



From an atheist childhood, to a life of ministry

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Tonga phone outage left Reverend Tongia with only prayer

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A new deacon embraces a supporter after 17 people were ordained in a ceremony at St Paul's Cathedral in February.

Picture: Janine Eastgate

New deacons ordained into the church

As 17 people were ordained deacons in the Anglican church, they were urged to find their strength and peace in Jesus. The men and women ordained into the office came from all sections of the Anglican community, and a wide range of backgrounds in ministry. Ridley College principal Brian Rosner drew on Psalm 29 to remind the new deacons that no one was like the Lord God, urging them to draw strength and peace from him.

Coverage – Pages 8-10

Religious rights laws in limbo

'Train wreck' discrimination bill withdrawn, faith groups divided on need

by Stephen Cauchi

FAITH GROUPS HAVE OFFERED a mixed response to the withdrawal of the Liberal Party's *Religious Discrimination Bill*, some welcoming the move, others reiterating their belief that Australia's laws protecting expression of religious belief are lacking. Archbishop Philip Freier labelled the federal government's failed attempt to pass religious discrimination laws an "accelerating train wreck" in a February opinion piece in *The Age*, questioning whether Australia needed such legislation. But the Australian Christian Lobby said that Australia still badly needed religious discrimination laws, and such laws would be

passed by whoever won this year's federal election. The religious discrimination bill passed the lower house after Labor, independent Rebekah Sharkie, and five Liberals – Dave Sharma, Katy Allen, Trent Zimmerman, Fiona Martin and Bridget Archer – voted for an amendment to the bill. However, the government decided to shelve the bill in the upper house. The bill has caused considerable public debate over its potential to allow religious schools to discriminate against LGBTIQ+ students. Australian Christian Lobby spokesperson Wendy Francis said that the government was right not to pass the amended legislation in the upper house. She said the amendments proposed by the six

MPs – the repeal of section 38(3) of the *Sex Discrimination Act* – would have left religious schools in potentially a worse position than they are now. **"Very few mainstream Christian schools want to discriminate against students on any grounds."** Archbishop Philip Freier This section of the act states that it is lawful for a person to discriminate against another person on the grounds of a person's sex, sexual orientation, gender

identity, marital or relationship status, or pregnancy, in connection with employment as a member of staff of an educational institution, if it meets two criteria. The discrimination must be conducted in accordance with the doctrines or teachings of a particular religion, and it must be done in good faith to avoid injury to the religious

susceptibilities of adherents to that religion. Ms Francis said Australia had anti-discrimination laws against gender, sex and age, and needed such laws for religion. She said for Christian schools the main benefit of such legislation would be allowing them to employ people who kept to their ethos, in the same way a political party would be able to employ staff who kept to a particular ideology. Ms Francis said the Catholic Church and Christian Schools Australia were trying to work with the government to get the bill passed before the next election, but the chance of that happening was low.

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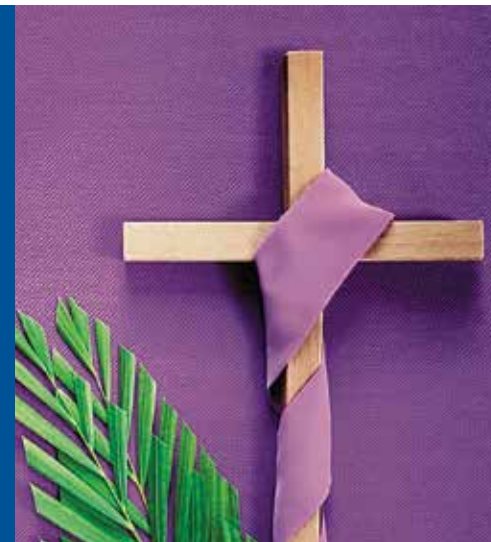
Ask God to grant you peace through worries

HOPE THAT OUR JOURNEY through Lent this year will truly be undertaken in a spirit of pilgrimage which opens our minds and hearts to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. There is a well-documented "long COVID" cluster of physical symptoms that afflicts many people who have suffered from COVID infection. I suspect that there is a corresponding mental and likely spiritual phenomenon as well. We all know something of this when we experience apprehension about returning to the routines and places that were once so familiar, when we look to the future with uncertainty as to whether our plans will materialise. We may have simply become conditioned to the smaller world of our domestic spaces, and have become accustomed to the internet and other electronic means as our only window on the wider world.

Jesus' own experience of the 40 days in the wilderness shows us the pattern for self-examination and a closer walking with God that we can make ours in the Lenten journey. Jesus relies on the revealed will of the Father to refute the temptations of the devil.



"When we start to go into that cycle of repeated thinking on our troubles it is good to stop and intentionally offer the matter in prayer to God."



We see in those temptations the subtlety of deception that we must all confront: the apparently virtuous aspect of a decision or action that is not in fact so.

We have access to the same spiritual resources that sustained our Lord over this long time of testing and self-examination. Intentionally reading the Bible with the matters of our heart and mind open before God is a good place for us to start. Times of quietness allow this clarity. When we start to go into that cycle of repeated thinking on our troubles

it is good to stop and intentionally offer the matter in prayer to God. "God I've struggled in my own mind about these things, I now hand these over to you and rely on your grace to lead me to peace and rest from my worries."

There is great value in taking a passage like Philippians 4:1-7 as a resource for Lenten contemplation. It deals with the unhappy discord between Euodia and Syntyche, and we all know how disturbing bad relationships are. Whatever is the source of our unease, Paul's words to the

Philippians give great assurance. He calls them to be a community that heals the discord, and the church at its heart must be a community like this. He reminds them that their names are all "in the book of life".

Whether on account of conflict, self-doubt or spiritual long COVID, any of us can drift away from God's presence. Paul's response is to encourage confidence in where we stand with God, rejoicing before the Lord and exercising gentleness to others – all things that don't easily

emerge out of our troubles. That is why we need to be intentional and receive the ancient wisdom of the season of Lent in the Church's year as a gift to be received.

"Lord God almighty, grant to your people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds follow you, the only God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Philip Melbourne

Clergy Moves

Vacant Appointments as of 21 February 2022:

Holy Trinity, Bacchus Marsh with Christ Church, Myrniong and St George's Balliang; St Martin, Belgrave Heights; St John, Bentleigh; St Edward, Blackburn South; St John Chrysostom, Brunswick West; St Faith, Burwood; St Paul, Caulfield North; St Catharine, Caulfield South; St Alban, Coburg West; Darebin South; St Mark, Dromana; Christ Church, Geelong; St Stephen, Greythorn; St Martin, Hawksburn; St Matthias, Mernda (from April 2022); Christ Church, Newport; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; St Matthew, Pantom Hill; St Aidan, Strathmore; St Andrew, Somerville; St Thomas, Upper Ferntree Gully; All Saints' Carlotta Tye Memorial, Selby; St James, Wandin with St Paul, Seville; St Thomas, Winchelsea with Holy Trinity, Barrabool and St Paul's, Deans Marsh; St Paul, Westmeadows

Appointments:

BROWN, The Revd Kirsty, appointed Acting Precentor, St Paul's Cathedral, effective 8 March to 18 May 2022

CAROLAN, The Revd Peter James, appointed Priest-in-Charge, St Paul, Fairfield, effective 28 January 2022, continuing as Priest-in-Charge of Authorised Anglican Congregation of Merri Creek

CETRANGOLO, The Revd Heather May, appointed Staff Chaplain, Anglican Centre, effective 3 February 2022

CROUCH, The Revd Wendy, appointed Assist Priest under PTO, St John, Toorak, effective 6 March 2022

DANAHER, The Revd Michael Francis, appointed Incumbent from Priest-in-Charge, St Andrew, Aberfeldie, effective 6 February 2022

DEVERELL, The Revd Dr Garry, appointed Assistant Priest, St Paul's Cathedral, effective 17 February 2022

HEWITT, The Revd David Benjamin, appointed Assistant Curate, Authorised Anglican Congregation, City on a Hill, effective 1 February 2022

HOPKINS, The Revd Luke, appointed Chaplain, Trinity College, effective 17 February 2022

LI, The Revd Zhuhong [Ruth], appointed Assistant Curate, St James, Ivanhoe and Holy Trinity, Kew, effective 1 February 2022

SENN, The Revd Patrick Vincent, appointed Assistant Priest, Authorised Anglican Congregation of Merri Creek, effective 6 February 2022

SONNEMAN, The Revd Stephen James, appointed Assistant Priest, St Jude, Carlton, effective 3 February 2022

Permission to Officiate:

GRAVOLIN, The Revd Wendy Margaret, Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 1 March 2022

HOLLINGWORTH AC OBE, Peter John, Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 29 September 2021

KEMPSTER, The Revd John Hugh, Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 17 February 2022

OLIVER, The Revd Martin Andrew Newton, Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 20 February 2022

Resignations:

COLLIVER, The Revd Barbara, All Saints' Anglican Church Carlotta Tye Memorial, Selby, effective 1 June 2022

GRAVOLIN, The Revd Wendy Margaret, The Parish of St Thomas, Winchelsea with Holy Trinity, Barrabool and St Paul's, Deans Marsh, effective 1 March 2022

OLIVER, The Revd Martin Andrew Newton, St Martin, Belgrave, effective 7 February 2022

WILLIAMS, The Revd Brenda Mary, Assistant Curate, St George, Malvern, effective 28 February 2022

Retirements:

HURWOOD The Revd Philip, Priest-in-Charge, St Andrew, Somerville, effective 1 May 2022

For Vacant Parishes listing contact registrar@melbourneanglican.org.au

See Tributes at www.tma.melbourneanglican.org.au

Clergy Moves is compiled by the Registry Office and all correspondence should go to registrar@melbourneanglican.org.au



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St Paul's Cathedral

Together transforming our City and Diocese

UPCOMING EVENTS & SERVICES

Wednesdays	1pm	Lunchtime Concert Series (see website for upcoming concerts)
Sundays in Lent	8am & 10am	Lent Sermon Series – 'Living a Life of Discipleship'
Sun 27 March	4pm	Mothers Union Lady Day Service Preacher: Bishop Genieve Blackwell
Sun 10 April	8am & 10am	Palm Sunday Services Preacher: Canon Christopher Carolane
Thurs 14 April	6pm	Choral Eucharist Preacher: Canon Prof. Dorothy Lee
Maundy Thursday		Solemn Choral Liturgy
Fri 15 April	9am	Preacher: The Archbishop
Good Friday	1.30pm	Liturgical Performance: <i>The Crucifixion</i> by John Stainer
Sun 17 April	6.30am	Easter Vigil
Easter Day	10am	Choral Eucharist
	1pm	Easter Mandarin Eucharist 華語崇拜
	4pm	Festive Choral Evensong
Sun 24 April	4pm	ANZAC & RSL Choral Evensong
Apr 22 – Jun 26		Luke Jerram's <i>Gaia</i> at the Cathedral www.cathedral.org.au/Gaia

REGULAR SERVICES

Sundays	8am	Holy Communion (BCP)*
	10am	Choral Eucharist *
	1pm	Bilingual Eucharist 華語崇拜
	4pm	Choral Evensong
Weekdays		
Monday	2.30pm	Choral Evensong (on Channel 31)
Tuesday	5.10pm	Choral Evensong *
Wednesday	12.15pm	Holy Eucharist
Thursday	5.10pm	Choral Evensong

Services marked with *(asterisks) are live-streamed via our website & social media
The Cathedral is open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 3pm.

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Why two bishops locked themselves in a cage

by Elspeth Kernebone

TWO MELBOURNE BISHOPS have locked themselves in a cage to protest inhumane detention of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia.

Bishop Paul Barker and Bishop Philip Huggins each spent eight minutes locked inside a cage outside the Park Hotel in Carlton, where dozens of detainees have been held for up to eight years.

About 30 men are being held in the Park Hotel, while several hundred people who are asylum seekers or refugees remain in Nauru or Papua New Guinea.

Bishop Huggins said he planned to spend his eight minutes in the cage meditating "Jesus have mercy".

He said the display's purpose was twofold. One, it took place in view of some of the people detained at the hotel, giving them encouragement and comfort.

Second, Bishop Huggins said he hoped any media generated would increase pressure on Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese to develop a bipartisan solution to free detainees.

"It's a matter of compassion, compassion is doing to others what you would hope people would do to you, and not doing anything under any circumstance you wouldn't want anybody to do to you," Bishop Huggins said.

"As a parent, I particularly feel for their parents, and their grandparents, who have loved them and wondered about them for eight years."

Bishops Barker and Huggins



Bishop Philip Huggins meditates inside a cage outside the Park Hotel.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

"We're wanting to ... put pressure on governments to deal with this in more humane and expedite some of these issues better."

Bishop Paul Barker

are the latest in a series of public figures invited to participate in The Freedom Cage campaign, including former soccer player Craig Foster. The group aims to stand in solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers, detained both in Australia and offshore.

It is calling for an end to mandatory and indefinite detention, the immediate release of asylum seekers and refugees into the community, an end to offshore detention of asylum seekers, and compensation for suffering.

It is also seeking the abolition of the direction which prevents refugees who arrived by boat being granted family visas.

Bishop Barker and Bishop

Huggins' participation comes after church leaders launched a #SetThemFree campaign in late January, hoping to seize attention from the media frenzy surrounding tennis player Novak Djokovic's detention in the Park Hotel.

Bishop Barker said Djokovic's deportation highlighted that people had been detained in the same hotel he was for as long as eight years. He said he and Bishop Huggins hoped to raise the public profile of the issue.

"To [detain them] for eight years is an abuse of human rights and dignity," Bishop Barker said.

"We're wanting to raise that issue, and thus put pressure on governments to deal with this in more humane and expedite some of these issues better."

"We believe that Christians should be at the forefront of compassion to refugees, it's a big theme in Old Testament law. We want to add our voice to others."



Bishop Paul Barker protests indefinite detention of refugees.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

Djokovic saga hits plight of detainees into spotlight

by Elspeth Kernebone

CAMPAIGNERS HOPE the media frenzy surrounding tennis player Novak Djokovic's detention will draw attention to the plight of refugees and asylum seekers trapped for years in detention by Australian government policies.

Religious leaders joined together in January to launch a #SetThemFree campaign, calling on the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader to work together to release asylum seekers and refugees who have been held in indefinite detention for up to eight years.

Bishop Philip Huggins said Djokovic's presence in immigration detention had highlighted the plight of dozens of people, detained in the Park Hotel in Melbourne, and offshore on Nauru and in Papua New Guinea.

Bishop Huggins said these people's fate was entirely in the hands of politicians, as there was no legal remedy they could seek. He said unless these leaders took action, the people could remain in detention in 10, even 20 years time.

Bishop Huggins urged Melbourne Anglicans to meet with their local MP – and any counterpart candidates – to call on them to take the issue to their next party



Religious leaders joined to launch a campaign urging politicians to come to a solution to release people seeking asylum and refugees kept in indefinite detention in Australia.

Picture: supplied

room meeting, to find a solution.

He said the campaigners hoped to have the people released from detention before the next federal election was announced, so the issue was not caught up in the campaign.

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre reports about 70 people seeking asylum are still held against their will in onshore detention centres, after being transferred from offshore detention for medical treatment.

About 200 people who are refugees or seeking asylum remain in detention on Nauru or in Papua New Guinea.

About 30 men are being held in the Park Hotel in Melbourne.

Bishop Huggins said these people were the casualties of elections won on "stop the boats" rhetoric.

He said it was inhumane and cruel to lock people up for eight years, especially when most of them had been recognised as refugees.

"We know the plight of these people, it would be far better, saner and give us dignity as a nation to look after them properly as refugees."

Bishop Philip Huggins

Their physical and mental health was deteriorating as they remained trapped in rooms with little stimulation and only hostile people to interact with, he said.

"On the basis of a test of compassion, no one would want to have anyone they love locked up for all these years," Bishop Huggins said.

"Many of these people who fled from their country of origin, they have aging parents they haven't

seen, they haven't seen for eight plus years.

"[The] basic call of our faith and humanity insists that we should put an end to this."

Bishop Huggins said he hoped the federal government would allow the people to resettle in Australia, and build a life here.

"We know the plight of these people, it would be far better, saner and give us dignity as a nation to look after them properly as refugees," he said.

"[We should] allow them to have access to the health system, and health care, and employment, and to start to make a life, in the same way we've done with countless refugees in the whole period since World War II.

"Australia's a much better country, and a much richer country, culturally and economically and socially, as a consequence of the success we've had resettling refugees."

Bishop Huggins was among faith leaders across Victoria who joined to launch the campaign at St Paul's Cathedral on Friday 28 January, which was supported by the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

Campaign spokesperson Reverend Tim Costello spoke at the #SetThemFree launch event, as did film director Richard Keddle.

Election proposal a waste of time: Sherlock

by Stephen Cauchi

AUSTRALIAN ANGLICAN responses have been mixed to a proposal offering more votes to members of the worldwide Anglican Communion in future elections of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In January the Archbishop's Council secretary general released a consultation document seeking views of Anglicans on possible changes to the process for discerning future holders of the office of Archbishop of Canterbury.

Specifically, the secretary general suggested an increase in the number of Anglican Communion members from outside the United Kingdom on the Crown Nominations Commission. This commission advises the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on the appointment to the office of Archbishop of Canterbury.

In Australia, responses to the proposal have varied.

University of Divinity vice-chancellor Peter Sherlock expressed opposition for the idea, saying it was a waste of time. He said he doubted the changes would ever happen, as the legacy of COVID-19 and decline in membership were much bigger priorities for the church.

Professor Sherlock said the Church of England's historic authority – a legacy of Empire – was long gone. He said the Archbishop of Canterbury had very little power in the global Anglican communion, instead being fundamentally the primate of the Church of England.

"What would Anglicans in Australia think if the Church of England had a say in who the primate of Australia was?" he asked.

Professor Sherlock said the move also suggested the Archbishop of Canterbury should be something like an Anglican



Professor Peter Sherlock said he doubted whether the proposed changes would ever happen.
Picture: supplied



Reverend Dr Alexander Ross is broadly supportive of the proposal.
Picture: supplied

Pope, a concept rejected by the 39 Articles of the Anglican faith.

He said it was up to each national Anglican church to make its own decisions about leadership.

But he said greater involvement in the global Anglican Communion could be expressed by rotating the chair of the primates' meeting, or the presidency of the Anglican Consultative Council.

Consultation documents state that the rationale for the proposed changes is to increase representation of the Anglican Communion on the CNC, as the Archbishop of Canterbury is the nominal head of the global Anglican Communion, but elected mainly by members of the Church of England.

Of the 16 Crown Nominations Committee members who nominate the archbishop, only one member represents the Anglican communion outside of England.

Under the proposed changes, there would be 17 CNC members, five of whom would represent the

Anglican Communion outside of England.

The Anglican Communion has 41 provinces worldwide – including Australia, where the primate is Archbishop of Adelaide Geoffrey Smith.

The Archbishop of Canterbury does not have any authority over the other provinces or primates, but is regarded as "first among equals".

According to the document, Archbishop Welby estimates that 25 per cent of his job is spent on global Anglican Communion responsibilities.

"It is important to recognise that many of the national church responsibilities of the archbishop are also closely bound in with communion responsibilities, as is his public voice," the document states.

"Current issues of global concern – the environmental crisis, migration, health-related matters (HIV, COVID etc) – call for a communion-wide response and engagement."

"Current issues of global concern – the environmental crisis, migration, health-related matters (HIV, COVID etc) – call for a communion-wide response and engagement."

Anglican Consultation document

The document also states that as the Church of England's role within the Anglican Communion was rooted in England's colonial history, it could not escape asking why a British cleric should always be the first among equals.

It suggests that the five representatives of the global communion could come from one of the Americas, the Middle East and Asia, Africa, Oceania (including Australia) and Europe.

The Anglican churches of Wales, Scotland and Ireland would not be represented under the proposal.

Professor Sherlock said the suggested regions were one of the weakest points of the proposal, as Anglican national churches were not formally grouped into the five areas named.

He said it was also deeply unfair to exclude the Anglican churches of Wales, Scotland and Ireland from participating.

In contrast St Agnes' Glen Huntly vicar the Reverend Dr Alexander Ross said he broadly supported the proposal.

Dr Ross said he had completed PhD under the supervision of former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams covering archiepiscopal authority and the member churches of the Anglican Communion – the issues being discussed.

He said there was certainly justification for increased international involvement in the selection of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Dr Ross said the average Anglican was under 30, female, and lived in the developing world, and this should be represented on the Crown Nominations Commission.

He said the change was absolutely not about making the Archbishop of Canterbury an Anglican Pope.

But Dr Ross said he disagreed with exclusion of the Anglican churches of Scotland, Ireland and Wales from the selection process under the proposal.

"Considering the significant role the Archbishop of Canterbury has within the whole of the United Kingdom it seems mad that these churches be excluded – surely room can be found for their representation," he said.

The consultation process was announced in January by the Church of England's Archbishops' Council. It will run until 31 March.

The Archbishop's Council will consider the feedback and if they decide on a final proposal, it will be voted on by General Synod in July.

To download the consultation document, visit tinyurl.com/5dysz4ru.

Lack of clarity the main issue for religious schools

• From - Page 1

But she said the bill would pass in some form after the election, as both major parties had committed to bringing in religious discrimination legislation.

Ms Francis said the issues regarding transgender students were complex, also raising problems for single-sex schools.

She said it should be sent to the experts at the Australian Law Reform Commission, so they could address competing rights issues.

PhD candidate researching the intersection of religious freedom and LGBTIQ+ discrimination for employees of religious bodies the Reverend Angus McLeay said the legislation would have addressed gaps in the coverage of discrimination in federal law, particularly problems in NSW and South Australia.

But Mr McLeay said there were mixed views about the seriousness of religious discrimination, as the Ruddock review found there was



Views are mixed about the need for religious discrimination legislation.

Picture: iStock

not strong or clear evidence of serious discrimination.

He said Muslim, Jewish and Sikh religious groups were particularly prone to discrimination.

Mr McLeay said the major loss for religious schools was the lack of the clarity the legislation would have provided. He said religious schools were already able to hire in

accordance with their ethos, under general employment law.

Writing in *The Age* in February, Dr Freier there were no winners from the accelerating train wreck

of the federal government's attempt to pass a religious discrimination bill. He said that Australia did not need the legislation because many of the recommendations of the Ruddock committee – appointed by the government in 2017 to consider the issue – could be achieved by amending existing anti-discrimination law.

Dr Freier suggested a charter or a bill of rights was a possible way forward on the issue, citing New Zealand's Bill of Rights dating from 1990 as a good example.

"Because the debate was hijacked by the religious schools issue, Christians were construed as people with a burning desire to discriminate. I emphasise that very few mainstream Christian schools want to discriminate against students on any grounds," he said.

"My conversations with Anglican principals in Melbourne make me confident that they want gay or transgender students to flourish as much as any other student."

How stepping back might help you step forward

by Brian Holden

I feel thin, sort of stretched, like butter scraped over too much bread.

HEAR ECHOES OF THOSE words of Bilbo Baggins everywhere. "I am just so tired." "I don't feel like I've had a holiday in two years." "I caught COVID in my weeks off." These are phrases that I have heard regularly since the start of this year. We have all been in this hard place of lockdown and pandemic for quite a while, and the temptation as restrictions lift is to make up for lost time. After all, we haven't been doing much, so we have had enough time resting.

But, like an athlete returning to competition after a long time off, we want to make sure our bodies and minds are right before that first sprint. We need to approach the Christian life out of a place of health.

There is a difference between rest and restoration. Screen-based entertainment may allow me to rest, but it doesn't restore me. We are called to be God's body and join him in the restorative work he is doing, but we must allow ourselves to be restored first.

When I need restoration, it's often due mental and emotional strain. To rest, I need to withdraw to a place that doesn't require anything of me. I need a place where I can sit quietly and be, rather than feel the compulsion to do.

Jesus, too, felt the need for this practice. We read in Mark:



We must allow ourselves to be restored first.

Picture: iStock.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

This was a pattern for this man, under a lot of pressure and expectation. Jesus knew the value of getting up and getting out of normal life to spend time with God. He modelled

"Jesus knew the value of getting up and getting out of normal life to spend time with God. He modelled it and the writers of the Gospel made sure to capture it."

Brian Holden



it and the writers of the gospel made sure to capture it.

I recently provided an opportunity for people to join me in retreat for a day. We spent time reflecting, praying and being restored by God. Here are some of their thoughts:

We moved slowly through the day in a way that challenged my sense of mastery, and helped me to stand back and focus on what the Lord is calling me into. I didn't get many things on my to-do list done on Tuesday; but I was left with a greater God-centred readiness for what we might do together. – Graham

If I could give a picture of pre- and post-retreat time for me, it's a bit like the difference between having a tangled ball of wool, and then being able to untangle it, find the end and make it a usable piece of wool again. Taking that time to spend with God, helps me to focus, recenter on the main thing, and then sort out all the different threads running around in my mind. By the end of the day, I feel refreshed, and ready to go again. – Karen

How are you finding way to retreat and restore to advance God's Kingdom?

Champion of asylum seekers calls it a day ... nearly

by Stephen Cauchi

AN ASYLUM seeker support centre that's helped hundreds of people will close its doors in the coming months, as its dedicated founder looks to wind down his involvement.

When David Spitteler founded the Asylum Seeker Centre in 1997, no one was helping asylum seekers. The situation has changed since then, but great need remains.

So Mr Spitteler plans to keep supporting asylum seekers, through the work of the larger, separate Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

A member of St Barnabas' Glen Waverley, Mr Spitteler founded the ASC in 1997, when he was working four days a week, and looking to fill his day off.

At the start it was simple, then it grew, developing into a network of people who donated on a regular basis.

It's now an interdenominational Christian response to the material needs of asylum seekers and refugees. With no paid staff, the Asylum Seeker Centre runs on about \$100,000 annually, all donations.

Mr Spitteler said distributing food and other basics for free had always been a key plank of the centre, which currently had about 100 families seeking asylum on its books.



The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre's David Spitteler (right) is retiring.

Picture: supplied

"Distributing food and other basics for free had always been a key plank of the centre, which currently had about 100 families seeking asylum on its books."

David Spitteler

Mr Spitteler's work at the centre was also instrumental in the development of the much larger Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

He had been running the ASC for four years when he was asked by Victoria University welfare studies lecturer Kon Karapanagiotidis to give a talk to his class in 2001.

This outreach class developed into the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, founded by Mr Karapanagiotidis.

Now aged 80, Mr Spitteler, decided it was time to close the Asylum Seeker Centre when the ASRC announced plans to move its hub to Dandenong.

But he wanted to continue helping people in need, so he plans to volunteer with the ASRC.

From the start, Mr Spitteler has run the ASC unpaid, in his spare time.

Its basic model has not changed over 25 years, but the needs of asylum seekers have.

Mr Spitteler said asylum seekers were allowed to work when the centre first opened. But soon after the Howard government introduced a no-work visa, which applied for most of the next 20 years.

Policy changes mean some asylum seekers also have no hope of permanent residency under the current legislation.

As well as his work supporting asylum seekers, Mr Spitteler is also a prolific, unpaid public speaker and lay preacher on asylum seekers and other topics.

Currently, he speaks about 100 times a year – about 50 sermons and about 50 community engagements.

He has also preached on holidays in Scotland, England, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Cairns and Broome.

"It's given me opportunities. If I'm on holiday I will go to the church (and ask) do you want me to speak," he said.



Victorian Governor Linda Dessau attended the service in honour of Queen Elizabeth's 70 years as sovereign. Picture: Ming Zhou

St Paul's marks Queen's reign, acknowledges cost of empire

by Mark Brolly

ANGLICANS HAVE celebrated the Queen's seven decades as sovereign in Melbourne with a Festival Choral Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral.

It took place 70 years from the date Elizabeth II succeeded her father King George VI in 1952, on 6 February.

The service also acknowledged the cost of colonisation, associated with the actions of the British Crown.

The Reverend Canon Glenn Loughrey, a Wiradjuri man, shared the Bidding Prayers with the Dean of Melbourne, the Very Reverend Dr Andreas Loewe.

Dr Loewe gave thanks for the length of years granted to the Queen, and her faithful devotion, dutiful commitment, loving leadership, gentle constancy, royal dignity and kindly humanity.

Mr Loughrey prayed for those in need, especially for those suffering because of the actions of the Crown in the ongoing act of colonisation. He asked that each might be redeemed by the love of God, and of neighbour, so they might share in God's bounty.

In his sermon, Dean Loewe hailed the Queen for her personal faith, for her part in the Commonwealth's transition from former colonies to independent nations, and as "an ambassador for Christ and a minister of his reconciliation".

"As part of the decolonisation of the Commonwealth of Nations, she has often spoken of the importance of facing up to the pain of the legacy of the empire," he said.

"The events [of the past] have touched us all, many of us personally, and are a painful legacy," she said during a historic visit to Ireland in 2011.

"Here in Australia, we still have to begin that process of truth telling, of deep and humble listening, and of acknowledging fully the harm done to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in the name of colonisation ... The Queen knows 'to bow to the past, but not to be bound by it,'" Dean Loewe said.

The service was attended by Victorian Governor Linda Dessau.

Storms put seafarers' support centre out of action

by Stephen Cauchi

A HASTINGS centre that supports ships crews is seeking grant funding, so it can reopen after a devastating storm.

Heavy rain and storms on 7 January damaged the roof of the Hastings Seafarers' Centre and led to the collapse of the ceiling.

Centre chairman Geoff Connelly said the gutters on the centre's roofs had not been cleaned for a long time, allowing water from the storm to seep through.

He said the insurance company considered that the damage was caused by negligent maintenance and did not pay.

The Seafarers' Centre has received \$500 from a locally-operating business for an investigation into the damage, and \$1800 from the Hastings Rotary Club to repair the roof.

But the centre still needs



Hastings Seafarers' Centre is seeking funds to fix its ceiling. Picture: supplied

\$2300 to cover the costs of ceiling repairs.

Mr Connelly said he was hoping this would come from a grant from the Australian Mariners Welfare Society.

He said the centre was also applying for a maintenance

grant, to clear its gutters.

The Mission to Seafarers is a society of the global Anglican Communion, operating in 200 ports around the world. In Victoria, four sites operate, at Melbourne, Portland, Geelong and Hastings.

Mr Connelly said that 10 to 20 seafarers visited the Hastings centre each day, amounting to thousands each year.

The mission gives seafarers support in many forms, including care packages, spiritual support, essential supplies and transport. Mr Connelly said they also provided a chaplaincy program for all faiths.

The Hastings centre itself has a recreation room with a pool table, and a comfortable space for ships' crews to relax.

Mr Connelly said that if the centre received a grant, it could reopen before the end of February.

Parish celebrates centenarian's living legacy

by Bob Barclay

ON ASH Wednesday Nancy Esmore, a member of Glen Waverly Anglican Church, celebrated her 100 years of life. Seventy-three of those years were spent with her much loved husband Arthur who passed away 2015.

Born in Dunolly, Nancy was the youngest of 17 children. Growing up between the world wars. Nancy began work at the Dunolly Hospital where she cooked meals for the staff and patients, but her real ambition was to become a nurse.

In 1941 she married Arthur, at St John's Church of England Dunolly. Mr and Mrs Esmore moved to Albert Park Melbourne, and the Emmanuel Anglican church became their spiritual home for 24 years. They then moved to Glen Waverley



Nancy Esmore with Bishop John Harrower, the Reverend Phil Meulman and daughter Sue Bloomfield. Picture: Bob Barclay

into a house they built and, which remains Nancy's home today.

St James' Syndal was their faith community, which it remains, now as part of the GWAC amalgamation.

Here Mrs Esmore made many friendships that persist today. Over the years she and Mr Esmore were involved in various associations, including local garden clubs. Mrs Esmore continues to spend much of every day in her beloved garden, which she loves to share with anyone interested. She simply cannot stop propagating plants, her green fingers supplying a wonderful living legacy to many other gardens.

Mrs Esmore's parish family at GWAC acknowledge this wonderful achievement of her centenary, and wish her God's blessings as she witnesses to and encourages many people who are touched by her wisdom.

From the editor's desk

by Elspeth Kernebone

FEELING TIRED? Feeling tired of talking about feeling tired? Me too ... Yet somehow two of our contributors drew me in this month as they reflected on that feeling of exhaustion. Clare Boyd-Macrae urged her readers to draw from the "boundless and unstinting resources of God's love and grace" – and Brian Holden had a similar message.

But when I looked deeper, many of our contributors this month touched on that theme as they reflected on Lent: that we should rely on God for our refreshment.

So, reader, of course I hope this edition is refreshing in itself – but I also hope our writers point you to where real refreshment lies.



St Paul's Geelong has launched a fundraising appeal for its historic building. Picture: supplied

170-year-old Geelong church seeks funds to serve future need

by Elspeth Kernebone

A GEELONG church has launched an appeal for \$500,000, to fund repairs to its 170 year old building.

St Paul's Geelong initially set out to fix a damp south wall, but in doing so discovered a host of other issues needing attention first.

It's meant fixing drains, rain heads and plumbing, before it can repair the damp in the wall. Two years in, the church is yet to complete the seemingly simple fix it first set out to do.

And the work to date has all come at a cost.

But parishioners see the restoration as an important part of maintaining their building for future generations of Geelong residents.

St Paul's Heritage Advisory Committee member John Duncan said the church was preserving its building for the future, because it could see it had an important role to play for the region's growing population.

"The church has been well-maintained over the years, it's been well-looked after, and we want to see it have another 170 years into the future of Geelong," he said.

The 170-year-old early Gothic Revival St Paul's building is constructed from soft Wauryn Ponds stone.

Mr Duncan said this tended to be a softer stone, which required a special, expensive, type of mortar.

He said it was important to fix the damp in the wall, as it could cause further deterioration throughout the building.

But, even with funding from Heritage Victoria, the sums needed are larger than parishioners can cover.

"Every time you do anything with a heritage building, it costs thousands of dollars," Mr Duncan said.

St Paul's Geelong launched a fundraising appeal on Sunday 30 January, attended by the local Legislative Assembly member, two local councillors, and the chair of the National Trust (Victoria).

Mr Duncan said the committee was planning a series of concerts to raise funds for the restoration work.

Three ordinands, three years, a gift for life

by Stephen Cauchi

A NEW MELBOURNE SEMINARY will aim to sustain long and faithful ministry in its residents' lives, as it looks to welcome trainee priests in early 2023.

St Agnes' House will be the first Anglican seminary to open in Melbourne for several decades.

An initiative of St Agnes' Glen Huntly, the facility aims to recapture the way priests were trained when seminaries were common.

St Agnes' priest the Reverend Dr Alexander Ross said the house would draw on some of the training patterns of the past which were no longer happening.

Dr Ross said residential seminaries used to be the dominant way priests trained for ministry, but in Australia this had mostly given way. He himself trained for two years at an Anglican theological college in England.

Dr Ross said such opportunities were critically important because of the maturity gained through communal living, as people learnt to bear with each other in close settings.

"Living alongside one another, praying for each other and with each other, and studying together and reflecting together and journeying with others,



St Agnes' Glen Huntly has opened Melbourne's first Anglican seminary in decades.

Picture: supplied

"Journeying with others, quite intensively, in that time before ordination is a real gift for sustaining a long and faithful ministry."

Reverend Dr Alexander Ross

quite intensively, in that time before ordination is a real gift for sustaining a long and faithful ministry," Dr Ross said.

At St Agnes' House, three ordinands will live together for three

years, while studying a theology course through Trinity College.

Dr Ross said they would have a whole extra program on top of their studies, connecting the academic work with ideas around what it meant to live a priestly life, and to engage and connect with the world of mission.

The seminary sits next to the St Agnes' church building, in the former vicarage. Dr Ross said this meant there was a real overlap with the life of the church.

The three ordinands may be

men or women and must be aged under 35. Dr Ross said the age limit aimed to cater for people who could still give a lifetime of ministry.

Dr Ross said the seminary was the first to open in Melbourne for some time. He said Ridley College, which opened in 1910, was the last to open still in existence.

He said idea for a seminary came from planning around how to use the church's former vicarage, with an enthusiastic response from the congregation and parish council of St Agnes'.

Dr Ross said house was also a way of fulfilling the mission action plan of St Agnes': to reconnect with the local community.

The house was officially launched on Sunday 22 January, with speeches from Trinity College Theological School dean the Reverend Canon Bob Derrenbacher, and Christ Church Brunswick vicar Bishop Lindsay Urwin.

It will welcome its first ordinands in 2023, after the building is renovated.

Dr Ross said prospective deacons as well as priests would also be welcome to apply.

More information is available at: saintagneshouse.org.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED?

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Leonie, mother of four adult children and blessed with nine wonderful grandchildren.

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☐ Please also send me further information about leaving a Gift in my Will to Anglicare Victoria.

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Grace felt empty, then she heard the gospel

by Stephen Cauchi

GRACE WANG HAS GONE from living in a poor persecuted family in Mao's China, to an Anglican deacon in Australia.

Now the Reverend Grace Wang, her deaconing on 5 February also marked a denominational transition to the Anglican Church, prompted by her determination to be ordained.

Ms Wang was born in 1969 into a family that suffered political persecution at the hands of Mao's communist government. Her grandfather died from the persecution and the rest of the family was tainted.

"This affected my father and my older brother and the family, so they couldn't go for higher education," Ms Wang said.

"The family had hardship during those years ... I was so poor financially and politically oppressed.

"It was really sad and Mum was sick, my sister was always sick."

Food shortages and famine were a constant concern, Ms Wang said. But even back then there seemed to be provision over her and her family.

"Mum told us that she was so worried that with only a little grain flour left, we might not survive the winter. But she kept taking [the grain flour] and it seemed to always be the same amount remaining," Ms Wang said.

"I believe the Lord provided for the family to survive the famine. Even before I knew Jesus, he was providing, he was protecting us."

Ms Wang said the family were not Christians then, but practiced an indigenous Chinese religion. Her parents paid respect to the ancestors, and hoped they would protect the family.

The future there looked grim, so Ms Wang's brother encouraged her to work hard and leave their tiny village in northern China to seek a better life.

She moved to the nearby city of Shandong, studied nursing, and got married. She worked and studied hard and earned rewards and recognition, but inwardly felt



Grace Wang first heard the gospel while in hospital. Picture: supplied.

"I believe the Lord provided for the family to survive the famine. Even before I knew Jesus, he was providing, he was protecting us."

Grace Wang

empty. She always felt like there was something missing.

Then an accident put her and her two-year-old son in hospital. There, a volunteer shared the gospel with her. The lady also asked Ms Wang to repent.

"It was the first time I heard about God, a true God who loves me and is so powerful and faithful. He gives life – physical and spiritual," Ms Wang said.

"I didn't hesitate. I said 'God really exists – God please help me.' I prayed.

"I never thought of myself as a bad person – I didn't think I did anything particularly wrong to others. But she explained what sin is – the separation from God. I realised I do need to admit I'm a sinner and needed salvation."

In 1998, for the first time, Ms Wang went to church, taking her son.

"We knelt under the cross. I had just had the feeling of the Father opening his arms to welcome me home. I cried for a long time. It was very clear the sense of being



Ordinands at their deaconing ceremony.

Picture: Janine Eastgate

welcomed back home. That was so comforting," she said.

"I was very, very thankful that God found me, found us, and also I was a bit upset why no-one ever told me.

"I left all my jewellery, my necklace, in the offering bowl."

Ms Wang began to regularly attend this church, which had a large congregation. Her friends and family did not know Jesus, and that gave her the desire to share the gospel with them.

Then in 2001 she moved to Singapore for two years, to further her nursing education. There she joined the local church and was baptised. She also met other Christians through her training.

When Ms Wang finished training she returned to China. But there her previous position had been given to someone else.

She was also concerned about her family, as the accident involving her son had left him with a disability, for which there was no financial support in China.

At that stage, her husband's spiritual state also worried her. She said he kind of believed in God, through witnessing her own life stage, but it was hard for him to go to church.

"It was my biggest desire for him to become a Christian, to know the Lord," she said.

The family decided to move to Australia in search of a better life.

In 2004 Ms Wang came to Melbourne, followed by her husband six months later.

"I knew no-one, it was so

frightening. It was the same as when I went to Singapore. But I knew that the Lord was faithful," she said.

"So I came with only a little bit of money and small amount of luggage with no job."

In Australia she joined her local church, a Presbyterian church in Heidelberg, and enrolled at Presbyterian Theological College.

Her husband joined her at that church, where they started a Chinese fellowship, welcoming people from all over China.

Ms Wang entertained thoughts of being a minister, but her doubts about whether God was calling her to ministry were reinforced by the Presbyterian Church's stance on women's ordination.

But her teacher was a woman, and she saw women serving faithfully in the church.

So Ms Wang began to think that teaching may not be right, and began to ask many people their opinions, including her lecturers and senior pastors.

Ultimately, she decided to transfer her studies to the Melbourne School of Theology, to study a bachelor's degree in ministry.

In 2019, she began attending Holy Name Anglican Church, in Vermont South.

Having decided to become a deacon, Ms Wang then started studying at Ridley College in 2020 to begin a graduate diploma of divinity.

She was appointed as a part-time lead minister in 2021 at Holy Name, where she will also work as a deacon.

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Strength, peace for new Melbourne deacons

by Elspeth Kernebone

NEW ANGLICAN DEACONS were urged to seek strength and peace in Jesus during their ordination ceremony.

Seventeen men and women were ordained as deacons in a service at St Paul's Cathedral on Saturday 5 February.

Ridley College principal the Reverend Dr Brian Rosner preached on Psalm 29, linking its theme of God's power in nature to Jesus' power over the storm displayed in the Gospel of Mark, chapter four.

Dr Rosner said the Psalm's underlying message was the same as the message throughout the psalter: that no one is like the Lord God.

He said the psalm described the two gifts ordinands needed for their future: strength and peace from God. Strength to face the challenges of living a faithful and fruitful Christian life, and peace to



Seventeen people were ordained as deacons in the Anglican Church.

Picture: Janine Eastgate

face the inevitable disappointments.

But Dr Rosner said God's power displayed in the storm throughout

the psalm showed that when praying for strength and peace, Christians were praying to the

supreme God, a glorious God of power and peace.

He drew links between this

Psalm and Jesus' actions recorded in the gospels.

"It's no accident that Jesus displays the same power over nature that we see in Psalm 29, for Jesus Christ is Lord of heaven and earth," Dr Rosner said.

"He sits enthroned over the flood as king forever, and we can pray to him with the power and peace that all of us need.

"May the Lord Jesus give strength to his people, particularly these ordinands. And may the Lord Jesus Christ give to his people the blessing of peace."

Kathleen Alleaume Ross, Elizabeth Bolton, Elsa Carr, David Chiswell, Benjamin Scott Clements, Xeverie De-Leon, Kristen Dillon, Louis Glazebrook, Gavin Hansford, Bradley Jackson, Andrea Nagy, Terence Ng, Joshua Simon, Anastasia Slater, Lydia Jebaranee Thangadurainadar, Grace Wang and Samantha White were ordained as deacons at St Paul's Cathedral.

Ordained after years of ministry in Japanese church

by Stephen Cauchi

DESPITE THE challenges of working in a Japanese church, Brad Jackson returned to Australia focused on parish ministry as his next step.

On Saturday 5 February, the now Reverend Brad Jackson was ordained a deacon in the Anglican Church with 16 others.

With his wife Michelle and three children, Mr Jackson spent 12 years working in Japan with the Church Missionary Society. Since their return to Australia in 2020, Mr Jackson has worked at Glen Waverley Anglican Church.

While still in Japan, he entered the Year of Discernment to determine whether God was calling him to ordination.

"I was very much focused on working in a parish because I felt within myself that God had prepared me for this next step," he said.

"I decided to enter the Year of Discernment before I came back to Australia. That's the route I wanted

to take – I felt in myself that now would be a good time to consider ordination."

This came despite the challenges of serving in Japan, which Mr Jackson said last year was "incredibly difficult". The Jacksons and their children moved to Japan in 2008 and stayed there until 2020. They were based at Kobe, near Osaka, at Higashinada Baptist church.

Mr Jackson said that they felt they were often working beyond their strengths or language ability and training, in a disinterested culture, where Christianity was seen as irrelevant.

But with the challenges, came encouragements. Regularly in the Jacksons' church, four or five people might be baptised each year.

Returning to Australia, Mr Jackson joined GWAC as senior associate minister. His discernment process took place under the oversight of mentors, including GWAC vicar Phil Meulman, and CMS Victoria state director Wei-Han Kuan.



Brad Jackson (right) was ordained on Saturday after 12 years missionary work in Japan.

Picture: Janine Eastgate

Mr Jackson said submitting himself to the process of being examined was vital.

"Discernment isn't something that we should do alone, it should be done with others involved confirming that sense of call," he said.

"I love to connect with Jesus, I love connecting people with Jesus,

I love to care for God's people – that has always driven me.

"But whether you should do that as an ordained person, or whether you should do that as a missionary, needs to be discerned with other people along the way."

Mr Jackson plans to go on to be priested in November. He is also

studying clinical pastoral education, which is hospital ministry for people who are experiencing long-term significant or terminal illness.

Mr Jackson said he was glad to be ordained later in life, partly because he became Christian only as a student.

He said his involvement in that university ministry wasn't enough experience to go on to become a priest. Working with Higashinada Baptist Church in Japan gave him parish experience he needed.

"I needed to grow up and go through different stages of life too – marriage, young kids, older kids – it helps me, I think, to relate to a wider variety of people," he said.

"At that time in my life I was more comfortable working outside the church. I didn't really have ministry experience or the maturity and life experience to be able to work across a wider demographic.

"I was working in a parish context. I think that really formed me. It gave me the opportunity to make this next step that I'm taking."

"Arise shine for your light has come" (Isaiah 60:1)

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Communion at the 5 February ordinations.



A new deacon receives her stole.



Ordinands during the ceremony at St Paul's Cathedral.



Archbishop Philip Freier speaks with ordinands.

Ordinations — in pictures

Seventeen men and women were ordained as deacons in a service at St Paul's Cathedral on Saturday 5 February.

Photographer Janine Eastgate captured the ceremony.



Brian Rosner preaches.



Prayer for an ordinand.



The new deacons during their ordination at St Paul's Cathedral in February.



Stacey Slater, Grant Dibden, Kristen Dillon and Liz Bolton.



Seventeen men and women were ordained as deacons during the service at St Paul's Cathedral.



New deacon Xeverie Swee with supporters.



St Paul's Cathedral precentor Heather Patacca at the ceremony.



A new deacon with children.



A new deacon with supporters after the service.

Jill Firth steps forth in the name of the Lord

by Mark Brolly

THE REVEREND DR JILL Firth's life and ministry are proof that, at least sometimes, God indeed does work in mysterious ways.

Dr Firth is the child of atheists who – true to their word that their children could decide for themselves what they believed – supported their daughter when she declared as a teenager that she had become a Christian and later when she worked with the Church Missionary Society.

And despite now being “The Reverend”, the Ridley College lecturer never expected to become ordained.

Married to Archdeacon Len Firth, Dr Firth had no interest in ordination for herself while the couple worked together in mission and ministry for decades, everywhere from the West Australian wheatbelt, to suburban Perth, Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and in Hong Kong during its transition from British to Chinese rule.

Back in Melbourne after this, Dr Firth found her way into the Year of Discernment for those considering ordination during “a time of refreshment” for her, after demands of the Hong Kong years. She warned her fellow retreatants that she might become a “runaway bride” as they prepared to be deaconed. But the call to ordained ministry became clear to her during that retreat and she has never looked back.

Now Dr Firth finds herself on the faculty at Ridley, many years after being told she couldn't study there as a school-leaver.

“It's all come together,” she said.

“Hast thou not seen how thy heart's wishes have been granted with what He ordained, which I learned in school, I think before I was a Christian.

“My life could have been anything different and still have been good but it's just hilarious to me that all the things I hoped for have come together in whatever I'm doing.”

Dr Firth recalls being a young child in Deer Park encountering God.

“I used to see God at the bottom of my garden. I know I was less than eight ... I didn't know it was God but I used to go and meet this invisible figure,” she said.

“Years and years later after I'd become a Christian, I thought, ‘That was You, wasn't it?’ So God has been in my life, even though I didn't know, from very early.

“I was really interested in God even though I didn't get it from my family and then I became a Christian when I was about 12.”

West then East

It was during her University of Melbourne studies that Dr Firth met Len, who had to return to his home town of Perth to be ordained. They married, moved to the west, and moved into the college where he was preparing for ordination.

The policy of Perth's then Archbishop Geoffrey Sambell was



For the Reverend Dr Jill Firth, ordination has been her doing what God has given her.

Picture: Mark Brolly

to send newly ordained priests to the country, so the Firths found themselves in the wheatbelt towns of Trayning, population 180, and Mukinbudin, population 350.

Dr Firth had by then completed her first degree, but there wasn't a lot of job opportunities for a university graduate. In fact, there was “not a lot of anything”.

“God has been in my life, even though I didn't know, from very early.”

Reverend Dr Jill Firth

Dr Firth had two children in the five years the family spent there. She led mothers' groups, was a breastfeeding counsellor, led Bible study, became involved in the dramatic society and did China painting, as well as a lot of reading.

There followed another five years in the northern suburbs of

Perth at a church plant in Padbury, a third child, and more ministry among mothers and children.

At that point, Archbishop Sambell paid for one or two clergy a year to go to Asia to learn about the church there. Len became fired up about working in the Malaysian state of Sabah, and the pair made plans to go there after time at CMS training college St Andrew's Hall.

That fell through, so the family went to Groote Eylandt for a three-month locum that lasted 15 months. Then they went to Hong Kong, again with CMS.

Dr Firth took an important lesson in guidance from it.

“One of the things I say about guidance to people who say they don't know what to do is, ‘Look, the job God wants you to do may not be there yet’, because that job wasn't there when we set off for Groote Eylandt,” she said.

They left around Easter 1990, staying in Hong Kong until 2000. And in June 1997, Hong Kong's handover was due to happen. Some affluent businessmen and senior pastors among those choosing to get out early, but the Firths committed to stay beyond 1997.

In their work, the Firths joined anything the Hong Kong churches were doing.

“In the churches, we were pre-

“I've spent a lot of my life as a lay person and it wasn't ineffective. I don't think ordination's an improvement ... I think it's more important for me to be doing the thing that God gave me to do.”

Reverend Dr Jill Firth

paring for all the eventualities,” Dr Firth said.

“China said that they'd do 50 years of the ‘one country, two systems’ so if that was true you just wanted to strengthen gospel work like Bible teaching, prayer, discipleship ... But some people were preparing to go underground...”

The fear of a Y2K computer shutdown also loomed. Hong Kong was reliant on water from mainland China and water supply – and so much else – reliant on computers. Dr Firth remembers keeping two weeks' supply of canned food in case the worst happened.

“It was quite an apocalyptic time,” she said.

“But it was a tremendous time of fellowship and heartfelt commitment to Jesus, just so moving.”

Back to Melbourne

In 2000, Len became Principal of St Andrew's Hall in Melbourne, and Dr Firth returned to her studies – in history, theology and spiritual direction.

“I didn't really know what I was going to do and I didn't take any roles because I was pretty burnt out,” she said.

“I was nearing the end of my third year of study and I thought, ‘I'm going to come out of the end of this and what will I do?’”

So Dr Firth approached Bishop Paul White and asked to join the Year of Discernment, even though she didn't expect to be ordained. She was finally convinced about God calling her to ordination only at the diaconal retreat.

“For me, once I was on the ordination path, I wasn't choosing between deacon and priest, I was choosing between getting ordained and not getting ordained,” Dr Firth said.

After curacies at Bulleen and West Brunswick, she was approached to teach Hebrew at Ridley.

She also spent five years as an Associate Priest at St Paul's Cathedral, where her son-in-law the Very Reverend Dr Andreas Loewe is Dean.

At Ridley, she has organised five Evangelical Women in Academia conferences at the request of the principal, the Reverend Dr Brian Rosner, and the Reverend Dr Tim Foster. The results were incredible.

“I think they thought we'd have 12 ladies over for morning tea but

we had 120 people from all over Australia,” Dr Firth said of the first conference.

And what does she think now of her decision to be ordained?

“I've spent a lot of my life as a lay person and it wasn't ineffective. I don't think ordination's an improvement ... I think it's more important for me to be doing the thing that God gave me to do,” Dr Firth said.

This profile of the Reverend Dr Jill Firth is part of a series on women in ministry, marking the December 2022 anniversary of 30 years since women were ordained in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

Our aid program should inspire national pride

by Bob Mitchell

IN MY VIEW, A ROBUST COMMITMENT by government to a foreign aid program requires three elements: generosity, consistency, and a dedicated focus. As I look back over the last 10 years, these pillars have been decidedly shaky.

In terms of generosity, Australia's commitment to foreign aid has slumped to an all-time low. It currently sits around 20 cents for every \$100 of national income. That's underwhelming and embarrassing when compared to most of our OECD peers and Scandinavian countries.

This matters in two ways. Firstly, a great deal of good can be achieved with foreign aid. Repeated evaluations show that public money directed through Australia's non-government organisation program is especially effective in ensuring impact.

But, the saddest thing about successive aid cut-backs is the message sent to the broader Australian community. Governments are elected to provide leadership and to set a national vision. Rather than standing up for dignity and compassion for neighbours in need, these cuts have painted a dismal and inward-looking picture. The language of

fiscal responsibility, budget repair, and charity starting at home has been used to cloak narrow self-interest, insularity, and at times, xenophobia. Australia deserves an aid program that inspires national pride and that appeals collectively to our better instincts.

Consistency means having a principled approach. Helping other people, sometimes the poorest of the poor, is a good in and of itself. We should not forget this. The humanitarian ideal can be compromised when our aid investments are viewed through other lenses. These lenses go by various names, including national security, soft diplomacy, trade opportunity, and global ambition. While such considerations are not unimportant, our aid program should not be held captive to other agendas. Directing greater support through NGOs is one way of helping to prevent this.

Finally, developing and administering an official aid program is a serious business requiring dedicated departmental support, bureaucratic stability, and professional opportunity. Looking back, I deeply regret the dismantling of federally-run AusAID and its absorption within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This has had the effect of further eroding the emphasis on



Dr Bob Mitchell is shown how to thatch a roof in Northern Mozambique. Picture: Anglican Overseas Aid

humanitarianism and the development of an independent national aid program.

One very positive development over the last 10 years is a much deeper understanding across the aid and development sector about what faith-based NGOs can contribute.

In the developing world, faith is front and centre. It remains most people's primary source of meaning. Engaging with faith-based actors, like local church networks,

can produce great results. This may seem obvious, but for many decades development was seen as a project of modernity to be kept at a safe distance from the church. I like to think AOA has had a small but important role in providing leadership in this space.

With a federal election around the corner, I would encourage all voters to do their own research about candidates. Undoubtedly there are people of goodwill and

global concern on all sides of politics. I recommend looking out for those aspirants to public office with policies and personal principles that stand up for human dignity.

Caring for others is central to our Christian discipleship. It is also in everybody's collective interests. COVID-19 is a great example of how a truly global response is necessary to achieve the common good.

In May, I will be especially wary of contenders who cast aside concern for our neighbours with the kind of shrill jingoism that we hear too often. In my experience, Australians are generous people with a real concern for the hardships experienced by people everywhere. In our Prayer Book we ask Almighty God to "Give the people of this land a spirit of unselfishness, compassion and fairness in public and private life". We also ask God to help us to share "with justice the resources of the world". To these prayers we should all say a very loud "Amen!"

Retiring after nearly 10 years as chief executive of Anglican Overseas Aid, the Reverend Dr Bob Mitchell was invited to reflect on Australia's aid policy over his term of office, with an eye to the coming election.

What do the vulnerable need?

by Paul McDonald

A LOOMING federal election raises debate on what are the right social policies for the country's most vulnerable in a pandemic world.

Measured in human cost and human impact, there are a couple of policy areas from my vantage point as chief executive of Anglicare Victoria – the state's largest provider of services to vulnerable families and children – that an incoming federal government needs to turn their minds to.

Housing relief

At one point earlier this year there were more than 230 homeless families, including more than 450 children, residing in the Victorian government's Homeless Hotels initiative. These families found themselves homeless as a result of a downturn in the economy, domestic violence, or rising rents.

A national policy and fund to help Australia's homeless families should be front of mind for any federal government. Rents are booming and more families are finding themselves in housing stress. It's not sustainable.

Social housing is one of the most effective ways to help people caught by the rental squeeze, which also creates thousands of construction jobs. The Council to Homeless Persons is calling on the federal government to build 25,000 new social housing units per year, along with increasing the level of Commonwealth Assistance.

The Victorian government has stepped up with its \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build. But it won't do the whole job and to date the



Housing should be front of mind, writes Paul McDonald. Picture: iStock

Morrison government is nowhere to be seen. One less submarine and a few thousand more homes seems like a good trade to me.

A better deal for young people

The lives of young people across the country were smashed by the COVID-19 pandemic. All the things they held dear were cancelled: social events and concerts, group learning at school, casual jobs and even just hanging out with their friends. Helping young people recover will not be easy.

The government's release of Australia's Youth Policy Framework last year was a good start. But deep listening to the voices of young people needs to be better embedded in government decision-making processes, so that their views are truly represented.

A more comprehensive youth strategy is needed, to help an anxious generation recover their mojo and transition confidently into adulthood. The current youth benefits paid by the government

are also far below the poverty line, which is a recipe for long-term disadvantage. Further, until recently foster care was cut off by the state at the age of 18. It was too young. Around half those leaving care at this age would be homeless and jobless within 12 months. From the beginning of 2021 the Andrews government offered extended support to the age of 21 for all young people in the state care system. It ultimately saves governments money. It's a no brainer.

National coordination would create a guarantee of continued care to 21 years.

And to the refugees

Finally, I cannot get those locked up in Carlton's Park Hotel out of my thoughts. Most have legitimate refugee status yet some have been in that same hotel for near on five years. One young man was detained when he was 15 and he is now 24 and locked up in the Park Hotel. We would be objecting loudly if this was happening in another country.

The first thing a new Prime Minister should do is release them – whether to "community detention" or to New Zealand, whose government has agreed to accept them all. Until then, we should be writing to the Prime Minister seeking their immediate release.

Good luck as you assess the candidates. This time let's approach our decision bottom up: Ask your candidates what they will do for the country's most disadvantaged and vulnerable to inform your vote.

Paul McDonald is chief executive of Anglicare Victoria.

Filling the cracks in our social security system vital: Brotherhood

by Dr Lucia Boxelaar

THE 2022 federal election will be one of the most important elections we have had in a long time. As a nation we face a pressing question: how will we ensure equity as we emerge from the pandemic and as we address the challenges of climate change?

The pandemic exposed what most of us knew: there are underlying inequities in our society and, in times of crisis, those already experiencing disadvantage and hardship are hit hardest. The pandemic has also shown that we can make different policy choices. Our research shows that a modest increase in social security expenditure can significantly reduce poverty among JobSeeker recipients.

As an agency on the frontline, we are advocating for change in four priority areas at this important election.

First, in our programs we see how low social security payments trap people in poverty. We meet job seekers unable to afford the bus fare to attend an interview, or the clothes to look presentable for it. We see single mothers on low incomes who struggle with the overwhelming stress of combining fixed hours of childcare, unpredictable work, and a punitive social security system. A review of our social security system is critical to ensure that payments and conditions enable people to live a life of dignity and to navigate a pathway out of poverty.

Second, we often come across people who have fallen through the cracks of our services system; very

isolated elderly people left without support, or NDIS participants who wait months for the supports they need to thrive. We are calling for transformation of our services system, to one built on an aspiration to help people thrive. One where services are funded and coordinated to cope with the complex issues facing people experiencing disadvantage. To address these systemic challenges, the Brotherhood of St. Laurence has long argued that there is a role for organisations such as ours. This goes beyond delivering government contracts, to leveraging our connections within local communities, and to harness the contribution they can make to helping people thrive.

Third, and most heartbreaking, is the hopeless situation forced on people seeking asylum. An urgent review of our policies is required to ensure a humane and compassionate approach to visa processing and settlement.

And finally, we are witnessing increasing impacts of climate change, which affect us all, but impact the most those with the least. Fair, fast, and ambitious action on climate change must be our government's main priority.

We know from our work that many Australians share our compassion, and our vision for an Australia free of poverty. There is great willingness in the community to support those who are doing it tough. It is time that this is reflected in the policy choices that we make.

Dr Lucia Boxelaar is acting Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

Your say on discrimination, history, refugees

Called to reflect peace

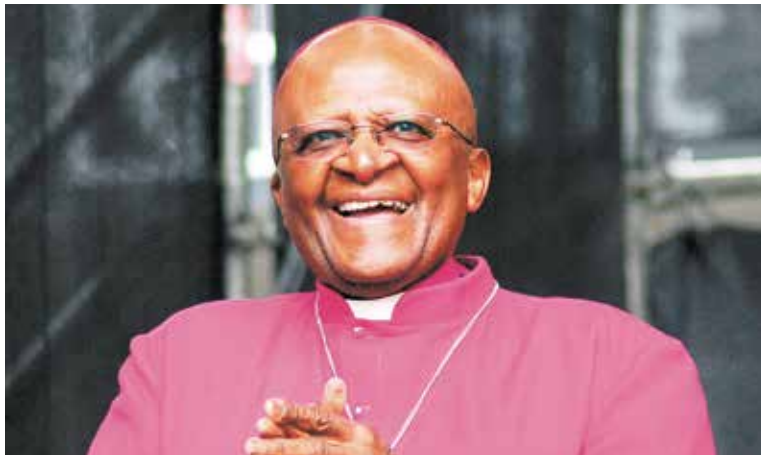
The *Religious Discrimination Bill* – now thankfully pulled – has damaged the Church and Christians. On listening to the deep feelings of members of Parliament, and reading articles in the media, it is clear that the stance of certain Christian groups is seen as discriminatory and judgemental. They are advocating an agenda which causes vulnerable people to feel persecuted. This is so contrary to the gospel of Christ. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, whom we honour at this time, advocated the concept of “ubuntu”, a way of living which celebrates our diverse interdependence and reflects the wholeness or the “shalom” that comes through the sacrificial love of God seen in Jesus. Jesus Christ calls his followers to live and advocate in such a way that the good news of God’s love is attractive to all.

Bishop Ian Palmer
Mount Duneed

Not terra nullius

February’s *Melbourne Anglican* includes a number of references to the violent dispossession of our Aboriginal people and its ongoing consequences for First Nations peoples.

This reminded me of a comment by Captain Cook reported in Rob Mundle’s book *Cook*, written shortly after the Endeavour was almost wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef. Captain Cook recorded that the “natives of New Holland are in reality far happier than Europeans” and “live in tranquillity which is not disturbed by



The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu advocated a way of living which celebrates our diverse interdependence. Picture: file.

the inequality of condition”.

This happy state was abolished by the arrival of the colonisers. The Reverend Dr Peter Carolane observes in *TMA* that colonisation was a form of systemic injustice, and that it is a fantasy to think that it and its effects could be reversed.

Your February issue carries a call for Australia to keep repenting injustices past and present. Christians in Australia need to understand their history and the events of the past, and the need to learn and reflect on ways to remedy the results of earlier mistakes and injustice. Australia was not terra nullius!

James Moore
Kogarah

We need change now

Church attendance in Australia has fallen away consistently over the past 40 years, with one factor being that the leadership and worshippers have not changed with

the times. Church fellowships have stayed the same, they lack life, purpose, are not challenging and have retained some doubtful doctrines. These organizations are asset rich but people poor. Millions of dollars are held dormant in unused church buildings, manses, tennis courts, playgrounds and kindergartens, and vacant land, yet appeals are made frequently for donations.

For the church to stop dying, and in many places, it is top-heavy, it needs to change as soon as possi-

ble. The people need to do business with God, be definite in their life of godliness and lovingly accept Jesus as their savior. Be encouraged, blessing awaits you.

Garry Andrews
Cheltenham, Victoria

A prayer for compassion

Now that Novak Djokovic has been sent home and the Australian Open is over, the news media has forgotten about the 35 refugees who have been locked in the Park Hotel for two years. But the suffering of these people has not gone away, even if we ignore it.

Many of them came to Australia under the short-lived Medevac legislation for urgent medical treatment which was not available in the offshore detention centres where they had been held for seven years.

Most have still not received that treatment, instead they have been locked up and forgotten. These innocent people, and thousands of other refugees and asylum seekers, have not even been charged with, let alone convicted of, any crime,

yet we punish them in ways which would not be tolerated for our worst criminals.

If there is one theme running through the Bible almost from beginning to end, it is God’s command that we should show compassion to those in need and welcome strangers in our land. This is summed up in Jesus’ two Great Commandments: we should love God and love our neighbours as ourselves.

Djokovic was held in detention for just four days and he described it as “torture”. What must it be like to be there for nine years with no prospect of release? As we approach a federal election, I pray that we will put compassion ahead of cruelty, generosity ahead of selfishness, and love ahead of hate.

Charles Body
Kaleen



Over to You is a forum for respectful dialogue about material published in *The Melbourne Anglican*, or issues affecting the church or society more broadly. Please email letters to editor@melbourneanglican.org.au. They must be less than 250 words, and include your full name, address and phone number for identity verification. Letters may be edited for clarity, length and grammar.

Letter of the Month

Considering writing in? Just in case you needed extra reason, *The Melbourne Anglican* is introducing a Letter of the Month award. Each edition the submission judged best will receive a \$30 bookshop voucher.

Congratulations to **David Powys**, whose letter was named *The Melbourne Anglican’s* Letter of the Month for February.

Enter Grace Tame, one mother’s answer to prayer

by **Alison Andrew**

IN JANUARY 2020, Grace Tame entered our lives as a collective symbol and a public figure, speaking into the space of sexual assault. She brought what has been hidden out into the light.

Because of the recognition Ms Tame received for campaigning to change Tasmanian laws, a public conversation began and is continuing. This is an answer to prayer for all people, as what was unspoken and ignored has now been brought into the public sphere.

Now go back four months before we knew Ms Tame. On 13 October 2020, my teenage daughter was brutally raped. As a mother, I jumped headfirst into researching Australia’s laws and issues of consent, and I discovered them to be lacking in both substance and application. I kept asking, “Why are we not talking about this?” And my prayer every night? It was continually, “Lord, we need to bring this issue out into the open, we need to talk about it”.

The more I researched, the more I realised that our laws around consent needed drastic change. In my heart I hoped we would not shy away from issue of sexual assault, because in all our communities we are surrounded by survivors who



The courage shown by Grace Tame and Brittany Higgins has inspired courage in others, writes the Reverend Alison Andrew. Picture: iStock

have been expected to be silent, so as not to disrupt others’ lives.

Then Ms Tame and Brittany Higgins entered onto the public stage. Thank goodness, someone had the courage to speak out. My prayer was answered.

Suddenly, the big silence around sexual assault in our communities, the silence that we have for so long tried to ignore, was up for discussion. All over Australia the conversation took a dramatic shift.

As Ms Tame met the Prime Minister as outgoing Australian of the Year, words like “spoilt child”

swirled in the media, as did many suggestions on how she “should” have behaved. Too quickly, we all jumped on the bandwagon with an opinion: “Should she have respected the office if not the man? Should she have been thankful? Should she have responded differently?”

Even having these conversations made two erroneous assumptions. Firstly, Ms Tame is not the issue, sexual assault and endemic institutional sexual harassment and assault is the issue.

But secondly, and what I find perhaps the most compelling rea-

son not to get into a debate about how Ms Tame should or should not have behaved is this.

In debating her behaviour, we as a society are perpetuating the very abuse that Ms Tame has survived, where people felt they had a right to tell her what she should and should not do with her body. As she said after the meeting with the Prime Minister, abuse culture is dependent on “submissive smiles and self-defeating surrenders”. We do not own Ms Tame, she is not our property.

Listening to both Ms Tame and Ms Higgins’ recent speeches to the Press Club, I was struck by how they both felt little had changed. I wanted to tell them that their voice and their courage had inspired people across this land to speak up. That their courage had inspired courage, their words set people free from the prison of silence. That it is not their job to fix the issue, their job was to start the conversation, which we continue and we will help lead to change.

In Victoria last November, the Victorian Law Reform Commission submitted a host of recommendation to the Attorney General in their 614 page report *Improving the Justice System Response to Sexual Offences*. This report drew on the submission of 71 survivors, and my

daughters’ story was one of them. The law recommendations coming from that report are an answer to prayer. These laws, will protect the survivor in assaults, and bring a multitude more healing opportunities for survivors in Victoria.

So, what is our response as a church? As a faith community? What are we doing in this space?

Well, we are doing well to be compliant on paper and in words with our “Safe Ministry” training. But at a person-to-person level, in our faith communities, where is the change and what should the change be?

The reality is in any community with people, there are survivors of sexual assault. We have a privileged position as members of faith communities to lead change in this area. People need the church to be a place where they feel safe, a place to experience the love and grace of God. So my recommendation would be to start with something simple, the first step is to ask the question, “What do we do here? And what can we do to help people feel safe in this place?”

The Reverend Alison Andrew is available to talk at youth groups and churches on the issue of consent. She can be contacted at alison.veale41131@gmail.com.

Should Melbourne abandon synod elections?

As the diocese's archbishop election process is reviewed, Muriel Porter is calling for a return to the system of decades past: an electoral board. It's not just that the elections have failed in their original purpose, writes Dr Porter, but new communication technology has brought new pitfalls.

AN ELECTORAL BOARD ELECTION was the method this diocese used to elect archbishops for more than a century. In the 1980s the process was changed to synodical election.

The *Archbishop Election Act* passed in 1988 provided for an 18-member, synod-elected Board of Nominators to bring a selection of candidates to an election meeting of synod members.

That act that is currently the subject of review.

In 2021 synod vigorously debated review recommendations about the act, brought by a small working group. A new, larger working group is now carrying that process further, with a view to bringing new legislation to the 2022 synod.

What was not on the table in last year's review was the possibility of abandoning direct synodical election for a return to the earlier process: election by a synod-elected Board of Electors.

I hope that the newly-constituted working party will at least consider this possibility, for which I am seriously advocating.

I served on the Board of Nominators for each of the Archbishopric elections conducted under the 1988 act since it came into being: the elections of archbishops Keith Rayner in 1990, Peter Watson in 2000 and Philip Freier in 2006. So, I write with in-depth experience of how the current process works – and doesn't work – and memories of some behind-the-scenes events that still trouble me.

When the 1988 act was passed, a synod election seemed like a good idea, that hopefully would ensure an archbishop had strong majority support across the diocese.

From all accounts, the Board of Electors that elected David Penman as archbishop in 1984 had

been conflicted by churchmanship and personality politics. The board struggle, aspects of which had leaked widely into the diocese, suggested that the election outcome was not strongly supported.

Whether this was actually true is hard to ascertain at this distance. But it seems Archbishop Penman felt it keenly enough to want to ensure that his successors could be assured of much stronger majority support. Election by the whole synod would surely overcome any doubts.

Frankly, I don't believe it has. The last three elections have been every bit as conflicted as the last board election, and the struggle to achieve an outcome has been just as taxing and just as divisive. Two of those elections have endured a failed synod election session, with the Board of Nominators required to return to work to provide a fresh slate of names for a new session.

I do not believe that the three archbishops elected by synod process have enjoyed a significantly higher level of initial support than David Penman did. Any doubts over their candidature, or that of any of the other candidates brought to those synod meetings, were in fact more widely known and discussed, given there were many hundreds of people canvassing their names. I also believe these elections have been more divisive for the diocese than election by an electoral board would have been.

And there is now another factor that was not on the radar at the time Melbourne changed its process: modern communications. In 1988, the internet was still some years away from public access. Email and mobile phones were rare, and social media didn't exist. The biggest danger confronting a synod election was confidentiality: ensuring that hundreds of synod members



Synod elections pose a risk, writes Dr Muriel Porter.

Picture: iStock

"The election synod voting process is necessarily complex. In a time-poor, often highly emotional context, many synod members can feel confused and conflicted. They are ready fodder for manipulation by astute operators."

Muriel Porter

did not reveal what was happening behind the closed doors in an election process lasting several days.

In the era of mass, instant, unbridled communication, a synod election is now too fraught to be safe for anyone. Direct messaging apps, text messages, social media and the rest can too easily corrupt the process. That is a danger for any high-stakes synod debate of course, but a synod archbishop election by its very nature takes no prisoners. Once an archbishop is elected, there is no way a flawed or damaged process can be redeemed by recommitting the decision.

Those who were part of the last election will remember that email

mischievous circulated to one section of the synod membership at the 11th hour drastically changed the votes for one candidate. It was impossible for the information distributed in that email to be checked or challenged before the crucial ballot.

That was in 2006. Think how much more intrusive communication methods have become since then. That is, I believe, a crucial reason why such an important decision can no longer be safely committed to a large, unwieldy, time-constrained process.

Furthermore, synodical elections mean some high-quality potential candidates will not allow their names to be considered by a

large semi-public meeting, where there is no opportunity for redress if their reputation is challenged.

Synods also have very limited opportunity to assess candidates. We tried our best with video interviews and presentations in 2006 but these were not really satisfactory, leaving synod members at the mercy of second-hand information. On more than one occasion, as chair of the Board, I had to publicly correct misunderstandings, and challenge unkind and ignorant comments made during meetings.

The election synod voting process is necessarily complex. In a time-poor, often highly emotional context, many synod members can feel confused and conflicted. They are ready fodder for manipulation by astute operators.

In contrast, a Board of Electors, has the advantage of time, space and privacy. These provide the opportunity for members to get to know each other and hopefully learn to trust each other. It avoids a rushed decision, and mean all information can be checked and challenged. And, candidates can be properly and fairly assessed, both through confidential information that could not be made available to a large semi-public forum, and in face-to-face in-depth interviews.

A Board of Electors is of course not perfect, no election process is. A board can seem to be not as democratic as a synod election, and if not judiciously managed, can also be manipulated and create division. But synods themselves are not democratic, because in a diocese the size of Melbourne, they constitute a small proportion of the whole. Synod members are representatives of the diocese, and a Board of Electors is elected by the synod, so represents the representatives. If it is comprised of a significant number – I would advocate strongly for a board of at least 18 members – it can be genuinely representative of a diocese as diverse as Melbourne.

I sincerely hope the new review group gives serious attention to the possibility of returning the election of archbishops to a Board of Electors.

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We have the money, now we need the vision

by Andrew Judd

TEN YEARS AGO, MY WIFE and I started attending a church just off “Cowpasture Road”. It was called that, someone eventually explained, because 50 years earlier this busy suburb was exactly that: a cow pasture. It was still a mostly empty field when the bishop started raising funds to purchase a small plot of land.

A generation ago, these Anglicans committed to parish-based ministry and a vision for evangelism and growth, stepped out in faith. Like Abraham buying the field in Machpelah, Joseph buying the fields for Pharaoh, or Jeremiah buying the field in Anathoth, to purchase land for a church where there is not yet visible need is an act of faith. It requires short-term sacrifice and a long-term vision.

It requires no long-term vision at all, however, to recognise existing needs. At our most recent synod I asked the question how many church plants and Authorised Anglican Congregations in this diocese are renting their primary place of worship. I was grateful to the archbishop for his speedy verbal answer: “seven”.

Seven of our already established church plants and congregations are still without a permanent address. Some of these are years old, and now amongst our biggest congregations. Before the pandemic an estimated 15 per cent of Melbourne Anglicans worshipping on any given Sunday were sitting in a movie theatre rented by one of the City on a Hill congregations.

To these seven congregations, God willing, we will soon add more. I was deeply encouraged to



We have millions of dollars entrusted to us with one mission “To make the Word of God fully known”, writes Andrew Judd.

Picture: iStock

see at the same synod the excellent video presenting some of the church planting projects in the diocese. Of course, almost all of these will be starting out with rented facilities.

To those who wish somebody else had responsibility for their parish maintenance bill, being a renter might sound like an advantage. And sometimes it is. But it also makes it much harder to establish an embodied presence in a community – to communicate that “we are here with you for the long term”. This is one of the reasons why a United Kingdom bishop I know spends his life trying to find buildings for new church plants right from the start.

Practically speaking, being a nomadic congregation means someone must be in constant

“We need something of the vision of those generations past who ... gave sacrificially to support congregations and ministries they would never meet.”

Reverend Andrew Judd

negotiations with venues. It means your children’s program area is never quite as well set up or safe as you would like. It means sometimes having your Easter services cancelled a week out because a shopping centre decided to do last minute maintenance. It means 30 per cent of live giving each year just to keep the doors open. It

means your priest-in-charge lives 45 minutes away because that’s all the stipend covers.

I’ve never heard a church planter complain about any of this, by the way. They’re an odd bunch in my experience – sometimes they seem to relish a challenge.

But the church historian in me worries that – especially in many

of the fastest growing parts of our diocese – we are handing nothing down to the next generation that we didn’t inherit from those who went before us. We need something of the vision of those generations past who, decades before my wife and I came along, gave sacrificially to support congregations and ministries they would never meet.

Speaking of our inheritance, in the last ten years in this diocese \$69 million has been realised from sale of church properties. Only seven per cent of those funds were spent on new building projects. Almost all of that was small grants for the renovation or redevelopment of existing facilities – the welcome exception being the \$1.27 million allocated from those sold churches to help St Matthew’s Mernda (Plentylife) build much-needed facilities for its thriving ministry. I’ll admit it, we’re not quite at Cowpasture Road levels of investment in the far-off future, but it’s something.

The cities of Melbourne and Geelong are rapidly changing. The challenges we face are substantial – but so are the opportunities, and the resources we have been given to meet them. We are stewards of a mind-boggling inheritance. (I don’t just mean the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and our precious Anglican traditions!). We have hundreds of millions of dollars entrusted to us with a single mission: to make the word of God fully known. May the Master be pleased with us when, at the end of all this, we report back how we have invested his talents.

The Reverend Dr Andrew Judd is associate lecturer in Old Testament at Ridley College Melbourne.

How to elect for ‘one-of-us-ness’ in an archbishop

by Christopher Porter

SELECTING GROUP representatives – whether they be a chief executive, sporting team captain, or an archbishop – comes with a host of challenges. Of these, the challenges that concern the leader themselves are often easier to see and address. Selection criteria, competencies, desirable attributes, qualities, and so on, are all commonplace within a selection or election process. However, a new leader is not installed on their own, but rather as the leader of a group – and in our case, at the behest of that same group. Good leaders need the support of the group that they are leading, and an archbishop is no outlier. It is this marshalling of support for a leader that is often sidelined in the process, and – as Muriel Porter notes (page 14) – has been the rationale for previous changes to the Archbishop Election Act. Given we are already reviewing the act, we should consider processes that address this directly.

Leadership and psychology research show clearly that an effective leader needs to embody a sense of “one-of-us-ness” for



Leaders need to be recognised as not only being one of the group but also as representing all of its key membership attributes. Picture: iStock

the group. However, the sense of “one-of-us” is hard to define for an incoming leader, except that they embody the typicality of the group – ideally functioning as a prototypical member. They need to be recognised as not only

being one of the group but also as representing all of its key membership attributes. Of course, for an archbishop’s election this is often hard to ascertain, especially as many candidates will be relatively unknown to the broader diocese.

Instead, one of the strongest ways to assess the typicality of a large group is to broaden the representation from that group in assessing typicality. This naturally leads us to the model we have, where a broad representation of the diocese has input into the election of the new archbishop. One model for this is our own federal and state electoral system, which taps the “one person, one vote” approach to elections. This would mean that every person on a parish electoral roll would be eligible to vote for the new archbishop. But as Dr Porter and others have described, this comes with significant privacy and reputational concerns.

Another approach would be for a hierarchical election process, where the broadest range of the diocese – those on electoral rolls – elect their synod representatives, and these elect a Board of Electors. However, under our current system with the three-year cycle of elections the time lag between synodical elections and an archbishop election is decoupled. A lot can happen in three years – even without a pandemic – and the broad membership of the church

is likely to feel disconnected from their electoral representatives and therefore the election process.

However, this disconnection of membership with electors could be resolved through the *Archbishop Election Act*. If we are serious about bringing back a Board of Electors, then this can be intrinsically coupled with the archbishop’s election. Procedurally this would mean we should elect a Board of Electors as the first step in the archbishop’s election process. This means that the members of the group (the parishioners) are more invested in the “one-of-us-ness” of their representatives (due to the close timeframe and electoral links) on the board, and therefore in the “one-of-us-ness” of the archbishop.

Ultimately this would lead to a system where we do not just have broad electoral support of a new archbishop, but broad membership support. The archbishop is much more likely to have the support of the diocese, and be seen as “one-of-us” through the process.

The Reverend Dr Christopher Porter is Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at Trinity College Theological School, University of Divinity, Parkville.



Good news, we all have a glorious privilege

THE STATISTICS ARE DIRE. IN 2021 the Youth Ministry Futures research project identified an "appropriate model of youth ministry" in less than 30 per cent of the parishes in the diocese. Sixty-six parishes have no teenagers at all. Others have young people in the congregation, but the ministry is either unhealthy or holds little hope for the future. Many have insufficient plans for discipling young people, or have little or no outward vision for connecting with young people outside the church. Only 13 parishes have ministries that connect with more than 30 young people. The remaining 104 parishes surveyed had an average of eight young people each.

These numbers aren't enough to maintain the church as an institution, let alone fulfil our mission of making the word of God fully known.

So whose job is it to fix this?

We have a Diocesan Youth Ministry consultant, perhaps it's his job? Though if the heart of ministry is the parish, maybe the responsibility lies with vicars? Perhaps then that's a collective sigh of relief we hear from those vicars fortunate enough to have employed a youth minister, or at least found a willing volunteer. The rest of us can rest easy knowing that there's at least "someone" who can do "something" for the young people! Or perhaps the real responsibility lies with the parents? Surely youth ministry, like charity, begins at home.

Early in 2022 a new Children's and Youth Ministry working group was established by Archbishop in Council to develop a proposal for a diocesan office. This role would be to effectively plan for, resource, and support growth in the number of children and young people involved as active disciples in the parishes of the diocese. Maybe then it's the job of the working group to fix children's and youth ministry? At least until we're able to offload the job to a newly formed diocesan office.

Trying to identify who is responsible for youth ministry can quickly descend into a blame-game. And if we do identify a "culprit", then the burden of responsibility on those individuals can be crushing.

But there's also a bigger loss here. If we do manage to identify someone to off-load youth ministry onto, the rest of us miss out on the glorious privilege that belongs to each one of us: sharing Jesus with the next generation.

Psalm 78 invites all of God's people to take our part in the ancient relay of intergenerational faith transmission.

In this long recount of Israel's years in the wilderness, despite the repeated faithlessness of God's



Only 13 parishes have ministries that connect with more than 30 young people.

Picture: iStock

people, God continues to meet them with mercy and grace.

We see verses 37-39 encapsulate the story, saying:

Their hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant.

Yet God was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them.

Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath.

He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.

The church's engagement with young people can tell a similar story. Throughout history there have been many times when the church has failed in her responsibility to share the faith with the coming generations. Yet there have been many times when God has graciously worked through ministry with children and young

people to bring new life to the church and blessing to the world.

Despite human faithlessness, the Lord remains faithful. Despite everything that God's people do, God continues to meet us with mercy and kindness. That's the message at the centre of Psalm 78: God is with us, full of forgiveness, patience, and steadfast love.

Our privilege is to hand this good news on to the next generation.

Psalm 78:3-6 describes a great relay race of intergenerational faith transmission: our "ancestors" handed on the faith to us, then we hand on the faith to "the next generation", our children. Looking further forward, verse six speaks of "the children yet to be born", and then further still to "their children". The great vision of Psalm 78 is to see the faith handed down to our children's grandchildren!

Our task is in verse four: "we will tell the next generation the

praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done".

We speak because God has spoken: "He decreed statutes and established the law in Israel". By this the psalmist means more than just a list of instructions or the Ten Commandments. The law and statutes are the stories and embodiment of God's relationship of love with his people.

So, who is given the grand privilege of sharing this good news with young people?

It is "my people", "we", who are part of "this generation". That is to say, the privilege belongs to all of us! Sharing the faith with the next generation is not the job of any one individual, whether by offloading the responsibility to a youth leader or leaving parents to carry the burden alone. Children's and youth ministry is the privilege and joy of the whole people of God.

Together we create a commu-

nity of belonging where the good news of Jesus is heard and experienced: in word and sacrament, at home and away, in instruction and witness, through peers and leaders, by parents and young adults and elders and children together

We don't do this just so the church as an institution would be preserved. Our goal is that young peoples' lives would be changed. In the words of Psalm 78:7: "Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands." It's not just being moral, but knowing God, and finding life in him.

The alternative isn't neutral. Left without God's word, verse eight says, they will be like their ancestors, stubborn and rebellious, with hearts not loyal to God, and spirits that are unfaithful to him.

The turning point in Psalm 78 comes in verse 65. "Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, as a warrior wakes from the stupor of wine". After the seemingly unending cycle of our faithless disobedience the light of hope comes when God himself leaps into action.

God calls David from among the sheep pens. David is the unlikely leader everyone else had overlooked. David will be a shepherd, a good shepherd, who will lead with integrity and skill.

Though David continues the story of the ancestors, his story points forward to Jesus: the unlikely leader that others overlooked, the good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep, and who leads us with integrity and skill into God's good future.

Ultimately, we want to see flourishing children's and youth ministries across the diocese, not simply to preserve our institution. Instead, how will we serve young people with the word of Christ, for their good and the glory of God?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "The future of the church is not youth itself but rather the Lord Jesus Christ alone. It is the task of youth not to reshape the church, but rather to listen to the Word of God; it is the task of the church not to capture the youth, but to teach and proclaim the Word of God."

Trusting in the mercy and kindness and power of God we embark on this privilege and responsibility to share the good news of God, with the next generation, so that our children's grandchildren would live to praise the Lord Jesus.

The Reverend Canon Rhys Bezzant, member of the General Synod Liturgical Commission, has written this prayer (inset) for Children's and Youth Ministry in our Diocese. The members of the Children's and Youth Ministry Working Group encourage every parish to use this prayer as we look to our Heavenly Father to bless our efforts in sharing Jesus with children and young people.

Prayer for children's and youth ministry in our diocese

Dear Heavenly Father,

We exalt you that in every age you adopt into your family men and women, boys and girls, to live to the praise of your glorious grace. We thank you for your servants who have commended your works to the next generation, who declare your greatness for all to hear.

We thank you especially for caring adults in our church, for Sunday school teachers, for youth group leaders, and for all who speak on behalf of those with a quiet voice. We thank for those faithful people who have served CEBS and GFS, that repentance and faith might be preached in all the world. We thank you for those who taught us the gospel.

Have mercy, dear Lord, on the Anglican Church in Melbourne, and bless us with ministries small and large that testify to your grace among our children and youth. Grant us the ability to nurture leaders who will themselves pass on the faithful deposit to those who come after them. And train us all in prayerful dependence, that we might look expectantly for signs of growth and opportunities for witness every day.

We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who grew in stature and grace, filled with wisdom and the Spirit.

Amen.

Long-serving journo to bid diocese farewell

Melbourne Anglican journalist Mark Brolly, set to retire in April, shares some of the highlights of his time at Anglican Media, and his reflections on journalism from a career spanning more than 40 years.

by Emma Halgren

Could you tell me about your career prior to joining Anglican Media?

I **BEGAN MY CADETSHIP AT THE** Age on 17 January 1977, 10 days after I received my HSC results, and a week after Mum had died after a short illness. I did a bachelor of arts at RMIT majoring in journalism and did the usual rounds cadets then did, such as sport, police rounds and industrial relations.

I left *The Age* in July 1983 to travel, and to prepare for lay missionary work among Aboriginal students in Western Australia, which I did in 1984-85 – a formative time! I was very fortunate to be able to return to *The Age* in 1986 as a sport sub-editor and from August 1987 spent almost four-and-a-half years as religious affairs reporter at the same time I was doing a bachelor of theology at the ecumenical United Faculty of Theology.

Women's ordination was the big issue then and the biggest story was Archbishop David Penman's illness and death (he was only 53) in 1989, and the election in 1990 of Archbishop Keith Rayner as his successor.

At the end of 1991, I returned to sports subbing at *The Age*, where I remained until I took a redundancy from the paper in 2008.

I'd started writing for the London-based international Catholic weekly, *The Tablet*, at the end of 2003 and kept doing that till the end of 2018.

It was after I'd left *The Age* that I spotted the ad for a journalist for Anglican Media. I met Roland Ashby in late 2008 and he agreed to take me on, starting in February 2009.

What have you enjoyed most about your work as a journalist on *The Melbourne Anglican*? Of what are you most proud?

I've enjoyed the personal and professional relationships with colleagues at TMA, but also the variety of work. I enjoyed going to parishes, interviewing clergy, parishioners

and volunteers, seeing the many works of the church in parish and other settings. The mix of writing about local ministry and mission, interviewing locals and visitors from interstate and overseas as well as covering broader issues in the Church and society certainly ensured no two days were the same.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's one-day visit to Melbourne in 2014 to install Archbishop Freier as Primate stands out. I recall his stamina, as he had a series of meetings during the day with bishops, clergy and the media.

Covering funerals and memorial services for people as varied as Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, footballer Jim Stynes and former Premier John Cain, as well as prominent Anglicans such as Bishop John Wilson and Archdeacon Philip Newman, has been memorable. And of course, Bishop Barbara Darling's passing and the shock at her funeral, only a few months after her farewell at St Mark's Camberwell upon her retirement. She was a warm, faith-filled person and a Carlton supporter as well, so was impossible not to like!

Veteran journalist praised for 'generous spirit, perpetual good humour'

Archbishop Philip Freier

wished Brolly the best for the future, saying: "Mark Brolly is a real old-school journalist, with a concern for the facts and for fairness. Over his years with the diocese, he has proved himself a wonderful person, and one can't but help have affection and admiration for him. I also admire his commitment as a member of the Pallottine Family in Australia over many decades."

Roland Ashby, who was TMA's editor from 1995 to 2018, said Mark Brolly was "a much esteemed colleague."

"I found him to be a first class writer, and a highly experienced and professional journalist dedicated to truth, accuracy and fairness," he said. "He also brought a deep and wide knowledge of the church (across all traditions), theology, history and faith to the



Mark Brolly has bid farewell to *The Melbourne Anglican* after 13 years. Picture: file

You've worked as a journalist for more than 40 years and experienced first-hand many changes in the industry. Could you reflect a bit on these changes, and any hopes and fears you have about where journalism is heading?

Technology has at once made things easier for newspapers

and imperilled them. There's no single deadline now. In the past, radio reporters often had hourly deadlines, TV journalists had to get back to edit their stories and newspaper reporters often had the relative leisure of a few hours to write up a longer article in more depth as required. But those old boundaries are changing where

general knowledge – a one-man Wikipedia."

"Though a Roman Catholic, Mark has a deep knowledge of the Anglican Church, its intricacies and its people – every one of whom he seems to get on with well."

"He is a fine journalist whom TMA readers will miss. I certainly shall."

Michelle Harris, the diocese's chief communications officer, said of Brolly: "His encyclopaedic knowledge of issues within faith-based communities and his understanding of contextual appropriateness on issues still amazes me. But more than that is his ability to connect with so many people in such a genuine way."

"As a person, Mark is one of the last true gentlemen ... his kindness, empathy and generosity of heart will be sorely missed."

newspapers also produce social media and video content.

I worry that there are too many commentators and too few reporters. There's still a crucial place in a democratic society for a professional to be the eyes and ears of those who can't be present at an interview or event and to dispassionately record in whatever medium what happens, what is said and what it means or might mean. And there must be a place for readers or viewers to have their say, too. All, hopefully, would be courteous and dedicated to seeking the truth. As C.P. Scott of *The Manchester Guardian* famously wrote more than 100 years ago: "Comment is free, but facts are sacred."

What significant shifts in society and the wider culture have you noticed over your working life, and how have attitudes to religion and church changed over that time?

The churches were already losing their standing when I started but were still, in the main, respected. I'm a Roman Catholic and my memory of my parish in my 1960s and early 1970s childhood was that there was still a fair spread of the generations. No longer! My church was wrestling with the implications of the Second Vatican Council and change was a given – tough to take for some, liberating and exciting for others, and a mix for many. We felt open to the world and less timid. I suspect Anglicans might share some of these memories at least.

I think it's impossible to overstate the impact of the child sexual abuse crisis on us. It must surely rank with the greatest crises in Christian history. Its effects are far from having played out, and pop a global pandemic of indefinite duration on top of that and you certainly are looking for a big booster from the Holy Spirit.

We need a root-and-branch examination of what we're doing and how we're doing it, followed by prayerful discernment and a determination to change what needs to change. Certainly, the child sexual abuse crisis has shaken my faith more than I ever imagined that it would be challenged. That said, the essences of faith accessible in prayer, communal worship – well and simply done – and scripture are for me a comfort and sustenance.

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Myths vital to understanding 'Climate Change'

Distinguished Christian climate scientist Mike Hulme argues we should see "Climate Change" as an opportunity to be grasped, rather than just a problem to be solved. Here Richard Gijsbers reflects on Hulme's book *Why We Disagree About Climate Change*.

IN MIKE HULME'S VIEW "Climate Change" is now a social phenomenon. Having worked its way into our conversations, thinking, religions, community standards, and identity, it influences the cars we buy, the stories we tell our children, and our worship at church on Sundays. It is far more than just a technical issue – to him, that is "climate change" – and dealing with it is not just a series of binary choices between simple, opposing right and wrong options.

Currently Professor of human geography at Cambridge University, Hulme is a climate scientist who is also a Christian. Throughout this work he argues that issues around climate change are intractable, complex, and nuanced, and that the solution is not just a matter of pumping less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, or persuading others to do so.

The book is for a secular audience, and Hulme makes little attempt to engage with Christian theological writers on the subject. However, he does unashamedly draw on his Christianity to make his case.

Hulme takes the debate away from doomsday scenarios, targets, and deadlines, and presents the landscape of this phenomenon,

inviting us to decide where we will go within that landscape on our own journeys. But in no way does he minimise the enormity of the changes and threats we are facing, or the values and approaches, hopes and expectations we bring to the topic.

Hulme starts by listing some ways "Climate Change" has been captured in the community, from a battleground between different philosophies and practices of science, to a justification for the commodification of the atmosphere. In each chapter, Hulme highlights a different facet of the debate that makes the issue so difficult.

Hulme also notes our penchant for using crises such as climate change as vehicles for pursuing our own ideals for society, nature, and a better world. However laudable our intentions, the collective result is that they have made our responses horrendously complex and messy.

Hulme's concern is that, together laudable strategies have created a "log jam of gigantic proportions", which is not only insoluble, but is perhaps even beyond our comprehension. He argues that we need to work within this complexity rather than to strive to conquer it.

Hulme insists that because of

its social nature, we need to go beyond seeing "Climate Change" as a problem, to instead see it as an idea to recognise and use within society. To do this, he suggests we employ myths to help us understand our situation – here "myths" describes those stories that embody the beliefs which underly our approach to everyday or scientific reality.

He argues these attitudes of mind can be used to mould the idea of "Climate Change" to serve many of our psychological, ethical and spiritual needs, and promote novel outcomes in all sorts of areas such as creative arts, intellectual property, energy production, confronting poverty, and so on.

Hulme identifies four myths that can be used to help us understand four key psychological instincts: nostalgia, fear, pride, and justice: "lamenting Eden", "presaging the apocalypse", "constructing Babel", and "celebrating jubilee".

Personally, I would have added a fifth myth: the suffering servant, in which people have lost hope through their own behaviour and are suffering, until God intervenes offering to lead them lovingly to a new beginning.

Hulme rejects the outright "problem-solution" mindset of a traditional approach, so employing these myths is not a solution in the usual understanding of the word. Instead, they are frameworks or understandings to help us live with and within the new reality.

He does not necessarily endorse all that might be assumed from any single one of these myths.

Thus, while he categorically rejects doomsday thinking, he recognises that the apocalyptic myth is a reality in our conversations about "Climate Change".

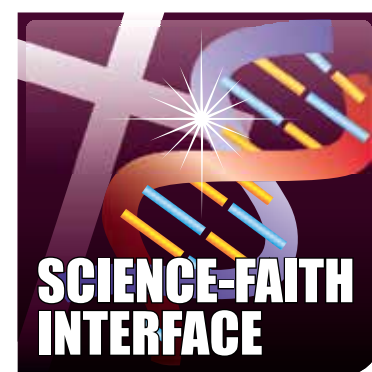
Hulme's work provides enough information to set my mind running and reflect on this as a different approach to climate change, as a social construct. From this, I can reflect more broadly on who we are and how "Climate Change" affects our thinking.

I spent my professional life struggling with environmental problems and having had to learn to live with them. Think blackberries, feral pest animals, the hole in the ozone layer, the long-term impact of the 1939 bushfires, eucalypt dieback, and dry-land salting. So, I had always thought it optimistic that we thought that we could "solve" climate change per se. Throw in the international dimension and my head really starts to spin.

Hulme does not ask us to stop striving to behave responsibly on this issue, but he does reject our hopes that these will "solve" the problem and take us back to the day when this was not an issue.

In among the confusion and muddling – the frustrating international conferences, the scientists and engineers struggling to suck carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, or any other attempts to address the problem of climate change – we should step back and seek to understand the nature of this social phenomenon. Hulme encourages us to do this.

And so, the book leaves me



with thoughts and ideas tumbling through my mind about how we must now live. I would encourage anyone engaged with "Climate Change" to read this book, not to tell them how to think, not for answers, but for questions and the possibility to start thinking afresh and come up with new, innovative and helpful perspectives.

One challenge for me was to reflect on how my faith in Jesus Christ might make a difference. That said, and being familiar with the myths he draws on, I can also see beyond them and on to the God who created this untameable nature, and loves and cares for it as much as God loves and cares for me. That is a myth I can live with and draw on.

ISCAST Fellow Richard Gijsbers is a retired forester with field experience in rural Victoria, Nepal, Cambodia and India, and in policy and planning in native forests. Richard will contribute to a series of online conversations, Creation Care in the Climate-Change Century from 3 March to 5 May. More details can be found at bit.ly/convos2022..

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The diocesan team leaders for Human Resources and Theological Education are working together on a project to consolidate and improve the delivery and content of a range of diocesan run training and development programs.

Expressions of interest are invited from persons with expertise and experience in developing and delivering adult education and professional development training programs in a variety of settings – for online, in person and hybrid models of delivery. The advisory group will provide advice and assistance with a view to ensuring best practice in both the content and method of delivery of such programs. It is anticipated the group will meet six times annually.

To express interest, please send a short cover note and CV by email to Grace Lococo, HR Manager, glococo@melbourneanglican.org.au



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Prayer only recourse after disaster blackout

by Stephen Cauchi

THE REVEREND SIOSIFA Tongia had called his mother in Tonga for her 87th birthday when the line suddenly cut out.

It was the first sign for him of a major disaster which was hitting the island nation: a volcanic eruption, followed by a tsunami.

An hour later Mr Tongia reached his family again, as they travelled to higher ground. After that call cut out, he did not know if they were safe until days later, when his sister managed to access a satellite phone.

All Mr Tongia had was news reports, and images uploaded to social media before communications cut out.

"I have a strong faith, but the news was awful – the volcano had 500 times the force of the Hiroshima bomb," he said.

"Still, I did not waver one per cent in my faith thinking that Tonga would disappear or that my family would suffer."

Vicar of Melbourne's St Albans Anglican Church, Mr Tongia urged Australians to donate money and goods to the appeal on the island.

Mr Tongia's mother, three sisters and one brother live in Tonga, while his other brother lives in Victoria.

As the volcano erupted on Saturday 15 January Mr Tongia was on the phone to his mother in Tonga, talking and singing happy birthday. Then, the phone cut off.



Reverend Siosifa Tongia with his mother.

Picture: supplied

Mr Tongia tried to call her again, but couldn't get through.

"I waited and I waited, and I couldn't get through. I didn't know what had happened. I kept trying and trying but I couldn't get through," he said.

After an hour, Mr Tongia said he managed to reach his family. A sister told him what happened: while they were talking there was an explosion, then communications had blacked out.

Mr Tongia said that after the volcanic explosion there was panic on the island as people headed to high ground to avoid a tsunami.

When he next spoke to his family, they were travelling to a high place on the main island.

But it was difficult to move anywhere, because people were panicking. There was bumper-to-bumper traffic on tiny roads to get to the higher parts of the main islands.

It took his family more than three hours to travel three kilometres in the traffic.

"They could hardly move - all the traffic was crammed on the tiny street but luckily they were able to be diverted from the main road," he said.

By this stage, ash and small rocks from the volcano were falling on the island. Mr Tongia said people panicked, as no one had experienced this before.

"There was panic as people had no experience about that type of situation."

When the second phone call cut out suddenly, Mr Tongia feared the worst. All he knew was from photos uploaded to social media before the nation's communications cut out.

Mr Tongia and family members in Sydney, Queensland and New Zealand tried to get in touch in Tonga, but could not.

"We were all the same. It's not only here, the whole Tongan communication [system] was cut off from the world," he said.

"I was very stressed. I was not sleeping day or night. I kept awakening and wished that I heard from them."

Finally, five days later on Thursday 20 January, one of his sisters in Tonga managed to call him.

It was a very lucky break. His sister, who worked for a Tongan communication company, had managed to find someone with a satellite phone – the only means of communication at that point.

With the satellite bandwidth absolutely crammed, the phone conversation was short before it cut out. But she told Mr Tongia his family were all safe and well. They had been able to shelter with his

eldest sister, a nun, in her convent.

A day later, his sister called again.

"On Friday evening my sister called again and passed the phone to my mother. And it was the best gift that I ever had in my life, when I heard my mother. She was fine," Mr Tongia said.

By that stage, ash and dust had covered not only Tonga's main island, but its surrounding islands as well. Mr Tongia said his family had to deal with ash and dust everywhere as best they could, with no proper equipment.

Fortunately, his family's homes all survived intact. Only his younger sister's home – less than 200 metres from the beach – suffered saltwater damage.

Mr Tongia said he was glad to see that Tonga's main island was relatively undamaged.

He said his sister told him not to worry about the food and water situation, but he knew in the long-term they would need support.

He said he was trying to arrange a program in Australia to transport shipping containers filled with goods to Tonga, similar to programs in New Zealand.

Mr Tongia said donations of money were also welcome, but many shops and stores were damaged and closed.

To donate to Anglican Overseas Aid's Tongan appeal, please contact: anglicanoverseasaid.org.au/donate-online/

What will decide the federal election?



Michelle Grattan AO
Political Journalist

Jo Knight
Anglican Overseas Aid CEO

Australia is going to the polls some time before the end of May in what is tipped to be a close-fought election. What issues might be decisive? Pandemic and economic management, national security and leadership are likely to be prominent. But what should the issues be to lead Australia into the next decade? Join Melbourne **Archbishop Philip Freier** and guests **Michelle Grattan** and **Jo Knight** in the first of the Archbishop's public conversations for 2022.

Wednesday, 16 March 2022, at 7.30am. This conversation will be held on Zoom. Register at <https://www.trybooking.com/BXOLS>



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Passion to speak shines bright Upside-down,

Dianna Edwards, *63 Years: A memoir* (Melbourne: Memoir Publishing, 2021).

by Duncan Reid

LAST MONTH AUSTRALIANS WERE all treated to the unedifying spectacle of our federal parliament debating the rights – or wrongs – of religious institutions to exclude children who are considered in some way different from “normal”, whatever that might mean.

This memoir is the story of a family in suburban Melbourne in the 1940s and 50s living with and genuinely loving a member who was different, although this difference was not in one of the ways debated recently in the public sphere. Rather, the author’s brother was severely disabled from birth – “spastic” was the term used at the time. But it was the sense of difference that that initially burdened the author so much, the reason she never invited friends home from school, the reason her nuclear family was slowly, almost imperceptibly edged out of social gatherings with cousins and the wider family.

Other burdens came later. We read of the burden of constant care on the part of her parents, and later, during the period of deinstitutionalisation and independent living for people with a disability, the burden of constant advocacy from author and her sister on behalf of their brother.

Throughout this memoir Dianna Edwards testifies to the constant



role of her family’s very understated Christian faith, nurtured by parishes like St Oswald’s Glen Iris and St Luke’s Vermont. I’ve heard it called “lukewarm Anglicanism”. But its genius was for playing a sort of background music in the lives of a family with five children, living in almost constant uncertainty about money and housing, and above all, anxiety for a much-loved sibling whose disabilities demanded ever more time and attention. This faith made few demands, with the exception of unpretentious love itself. But it was a constant presence, mentioned only in passing from time to time through the narrative.

Edwards’s memoir is a story of very great courage, love and patience in the face of frustration, especially frustrations in dealing with the various public institutions whose responsibility was to care for people with a disability, but which so often failed them and their families. It is a book the author felt she had to write, a story she had to tell. Her message to me was characteristically self-deprecating “Be warned – it is no literary ‘gem’, but merely a story I felt the need to tell.”

Why did I choose to read it? Simply because the author is a former parishioner from my curacy over 40 years ago, and as the American writer Marilynne Robinson puts it, “when people come to speak to me, whatever they say, I am struck by a kind of incandescence in them.... To see this aspect of life is a privilege of the ministry which is seldom mentioned.”

A memoir is a coming to speak, and the incandescence, the passion to speak up, is there throughout. I am sure I am not the only one who will feel this. My only regret is that I chide myself for not asking the questions that might have brought more of this story to light back then, all those years ago.

The Reverend Dr Duncan Reid is head of Religious Education, Camberwell Girls Grammar School, and an adjunct faculty member at Trinity College Theological School and the University of Divinity, Melbourne.

by Melody Murton

I USED to live in one of the world’s most liveable cities. Now, it’s known more for being one of the world’s most locked down cities. Two years of on again – off again lockdowns, masks and holidays plans have left me disoriented. I’m no longer surprised by disruption – I expect it. It’s hard to find rhythms, sure things and firm paths.

But there is a way to walk steadily through this disrupted world. That’s the claim made by *An Upside-Down World*, a new podcast from Tearfund, produced in conjunction with a seven-part Lenten reflection series. Yes, life today is chaotic and uncertain – and far more so, in majority world communities where Tearfund partners with local organisations – but there is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

The podcast navigates these upturned paths with one of scripture’s most perplexing maps, the Beatitudes. Jesus outlines the “conditions” under which people experience “blessing”. He doesn’t suggest security, status or self-preservation – Jesus calls for mercy, mourning and meekness. Each statement is a bit like Siri cutting half an hour off your commute but directing you towards a dead-end: it sounds good, but is it really going to work? Is Jesus’ back-to-front framework really the way to life in an upside-down world?

Listening to the guests on *An Upside-Down World*, I believe – perhaps more solidly than I have before – that the answer

**“Is Jesus’
back-to-front
framework
really the way
to life in an
upside-down
world?”**

• Continued on page 21



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right way up

is yes. Not a straightforward yes, but a humble yes. It's evident in the stories shared, which come together in a delightfully diverse collection of voices both global and local, unknown and familiar. Pastor Ray Minniecon speaks of mourning and comfort as someone who has seen his community carry the burden of far too much sorry business. We hear how God's mercy led Nebiyu, the director of an Ethiopian community organisation, to a transformative experience of forgiveness with his father. Jacinta, a doctor from the Gold Coast, shares the challenge of maintaining purity of heart when you are just bursting to do good in the world. And if you've ever wondered what fills and sustains Tim Costello after decades of (often unquenched) hungering and thirsting for righteousness, well, that's in episode four. Hosts Joel McKerrow and Grace Naoum anchor the conversations with warmth and curiosity, lending their skills as performance-poets to the mix, offering a creative response to the themes and stories shared.

One theme that comes through in almost all the interviews is listening. Listening overcomes pride and makes room for meekness, it keeps the channels of peace flowing, it sets aside power. Listening levels the ground. I think of the crowd gathered on the mountainside, listening together to the teacher, hanging off his every "you are blessed when...". How those words must have flipped things upside-down – or maybe right way up? – back then. They still do today.

Engaging with Beatitudes in the lead up to Lent makes perfect sense. Jesus' death-defeating sacrifice was as upside-down as it gets. *An Upside-Down World* busts any notion that the Beatitudes are cute, pocketable sayings, and tells just how much they can shape – and stabilise – life for the disciple of Jesus today.

An Upside-Down World launches Wednesday 2 March, releasing weekly episodes up to Easter. Subscribe on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or wherever you stream your podcasts, and for more information visit tearfund.org.au/the-way-of-love.

Melody Murton is content lead at Tearfund Australia.

Gospel focus shift welcome

Matthew W. Bates, *The Gospel Precisely: Surprisingly Good News about Jesus Christ the King* (renew.org, 2021).

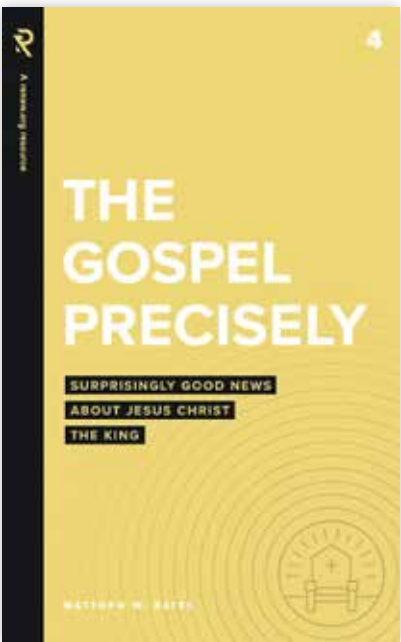
by Fergus J. King

THE GOSPEL PRECISELY MAY serve both as a summary to the core of the gospel appropriate for new Christians, and as a reality check for those who think they know it all.

The work distils Matthew W. Bates' two earlier technical books – *Salvation by Allegiance Alone* and *Gospel Allegiance: What Faith in Jesus Misses for Salvation in Christ* – into a format for use in parish study groups or their equivalents.

Bates starts by questioning the value of a phrase like "Jesus died for my sins" as a full expression of the gospel. Certainly, it contains truths, but these are partial and may be distorted.

With this summary, it becomes easy for the Christian faith to become little more than an insurance policy, or a glorified personal development course. Central to the problem is that it puts "me" at the forefront – and such self-centredness is an orientation which leads away from God, even if couched in the right religious vocabulary. A focus on "my being forgiven" ignores the social, political, and cosmic dimensions of the gospel. Our understanding of faith also



gets challenged. We may focus on orthodoxy (believing all the right things), or on trust (the personal relationship with Jesus) in our different expressions of Anglicanism.

The brutal truth is we need both of these, and then must add allegiance (expressing loyalty by the way we live) to this.

Bates addresses these shortcomings by focussing on the Christ, rather than on ourselves. Glory or respect is properly God's. What should lie at the heart of the gospel is a phrase like "Jesus the Christ is King" (cf. Romans

10:9). In this, the person of Jesus is identified with the role of the Christ and given the kind of allegiance expected by a king, albeit one who suffers and gives his life for his people. This is better expressed in a gospel which embraces 10 stages, from Jesus' pre-existence to his coming to rule as judge. The shift in focus is crucial. It frees us from ourselves, and puts God at the heart of the gospel. Vitally, it asks us to look afresh at God, and ally ourselves with his person and nature. And, because God is essentially a God who loves and sends, it asks us how we can love and be sent on his behalf to continue to make this good news known.

The five chapters of this short book explore these significant themes, with questions for reflection and discussion provided so that even the most inexperienced can work through the material. Some will find Bates' challenge to the limits of "Jesus died for my sins" a hard place to start, but the journey he describes replaces it with something fuller and richer.

Try it if you don't believe me. I am prepared to wager that paddling in Bates's "Jesus is King" theology, will prompt many to test the deeper waters of *Gospel Allegiance*.

The Reverend Dr Fergus J. King is Farnham Maynard Lecturer in Ministry Education at Trinity College Theological School.



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The Lenten question, 'Who are you really?'

Luke Hopkins

AS WE ENTER LENT, MANY parish churches across our diocese will suddenly be doing things a little differently. The way we worship and the way we use our spaces for worship are different compared to the rest of the year.

For the most part, most things are the same. And yet, they've changed as well. Just different enough. Hopefully enough to jolt us a little. Hopefully enough for us to need to pay a little close attention, so that we're not just going through motions. For some, we don't sing the Gloria or the Alleluias during Lent, waiting for the great Alleluia of Easter. The decorative accents change to purple or rough sackcloth. We have some different responses and prayers. Icons and crosses may be covered over with hessian. Many of the candles and flowers may be taken away. Everything is stripped back a bit. The reason? Well, we can all become attached to particular ideas and images in our minds, so much so that they can replace the very thing they are meant to represent and call us forward to. As such, the stripping back of our liturgical items is an outward sign of the inner stripping that is meant to be going on during the season of Lent.

Lent becomes a call to the church to become more truly herself. A time to remove some of the fluff and decoration that's built up. A time to reassess the stories we often prefer to tell ourselves about ourselves. A time to see who we truly are underneath it all. Lent is an opportunity to reset the clock.



The true answer to our identity lies in Christ, writes Luke Hopkins.

Picture: iStock

A time to take inventory. A time to renew our own sense of commitment. A call to be genuine.

Lent asks us: "Who are you really?" Not an easy question for many of us to answer, especially considering most of us prefer a kind of self-willed amnesia most of the time.

The Oxford Dictionary defines the word genuine as "truly what something is said to be – authentic". Seen in this light, Lent can become for us a call to authenticity. If we take up the opportunity provided (available all year round of course), this season can be reparative and restorative for us. This season provides an opportunity for us to come to grips with all the false images we have of God and of ourselves. It's also time to confront the hurts we have done to ourselves and others, which is why it is preceded by Shrove Tuesday. "To shrive" is an old word meaning to confess and absolve. This is never comfortable. However, it

"[Lent] should be a real fascination with the new life that has dawned in us and in the world through Christ's death and resurrection."

is spiritually necessary. Lent is an opportunity to be reminded, in the words of Augustine of Hippo, that "The church is not a hotel for saints, it is a hospital for sinners".

Our focus on Lent should not be a morbid obsession with making ourselves feel miserable in the

hope of pleasing God. Instead, it should be a real fascination with the new life that has dawned in us and in the world through Christ's death and resurrection. Lent leads us to Holy Week and Easter. It is a season for new growth. It is about coming home to God and, in so doing, becoming more at home with ourselves. As Archbishop Rowan Williams reminds us: "It's important to remember that the word 'Lent' itself comes from the old English word for 'spring'. It's not about feeling gloomy for 40 days; it's not about making yourself miserable for 40 days... [In the northern hemisphere] Lent is springtime. It's preparing for that great climax of springtime which is Easter – new life bursting through death. And as we prepare ourselves for Easter during these days, by prayer and by self-denial, what motivates us and what fills the horizon is not self-denial as an end in itself but trying to sweep and clean the room of our own

minds and hearts so that the new life really may have room to come in and take over and transform us at Easter."

The three traditional Lenten disciplines of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, are meant to deliberately focus our minds on becoming more authentically Christian. By fasting and other acts of self-denial, we learn self-control and let go of the cultural assertion that we are what we consume. Through charitable giving, we learn to avoid creating false priorities and realign ourselves to God's priorities. Through prayer, in having some honest conversations with God, we humble ourselves and can come to realise that we are dependent on God's grace. Through fasting, almsgiving and prayer we enter more deeply into the meaning of Christ's passion, death and resurrection.

In these Lenten disciplines we also have the chance to discover more deeply who we truly are in Christ. They help us to become more authentically human, which is after all what it means to be Christian. For in Christ we see not only what God is really like, but we are also opened up to seeing what being truly human is like.

Again and again in the Gospels, we see that Jesus will not betray or deny who He is. Ultimately, He is tortured and dies because He will not betray or deny who He is.

Could the same be said of us? How do we truly discover who we are? The answer to that lies in Christ.

The Reverend Dr Luke Hopkins is college chaplain at Trinity College Melbourne.

Prayer Diary

Find the prayer diary online at melbourneanglican.org.au/spiritual-resources

MARCH

Sun 6: The Anglican Church of Korea (Bp Peter Lee Kyeong-Ho, Presiding Bishop); The Diocese of The Murray (Bp Keith Dalby, Clergy & People); Ridley College (Brian Rosner, Principal; Tim Foster, Richard Trist); St Michael & St Luke's Dandenong (Santa Packianathan); St Matthew's Ashburton - Pastoral Visit (Abp Philip Freier); St Alfred's Blackburn North - Confirmation Service (Bp Genieve Blackwell); St Paul's Frankston - Pastoral Visit (Bp Paul Barker);
Mon 7: The Diocese of The Northern Territory (Bp Greg Anderson, Clergy & People); Defence Force Chaplains; St Philip's Deep Creek (Megan Curllis-Gibson);
Tues 8: The Diocese of Wangaratta (Bp Clarence Bester, Clergy & People); Archdeaconry of Geelong (Jill McCoy); Parish of St John's, Diamond Creek w. St Katherine's, St Helena and St Michael's, Yarrambat (Timothy Johnson, Kirk Mackenzie, Joel Snibson);
Wed 9: The Diocese of Willochra (Bp John Stead, Clergy & People); Shelford Girls' Grammar (Katrina Brennan, Principal); Christ Church Dingley (Richard Loh);
Thurs 10: Anglicare Australia (Bp Chris Jones, Chair; Kasy Chambers, Exec Director); Relationship Matters (Janet Jukes, CEO); St David's Doncaster (Judy Frost);
Fri 11: Theological Colleges, Church Schools & Church Kindergartens; Melbourne Anglican Foundation; Holy Trinity Doncaster (Andrew Price, Mark Chew, Esther Ruan, Vijay Henderson,

Geoffrey Hall, Alan Xue);
Sat 12: Mission Agencies of the Anglican Church of Australia; Police Force Chaplains (Drew Mellor & other Chaplains) and members of the Police Force; St Mark's Dromana (Incumbency Vacant);
Sun 13: The Anglican Church of Melanesia; Religious Orders serving within the Anglican Church of Australia; St Michael's Grammar School (Terrie Jones, Principal, Kenyon McKie, Chaplain); St Margaret's Eltham (Keren Terpstra); Church of the Ascension Burwood East - Pastoral Visit (Abp Philip Freier); Parish of Queenscliff/Pt Lonsdale - Pastoral Visit (Bp Kate Prowd); Parish of Noble Park - Pastoral Visit (Bp Paul Barker);
Mon 14: Locums and all retired clergy; Ministries to Youth; St Mark's Emerald (Andrew Bowles, Jerome Dias, Vivianne Dias);
Tue 15: The Anglican Church of Australia (Primate Abp Geoffrey Smith, General Secretary Anne Hywood, the General Synod & the Standing Committee); Archdeaconry of Kew (Greg Allinson); St Matthew's Endeavour Hills (Kim Wellard);
Wed 16: The Diocese of Adelaide (Abp Geoff Smith, Asst Bps Denise Ferguson, Timothy Harris, Christopher McLeod; Clergy & People); Peninsula Grammar (Stuart Johnston, Principal, Mark Sweeney, Chaplain); Parish of St John the Evangelist Epping (Raffaella Pilz);
Thurs 17: The Diocese of Armidale (Bp Rod Chiswell, Clergy & People); Mission to Seafarers (Neil Edwards, Chair;

Onfré Punay, Chaplain); Christ Church Essendon (George Kirreh);
Fri 18: The Diocese of Ballarat (Bp Garry Weatherill, Clergy & People); Mothers' Union Australia, Diocese of Melbourne (Elaine Longford, President); St Paul's Fairfield (Peter Carolane);
Sat 19: The Diocese of Bathurst (Bp Mark Calder, Clergy & People); Anglican Criminal Justice Ministry Chaplaincy (Rob Ferguson, Senior Chaplain & Chaplains); Parish of Ferntree Gully and Rowville (Hilton Jordan, Luke Pedersen);
Sun 20: La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico (Bp Enrique Trevino, Interim Primate); The Diocese of Bendigo (Bp Matt Brain, Clergy & People); Tintern Grammar (Brad Fry, Principal, Alison Andrew, Chaplain); St Mark's Fitzroy (Stuart Soley);
Mon 21: The Diocese of Brisbane (Abp Phillip Aspinall, Regional Bps Jeremy Greaves, Cameron Venables, John Roundhill, Clergy & People); Royal School of Church Music (Roslyn Carolane, Chair); Parish of St John's, Flinders w. St Mark's Balnarring (Keiron Jones);
Tue 22: The Diocese of Bunbury (Bp Ian Coutts, Clergy & People); Archdeaconry of La Trobe (Gavin Ward); Parish of Footscray (Chaplain Soma, Gabriel Mayen);
Wed 23: The Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn (Bp Mark Short, Asst Bps Stephen Pickard, Carol Wagner, Clergy & People); Trinity College & Theological School (Robert Derrenbacker, Dean); St Mark's Forest Hill (Philip Knight);
Thurs 24: Ministry to the Defence Force (Bishop Grant Dibden, Chaplains & Members of the Defence Forces); Social

Responsibilities Committee (Gordon Preece, Chair); St Luke's Frankston (Glen Macrae, Dennis Emery);
Fri 25: The Diocese of Gippsland (Bp Richard Treloar, Clergy & People); SparkLit (Michael Collie, National Director); Parish of St John's, Frankston North w. St Luke's, Carrum Downs (David Sullivan, Cheryl Sullivan);
Sat 26: The Diocese of Grafton (Bp Murray Harvey, Clergy & People); St Paul's Frankston (Claudia Mauracher);
Sun 27: The Church of the Province of Myanmar (Burma) (Abp Stephen Than Myint Oo, Primate); Ministry with the Aboriginal people of Australia (Bp Chris McLeod, National Aboriginal Bishop, Aboriginal Clergy & People); Trinity Grammar School (Adrian Farrer, Principal; Chris Leadbeater, James Hale, Chaplains); St Stephen's Gardenvale (Paul Carr); Parish of Ocean Grove & Barwon Heads - Pastoral Visit (Bp Kate Prowd); St Oswald's Glen Iris - Pastoral Visit (Bp Paul Barker); St Stephen's Greythorn - Pastoral Service (Bp Genieve Blackwell); St Paul's Cathedral - Lady Day Service (Bp Genieve Blackwell);
Mon 28: Ministry with the Torres Strait Islander people of Australia (Torres Strait Islander Clergy & People); Karingal - St Laurence Community Services; Christ Church Geelong (vacant incumbency);
Tues 29: The Diocese of Melbourne (Abp Philip Freier, Asst Bps Paul Barker, Bradly Billings, Genieve Blackwell, Kate Prowd, Clergy & People); Archdeaconry of Maroondah (Bruce Bickerdike); City on a Hill Geelong (needs checking: listed

names are not all COAH Geelong); The Diocese of Newcastle (Bp Peter Stuart, Asst Bps Charlie Murry, Sonia Roulston, Clergy & People); Yarra Valley Grammar School (Mark Merry, Principal); St Paul's Geelong (Nigel Pope);
Wed 30: The Diocese of North Queensland (Bp Keith Joseph, Clergy & People); Stewardship Agencies; Parish of Gisborne (Dennis Webster, Debra Saffrey-Collins, Alan Smith);
Thurs 31: The Diocese of North West Australia (Bp Gary Nelson, Clergy & People); Archdeaconry of Melbourne (Heather Patacca); St Barnabas' Glen Waverley (Phillip Meulman, Gordon Li);

APRIL

Fri 1: The Diocese of Perth (Abp Kay Goldsworthy, Asst Bps Jeremy James, Kate Wilmot, Clergy & People); Brighton Grammar School (Ross Featherston, Principal; Chester Lord, Chaplain); St James' Glen Iris (Samuel Crane);
Sat 2: The Diocese of Riverina (Bp Donald Kirk, Clergy & People); Department of Theological Education (Bp Bradly Billings, Assistant Bishop, Monomeeth Episcopate); St Oswald's Glen Iris (Glenn Loughrey); Parish of Cranbourne - Pastoral Visit (Bp Paul Barker); St Matthew's Prahran - Confirmation Service (Bp Genieve Blackwell);
Sun 3: The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion); The Diocese of Rockhampton (Bp Peter Grice, Clergy & People); Victorian Council of Churches (Dr Graeme Blackman, President, Ian Smith, Executive Officer); All Saints' Greensborough (Julie Blinco-Smith).

Persecution, a reporting omission that puzzles

by Barney Swartz

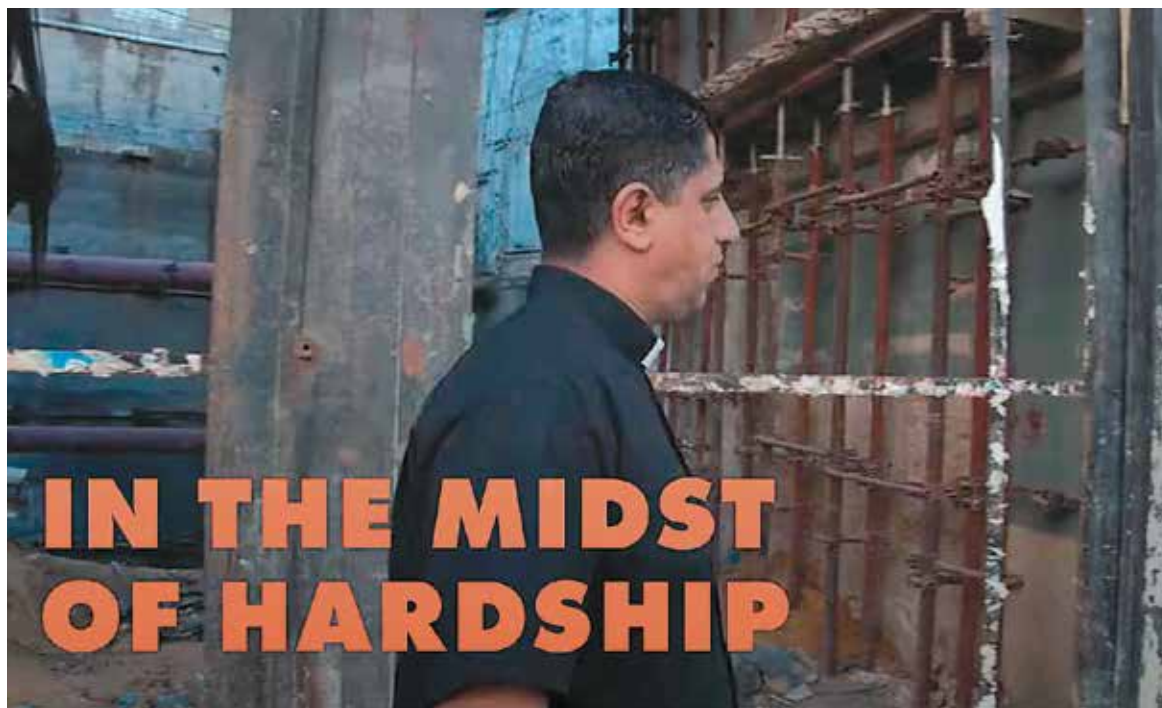
MORE THAN ONE IN SEVEN Christians around the world, or some 360 million, are at daily risk, according to Open Doors' 2022 list of the most dangerous countries in which to be a Christian.

Yet, oddly, I could not find any mention of this important report in any of Australia's mainstream newspapers, and not many around the world. Christian media certainly picked it up, but otherwise it was largely ignored.

It is inconceivable how this persecution escapes the radar of mainstream media. Secularists often see Christianity merely as a colonialist white religion – oppressor, not oppressed – which is unpardonable ignorance, as by far the majority of the world's Christians are neither white nor privileged. By and large, the Western government have abandoned them.

Take Nigeria, where by far the most martyrs were killed – 4650, or 79 per cent of martyrs – followed by Pakistan (11 per cent). Mysteriously, the mainstream media seldom recognises the religious nature of the genocide in northern Nigeria, preferring to describe it in terms of nomadic herding culture against agricultural culture. It's true that this is a factor. But the Fulani Muslim herdsmen and Boko Haram are specifically engaged in jihad, supported and supplied by Islamic State, and the key reason is hatred of Christianity.

In contrast, the real danger to life and livelihood of so many believers renders it absurd hyperbole when Western Christians complain that they are persecuted – a constant refrain, for example, from Trump's Christian Right. We certainly face increasing challenges, as Jesus



Video still from <https://opendoors.org.au/world-watch-list/>

“By far the majority of the world's Christians are neither white nor privileged. By and large, the Western government have abandoned them.”

promised all who follow him, but we are not dragged into the street and beaten to death or executed on trumped up blasphemy charges as in Pakistan, nor do we have religious tattoos removed with acid as in Egypt. We can get and keep jobs, an education, and we are not targeted to be denied clean water, food or health care.

Open Doors ranks the most dangerous countries in which to be a Christian as follows: Afghanistan, North Korea, Somalia, Libya, Yemen, Eritrea, Nigeria, Pakistan,

Iran, India, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Maldives, China, Qatar, Vietnam, and Egypt. The rankings are based on violent incidents but also social and government pressure.

If you explicitly want to help the persecuted church, three welfare and advocacy agencies I recommend are Open Doors, the Barnabas Fund and Voice of the Martyrs.

From the persecuted to the not nearly persecuted enough. I can

think of only two groups who receive reverential attention despite their manifest imperfections. One is cult leaders, religious or otherwise, and the other is weather forecasters.

I'm a little obsessive about rain (my favourite weather). I kept a record in January of rainfall promised by the Bureau of Meteorology and the amount actually received in my area. I noted dates when the BOM said there was a 50 per cent or better chance of rain. On five days there was a 90 to 95 per cent chance of rain; our total on four of them was zero. In all, the BOM said the chance of rain was 50 per cent or higher on 13 days; we had no rain on nine of them.

Now, of course, I believe in science and evidence. So for my weather forecasts I stick my head out the window. But if I'm complaining about the BOM (which I am), I have to concede where the



Barney Swartz
is media adviser to
Archbishop Philip Freier and
a Senior Fellow of the Centre
for Public Christianity.

real stupidity lies here. It's with me, who knows all this yet still fanatically consults the BOM every day, often more than once. As Eliphaz the Temanite tells Job, it is God who sends the rain (not the BOM).

When not exerting myself to the utmost on behalf of the Anglican Church, I divide a good deal of time between firtling, spoffling and tantling. I'm sure many of you do the same. For the uninitiated, to firtle is to look busy despite doing very little, to spoffle is to be busy on a task of little importance (also to fuss), and to tantle is to be busy but not achieve anything.

My brief etymological investigations revealed nothing about spoffle or tantle, while firtle comes from ancient Cumbrian dialect. But they are all old English, and it is interesting how important it must have been in the feudal world to at least look busy. Not, perhaps, unlike today. One of my favourite lockdown internet memes claimed: “I feel sorry for all those husbands who kept telling their wives they'd get round to it when they had time.”

Draw from the deep well of life on offer

by Clare Boyd-Macrae

A RECENT reading from the Common Lectionary used by Christian worshippers the world around was a sublime passage from the prophet Jeremiah. Chapter 17 verses 7-8 reads:

Blessed are those who trust in God, whose trust is God. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; In the year of drought, it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.

We need to draw from the boundless and unstinting resources of God's love and grace if we are not to become cynical, disillusioned or just plain exhausted. Jesus put it another way in his encounter with the woman at the well – “I am the living water with which you shall never thirst”. To this she pragmatically replied, “Sir, you have no bucket and the well is deep”.



So what are our buckets? What are the ways we can drink of the living water, send our roots into the stream of divine grace? Because, let's be honest, the way of Jesus is not easy and at times it is profoundly counter-cultural. And life itself is fraught with suffering. But Christians have been given a variety of buckets with which to draw from that deep well.

Study of the Bible is a complex but rewarding source of revelation and a time-honoured way of aligning ourselves to God's purposes.

Another is weekly worship with fellow travellers. The reading of the stories out loud, the corporate prayer, the preaching

of the word that rarely fails to touch me, the majesty of the music: worship is a practice that provides the anchor and arrow for my week.

There are others: meeting with fellow believers to share life and talk about the God stuff, reading theology or devotional books.

My preferred bucket, my mainspring of resilience and strength, has been the practice of contemplative prayer or Christian meditation. Sitting in silence, in a group sometimes, but more often by myself, breathing steadily and saying a prayer word over and over has sustained me through decades.

We are blessed to have a

multitude of buckets, because sometimes one becomes a struggle. Recently, my meditation practice of a lifetime has been a burden. It has been so hard to sit and be silent and dwell with God, and doing it seems drier and more pointless than ever before.

During this fallow time, my two worship communities – my congregation and the tiny chapel group at work – have reminded me why I am a Christian. The richness of the stories has fed me. Music has moved me. The companionship of my fellow-pilgrims has given me strength. My meditation practice will continue, and the delight will return, but right now, worship is what is feeding me, and that's okay. We have so many disciplines with which to deepen our faith, sustain our hope and increase our love. Let's make use of them, so that we can be like trees, planted by water.

Clare Boyd-Macrae's blog is at clareboyd-macrae.com



Spirit Words

Always be glad because of the Lord! I will say it again: Be glad. Always be gentle with others. The Lord will soon be here. Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.

Philippians 4:4-7

Gold taps into eerie history of Australian film

by Tim Kroenert

THERE IS A LONG HISTORY IN Australian cinema of depicting natural environments as a source of psychological and physical horror. In films like *Wake in Fright*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Wolf Creek*, the Australian wilderness is portrayed as a beautiful but treacherous, living presence. The force of its elements, its beasts and sheer scale are as much a threat to the protagonists as the sinister humans that also exist in those films. Such films play on a deep-seated sense that those of European descent are interlopers, who simply don't belong there.

Director Anthony Hayes' *Gold* joins that tradition with a dark and vaguely dystopian meditation on greed and obsession in the far outback. There are murmurings throughout of apocalyptic events rending the nation's more



Zac Efron stars in the Stan original movie *Gold*.

Picture: Stan

populated regions. The film's central character, billed only as Man One (Zac Efron), has come to the desert in search of some kind of solace. Man Two (Hayes) has agreed to

drive him where he wants to go. Their long and gruelling crossing of these badlands comes to a halt when they stumble across a deposit of gold.

The gold is an iceberg, a protruding lump with a massive bulk caught beneath the soil. The two men agree that one of them will return to the nearest (but days distant) town to retrieve excavation equipment, while the other will remain and stand watch over their find. They decide that Man One will be the one to stay. He is confident he is up to the task. But as days pass, his water supply dwindles, the sun blisters his skin by day, wild dogs snarl in the darkness by night, and he comes to realise how fragile a concept survival is in this place.

Cinematographer Ross Giardina creates images that milk the scenario and setting for their mythic potential. Two men leap and holler in silhouette against an impossibly distant horizon – small gods dancing on the face of the universe as they celebrate their supposed newfound wealth. Later, a lone pale campfire and silver moon barely

keep night's shroud at bay. The gold itself is a talisman, anchoring Man One to the material world as the unknowable void threatens to engulf him. Ironic, since that glinting face is what kept him here in the first place.

Efron's portrayal of the man's physical and psychological undoing is visceral and captivating. As a largely solo performance it is a tour-de-force. But the film doesn't quite pay off on his efforts. The arrival of a mysterious, hooded woman (Susie Porter), armed with bow and arrow, marks a turn into a sillier mode of gothic horror. Eventually *Gold* devolves into more banal depictions of violence and gore. In the long run it will be a footnote rather than a classic like those films mentioned above. For now it is at least a thoughtful diversion.

Gold is streaming on Stan.

A family's strength triumphs over conflict in *Belfast*

by Wendy Knowlton

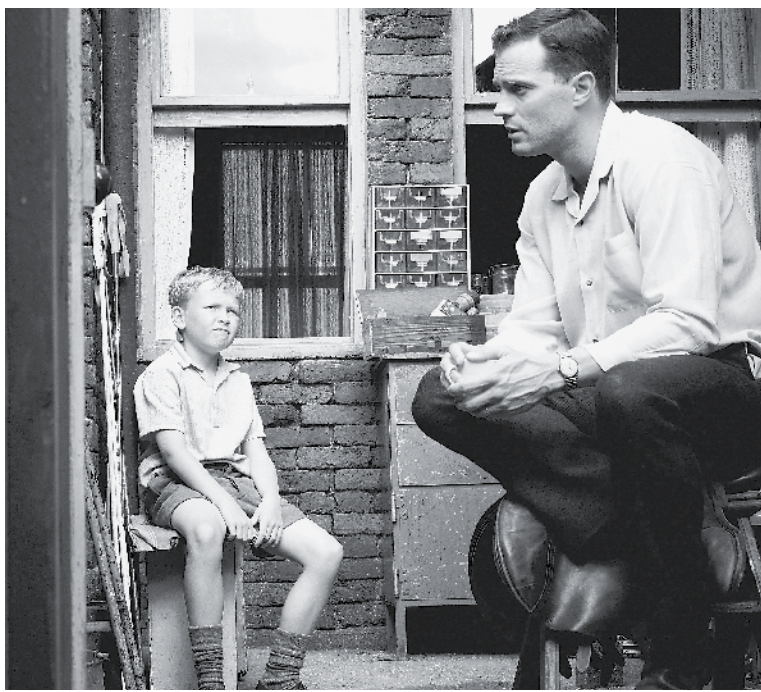
BELFAST OPENS with a scene of nostalgic sweetness. It's 1969 and Buddy (Jude Hill) fights dragons in his local laneways, as mothers call children in for tea. This is a community where everyone knows everyone, and all seems cosy and secure. But violence erupts as Protestant vigilantes target the mixed street, marking and trashing Catholic houses. A blazing car explodes, paving stones are ripped up for barricades and suburbia becomes a warzone, a microcosm of a wider world in which the Troubles are beginning.

Kenneth Branagh's film, based on his own childhood, is wistful and charming. Since we see everything through Protestant Buddy's nine-year-old eyes, the conflict his country is facing hovers around the edge of his consciousness only. While Ma (Caitriona Balfe) has to worry about back taxes, and Pa (Jamie Dornan) commutes to England for work while also resisting pressure to join organised

violence, Buddy's concerns are simple. He wants to stay in Belfast, see his beloved Granny and Pop every day, and work out how to marry Catherine – a girl from his school.

Buddy is even drawn to the advantages of Catholicism. Apparently, they can commit any sin, confess afterwards, and all is forgiven. His own minister preaches hellfire for those who choose the wrong path. But the conflict portrayed prioritises power over religion. We see local thug Billy Canton (Colin Morgan) pressuring young boys into making "deliveries", or one of Buddy's neighbours demanding people he knows perfectly well declare their names and intentions at the makeshift barricades before he'll let them pass.

However, the strength of this community counters much that threatens to tear things apart. While Granny (Judi Dench) and Pop (Ciaran Hinds) provide the warm and sometimes acerbic background to family life, Buddy's parents, exude steely strength and



Buddy (Jude Hill) and Pa (Jamie Dornan) discuss their own troubles in *Belfast*. Photograph – Focus Features

passion. Pa triumphs in a real-life showdown of light and darkness, an embodiment of the heroes of Buddy's pop culture fantasy life

where *High Noon* and *Star Trek* dominate. Branagh uses colour when the family watch *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* or *A Christmas*

Carol to represent the vibrant power of imagination and escapism, but their own lives are hardly black and white. As they dance in the beleaguered street, or celebrate together at a wake, this is a community that knows as much of joy as conflict.

Ultimately, for those who refuse to take a side, there seems little choice but leaving, and yet, as Ma sadly states, Belfast is all they know. England may be safe, but it is not home. She and Pa have lived in the same streets all their lives. Everyone and everything is familiar. From a place of belonging, they will go to a place of exile where their accents will brand them, and they'll be blamed for British casualties in the Troubles. Branagh's beautiful film is a tribute to the past and a place. As they leave, Granny, who stays behind, wills them not to look back. Buddy does. And it's heartbreaking.

Belfast has been nominated for eight Academy Awards including Best Picture. It is showing at selected cinemas.

Step inside Sarajevo reminds of the human cost of all conflict

by Tim Kroenert

BOSNIAN FILMMAKER Jasmila Žbanić's filmography traces the scars of her country's troubled recent history. Her 2006 debut *Grbavica* explored how the events of the Bosnian War continued to shape the lives of women in modern day Sarajevo. The young lovers who lead her 2010 follow-up *On the Path* are similarly haunted by traumatic memories of the war. Žbanić's most recent film, *Quo Vadis, Aida?* takes an even more direct approach, depicting events that for her are literally close to home.

Its focus is the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, in which more than 8000 Muslim men and boys were executed by the Bosnian Serb Army of Republika Srpska (the

VRS). Some 30,000 people had been displaced from their homes and fled to Srebrenica, a United Nations protected zone. But the UN proved either ill-equipped or ill-prepared to help them. In an interview published by the Council of Europe in 2020, Žbanić said at the time she was living under siege in Sarajevo, just a few hours away.

"It is a tragedy that took my heart and soul," she said. "The story of Srebrenica is an incredible drama of human beings that this institution [the UN] failed to protect. The more I dug into it, the more I was shocked that it was possible that it could happen in modern-day Europe."

To explore this fraught terrain, the film adopts the perspective of Aida (Jasna Đuričić), a local



Jasna Djuricic is Aida, a UN translator who foresees the horror to come at the Srebrenica massacre. Picture: highonfilms.com

teacher now working as an interpreter for the UN's Dutch representatives. In this role Aida sees both sides of the coin. She shares the pain and plight of her countrymen, while serving as mouthpiece for the compromised diplomacy of the UN representatives. At first she has little choice but to trust that the good intentions of these would-be protectors will lead to good outcomes.

Her faith wanes as the thousands who have come to Srebrenica seeking asylum, with promises to protect them, all with the UN's assent. Disturbingly, in this process fathers, husbands and sons are forcibly separated from the women who love them. Aida foresees the horror to come, and her focus turns to using her UN status

to try to shield her own husband and teenage sons. But it's a race against time, and Aida may have misjudged how far her privileges extend.

Nominated for an Oscar at last year's Academy Awards, *Quo Vadis, Aida?* has been a long time coming to Australian cinemas. It is well worth viewing on a big screen: immersive and virtually documentary-like in its sense of realism and "in their shoes" authenticity. Of course, this is not a happy episode in history. The film's final act is harrowing, and its denouement emotionally devastating. Its telling of these specific events is a reminder of the human cost of all conflicts.

Quo Vadis, Aida? is screening at Cinema Nova.