

THE Melbourne Anglican

MARCH 2023, No 622



A family calling: Husband and wife among 15 new deacons

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earn honours

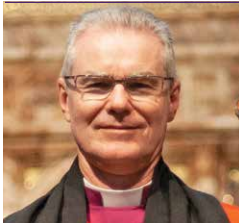


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unique in AI
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Aligning lives
to reach out

Pedram and Leili Shirmast. Picture: Janine Eastgate.



Let Jesus' trial in the desert guide your Lenten pilgrimage

■ Archbishop Philip Freier

I've always found the first verse of Matthew 4 confronting: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit to be tested by the devil."

At one level it might sound procedural, the Spirit leading Jesus to a place of testing where the outcome was already well assured. Something like a confident and well-prepared student approaching their end of year examinations. We quickly reach the second verse and see that Jesus does not approach what is to come from a point of physical strength – quite the opposite, he is depleted in a way that few of us could imagine. "He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished." It was then that the tempter came to him offering all of the sweet promises of satisfaction, power and adoration that the world has. Jesus' answers are plain and, at each point, reject the success and pleasure that is offered from the world.

Taking his cue from Jesus' answer to the first temptation by quoting from Scripture, "it is written", the tempter quotes those words and verses of Scripture back to Jesus in the second temptation.

So it continues, until Jesus brings the



Picture: iStock.

whole event to an end by saying, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." Angelic relief follows the silencing and departure of the devil.

It is clear that we cannot expect to emulate the arduous physical and spiritual ordeal of Jesus' journey through these trials in the wilderness. We can, however, apply the principles of his wilderness time of temptation in our own Lenten pilgrimage. Some of you are seasoned observers of this time of physical and spiritual discipline, and I now find each Lent a time of more intense prayer and reliance on God. Others may be new to this way of thinking, of using the liturgical year as a scaffolding for personal and

corporate spiritual practice. Lenten studies have a long heritage of fostering corporate spiritual practice and studying Scripture as we approach the great three days of Easter.

However we think and act in response to the season of Lent, the time of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness stands out as an exemplar of God's abiding faithfulness to those who follow him and have been incorporated by baptism into his spiritual body, the Church. It often seems that the world around us is so deeply set in a yearning for the power and the pleasure the world offers that the spiritual claim upon life is dismissed. This is a profound irony and evocative of the distorted reasoning that Jesus confronted in the Judean wilderness so long ago.

Psalms 71 is one that I recommend to you as you confront the spiritual powers that compete with God the Holy Trinity for attention and allegiance. I find a repeated reading of this Psalm a good framework for reflection on these things. I also recommend this prayer to you as a response to your reflection, "Faithful Lord, living Saviour, in youth and old age, from the womb to the grave, may we know your protection and proclaim your great salvation to the Glory of God the Father."

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In February's episode, Dr Li Wan tells Kirralee Nicolle his story of growing in humility as God demonstrated his faithfulness to Li through his medical research work.

For Li's story and more, listen to our podcast via tma.melbourneanglican.org.au:

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Chance to act for meaningful change

■ Jenan Taylor

Religious leaders of Indigenous and multifaith communities have asked people of faith to listen to the perspectives of First Nations' people for clarity about the proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

It came as a formal push for a constitutionally enshrined First Nations' voice was launched in February.

Social justice organisation Common Grace invited Christians to pay attention to and reflect on the calls for justice from Indigenous people.

National director Gershon Nimbalker said that the campaign was an opportunity for Christians to act together for real change.

He said some parts of the Church were uncertain about the referendum but that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders wanted Christians to act and do what the majority of First Nations' people wanted.

Wuthithi and Mabuiag Island woman, Common Grace relationships and storytelling coordinator Safina Stewart said that considerations of the Voice, treaties or truth telling always came back to the topic of justice because injustices persisted in the lives of First Nations' people.

She said Indigenous people faced great sorrow and frustration at the structures that inhibited their health, freedom and ability to flourish.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian leaders including Aunty Jean Phillips are part of the organisation's Listen to the Heart campaign and speak of their experiences and of ways of keeping faith and hope alive, online.



Safina Stewart.

Picture: supplied.

Common Grace said it planned to run live presentations in Australian cities including Melbourne and Sydney.

Melbourne's Interfaith Centre also asked multi faith and multicultural community leaders to participate in a special discussion about voice and reconciliation.

Centre director the Reverend Helen Summers invited representatives of different faiths to put their questions and concerns about the process to the panel.

"It is important that people are given clear information about the proposal, so that they can pass it on to their congrega-

tions and communities," Ms Summers said.

The discussion featured Indigenous elder Aunty Helen Bnads, member of the Voice Co-design Senior Advisory Group Father Frank Brennan, and several human rights advocates including Melbourne Anglican Bishop Philip Huggins.

Wiradjuri man, the Reverend Canon Glenn Loughrey was part of a panel seminar at St Paul's Cathedral aimed at giving members of the Church and the wider community the chance to learn about the importance of the Indigenous Voice.

Struggle to find priests for outer suburb churches

■ Maya Pilbrow

Inner-city priests need to be willing to move to outer suburban churches as these parishes struggle to fill vacancies, incumbency committees say.

Parishes with vacant appointments exist across the Diocese of Melbourne, but the parishes in the outer limits of the diocese have struggled especially to find suitable candidates for incumbency.

St Luke's Cockatoo and Christ Church Geelong are two such parishes.

St Luke's incumbency committee member Mark Coulter said location was a big factor in his parish's difficulty in finding a new incumbent.

"We're on the very edge of Melbourne. Trying to get somebody who's willing to move out to the sticks is more of a challenge," he said.

As a result, he said his parish had a fairly small pool of candidates.

"There's quite a few churches like that. We're not the only ones in this position," he said.

Christ Church Geelong incumbency committee member Professor Shurlee Swain said the main issue her parish faced was finding candidates willing to move to Geelong.

"The challenge in Geelong is getting clergy to cross the West Gate Bridge," she said.

Professor Swain said many clergy had established lives in the eastern suburbs and it was difficult for them to uproot their families to serve in one of the outermost parishes in the diocese.

Fellow Christ Church incumbency committee member Judy Munro agreed.

"These days, it has to be a family decision," she said.

Mrs Munro said Geelong should not be viewed as a distant or undesirable place for clergy.

"The quality of life is so good here. I can't understand why they're not competing to get here," she said.



Bishop Huggins (centre) with Bhakta Dasa (right), and other interfaith community leaders.

Picture: supplied.

Seeking safety in worship after vandalism of Melbourne temple

■ Jenan Taylor

Leaders of a Port Melbourne church and a temple that was defaced in a series of attacks against Hindu places of worship, have called for ideas about religious freedom and safety during a joint sermon.

Holy Trinity locum the Right Reverend Philip Huggins and the Australasian International Society for Krishna Consciousness interfaith director Bhakta Dasa preached on the importance of worshipper safety during a service at Holy Trinity in late January.

Bishop Huggins invited Mr Dasa and other leaders from the ISKCON Hare Krishna temple and wider community to the service after the temple was vandalised during a spate of attacks in late January.

He said recent world events, in which people were killed in a mosque in Pakistan, a synagogue in Jerusalem, and in two churches in Myanmar, was a reminder of how important it was to protect the freedoms we have in Australia.

Bishop Huggins said because feeling safe was critical to how people perceived a place of worship, ensuring that they could offer that feeling to worshippers was common ground for all faith leaders.

He said that was why and he and Mr Dasa also canvassed ideas about what could be done to enhance those feelings of security.

That included the possibility of having visual reminders such as community billboards that helped make people more

aware and appreciative of the tradition of safety that they could find locally.

"People gather so many associations over the years about places of worship, which they regard as places of solace, comfort and as spiritual homes, particularly if they've had a long family connection with it. So, to feel safe and be safe there means an enormous amount to them," Bishop Huggins said.

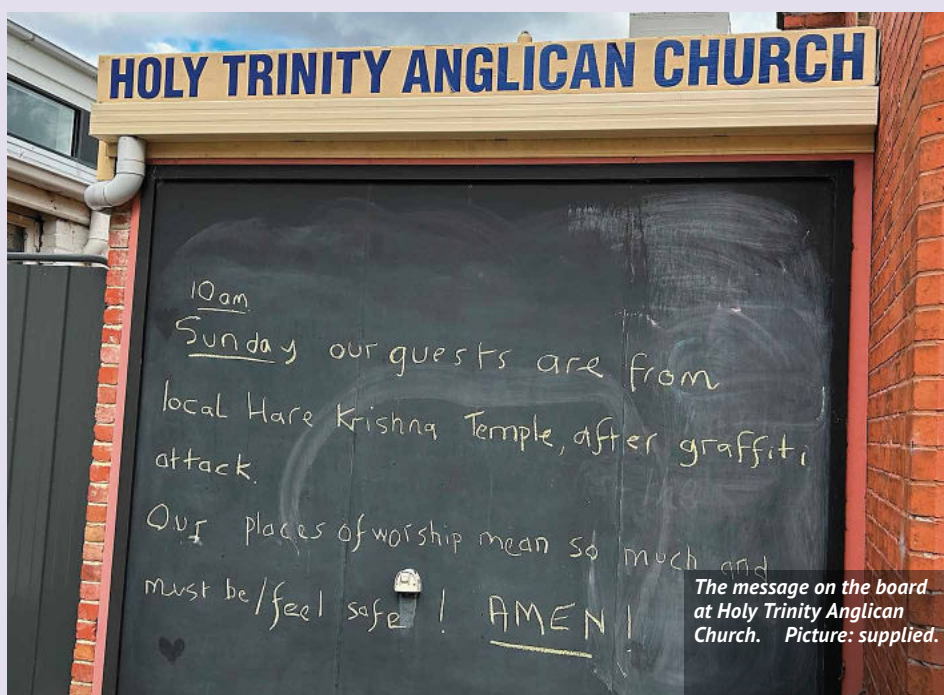
Anti-Hindu graffiti was sprayed across the front of the Hare Krishna Temple in one of three attacks against Hindu temples in Melbourne in January.

The Indian High Commission in Canberra denounced the vandalism and described it as an attempt to stir up divisions in the Indian-Australian community.

Bishop Huggins said members of the temple were not in need of a new place to worship because of the incident, but that he had been in a situation in Geelong in the past, where he offered the use of church space as a worship venue to the local Muslim community when their mosque was burnt.

Because it was important to reach out to other people of faith when they faced difficulties, it was possible Holy Trinity would offer a helping hand to the Hindu community if it was needed, he said.

Bishop Huggins and Mr Dasa planned to meet with City of Port Phillip mayor Heather Cunsolo about their plans for other harmonising initiatives.



The message on the board at Holy Trinity Anglican Church. Picture: supplied.

GAFCON group starts church in diocese opposed to same-sex marriage

■ Kirralee Nicolle

The GAFCON-linked Diocese of the Southern Cross has established a congregation in the Diocese of North Queensland, despite North Queensland synod's vote in 2021 to recognise marriage as being between a man and a woman.

The DSC announced a new congregation on 8 January in Cairns, running its first official gathering that day. Its leader is the Reverend Trevor Saggars, who was previously a priest at a Cairns Anglican Church of Australia parish.

A letter from Bishop Glenn Davies presented at the first meeting of the new congregation said Bishop of North Queensland Keith Joseph was complicit in the legalising of same-sex blessings in the Anglican Church of Australia.

Bishop Davies referenced the refusal of Bishop Joseph to vote on a motion at General Synod in 2022 which sought to affirm marriage as the exclusive union of one man and one woman.

But Bishop Joseph said he supported the substance of the General Synod motion but chose not to vote as a protest at the manner of the debate.

It comes as there are differing perspectives on the legal status of same-sex blessings in the Diocese of North Queensland.

Bishop Davies letter said Bishop Joseph's "inability or unwillingness to affirm the statement and the doctrine of the Anglican Communion" had "effectively made same-sex blessings legal in the Diocese of North Queensland".

The letter went on to say that Bishop Davies believed Bishop Joseph had failed in his episcopal leadership of the diocese.

"He has failed to make an unequivocal statement that same-sex marriage, let alone homosexual behaviour in general, is sinful," it stated.

"His not voting for the statement at General Synod on such an important matter before the Church, was irresponsible, if not reprehensible. This is not how a bishop in the church of God should lead his people as a shepherd should lead, following the doctrine of Christ."

Bishop Joseph said he had been in support of the motion at General Synod which upheld marriage as the exclusive union of one man and one woman, but had



Bishop Glenn Davies.

"[Bishop Joseph's] ... unwillingness to affirm the ... doctrine of the Anglican Communion [has] effectively made same-sex blessings legal in the Diocese ..."

Bishop Glenn Davies

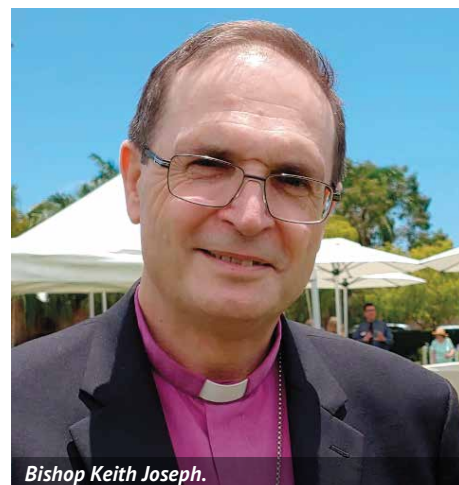
abstained from voting as a protest against the politicisation of the issue and a lack of the Holy Spirit in the process.

"I found the General Synod process to be so tainted by politics and so just so dirty," he said.

In a 13 January ad clerum from Bishop Joseph he said the North Queensland Synod in April 2021 passed a motion "recognising ... that marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one women" (sic). The ad clerum said that in full the motion read:

Recognizing that the issue of the blessing of same-sex marriage is divisive both in this Diocese and in the broader church and that the Word of God teaches that marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one women, this Synod resolves that the Bishop be requested to direct that clergy and lay ministers not be permitted to conduct orders of service for the blessing of same-sex unions and that services for the blessing of same-sex unions not be conducted in places of worship.

In this ad clerum Bishop Joseph said



Bishop Keith Joseph.

"I found the General Synod process to be so tainted by politics and so just so dirty."

Bishop Keith Joseph

2021 North Queensland Synod motion was then given effect by him in a letter sent to all clergy and laity in the diocese on 21 April 2021.

Bishop Joseph said many North Queensland parishioners with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage were opposed to same-sex marriage on cultural grounds.

He said a small percentage of North Queensland parishioners were in favour of same-sex marriage, but most of the rest were either indifferent or opposed to the practice.

A spokesperson from the Diocese of the Southern Cross said that same-sex blessings were in fact currently legal in the Diocese of North Queensland as a result of the Appellate Tribunal's Wangaratta Blessing Service Opinion from November 2020.

"Same-sex blessings are currently legal in the Diocese of NQ, as they are in any diocese of the ACA where the Bishop has not declared such services either irreverent or unedifying, in accordance with the *Canon Concerning Services 1992*," the spokesperson said.

A Diocese of Melbourne legal officer said the legal position was broadly that a minister in a diocese could bless a same-sex marriage unless the diocesan synod had made a regulation forbidding it, or the diocesan bishop had determined that the form of service is not reverent and edifying.

Unique role in supporting new arrivals

■ Maya Pilbrow

Churches can and should provide services to support newly arrived asylum seekers and established refugee communities, an expert from a refugee-oriented non-profit has said.

Embrace Refugees Australia refugee development consultant Naomi Chua, who is also a parishioner at St Thomas' Burwood, said church communities were equipped to play an important role in welcoming asylum seekers and refugees to Australia.

Ms Chua said her experience working with different levels of government and local communities had shown her that state services for refugees faced severe limitations on resources.

She said the government invariably ended up relying on charities, churches and other organisations to fill gaps in services.

Ms Chua said her own parish of St Thomas' had recently been given an opportunity to help a refugee family whose house burned down shortly before Christmas.

Fellow parishioner Melinda van der Westhuizen said many in the congregation felt compelled to help in any way they could after hearing about the fire.

Ms van der Westhuizen said parishioners were able to pool their resources and reach out to other members of the community.

"We were motivated to be practical in our actions," she said.

She said the effort was successful, and within a few days the family, who had been evacuated from Afghanistan following the Taliban's takeover in 2021, were able to move into a new residence furnished with donations.

"I felt honoured to engage with the



Picture: iStock.

family and meet the children. We were so thankful for the opportunity," Ms van der Westhuizen said. She said she would welcome the opportunity to engage further with refugees in her community.

The Reverend Megan Curlis-Gibson, vicar at St Philip's, Deep Creek, said her parish was also grateful to have the opportunity to get involved with asylum seeker and refugee communities.

Following the influx of Afghan evacuees in 2021, Mrs Curlis-Gibson said her church was able to liaise with Ms Chua and organise donations and fundraise for the recently arrived asylum seekers.

She said the Spirit of God made it especially easy for church communities to provide care for refugees.

"He makes our hearts ready to be

generous to the stranger, to the person in need," she said.

Ms Chua cited the recently launched Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot as an example of the importance of community organisations in resettling refugees.

Under the CRISP scheme, the government will allow 5000 additional approved humanitarian refugees to settle in Australia if a community group sponsors their settlement.

Working with NAYBA, a global organisation that seeks to empower churches to engage in their communities, Ms Chua is working to implement the Welcome Home Project, which aims to find suitable churches to act as community sponsors under CRISP.



Reaching the Territory for Christ



Hear from **Greg Anderson**, Bishop of the Northern Territory together with BCA Field Staff **Jacob & Sarah Kelly** (Kyabram) at the BCA Victoria Annual General Meeting and Dinner

Saturday 22 April 2023, 5.30pm drinks for 6pm dinner & Annual Meeting

Glen Waverley Anglican Church (GWAC)
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Shelter, warmth, food, first priorities

■ Kirralee Nicolle

Christians in Australia are being urged to pray for those affected by devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria and consider donating to relief efforts.

The epicentre of the quake occurred on Monday, 6 February near the Turkish city of Gaziantep, near the border with Syria, according to the World Health Organisation. The United Nations said the original quake was a 7.8 magnitude, with a 7.5 magnitude quake following the first. A 6.4 magnitude quake also hit southern Turkey on 20

February. *The Guardian* has reported that the death toll is more than 47,000 people across the two affected nations. Aid organisations are seeking to partner with those on the ground to deliver vital emergency resources and assistance.

Open Doors Australia chief experience officer Anna Hutchens said Open Doors partners in Syria were offering shelter inside churches, with some providing temporary shelter to over 1000 displaced people.

"In Turkey, the focus is less on shelter," she said. "It's on giving out blankets and sleeping bags and heaters. [Open Doors partners are]



Rescuers searching rubble for survivors following devastating earthquakes in Syria and Türkiye. Picture: supplied.

supporting the recovery efforts, and giving emergency relief, food and water.

"We've gotten a lot of reports from Syria about the church being able to help people who have been affected in a really significant way. So we're praying that God continues to use the church as a light in the darkness."

Ms Hutchens said Open Doors was asking Christians to both pray and give to the emergency response work, and that the agency had an immediate need for \$100,000 for resources.

"Prayer is one of those things that can

sometimes feel like it's not enough," she said. "But as believers, we know that it's the most powerful thing that we can do."

Anglican Overseas Aid executive director Jo Knight said while AOA was not directly involved in relief efforts, they were supporting this work through their involvement in the ACT Alliance, a network of aid organisations who were delivering services to those affected by the earthquakes.

Ms Knight said Australian government agencies were working effectively to establish aid work in Türkiye and Syria. She said there might also be other ways to help those affected.

"[There] might be Turkish and Syrian communities here people can reach out [to] through local networks," she said.

"In situations of this scale, it's prayer and a generous financial response that will make the difference."

To give to Anglican Overseas Aid, visit: anglicanoverseasaid.org.au/donate-online. To give to Open Doors visit: opendoors.org.au/donation. The Anglican Board of Mission and Anglicans in Development have launched an appeal at: abmission.org/appeals/emergency-appeals/turkiye-syria.

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UPCOMING EVENTS & SERVICES

Exhibition	Daily	'Jesus in Melbourne' by Michael Donnelly.
Wednesdays	1pm	Lunchtime Concert Series (see website for upcoming concerts)
Fri 24 Mar	2pm	Cathedral Seniors Fellowship Speaker: The Revd Jeremiah Paul – 'Muslim migrant to Anglican Priest'
Sun 26 Mar	4pm	Mothers' Union Lady Day Choral Eucharist Preacher: Bishop Kate Prowd
Sun 2 Apr	10am	Palm Sunday Procession & Choral Eucharist
Tues 4 Apr	11am	Diocesan Chrism Eucharist & Renewal of Ministry Promises
Thurs 6 April	6pm	Choral Eucharist & Vigil
Maundy Thursday		Preacher: The Precentor
Fri 7 April	9am	Good Friday Choral Liturgy
Good Friday		Preacher: The Precentor
	3pm	<i>The Crucifixion</i> – John Stainer; Address: The Dean
Sun 9 Apr	6am	Easter Vigil & First Eucharist of the Resurrection
Easter Day		Preacher: The Dean
	10am	Easter Day Choral Eucharist; Preacher: The Archbishop
	4pm	Festive Choral Evensong; Preacher: The Canon Missioner

REGULAR SERVICES

Sundays	8am	Holy Communion (BCP)
	10am	Choral Eucharist
	4pm	Choral Evensong
Weekdays	12.15pm	Holy Eucharist
	5.10pm	Choral Evensong (Tues – Fri); Evening Prayer (Mon)

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Congregation gather at Camp Jungai.

Picture: supplied

Karen church camp strengthens intergenerational ties

■ Jenan Taylor

Members of a Werribee Karen authorised congregation took steps towards strengthening relationships, including their cross-generation ties during a retreat in January.

More than 100 people from the St Stephen's youth group, mother's union, men's society and Sunday school attended the four-day camp aimed at bringing them closer together.

In the Karen Christian community the four groups are viewed as the church

pillars and key to its stability.

Vicar the Reverend Moe Win Tun Kin said the groups usually went on separate retreats, but because the pandemic had disrupted their plans in the last few years, they had decided to run a combined camp for the first time.

Mr Tun Kin said church leaders wanted to set an example for the younger generations that aligned with the St Stephen's motto "Growing together in unity".

They also wanted to encourage attendees to do activities together, including Bible study.

Youth lay leader, Mayre George said each group ran their own workshops, and shared what they'd learnt each evening.

An unexpected result was that parents and youths took the opportunity to discuss the generational differences and were able to bridge the gap in understanding.

"Because the children grew up here, they experienced a different cultural style compared to their parents. They usually don't discuss the difficulties of that, but they were able to share these things very well during the camp," Ms George said.

Theatrics helps church aid needy

■ Jenan Taylor

Mullum Mullum parish's theatre productions have helped the church raise funds, and more since 1996.

Vicar the Reverend Maria Brand said its drama group, St Paul's Players, started when a few parishioners brainstormed ways to raise finances for the church's various mission focuses, and hit on the idea of a one-off musical theatre performance.

"Everybody loved it so much, that they kept going, and created a ministry group from it. From then onwards, they've raised money for whatever mission the church decided to focus on each year," Ms Brand said.

Those included \$20,000 for a Zambian community in 2019.

The production team now aims to help the church raise money for a community affected by the 2022 Victorian floods.

But Ms Brand said St Paul's Players was not just about fundraising.

Its fellowship tended to attract



St Paul's Players from Mullum Mullum Parish Theatre Group.

Picture: supplied

parishioners of all ages, was a point of contact for less active members, and it helped the parish reach people in the wider community, she said.

Producer Naomi Short said St Paul's Players comprised up to 30 people, including those who helped with sound and costumes.

She said although preparations were extensive and ran from January to November each year, it operated on a budget of \$100. Extras like lighting, were sometimes covered through money raised at a cake stall.

To keep costs down, and ensure all profits went towards mission projects, the group only performed original works, Ms Short said.

She also said that although all the productions were religious, they had captured the interest of unchurched participants, some of whom were now further involved with Mullum Mullum.

But she said the group strived to make joining as easy as possible.

"We welcome anybody. We have a philosophy of no auditioning, because auditions are very scary," Ms Short said.

Vulnerability a 'really important starting point' for mission workers

■ Kirralee Nicolle

Spiritual fitness takes precedence over physical ability when it comes to engaging new mission workers, mission leaders say.

While missionaries have traditionally worked in very remote and challenging areas of the world, some prominent voices are advocating for greater inclusivity for those experiencing chronic illness or disability. In fact, they say such conditions can be an asset.

Author of *Disability in Mission: The Church's Hidden Treasure* Nathan John said while some physical or mental health conditions may be prohibitive of certain locations or types of work, they are not a disqualification but rather a point of discussion.

"If you have a disability [which restricts] mobility, then you might end up in a place like Tokyo or a place with very good accessibility and good services to provide for your disability," he said.

Mr John said the first step to serving God was to know your own inadequacies and trust that God would fill any gaps.

"That humility that our vulnerability or disability brings us is a really important starting point," he said. "It makes us aware that we're interdependent, and ultimately we're dependent on God."

Melbourne Church Missionary Society candidate Lauren Raiter said while having chronic illnesses did determine in which areas of the world she would be best suited to work, her faith helped her to avoid worrying about her wellbeing.

Ms Raiter said doctors had advised her that overseas work was entirely possible with her conditions.

"I'm a coeliac and I have diabetes, so medical things just make some areas of the world much harder to do well in," she said.

"The biggest part is just trust in God and understanding that I don't need to worry about a lot of big things because worrying about them isn't going to necessarily gain any greater control over them."

CMS Victoria executive director Wei-Han Kuan said the biggest misconception about applying to a mission agency was that it was the same as applying for a job. He said that instead, the CMS process was one of discerning both character and competence. Mr Kuan said a person's spiritual quali-



CMS Victoria candidate Lauren Raiter.
Picture: Supplied.

"I'm a coeliac and I have diabetes, so medical things just make some areas of the world much harder to do well in."

Lauren Raiter

ties – godliness, prayerfulness, humble dependence on God and capacity to suffer for the gospel were key. He said CMS also sought those with a proven track record of suitability in ministry.

"We send missionaries as humble learners, and we hold to 'vulnerable mission' as our basic missiological stance," Mr Kuan said. "That is, we expect to be weak, unable and needing to learn and depend on others

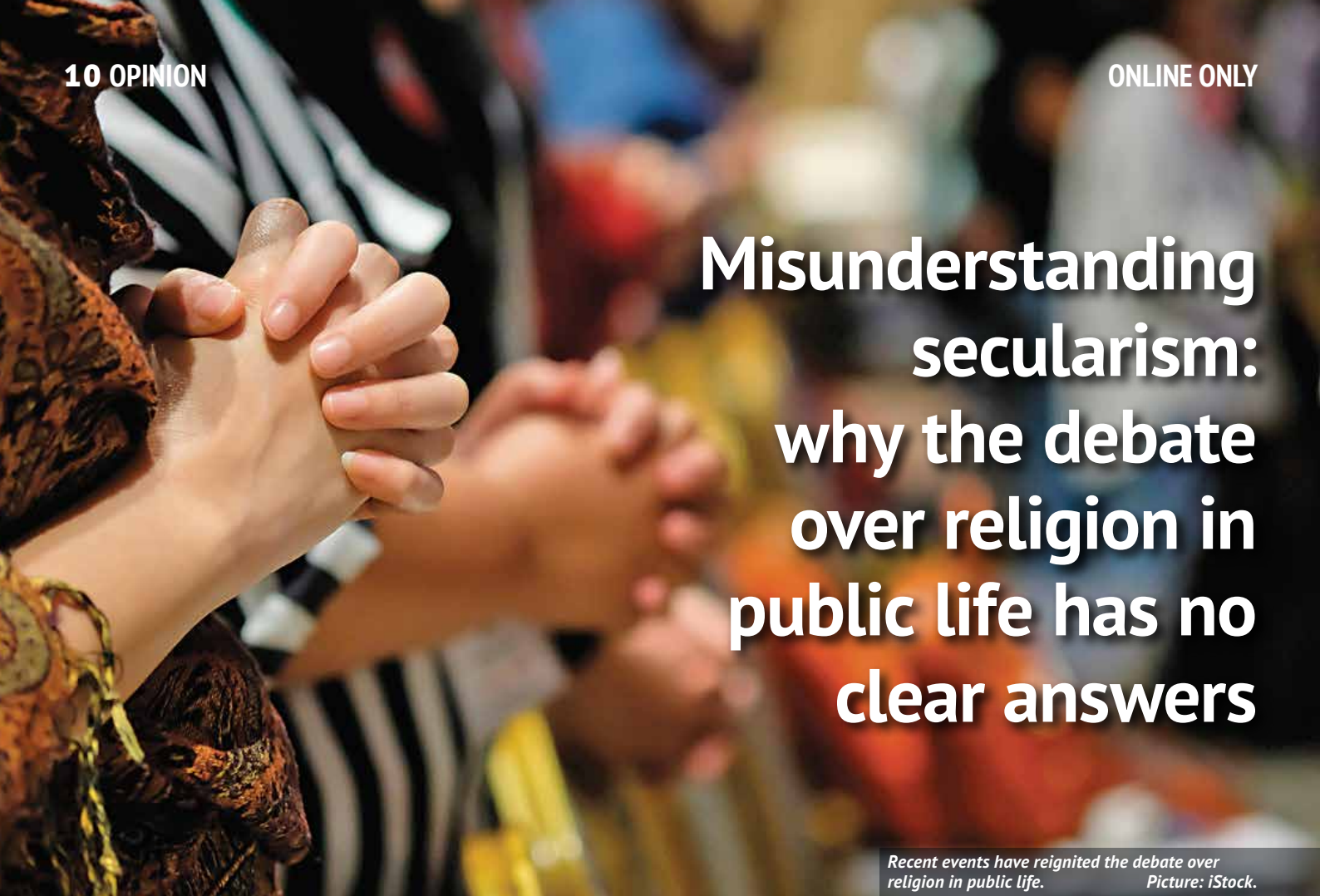
on location. That will certainly be true of our need to learn language and culture but also in other areas where we may lack ability."

He said that when prospective candidates fit the spiritual requirements of CMS, they then proceeded with seeking a placement which provided enough care and support for their individual needs.

"We know that all disabilities require some level of support," Mr Kuan said. "Therefore, that places limitations on where we can place such a person. We cannot place them somewhere where they don't have access to the medication, the ongoing therapy or maintenance they need."

But he said these limitations did not exclude those experiencing disability or chronic illness.

"We're pretty creative, and the fields are ripe unto harvest," Mr Kuan said.



Misunderstanding secularism: why the debate over religion in public life has no clear answers

Recent events have reignited the debate over religion in public life.

Picture: iStock.

■ **Maya Pilbrow**

Is religion disappearing from public life, or is Christianity influencing politics to a worrying degree?

Was Andrew Thorburn's resignation as chief executive of the Essendon Football Club due to discrimination, or was the club's claim that Mr Thorburn's views were incompatible with their own valid?

Did the Victorian Liberal Party make a mistake in distancing themselves from Renee Heath?

Some Christians may begin to worry about expressing their faith publicly. Conversely, some might think politics is being unduly influenced by fringe religious groups

All these concerns seem to revolve around the role of religion in public life.

Recent events have incited a fresh round of debate over what it means to be a secular democracy.

Pilgrim Theological College Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Theology John Flett said some of these questions represented valid concerns, but that he thought the wider debate over Christianity in public life had been blown out of proportion.

Dr Flett said misconceptions about Christianity were common in mainstream discussions about the role of religion in public life.

He said some Christian organisations, such as David Pellowe's Church and State Summit were openly political in their aims and that it was worthwhile to be informed about groups that seek political goals.

Dr Flett said legitimate concerns over what he referred to as mainstream dominionism, such as that promoted by Church and State Summit, were obscured by fearmongering over mundane practices within certain denominations, such as practices like speaking in tongues.

"Anybody of faith feels quite alienated in Victoria."

Wendy Francis

He said mainstream media coverage of what he referred to as conservative churches, such as those attended by Andrew Thorburn and Renee Heath's family, tended to focus on practices such as speaking in tongues, framing them as strange and foreign.

"[For hundreds of million of] Pentecostals and charismatics in the world, speaking in tongues is a completely normative practice, but it looks really odd to people who are completely outside that [culture]," he said.

The discourse surrounding Mr Thorburn's resignation and Ms Heath's treatment by her party has died down once again, but experts say questions about the role of religion

in public life and how our ever-changing society deals with these issues remain relevant.

Academic Audrey Statham, whose research focuses on democracy and education, said the role of religion in public life was theologically and philosophically complex, cutting right to the core of what it meant to be a democracy that is genuinely inclusive of diverse groups and individuals, both non-religious and religious.

She said much of the conversation around religion in public life was because the concept of secularism was itself open to interpretation.

Dr Statham said a major school of thought regarding secularism came from American theologian Stanley Hauerwas, who saw secularism as something which forced religious believers to police their own convictions in the public arena.

"It's a pretty negative view of what a secular society is," she said. She noted that this perspective was nonetheless quite persuasive among some religious groups.

Dr Statham said another approach saw secularism as the appropriate response to diversity within a democratic state, a point of view credited to Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor.

She said this view emphasised including religious groups of all stripes within public debate.

Ridley College lecturer the Reverend Dr Michael Bird agreed with this definition, saying secularism was about creating space for people of all faiths.

"[Secularism] is a tool for maintaining equality while respecting one another's differences," he said.

Dr Bird characterised the debate over religion in public life as a series of knee-jerk reactions to pressure from the left and the right.

"There are people who want something theocratic, a kind of a benevolent Christian despot. And there are those who want the same thing with a progressive despot who will deliberately marginalise religion," he said.

Dr Bird said these points of view were incompatible with true secularism, but that mainstream and social media were responsible for stirring up animosity between religious and non-religious people.

He said Christians ought to defend secularism.

Dr Statham agreed, saying she believed secularism to be valuable.

"We should foster [secularism]. It requires different attitudes towards the role we can play as religious people in a democracy," she said.

Dr Statham said democracy needed to be understood as an ongoing process, one which strived to include viewpoints that ranged from commonplace to controversial.

She said individuals within democratic states needed to be open to hearing different perspectives from their own in order to live and act fully democratically, and that the democratic process was failing if it excluded religious people or caused them to turn away from public life.

Lobby groups and Christian advocacy organisations have expressed that they feel they are being excluded from public life.

Australian Christian Lobby politics national director Wendy Francis said recent events in Victoria including the Essendon Football Club controversy and the Victorian Liberals treatment of Renee Heath had contributed to an environment where religious people did not feel comfortable expressing themselves.

"Anybody of faith feels quite alienated in Victoria," she said.

Ms Francis said people of faith were the Liberal Party's natural constituency and many religious people felt abandoned by major party politics in the last year.

Dr Flett said astute political actors could galvanise religious anxieties, saying the ACL, which he pointed out was recently declared a hate group by the Global Project Against

Hate and Extremism, was an example of this.

Dr Flett said Christians had diverse views on many issues, and it was an error to assume Christians were right-wing.

"Penny Wong is a Uniting Church member, and you don't get more left than Penny Wong," he said.

"[I am concerned about the rise of] factions who now believe the time has come for their racist, nationalist, LGBTIQ-hating, pro-conversion and anti-women's rights agendas to come to the fore."

Catherine Burnett-Wake MP

Dr Flett said unfamiliarity with the realities of modern Christianity often resulted in scaremongering within public debate over secularism.

"There is profound ignorance to the point of fear," he said.

But Dr Flett also said fear and paranoia were common among some Christians who felt they were undergoing persecution for their beliefs.

He acknowledged this paranoia was real but noted that many of these fears played into political culture wars over issues of gender, sexuality and morality.

After losing pre-selection to Renee Heath, whose family has long-standing ties with controversial City Builders Church, former MP Catherine Burnett-Wake said in her valedictory statement to Parliament that she was concerned about the rise of "factions who now believe the time has come for their racist, nationalist, LGBTIQ-hating, pro-conversion and anti-women's rights agendas to come to the fore" within Victorian politics.

Former members of the church have alleged they were subject to conversion therapy.

Ms Heath, whose parents are pastors in the controversial church, has said she should not be judged by the statements and actions of her family.

Dr Flett said it was vital to listen to and engage with religious groups, especially those deemed to be controversial or fringe, to address the issues face by those within those groups and avoid exclusion which might lead to alienation.

"It becomes a question of how do you actually make sure that everyone has a voice within society, and that their ideas are exposed, not in the sense of repudiated, but actually so they can become part of discourse," he said.





Attendees at a food distribution program to address hunger in Kenya. Picture: Supplied.

Climate change blamed for hunger and increased violence in Africa

■ Kirralee Nicolle

Feelings of hopelessness and displacement are rising in African communities impacted by catastrophic environmental change, Anglican and Episcopal representatives in Africa say.

Leaders said parts of Kenya were facing ongoing drought and food shortages from lack of crops and high inflation rates, while nations in the Horn of Africa were experiencing severe flooding and resulting forest decay.

Anglican Overseas Aid partner the Anglican Diocese of Mt Kenya West program coordinator Millicent Wambugu said pastureland had diminished due to lack of rain since 2020, affecting key food crops such as maize, beans and potatoes. She said many in the region who existed on subsistence farming were hard-pressed, and that able-bodied members of the community were leaving their families and the vulnerable behind to hunt animals for food. She said she hoped to see more government intervention to meet

the needs of desperate families.

"The communities are getting to a point where they are asking what next," Ms Wambugu said.

She said with the help of Anglican Overseas Aid, the church was responding to the needs of nine different communities in Kenya and implementing lunchtime feeding programs for both students and toddlers. By encouraging children to attend school, Ms Wambugu said these programs led to less child abuse in homes. She said there were signs of hope despite the difficulties.

"We've had quite a number of gains within the community," Ms Wambugu said. "We've been able to see communities be more inclusive in terms of disability. We've seen women take part in most of the decision-making processes, and we've also seen incidences of child abuse going down."

South Sudan Episcopal Development and Relief Fund director Light Wilson Aganwa said Anglican Overseas Aid had been providing technical assistance to the Ecumenical church and had also assisted in

responding to the needs of 936 households. He said all 10 states in South Sudan had been either directly or indirectly affected by climate change. Mr Aganwa said northern South Sudanese communities were battling widespread flooding which had caused animals to die, people groups to be displaced and crops destroyed. He said ethnic violence had also increased due to greater crossover of warring people groups, and old growth forests were decaying from the stagnant floodwaters.

"Why don't we start preparedness planning in terms of food security [and] climate change to prevent these problems from getting worse and to maintain a healthy climate?" he said.

Mr Aganwa said the area near the equator had been less affected and could be a good place to develop agriculture to sustain the rest of the country.

To donate to Anglican Overseas Aid and support their efforts in Kenya and South Sudan, see here: anglicanoverseasaid.org.au/donate-online/



*Jean Young prepares to abseil from a skyscraper at an Anglicare Victoria fundraiser.
Picture: Anglicare Victoria.*

Community, education efforts awarded

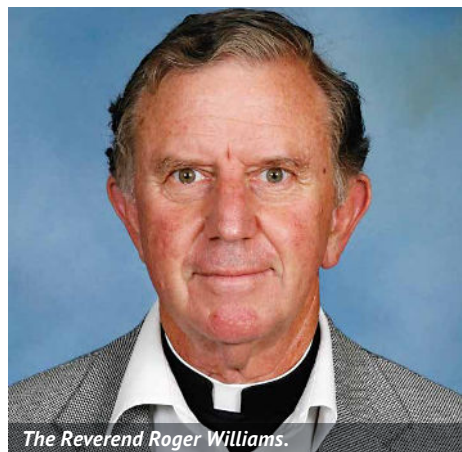
■ Jenan Taylor

A gastroenterologist, a school chaplain and a grandmother who helped start a homeless support organisation, were among Anglicans from the Diocese of Melbourne who were celebrated in the 2023 Australia Day Honours List.

School chaplain, the Reverend Roger Williams was posthumously honoured with a Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to secondary education, spanning 35 years.

Surf Coast parishioner Jean Young, and consultant physician in gastroenterology Dr Mark Stephens, were also OAM recipients.

The beneficiaries of Mr Williams' service included Melbourne Grammar, Sandringham Secondary College, and Mentone Grammar where he was chaplain from 1998 to 2014.



The Reverend Roger Williams.

"The Rev" as he was affectionately known by staff and students at Mentone Grammar taught Religious Education and English, and coached football, along with delivering pastoral care.

Mr Williams' work coordinating student trips to the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea from 1984 to 2019 was also mentioned on the citation.

Described as outstanding by Mentone Grammar, the journeys Mr Williams led were arranged to provide students with generous and lasting insights into the local culture, and of the service of the Australian Diggers in 1942.

Ms Young's citation highlighted her contributions to homelessness support service Outpost Geelong, her work with a local food donation group during the COVID crisis, and volunteer roles in Papua New Guinea, as well as with the Ladies Auxiliary, Torquay.

Her service to the community of the Surf Coast region also includes volunteering with St Luke's Grannies Group, and helping with the church's rosters and catering for more than 30 years.

She said the most valuable experience in her years of service was completing a counselling course with Lifeline Australia.

"You only have a telephone, only a voice to pick up where people are at. You can't see them, so there's no eye contact or anything, but that taught me a lot about

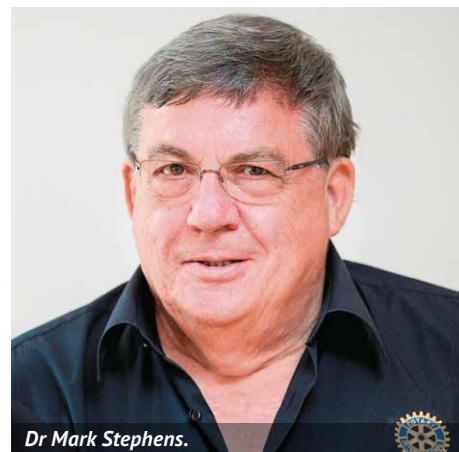
how to cope with many situations," Ms Young said.

Her fundraising efforts for Anglicare were also noted. They involved abseiling down the side of a building, a challenge she did two years in a row.

Dr Stephens was recognised for his services to the community through an array of professional and service organisations.

His citation mentioned his involvement with Rotary International and peak bodies such as the Australian Private Hospitals Association, and his role as the Diocese of Melbourne's COVID-19 compliance medical adviser.

A parishioner at St Stephen's Gardenvale, Dr Stephens' advocacy efforts for the introduction of day endoscopic services, helped reduce lengthy waiting times for procedures and shorten hospital stays.



Dr Mark Stephens.

'Being Christian in Iran, it's not a good thing'

■ **Maya Pilbrow**

The Reverend Leili Shirmast's faith has accompanied her through difficult times.

Mrs Shirmast, who was ordained as a deacon in February, credits God with giving her hope during some of her family's biggest struggles.

Mrs Shirmast and her husband Pedram arrived in Australia in 2019 after spending six years as refugees in Türkiye.

They had left their native Iran fearing religious persecution.

Mrs Shirmast grew up in a Muslim family in the Islamic Republic of Iran and first heard the gospel through her husband.

Iran is home to the world's strictest laws on blasphemy and apostasy, according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. Punishments can include the death penalty.

"If [the government] figure out that you've changed your religion, they will kill you. It's not safe at all," Mrs Shirmast said.

Mrs Shirmast and her family made the difficult decision to leave. She and her husband spent the next six years as refugees in Türkiye, a hard period where they had no idea about their future.

Mrs Shirmast said her faith helped guide



The Reverend Leili Shirmast was ordained a deacon in February.

Picture: supplied.

her during this time. She and her husband ministered to fellow Iranians and Farsi speakers in the refugee community – a church which was a blessing.

Since moving to Australia, Mrs Shirmast has worked to build a similar level of community with fellow Iranian Christians. At first, the culture shock in Australia was immense, but Mrs Shirmast said her calling to serve God was instrumental in her and her husband's efforts to build a new life.

"We were called to work with refugees, to work with people. And we really felt God guiding us and helping us," she said.

She and her husband first joined Emmanuel Iranian Church in Dandenong,

spending two years in the congregation.

When the time came to start their placements ahead of ordination, they moved to St Philip's Deep Creek.

Mrs Shirmast said the multicultural congregation at Deep Creek provided new opportunities to grow in her ministry.

She said the parish had been incredibly supportive and welcoming.

"The first day I went there, I felt I was in our church in Turkey. It was a very good feeling. I think God guided us to go to that church," she said.

Mrs Shirmast and her husband were set to begin as assistant curates at St Philip's after their ordinations.

'Where He wants us, that's where we'll go'

■ **Jenan Taylor**

Xiaoxi Lou has always loved helping people. She keeps an eye out for those who worry about what God wants, and particularly for Christians anxious that those closest to them are not believers.

The best way she can help people, she believes, is by helping them understand Jesus. And that's been on her mind since at least 2000.

Just 16 years old, Ms Lou found herself staring at a crucifix on the wall of her hospital ward and nursing a deep anger at the God it represented. Ms Lou wasn't a believer, she was recovering from major surgery to remove a brain tumour, and there was the cross. She recalls studying it and asking: "God, if you're really God, then heal me."

There were many hurdles after Ms Lou's discharge from hospital. She

had meningitis, needed a mobility walker, and her doctors warned she might need radiotherapy. They also said her hair would fall out, and she might never have children.

Then they did a follow-up scan, and declared the tumour gone.

"I thought I'd better go to church and find out about this Jesus guy," Ms Lou said.

She began attending Glen Waverley Anglican Church, and became the first Christian in her family. This created tension between Ms Lou and her father, economics visionary Professor Xiaokai Yang, who had no time for faith.

This was painful, but Ms Lou can see how the cracks created room for an awareness of faith to seep into the relationship. "God was using me in a way that I didn't recognise at the time," she said.

Things changed when Professor Yang was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2001.

He turned to Christ and was baptised.

When her dad died in 2004, Ms Lou was on a mission trip overseas and raced back to Melbourne to deliver the eulogy at his funeral. It was then she realised she was comfortable with both her Chinese and Australian cultures and started working with international students at GWAC. She qualified as a social worker and worked in hospitals before studying at Ridley College.

Now working at All Saints Clayton, Ms Lou and her husband were ordained deacons on 4 February. Ms Lou doesn't know yet if she will become a priest.

"I believe in leaving my options open," Ms Lou said. "I've assumed too many times that I know how things are going to go, and then I get diverted. So, I'm not about to make plans and assume that God will follow. Where He wants us, that's where we'll go."



A firm hope through challenges for new deacons

*The Reverends Candice Mitrousis, Samantha Lo, Weiyl Lou, Xiaoxi Lou and Rebecca Mading.
Picture: Janine Eastgate.*

■ Kirralee Nicolle

Newly-ordained deacons have been encouraged to rely on each other when challenges come their way.

Fifteen ordinands from churches across Melbourne braved the wet weather to be ordained as deacons at St Paul's Cathedral, surrounded by family, friends and fellow parishioners.

Parish of Flinders with Balnarring deacon the Reverend Christine Barren delivered the sermon, urging the ordinands to prioritise serving others as God serves.

"Each day we are to seek God revealed as the great I am; God revealed as the serving human Jesus and God as the Holy Spirit who has the potential to blow through our lives in life changing ways," Ms Barren said.

Ms Barren told the ordinands that rather than expecting privileges, they should expect challenges to come.

"History certainly is filled with stories of those who believed that they were entitled to be given the best seat at the table, but Jesus made it very clear to his disciples that this was not his way," she said.

"There may well be times when our ministry is ridiculed by the wider community

in which we live; we may fear that our ministry appears irrelevant to many we would seek to serve. It is then that each one of us must have the courage to reach out to another in the nighttime of our fear."

Ms Barren concluded with the encouragement that God would be present in the deacons' ministry.

"On this journey together, I have no doubt that God will be there at the centre of all that we do," she said.

New deacon the Reverend Pedram Shirmast said it was a miracle to be able to be ordained together with wife the Reverend Leili Shirmast.

"It's a very rare and a very strange thing to happen that God's called both of us," he said. "I really praise the Lord for this opportunity that he gave us to be ordained as a family."

Mr Shirmast said the pair were excited to continue ministering to the Farsi community at Deep Creek Anglican Church, and planned to begin a church in Doncaster East for Farsi-speaking and Afghan refugees who were in vulnerable settings.

St Vincent's Hospital pastoral care coordinator the Reverend Samantha Lo was ordained with the stole belonging to the

late Reverend Dr Brian Porter, a Melbourne Anglican priest, author and academic who died on 29 October 2022.

The stole was first worn by Dr Porter at his ordination to the diaconate in 1968 at St Paul's Cathedral. Ms Lo had cared for Dr Porter as chaplain at Karana Baptist Community nursing home until his death.

Dr Porter's wife Dr Muriel Porter said it was very emotional for her to see the stole which had adorned her late husband's coffin be worn by Ms Lo.

"It's a wonderful, wonderful celebration," she said. "It's his ministry living on."

The service was presided over by the Right Reverend Dr Bradly Billings, Assistant Bishop.

The deacons ordained were: the Reverend Tereza Audo, the Reverend Yzeh (Joey) Chan, the Reverend Tim Collison, the Reverend Aaron Ghiloni, the Reverend Zhitao (Hertz) He, the Reverend Amanda Lincke, the Reverend Samantha Lo, the Reverend Weiyl Lou, the Reverend Xiaoxi Lou, the Reverend Rebecca Mading, the Reverend Johnny Maryoe, the Reverend Monica Matoc, the Reverend Candice Mitrousis, the Reverend Leili Shirmast, and the Reverend Pedram Shirmast.

Referendum an opportunity for right

I write in support of the Reverend Canon Glenn Loughrey's call for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

In 1985 I was living in Germany, 40 years after the end of World War II. In the public discussion the full range of opinions and human emotions was on display: was it a defeat or a liberation? Or both?

Bernhard Schlink has written about how guilt can burden descendants, even to the third and fourth generations: "Insofar as they choose an identity saturated by history or one that other people assign to them, they stand in a certain sort of solidarity with past generations and will have to come to terms with their guilty past, either by acceptance or dissociation."

We non-Indigenous Australians also have an identity saturated by history, and a guilt by association. A Voice to Parliament will open a long overdue conversation and may just be the first step towards assigning this burden of the past to where it belongs.

Mr Loughrey is correct in seeing the invitation held out to us as a "creative healing process that lays the foundations for a future Australia, more mature, robust, and whole than ever before – the type of Australia

we wish to live in." The Referendum on the principle of a Voice to Parliament (Parliament itself should be free to sort out the details in a way that can evolve with the times) is an historic opportunity we cannot afford to get wrong. That's why I'll be voting yes.

Duncan Reid
Flemington, VIC

Benefits of AI a lost opportunity for humanity

We shouldn't approach artificial intelligence with excitement, but with caution and suspicion.

AI might be able to handle the time-consuming tasks that users are too busy to do themselves.

But rather than ease the burden of labour, AI might increase the relentless productivity expectations of modern workplaces.

If we demand so much of each other that we cannot keep up without the assistance of AI, then we must demand less.

AI cannot create something original. It can only ape the work of real human creativity and, importantly, it will never give credit to those whose creations it has taken. Every time we hand off a task for AI to

complete, be it writing, art, or music, we lose the chance to learn and grow through our own creativity. The benefits of AI will never outweigh that lost opportunity for growth.

If AI is allowed to become a part of how we work in the Church, it will strip the humanity from ministry, and create doubt that any sermon or article was actually written by a real person. Nobody wants to hear what Microsoft Clippy has to say about the gospel.

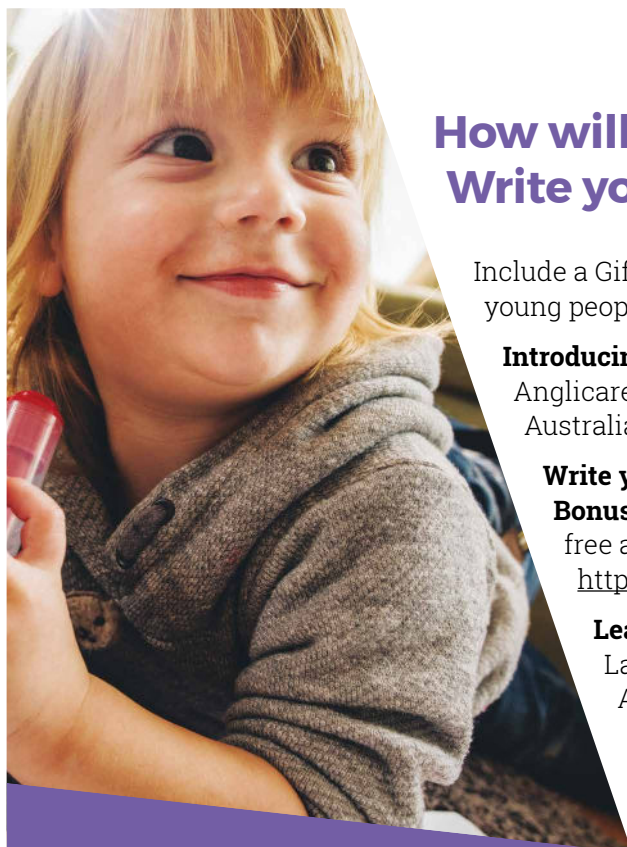
To quote the legendary animator Hayao Miyazaki when presented with AI generated art: "this is an insult to life itself ...

We humans are losing faith in ourselves."

Joel McFadyen
Melbourne, VIC

THE Melbourne Anglican

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**BETTER
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AI poses many challenges. The Church can help society grapple with these

■ Professor Neil Dodgson

Artificial intelligence has been around since the 1940s but only in the last decade has it taken off, with the development of deep neural network techniques inspired by the structure of the human brain.

Today, artificial intelligence is used to diagnose cancer, recognise speech, and identify people in a crowd.

The latest development is ChatGPT, an AI system that can interact in natural language with a phenomenal knowledge of a wide range of topics. In the next decade AI will develop to do so much more.

This leads to two interesting intersections with the Christian worldview. One is the philosophical: can a computer think, and can it have personhood?

The other is the practical: what is the Christian response to the changes and challenges that artificial intelligence will bring to society?

What would it mean if a computer could think?

GK Chesterton wrote, in 1910, “A machine only is a machine because it cannot think.” If a machine could think, it would become something more than a machine. Would we humans be willing to ascribe personhood to something non-human that demonstrated it could think?

How do we think about personhood?

Theologians have argued for centuries about whether animals are sentient, have souls, have intrinsic rights. We must now consider the same arguments applied to machines.

Think about how you determine that a *human* is intrinsically valuable.

A baby is unable to do much, but we accept a baby as valuable because we see potential. Someone with dementia is unable to do much, but we accept them as worthy of dignity because of their personhood.

These beliefs are social constructs embedded deep in our shared value system as a community.

What would it mean to accept a non-human intelligence into our community? What would it take to be convinced that a non-human entity had real intelligence?

As things stand, there is no artificial intelligence system that shows the range of behaviour of a rational human adult.

Yes, we do have artificial intelligence



Professor Neil Dodgson.

“Centuries of debate have left us well placed to think about what it means to have personhood.”

Neil Dodgson

systems that excel at certain limited behaviours, but they are simply extraordinarily complex automata doing what they are programmed to.

None has yet shown artificial general intelligence, which is the ability to apply intelligence across a massive range of things and to handle novel, unseen situations.

AGI is a goal that some think we will never reach. Renowned computer scientist, Edsger Dijkstra put the argument pithily in 1984, when he said: “Asking if a computer can think is like asking if a submarine can swim.” We honestly do not know if AGI is achievable.

If not, then that indicates that there is something special about humans. There is something about our brains and our being that is more than the sum of the 100,000,000,000 neurons in our heads.

If AGI is achievable, it raises questions about sentience and personhood.

We humans understand the limitations of being human and what we can reasonably expect another human to be able to do. But we do not know how an AGI would behave.

We raise humans in community to conform to the rules, laws, and customs of that community. This is how society survives across generations.

Will we need to “raise” AGIs in community? What if an AGI has very different values to us? How, indeed, do you instil values in a computer? And whose values? Those are questions to ponder now, before we develop an AGI.

But there is a more pressing question: what do we do about the existing artificial intelligence systems? They are not AGIs, they are not sentient, they are just tools. But they are powerful tools that can be used to control people’s behaviour.

We have seen this with social media. AI algorithms direct what users read and watch, which has had the effect of polarising civil society.

We have seen this with surveillance, where certain governments are experimenting with ways of tracking people’s behaviour, with automated rewards and automated punishments.

We can imagine using AI for good, providing each schoolchild with personally tailored education, to maximise the potential of our youth. We already use AI to diagnose certain diseases with greater accuracy than human physicians.

There are both negative and positive uses.

The Church has always tended to be reactionary to new developments. Our traditional response would be to call for a ban. That is not plausible.

We have an opportunity to take the initiative, to work with our communities, to decide how to think about and respond to these new technologies as they develop.

Why the Church?

Centuries of debate have left us well placed to think about what it means to have personhood.

A faith rooted in community has left us well placed to think about how we respond as a community to the challenges.

We are used to grappling with these ideas. We, the Church, can add value to the conversation.

Professor Neil Dodgson is Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research and Professor of Computer Graphics at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Organ music can be a powerful means of

■ Maya Pilbrow

These days Daniel Brace is the organist and music director for St Oswald’s, Glen Iris, but he didn’t grow up listening to the music he now plays.

As a young man he was a gifted musician, but his knowledge of church music was limited to a vague understanding of the church’s role in the history of the Western classical canon.

Everything changed when he was in his late teens. He went into a church, the organ was playing, it amazed him.

“It blew my mind to hear that music in the environment for which it was written,” Mr Brace said.

He began learning to play the organ shortly after.

For many organists, their instrument is awe-inspiring.

But the organ’s volume, both in terms of decibels and sheer size, poses challenges for churches and musicians alike.

These challenges mean many churches with organs struggle to find someone to play their organ, while other organs across the country lie in disrepair.

St Mary’s North Melbourne music director and organist Beverley Phillips said the organ was capable of things that no other instrument could match.

“You’ve got this wonderful colour palette to work with, that you cannot do on any other keyboard,” she said.

Ms Phillips said the organ’s versatility in texture and tone was especially important for liturgical purposes.

She said different forms of church music,



such as hymns and mass settings, required different types of accompaniment.


Ms Phillips said it could at times be difficult to get the whole congregation to sing along during services, but that the full sound of the organ helped bring people together.

“You can gradually build it up and create

a sense of excitement and take everybody along with you,” she said.

The Very Reverend Keren Terpstra said church music had the capacity to connect people to God’s presence, transcending the physical, and the rational.

Ms Terpstra, who is Dean of the Cathedral Parish of Sale and an acclaimed composer



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worship, but organists need support



Beverley Phillips says aspiring organists need more options for learning and training.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

and organist, said the organ was a useful tool for connecting young people to worship.

"I've watched as organists have performed and young people have stood there with their mouths open. The organ can be such a powerful instrument," she said.

Ms Terpstra said this versatility came from the organ's many pipes and stops.

When used, the stops block airflow to sets of pipes, producing different sounds. This allows organs to have the range of a full orchestra, with stops that can mimic the effects of stringed, brass and reed instruments.

Ms Terpstra said every organ was unique, and that organists had to spend time familiarising themselves with the quirks of their instruments.

Organ Music Society of Victoria treasurer and membership secretary Stephen Baldwin said the intricacies of organs meant they could be costly to maintain and difficult to repair. Mr Baldwin, who plays the organ at Christ Church, Brunswick, said that properly maintained pipe organs were less expensive to repair, but that there was very little funding available for caretaking of historical instruments.

The Organ Historical Trust of Australia keeps records of organs across the country, many of which are in disrepair or damaged, including Hamer Hall's organ, which was removed for renovation in 2011 and is yet to be restored.

In addition to the costs associated with maintaining these instruments, Mr Baldwin said there was a dearth of organists, meaning that many churches had organs but no one to play them.

The OMSV works to find organists to fill vacancies in parishes, but Mr Baldwin said more could be done to facilitate these connections.

Royal School of Church Music Victorian branch chairperson Tony Way said the current lack of organists was due to changes in education.

"In terms of actually training church musicians at the tertiary level, there's not quite the same resources as there were back in the last century," Mr Way said.

The Australian Catholic University used to offer courses in church music, according to Mr Way and Ms Phillips.

Ms Phillips recalled how she had initially enrolled in the bachelor of church music at ACU before the course was renamed to a Bachelor of Music before she graduated.

"[These days] it is almost impossible to find a course that would give you the opportunity to really study well as an organist," she said.

She said that church music required not only technical skill but also liturgical knowledge.

She said her own responsibilities included training herself and others vocally, understanding choral and organ repertoire, as well as knowing how to improvise musically and teach others.

For Mr Brace, who did not come from a church background, the vast skillset required to play the organ during services made his first few Sundays overwhelming.

Since then, he said he had grown accustomed to the traditions and rituals of church music and now relishes the opportunities he gets to bring music to others.

"I'm in a place where people value and love music," he said.

As to the challenges facing parishes and organ enthusiasts alike, Mr Brace said he felt optimistic.

"I'm hopeful that we organists will muddle our way through. Music is part of that, it binds people together," he said.

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On divisive issues, we should heed Paul's advice on meat and vegetables

■ Fergus King

Should Christians maintain unity in the face of serious ethical dilemmas? This is a question which bedevils our modern denominational and ecumenical life. Sometimes we find it so much easier to talk to Christians from another tradition rather than our own. And this is not a new phenomenon. Within the 20th century, discussions over the correct ethical, pastoral, and doctrinal issues such as contraception, divorce, and the ordination of women have all been cited as the issue which will finally split the church. Today, human sexuality is invested with the same fear or excitement – let us be honest, reactions to the prospect are divided.

Yet, contentious issues are nothing new. Equally, advice on what to do in such situations may be just as ancient. So, what might the ancients have to tell the moderns? It seems that a strategy may lie tucked away inside that most robust of early Christian documents: Paul's letter to the Romans – a community which seems ripe to split when Paul writes to them.

Their contentious issue is one to which we give hardly any thought, but which was hugely divisive in antiquity: food. The issue

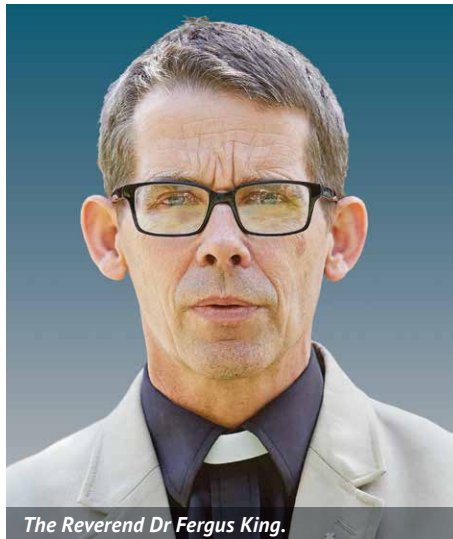
“We might do better to look to that shared confession of Jesus as Lord as a reason to maintain unity when we disagree strongly on other matters.”

Fergus King

is described in Romans 14, in the section of the letter from chapters 12 to 16 where Paul gives the Romans advice on how to live well, after spelling out his understanding of the gospel in Romans 1-11. The issue to the forefront in Romans 14 is what is the right diet for Christians. It has seen the congregation demarcated by two groups: the “weak” and the “strong”. The “weak” apparently eat only vegetables. The factions seem to have turned the debate into a contest about who is the real believer. This is often a useful exercise for us to direct to ourselves when spiritual pride comes knocking.

Food and related questions were a

hugely complicated business for the first Christians. What to eat, where, when, and with whom? For some, it marked one of the major fault lines in emerging Christianity – not necessarily between Jew and non-Jew, but about how much of Jewish tradition one needed to uphold to be a real Christian. These often manifested themselves in discussions about keeping Jewish food laws (such as in Galatians 2:11-15 and Mark 7:14-23), made more fraught by the fact that Jesus himself had set no clear precedent. It was Mark, not Jesus, who stated, “Thus he declared all foods clean” (Mark 7:20), presumably in the hopes of resolving the matter. A simple dominical word would have nipped any controversy in the bud. For others, the question was about which foods associated with Graeco-Roman religious life one might safely eat (see 1 Corinthians 8:1-14, 10:14-23): foods eaten in temples, foods recognisably associated with a particular cult, or foods from an unidentified source? Paul's answers in order are: NO, NO, and YES. Either way, food was as complicated then as those other contentious issues are today. Paul is aware that the matter is so fraught that it can divide the community. This he does not want, so he sets out his views



The Reverend Dr Fergus King.

“What we find in Romans is Paul effectively saying that an item deemed to be highly contentious should not in itself be grounds for a split within the community of the church.”

Fergus King

about food, and demands that a different perspective be adopted.

He starts by recognising that all humanity, Jew and Greek alike, has fallen short of God (Romans 1-3): everyone is in a mess. He then describes in Romans 4-10 the response that needs to be made to God. Not keeping the Law (or laws), but faith. By faith Paul means a behaviour which embraces three elements: understanding God as revealed in Jesus, trusting God, and being loyal to God: head, heart, and loyalty. The stuff of faith is found in the story of Jesus, and it gives the essentials of living well:

... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart, leading to righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, leading to salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

This is the hallmark of the Christian. If the Romans have wanted to make food the “make or break” issue, Paul has given a definitive “no”.

What, then happens to the food issue? First, Paul has relegated its importance

in comparison to faith in Jesus. But he then shows its lesser importance by using arguments familiar to his audience. He has already recognised that they may approach such matters either from the perspectives afforded by Judaism, or Graeco-Romanitas, or a mixture of the two. So, he provides an argument from each to downgrade the significance of food as compared to the confession of Jesus as Lord.

From the Greeks and the Romans, he borrows an ethical category known as the *adiaphora*. Actions may be morally beneficial (good), harmful (bad), or indifferent (neutral). These last are the *adiaphora*. Instead of treating food as good or bad, he says that food is one of them. While he does not use the term itself, the flow of his argument is clear: eating or not eating is a matter of indifference since both may give honour to God (Romans 14: 5-6). To further use the ancient category: either choice may be a preferred action, but neither is ultimately good or bad. So, it's not worth fighting over.

The second argument is perhaps more unexpected. Modern readers often assume that Jewish law was very clear on what should be done, or not. We tend to assume they were based on absolutes. But this was

not so for all. We assume that if something was declared unclean (*akathartos*), it was always unclean. But there was a second category, “common” (*koinos*), which we might call “grey areas”. We can recognise this reality from some of the recorded arguments between Jesus and his opponents in the gospels: there are times when it is right to do actions on the Sabbath which would usually be considered prohibited (for instance, Luke 14:5). And we do well to remember Ed P. Sanders’ assessment in *Jesus and Judaism* that Jesus hardly ever broke the Law itself, but frequently disputed what constituted a breach in different interpretations.

But Judaism of the time knew different ways of interpreting the Law. One of the most famous teachers of the Law, Hillel, thought items and acts were pure or impure not as absolutes, but because of the agent’s intention. Crudely, “If you think it is impure, it is impure for you, but not for all”. Interestingly, potential connections between Hillel and Paul are found in Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; see also Acts 23:6; 26:5): a Pharisee identified as Hillel’s grandson and Paul’s teacher. Paul is likely to have stood within this legal tradition. Again, the effect is the same as for the *adiaphora*: the contentious issue is relegated in importance – well below the confession of Jesus as Lord.

So, what we find in Romans is Paul effectively saying that an item deemed to be highly contentious should not in itself be grounds for a split within the community of the church.

After all that, it must be admitted that we do not know whether the Romans followed Paul’s advice or not. However, its preservation within the Scriptures which we all deem formative of our Christian behaviour suggest that his words are still worthy of our consideration when we run up against issues which threaten to fracture our community life. We might do better to look to that shared confession of Jesus as Lord as a reason to maintain unity when we disagree strongly on other matters. And we might ask, irrespective of what the Roman Christians did, whether we should heed Paul’s advice.

The Reverend Dr Fergus King is Farnham Maynard Lecturer in Ministry Education and director of the Ministry Education Centre, Trinity College Theological School.

This is a summary of the *Brighton Covenant of Churches’ Founders’ Lecture 2022*, held at St Stephen’s Greenvale, available online at: vimeo.com/764760436. A fuller version will be published in *Many Believed because of her Testimony: Essays celebrating the Scholarship and Service of Dorothy Lee*, ed. Robert Derrenbacher, Christopher A. Porter, and Muriel Porter (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, forthcoming).

A passion for Jesus and for science drives Karen Hale's work

"Integrating science and faith in the workplace" was the theme of a panel discussion featuring established scientists and science educators who are also practising Christians at a recent ISCAST conference.

ISCAST fellow and Dean of the Melbourne Business School, Dr Ian Harper, facilitated the panel and Q&A.

Here ISCAST board member and fellow Karen Hale, who teaches science and religious education at Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar, shared her experiences.

IAN: Karen, on this theme of integrating faith and science in the workplace, over to you.

KAREN: In high school, I loved the precision of maths and was fascinated by science, and I also became a Christian at a camp in year seven. I was very fortunate that my faith in Jesus grew at the same time as my love for science. I never saw any problem having the two together; it was just who I was. I loved science, and I was a committed Christian. I got into science at Sydney University, an exciting place to be.

When I finished my science degree, my local church asked me if I would be their youth worker. It surprised my parents that I decided to take on that position! They

didn't quite see the connection between finishing a science degree and then working full-time in ministry, but it didn't seem to be too much of a stretch to me. After a while, I decided I did want to continue pursuing science, and it became clear through the youth work that teaching was also a passion. So, I took a science teaching course and started teaching science, which was fantastic.

I also did a certificate course in biblical studies, because it seemed natural to me that if I was developing my science, then I needed to grow in understanding my Christian faith too. I had a small break from teaching when I had children, and finished a Bachelor of Ministry over eight years.

Upon re-entering the workforce, I wanted to combine my two passions. I was offered a position at a school teaching science and religious education, an amazing combination!

Students often ask, "How can you teach Christian studies and be a science teacher?" This is an issue for our young people – they see a big divide. My presence in school is a bit of an affront to that. It gives me an opportunity to talk about my passion for science – they know I'm passionate about it – but they also know I'm passionate about Jesus. Science has much to offer, but our understanding of who we are, what's important in life, meaning in life – these are equally as important, and as I tell them,



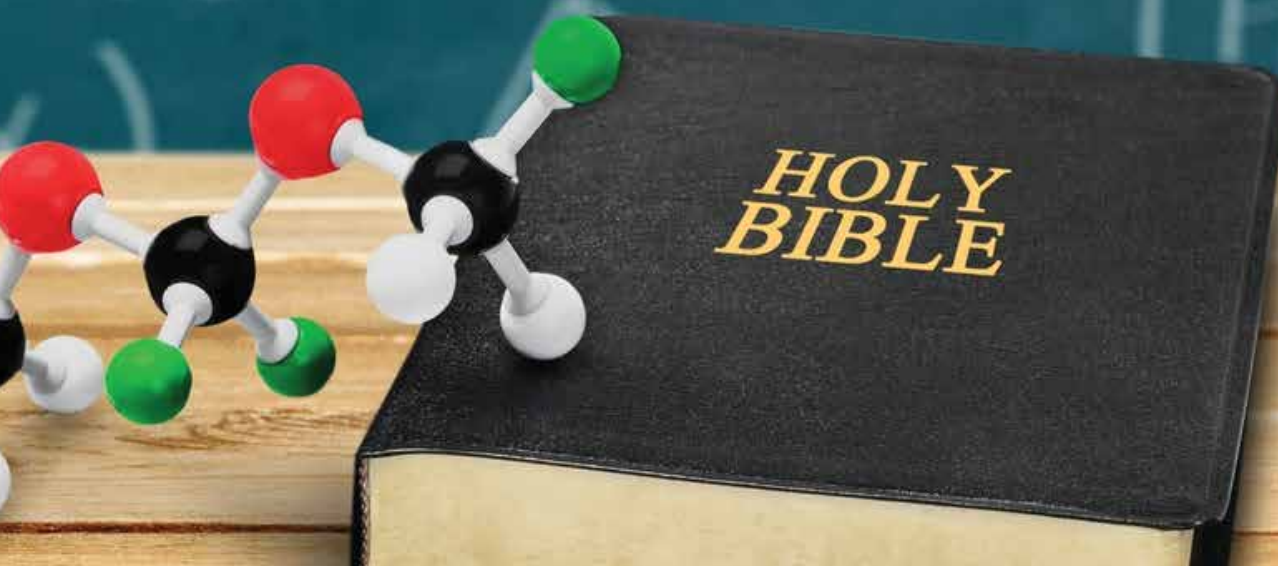
Karen Hale.

"Our understanding of who we are, what's important in life, meaning in life ... science cannot answer those questions."

Karen Hale

science cannot answer those questions.

Just as I shouldn't ask my theological friends the precise mechanisms of how the universe got here, we need to be careful



Picture: iStock.

that we ask the right questions of the right people. I find staff and students are very keen to engage with me, because it is who I am, and I feel a great sense of being part of the science-faith debate.

Over the years, I've learnt to be much more curious about what other people believe and why, and I've learnt the need to be gracious in my conversations with students and staff who believe very different things to me. As they say, you can win an argument but lose the debate. I don't need to be apologetic about being a Christian and a scientist, but I also don't need to be arrogant or disrespectful to other people, either. So, the way I engage with people is super-important ... because people carefully observe our lives.

Many people have been turned off by religion and there may be good reasons for that. But I try and turn people back towards Jesus. It is wise not to judge everything by the way Christians have behaved. It's better to go back and look at the person of Jesus.

IAN: Questions have come in from the audience. Here's one: "In academic or other work environments, have you been able to effectively share the gospel with colleagues?"

KAREN: My work staff environment is very easy because they're other adults that I can share things when they ask me

questions. As a teacher, though, I do need to take great care in the way I engage with students. I've heard that things I've said in the past have made an impression on students. Even if we don't realise it at the time, those small conversations can have an impact down the track, so let's not underestimate their power. Pray for people you work with, and ask for opportunities, but don't see it as a win just because you shared the Gospel in some overt way; it can often happen in very subtle ways.

"I would encourage us to think about the way Jesus interacted with all sorts of different people."

Karen Hale

IAN: Here's another question: "Should Christians proactively disclose what some see as controversial beliefs?" How open are we about our beliefs on, for example, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, etc., that we know are very contrary to the spirit of the times?

KAREN: As a teacher, I need to be particularly careful about the way I answer questions. Looking at the gospels, did Jesus use inflammatory, judgemental language?

[He might have used] harsh language mainly against the Pharisees. When he was talking with ordinary people, he was not like that. So, our answers may need to be tailored for different people. Wisdom is needed, and context matters. I would encourage us to think about the way Jesus interacted with all sorts of different people. He did not use inflammatory language, and to pro-actively display Christian beliefs that are controversial to the spirit of the times, could be inflammatory.

IAN: Finally: "What advice would you give Christian leaders facing a situation where all options available are bad or very disappointing at best? What should we do when the choice is difficult?"

KAREN: If we have to make a bad decision amongst bad decisions, we should be honest with those around us and say, "This is not great; I acknowledge this is not great." We live in a broken, messy world, and people know that; I think it's better if we're honest about it.

IAN: I'm sure your reflections can encourage our own journeys through work. Thank you, Karen.

This is the first in a series with established Christian scientists and science educators. Further conversations, with younger Christian scientists, can be found at bit.ly/ISCAST-TMA.

Memoir reveals Cave's metamorphosis

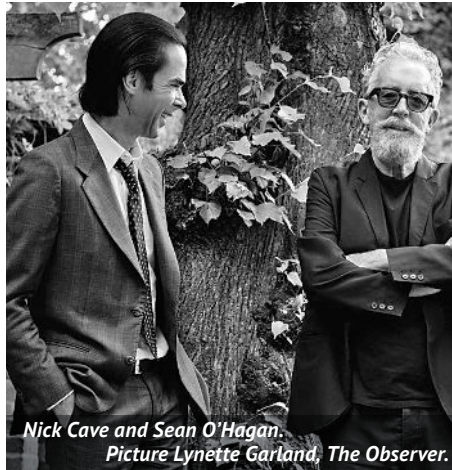
■ Bruce Everett

Nick Cave and Sean O'Hagan, Faith, Hope And Carnage (Melbourne: Text Publishing 2022).

Nick Cave, ex-pat Melbourne musician and *enfant terrible*, has matured and mellowed. Written during COVID lockdown, this book curates 40 hours of conversation with journalist, Sean O'Hagan, about life and death, the sacred and the secular. For Cave, this book is a live conversation rather than a memoir, and O'Hagan skillfully draws out, not only a thoughtful Cave, but also a humble and vulnerable father, son, and husband.

This is a profoundly religious book, and Cave suggests to O'Hagan that "it could be that you need to view my work, my relation to the world, and, indeed, my position on things within a religious frame, or it all may not really make sense." He articulates his faith, and his hope for the world, from his increasingly Christian perspective. For Cave, being open to the divine as the source of creativity and a source of connection to others is paramount. His songs "behave as though God exists ... and that being alive is of some consequence. That we are of some spiritual value."

While Cave acknowledges the mystery



Nick Cave and Sean O'Hagan.
Picture Lynette Garland, *The Observer*.

of God, as well as his own doubt and unknowing, his description of surrendering to the creative process and glimpsing God is as well articulated as any experience of the mystic writers. Where words fail to describe the ascendant prayer nature of some of his music, he refers the reader directly to his songs, including from his recent *Skeleton Tree*, *Ghosteen* and *Carnage* albums – one written as "a grieving zombie ... throbbing with pain and darkness and confusion" after the death of his son, Arthur, and the latter written as Cave experienced the COVID pandemic as "something fractured and smashed apart."

In conversation, he openly shares the

transformation which his family grief has wrought in him. "When it happened, it just seemed like I had entered a place of acute disorder – a chaos which was also a kind of incapacitation. It's not so much that I had to learn how to write a song again; it was more I had to learn how to pick up a pen." Then: "ultimately, it opened up all kinds of possibilities and a strange reckless power came out of us. It was as if the worst had happened and nothing could hurt us, and all our ordinary concerns were little more than indulgences."

Cave, despite or because of the losses, appears more mature and mellow, more resolved, more comfortable with his religion. As he says, unlike secularism, which attempts to "find meaning in places where it is ultimately unsustainable – in politics, identity and so on ... religion, at its best, can serve [to help] people feel more attached to each other and the world ... it deals with the necessity for forgiveness and mercy, whereas I don't think that secularism has found the language to address these matters." His faith and hope inspire his work and help to offset the carnage of the world and in his life.

The Reverend Bruce Everett is a deacon in the Diocese of Melbourne.

A valuable guide through the fraught process of hiring

■ Paul Arnott

Peter Corney and Ken Byrne, Hire Right, First Time: A Practical Guide for Staffing Christian Organisations (Melbourne: Arrow Leadership, 2023).

Reading this book, I was reminded how many things I could have done better when hiring staff. While I am among those who wrote a commendation for this book, I will do my best to review it fairly.

Hiring staff is one of the most difficult things any organisation can do. There are many pitfalls, as Corney and Byrne point out, not the least of which is that you don't know who you've got until you've had them for six months.

By then the probationary period is over and if you've made a mistake, it's too late, which is why it's so important to do all you can to get it right in the first place.

There's an added layer of complication for faith-based organisations.

The book's title suggests the process is

potentially even more fraught, because of the values of Christian organisations.

As Corney and Byrne point out such organisations are by their nature tolerant: "The wish to extend God's grace in Word and Deed is a deeply held value of the Gospel that can overshadow a hiring agency's obligations to their existing clients and staff. The desire to do good can lead us to be short-sighted in assessing the risk that goes with a poor hiring choice."

But the first chapter unpacks the many pitfalls of hiring them. Chapter 2 highlights the importance of writing a position description, which spells out what the job is designed to achieve. The book lives up to its claim to be a *guide* for staffing, as each chapter concludes with extremely practical, common-sense checklists to ensure the ground has been fully covered.

Chapter 3 details how to create what it calls "a compelling attraction strategy." It isn't enough to write a great position description, but also an ad that attracts people to the role.

One of the book's most valuable ideas is contained in chapter 4 – the importance of a structured selection system. The system is a well-thought-out, clearly defined process that all applicants must complete.

Chapters 5 and 7 highlight the importance of the interview, especially the role of really listening. Chapter 6 explains how to discover the beliefs and values of the candidate. Chapter 8 details how to do reference checks well and suggests they are often done poorly. Chapter 9 highlights the crucial importance of intuition in the hiring process. Chapter 10 explains how to make the final decision.

The next two chapters detail how to keep your best staff and how to dismiss staff. The final chapter reveals how to detect candidates that have a history of child abuse. Another rich resource is a comprehensive, free, downloadable User Guide. *Hire Right, First Time* is a potential goldmine for Christian organisations when hiring staff, indeed for any organisation seeking to hire right the first time.

A multicultural church: Jim's legacy

■ Dave Fuller

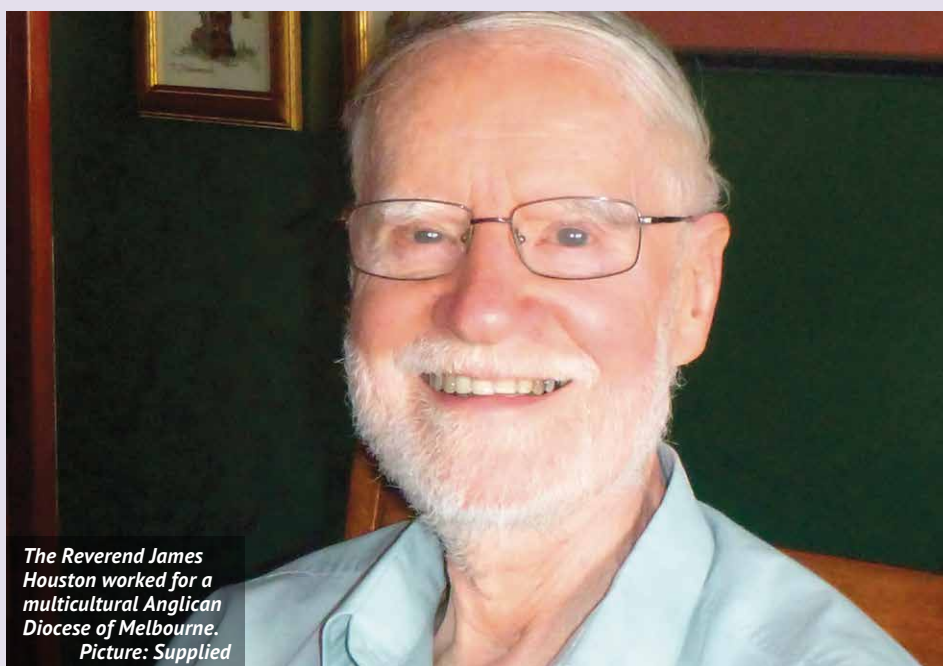
*The Reverend James Houston OAM,
19 November 1932 – 27 December 2022.*

Jim and Marjorie Houston were part of the Anglican Parish of Greensborough in the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne for my entire incumbency, from mid-2012 to early 2021.

I had the joy of working with them and observed their hearts and commitments, up close and personal. Although retired from paid working roles, their passion for the gospel, social justice, mission to the poor and encouraging multicultural engagement were hallmarks of their combined ministries.

During that time Jim had his long-awaited memoir published, *A Multi-Cultural Odyssey: A memoir (almost) sans Regrets*, which was later launched by Dr Philip Freier, Archbishop of Melbourne during the Diocesan Synod in October 2018. I had the delight of reading his memoir and later writing a book review for *Equip Magazine*, part of the Ethos stable of publications. While I was aware of some features of Jim's remarkable life, his book awakened me to so much more!

It was his contribution to the multicultural vision of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne which I will focus on. When he began to articulate this vision, the Anglican church of Melbourne did not reflect the ethnic diversity and demography of one of the most multicultural cities in Australia. In fact, quite the contrary, it was fundamentally white and Anglo-centric in flavour and outlook. When Jim was ordained to serve as an Anglican Priest at the age of 56 years, he and Marjorie were sent by Archbishop David Penman to one of the poorest and most multicultural suburbs of Melbourne,



*The Reverend James Houston worked for a multicultural Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.
Picture: Supplied*

the parish of Dallas, where they served for seven years.

Archbishop Keith Rainer, who succeeded David Penman then appointed Jim to the role of director of Cross-Cultural Ministry in 1993 to examine the progress of the Anglican Diocese with respect to multicultural ministry. He worked full time in this part time position for three years. What came out of that time was a comprehensive report titled, *Seeds blowing in the wind: A review of multi-cultural ministry and mission*. He concluded that the diocese had a long way to go but progress could and would indeed be made.

By 2016, Melbourne's original five non-Anglo congregations would grow to 40, drawn from 20 ethnic groups and linking some 3000 worshippers.

Jim was thrilled to see these developments and lived long enough to see his vision unfolding. Over the past 10 years, at the annual ordination services, at least

40 per cent of the candidates have been from non-English speaking backgrounds. Melbourne now has 47 non-Anglo parishes, some of which are the most dynamic and vibrant in our city. At my own local monthly deanery meeting, there are priests now from Karen State in Burma, South Sudan, China, Sri Lanka and Polynesia.

Jim was also part of a small team in the Greensborough church which led the parish on a Journey of Reconciliation with the few Wurundjeri people still living in the area, on whose land the church was built. This led ultimately to a Service of Repentance and Restitution, and an ongoing financial commitment to a surviving Wurundjeri elder.

Thank you, Jim and Marjorie, for one of the most fruitful and dynamic partnerships, I have ever observed in my 36 years of full time Christian ministry.

The Reverend Dave Fuller is vicar of the Anglican Parish of Yarraville.



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Our mission: To reach our neighbours

■ Jon Tran

The phrase “Being before doing” reverberated in my heart and mind for days after I first heard it.

It was early 2019 and my wife and I were trying to discern what God wanted us to do next.

I am Vietnamese and my wife is Filipino. Hospitality and community are high on our family's cultural values.

We sensed a call to step out of our church context and into something that would be effective in reaching our neighbours with the Gospel of Jesus.

“Who has God made us to be?” became a question that we sat with for a long time.

It was also a question that was fundamental to the practise of the missional communities within the Soma Australia network that we became a part of.

In the network, we define missional communities as “families of disciples on mission.”

Core to this definition are three identity statements: God has made us family, God has made us disciples, God has sent us as missionaries into everyday life.

What makes missional communities unique is their commitment to working out what each of these identities look like in everyday life in their context.

God has adopted us as his children in Christ, and so we deliberately choose to be involved in each other's lives.

We show through our practical help and faithful presence that God has made us to be a spiritual family.

We share our joys and burdens, loving one another through life's ups and downs.

Since God has made us to be disciples of Jesus, we learn to apply the truth of the Gospel in our lives.

We integrate engagement with scripture, prayer, worship and Sabbath into our shared rhythms.

We seek to be obedient to Christ and to spur one another on to deeper joy and Christlikeness.

And since God has sent us into the world as missionaries, we seek to bear witness to Christ in all we say and do.

Together missional community members discern where God is already at work in their context, where He would send them as ambassadors, and how God is leading them to demonstrate and declare the gospel of Jesus collectively.

This involves a core group of six to eight committed members aligning their lives for the sake of forming another missional community.

They work out a rhythm of gathering to care for one another as family, to grow

in their discipleship to Jesus and to be on mission to those whom God is sending them to love and serve.

In 2022, members of the missional community I serve met every Thursday night and shared a meal.

Every fortnight we studied Scripture and prayed together. Once a month, we broke into small groups of three to four people to share more deeply and discern what God was doing in each of our lives.

We alternated that with an open board games night where we sought to show friends and neighbours the welcome of Christ and build relationships of fun and generosity.

On Sundays we all gathered to worship alongside the other missional groups that make up Inner West Church.

Missional communities make space for the stranger, the sceptic, the seeker and the devout follower of Christ.

They cannot do everything, nor should they. A missional community isn't a church, though it may well grow into one.

The gold lies not so much in what a missional community does, but in how its members live together, bear witness to the God who has made them to be His family, His disciples and His missionaries.

Jon Tran is the associate pastor at Inner West Church.



Picture: iStock

Has science disproved religion?



Picture: iStock

■ Chris Mulherin

My friend at uni says science has disproved religion ... are they right?

The short answer to that question is, “No, your friend is not right.”

Why? Because science is limited to investigating the natural world. That means that science cannot answer questions about what might lie outside of the natural world. Like God, for instance.

The longer answer involves teasing out what we mean by science and what we mean by religion. And, if we do that, we see that they don’t conflict with one another. So, let’s clarify the terms.

Religion is very broad and can be a vague concept. So, let’s talk more specifically about Christianity; it claims that there is a God who is creator of the whole universe, who made humans with a purpose, and who came to earth in Jesus Christ around 2000 years ago.

And when it comes to science, let’s assume that we are talking of sciences like physics or chemistry or biology that investigate nature and life on earth.

Perhaps the easiest way of understanding the harmony between these sciences and a religion like Christianity is to put some water on to boil for a cup of tea. Now ask, “Why is the water boiling?”

There are at least two sorts of correct answers to that question. One is about the *mechanics* or *particles* of the boiling water; the other is about the *meaning* or *purpose* of the boiling water.

Science answers the mechanics question: What is the physical cause of the boiling water? It gives us an answer that is about the particles of water and how the heat jiggles

“Curly Questions” is a monthly column written by experts dealing with tricky conversations that touch on faith, in a compassionate, practical and biblical way.

the water molecules making them eventually turn into steam.

But there is another answer that is also correct: I want a cup of tea. That’s an answer that talks about the meaning or purpose of the boiling water. It is a true answer – there would be no water boiling if I didn’t want a cup of tea – but it is not a scientific answer.

So, when it comes to religious claims, most of them fall into the category of meaning and purpose, which are beyond the reach of science. So, for example, science can explain much about the development of life on earth, culminating in *Homo sapiens*. But no amount of science can tell us if *Homo sapiens* are made in the image of God with the purpose of loving God and loving their neighbour.

There are other sorts of questions that science can’t, and never will, answer. For

example, existential questions (Why did my son Ben die? Where is he now?), or aesthetic questions (Is Beethoven better than the Beatles?), or philosophical questions (What are the limits of science? How do we know?).

Perhaps moral questions are the most obvious “outside of science” examples. Yes, science can tell us a lot about making weapons of mass destruction, but it can’t tell us whether it would be right to use nuclear or biological weapons. Moral questions lie outside the bounds of science and, if we think there are answers to them, we need to look elsewhere.

Another moral question is, “What should we do about global warming?” Yes, science can tell us that humans are contributing to a warming planet. And it can predict what the consequences might be. But science can’t tell us whether we ought to do anything about it, or whether the richer nations have more responsibility than others, or whether we ought to leave the problem to later generations who will have more technological ability to deal with it.

The answers to these sorts of questions can’t be found in a lab; they come from our values framework, which for many people, comes from their religious beliefs. So, while science is great for answering some questions, it is not in conflict with religion which offers answers to other sorts of questions.

Where to from here? You could point your friend to ISCAST – Christians in Science, and even get in touch to continue the conversation.

Is there a curly question you’d like us to address?

You can let us know by using the QR Code and filling out the form found using:



The Reverend Dr Chris Mulherin is Executive Director of ISCAST and the Archbishop of Melbourne’s advisor for science and faith education.



Fifteen new deacons were ordained on Saturday 4 February at St Paul's Cathedral in front of family, friends, clergy and parishioners.

Pictures: Janine Eastgate



Members of the South Sudanese community at the ordination service.

Clergy Moves

Vacant Appointments as of 16 February 2023:

St Eanswythe Altona/St Clement Altona Meadows; Bellarine Gateway; St Martin, Belgrave Heights; Parish of Box Hill; Brimbank; St John Chrysostom, Brunswick West; St Bartholomew, Burnley; St Faith, Burwood; St Mark, Camberwell; St Catharine, Caulfield South; St Luke, Cockatoo; St Philip, Collingwood; St Margaret, Eltham; Holy Trinity, Hampton; St Peter & St James, Kilsyth/Montrose; St Augustine, Mentone; St George Monbulk; St Peter's Murrumbidgee with Holy Nativity Hughesdale; St Aidan Noble Park; St Aidan, Parkdale; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; St Matthew, Panton Hill; St Mark, Reservoir; St Stephen, Richmond; St Mary, Sunbury [from May 2023]; Christ Church, South Yarra; Christ Church, St Kilda; St Luke, Sydenham; Parish of Upwey/Belgrave; St John, Wantirna South; St Matthew, Wheelers Hill; Christ Church, Whittlesea with St Peter's, Kinglake; St Thomas, Winchelsea with Holy Trinity, Barrabool and St Paul's, Deans Marsh

Appointments:

JACKSON, The Revd Jonathan Cedric, appointed Priest-in-Charge, South Darebin, and appointed Project Officer – Reimagining the Future, effective 15 February 2023

LANCASTER, The Revd Christopher Charles Wilson, appointed Project Officer- Reimagining the Future, effective 27 February 2023

MORRIS, The Revd Stephen John, appointed Priest-in-Charge, All Saints, Selby and St Thomas, Upper Ferntree Gully, effective 22 February 2023

MURRAY, The Revd Elizabeth, appointed Incumbent (from Priest-in-Charge) Holy Trinity, Williamstown, and appointed Area Dean, Deanery of Williamstown, effective 20 February 2023

Ordained to the Diaconate 4 February 2023:

AUDO, The Revd Tereza Alfred, Assistant Curate, St Andrew, Aberfeldie

CHAN, The Revd Tzeh Yi, Assistant Curate, St Thomas, Burwood

COLLISON, The Revd Tim Maxwell, Assistant Curate, St Mark, Camberwell

GHILONI, The Revd Dr Aaron James, Assistant Curate, St George, Malvern

HE, The Revd Zhitao, Assistant Curate, Holy Trinity, Doncaster

LINCKE, The Revd Amanda Louise, Assistant Curate, St Hilary Kew

LO, The Revd Samantha Nicole, Assistant Curate, St Paul, East Kew

LOU, The Revd Weiyl, Assistant Curate, All Saints, Clayton

LOU, The Revd Xiaoxi, Assistant Curate, All Saints, Clayton

MADING, The Revd Rebecca Adut, Assistant Curate, St John the Evangelist, Footscray

MARYOE, The Revd Johnny, Assistant Curate, Church of the Epiphany, Hoppers Crossing

MATOC, The Revd Monica Ayor, Assistant Curate, Christ Church, Melton

MITROUSIS, The Revd Candice Joan, Assistant Curate, St Stephen and St Mary, Mount Waverley

SHIRMAST, The Revd Leili, Assistant Curate, St Philip, Deep Creek

SHIRMAST, The Revd Pedram, Assistant Curate, St Philip, Deep Creek

Permission to Officiate:

OATES, The Revd Ian, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 2 February 2023

THOMPSON, The Revd Lachlan Arthur, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 6 February 2023

Obituaries:

BOUMA, The Revd Patricia Violette, 29 January 2023

For Vacant Parishes listing: registrar@melbourneanglican.org.au; Tributes: 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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