

NewView

It is an uncomfortable but generally unacknowledged fact that, in matters of faith, we do not all march lock-stepped together. While we claim 'Christian' as our religious affiliation on the census, that designation has a myriad of different interpretations. It is a rare occurrence, then, when Neil addresses this matter in his writing on our theme of 'faith' (p.2). He recognises that our individual beliefs are not all the same, and he sees his role (and that of the church) as nurturing our faith journey. That notion of faith as a journey is taken up by both Di (p. 3) and Alison (p. 4), who describe their journeys and their various challenges. Of course, those challenges are different for each of us, according to what we have been taught and have experienced in life.

Without getting into a theoretical discussion about the difference between faith and belief, I see faith as an extremely personal and individual matter, and I frequently find myself at odds with the traditional statements of belief known as 'the faith'. The many challenges to my faith have been mostly intellectual, but reinforced by lived experience. I have wrestled with creeds which were established centuries ago by a people who believed in a three-tiered universe and who believed in miracles as a ready explanation for what was not known or understood. Accordingly the story of the virgin birth (a common hero story of ancient civilisations), and of bodily resurrection, pose problems for me, in the 21st century, to accept as 'fact'. The elevation of the bible as the only sacred text worthy of acknowledgement has challenged me to re-examine my faith along with the gender exclusiveness of much theological discussion about our perception of G-O-D. Similarly, the idea that we are made in the image of God is problematic, when it seems to me that we have made God in our own image; or that this Jesus would have welcomed his elevation to the status of a god, whom we should worship and before whom we should bend the knee. The claim that the 'God of love' sent Jesus to die an agonising death to 'save' me from my sins is a contradiction that also requires my suspension of disbelief. The language of much of our liturgy which is often so out-of-touch with our daily life and with people outside the church doors are other sources of discord, as are the words in many hymns.

The good news for me is that Jesus' life was a model for how we should live: loving his neighbour, working for justice, acting kindly to the outcast, forgiving those who brought his life to an end.

I noted above that faith is a 'journey of development'. Well, as I said, it's a very personal matter. It's where I am at the moment, and it's not over yet! You may be outraged by my 'statement of faith'. But hopefully, it encourages you to ask questions about your personal faith. How does it relate to the accepted, proclaimed historic statements of our church? Do you have your own points of disconnection, or outrage? Am I the only disaffected foot-soldier? To thine own self be true.

Readers may wonder why I come to church since I face so many difficulties. I come to church because it is, above all, a community that, despite our differences, cares for each other. It tries in many diverse ways to emulate the example set by Jesus. It is a community that attempts (not always successfully, I know) to accept people as they are, whatever their faith or understanding of the church's creeds. It is not the only place in my world which offers this acceptance, but it is the place where I have chosen to throw my hat into the ring. I want to be a part of it. Perhaps this will provoke you to thinking about your faith, and why you come to church.

May this issue give you food for thought and conversation!

Robin Pope

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Neil's Musings
on
NURTURING
FAITH

A member of our congregation recently asked me whether I thought there was much diversity in the faith of our members. "Do you think we all believe the same thing?" I responded, "I think one of the good things about Glen Waverley Uniting Church is that people can express their Christian faith quite differently and yet find a home within this congregation". I said, "We don't all have to believe exactly the same thing and we can respect our differences". We encourage the use of *With Love to the World*, Susan Karoly leads a Bible Study group, we have a Friday morning discussion group led by Rev Evan Laidlaw and we have pop up studies on topics like marriage. Alongside that we have a variety of expressions of worship. This enables people with different views and ideas to be able to find a home in Glen Waverley Uniting Church. I thank God for that.

One of the pillars of the vision of our congregation is Nurturing Faith. Under this banner we want to encourage questions, discussion, Bible study, reading, seminars, prayer and meditation. It's good to encourage people to be open to other people and other ideas. It's good to be stretched in our thinking. It's important to hear other people's stories and to hear of their experiences. We can learn a lot from each other.

The Church Council did a listening exercise late last year called "taking the pulse". It was an opportunity to get a snap shot of how we are going as a congregation. One of the outcomes from this was the desire to be doing more work on nurturing and exploring faith. Hopefully in the coming months we will see progress being made in this area.

I recently spent two weeks in Northern Sulawesi immersing myself, along with others from this church, in the GMIM Riedel Congregation in Tondano. From my observation the strength of GMIM congregations is based around what are known as *kolums*. Each

kolum is made up of 20 families that live close together. Riedel has 16 *kolums* and each group meets every Tuesday evening. Each *kolum* elects their own elder and deacon. The *kolums* meet for worship and either dinner or supper in homes. The elder leads the worship/spiritual life, and the deacon the administrative/financial side. All ages from children to elderly attend on Tuesday evening. The purpose in meeting is worship which lasts 45 – 60 minutes and includes singing, prayers, Bible reading, a message, offering and prayers of intercession. All the components of Sunday worship are present in this worship in the home. I could see that gathering like this helps build a sense of community, supports pastoral care and nurtures faith among the group. Every member of the congregation is allocated to a *kolum*. If you miss a few meetings the elder will follow you up.



Rev Neil Peters

The vision of our congregation contains two inward areas of focus. They are nurturing faith, and strengthening our sense of community, including caring for one another and building connections and a sense of belonging. So, I came back from Indonesia with an increased desire and commitment to grow these two areas of our congregation's vision. I was not wanting to copy what they do at Riedel. However, the importance of building community and nurturing faith was highlighted for me.

As we open ourselves to others and what God is doing, we can learn, be encouraged and grow as God's people, as the Church.

Neil Peters

Our Theme:

FAITH

The Journey of Faith is a Discovery

“Faith” is an interesting word, a word which covers a myriad of areas, thoughts and beliefs. As children we have faith in the love, care and nurture of our parents and we are usually encouraged by them to “step out” and discover for ourselves and discover faith in other things. As we grow, we have faith in teachers, leaders, friends and we can even develop a faith in God.

The number of challenges we accept are often dependent on our faith in the person who runs the activity. So much of faith and trust come because we can see, touch and feel and that gives us confidence to “step out in faith”. I know when I abseil, I have confidence in the rope, the safety rope and the people who are running the activity. The strength of the rope to hold you, the strength of the safety harness to carry your weight and the expertise of the people running the activity gives you confidence and faith that you can successfully meet the challenge.

Faith in God is a different type of faith. We can't “see” or “touch” God and yet, in my experience, we “feel”, “respond” and “interact” with this entity we call God. Although it is easy to put our faith in a strong rope, a safe space and the love and care of people, it can sometimes be difficult to have faith in something unseen.

For me, faith is a journey, something that starts as a small seed that is planted in our hearts and as we learn, grow and experience God through our learning about Jesus and His amazing love, the journey continues and our faith grows. This all sounds very nice and neat and simple, but it is more than that. There have been times in my life when God, in my opinion, has got it wrong and my faith has wavered and I have avoided God stuff. But the one thing I have learned about faith is, that when my faith wavers, God's faith in me never does.

There have also been times in my life when I have had an absolute “sit up and take notice” jolt from God, via the Holy Spirit. I call these “Mountain Top” experiences, the experiences which really fire your faith and give you a feeling of real closeness to God. There have been other times when the wheels have fallen off and I have plummeted into the black hole of loss and grief. At these times I have had the faith to fall into the loving, caring, supportive arms of God and “felt” God's presence and strength. Sometimes faith means that our circumstances might not change but we can feel the amazing love of God, supporting, caring and reassuring. So that, as our relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit grows, so does our faith.

I said earlier that we can't “see” or “touch” God, but so often I “see” God in the sunrise or sunset, the rainbow after rain, the wind moving the trees and the laughter of a child. God is there in the smile of a friend, in the colours of a rock pool, in the grandeur of a mountain and the colours of the forest. I “touch” God when I touch the bark of a tree, the roughness of a rock, the smoothness of a leaf, the sparkling water of a waterfall, the water lapping at my feet when I walk on the beach, the hand of a friend, and the hug that reassures when the going gets tough.

There is a saying that says, FAITH means Forsaking All I Trust Him/Her. Faith is believing without seeing, trusting without everything going right, knowing that we are held by strong arms of love and care, no matter what. The journey of faith is a discovery and an experience that begins at the beginning and ends at the ending, but wow, what a journey!



Di Paterson

Faith is a Journey

Birth is a beginning – and death is a destination

And life is a journey, a sacred pilgrimage.

(Meditation from the evening service for the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur)

And so too, our faith is a journey.

Mine started in a family very involved in the local Methodist Church, moved through the growing experience of the Student Christian Movement at University, and, after marriage to Peter, in a growing Presbyterian congregation in a new suburb and later, two parishes and communities in rural Victoria. Over these years, the aspect of my faith that resonated most with me can best be summed up in the theme of an earlier student conference: “Christian Faith in Action”. So our lives were centred in the church, on Sunday services, councils and committees, fellowship and fund-raising, study groups and outreach.

I can pin-point a small incident in the 1980s that began a change. One Sunday, as the Bible reader in the old Bogong Ave Church, I found myself sitting alone in the front row. The hymn was “Who would true valour see, let HIM come hither”, and I decided to sing it in the feminine. The experience surprised me – I felt included without the need to do any mental gymnastics, and the words were more meaningful and challenging.

Recent years have brought technological advances and a growth in information to us: television documentaries on science and religion, history and archeology, books exploring these issues, and now of course, the internet. Recent scholarship has helped us get a better understanding of the cultural and social context in which Jesus lived and taught, and the political situation in the early centuries of the Christian Church. Documents like the Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient Jewish religious manuscripts first found in 1946-7, and the

collection of ancient books found in 1945 at Nag Hammadi in Egypt have added immensely to our knowledge.

It has been, and will continue to be an exciting journey for me, much more relevant to the 21st century world and people. However, to many today, the church uses an out-dated language and view of the world, with creeds developed in the 4th century, medieval understanding of the cosmos and Victorian era sentimentality, particularly in many hymns.

I would like to finish with a quote: “Faith is an ongoing conversation and quest for understanding - a Christian conversation that welcomes diverse viewpoints, and expects everyone to keep learning, never forgetting what has gone before, but not being imprisoned by it either.” (Brian McLaren, *The Progressing Spirit Newsletter*, April 2019)



Alison Barr

News from Sammy Stamp

Sammy Stamp is celebrating having reached a total of \$1 million from its sale of used stamps, since the group’s inception in 1977.

It is proof that your contributions of used stamps which are cleaned, trimmed, sorted and sold by volunteers are a most helpful form of recycling. The group has recently made its next three grants of \$5000 to three worthy causes.

Keep up those donations of used stamps, which can be left in the church office.

Dorothy Graham

Our Theme:

FAITH

JUNE 2019

A Faith Greater Than War

At Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance

There is morning and there is evening in the
King's Domain.

*O God, our hope in ages past, Our hope for
years to come.*

No ray eases across
the night's long watch;
time stands frozen,
awaiting the trumpet call.

The Shrine, on graveyard shift,
is monument to sacrifice:
the King's Domain in black,
rests silent in remembrance.

*Our shelter from the stormy blast, And our
eternal home!*

Beyond this hallowed ground,
suburban lights pin-prick pre-dawn,
announce safe sleep.

But set apart, The Shrine;
sentinel to youth's wild pilgrimage,
that demands payment of
innocence and loss;
signals sweethearts unwed,
families who grieve.

*Beneath the shadow of thy throne, Thy saints have dwelt
secure;*

Simpson and his donkey
both carried broken men.
"Don't forget me cobber!"
bronze echo from Fromelles.
"We'll fight them on the beaches"
till D Day came to pass.
Auschwitz, Cologne,
Gallipoli, The Blitz.

Sufficient is thine arm alone, And our defence is sure.

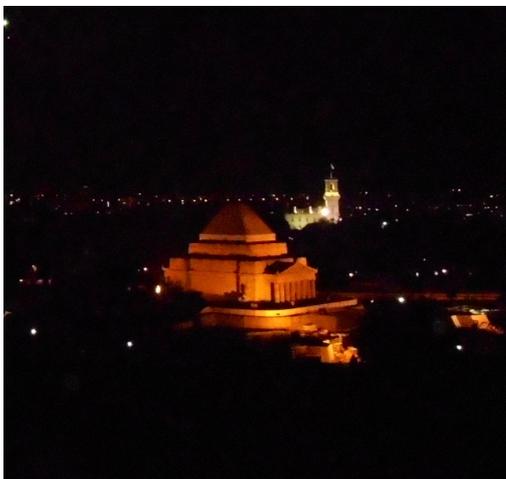
Bodies dragged from muddy trench,
bombing raid, enfathomed ship;
larrikin and cleric
prayed the dead to rest.

*From everlasting thou art God. To endless years the
same.*

The Shrine –
remembrance of sacrifice.
Acknowledgement of Death's invasion
into earth and sky and sea.
Across the forecourt the Spirit breathes.
The Eternal Flame genuflects.

Lest we forget we stand on Holy Ground.

*O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come;
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home!*



Anne Cook ©2019-06-09

Getting to Know

Birthday celebrations of the 'big O' variety are often occasions for a gathering, and also a time for reflection on the life lived. So it was for Audrey Allen when she recently celebrated her 90th birthday with a celebration with family and friends from near and far, and a recollection of the many changes that her life has encompassed. And those changes have been plentiful!

Born in a hospital in Benalla, Audrey spent her early years with her parents on their farm at Baddaginnie. Farm life demands a constant round of jobs, and since theirs produced cows and sheep, Audrey and her older sister Val and younger sister Merle each had various jobs to help.

Audrey remembers helping to milk the cows before and after school, feeding the chooks and drying the dishes (when her canny mother set her up at the kitchen table to avert any potential breakages). The farm necessarily had dogs, and playing with (and singing to) their pups was a shared enjoyment with her sisters, along with making mud pie cakes artistically decorated with bran and wheat on top. Once a week a bucket of water was heated on the wood stove for the weekly bath. The wood stove also provided warmth for the cold winter weather. These memories are of happy childhood years.

The May holidays was the time when her dad spread super-phosphate on the paddocks, and the girls had to stand as markers in the paddock so he wouldn't spread any area twice. The annual Benalla Show was a highlight of the year, with farming exhibits, competitions for domestic crafts such as cooking and sewing,

and visiting boxing troupes. It was also a custom to meet her Dad's cousin and share a picnic together at the show.

Transport to church and Sunday School and for shopping was by horse and gig until 1938, when the family acquired their first car. The year before, the much-publicised Spirit of Progress made its debut run from Melbourne to Albury, and Audrey remembers being taken to the end of a nearby paddock to see it passing through.



The farm at Badaginnie

Baddaginnie had a one-teacher school (with a visiting sewing teacher) which the sisters attended to Grade 8. It was a mile walk there, and sometimes it was a muddy trek. Audrey remembers that each day they had to learn to spell 15 words, and on Friday the whole 60 words were tested. If they made more than one mistake they would be given the strap on their hands - a far cry from today's teaching methods!

At about age 7, Audrey began to learn the piano, and was soon turning her skills to good use. She graduated to learning the pipe organ, playing for occasional church services, thus continuing the family tradition first established by her grandmother, and carried on by her own mother and an aunt. Music continues to be in her life today: her piano is clearly still in use, and her daughter Joy is known in our



At home on the farm

church community for her solo singing as well as her membership of Free Spirit.

Audrey Allen

Audrey's teenage years were filled with activity. After completing her Merit Certificate at Baddaginnie State School she moved on to Benalla High School, some 13 km away. Now she had to ride a bike to Baddaginnie to catch a school bus for the remainder of the journey. In addition to playing organ for church services, she taught in the Sunday School, and was a member of the Baddaginnie basketball and table tennis teams.

Money was scarce, and war-time rationing limited the availability of many items. Coupons were needed for clothing and food and petrol. Objects were often imaginatively repurposed, so it was considered sensible to make the basketball team skirts out of tea-towels, as coupons were not needed for them! Another cultural change Audrey has seen since the rule-driven religious rigidity of the nineteen-forties and fifties has been in Sunday activities. Sundays were not allowed to be spent on any 'work' apart from the necessities of farm life, such as milking the cows. She still remembers one wonderful, momentous Christmas Day when her father decided the cows would only be milked once that day. Knitting was not permitted on Sundays, until the war-time years in the forties when permission was given to knit for the soldiers serving overseas. Audrey remembers her shame when the minister came to pick her up to play for a church service and there was washing hanging on the line, left there from Saturday. It hung there in full incriminating view for the minister to draw the wrong conclusion about their observance of the sacredness of the Sabbath.

At Benalla High School Audrey learned shorthand and typing, and by age 16 she had a job working in the office of Permewan Wright, a general merchant and hardware

business, typing orders for farming requirements. She rode her bike in to Benalla, but usually caught the train home with the bike in the guard's van, unless a kindly neighbour offered a lift home, travelling on the back of his truck with the bike. When attending one of the dances at the Baddaginnie Hall she was introduced to a dashing young man who was working at Paterson's Furniture Store in Benalla.



In 1951 Fred and Audrey were married in the Methodist Church in Benalla, where they lived for the first 6 months; but then Audrey's parents bought a home to live in in Benalla and Audrey and Fred made their home back out on the farm at Baddaginnie. Although country life did not include many luxuries, they had had the electricity connected to the farm soon after World War Two finished (even before Glen Waverley had it). So they enjoyed the luxury of an electric refrigerator which kept food so much more reliably than its precursors, the Coolgardie Safe and its later improvement, the ice chest. They stayed on the farm for eight years. Audrey continued to work until the arrival of Joy in 1954, and later Graham in 1956. Audrey recalls that on the day she later went to hospital to give birth to Graham, there was a strong wind blowing which caused the windmill to vigorously pump water which was overflowing from the overhead tank. Such was the careful husbandry of resources that she climbed the farm windmill to stop the wastage of water.

In 1959 Fred was working at Paterson's Furniture store in Benalla, and he was transferred to the city to manage the store in Mount Waverley. They bought their house and land package in Kirstina St for £4350, pleased with its location close to a school and within walking distance of the station. Audrey stayed on at the farm for the six months it took for the house to be completed. Joy began attending the Glen Waverley Primary School in

**Getting to Know:
Audrey Allen**

1960, and Graham in 1962. When Joy began high school in 1967 Audrey returned to work, this time for Spaceline Homes, where she stayed for eleven years. This was followed by part time work as receptionist at Dr Ebrahim's surgery in Waverley Road until her retirement in 2002.

Meanwhile Audrey joined the choir of the Methodist Church, then conveniently situated in Waverley Road until relocating to the new Methodist Church in Springvale Road in 1962. She enjoyed the choir, and fondly remembers their performances of *The Messiah* (both at the original Methodist Church and at the Catholic seminary, now the Police Academy) and of the Christmas Carol services. She continued to play piano for the women's fellowship, and also played at Monash Gardens for Deaconess Evelyn Ellemor's services there.

Fred had managed various Paterson's Furniture stores after their move to the city, and also at Steele's Furniture, and then later at Scott Berkowitz. He had become involved in Apex, and then in bowling, and Audrey followed him by joining the bowling club in 1978. Fred's health deteriorated and he was forced to retire in the 1980s, but they managed to enjoy some travelling together to escape the Melbourne winters. Their fifty-seven year partnership

ended with his death in July, 2008. Audrey continued to be active, being on the flower roster for church until 2001. She has had her own health issues: two broken wrists, and a broken elbow and bouts of pneumonia. However, she has continued to live happily in the house she and Fred established, and to enjoy the next generations of her family. Graham had three boys: Travis (an electrician), Lachlan (an osteopath), and Brenton (a solicitor) and now Audrey is the proud great grandmother of six year-old Ava and four year-old Jax. She still makes herself useful, knitting for the little ones,



pottering in the garden, attending the Friendship Club at St Leonard's Church - along with other ladies from GWUC - and occasionally enjoying the hospitality of the Life Gate Church on Waverley Road. She is able to look back on a life that has been filled with many social, economic and technological changes, but continues to be anchored by the needs and constancy of her family and friends.

Thank you for sharing your story, Audrey!

Robin Pope



Two Breakfasts, Two Lunches

Hospitality, good humour and generosity have a face and they have a name and they have a home. Openness, generosity and hospitality greet you at table tennis and badminton, at morning tea in the fellowship area, at the Biggest Morning Tea, at GOMER, UCAF, the Men's Fellowship, in our playgroups and English classes, in the Hub, in our Chinese and Indonesian fellowships and so on. These are extraordinary and everyday qualities we see in the Bible in Jesus; this is the context Alanee referenced when she proclaimed that "generosity creates abundance"; these are part of what Rev Dr Apwee Ting alluded to when he extolled us to "extend the boundaries of grace".

We met hospitality like this from the moment we landed in Manado, North Sulawesi in Indonesia as guests of the Riedell congregation and GMIM, the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa. We were privileged to be the first ambassadors from the Uniting Church after the UCA signed a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with GMIM in February. Our days were full of surprises. The government offered us a bus and a driver for the duration. Some days we were offered two breakfasts, two lunches and two dinners. Busy ministers, deacons and elders put aside much of the week to accompany us as we participated in the life of the faithful at all levels. In one of his dialogues with local Christians Neil observed that the local church was very prominent wherever we

went - "...the church is at the heart of community life". Indeed, GMIM churches – some rich, some poor - appeared to be everywhere. The synod office in Tomohon seemed to be the most outstanding building in town, more or less the town hall equivalent whereas the Men's Fellowship of the Riedell congregation is doing up the small, run down houses of some of the poorest people.



"... make a joyful sound to the Lord"

Even more striking was the level of participation by the people. In their collective life as followers of Jesus everyone seemed to have a role in worship and in the weekly routines of meeting in homes and in church, in preparing for Sunday school, in choirs involving everyone (men, women, people over 65 etc regularly sing in services) or in a youth band or the traditional *kolintang* ensemble. Today I heard Bruce Pascoe [see review of *Dark Emu* in the May *NewView*] on *Away* (ABC radio national, 28.5.2019) claim that Australia's first people [similarly] "... created a social system where everybody could fit, where everybody got housed, everybody took part in the culture: it wasn't the elite artists, the Hollywood people...". This reminded me of our Indonesian experience. I saw no beggars or homeless people on the street in Minahasa even though there is hardship, poverty and no social security. We can learn a lot together with our friends in North Sulawesi.

Glyn Howells



Church at Minahasa, Tondano, N. Sulawesi

Activities
In & Around
Glen Waverley
Uniting Church



Australia's Biggest Morning Tea at The HUB
A great time was enjoyed by all who came to our morning tea on 23rd May, when the wonderful amount of \$1,000 was received in donations for the Cancer Council.
People were invited to write on a paper leaf the name of someone they knew who has been affected by cancer, and hang it on the Prayer Tree.
Our thanks to all who supported this morning tea, and special thanks to those who helped on the day.



Judith Greenwood; photos Geraldine Fleming



Framed Journalists Released in Myanmar

On June 14, 2019 Timothy Molineux posted the following report which was emailed by justact.org.au (the Justice Unit at the Uniting Church)

In February we requested that you write letters seeking the release from prison of two Reuters journalists in Myanmar who had been sentenced to seven years in prison for reporting on a massacre of the Rohingya ethnic group.

The journalists, Wa Lone (aged 32) and Kyaw Soe Oo (aged 28) were framed by police for accepting confidential documents and convicted under the *Official Secrets Act*. In good news, the journalists were released from prison on 7 May 2019 through a Presidential amnesty, having spent more than 500 days in prison. "I've been so happy that I couldn't even eat my breakfast," said Kyaw Soe Oo's mother, Shin Htwee. "I can't ask my son to stop working as a journalist because he loves this job. So whatever happens, I will support him to carry on," she told BBC.

The two journalists had lost their appeal to the Myanmar Supreme Court on 23 April 2019. The court gave no reason for dismissing their appeal. In early April the two journalists shared the Pulitzer Prize for international reporting. On 2 May, the two journalists were awarded the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize as part of the celebration of World Press Freedom Day (3 May) which is taking place in Ethiopia this year. The Prize recognizes outstanding contributions to the defence or promotion of press freedom, especially in the face of danger. It is named after Guillermo Cano Isaza, the Colombian journalist who was assassinated in front of the offices of his newspaper *El Espectador* in Bogotá, Colombia, on 17 December 1986.

Killings of Rohingya by the Myanmar military have continued. In early April the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern publicly that dozens of Rohingya may have been killed in an attack by a Myanmar military helicopter in Rakine state. According to villagers in Buthidaung township, army helicopters fired on Rohingya labourers while they were collecting bamboo. The army confirmed the attack, but claimed the death toll was six. Such attacks continue to force Rohingya to flee Myanmar.

Thank you to everyone who wrote letters seeking the release of the two journalists.

[There were copies of these letters outside our church office. for you to send away. Many thanks to those who did so. Here is the wonderful result of your efforts!]

JUNE 2019

for everything there is a season
and a time for every matter under heaven...

We record with sadness the deaths in the past months of members of our church family and we extend our support and sympathy to their families

Shirley Kathleen MORSBY

Elsie Grace GLOVER

Lindsay Norman HARMER