



# InSpire



NEWSLETTER OF THE STONNINGTON COMMUNITY UNITING CHURCH

Vol. 12, no 1

February 2026



[Remembering our Divine Nature - Gayle Jann |Private Yoga Asheville & Anywhere](#)

## AWAKENING TO THE LIVING UNIVERSE

*InSpiring*

## MINISTER'S MESSAGE

### Awakening to the Living Universe

On Tuesday 10th February at 10am in the church, I'll be leading the first monthly session of a small group series titled **Awakening to the Living Universe**. I want to share with you why I believe this journey matters for us as a church — and what we will be doing together.

At the heart of this series is a simple conviction: **God is not separate from the universe, but alive and active within it**. Creation is not just the stage on which faith happens; it is the very language through which God continues to speak. When we learn to listen to the deep patterns of the living world — to nature, to time, to relationship, to change — our faith itself begins to mature. We start to live differently, not because we are trying harder, but because we are seeing and hearing more clearly.

The method of the group reflects this. Rather than beginning with doctrines or arguments, we will begin with **experience**: with patterns of nature, with shared reflection, with silence, journalling, conversation, and simple ritual. Each session starts by listening to something real in the universe — a biological, cosmic, or relational process — and then noticing how it reshapes the way we understand ourselves, God, and the way we live. This is not a study group in the usual sense. It is a **formation group**, designed to help us become more grounded, spacious, and alive in our faith.

Our first session sets the tone. We will listen to three surprising teachers: the **agave plant**, **bamboo**, and a **supernova**. Each of these gives its greatest gift at the end of its life — seeds, abundance, or the very elements that make future worlds possible. From this we explore a challenging question: *What if ageing and limitation are not decline, but ripening? What if the universe itself teaches us to leave our best for last?*

Through reflection and a simple ritual, we will explore how this pattern reshapes what the Christian tradition has called elder wisdom — the deep, steady, generous way of being that comes with time. In spiritual language, we are expanding what God can express through us. In

psychological language, we are allowing a deep human pattern of wisdom to evolve into a more life-giving form. Both ways of speaking are welcome; what matters is the change in how we live.

My hope is that those who take part will discover a new way of being in the world: less anxious, more grounded, more generous, and more open to what God is still doing through them — and through us as a community. If this stirs something in you — curiosity, longing, or even a quiet restlessness — I encourage you to come. The universe is already speaking. We are simply learning how to listen together.

John Power

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## A NEW SONG

At its recent meeting, Church Council approved a new missional initiative centred on music — and we're delighted to share what is now unfolding in the life of our church.

Over recent months, a Mission Working Group explored how Stonnington might continue to grow as a welcoming, spiritually alive community in a changing world. After considering a range of possibilities, one idea consistently rose to the surface: **music**. Not simply as something we do in worship, but as a way of building community, deepening spiritual life, and opening new doors to those who may not yet feel at home in church.

Council has now approved the establishment of **two new choirs** in 2026:

- an **adult community choir**, open to anyone who loves to sing and is curious about the deeper dimensions of music, and
- a **youth / young adult choir**, focused on building peer community and leadership among younger singers.

Both choirs are being shaped around a simple but powerful rhythm: **Belong · Behold · Believe · Become.**

Participants are first invited to **belong** — to find friendship, connection, and a sense of home. Through singing together, they **behold** beauty and meaning in shared experience. Over time, this creates space for **belief** to grow naturally, not as something imposed but as something discovered. And finally, people **become** — growing in confidence, compassion, and the desire to contribute to the life of the church and the wider world.

The adult choir has been designed as a *bridge* between community music and church music — a welcoming space for those who may not usually sing in church, but who long for music that carries depth, spirit, and connection. The youth and young adult choir will provide a peer-based community for younger people, offering them both musical expression and a place to belong.

It is important to note that these choirs are not being planned instead of but in addition to our current music ministry, including the Ewing Choristers, the ensemble and our organists and pianists. In fact, we hope that these new initiatives will feed into what we believe are our already significant music ministries.

This is a **beginning**, not a finished plan. We hope the choirs will be established during the first half of the year, and Church Council will review the project mid-year to see how it is growing and what might come next. As with all initiatives we must also be open to the possibility that these plans will not take shape the way we envisage them, in which case we will imagine anew.

There are many ways you might choose to be involved in this ministry. Some may feel called to join one of the new choirs, while others may wish to contribute to the planning and shaping of the program. For all of us, we hope these initiatives will become a source of new life and new song,

enriching our community and extending our shared experience of worship.

John Power

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## WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2026

The World Day of Prayer is a global Christian movement led by women, uniting people in prayer and action for peace and justice across the world. Each year a different country prepares the service and shares its stories and culture with the global community.

The theme for 2026 is “I Will Give You Rest: Come” (Matthew 11:28–30), with Nigeria as the focus country.

The 2026 World Day of Prayer worship service, written by a group of ecumenical Christian Nigerian women in response to the theme, will be held on Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at a nominated church in your area.

The theme ‘I will give you rest: come’ was taken from Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart.” (NIV)

This service calls all to come closer to God and find rest in God. When we totally trust and have faith in God, our burdens become light, and we find rest.

The cover art for the service booklet is by Gift Amarachi Ottah.

Title:- Rest for the Weary

‘Gift, a final year Mass Communication student at Alex Ekwuerne Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, South Eastern Nigeria, draws inspiration from her home state of Abia. Following her family’s tradition in creative arts and printing. Gift has developed a unique artistic voice that speaks to the struggles and strength of Nigerian women. She was motivated to design this artwork because of the burdens that Nigerian women are facing.

She hopes that her art will help to amplify their voices.'



'Rest for the Weary' By Gift Amarachi Ottah

#### Artist Statement:

'My artwork depicts the daily reality of rural Nigerian women whose lives are marked by endless labour from sunrise to sunset. These women traverse treacherous paths to their farms, often carrying both their harvest and their children – a toddler strapped to their back, a heavy load balanced on their head, while guiding other children along unmaintained roads through thick bush.

The artwork also shows three women sitting together, their different traditional attire representing Nigeria's diverse cultures. Though they come from different ethnic groups, their shared experiences unite them. To meet their basic survival needs, these women carry burdens and traumas that are physical, emotional and spiritual.

Yet there is hope for the many burdens these people are carrying. These burdens become bearable when we respond to Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest." When we bring our weariness to Christ and support one another in community, we find rest and strength to continue our journey.'

Nigeria is located on the western coast of Africa with a population of over 122 million, the most populous country in Africa. There are currently 36 states in Nigeria plus the Federal Capital Territory.

Nigeria is predominantly Muslim and Christian with Islam dominant in the north and Christianity in the south, though both are present nationwide.

Christianity was introduced by European missionaries during the British colonial era and includes Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, and rapidly growing Pentecostal groups. Christianity has had a significant role in education and healthcare through missionary schools and hospitals.

'Women and girls in Nigeria face numerous challenges that stem from deeply rooted gender discrimination and inequality. Despite progress in some areas, cultural norms, traditional practices and societal expectations continue to hinder the full realisation of their rights and potential.'

The Boko Haram insurgency began in July 2009, when this militant Islamist and jihadist rebel group started an armed rebellion against the government of Nigeria. This has led to immense suffering, loss of thousands of lives and displacement of millions creating a huge humanitarian crisis in the Northeast and surrounding regions. Widespread violence has included forced recruitment and mass abductions particularly of women and girls.

The Bible Society Australia is partnering with Bible Society Nigeria to support displaced people and slum residents who have endured trauma from the Boko Haram insurgency, natural disasters and other conflicts.

This year, Temple Society Australia will host the local World Day of Prayer service, featuring a musical contribution from the McKinnon Secondary College Senior Singers. The event is open to the wider community and all are warmly welcome to attend.

The service will be held on Friday 6 March, 10:30am-12:30pm, at 152 Tucker Road Benteleigh.

For further information, visit: [World Day of Prayer - Benteleigh | Bayside City Council](#)

# ASK THE MINISTER!

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We are starting a new series this year, in which John will answer questions about his life, his ideas, and his theological formation and development. It will be a theological reflection on his life, using an overall evolutionary framework.

Each month John will address another question. He invites us to similarly reflect on our own faith journeys.

**Question:** *Where were you brought up?*

**John's Answer:**

I was first formed, quite literally, by land. My earliest six years were spent on a farm near Mudgee, with mountains holding the horizon. I didn't have language then for theology, but I think something essential was seeded there — a sense that reality is larger than us, older than us, and worthy of reverence. When I look back, I can see how that landscape trained my eyes and my spirit: the patience of seasons, the dignity of distance, the way life emerges through long, slow processes.

At the age of seven, my world shifted. We moved to Camberwell in Melbourne, and suddenly my formation continued in a very different ecosystem — one shaped by streets and schools, ideas and arguments, libraries and classrooms. If the farm taught me to listen to the earth, the city taught me to listen to thought. Through my schooling there, I was drawn into an academic tradition that prized questioning, learning, and conversation across generations.

I now see these not as competing influences, but as stages in a single unfolding. The land gave me a sense of mystery; the city gave me tools to engage it. Together they formed the soil in which my faith, my vocation, and my theology have grown — still evolving, still being shaped by the environments I inhabit.

[Come back for another intriguing question and answer next month!](#)

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## ETHNIC CONGREGATIONS ARE REALLY VIBRANT!

Alison Tokita

It is remarkable to look around at our multicultural Uniting Church!

There is an increasing presence of non-Anglo members in the UCA as in other Australian churches. These congregations are the legacy of missionary work in the home countries of these groups of people. In our immediate vicinity we know the Korean Church of Melbourne in Glendearg Grove, the Indonesian church at St Andrew's Gardiner, and the Tamil church at Serrell St. Their ministers are usually from the country of origin. Many ministers of Anglo congregations are of ethnic origin: Rev Sylvia Akaoula (Toorak UC, Tongan), Rev Paulo Kwajakwan (Benalla UC, Sudanese), Rev Ji Zhang (Ormond UC, Chinese) to name just a few. Significantly, the current national president of UCA is Rev Charissa Suli, of Tongan origin.

The Uniting Church of Australia declared itself a multicultural church in 1985. Today worship takes place in 30 languages, and there are 12 national conferences that support congregations and communities of the same culture. For example, in October the UCA's Korean churches celebrated their 50th annual conference.

The Korean Church of Melbourne claims to be the oldest Korean church in Australia, and commenced worshipping at the Burwood Presbyterian church in 1973, according to this article in Crosslight: [Korean church continues to grow - CrosslightCrosslight](#)

Missionaries took not only Christianity to the various colonial outposts, but also education (especially for women) and music. In Japan, Korea and China mission schools were significant conduits of western music, and Christianity was associated with western music. Notably, the Korean Church of Melbourne has an orchestra (some of whose members play for the

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra) and choirs and other instrumental ensembles.

These congregations are thriving and growing. They are multi-generational, and bilingual, holding services in English for youth groups. Our theological approach may differ somewhat, but we can work together in many aspects as members of the same body of Christ. Let us get to know each other.

### **Getting to know the Indonesian Congregation at St Andrew's Gardiner**

The Indonesian members of St Andrew's are always very responsive to overtures from SCUC: some members came to our Forum on Housing in 2024 and again to the Forum on Loneliness in 2025. They participated in the mini-Expo with leaflets on their Taichi classes. I put that in InSpire, and took part myself, as did others from SCUC. Six of the Indonesians attended and completed Zhuoran's Chinese classes.

On Sunday 28 December when our doors were closed, Hiro and I attended St Andrew's and met up with those students and other friends from the Taichi class.



The very different style of worship featured upbeat popular musical rhythms with piano and percussion. The service takes an evangelical approach and is conducted in Indonesian with interpretation available through headphones and on overhead slides. Rev Ajub Jahja's sermon started with him making lots of jokes and spruiking his most recent publication of summaries of all the sermons preached

throughout the year. I was sitting next to a man who took detailed notes of the sermon; he told me he does that every week so he can study the teaching again at home. The sermon expounded the lectionary readings of John 1:9-13 and Luke 2:25-32, and the theme of waiting was developed from the stories of Simeon and Anna.



Apart from the sermon collections however all communications are totally online including email, web page and several WhatsApp groups.

Speaking to some of the Indonesian friends afterwards, one couple introduced me to their daughter and grandchildren; two other couples said their children go to other churches, including City Hill and Sydal Baptist. This is also the case with Rev Ajub's two daughters. This indicates that the second generation continue to be church goers, but not tied to Indonesian language and community. One lady, a former teacher of Indonesian at the air force academy in Laverton, found that sad but perhaps inevitable.

I have enjoyed taking part in their activities, partly because it is the church I grew up in and evokes many memories. Also, Hiro and I were married there, and our two children were baptized there. But also, because their vibrant and energetic faith is inspiring. Their willingness to join with our activities is greatly appreciated!

## OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN 2026

*"You must be the change you wish to see in the world" - Mahatma Gandhi*

SCUC's Working Group for Community Engagement (which liaises closely with the Mission Working Group) meets informally approximately every 6 weeks at the Church to plan our events. In between meetings we develop and continue to organise the program via email.

New members and ideas are always welcome!

The objectives of this Working Group include outreach to the wider community; at this stage by providing a venue and audience for not-for-profit groups, generally with a social justice focus. This gives these groups an opportunity to share and promote their purposes and activities. In addition, community outreach may also engage, inform, and promote our congregation and build SCUC's relationships and profile in the community.

We also hope there will be opportunities to make connections, to reciprocate, and that we may be invited to attend events held by other churches and community groups.

With this in mind, SCUC's 2026 community engagement is to be launched on:

- **22 February 2026** the screening of the documentary "Love in the Walls" at SCUC at **3pm**, followed by afternoon tea. Entry by donation, all proceeds to **Servants Community Housing**.
- **31 May 2026** follows with the plan to hold a *Feast for Freedom*, a special lunch for approximately 60 people, after the Sunday service. All proceeds from this occasion will be donated to the **Asylum Seekers Resource Centre**.
- **25 July 2026**, a Saturday evening, is nominated for a special "Christmas in

July" dinner, again for approximately 60 people. All proceeds will go to the **Avalon Centre** which provides community support services and homes for the homeless.

- **A date in October TBC**, an exhibition of historical memorabilia at "Back to Church", former members and their families will be encouraged to join us. This event will trace the evolution of **Stonnington Community Uniting Church** in our community. Your reflections and contributions are greatly valued. Please see the article "Down Memory Lane", which follows.
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On each of these occasions there will be extensive information about the organisation which is the focus of the event. Where meals are involved, a booking system to attend will be put in place. There will be no set cost but a donation amount (tax deductible) will be suggested. Congregation members are encouraged to invite friends and family to participate.

We would also appreciate assistance with publicising the events: word of mouth is always great, but "many hands make light work", and in particular we are seeking volunteer walkers for letter boxing in the area.

Maria Sandbach

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### "DOWN MEMORY LANE"

#### BACK TO CHURCH: October Date TBC

Readers may recall the Emeritus Elder article in *InSpire* in July 2025. One particularly poignant aspect was Joyce Jenkin's memory of Keith McAllister's remarkable contribution as a Sunday School teacher at Ewing Memorial Uniting Church, now SCUC. The nativity scene made by Joyce and Ian's sons (Dave and John), under Keith's guidance, and featured in the photo, was

again part of their family Christmas tradition in 2025.



The Jenkins' nativity scene is an excellent example of the memorabilia we hope to feature in the Back to Church Service and associated historical exhibition on 25 October 2026. For this event, we are intending to seek out former members of the congregation and invite them to attend the service with the current congregation on that day, this will be followed by a special morning tea. We hope that the exhibition will not only be a source of interest, but also provoke memories and potentially oral history. The Working Group on community engagement welcomes all ideas and offers of assistance, to make this a very special occasion.

Please think about any small items you may have kept in the back of your cupboards that reflect some aspect of Stonnington Community Uniting Church's story. Why have you kept it? How does it relate to SCUC's history/ the church community's past way of life? For instance, maybe you have a recipe from a PWMU afternoon tea, a Sunday school prize, an old Cub uniform or a precious order of service from a family wedding or funeral?

Cherishing our heritage and celebrating the past nurtures deep roots which enable us to navigate our future on a firmer footing!

Maria Sandbach

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR GETTING INVOLVED

If we each help where we can and when we can we can make a difference to the church community!

- Deliver leaflets for the film screening!
- Join the catering team!
- Help with watering the native garden
- Put your hand up and put your name down in a roster for morning tea or for the monthly lunches.

See Jane in the office or Alison to discuss these opportunities for service!

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### “THE CHORAL” AND OUR MUSIC MISSION

There are parallels between Nicholas Hytner's recent film “The Choral”, and Stonnington Community Uniting Church's commitment to mission through music.

“The Choral” highlights the power of music in bringing a community together to share beauty, creativity and joy, in dark times. Set in very different period (1916), in the fictional Yorkshire village of Ramsden, the locals struggle to keep their choir (the Choral) going, as their young men leave to fight in World War 1.

Limited options result in the recruitment of Dr Guthrie, an atheist, gay Germanophile, as Director of the Choral. Through a process of elimination Elgar's oratorio “The Dream of Gerontius” is the chosen performance piece. While avoiding the works of German composers,

it still has “unfortunate” Roman Catholic overtones. Despite petty divisions and jealousies, the necessity of compromise, of making-do, and the power of art result in a unique and highly relevant performance which touches cynical and somewhat despairing, grieving hearts.

Along the way various characters’ insights resonate: we are told that purgatory is a “no man’s land,” an ambiguous in-between place. Guthrie rationalises the rearranging of Elgar’s composition because “art begets art”. Amongst these philosophical reflections, the simple joy of singing sustains this community in desperate challenging times.

Transpose to a different time and place: Stonnington Community Uniting Church in 2026 (excuse the music pun!). Our context is very different from the Choral, but the power of music and art remains: it uplifts and soothes us all in an uncertain, unstable complex world, where we each navigate life’s challenges.

Our congregation is embarking on our own music mission: building on our talented existing musical groups, we hope to expand and inspire involvement and an appreciation of the sacred, enhance a sense of belonging, and nurture joy in our community.

Maria Sandbach

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### **CONGRATULATIONS TO DEBBIE HOLMES**

Director of the Avalon Centre, Debbie Holmes was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Australia Day Honours “for service to community social welfare”! (What an understatement!) We send Debbie our warmest congratulations!

# **REPORTS**

## **STONNINGTON COMMUNITY UNITING CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT**

*Joyce Jenkin*

### **Catering arrangements in 2026**

Council is concerned by the fact that some of our volunteers are being overworked and therefore there is a need for more of us to step up and volunteer to help with a number of tasks:-

For morning teas, these include buying milk, setting out the cups, etc. and putting on the dishwasher before church; making and serving tea and coffee after church and then doing the dishes and putting away the tables and chairs and taking the tea towels to wash.

For our monthly lunches, helping to put out the food & turning on the dishwasher; clearing dirty dishes off tables & taking them to the kitchen; washing up and putting away the tables and chairs, turning the dishwasher off & cleaning it, folding & wiping down table cloths, and taking tea towels home to wash.

We are lucky in that the tables and chairs are set up for us by paid arrangement and that Kerrie and Peter are happy to do the lunch shopping but that doesn't mean that there isn't work to be done. If you are willing to help, please add your name to the lists provided for morning tea and lunch rosters or speak to a council member for more information.

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### **SOMETHING FOR THE SPIRIT**

**Lorna Henry**

A very happy new year to you all!  
A new year. A time for a new start.  
I have been thinking during this holiday period of the importance of having a clear mind and a moral stance in the world today. Really crazy things are happening.

We have spent the early years of our SFTS gatherings reading and listening to our inherited texts and teachings of Christianity, to make sure we understood what they were saying, adjusting

our thinking, finding a new interpretation where that seemed necessary, in order to hold in our faith something real and vital for living.

Nowadays I find myself absorbing the events near and far, being astonished, bewildered, and curious about what is different in the world. I'm trying to apply that guiding faith and understanding to world events. Much of what I see is not good, not kind.

Was it always like this and I hadn't noticed? If there has been change, what are the factors causing it? What could help to make our world more workable? More conciliatory? More kind? I'm reading analysis and comments, and coming back to publications like Eureka Street and The Conversation.

My hope is to be able to talk with you all about these things.

However, these might not be your concerns! So, I would really like to know what YOU would like us to talk about in SFTS, the directions you would like us to take.

Here's your chance: Our meeting is on **Sunday February 15th**, [REDACTED]. We can talk then about our concerns, our wishes, directions and topics. I will also have a topic for us to discuss that day.!

So, I look forward to seeing you at our first meeting for the year on Feb 15th. Let's see what directions we choose, while we enjoy the conversation, with something to eat and drink!

All are welcome.

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**LIBRARY NEWS**  
*Faye Pattinson*

Happy New Year to you all!

Our first Book Chat for 2026 will be in the Margaret McKinnon room at the church at 10.30 am on Thursday, 19th February. There should be lots of books to share after the long Christmas holidays when hopefully you've all had time to do

lots of reading. So, it promises to be an exciting Book Chat.

All welcome even if you haven't a book to share. There might be a book shared that piques your interest. Or just come and share a cup of tea or coffee with us.

Looking forward to seeing you all on Thursday, 19th February!

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**FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY TABLE**

**Lencie Harding**

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The final Op Table for 2025, held on Sunday, December 14, raised \$310.05.

Treasurer, Jan Riches has reported that the following UC agencies and other worthy causes were supported from Op Table proceeds during 2025:

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre	\$200
Frontier Services to support the work of the Bush Chaplains	\$500
Indigenous Hospitality House	\$100
Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders)	\$300
Stonnington CUC's native garden	\$200
Uniting to support Uniting Prahlan's Winter Breakfast Programme	\$400
Uniting's Christmas Appeal	\$300

**Total** **\$2,000**

Many thanks to everyone who supported the Op Table last year with special thanks to Isabelle, Margie and Michael Williams. I would also like to thank the members of our congregation who make generous financial donations.

This year the Fellowship Opportunity Table will continue to operate during morning tea to follow the Sunday service. The first will be held on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March.

**SAMMY STAMP**  
*Lencie Harding*

**2025 was ANOTHER GOOD YEAR for  
SAMMY STAMP!**

Due to the continued support of church, community groups, individuals and businesses in Victoria, Tasmania and Australia, another pleasing result was achieved.

Sales had reached about \$35,470 at 12/12/ 2025, (\$34,204 same period last year). This brings the total sales/interest since 1977 to \$1,263,170.

Coin and bric-a-brac sales have continued to grow over the year. Thanks to all who have donated same.

A big thank you to the folk of Trinity Uniting Church, Brighton, for their continuing support by allowing us to use their facilities free of charge.

Below is the list of grants approved during 2025. Total \$34,500. (Last year \$47,900)

Allice Springs U.C., towards employing a Community Engagement Pastor	\$5,000
Johnsonville U.C., towards reproductive health education tools in Solomon Islands and Samoa	\$1,000
Deaf Ministries International, Agriculture & Livestock Centre, Tanzania.	\$4,000
M.L.G. towards transport costs of charitable good to our Pacific Neighbours	\$5,000
Vanuatu Prevention of Blindness Project	\$2,000
Uniting Vic.Tas, Winter Share Appeal supporting homelessness services.	\$3,000
UnitngWorld, helping West Papuan communities to build long term food security	\$5,000
Frontier Services, assisting Bush Chaplains to support outback communities	\$5,000
Musicar Rio, Brazil, support towards musical program for vulnerable youth	\$2,000
Johnsonville U.C. support for local overseas seasonal workers.	\$2,500

**TOTAL**

**\$34,500**

**TOTAL OF GRANTS SINCE 1977: \$1,240,793**

Allan Clark  
Convenor

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**CHINESE CLASSES**

Chinese classes finished successfully on December 12. Zhuoran Wei is hoping to offer a follow-up class this year, but the dates are still not fixed. If you are interested in doing a little Chinese but didn't attend the first series, don't worry: you will be able to fit into the leisurely pace of fun learning with Zhuoran.

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**TAICHI AT ST ANDREWS**

The first Taichi class at St Andrew's will be held on Friday 6 February at 2.00 pm. It is great for your mental and physical serenity! Everyone welcome.

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**TEAR FUND**

**Advent 2025**

TEARFUND has become a firm part of SCUC's Advent calendar. Each year the Stall in the Hall after church on Advent Sundays sees a steady stream of generous donors come to the table to buy their Christmas card or gift from the Useful Gifts Catalogue, or more commonly now after more than 20 years, to give their donation towards a well for a village.

Advent 2025 continued the tradition and provided a total of \$2320, which included \$1900 for a village well. We don't know where the well will be installed, but we know that it will provide clean and consistent water supply to a whole village, where previously water has been a chancy, perhaps not easily obtained commodity.

I have received a letter of thanks from Cathy Cook, Fundraiser at Tearfund, including the following words:

*Thank you! Your commitment and generosity have made a real difference and we're so grateful for the way you've responded to Tearfund in your community. You are a vital expression of hope, faith and Christ's love in action. You enable us with our partners around the world to tackle injustice and walk alongside communities as they overcome poverty.*

*Thank you again - your partnership is a gift!*

It is gratifying to look back over the last 23 years of our connection with Tearfund, during which we have raised a total of \$113,500. That includes provision of at least 12 village wells, besides the other gifts for health, education, improved agriculture and advocacy.

I want to add my personal thanks to every person who has given so generously, requiring no great marketing on my part! You simply come to the stall table and give. Thank you so much!

All given 'that they might have life, and have it more fully'.

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### **SCUC'S CELEBRATION OF MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS**

In 2026 a number of our congregation members are looking forward to celebrating milestone birthdays. Prior to the COVID pandemic these occasions were often marked by a special cake at Sunday morning tea, or some folk going out for lunch. It would be lovely to revive these traditions. If you have, or know of a forthcoming significant birthday that you and the birthday person would like acknowledged, please let the Church office/us know 2 weeks before the date. Where people have birthdays proximate to each other, they could possibly share a joint celebration with their SCUC friends! Birthdays and anniversaries are special times but people differ on whether and how they want them marked.

Maria Sandbach

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### **COMMON THREADS**

**Alison Tokita**

At our last meeting for 2025 on Thursday November 27 the full room included Faye Pattinson, who brought good cheer and a tweed suit that she made perhaps 50 years ago! It was so beautifully tailored. There was a lot of Christmas cheer and conversation as well as hard work. It was nice to have John join us too.

Thank you all for a wonderful year of fellowship and productivity. Thank you for the lovely card and gift too!

Our first meeting for 2026 on January 22nd, 10.00 to 12.00 in the Margaret McKinnon Room included the celebration of three birthdays with two magnificent cakes provided by Joyce and Maree. We were joined by John and Jane.

The meeting was followed by lunch at Mr Sister café. Next meeting on Thursday 26 February.

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### **MONTHLY CAFÉ CATCH-UP**

**Mr Sister Café, 81 Waverley Road  
(Third Tuesday 2.00 pm)**

Our first catch-up over coffee this year on 20 January attracted twelve attendees, who enjoyed a lively even vociferous meeting in the cooler room at the front of the café. As always, the coffee was good, and the iced coffee latte was a popular choice.

Please feel free to drop in and join in the conversation at the next catch-up on Tuesday 17 February from 2 pm.

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## WEBSITE and FACEBOOK

Have you seen this beautiful article on the church website?

### *Stepping Into Reflection: Feet, Faith, and the Path We Walk*

Opportunities for thought and spiritual reflection often arise in unexpected ways. Recently, following a routine visit to my podiatrist, I found myself pondering feet — something we rarely think about unless there is a problem to be fixed. Yet, as I reflected further, I realised how often feet appear in Scripture, and how much they can teach us about humility, service, belonging, and the paths we choose to walk in faith.

This brief exploration begins with a well-known story from the Gospel of Luke and then wanders through other biblical references, before returning to the powerful image of foot washing as a model for Christian living...

You should look at the whole article here!

[Feet, Faith, and Humility | Stonnington Uniting Church](#)

Also, please leave a comment!

### **HINT from our Webmaster:**

The more hits our website gets, the better it is positioned by the algorithm to be noticed by casual searchers.

Similarly for our Facebook page: The more Likes and even better Comments it gets, again it attracts the attention of the algorithm and is shared and profiled more. Visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/unitingstonnington/>

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## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks to all for your contributions to the issue. We always welcome your letters, articles and photos. Special thanks to Maria and Alan Sandbach for their editorial assistance and diverse contributions.

The deadline for the **March 2026** edition of *InSpire* is **Monday, 23 February**. Articles should be emailed to the Editor, Alison Tokita, at [alison.tokita@unitingstonnington.org.au](mailto:alison.tokita@unitingstonnington.org.au)

# FORTHCOMING EVENTS!

## EXPERIENTIAL SPIRITUAL GROUP

Rev John Power will offer a workshop titled “Awakening to the Living Universe: A Path of Panpsychist, Evolutionary Spirituality”. This experiential spiritual group will meet monthly. The initial get-together will be in the church on **Tuesday 10th February at 10am** followed by morning tea.

You can read about the rationale in John’s Message, and also in the leaflets in the Narthex explaining the nature of the approach. If you are interested in taking part in this group, please inform Jane in the office, or speak to John directly.

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## Film Screening at SCUC Sunday 22 February

We are delighted with the opportunity to screen the 2025 documentary “Love in the Walls” at **SCUC on Sunday 22 February 2026, 3.00 to 5.00 pm**. This 60-minute film captures the warmth and community spirit at the Servants Community Housing’s Carrical House in Hawthorn. The film is directly relevant to aspects of our 2024 Forum on Homelessness and 2025 Forum on Loneliness.

The screening of the film will be open to the wider community and entry will be a gold coin donation. Amanda Donohoe (CEO of Servants) will be attending for a Q and A session after the film. Servants “Love of Good” products, honey and apple cider, will be available for purchase; and we will provide afternoon tea.

Importantly the screening of this film will coincide with the launch of SCUC’s 2026 theme of Community. What is it? How is it evolving? Why is it important? How do we nurture and share community? What thoughts do you have for

developing SCUC's community outreach in 2026? How would you like to be involved?

We look forward to hearing from you!

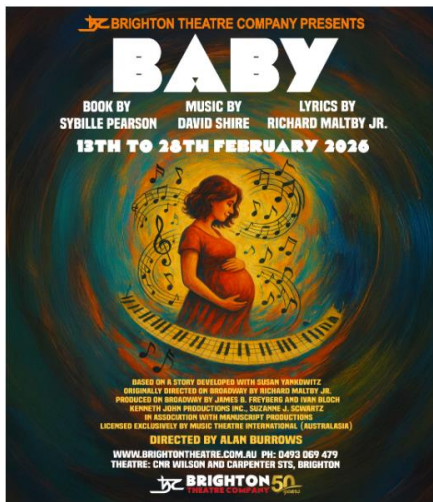
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### “BABY” – THE MUSICAL!

Colin Prohasky, our organist, is the musical director of **BABY**, a musical to be performed at Brighton Theatre Company in February. He says it is really good! The show concerns the reactions of three couples expecting a child. It first ran on Broadway from 1983 to 1984.

The season runs from 13 to 28 February, including some matinee performances.

Anyone interested in making a group booking? If so, see Alison. Wednesday 25th at 8.00 pm is my preference.



For full details and booking see the website:

[Season 1 – Baby | Brighton Theatre Company](#)

## MUSICAL SOIREE

25 February



Isabelle Roberts is hosting a musical soiree, "Listening to Music", at her home on Wednesday 25 February, 2.00 pm. The programme will include a taste of Baroque, Classical and Romantic music. If you are interested in coming, please speak to Isabelle to reserve a place!

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### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Alison,

As you know our friend Herro Zhao sends her church friends a greeting and a beautiful card every year for Christmas/New Year.

Would you consider picturing it in the Feb issue of InSpire please together with the following message:-

Dear SCUC friends,

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year.

All the best wishes for you.

Love, Herro

Kind regards,

Lencie



**CALENDAR FEBRUARY 2026**

<b>SUNDAY 1<sup>ST</sup></b>	<b>11 AM</b>	<b>EUCHARIST &amp; COMMUNITY LUNCH</b>
<b>SUNDAY 8<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>10.30 AM</b>	<b>CHURCH SERVICE</b>
<b>TUESDAY 10<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>10.00 AM</b>	<b>SPIRITUALITY WORKSHOP</b> <b>“Awakening to the Living Universe”</b>
<b>SUNDAY 15<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>10.30 AM</b> <b>5.00 PM</b>	<b>CHURCH SERVICE</b> <b>SOMETHING FOR THE SPIRIT</b>
<b>TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>2.00 PM</b>	<b>CAFÉ CATCH UP AT MR SISTER</b> <b>CAFÉ 81 WAVERLEY ROAD</b>
<b>THURSDAY 19<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>10.30 AM</b>	<b>BOOK CHAT</b>
<b>SUNDAY 22<sup>ND</sup></b>	<b>10.30 AM</b> <b>3.00 PM</b>	<b>CHURCH SERVICE</b> <b>“LOVE IN THE WALLS” FILM</b>
<b>THURSDAY 26<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>10.00 AM</b>	<b>COMMON THREADS</b>