



Toorak Uniting Church

Update 11 February 2018

office@toorakuc.org.au
www.toorakuc.org.au

Phone: 9829 0300
Sunday services 9am & 10.15am



Still Thinking – Forgiveness— Christopher Page

Several years ago the celebrated atheist Richard Dawkins wrote an important book titled *The Selfish Gene*. In fact, Dawkins coined the term, “the selfish gene” no such idea existed before the book was published in 1976. The book made a significant impact in the fields of both evolutionary biology and cultural development. Naming a particular gene selfish was problematic because as Dawkins and others explained, genes have no will or moral motivation, rather they are “selfish” in the sense that the genes that replicate and are passed on are those that serve the best interest of the organism to which they belong – hence selfish.

Self-interest or selfishness has not had a good press in the Christian tradition. Most of us were taught that to put one’s self before others was wrong, even sinful. From a young age children are taught to share and to put others first and that selfishness should be punished or at least corrected. And yet there is also the opposite view that the child must learn to be assertive and stand up to bullies and those who would exploit them. And we know that our society relishes competition and glorifies winners and barely tolerates a loser.

There is no denying that Dawkins’ “selfish gene” is essential to the survival of the human species and active in the healthy human being and that even acts of bravery and altruism can be in fact, self-serving, perhaps not observable in the immediate context but later in a larger vision of life. A healthy Christian view of life finds nothing wrong with that. The central tenant of the Christian faith is to, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and your neighbour as yourself.*” I think it is fair to say that loving my neighbour is often in my and the neighbours, best interest.

An example of this reciprocity comes from the considerable research done in recent years on the therapeutic value of forgiveness. If one was to choose the opposite emotions to forgiveness they would be anger, hate, revenge or resentment. It doesn’t take much imagination to recognize the damage these emotions do to ourselves and to those around us. It could be suggested that to forgive is an act of selfishness because I may get more benefit from it than the person I am forgiving. Letting go of grudges and bitterness can open the way for experiences of compassion, kindness and peacefulness and it takes me out of the role of victim and empowers me to act with courage and assertiveness.

Katherine Piderman, Ph.D., staff chaplain at Mayo Clinic in the USA recognizes that forgiveness can lead to: Healthier relationships; Greater spiritual and psychological well-being; less stress and hostility; Lower blood pressure; fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety and chronic pain; Lower risk of alcohol and substance abuse.

But it is important to note that forgiveness is a process rather than merely an event. We have all heard someone say, “just forgive and forget!” We also know that that is not so simple. Cheap or easy forgiveness neither helps the victim nor the villain. It may be just a way of avoiding conflict or burying a deep hurt. True forgiveness takes time. When we have been wounded or we have wounded another, it is legitimate to wait until that wound has begun to heal and we are less vulnerable. Nevertheless, there is a time to forgive. The Catholic priest Henri Nouwen said it this way:

Finally, it demands of me that I step over that wounded part of my heart that feels hurt and wronged and that wants to stay in control and put a few conditions between me and the one whom I am asked to forgive and forgive them.

An article on Page 9 of this month’s *Crosslight* newspaper features former TUC Intern Minister, **Paul Dau**. The text of the article is also copied overleaf.

A number of groups have already booked to meet regularly at TUC in 2018. If you are interested in joining any of them, the Office staff can provide contact details.

Australasian Native Orchid Society	7.00pm	1 st Fri of month
Beaurepaire’s Bridge	12.30pm	Thu
Brown’s Bridge	9.00am	Wed
Ceramic & Glass Circle	7.00pm	2 nd Mon of month
Dickens Fellowship	6.30pm	3 rd Wed of month
Feldenkrais (various groups)	Irregular	check online calendar.
Ikebana International	9.00am	2 nd Tue of month
Le Club Enfants	9.30am	Tue
Soozexercises	9.30am	Mon & Fri
Tai Chi	10.30am	Thu
TUC Dance Classes	Irregular	check online calendar.
TUC Handbells	6.00pm	Wed
TUC Morning Group	10.00am	3 rd Thu of month
Weight Watchers	5.30pm	Tue
Yoga	9.30am	Mon & Thu
Young Engineers	3.30pm	Mon, begins 16/04 (Term 2)

Would you, your friends and family be interested in being an audience member at a recording of Channel Nine’s **Millionaire Hot Seat**? Audience members enter a draw to win \$500 as well as other prizes. It’s a great day out, full of laughs and entertainment. See Eddie live in action and experience the thrill of watching Australia’s favourite game show. Bring as many people as you’d like. Food, drinks and free parking provided. We make the day enjoyable for all those who attend!

Upcoming recording dates are:

Wed 21 Feb Thu 22 Feb Mon 26 Mar Tue 27 Mar
 Tue 17 Apr Wed 18 Apr Tue 01 May

Call Olivia Hains on 9420 3190 for information or to book.



Diary Dates

Sun	11 Feb	10.15am	Baptism of Elizabeth Bell	Church
Tue	13 Feb	4.30pm	MT meeting	Wettenhall Rm
Thu	15 Feb	10.00am	Morning Group	Faichney Rm
Sat	17 Feb	4.00pm	Nickson-Kerr wedding	Church
Sun	25 Feb	11.30am	Whole Church Family service and lunch. All welcome.	
Tue	27 Feb	7.30pm	TEM Lenten Studies	TBA
Tue	06 Mar	7.30pm	TEM Lenten Studies	TBA
Tue	13 Mar	7.30pm	TEM Lenten Studies	TBA
Tue	20 Mar	7.30pm	TEM Lenten Studies	TBA

Please join us for lunch after our Whole Church Family service on Sun, 25 Feb. All welcome.

Stamp time! Please bring your collected used stamps during Feb. Sundays and leave them at the back of the church, or on weekdays, drop them into the Office. Thank you, June.



Mental Health Foundation Australia invites you to attend a non-denominational **Grief and Loss Support Group**. Everyone is welcome. Last Tue. of the month at 12:00, St. Johns Church, 86 Clendon Rd, Toorak. 9826 1422 | www.mhfa.org.au

Prayers for Christian Unity 2018 at 10am

Feb 22 Swedish Church
Mar 22 St Peter's
Apr 26 St John's
May 13-20 Week of Prayer
May 17 12pm, + lunch, at St Peter's
May 31 TUC

* Dates are set for the Toorak Ecumenical Movement's **Lenten Studies**. Meetings will be held on the following Tuesdays, from 7.30pm: 27 Feb, 6 Mar, 13 Mar, 20 Mar. Topic and venue details will be provided when they are finalised.

* **Toorak Ecumenical Council's** May meeting will be held at St Peter's.

In our thoughts and prayers— The family of Ryan de Wit, 29, former TUC electrician, who was fatally electrocuted in a workplace accident. Ryan's wife, Emma, is due to give birth to their first baby in April.

To our members Lenore Newnham and Jill Williams, who have retired from their long-time reliable help at the fellowship hour, we give our thanks for their commitment and generosity. Special thanks are here recorded also to Jonathan Lancaster, for his on-going behind-the-scene assistance each week.

Thank you, too, to Milton Cameron, Kerrie Cross, Hilary Hall, Julie and Jack Frazer, June Downes, Charmaine Cornford, and Jeanette McArthur who will continue serving tea and coffee week by week after the 10.15 service.

All congregants are encouraged to join together in the Faichney Room for fellowship, to extend the hand of friendship, and to welcome our visitors. The time is set aside; the tea and coffee are free!

Christine Brown





Uniting Church minister and South Sudanese refugee Rev Paul Dau says some of the recent media coverage and high-level political commentary on African youth crime comes is hugely disappointing.

The newly ordained Springvale Uniting Church minister endorsed comments from UCA President Stuart McMillan who yesterday said the spread of fear and negativity about South Sudanese and other African communities is a blight on our public life”.

Mr Dau, who has lived in Australia since 2003 after leaving behind his family to flee civil war in Sudan at age 10 and spending the next 16 years trekking across Africa and living in refugee camps, said that a negative portrayal of his community was nothing new.

“This is not the first time we are used to this kind of media coverage or political commentary. It has been going on for a decade or more,” he said.

Mr Dau said it was sadly true that a small number South Sudanese youth in Victoria were engaged in criminal and anti-social behaviour.

“What is disappointing is that first of all I have to admit that as a community we are not in agreement or happy with what a few of the young people within the South Sudanese community, or African as a whole, are doing. That is the fact that has to be acknowledged,” he said.

However, Mr Dau said the media and political commentary, which has seen notable contributions at a federal level by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Minister for Immigration Peter Dutton, has not been helpful.

“The amount of coverage that is given to this tiny group of people within the community seems to portray the rest of the community in the same manner,” Mr Dau said.

“This is where a huge disappointment is coming from and especially when it is taken up the government and the prime minister in particular. That’s really discouraging because we are trying our best to ensure that we fit within the community.”

Mr McMillan called some of the media and political commentary highly destructive.

“I find it deeply regrettable and offensive that some of our political leaders and media have begun the New Year by demonising a group of young African men,” Mr McMillan said.

“This is no doubt hurtful to many Africans who have made Australia their home and do their level best to contribute to the Australian community whilst in many cases also supporting loved ones in their home nations.”

Mr Dau said that while some South Sudanese youth were being affected by issues such as a breakdown in parenting, high unemployment and housing difficulties there were significant efforts being made to overcome this.

“There are a number of initiatives coming forth from the state government, the local communities and the community at large to ensure the newly arrived migrant is supported and that integration into the larger community is encouraged,” he said.

“No one can deceive themselves that that can be achieved overnight. It is going to be a process.”

Yesterday Mr McMillan urged more recognition of the good news stories out of the South Sudanese and other African communities.

“Our politicians and media need only lift their eyes to the wonderful African communities of faith to find positive role models and affirmation,” he said.

He pointed to the South Sudanese National Conference held in Melbourne last September as a glowing example of South Sudanese youth “taking their future into their own hands.”

Mr Dau agreed that such positive stories were often being ignored or drowned out.

“If you happen to visit one of the South Sudanese places where we gather and see what young people are doing you will have a different perspective,” he said.