

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

VALUING CONNECTIONS

Our church family reunion at Tiona campgrounds in December last year, now seems almost a distant memory. Before the ravages of Covid 19 hit our shores (and indeed the world stage), that peaceful and spiritually uplifting community experience, was somewhat spoiled for me by personal health problems. But in the midst of acute pain (which turned out to be caused by kidney stones), and trips in and out of the nearest hospital at Taree, I was able to appreciate the prayers and support of the Tiona community. That same support from the wider church community has been with me in the last few months as I have undergone a hip replacement and subsequent rehabilitation in Sydney. My wife Adele and I have also been greatly blessed by the outpouring of love and prayers from the church community in the recent loss of Adele's mother Norma. The power of community has been with us in abundance!

Our contributors this month bring a wide variety of experience and viewpoints on the concept of community. Both the macro and the micro aspects of community life are emphasized. Annie Falcke, Peter Lonsdale, Helen Granleese, Janine Wood and Wendy Ballard each bring their own personal perspectives and life experiences as they explore the theme, "Blessings of Community." Unity in diversity, indeed! Lisa Hoelzl explores the evolution of her ceramic studio and how community moulded around the transformative medium of clay. Ron Harmon draws attention to the "significant challenges to our shared future." Ken Robinson also touches somewhat upon our diversity and what helps to create unity in the international community of the church, including the effects of our cultural background upon our worldview. He notes the "profound significance" of the word "community" in our church name. Ben Smith also mentions cultural effects when he talks about "all the forces of society [that] bear their weight upon us." He uses the tea tree as a metaphorical image to emphasize that we all need community support and strength to simply survive.



Katie Harmon – Mclaughlin asserts that "living Jesus" comes from our spiritual "inward center" and is expressed tangibly in community, sometimes radically, as we seek to address issues of justice, discrimination and empowerment in the complex world in which we live. Rick Bunch also touches on this theme and reminds us that "much of the world's population is at increased risk because of ethnicity, culture, and status."

Finally, Adam Wade raises a series of challenging questions not only for us here in Australia, but throughout our world-wide church community. They are all important questions, but perhaps none more so than his final two.

This challenges me to consider two questions as a result: Are we striving to create these same types of communities in our own midst into the future? And [how] will we respond ... when we encounter those people across from us in the future?

Although I used the word "finally" (above), I'm not quite finished: it would be remiss of me not to mention my recent and dramatically altered perception of what community "is" (sorry, but my master's degree was in cultural anthropology). Covid 19 has opened up new opportunities for many of us, in this electronic age. Be sure you check out the "Events" page (p.27) to see how you can avail yourself of online worship, study and social opportunities during the next few months. We are not all the same, but we are "one in the Spirit" and "Community of Christ" is our name!

Harry Fielding

Editorial Team Member