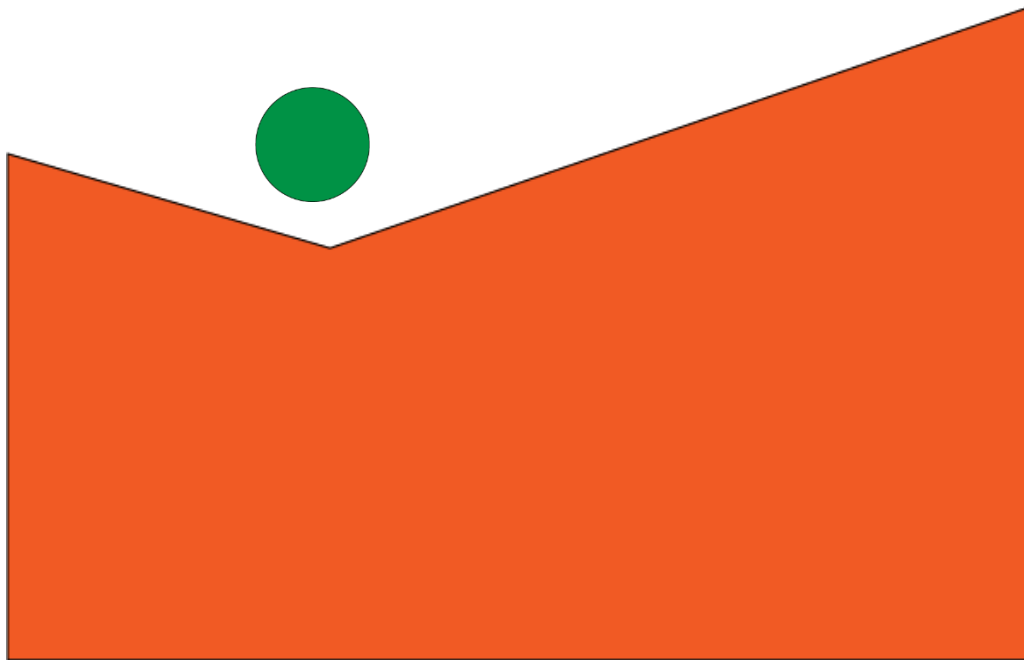


SALTBUSH
UNITING THE SCATTERED COMMUNITY

Ruminations



Seed






Autumn 2020


Ruminations is brought to you as part of **Saltbush – Uniting the Scattered Community**. The Uniting Church Synod of NSW & ACT oversees this work as an encouragement to all rural Christian communities and their leaders, irrespective of size or location. You are invited to share this issue of Ruminations with others.


Rev. Mark Faulkner
Director of Rural and Remote Ministry Initiatives
Uniting Mission and Education.

Editors:








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Dr John Goss is adjunct Associate Professor in the Health Research Institute, University of Canberra, & Chair of St. Margaret's Uniting Church Council. John is a passionate supporter of Christian community and our response to environmental care as part of God's creation.

Margaret Graham is from Berrigan, NSW and together with her husband Garry has spent decades growing native Australian seeds! Margaret belongs to Berrigan Uniting Church.

Vivienne Halbisch has worked at Grazing Management Systems west of Narromine, NSW for 24 years, growing Saltbush as part of caring for the land and providing food for cattle.

Dr Michael Mawson Michael Mawson teaches systematic theology and ethics at the United Theological College, Sydney. Michael has particular interests in disability theology, the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theology and phenomenology, eco-theology, and postcolonial theology.

Editor's Introduction

Welcome to your Autumn edition of Ruminations
with the theme of

Seed!

Droughts and fires have dominated the last months and years but rain has come to much of New South Wales and the ACT in the last few weeks. Across the wheat belt plans for planting this season's crop are well under way. Some paddocks have been worked up ready for planting and some early season winter wheats have been sown. Generally the landscape has turned green with the sprouting of grass seeds and the trees are coming to life again.

Our theme of "Seeds" in this edition is now very timely as we consider those small and seemingly insignificant seeds with their potential for new life.

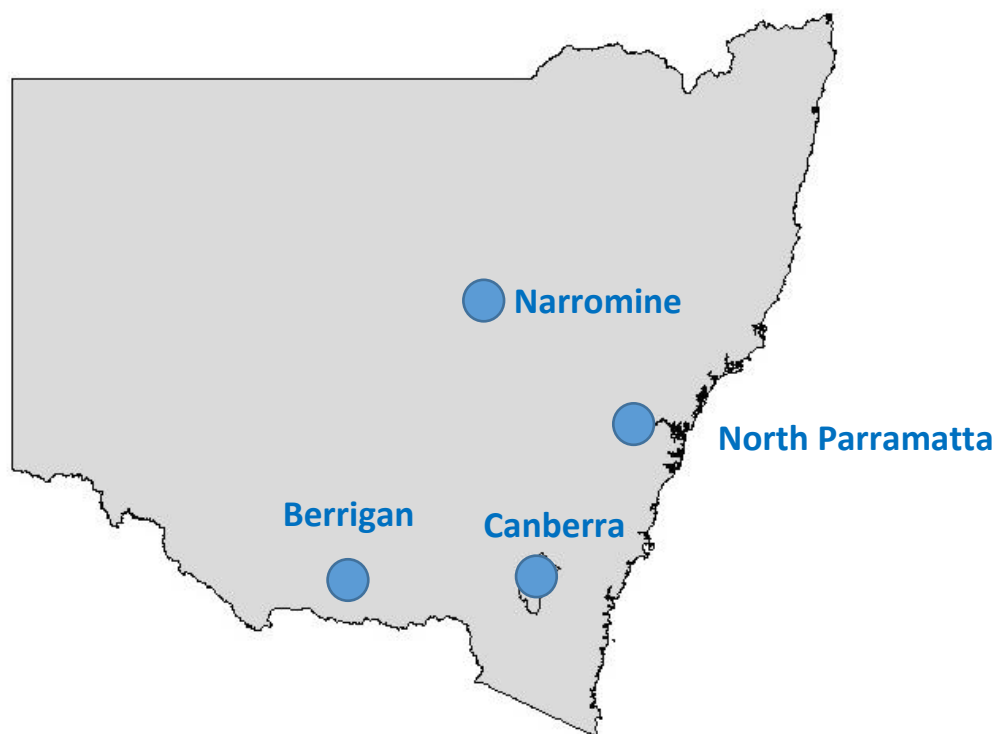
Margaret Graham talks to us about her experience of raising tree seeds and how they have transformed their farm into an oasis. Margaret also reminds us that planting the seeds of Love is a transforming process.

Vivienne Halbisich tells the fascinating story of managing a Saltbush Nursery with its millions of seedlings and how the seeds are transformed from seed to bushes ready to be sown out for livestock and shelter.

John Goss plants a seed in us through the story of how St Margaret's & Holy Cross congregations are looking to shape a carbon neutral future for themselves and invites us to join them.

Michael Mawson reminds us to plant trees even in the face of disaster and discover that our identity is shaped by God's grace alone. It is this freedom, Michael reminds us, through the words of Martin Luther that frees us to live differently in the world planting seeds of faith and hope.

Finally Tim Jensen introduces himself and tells us of the seeds of faith planted in his life that have shaped his ministry across the years.



Peace to you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Jensen', written in a cursive style.

A word from the Moderator

The view from my study at home has been transformed in the last three weeks. The paddock which had been hammered by drought into a dusty tarmac, now has pasture and a full dam, which had been empty for four seasons.

As I write this, a heron stands, nonchalant, feet in the water. The frogs' chorus arose immediately after the first major fall of rain, almost as if they had been sojourning elsewhere and arrived, en masse, for their wonderfully raucous celebration.

We were concerned and still are, that many paddocks might not have the seed stock, after a few vengeful false starts over the last three years, to be replenished after the rain. The burgeoning weeds, of course, seem the most resilient of all.

The season, as we know, has a long road ahead before we emerge from the drought. Many people have not had the amount of rain which we have received. Still, many of the rural communities are in a better place than we imagined.

We are thankful.

I think of the seeds sown in congregations and communities, waiting.

I think of those who lead, and serve and have done so, faithfully, for years. I know we have had some false starts, and some struggles.

I wonder what I might offer to bless, and grow, disciples in our congregations, and what our presbyteries might offer as they are cared for, in turn.

I look too, to the promise of God. God with us, challenging and transforming us. Are we expecting the Spirit of God to renew us, or have we dampened our expectations to what we can manage?

We are renewed for the sake of the community and world around us.

This season, as we walk towards the cross and the empty tomb, remember what the splendid expectation of God can do beyond our imagining – in all of us.

Rev. Simon Hansford

Moderator of the Synod of NSW & ACT.

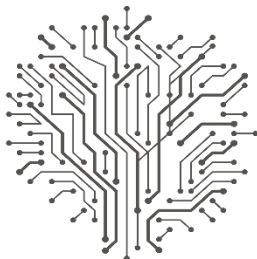
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon". Below the name is a long, slightly curved horizontal line.

Saltbush Sundays @9

**Saltbush is offering
Uniting Christian community online each Sunday @9.
Ponder life and faith together from wherever you are!**

Christian communities have met in diverse places and ways down throughout the ages and will continue to do so into the future. We are all being called to discover new ways to gather as Christians alongside new ways to live out our faith within our world.

If you would like to be included simply send an email to:
saltbush@nswact.uca.org.au



Saltbush – Uniting the Scattered Community

Can anything good come out of...

Rev. Mark Faulkner

Director of Rural and Remote Ministry Initiatives



"Jesus found Philip and said to him, "follow me"". Philip then found Nathanael and told him about Jesus, but in terms of the Old Testament (prophets), family line (Joseph) and home town (Nazareth). To this "invitation" from Philip, Nathanael simply

replies... "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" And so continues in John's Gospel the invitation to the first disciples. (John 1)

The writer of John is in fact inviting readers to look beyond traditions, family and geographical locations and see in Jesus Christ the one of God. When we come to the account of Nicodemus (Chapter 3), or the conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (Chapter 4), or all of chapter 9 where the man born blind receives his sight, all of these and of course the Gospel itself, is inviting us to see beyond...

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth"? As it turns out; yes!

Ancient Jewish historians write that in the early centuries Christians were also called Nazarenes (as opposed to the Nazarene sect) and there is one account in the book of Acts where a man is referred to as a Nazarene. (24:5) Perhaps to be a Nazarene is not only to be a follower of Jesus, a Christian, but also a believer that, yes, something good can come out of unexpected places like Nazareth.

Hope is one of the Godly characteristics of the Christian faith and like "Nazarenes" we are believers that good things can grow out of unexpected places in remarkable ways and that God is still blowing within and around to bring light and life.

● I took this photograph (p.7) amongst the burnt out remains of bushland after a fire up near Coonabarabran. Christian "Nazarenes" believe that from the seed in the ash can come life

again calling us once more to cherish the creation that we belong to as part of God's hand within the universe.

As Christians, or "Nazarenes", we believe that even amongst the pain of loss and destruction, even death, God still blows with the presence of life.

As Christians at this time of global chaos, when the world might realise we are not as invincible, controlling, powerful and self-determining as we believed, it is perhaps a time of spiritual calling to humbly reflect and discover the seeds of new life, even in places and ways we hadn't noticed or considered previously.

As Christians, when the road ahead is still going to be hard and rough for many, we should see that it is in fact a mark of discipleship to be a people of hope, life and expectation as to the good that God brings.

Can anything good come out of a blackened landscape and ash covered hills?

Can anything good come out of our social breakdown and powerlessness?

The Nazarene would say, "yes"! For in God, in the way of Christ and the blowing of the Spirit, from the smallest seed, from unexpected places, comes life and sometimes, if not often, we are called, as individuals and as Christian communities, to be the announcers of that good news.

Can anything good come out of... ?

Our stories...

Margaret Graham

Berrigan, NSW.

We, Garry and I, are from a very small community, in the Southern Riverina approximately 25 minutes from the Victorian Border and the Murray River. We have a small property which we purchased in 1991 and therefore sought to find a way to use our property as a benefit to the area, the community and a place to feel that we were attached to our heritage of being raised on a farm and enjoying the lifestyle which it provides. Having both been raised in the area on farms we felt that this was a lifestyle we wanted to raise our children in and enjoy a different peace that the land gives.

Our decision was clear, but with it came much hard work.

We began a seed orchard with the planting of approx. 8,000 trees in 2002 in the middle of a drought. The drought to beat all droughts they said.

The seed was supplied, planted and nurtured. It was time consuming watering the trees in the middle of the drought and hoping that all would survive. Our hopes lead us to the belief that strength can be found in some trees and yet not in others. Survival of the fittest it might be called. There was disappointment with losses but much joy at the same time as we saw the growth in many.

We persisted in encouraging the growth of the trees and nurtured them with our weekly watering for a whole year so that the trees might grow and return seed for future planting. As they grew they needed less attention and became self-sustaining and relying on the natural rains to keep them alive.

The trees grew over time to produce much seed. Seed was sorted cleaned and prepared for Central Murray Catchment Authority to distribute to other farms.



You could say this was a project of love or you could call it madness and many people questioned our motive and why we would pursue such a dream. Crazy and different – well yes just a little different from those around us.

This has been a journey of good and bad, sadness and joy, hope and love. We have since planted 95 % of our land to growth of trees and seeds.

Persistence, patience and a labour of love.



2020 has arrived and we continue to be a part of planting, nurturing, picking and enjoying the fruits of our labour. The seed is still collected and is used for seed plantations on farms and so we see benefit from the seed we grow being used to enhance tree lines on other farms.

We never know where our seed ends up but it is produced for the purpose of growing more seed and more trees in many areas.

We now have dozens or more varieties of different trees and shrubs and have restored the native grasses on the land. We have noticed a change in the environment on our farm including an increase in the native plants and grasses and virtually no Paterson's curse or Bathurst Burr. We have more spiders, lizards and other small creatures and of course larger animals such as rabbits, hares and kangaroos in and around the trees who visit

our space to be fed and find a peace that they enjoy. We wake to the delight of birds singing including the little blue wrens, to the larger parrots, kookaburras and owls.

It is our home and we feel at peace in this space we call home. It gives us great joy to have decided on this project and to plant seeds for the future. It may never give us a huge income but it will continue to touch our hearts.

We all plant seeds in our lives, sometimes not knowing what will become of the planting, and when there will be a harvest. We raised our children planting seeds, we participate in our community sharing seeds. We attend churches in the region planting a variety of seeds.

If a seed is not planted it never has the chance to grow.

We as people within our own family and our church and community continue to do what we feel is right to nurture and grow a place of love joy and peace. We share what we have been blessed with, so that many seeds may be planted and our crop will be plentiful.

God's love helps guides us through many challenges so that we may continue to plant seeds. Our world challenges us and this year is no exception with drought, fire, flood and more. Just as we planted seeds and nurtured them we are to have faith and trust that we can be involved in supporting others who need us as they grow in faith.

We, as a people of faith on our journey of life are compelled to plant seeds of love with all whom we meet in our lifetime and there are many ways that we can do this.

It is my belief that we plant seeds every time we meet or greet others, as we share our love to them, embrace them, encourage and support them in their daily lives.

We are placed in particular situations and places for good reason and if we trust that we are being led to help others then we have opportunity to plant many seeds and the greatest seed we can plant is the seed of LOVE.

The Saltbush Nursery...

Vivienne Halbisch

Narromine, NSW.

It was 24 years ago when I turned 50 I became a Grandmother for the first time and got an off farm job as a Saltbush Nursery Assistant. This was very challenging as I had never organised so many people before.



The nursery is the most advanced of its type in Australia and one of the most sophisticated in the world.

The first stage of the Nursery covers a total area of 25,000 Squares meters and can cater for up to 4.8 million seedlings at any point of time.

It provides a sheltered, controlled environment for the plant during their most vulnerable early stage of growth, specialised open hardening areas are provided for the plants prior to shipping and field transplanting.

All the plants are assessed at various points during their initial growth stage for robustness. This allows the selection of the strongest Oldman Saltbush seedlings for field planting providing the highest possible survival and establishment rates even in harsh conditions.

Oldman Saltbush (*Atriplex Nummularia*) seedlings in the nursery commences in October and goes right through until February of each year.

After germination the seedlings are placed into a controlled, sheltered environment for 10 to 12 weeks. Then are strong enough to be placed on outside benches where they are hardened over a further 14 to 16 weeks. Regular watering, fertilizing, pruning and weeding operations are carried out during this period.

Prior to dispatching, the plants are pre fertilized, leaves air dried so as to remain at their absolute peak during transit to the field for planting.

The individual seedlings are taken from their growing trays and packed into specially developed waxed cardboard boxes which hold 600 fully primed seedlings ready for planting in the field. Depending on the number of seedlings ordered there is a mechanical transplanter available for big areas of seedlings to be

planted. As they are planted they receive a little injection of water and then wait and see them grow.



Oldman Saltbush has long been recognised as a palatable drought fodder, particularly for sheep. It develops a lattice of woody stems which branch from or close to ground level and utilises a taproot with a subsequence root system that is moderate to deep.

Carbon Action Project

John Goss

Adjunct Associate Professor, Health Research Institute, University of Canberra & Chair of St. Margaret's Uniting Church Council.

On 1st. March, the congregations of St Margaret's Uniting and Holy Cross Anglican in Hackett, Canberra, launched their Carbon Action Project. The main objectives of this project are to:

1. Make the Holy Cross/St Margaret's site carbon neutral; and to
2. Assist families within St Margaret's and Holy Cross to become carbon neutral.

Why are we doing this?

Many members of the congregation of St Margaret's and the Parish of Holy Cross are concerned about climate change. And we should be. According to the latest research (Mark Howden, Climate Change Institute, ANU), even if countries achieve the emission reductions promised in the "Paris Agreement" the average global temperature rise is predicted to reach nearly 3°C. (He compares that to a total of 5°C that historically made the difference between an ice age and what we think of as "normal" conditions.) For Australia this means more days above 40°C, more drought, more heat stress, more fires and importantly, less water for everyone.

This is truly a climate emergency. And as in many an emergency before, all over the nation and the world, church communities

like ours will respond by helping out those in need: the people that are affected by drought, those losing their homes to fires, to flood and rising sea levels. But let's not wait until more disasters happen. We need to take up our role as stewards of God's creation.

The motivation for our action in this area is because we believe in God, the source of all that is good, true and beautiful, who made our world and continually sustains and renews it. We believe that our love for God should be shown by loving and respectful relationships with all of God's creation and with each other.

We grieve that our world has been damaged because humanity has related out of selfishness. In acting to restore our beautiful world, we follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ who has "reconciled all things in heaven and earth to God" (Colossians 1.20), and calls us to the transformation of our minds and hearts so that we may be effective signs of God's love in, and for the world.

As Christian churches in North Canberra, both St Margaret's Uniting Church and Holy Cross Anglican Church share a common calling to embody and enact God's Kingdom of justice and peace (including justice for creation) at the heart of our local community.

Our churches' joint Carbon Action Project is a visible and practical expression of our Gospel commitment in these areas.

Our vision for a carbon neutral future!

In his book 'Super-power; Australia's low-carbon opportunity', Professor Ross Garnaut sets out a path forward for Australia which not only enables us to do our fair share with regard to moving toward a carbon neutral future, but is a path which uses our extraordinary renewable energy resources to build a stronger, more sustainable economy integrated with a stronger ecology. And his response to those who despair as to whether there is hope for change in this area, is to say: "...move forward we will as the saving grace of community concern demonstrates its tenacity and influence in our own and many other political systems." (p. 57)

It is because community concern is crucial to effective action on climate change, that for the Holy Cross/St Margaret's Carbon Action Project, community is at the centre. In the Carbon Action Project, we are working together as two church communities, by pooling our time, resources and knowledge to move to carbon neutrality as soon as we can and in the most effective way possible.

Everyone in our two communities has a contribution to make to this work. Some have rich monetary resources, and those with high incomes will be expected to make a disproportionate contribution from their income to climate change action. Some have wisdom and knowledge which we would like shared among the community, so that our response can be effective and efficient.

Many of the older people in our community have a lifetime of experience in using limited resources in the most effective way

possible. We need to draw on this wisdom. Some have time to devote to researching the best way to act, and in helping others to take action. Each of us has a role to play.

What are the goals for the Carbon Action Project?

Three possible goals for the Project are:

*To see our church site at Hackett carbon neutral within 2 years.

*To see almost all families having carbon action plans towards neutrality within 2 years.

*To have fun on the road to achieving these goals. We want to cast off gloom and despair, and create an oasis of hope, in which we as a community can celebrate that together we are doing at least our fair share with regard to bringing justice to our beautiful creation.

For further information about this project you can download the Carbon Action project Newsletter at:

<https://stmargaretsunitingchurch.wordpress.com/carbon-action-project/>

If you want to be placed on the mailing list for further information about this project please email John Goss at:

john.goss@canberra.edu.au

Introducing... myself!

Rev. Tim Jensen

Saltbush Scattered Community Minister.



My father was a surveyor for the Commonwealth Department of Works and my mother a teacher with Commonwealth Education. They lived in Rabaul, P.N.G with my older brother and it is here in 1966 that I was born. In 1971 my parents moved to Darwin and apart from some time in Brisbane due to a cyclone and then spending time at boarding school in Ipswich, I considered Darwin as home. When I had left school I began an apprenticeship as a plumber and drainer with the Northern Territory government.

A sense of a living Spirit was always with me as a child so I can't remember not ever having a feeling of a God presence or at least

a vague understanding that there is something or someone greater than ourselves in the universe. My journey lead me to a place of wanting to know this Spirit of life and it was in Jesus Christ that I would and do find my place. Living in Darwin in the 1980's and being in the building trade meant that life had a unique challenge to it. A friend of mine said at the time 'you're either one of two types of people up here: a Christian or an alcoholic.' He was exaggerating of course but it did feel like that at times.

So it was during this time I felt that my future did not belong to copper pipes and pvc drains. I initially was going to join the police but felt I didn't have the aptitude for such a demanding role. When I finished my apprenticeship I moved down to Ipswich and thought I would find work until I sorted out what I wanted to do. The minister, Rev. Norma Spear, felt that my direction was pointing to ordained ministry. With no other commitments I thought I would explore hers (and others) discernment. To do this I needed a university degree, I applied to get into primary teaching but didn't like my chances of being accepted. Then low and behold the next three years I was studying at Griffith University, Mt. Gravatt Campus. It was during this time Danina and I got married. Danina was a registered nurse from Darwin and we had known each other for some time before she moved to Brisbane to study midwifery.

We returned to Darwin when we both had finished study and I was offered a teaching position in Barunga, 80 kilometres south east of Katherine. Danina was able to find work at the Katherine hospital. Growing up in the Top End and being on Aboriginal communities working as a plumber, as a guest with the church and then as a teacher, I found living and working alongside

aboriginal people a great privilege. But it was in teaching that I faced my greatest challenge as the curriculum was entirely based upon what white society deemed was important. What I found living on community was a much richer and more engaging life experience that was largely ignored by a broader society. Where I as a 'white fella' was given grace when I made mistakes and included when I wanted to learn about 'black fella ways'. Personally, I feel that we are greatly impoverished as a nation when we choose to ignore or even exclude the wisdom of First Nation people.

Because of a number of different circumstances (largely political) we were only there for about 6 months before then moving to Ayr, North Queensland. I taught and Danina nursed and we became parents with the birth of our daughter Anika in 1993. I continued to feel that my life's vocation was as a minister, I candidated through North Queensland Presbytery. We then moved to Brisbane in 1995 where I studied at the Brisbane College of Theology, at the time a Uniting, Anglican and Catholic school. Danina would work for a nursing agency. It was during our time in Brisbane that Davis, our second child came into the world in 1996.

I was then ordained in 1998 beginning my first placement in Longreach in February 1999. Danina worked at Longreach Base Hospital, part-time and my responsibilities were with the church in town and the properties and smaller township in the region. It was a rewarding first placement and of course full of challenges. I grew to appreciate the deep connection that people on properties had with the land and the importance of community. A spirituality of Christ in the outback expressed itself in the

incarnational nature of God in our midst in the wilderness. In 2001 our third child Nathaniel was born at Longreach Base.

In July 2002, we accepted a placement with the Bangalow/Byron Bay Multi Centre Congregations, a different congregation, a different Synod a very different culture to Longreach. We lived in Byron Bay for about 10 years. It is here that we became part of the life of the community through the local schools, the hospital where Danina worked and the many different sporting groups. And for our three, now adult children, Byron Bay is home for them. Byron Bay has an eclectic expression of people's faith which broadens out to include all beliefs. Many times I had deep and purposeful conversations with people that would have been acceptable in any congregational setting except these people were Buddhist, Jew, Wicker, Baha'i, Sannyasin, Hare Krishna and more.

In 2012 we moved to Canberra where I began ministry at North Belconnen UCA. Anika didn't come with us but went on to university in Melbourne to do global studies and is now a social worker. Davis finished his last three years of high school before moving to Sydney to study film and Nat completed his full secondary education in Canberra. Like our previous two placements, our time at North Belconnen was incredibly rewarding, where the congregation has a broad social engagement and a thoughtful theological expression.

While that is a bit of a chronology of my life the continuing thread for me is the movement of God throughout my life. Mostly revealed in the transformative nature of the Gospels that invites us through Christ and the Spirit to grow deeply in our faith, to mature in our character and to learn what it means to

love: God, ourselves and others. And to know that we never stop growing, maturing and learning what it means to love and what that should look like.

Danina and I look forward to this next part of our faith adventure and working with Saltbush and meeting the many people from the different parts of the Synod.

God bless you all and may you always know the abiding presence of the spirit and love of Christ in your lives.

Experiencing the Word...

Sowing Seeds before the Apocalypse – Martin Luther's Response to Climate Change.

Dr. Michael Mawson

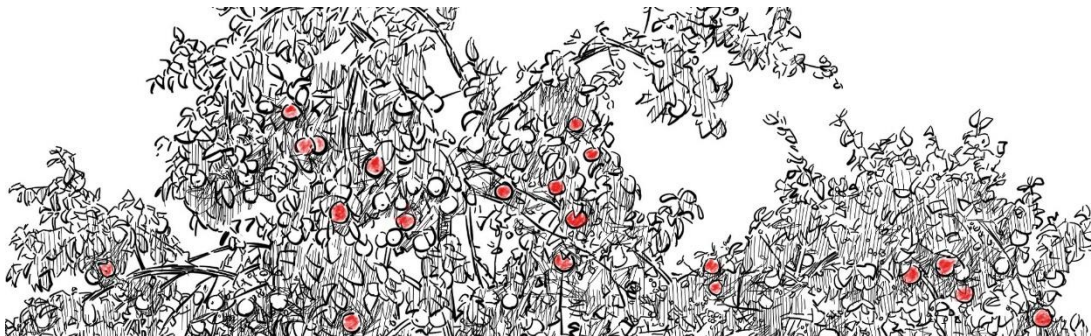
United Theological College, Sydney.

This summer has brought with it drought, bushfires, hailstorms and flooding. It seems as if the end times are upon us. More specifically, there is now irrefutable evidence of climate change and the extent of its effects. And even if only the most conservative of predictions from scientists are correct, the experiences of this last summer are just a foretaste of what is to come.

This means that extreme weather events are likely to soon become the norm. Hotter and dryer conditions will almost certainly result in more frequent and widespread bushfires. Warming oceans will further compromise reefs and other fragile ecosystems. Many indigenous flora and fauna will become endangered and then extinct. And large parts of Australia will soon be inhospitable and uninhabitable to human and non-human life.

In the face of this impending crisis, our politicians are proving unable to provide leadership, at least of a kind that might result in a coordinated and sustained response. The industries which have made the greatest contributions to carbon emissions continue with business as usual. And there is little indication that many of us are willing to embrace the kinds of changes and sacrifices that would mitigate climate change and its effects.

In short, the world as we know it is coming to an end. And there is little reason to believe that this end can or at least will be avoided. How, then, do we continue to sustain faith and action in the face of all this? For those of us who claim to be Christians, how do we sustain hope in a way that is responsive to (rather than evading and avoiding) the seemingly overwhelming challenges of this new situation?



Martin Luther is supposed to have once claimed, 'Even if I knew that the world were to end tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree today.' What are we to make of Luther's enigmatic remark? By one plausible reading, his remark amounts to little more than act of quiet defiance in the face of impending destruction. According to such a reading, he is advocating something along the lines of one final performance as the Titanic slips beneath the waves. Planting an apple tree just before the end is thus a noble gesture, but ultimately a futile one.

By another reading, Luther's planting is not simply an act of defiance, but also an insistence upon attending to God's presence and work where we are. Throughout his theology, Luther displays this deep commitment to finding God in the mundane, everyday activities that make up much of our lives. God is to be found in the slow and careful work of planting and cultivation, even and especially when we ourselves cannot clearly

see the significance of such work. We undertake such small, hopeful acts, trusting that God is present and preserving the world through them.

This thread is present in Luther's famous tract, 'The Freedom of a Christian'. Here one of Luther's driving concerns is to show how serving God and neighbour need not be governed by anxiety and fear. It is not up to us to establish our own value or meaning (or our own future or salvation) through good works or accomplishments. Rather, it is God's grace alone that justifies us and secures who we are. And for Luther, recognising this frees us to be in the world in a different way. In particular, it frees us to be present and attentive to others, without some ulterior motive or higher agenda. Because we are saved and secured by grace alone, we are free to quietly love and serve others simply as we find them.

What are we to make of Luther's theology of grace and presence? In the midst of our anxieties about climate change and its challenges, what consolation do these threads from his theology have to offer?

A few thoughts.

First, as just noted, I think that Luther helps remind us we are free from having to secure our value or identity for ourselves. Specifically, because of God's grace we are free from many the kinds of cultural pressures and pursuits that have contributed to the current crisis (i.e. defining ourselves through travel and experience, consumption, technology, the accumulation of possessions, the pursuit of security at all costs, etc.). In faith and hope, we are free to commit to the quiet and less glamorous

work of planting and cultivating trees. We are free to live and to serve one another where we are, and in ways that are unexceptional and close to the ground.

Second, in a related way, Luther reminds us that we are free to recognise and reject a scarcity mentality that is becoming ever more prevalent as climate change takes hold. We are free to reject a kind of politics that is driven by such a mentality, that is, by our collective anxieties about securing borders and maintaining economic prosperity. Instead, in faith and hope we recognise and embrace our deeper connectedness to one another and the earth. For Christians, faith in God's abundant grace stands in opposition to any concerns about scarcity.

Third, Luther's theology reminds us that our faith and hope are to be this worldly. If we have hope in a life to come (a time 'when God shall wipe away all tears...') this is not to be at the expense of attending to the present and its challenges. As another Lutheran theologian has recently put it, 'Christian hope is not about expecting another world, but rather an encounter with God himself in this world.' Christian faith and hope continually press us back into the present. They allow us to attend to and remain with the climate emergency and its challenges, resisting the temptation of easy answers or false reassurance.

Finally, in this way Luther directs our gaze downwards. He helps us to commit to where we already are and the tasks that are at hand. Because of faith in God's grace, we are free to do the good works God has prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10). Once again, we are free to commit to the small and hopeful tasks of planting and cultivation, as well as to any available acts of resistance and disruption. Indeed, it is through such acts, following Luther that

we begin to step back from and unravel our complicity in the systems and logics that have led us to this point. It is through such acts that we acknowledge God's grace, and begin to live into our freedom.

The world is about to end. So in faith and hope, let us begin to plant trees.



News from Saltbush...

Geoff Wellington

Saltbush Scattered Community Minister.

Greetings to you all as you enter the season of Easter and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus the Christ!

This year has started with a bang for Saltbush with over 40 people at the Saltbush Gathering at Yass Uniting Church. It was a great time of sharing together the shaping of Christian Community in the 21st century and what that might look like in congregations across the region. People came from across the presbyteries of Canberra Region, Macquarie Darling and Riverina and at least 12 congregations came along.

There were a number of visitors from the NSWACT Synod joining us and contributing to the conversation. Thanks to Rev's Jane Fry, Bronwyn Murphy, Lindsay Cullen and Emma Parr, Jessica Morthorpe, Kingsley Murphy for being part of the day.

Emma Parr led us in considering what Christian Community – Together & Safe looks and feels like and together we learned how to access the Word Around the Bush worship material. Hospitality and social interaction was had over dinner together and a big thank you to the Yass folks who hosted us for the day. Mark Faulkner and Geoff Wellington have attended presbytery meetings in the Riverina, Macquarie Darling and New England North West Presbyteries and worshipped with Yass, Boorowa, Forbes and Uralla congregations in the last month or so.

It's very pleasing to hear that a number of congregations are starting to use the Word Around the Bush in their congregation's. Let us know when you use it and how you are getting on. If you would like one of the Saltbush Team to come and lead a Saltbush Service for you to start you off, be in touch.

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Saltbushcommunity/> and our Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos> sites are showing us that there is increasing traffic visiting and viewing material and we encourage you to comment and keep everyone up to date with what's happening in your congregation.

Saltbush Online Cafés have started for Lent with 20 or so people joining Mark and Geoff in two different groups. The Cafés seem to be working well and we are excited about the possibilities for such Online Groups in the future. If you have some ideas about a group, drop us an email.

The big news for the start of March is that Rev Tim Jensen has finally joined the Saltbush Team and we welcome Tim on board.

Plans for Rev Tim Jensen's induction have had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 virus along with the next Saltbush Gathering at Hillston.

Also, Saltbush Sunday @9 Worship has commenced for the time being in response to COVID-19 and if you would like to join online worship with the Saltbush Ministers, then please just get in touch.



Please consider financially supporting Saltbush; either as individuals or as a congregation.

Your donation will be directly used for the work of supporting Saltbush and the ways we are working to encourage smaller, rural congregations.

You can donate generally towards Saltbush and this will include the cost of enabling the printing of Ruminations.

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