

Kallara family camp



MY THOUGHTS

By Dianne Kent

My Husband Ray and I registered for family camp 2024 after being surprised that the camp would proceed because a buyer had been found and sale documents were being drawn up. I have been one of a team from Bendigo who have organized many family camps at Kallara over the years. I went with some sadness in my heart knowing that the campgrounds would not belong to us very soon but understood why this was happening.

We arrived mid afternoon on the Friday to find quite a few friends already at the camp, I watched as all the other campers arrived right up until late on Friday night. The dining room became very loud, a very lively room full of friends, some I have not had any contact with for many years. There was much sharing in classes, at campfires, at the meal table and in the kitchen. Graeme and Helen provided us with the much needed nourishment for the weekend accompanied by the endless rosters of helpers in the kitchen and the washing of the many dishes. Children and teenagers were among the campers. We were treated to Coffee by Barista Kristie and muffins each day made lovingly by Amelie, Elizabeth and Kouper, who will be participating in the upcoming Youth Pilgrimage to USA, the money raised will help with their expenses.

We viewed photos of working bees to build Kallara, lots of hands hammering or digging, lots of fundraising to make this place possible for which I am truly grateful to have had the many experiences here through Family camp, Women's retreats and children's camps. I have worshipped, cooked and participated at all these camps.

I was humbled to be asked to participate in the Communion service as one of 6 Priests to serve communion on the Sunday night by June Stephenson, one of the many moments when the spirit of God was among us all.

We were led in singing by Kristie and Holly and accompanied by Lorraine on Keyboard, and Ray and Daniel on their Guitars, also Amelie on her Saxophone, thank you all for your music ministry.

I look forward to what is next in our camping experiences, whether it be at Kallara or somewhere new, God's spirit will go with us wherever that may be.

MY REFLECTIONS

By Roger McLaughlin

My reflections on the Victorian Family Camp weekend emphasised how much our lives are made of memories of those who shared these times.

Also, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of folks present, including members and friends from the interstate who gave and received so much from this place. Everything has its Alpha and Omega. This weekend was to be the Omega for the Community of Christ's ownership of a place where so many lives were blessed with the uplifting of spirit, renewal of hope, joy, and sensing God's presence undergirded by the beauty of mountains, bushland, and animals that shared God's peace here.

It was thought this moment would be one of sadness, one of loss. Yes, there was this feeling, though; this soon gave way to the joy that came with memories

that enriched our lives over the past thirty-plus years. We remembered those who gave so generously in many ways, now passed on, leaving us what we have enjoyed to this day.

I personally will remember the weekend for the opportunity to reunite with precious friends, not seen for some time, along with sensing again the assurance of God's love, as this spirit of many enabled them to share fears, needs and concerns. This, in turn, brought a sincere response of embrace and prayers from a "loving extended family," knowing there would be no Omega with his.

Kallara will still be a place of blessing, where lives can be given hope for a better future in the program set down by the new owners.

THANK YOU, KALLARA,
by David R. Brock, March 2024

Why did you claim me so deeply, Kallara? Why such a feeling of welcome and home? Why such a sense of call?

Perhaps because I grew up a farm and ranch kid in mid-America and in the dry climate of rural Idaho in the U.S. West. Maybe it was a sense of connection to the land, to pasture and paddock, to fields of crops, to inland flora and fauna. Perhaps it was a reminder of the agrarian culture and lifestyle of those who plant and harvest, who herd cattle, raise pigs, and tend flocks of sheep. Maybe it was the sight and sound of magpie, galah, and cockatoo at dawn and dusk. Maybe the presence of wild things; glimpse of wallaby, koala, or echidna, or the night sounds of creatures unseen.

Yes, that was partly why I loved those acres that were ours out there in rural Victoria. I'll always remember the walks up the hill behind the dormitory, the morning jogs on macadam roads, afternoon walks alone or with a colleague along that eucalyptus lined road at the edge of the campground, the morning view across the paddock from the patio of the conference hall—coffee cup in hand.

The dining hall and conference center rang with laughter, animated conversation, music, and the noise of pots and pans called into service for another meal. Sometimes there were tears in that hall. Sometimes one person simply held silence and listened as another spoke from a deep place. It was the venue for concerts, talent shows, dramas—including a creative, forever unforgettable opera by the youth based on a story in the Book of Mormon. A comedy it was!

Our days were bookended in reverence. Sometimes we sat in a large circle around a worship center we had created. At other times we shared in small groups. Sometimes we sat in rows as sermons were spoken, testimonies offered, sacraments extended.

I recall the camp where I ended my forty-day pledge to give up coffee for Lent. On a beautiful sunlit Easter morn, I drank three savory cups over a substantive breakfast with friends at an outdoor table. Later, we shared in a moving resurrection worship with special music, including guitar, electric piano and didgeridoo.

If asked to name my favorite spot at Kallara, it would be the Upper Room, built during the years I traveled to

Australia. So many quality classes and seminars were offered there. It was a place where key decisions were made, often by a dedicated campground board.

I recall a leadership camp in which the participants wrote poetry in the character of prophetic voices through the ages—from the psalmist to the teller of parables in biblical times, all the way to the transformation made possible by those who understand the power of words to shape the future in the present.

I remember an evening communion service in the Upper Room—a candlelit, Taizé-style worship. A time of washing feet, sitting in contemplative silence, sharing bread and wine as we recalled that other Upper Room where early disciples were melted, molded, and filled by a man named Jesus.

I can still name many of the amazing people I met at Kallara. I won't. I'd forget to name you all. The people matter most. I recall personal conversations about anguished loss and immeasurable joy. Confidences not to be shared publicly, but to be held as sacred gift, forever. I'm sad about the decision that wisdom demanded. I'm deeply saddened. I miss Kallara. But mostly I'm grateful... beyond measure. Kallara is in me. Kallara is in us. Kallara still shapes me, continues to mold me and you. Thanks be to God.



PRAYER OF BLESSING

by June Stephenson

Holy God, bringer of hope, the creator of all, sustaining power in our Universe:
 We are so thankful for the opportunity to be here in this place we call sacred ground, that we can come together for these precious few days.

We give thanks for all those who have made this weekend the blessing it has been for our community, for those who have worked, fed and blessed us physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually

We give thanks for this Community of Christ, for the traditions of camping and community that have called us again and again into the wilderness, to find you in the silence, in the sunrises and sunsets, in the rain, and the mist, in the heat and the cold, in the birdsong and the wonder of the native kangaroos, koalas, echidnas and other amazing wildlife, even the snakes, in the beauty of the statuesque gum trees, the flowering wattles and other unique plants.

We have been in this situation before – many of us had to say goodbye to our old Reunion Grounds at Mountain Hut, and we grieved. We wandered in the darkness for a while as we searched for another spiritual home, and it took some time before we settled at Kallara.

What precious memories we have celebrated this weekend – we have laughed, and given thanks for the people who have gone before us, and those who still walk with us today, who sacrificed and struggled, to create this retreat in the bush. Bless them with knowledge and certainty that their efforts have not been in vain, and they have been appreciated, and lives have been blessed as a result.

Holy God we acknowledge the reality that your creation does not stand still and become stagnant - times have changed and society has changed, such that it is necessary to close this chapter in our history. It is hard to come to the understanding that as a people, we no longer have the capacity to maintain this wonderful place, and so we grieve as we close this chapter of our history at Kallara. Comfort and bless us in our grief as we journey into the future.

We rejoice in the news of the intentions of the new owners of this sacred space. May they be blessed and led by your Spirit to make a difference in the lives of others. We celebrate the hope that there may be ongoing opportunities to still have access to this sacred ground.

As we drive down the road today, closing this chapter of our time at Kallara, may we hold to the hope of returning without the responsibility of ownership, and may we look with open eyes as we begin a new chapter in our ongoing history.

We celebrate the new opportunities that some are already seeing in new ways to continue their journey of discipleship. May we be attentive to all whom Your Spirit of Love places on our minds, so they too can feel the blessing of your Spirit, comforting, sustaining and encouraging them in their times of need.

Loving God, may our hearts, and the hearts of those who journey with us, be open to the inspiration of your

Spirit, so that we can hear your voice calling us to new opportunities, new ways of being the Church. May we seek lives lived in peace, right relationships, and the pursuit of justice to bring your peaceable kingdom on Earth. May we claim your promise to journey with us always and may this be our constant hope.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Light to the World, we pray, Amen.

