



### 2021 - THE YEAR OF HOPE

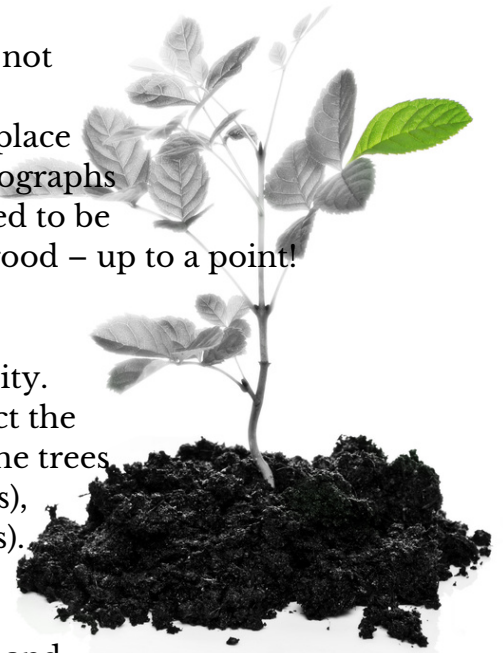
## From the past – Future in Hope

Matthew 24:36-44

It's an old joke: What do you think of nostalgia? Answer: Well, it's not what it was!

On Facebook, there are many pages for people from a particular place or city to share memories and reminisce about the past. Old photographs are shared, and participants offer comments about how things used to be and how things have changed over the years. This is all well and good – up to a point!

On one such page, focused on the Tongan capital Nuku'alofa, a recurring issue concerns the Old Market shed at the heart of the city. Every time an old photograph of this area appears, one can predict the response with great accuracy. People complain about the loss of the trees (although there are still trees), the old bus stop (there are new ones), and the removal of benches (seating is now in the stone surrounds). It was a lovely open space where people met. But they complain about, and/or fail to commend, the many new uses of the sheds, including a vibrant fish market complete with a very popular fish and chips shop, the only one in the city; and a new public swimming pool close by near the wharf that is being used day and night. Taken to extremes, nostalgia can bog us down in the past, preventing us from appreciating newer innovations and delights.



In Advent, we are called to remember the past event of Jesus Christ entering our world and to look forward with hope to the unfolding of God's future. The first of these is relatively easy as we prepare for the familiarity of the Christmas story, the usual activities, the carols, the celebrations and the memories of Christmases past. The second confronts us with the unknown, especially in this Covid landscape that presents us with the possibility of changing our familiar world and within ourselves.

In Advent, we look back upon the good experiences of the past and then look forward, moving on in our journey. We cannot forget past experiences, but perhaps we can choose how we respond to those memories. We can reflect on how our past has shaped us and how we use that as a base to spring forward in hope and expectation into what God has in store for our congregation in 2022.

Lord, be with us on our journey this Advent season as we wait in great anticipation to receive the saviour of the world Jesus Christ. Help us value the past and trust you for today and tomorrow. Amen.

# Worship At Home

## Advent 4: People

The fourth and last in our series of Advent reflections and prayers considers the encounters between Mary, Elizabeth, Joseph and Zechariah.

### Acknowledgement of Country

We, the people of Belmont Uniting Church acknowledge the Wauthaurong Peoples, the first inhabitants of the land we live and worship since time beyond remembering. We acknowledge that through this land, God nurtured and sustained the First Peoples of this country, the Aboriginal and Islander peoples.

### A Prayer of Approach

Lord Jesus, son of Mary, recognised by Elizabeth, loved by Joseph, welcomed by strangers, nurtured by family, bless the bonds which tie us to those around us and bring joy and understanding to those relationships which are hard. Amen.

### Notes on the Bible readings

Luke 1.39-45,(46-55) • Micah 5.2-5a • Hebrews 10.5-10

### Christmas Crib

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women (Luke 1.41-42).

Many Christmas cribs and posadas will be on display now in homes, churches, schools and elsewhere, peopled with characters essential to the story of Christ's birth. The nativity story is all about encounters, many of them unexpected but joy-filled, as heavenly angels and earthly shepherds mingle with different generations of a family experiencing a turbulent chain of events. Elizabeth's joy and encouragement to Mary must have contrasted with the rejection and hostility she would have expected from her local community. Mary's parents and Joseph were at the heart of Mary's experience, as Zechariah was for Elizabeth. The birth itself was surrounded by strangers in a town Mary didn't know, visited by nearby hill-farmers. Christ's coming was located in the real-life story of multiple people in various places.

### A reflective way into prayer

'How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given. And God imparts to human hearts the blessing of his heaven.' As we reflect quietly on those words, may we take that blessing into our homes...(pause) into our places of work and learning...into the turmoil of our lives and our world...into the depths of our hearts...that we may know true peace this Christmas and always. Amen.

### A personal prayer

Lord Jesus, you come as the living word, to be the voice of the voiceless. You come as the word made flesh, to clothe our mistakes. You come as the light in the darkness, to illumine our hope. You come as the lamb of God, to transform our brutality. You come from the womb of Mary, to bring all creation to new birth. You come as the child of humility, and the servant of love. Come to me afresh this Christmas Day, dear Lord Jesus. Amen.

### Live your faith

Look for signs of the unexpected God at work this week. Where is God at work in strange places? Is there an unexpected place where you can do something to share the good news?

### Questions for reflection

- ▶ What strikes you about this contemporary nativity?
- ▶ What might this couple's story be?
- ▶ How would you help this Mary and Joseph?



## **Moving Home!**

The family wishes to thank you all for the support during our move from the manse to the family home in Melton. We have now moved and settled in time for the children to take part in the transition program in their new school. I have now tested out the daily commute from Melton to Belmont each working day last week and this week and I am so glad to report that it is quite manageable. Although the rhythm of my availability for our ministry has changed due to our move, it certainly opens up other opportunities to be in ministry together in 2022.

As you may already be aware, I will be taking Long Service Leave in January. In my absence, Rev Craig Collas will be our Supply minister, leading services on Sundays and providing pastoral support during the week.

## **Weekly Minister's Routine & Office Hours – from February 2022**

**Sunday** – 10.00 am morning Service - (Minister working from the Church office) Afternoon - Ikani is available for pastoral conversations and visitation

**Monday** – Minister's day off

**Tuesday** – Office Open - 9.30 – 12.30 pm - (Minister working from the Church office) Afternoon minister is available for meetings and other activities of the congregation

**Wednesday** – Ministry and Mission role – Synod Minister will sometimes be working at the Church office, home or Synod office

**Thursday** – Office Open - 9.30 – 12.30 pm – (Minister working from the Church office) Afternoon - the minister is available for meetings and other activities of the congregation

**Friday** – Prayer Group – 9.00 am Office Open - 9.30 – 12.30 pm - (Minister working from the Church office) Afternoon minister is available for meetings and other activities of the congregation

**Saturday** – Worship preparation (working from home)

## **Office Opens 9.30 – 12.30 Tuesday, Thursday & Friday mornings**

You are welcome to stop by for a coffee with Ikani during this time. It would be helpful for Ikani to be fully available to you if you could let him know the time of your visit. The church will also be open to the public for personal prayer during these times.



## **Weekly Prayer:**

“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...’ (Matt 6:9) Prayer is one way we communicate with God. Prayer can be silent or said out loud. Whichever way you connect with God, when we stop to pray, we acknowledge the greatness of God and are reminded that we cannot do everything by ourselves. We seek God’s forgiveness, grace and guidance in all that we are and do.

Ikani is inviting any member of the congregation to join him at the church office every Friday morning from 9.00 – 9.30 am for a time of prayer and meditation. If you are not available to join him in person there is an invitation for you to be in prayer together wherever you may be at this time every Friday morning.



## Belmont Uniting Church December Roster 2021



Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 19	10:00am	Rev. Ikani	L. Jackson	R. & J. Ferguson	R. & J. Jeffers	B. Vaitohi	B. Jennings	L. Rankin
		<b>Communion</b>	<b>Flowers</b>	<b>Morning Tea</b>		<b>Covid Marshall - Ray</b>		
		N/A	A. Merritt	A. & R. Bunting		E. Wood & Ros Buckwell		

Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 19	7:30pm	Oasis	L. Moss	Oasis	J. Ferguson, G. Coomber	D. Zucarro	David Zucarro	L. Rankin
		MC R. Ferguson		Supper		Covid Marshall - Glen		
Fellowship Committee								

Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 24	7:30pm	Rev. Ikani	J. Ferguson	TBA	R. Ferguson, A. Merritt	B. Vaitohi	TBA	L. Rankin
		<b>Flowers - A. Merritt</b>		<b>Covid Marshall - Ray</b>				

Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 25	9:00am	Rev. Ikani	A. Merritt	R. Pearson	R. & R. Buckwell	B. Vaitohi	R. Bunting	L. Rankin
		<b>Flowers - A. Merritt</b>		<b>Covid Marshall - Glen</b>				

Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Dec 26	9:00am	TBA	L. Jackson	E. Richards	G. Coomber	B. Vaitohi	G. Schneider	L. Rankin
		<b>Flowers - A. Merritt</b>		L. Moss		<b>Covid Marshall - Ray</b>		

<b>Morning Tea</b>								
R and J. Jeffers R Pearson & Volunteer								

Date	Time	Leader	Leader's Steward	Readers	Greeters & Ushers	PowerPoint	PA Operator	Organist
Jan 2	9:00am	TBA	R. Pearson	B. Couper	R. Ferguson	N/A	M. Richards	L. Rankin
				D. Stephens				

		<b>Communion</b>	<b>Flowers - TBA</b>	<b>Morning Tea</b>		<b>Covid Marshall - Glen</b>		
		L. Moss, A. Merritt		H. McCann, J. & G. Schneider				
		R. Pearson, J. Jeffers		Volunteer				

We need one extra person to be on Morning Tea on Dec 26th. Also January 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd & 30th. Please see Julie today or phone 0418 996 592

### Lectionary Readings

Dec 19 - Advent 4	Mic 5: 2 - 5	Psalm 80: 1 - 7	Heb 10: 5 - 10	Lk 1: 39 - 45, (46 - 55)
Dec 24/25 - Christmas Day 1	Is 9: 2 - 7	Ps 96	Tit 2: 11 - 14	Luke 2: 1 - 14, (15 - 20)
	Christmas Day 2 Is 62: 6 - 12	Ps 97	Tit 3: 4 - 7	Luke 2: (1 - 7), 8 - 20
	Christmas Day 3 Is 52: 7 - 10	Ps 98	Heb 1: 1 - 4, (5 - 12)	John 1: 1 - 14
Dec 26 - Christmas 1	1 Sam 2: 18 - 20, 26	Ps 148	Col 3: 12 - 17	Luke 2: 41 - 52
Jan 1 - New Years Day	Ecd 3: 1 - 13	Psalm 8	Rev 21: 1 - 6a	Mt 25: 31 - 46

This is the penultimate publication of the Newsletter for 2021  
Next week will be a special Christmas edition

We're all excited at the news



May you have the gladness of Christmas which is hope;  
The spirit of Christmas which is peace;  
The heart of Christmas which is love.







# Important Notes

## LOOKING AHEAD

Sunday 19 December	- 10.00am. ~ Advent 4	- Rev Ikani Vaitohi
	7.30 pm. - Christmas Carols Service	- OASIS Group
Friday 24 December	- 7.30pm - Christmas Eve Service	- Rev Ikani Vaitohi
Saturday 25 December	- 9.00am - Christmas Day Service.	- Rev Ikani Vaitohi
Sunday 26 December	- 9.00am - Christmas 1	- Rev Ikani Vaitohi

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**YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR  
CAROL SERVICE**

**'The gift of Music'**

**7.30pm, This Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> December**  
**At Belmont Uniting Church**  
**Presented by the Oasis Group**  
**and our Young People**

**Enjoy songs, stories, and supper.**





## **Church Council update**

### **Minister's leave**

Our Minister will be taking some well-earned Long Service Leave during January 2022.

Our Supply Minister is Rev Craig Collas. Craig will be part time, working either two or three days each week, and leading worship each Sunday. Craig will work closely with our Pastoral Care Committee and Visitors. For urgent pastoral matters, please contact your Visitor or a member of the Pastoral Care Committee, who will liaise with Craig.

We look forward to welcoming Craig, who has provided us with some information about himself:

*Craig Collas was ordained in QLD and served in congregational ministry prior to joining the RAAF as a chaplain. He is a graduate of the Australian Defence Force Chaplains College and is currently retired. Upon leaving the RAAF he was in placement as the minister at Wesley Uniting Church in Perth. He has previously served the church in WA on the General Council and the Standing Committee and prior to this he was on the Qld Synod chaplaincy committee as well as being a member of the Assembly Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee. He has served on the board of LifeLine Nth QLD as the deputy chair as well as serving on the boards of Good Samaritan Industries and the Mandorls Art Award. While in the RAAF he served in the Middle East as well as Timore Leste and lived in Malaysia as the ADF chaplain covering SE Asia. His other interests include reading, playing violin, mandolin and guitar. He is married to Narelle who is in placement as one of the Presbytery ministers of Port Phillip West.*

On 30 January, our service will be led by Rev Jeanne Beale, one of our Presbytery Ministers.

### **Mission partnership discussion**

Council accepted an invitation from the Anglesea UC Church Council to discuss ways in which our congregations might support each other in mission, service and worship.

### **Church Council elections**

Council members whose term of office is ending are: Bev Dickie, Bill Jennings, Raye Pearson, Peter Woods and Glen Coomber.

An election for Church Council members will take place on Sunday, 6 February 2022. You are encouraged to prayerfully consider and nominate members for election to Church Council. Nomination forms are available in the porch of the church. Completed forms (signed by two members) should be given to the Secretary (Glen Coomber) by 26 January 2022.

### **Annual Report**

Committees and groups are asked to provide their 2021 report to the Secretary by 13 February 2022. A meeting of the Congregation to receive the 2021 Annual Report will be held on Sunday, 20 March 2022.

### **January Services**

**All Sunday morning services will start at 9:00am**



# BUC - IN - MISSION



## Sharing God's love through the Christmas Bowl

Thank you for joining once again with churches across Australia to share God's love through the Christmas Bowl.

Like 2020 before it, 2021 was a year of turbulence and disruption. The coronavirus pandemic continued to impact us all, with congregations again having to connect virtually, and many community members suffering.

And as is often the case, the impact was not felt evenly, with the poorest among us hit hardest, especially the 82 million people around the world uprooted from the stability of their homes by conflict or disaster, and the people caught up in the humanitarian crises caused by this year's conflicts in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Gaza and the fall of Afghanistan.

In the midst of this division and chaos, the Christmas Bowl is a vital channel for expressing our unity in Christ. And it provides a powerful mechanism for sharing God's love, with those who need it, through practical Christian action.

Thank you for being part of this important tradition, and helping to create a world where uprooted people have a safe place to belong.

### Support

If you would like to support the Christmas Bowl 2021, there are envelopes on the table in the front foyer. You can place your donation on the offering plate each Sunday and we will be forward it on. If you have any questions please speak with Raye Pearson.

## Crosslight - December Edition is here!



The December Edition of the Crosslight is now available to be collected from the table in the front foyer. Crosslight is a bi-monthly printed publication by the Communication and Media Services of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania available to all congregations. All editions of the Crosslight are available both in print form and electronically.

If you prefer to receive or access the electronic online version of the Crosslight you can view it here - <https://crosslight.org.au>. A very important benefit of accessing the online version is that we will reduce our carbon footprint by printing less copies of Crosslight. So if you do so incline, please let Ikani know.

We acknowledge with gratitude Lloyd's tremendous work in labelling and sorting our Crosslight.





## A Short Christmas Story by Charles Dickens

Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course, and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by the apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone, too nervous to bear witnesses, to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out. Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose, a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered, -flushed, but smiling proudly, with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been, flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glasses. Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.



# Children's Activities

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ROOTS Activity sheet

19-24 December 2021 | Advent 4



**Luke 1.39-45, (46-55)**

As Mary and Elizabeth greet each other Elizabeth talks of the blessings that Mary has received.



Elizabeth and Mary greet each other.



Draw somebody you would like to see and greet: perhaps someone you haven't seen for a while or somebody who is important to you. How would you greet them?



**Puzzle**

Can you find these words from Mary's story, hidden in the word search?

believe  
blessed  
praise  
greet  
rejoice  
Lord  
God  
holy

l	f	m	n	w	e	z	n	h	e	l	o
b	e	l	i	e	v	e	y	d	u	o	L
l	a	w	h	u	b	e	s	q	t	o	o
e	a	r	e	j	o	i	c	e	p	t	r
s	n	z	a	f	l	i	e	t	r	i	d
s	z	h	u	q	u	r	o	u	e	a	h
e	f	m	t	h	g	a	b	a	j	n	i
d	a	o	t	o	a	h	b	w	b	f	v
e	h	y	f	i	o	u	l	t	h	t	b
d	o	G	t	l	i	o	x	r	e	k	u
d	b	h	y	f	u	e	s	i	a	r	p



Write Mary's diary entry after she has been greeted by Elizabeth.  
What sort of a day has she had?  
How is she feeling?

*Mary's Diary...*



**M**ary set off, as quickly as she could, to a town in the hills where her cousin Elizabeth lived with her husband Zechariah. When Mary arrived, she entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, she felt the baby inside her kick, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth cried out, 'Mary, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the baby inside you. Why has this happened to me – that I am honoured by a visit from the mother of my Lord? For as soon as I heard you arrive, the baby inside me leapt for joy.

Mary, you are blessed, for you believed God's promise.'

Mary said:

'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord!

My spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour, because I, an unworthy servant, have been chosen.

From now on, I will be known as one blessed by God.

The Almighty has done great things for me.

Holy is his name! God's mercy is for all, and for ever.

The strength of the Lord is shown for all to see.

The powerful are brought down,

and the humble are lifted up;

the hungry are filled with good things,

and the rich are sent away empty.

God promised Abraham and his descendants

that he would come to their help,

and that help is here!'

Luke 1.39-45, (46-55)

Did you know?

• Blessed here means that Mary has received God's favour.

• To 'proclaim' means to shout out for all to hear.

## Blessed are you

 **Luke 1.39-45,(46-55)**

Mary travels to see her cousin Elizabeth during a time of both their pregnancies. As Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, Elizabeth feels her baby leap for joy. She feels blessed by Mary's visit, and is surprised that she has been chosen in this way. Elizabeth also reassures Mary that it is because she believed in the word of the Lord that she too has been blessed.

Now read **Luke 1.39-45,(46-55)** see p.2 for text.

### A note on the passage

Any pregnancy is miraculous, but for Elizabeth who thought she could not conceive and Mary who was a virgin, they understandably felt very blessed! Sometimes, when someone is kind or over generous to us, we can become overwhelmed and possibly even feel not worthy enough to have received such a blessing. This passage reminds us that God loves us all – with overwhelming blessings – and we too can be blessings to the people that we meet.



**Ask yourself:** If we could see the signs of greeting we exchange, what would that look like?



The week before Christmas can be a busy time. Can you guess how many people you might come into contact with in some way, e.g. on a bus, in the supermarket or at a school nativity? This week, challenge yourself to treat every greeting as a chance to bless someone new, wish them a Merry Christmas, share a smile or offer to help when needed.



Singing can bring great joy and blessing for those leading and listening. This week, safely organise a carol singing event at your local church, care home or even door to door. Be sure to include hymns of love, blessing and greeting.



## LISTEN

Alongside the carols and Christmas number ones, start each day this week by listening to the song '10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)', Matt Redman on *Spirit & Song*, when you wake up, to focus your mind on the blessings around you. Try to also write down 10 reasons why you feel blessed each day. Or 10,000 reasons, if you have the time!

## WELCOME

How do you feel when you are reunited with friends and family after being distant for a while? Do you travel to see loved ones at Christmas, or do they come to you? If you are hosting in any way this year, make a 'Welcome' poster to greet your guests. Make it as bright and large as possible!



When you count your blessings, how many of those are family and friends? Spend some time looking through photographs of past Christmases remembering all the blessed times which you have had with your loved ones. Perhaps you could get one or two of the photos framed or printed out, if you only have digital copies. Can you remember what made you smile, what were you doing, and how were you feeling?