

Dear Friends,

Many of you will have heard Gladys Bergersen died on Monday evening at age 97. She will be greatly missed by her family and friends, by the community at Yarra Rosa, and by this congregation with whom she has a long association. As she mentioned at the church anniversary this year, her father attended the dedication of this church in March 1928, and slept out under a bridge over the Molongolo River before returning home to Sydney!

Gladys' funeral will be next Friday, 13th June at 2pm, in the church, followed by afternoon tea in the hall. If you can help with ushering or with afternoon tea, please let me know (belinda@canbap.org) or you are also welcome to bring something for the afternoon tea. If you can't be here in person, you can watch the service here - <https://youtube.com/live/LFPxwdaF7JM>.

Many of you will have memories of Gladys you will treasure. I have many, but two stand out.

The first is a conversation we had in May 2018 when, as part of May Mission Month, I was conducting conversations with people about mission activities they were engaged with, in the place of giving a sermon. Gladys was not a fan of the conversation format and came to talk to me about it. *"What if,"* she said, *"someone was to die this month without having heard a proper sermon!"* It did make me laugh, and I assured her that I did not think God would look on someone any less kindly because they had not been regular consumers of sermons – though I appreciated the fact that she found this (temporary) change very difficult and was grieving for something she loved.

My second memory, however, is of a time she astonished me with her capacity to adapt to change. It was the first week of the Covid shutdown and, after an initial trial of Zoom the weekend before, our service that coming Sunday was to be on Zoom. I rang Gladys to see if I could come to her apartment to show her how to access the service. *"No,"* she said, *"I am under strict instructions from my children not to let anyone in, in case they have the virus."* *"What if I just stand outside the door, in the corridor of the units and talk you through it?"* *"No, I don't think they would be happy about that either."* *"Ok,"* I said, *"we've emailed everyone instructions, but this is basically what you do,"* and I gave her the best over-the-phone explanation I could.

To my astonishment, the very next Sunday, there she was – online – and watching the service! And, when we created breakout groups after the service, she was in our group and after a minute or two, had unmuted herself and was joining in the conversation.

Perhaps it is that, her desire to stay engaged with what was happening, that I will remember most about Gladys. And it resonates, for me, with the desire of this church to stay engaged with what God is doing in our world, with what God is revealing to us in Scripture, and, therefore, with the form that God's love and justice takes in our words and in our lives.

As we continue to live out and speak out God's justice, as the formal part of Reconciliation Week ends, let me leave you with the prayer that Steph Evans prayed for us on Sunday.

Loving Father, Creator Spirit,

Thank you that you created all people. That you knit us together in our mother's womb and placed a purpose on each person's life. Thank you that there were no mistakes in your creation.

Thank you, God, that we have weeks like these where we can turn our focus to reconciliation. These lands bleed and yearn for your reconciling Spirit, and I pray that this week acts as a reminder of this to us all, a reminder that won't be forgotten in the weeks to come.

Yet in this week I come to you with a heavy heart.

God, I pray for all those impacted by the Stolen Generation. I pray that your peace will rest with them and that they will know your love and comfort. I pray for all mob fighting for their land, that they will find strength in you. I pray for the too many mob who are incarcerated. I pray they will find peace in you, that their families will find peace in you, and that our governments will hear your call for justice as so many fight to stop the increasing incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. I pray for the parents of the children who continue to be taken away. I pray that your guiding hand will be over these systems as we stand in your defiant hope asking for change. I pray that you'll be with these children, that you will be known to them as their loving Father and that, whilst they wait to be reunited with their family, they will continue to be connected to Country, community, and culture.

God, I lift up all mob to you. That you will be there and known in the pain of injustice.

Thank you, God, that you are with us in times of injustice. That you are in our citadels. That you stand with us, Mob or not, and lead us towards a just world, a garden world.

God, I could not think of anything more powerful in this journey of reconciliation than your love. God, I pray that as we join with you, you will transform us to be people who are more Christlike. People who live out your command to love.

I pray God that you will transform all of Australia to love like you love, so that we love so much that there is no longer room for racism. That your love is felt in rooms of decision making so that there is no longer room for injustice. That we love so deeply that we care for Country. That your love is felt in our churches as we truth-tell and welcome Mob through our doors.

God, you have reconciled nations and people before and I so wholly believe that you will do so again, that you are doing so. Thank you, God, that you are working in us to achieve reconciliation. Thank you, God, for the vision of justice, reconciliation, and love that you have for us, that you have for your garden city to be realised on Earth.

*God help us to have ears that hear as we continue to listen deeply.
Help us to hope defiantly for a reconciled Australia.
Help us to love one another and cherish our differences.*

May your love be the foundation of Australia's reconciliation. Let your justice fall on our lands.

In your mighty mighty name, Amen

Amen to that!

Grace and peace,

Belinda