

Charman Uniting Church

News Letter

15th November 2026 Vol 7 No 41 Pentecost 25

HIDDEN SURPRISES!



Jo-ann ecstatic at finding a piano like hers in our storeroom

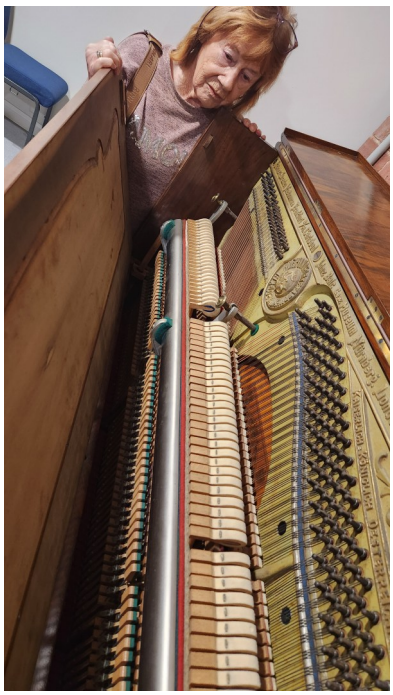
For those of you who are familiar with the (former) Black Rock Uniting Church, you may recall a large box shaped object sitting under a dusty cover, in the far corner of the church, just next to the organ. Look closer and it has the unmistakable shape of a piano, and beneath that dusty cover and you will find - surprise, surprise - a piano!

Church pianos usually have an unfortunate history. They are generally family 'hand me downs' which no one wants anymore, and rather than send them to the tip *"the church would love to have it - and Aunt Maude would be so pleased to see her beloved piano in a church!"* Well, Aunt Maude might be pleased, but would the church share her pleasure? Unfortunately in this situation it's very hard for the church to say "no", as Aunt Maude was a staunch member, President of the knitting circle and lead soprano in the choir. To see her piano go to landfill would be unthinkable - yes, we *might* have a use for it. Forty years later it's still under a cover, unused.

Ever since we Cheltonians joined the Black Rockers I've often wondered what lay beneath that dusty cover. It was never used and I assumed it would just be another (horrible) church piano *(the church hall and store was full of them!).* It was not until it looked like the Black Rock property was going to be sold that I decided to take a peek at what lay that dusty cover and to my surprise - **OMG - IT'S AN AUGUST FORSTER PIANO!** August Forster may not mean much to you *(and it's not a common brand),* but to any pianist August Forster rates along with Bechstein, Bluthner, Schimmel and Steinway! And to think an August Forster has been lying dormant under that cover all those years.

Then imagine Jo-ann Stenton's excitement when we lifted the cover off the August Forster *(now in safe storage at Charman)* and discovered a piano almost identical to the piano she learnt on as a child. Her family August Forster originally belonged to her Aunt Mabel, then her mother and now resides with Jo-ann's daughter. It was originally purchased in 1906 for Mabel's 9th birthday, but is thought to be a 1901 model.

So how old is the Black Rock piano? A quick look inside reveals that is has an *'under damper'* action, that is, the felts which 'dampen' the strings are *under* the hammers which strike the strings, unlike earlier pianos had the dampers 'over' the hammers - a small difference but does date the piano this side of 1900. But the real clue is in the name of the company who sold it in the first place - "M Brasch & Co, Melbourne Sole Agents". No, that's not a spelling mistake - Brasch.



Braschs first opened in 1862 at 108 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne by German Marcus Brasch. Originally it retailed pianos and other musical instruments, with the slogan, "*a home is not a home without a piano*". However, with the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914 Braschs dropped the 'C' from Braschs to became Brashs because of anti German sentiment.

No spelling mistake - it's Brasch & Co before they dropped the 'C'



So this dates our piano somewhere between 1900 and 1914. Jo-ann claims that the fancy decoration and writing inside the piano is the same as her family piano, so it's probably very early 1900. Strangely, no one seems to know how Black Rock acquired their piano.



These days a new August Forster upright piano can cost up to $50,000, and an August Forster grand in excess of $150,000. Again looking inside, the condition of the hammers and damper felts suggests that it has had a major refurbishment at some time - they are definitely not the original felts, and by the precise line in which they stand, whoever did the refurbishment was a master craftsman.

Brashs was later taken over by Marcus's son, Alfred Brash. Alfred traded the business through the Great Depression, with an astute idea allowing his customers to repay the debts owed on the pianos over a longer period (20 years rather than five), as it realised that the pianos would be kept in a better condition in the customers' homes than repossessed in his warehouse. Post-World War II, Brash boomed, as it sold refrigerators and took trade-ins on old ice chests. The traded-in ice chests were then on-sold in sales in South Melbourne, then a poor community.

Geoff Brash later took over from his father. By the 1970s, Brashs expanded further, adding vinyl records, pre-recorded and blank cassettes to their line. in the mid-1980s, it stopped selling whitegoods. In an effort to streamline operations, Brashs was split into Brashs, a company that sold audio systems, microwaves and compact discs, and Allans, which focused on musical instruments. The Suttons branch of the company had long closed. Geoff Brash stepped down as executive chairman in 1988 but stayed on as a director.



The elaborate writing suggests early 1900s

Part of the expansion also included taking over major book chain Angus & Robertson for $20 million. By the 1990s, its product base expanded to selling hi-fi stereos, video cassette recorders, microwaves and televisions. It also resumed selling white goods, and operated stores for a brief time in New Zealand between 1991 and 1992, taking over HMV's stores after they exited the music market.

Brashs struggled from the early 1990s onwards. Its re-entry into the whitegoods market was unsuccessful, and sustained heavy losses. According to Geoff Brash, the last family executive, the problems that caused the collapse were authoritarian leadership, cheapening of values, advertising that did not deliver, over-expansion, faulty management information systems, increased competition and internal conflict.

In 1994 the Brashs retail chain was placed into voluntary administration. It was delisted and shareholders did not receive any return. In February 1998, Brashs was placed in receivership with debts owing of $80 million. At one time the Brashs chain had 105 outlets, employing over 2,000 staff members. Some stores were sold to Brazin Group and The Good Guys.

In 1984 and with the rapid decline of the home organ market *(sales of home organs plummeted from 30,000 units in 1982 to 3,000 units in 1984)* I was employed by Brashs as keyboard consultant and demonstrator as a last ditch effort to save their keyboard market. During this time I recall a most pleasant friendship with Geoff Brash whom I would describe as a "thoroughly decent and friendly gentleman of the old school" (*and one who admired my playing!)*

However the writing was on the wall for Brashs and 6 months later they closed 13 keyboard stores and sacked 51 people. I was one of them.




Immaculately restored hammers and dampers

Children's Ground

Walk with us



Children's Ground was set up to give people agency. To give people a say. To give them choice in how they see their children growing up. Because the oldest education system in the world deserves a strong future.

Click on the above image or **HERE** to read the full story



- First Nations people across Australia have self-determination and enjoy social, cultural, political and economic justice.
- Our next generation of children know and celebrate their culture and identity, have freedom of choice and expression and can live with opportunity, peace, harmony and wellbeing.

Australians recognise our shared history and celebrate First Nations culture and strength.



Achieve systemic reform over 25 years through the Children's Ground Approach led by our First Nations people. Evidencing this approach for national reform.

And through our approach, celebrate and uplift First Nations knowledge, creating equity and access to high quality education, health and economy in community for the next generation of children.



Recognising children, families, our Elders and our culture. Listening to the way we as First Nations people want to lead and then following that path.

Upholding First Nations law and culture and the central place of land, kinship, responsibilities and knowledge from Apmerengetyele (from the land).

For the full story of Children's Ground click on the image at the right or HERE to watch a short video….



CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

Monday 30th November to Sunday 6th December.

CHARMAN UNITING CHURCH

313 CHARMAN ROAD CHELTENHAM

DECORATE A TREE

BRING YOUR TREE AND DECORATIONS TO 313 CHARMAN

WHEN?

BETWEEN 2PM AND 5PM ON SATURDAY 28TH OR SUNDAY 29TH NOVEMBER
BE PART OF OUR INAUGURAL CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL.

Decorate your tree in a traditional style

OR

a theme which may relate to your business or your group's activities

OR

your family's special interest

Let your imagination FLY
see what others have done



Free entry for trees and visitors

FESTIVAL HOURS:

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY
1PM TO 5PM
THURSDAY & FRIDAY 3PM TO 7PM
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 1PM TO 5PM

OUR ANNUAL GIVING TREE

Every year our congregation has the Giving Tree .

Our generous congregation can bring gifts for all ages ,and place them under the Christmas tree .

The gifts will be given to Southern Family Life, in Bayside, who will distribute them to those unable to afford presents for their families .

Please bring the gifts unwrapped .

We aim to hand over our contribution by December 4th.

Many thanks in anticipation of your thoughtfulness .

Barb Allan



Pastor Di admiring last year's Giving Tree at Black Rock



Leprosy Mission Australia

Christmas Catalogue 2024

Your shopping is transforming lives — one gift at a time!



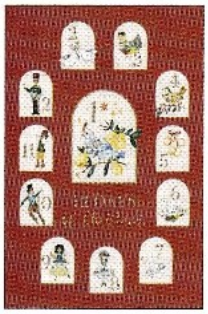
Gift Love and Hope this Christmas

Click **HERE** to go straight to the leprosy shop

1800 710 710 shop.leprosymission.org.au Shop online

Let Christmas wishes support those in need.

Your purchase helps people in crisis this Christmas.



12 Days of Christmas

$15 per pack of 10

Sentiment: May the festive season bring only happiness and joy to you and your loved ones.



Australian Native Flora (Mixed Pack 1)

$15 per pack of 10

Native Flora sentiment: May you have a wonderful Christmas and a happy New Year.
Floral Joy sentiment: May the joy and peace of Christmas be yours throughout the year.



Christmas Stockings

$15 per pack of 10

Sentiment: Wishing you a wonderful Christmas and Happy New Year.

Nativity (Mixed Pack 2)

$15 per pack of 10

Nativity Sentiment: May joy be yours during the season of goodwill and may the New Year bring grace and peace.

Nativity Bible Verse: 'And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.' John 1:14

Three Kings Sentiment: May joy be your gift at Christmas and may hope and love be your treasures in the New Year.
Three Kings Bible Verse: 'From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.' John 1:16





Peace Dove

$15 per pack of 10

Sentiment: May happiness be yours during the season of goodwill and may the new year bring peace and joy to you and your loved ones.

New premium gift tags

$8 per pack of 10. All with strings attached. Size: 90mm x 55mm.



Gift Tag 1
Love Peace Joy



Gift Tag 2
Peace Dove



Gift Tag 3
Merry Christmas



Gift Tag 4
Kookaburra Wreath

Call us
1800 668 426 (opt 5)

Visit
unitingvictas.org.au /christmas-cards

All prices are inclusive of postage and handling.

Uniting is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania.

REGISTERED CHARITY

Uniting



Bible Readings November 2026 *(the readings used in our service may differ slightly)*

Sunday 1st	Pentecost 23	Joshua 3:7-17	Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37	1 Thessalonians 2:9-13	Matthew 23:1-12
Sunday 8th	Pentecost 24	Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25	Psalm 78:1-7	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Matthew 25:1-13
Sunday 15th	Pentecost 25	Judges 4:1-7	Psalm 123	1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	Matthew 25:14-30
Sunday 22nd	Christ the King	Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24	Psalm 100	Ephesians 1:15-23	Matthew 25:31-46
Sunday 29th	To Be Advised				

Prayers of the People



We pray for all in need especially -

Joan Lum
Nan McArthur and family
Peter Aumann & Family
Alannah and children Sophie, Harvey and Austin
Peter & Rubia
Lyn's family—*friend of Costellos*
Matilda
Cec Bartholomeusz
Robyn
Pat
Adie & Ally
Katherine's cousin David & Family
Tina, friend of Joan Wood
Phillip (Barbara's nephew)
Anne-Maree, Andrew and their daughter, Rachel
Maria
Jenny and Janine Bartholomeusz
Anita and Kingsley
Joyce Curnow
Stuart - addiction struggles
Helen & Earle Hosking
Grace & Van Rensberg
Joan's friends Robyn & Jemma
Kath Tondorf
Susan Hoskin
Karen
Helen Cole
Barry
Adrian
Gloria, Samson & Family
Mark
Joyce Carpenter
Andrew
Bronwyn
Teresa
June and Grace Fairbank

We give thanks for those whose prayers have been answered..

~ DINE OUT GROUP ~

Our next dine out will be on Tuesday 17th November at 6:30pm at the Creative Thai 109 Charman Road Beaumaris (*near cnr Balcombe Rd).*

Let Joan Lum (0437 397 066) know if you are interested in attending.

ALL WELCOME



WEEKLY OFFERINGS: Thanks to everyone who have continued to make their weekly offering.
Direct Debit: Cheltenham / Mentone members note that direct payments can now be made to our Westpac account at Southland, **BSB number is 033 358, Account Number is 664 881** Payee "UCA Cheltenham Mentone Parish"

SOCIAL COLLECTION DEPARTMENT:

BayCISS - Please bring your donations, especially non perishable food to the church and we will arrange for their distribution.

Emerge - Financial help is the best way to help - Cheques to - GPO Box 420 Melbourne VIC 3001 or donate via the website www.emergesupport.org.au
Emerge welcomes vouchers for supermarkets or art materials which children could use at home - materials, pencils, colouring books etc. Margaret Bode is happy to collect items if you leave them at her home, 16 Monaco Street Parkdale. **Donations in an envelope marked EMERGE may be left in the collection plate.**



OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL:

Click on the YouTube logo to view a selection of **over 200** sermons and service preludes

This week's video – "Windows of Opportunity" Rev Greg Fry 8th November 2026

*Click on image or **HERE** to view*



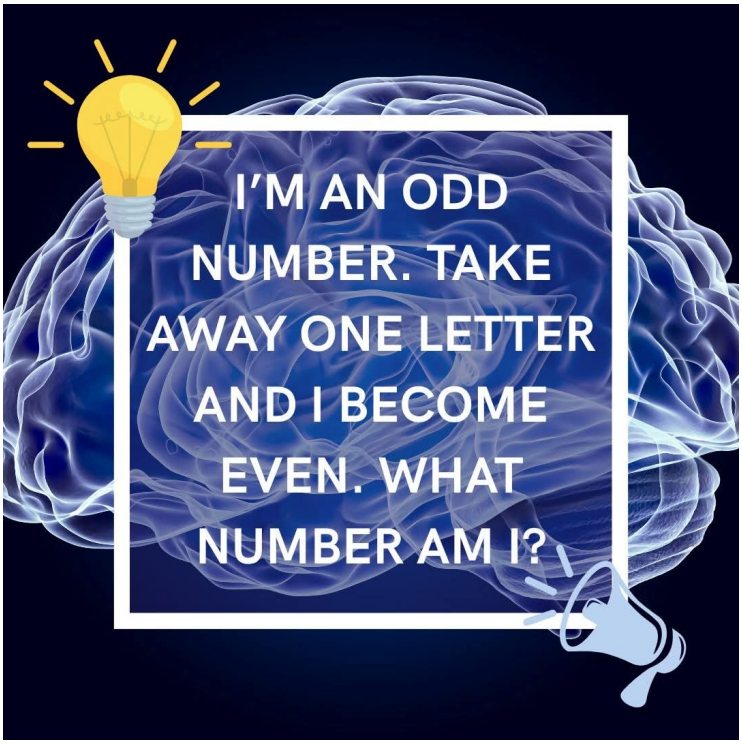
Church on the Internet - Sunday 10am *(virtual doors open 9:45 am)*



If you don't have Zoom on your computer/laptop/iPad/Smartphone, click on https://zoom.us/support/download
Then click on this link below or the "Sunday Church" image to join our Service
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82004410836?pwd=cU9RWlhVMm8wOUw0TStLV1EvNFdYdz09
Meeting ID: 820 0441 0836 Passcode: 665 784
You can also join us on your phone by dialling **03 7018 2005** and entering the above meeting details.







(answer at bottom of page ..)





