in vaccinations, 98% of women now receive antenatal care, and 89% of births are attended by a skilled provider.

Also—[from the same report](#)—the prevalence of stunting in Kenya has decreased markedly since 1993, with the greatest decrease coming between 2008 and 2022, during which stunting levels fell from 35% to 18% of all children.

A decades-long breeding project to restore giant tortoises on Española in the Galapagos Islands has transformed the barren ecosystem into a savanna. In 2020, nearly 2,000 captive-bred tortoises were released, and the population blossomed to 3,000. Giant tortoises, like beavers, are ecological architects. 'As few as one or two tortoises per hectare is enough to trigger a shift in the landscape.' [Hakai](#)

In 2012, the United Kingdom burned 64 million tonnes of coal. In 2022, it burned less than a tenth of that, 6.2 million tonnes. In 2023, coal usage [has plummeted](#) again, and the country remains on track to end coal-fired generation by October 2024. [Carbon Brief](#)

The next time you're on your phone looking at all the ways things are broken, remember this: worldwide, there are 50 million more girls in school today than there were in 2015. Completion rates for girls have increased from 86% to 89% in primary school, and from 54% to 61% in high school. There are five million more girls completing each level of education every year now compared to seven years ago. Bad news happens suddenly. Good news happens slowly. [UNESCO](#)

Between 2002 and 2022, the [Global Fund](#) saved over 59 million lives through its HIV, TB, and malaria programs. Last year the fund achieved record-breaking results: 24.5 million people received antiretroviral treatment for HIV, 6.7 million people were treated for TB, and 220 million mosquito nets were dispersed to at-risk communities.

Between 2018 and 2022, Mozambique exponentially increased its number of community health workers, from 1,000 in 2018 to 8,300 in 2022. Together, these community health workers now reach an estimated two million households countrywide, up from 240,000 households in 2018. [World Bank](#)

Between 2013 and 2021, cases of measles in Indonesia decreased by 95%, from 33.2 to 1.4 cases per million, and rubella incidence decreased by 89%, from 9.3 to 1.0 cases per million. [WHO](#)

The UK's Office of National Statistics says that crime in England and Wales has fallen to its *lowest level ever recorded*, with incidents of violent crime falling by 28% for 2023, up until June. A separate survey, which polls members of the public, suggests theft has dropped by 20% and incidents of anti-social behaviour are down 15% compared to pre-pandemic levels. [BBC](#)

services caused by Progress was set back in 2022 due to disruptions in immunisation the pandemic, but efforts are now back on track. [WHO](#)

Over the last decade, Americans with disabilities have made major progress in finding work and gaining qualifications. The share of those who held full-time employment rose from 20.9% in 2010 to 26.9% in 2021, and the share who hold at least a bachelor's degree grew from 12.2% to 17.9%. Both are the highest numbers on record. [GZero](#)

A rare bit of good news from South Africa. The proportion of people over the age of 20 years with no formal education fell from 19.1% in 1996 to 6.9% in 2022. During the same period, the proportion of people completing high school rose from 16.3% to 37.6%, and those completing tertiary education rose from 7.1% to 12.2%. [SA News](#)

Scientists say they've made the biggest breakthrough in treating cervical cancer in 20 years, using a course of cheap, existing drugs ahead of radiotherapy treatment. Trials show the new therapy cut the risk of women dying or the cancer returning by more than a third. Cancer Research UK has called the results 'remarkable.' [BBC](#)



We can make a difference!

Shalom

Colin Francis



Greenland!

Helen Black



During our arctic adventure in 2022 I was very excited to visit Greenland. The trip was delayed for two years by Covid, then by another day when our flight was cancelled because the plane was trapped by bad weather in Iceland's north. With yet more flight delays we were beginning to think we'd never get there, but we finally flew over Greenland's massive ice cap, a spectacular sight in itself.

We visited the country's southern tip where Qaqortoq, the region's biggest town, has a population of 3000. The landscape is a maze of fjords surrounded by mountains and glaciers, with the ice cap never far away, so there are no roads between settlements.



The fjords are the highway; instead of potholes the boats must dodge icebergs!

We travelled perched on the side of a fast

open boat which involved huge wind-chill, but the view was worth it 😊 The ice looks magnificent in the sunlight, brilliant white or varying shades of rich blue, bright aquamarine at the waterline. We heard a loud bang as one of the bigger ones lost a piece then rolled until it recentred itself, amazing! It was foggy trip to Hvalsoy island, eerie and a little unnerving with icebergs suddenly looming menacingly up next to the boat.

I tried not to think of the Titanic! But we made it and enjoyed exploring the 14th century Norse ruins surrounded by wildflowers, wild blueberries, and some of Greenland's thousand or so species of lichen. But then the sun asserted itself and in a grand unveiling we found ourselves surrounded by mountains and beautiful coastline.

Another highlight was fulfilling a 50-year dream of exploring a glacier. First peeking under its lip, enticingly beautiful but not safe to linger, then donning crampons to hike up its face. REALLY hard work but a proportionately amazing experience I'm so happy to have done. I stood on the edge of Greenland's ice cap!



In a week full of highlights I saw a different glacier calve and trekked along a glacial valley to yet another glacier, over multi-coloured rounded rocks and past the national flower, Willow Herb, which is the first to colonise new moraines. The final highlight was a visit to a beautiful bay full of icebergs which we kayaked around. Wonderful clean fresh air, super clear water, the only sounds the crackling of ancient air bubbles popping, melt water running off the bergs, and



occasional bird calls ... until the booming thunder of cracking and rolling bergs. We were careful not to get too close to the big ones.

And the few we saw collapse and roll were an excellent object lesson. An altogether amazing part of the world I feel fortunate to have visited.



Our Lady of the Gardenias

Curving serenity of
 silent stone
 from
 Southern shelly
 Limestone coast,
 poised
 pensive
 beneath the
 fragrant flowering gardenias.
 Singular florets of
 purest white
 come,
 crisp petals perfect
 like icing carved,
 but quickly fade.

Through our bedroom
 window
 there she is
 our white Lady,
 companion on my way,
 each morning bird visiting,
 calling me to wait
 trust
 simply be still
 and know that I am with God.

Junette Schoell 5/2/24



Jack Uebe's Story: Stay Tuned!!

Over the next issues of *The Rock* we will be bringing you hot off the press excerpts of Jack Uebe's story as recorded by Terry.



Ulli, Jack & Parents 1945

What a story it is recalling his upbringing as 'Joachim' during and post the Second World War in East Germany. Jack worked in forestry before he escaped to the west and then was

apprenticed as a merchant sailor before completing compulsory military service. After reuniting with his mother and two brothers Jack decided in 1959 to relocate to Australia for two years.

He recounts some interesting experiences at Bonegilla migrant camp, Portland as a butcher, and working for Dunlop before getting a job at sea.

Gippsland, 1 May 1974.



Jack becomes an Australian Citizen, 1974



Jack's story of meeting the love of his life, Helga. is unique and surely will bring a tear to your eye.

To quote Jack: "I had been busy paying off a mortgage on the East Malvern house but all of a sudden I got carried away and saw nothing but Helga. For the first time in my life I was in love."



STAY TUNED – MORE NEXT EDITION



Magpies

I have always loved magpies. Yes, I have been swooped by them! However, their reasons for swooping are now more understood and usually result from past treatment by people or predators.

I was only about eight when Mum sent me to the shop on the corner of the street for the . With a basket, the money and ration books, I knew that the maggies nesting in the old pine tree in the paddock next to our house would be interested.

And sure enough there they were, up in the tree, watching. I slipped the basket over my head and the handle under my chin. The maggies just looked and then flew off.

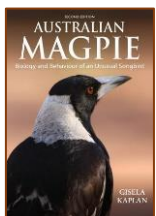


But what would happen when I was returning with the basket full and could not protect my head? Strangely they did not come back on my return. They never worried me again, although I was often sent for messages for Mum. However, I always carried the same basket at nesting time – just in case.

That family of magpies grew very friendly and often hunted for food in our backyard helping Dad's



veggie patch by taking grubs and other insects. They became at home in the yard meeting and greeting my mother at the back door where she emptied the crumbs from the tablecloth after breakfast.



Professor Gisela Kaplan has studied and written about magpie biology, behaviour, and amazing song over several years. Her book *Magpie* is a storehouse of knowledge about magpies and

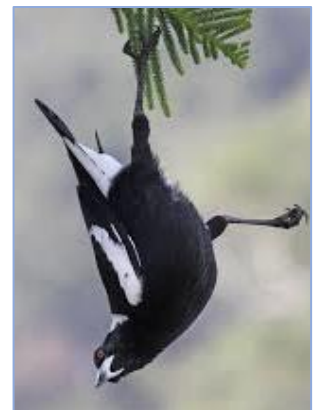


their beautiful song and caroling. Anyone who appreciates birds will certainly enjoy reading it. Part of her extensive research supports the proposal that magpies

have remarkable ability to recognise individual people. I think that this may have played a part in my adventure with the basket. Coming back with nothing on my head they recognized me as one of the friendly children next-door and did not attack. They probably knew as soon as they saw me before the basket was noted. Of course, I did not think this at the time.

We had moved to Sunbury in the summer of 1939. It was a very hard year. The drought persisted and it was very hot and dry. Water was very short and the water supply was only turned on for one hour per day. My mother would collect the water in the bath where it looked like liquid mud. She would let it settle and then boil it so that we could finally drink it.

When the rains came in April the paddocks were transformed. The grass seemingly grew overnight. The rain did wonders for the garden. There was an amazing crop of apricots on the six apricot trees. I can remember several other fruit trees as well as gum trees and a huge peppercorn tree to which Dad had attached a swing and we used the spreading branches as a tree house. The birds enjoyed the trees and the apricots and peaches. But we children certainly had our share and enjoyed the company of the birds.



Bessie Tyers

