

BULLETIN

Welcome to this week's Bulletin.

Today is National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day:
<https://aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/what-is-childrens-day/> National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day

As we gather in this special place, we acknowledge the *Yaluk-ut Weelam Clan of the Boon Wurrung People* as the traditional custodians of this land. We give thanks for their commitment to nurturing this land over many generations. We honour the sacred stories that belong to this land. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and for those emerging who will lead their communities into the future. We commit ourselves to empowering children to continue the journey of reconciliation on this land.

Robert Hoskin will lead us on this Sunday's Zoom gathering and has made this contribution to the Bulletin

When David asked me to take this worship service, I immediately looked up the readings and found this old story of Jacob crossing the Jabbok River. It resonated with me immediately, so much so that I decided to paint the image. I thought of the many times that I had made river crossings in the Kimberley, gingerly creeping over the rocks, feeling challenged as a novice four-wheel driver.

The worst time was when I drove the Boab Network's two wheel vehicle to a remote location on the May river. It had been a place where drovers had crossed with their herds on the way to Derby. When I saw the crossing, my heart sank for I knew that the clearance was barely an inch or two, if I got it right. My passengers were egging me on to make this crossing, because the camping was better on the other side. It felt great to have made the crossing and safely returning, knowing I would have some explaining to do if I had not made it and the car had to be left in this wild place

When I began to think about Jacob's story, I set it in the Kimberley, flanked by Boab trees and with rocks indicating where a person might walk without falling into the water. These rocks become symbolic of our life crossings, noting that all of us will be able to think of moments when we have made a crossing from one kind of life to another. This might have taken the form of marriage, or work, or even physical illness and recuperation. The Corona – 19 virus invites such a crossing, though many of us including myself, might feel that we are stuck in the middle of the Jabbok, or its contemporary form.

Yet, my challenge in the artwork was to illustrate the wrestling. I looked up several artists who had illustrated the story - Chagall and Redon - and tried to emulate their work. My attempt failed, for I am discovering the importance of being my own person and artist. It is not possible to copy their attempt, as it

is impossible for us to find a way through our current challenge by simply replicating the past. We must find a new way through this current crisis.

Today's theme is one of struggle and transformation. I took the theme from Jacob's life: the man with the technicolour coat who stole his brother's birthright and spent the first half of his life on the run. He eventually reached the Zabbok crossing, which became more than a physical crossing. It became symbolic of his life crossing, as he struggled with the angel probably in dream-space and eventually went on to reconcile with his brother.

According to Dr Wiki, The Zarqa River is identified with the Biblical river Jabbok where Jacob crossed on his way to Canaan. The contemporary river is far from picturesque, with raw sewage and inadequate treatment plants leaving it smelling bad and an eyesore for the community. Maybe, this simple example illustrates what we struggle with today: a world that has gone out of control and urgent needs change and transformation. Yet, we are bearing the pain of this change, as we wait in hope for such a better world. In Jacob's case, he had to reconcile himself with the fact that he stole from his more down – to – earth brother who was described as the hunter.

We, in Australia, must make our own (re)conciliation with Aboriginal people, having stolen their birthright and rightful connection to this land. I use the (re) because there never was a conciliation, but as with other colonising across the world, it was a takeover with lack of relationship. We are deeply aware of the impact of this takeover in the current struggle of “Black Lives Matter” - seeing a revisioning of what Europeans thought to be their natural right. Yet the reconciliation must go even further. It will need to be a reconciliation with the land itself and the earth of which it is part. We might see the Corona -19 virus as an enemy, taking our lives both economically and physically. But I wonder if the virus needs to be seen in a different light. Perhaps it is more of a prophetic sign and challenge, inviting us to wake up and as a nation and change our ways. We are wading through a modern- day Jabbok and wrestling with an angel.

I have written this piece before completing my painting, so will show the work in tomorrow's worship. I decided to incorporate images of the virus in the painting, enfolded in the angelic light. I am unsure what this means. Does the angel bring the virus, or is this enfolded in the light, so that we are not alone as we meet what might be a diabolic challenge? Who knows. I leave it as a question for our reflection, though we may never find the answer.

Robert

CYBER – CHURCH Sunday 2nd August at 10.30 am Bible Reading: Genesis 32: 3 -32

This Sunday Robert Hoskin will lead our church gathering. David will be a participant.

Communion will be celebrated so please have your 'wine' of choice and some bread ready.

The zoom waiting room will be open around 9.45 for some chat time, and we will 'gather' more formally at 10.30.

If you have not joined us before and would like to -- please send David your email address so that an invitation can be sent to your inbox. Saints163@bigpond.com

BIBLE STUDY GROUP – Wednesdays at 6pm.

From David. This coming week we will continue our exploration of the concept of the *Holy Spirit*. In part 3, regarding the Holy Spirit. Jenny Batten will join us for an online conversation about her work and study as a Spiritual Director. How does she go about assisting people in this regard. What is it exactly? I thought Jenny might have some interesting insights into the topic we have been studying.

If you would like to be involved, just send me your email address (saints163@bigpond.com) and I will send you an invitation.

Best wishes. David

The next PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN NETWORK OF VICTORIA meeting will be on Sunday August 23rd at 4pm via Zoom.

Topic: “Enchantment, Disenchantment, Re-enchantment. Directions toward the future of Christian faith” with Rev Dr Christopher Page.

The PCNV has a new website which can be accessed at: <http://www.pcnvictoria.org.au/>

The Newsletter has been recommenced and this latest edition is worth a read. Included is a review of Julia Baird’s latest book “ PHOSPHORESCENCE. On awe, wonder and things that sustain you when the world goes dark”. Fourth Estate (Harper Collins), Australia, 2020. Hardcover. 310 pages

THE UNITING CHURCH ASSEMBLY in partnership with the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) will host an online interfaith service on **6 AUGUST** marking 75 years since the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The service will take place on Thursday 6 August, at 6-6.45pm. Register here to join the service by Zoom: <https://actionnetwork.org/events/interfaith-service-for-nuclear-disarmament>

The service will also be shared live on the [Assembly Facebook page](#).

The UCA is a signatory, along with many other denominations and faith groups, to an open letter initiated by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition calling on Australia to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

EVERYONE NEEDS A HOME

Homelessness Week begins on Sunday, 2 August and runs through to 8 August. The theme for this year is: *Everyone Needs a Home*. Homelessness Australia is calling for support with their Social Housing Pledge campaign, where they are asking people to write to local Members of Parliament and have some resources to assist people in doing this. For further information go to homelessnessaustralia.org.au

Can you volunteer to make face masks? It is now mandatory for metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire residents to wear a face mask when outside their home but many marginalised and vulnerable people in our community are having trouble accessing them . Uniting Vic.Tas and Uniting AgeWell are calling for volunteers to sew reusable, fabric face masks to be distributed to those most in need. For the ins and outs of how to get crafty and create some safe face masks, have a look at <https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/get-involved/volunteer-with-uniting/calling-for-volunteers-to-make-face-masks/?idU=1>

The Church Council would like to thank those who have continued to support our church financially over the last few months while we have been in lockdown – it is very much appreciated. Contributions to support the work of the church through bank transfer: 013 427. Acct 3108 34465. The only identification needed is ‘ offering’ By mail: PO Box 385, Balaclava 3183

Contributions to these bulletins welcomed – please send to desleighk@ozemail.com.au (photos, articles, poems – anything you would like to share with others)



a beautiful picture by May Gibbs drawn during the Spanish Flu of 1919