

Presbytery of North East Victoria
Chairperson's letter of Encouragement, September 2025
(a little early because Synod will be happening when the letter is normally sent.)

The other day I was having lunch at a café when an older woman came in. She had some difficulty walking and as she was preparing to sit, a waiter approached. She waved a ten dollar note at him and said: "Here, your legs are younger than mine." Then she sat down. Now it seemed the young man was new at the job and although he had handled our order with ease, English was obviously not his first language. He looked a little puzzled and asked the woman what she wanted. She, not hearing so well, said. "The paper, pass me the paper please." Papers for customers were sitting on the end of the counter. Still looking puzzled, the young man went away, and the woman settled into reading the newspaper that another customer had "passed." After a little while the waiter came back and deposited a large pot of beer on the table. It was a café that also served alcohol.

Focused on the newspaper, the woman lifted the mug and almost had the foaming froth to her lips, when she noticed that it wasn't what she had in mind. "Oh", she said, "I wanted coffee!" To her credit, she was very kind. She pulled out another note and asked the young man to bring her coffee, still not specifying the variety, and then she added, "Leave the beer and I will drink it later." To his credit, the young man took the beer away and brought back an unspecified variety of coffee.

In this life, clear communication is everything.

We live in a world drowning in words and false and deceptive messaging. We need to be clear in our own minds what our message is and to be able to convey it clearly without deceit or deception and certainly with kindness. In strength or weakness, in wealth or poverty, at the centre or from the margins, there is a truth which is ours. There is the unfathomable mystery that God seeks us, that God comes to us in the person of Jesus, that we are called to be partners, building a different kingdom to the ones we currently see – those of the like of Putin and Trump and Netanyahu and others. It is a kingdom, a reign, a rule, in which those brought low by the kind of kingdoms here mentioned find a home, a haven, a safe resting place. Who are those brought low in our communities?

Building such a kingdom, takes time and energy and effort. It takes focus and patience and persistence. It takes a never give up attitude. If we spend our lives, waiting, longing for the perfect expression of this kingdom (this church) to come along, then we will forever live in disappointment and in effect will have wasted our lives. The kingdom comes in the hurley-burley of life, in bumping into each other, that somehow smooths our sharp edges. It comes through the acceptance and accommodation of each other's foibles and failings, relying on the gifts of the Spirit to give us what is necessary as we look to one another's welfare and well-being. The Genesis writer was right, I think. We live in chaos – only look around you. We live in chaos, but it is in the chaos that God comes to us, breathing into our nostrils something of God's own spirit, gifting God's own self. This is what life is for us – to be God-breathed. The chaos does not end, but we live in a different realm within it, and in that different realm we live full, God breathed, lives. My encouragement for each of us today is not to fall under the sway of complaint or criticism - so rife in the world - demons if ever I heard them described. My encouragement is for us not to put up barriers, turning away in silence or anger, but to seek always ways to be understood. My encouragement today is for us to look for ways to communicate the God news clearly and kindly, with the welfare of the other, first in mind. Slow, careful work in which the kingdom comes in even greater fullness and we know the joy of God. We never know when God is going to speak to us, or how. Who would have thought that a seemingly insignificant exchange between two strangers in an unfamiliar café would be a moment of enlightenment - a time when God spoke.

Every blessing

Gereldine