

THE Melbourne Anglican

JUNE 2023, No 625

Easing worry one full tummy at a time

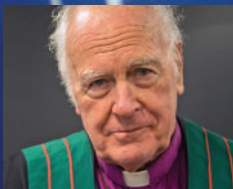
Churches in Melbourne's east have helped support services such as Anglicare Victoria take the first step towards lifting people out of systemic poverty: filling their bellies. It comes as increasing costs of living hit hardest for Victoria's most vulnerable people.

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Anglicare Victoria volunteer Denis Long and student Baljeet Kaur unpack St Hilary's Hope bags.
Picture: Elspeth Kernebone



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monarchy trumps
a republic



May the vision of Jubilee inform our prayers

■ Archbishop Philip Freier

It is very easy to see the demands on infrastructure investment as we drive around Melbourne or Geelong.

New roads, schools and hospitals are obviously needed to meet the basic needs of a growing population. The costs of infrastructure are enormous, \$1.5 billion for the New Footscray Hospital, over \$12 billion for the Metro rail tunnel project, and the West Gate road tunnel predicted to cost \$10 billion. Even the cost of changing policy is great, the cancellation of the East West Link project in June 2015 cost more than \$400 million. And these are just the capital costs. Schools and hospitals need staffing and the provision of other services to maintain their operations.

It is not hard to see the pressure on state and federal sources of taxation income and the challenges in finding the balance between raising income and spending. There is a balance too that must be reached between these sorts of capital items, including defence spending for the Commonwealth, and the investments in services and people that are needed. This is a live question at the present time, whether

the funds designated to build a new stadium in Hobart are better spent on investing in public housing as that state experiences great pressure in adequately housing its people.

“[Jubilee] was the ultimate disrupter to ‘inter-generational disadvantage’”

We often hear the word “crisis” applied to one side or other of the debate about where our public resources are best applied and in what priority. As far as I can tell these debates happen in similar ways, with perhaps different question, in most countries. Internationally this meets various responses, whether through higher taxes or greater expectation of non-government solutions or even tolerating widening inequality between rich and poor.

The Bible gives us the wonderful vision of Jubilee as an extrapolation of the principle of Sabbath. After the passing of “seven weeks of seven years”, the 50th year was a time of rest for the fields but more importantly for restoration of birthright for those who had experienced hard times, indebtedness, and

thus loss of dignity and social standing. It was the ultimate disrupter to “inter-generational disadvantage”. Probably regarded as simplistic and unrealistically idealistic in today’s politics, it is a powerful divine vision for us to grapple with as we seek to name a Christian response within the many debates about contended, and even competing, priorities.

As we approach the 80th anniversary of the death of William Temple in 2024 it would be fruitful to open again his *Christianity and Social Order*. This short book, written in 1941, integrated the ancient wisdom of God’s revelation with the emerging challenges that Temple could see arising after wartime. Temple was keen to establish the principles by which policy could be judged, rather than to advocate for distinctive policies themselves. I look forward to Temple’s thoughts being freshly explored as we approach this anniversary. His work is important in integrating the biblical witness with the questions of equity and justice that arise in the context of pressure on our social security system, Medicare and NDIS.

May the vision of Jubilee inform our prayers for our world and its people.
Grace and peace in Christ Jesus.

THE Melbourne Anglican



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The Reverend Natalie Dixon-Monu co-ordinates the award-winning Boroondara Community Outreach, a mental health ministry that also provides those it supports with worship, hospitality and art opportunities. She spoke with *Everyday Saints* about how her faith has helped her bring hope to others.

For her story and more, listen to our podcast via
tma.melbourneanglican.org.au.

Everyday Saints.

For an Anglican Approach



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The Falahati family was reunited with close friends the Reverends Pedram and Leili Shirmast at Deep Creek Anglican Church.

Picture: supplied

Miracle reunion for refugee family

■ Maya Pilbrow

When Esmail Falahati arrived in Australia in March, he felt a sense of relief.

Mr Falahati and his family had spent almost eight years as refugees in Türkiye, having fled Iran due to the persecution they faced as Christians in the theocratic Islamic republic.

They are now attending Deep Creek Anglican, a church they found through friends Pedram and Leili Shirmast, both curates there.

Mr Falahati said he was grateful to be able to openly celebrate his faith.

Iran is the ninth most dangerous country for Christians according to non-denominational mission Open Doors. Converts from Islam are subject to governmental persecution, as Christianity is classified as a threat to national security under the country's strict penal code.

The Falahati family experienced these dangers firsthand.

In 2015, Mr Falahati was praying with friends in an orchard outside Tehran when he was arrested for illegally running an underground church.

He spent 33 days in solitary confinement where he was subject to torture including sensory deprivation. His experiences in prison have had a lasting effect on him.

"The person who was interrogating me said 'I don't want to hurt your body, but I will definitely hurt your soul and mind,'" he said.

While Mr Falahati was imprisoned, his

family was harassed. He said his captors would give him detailed reports about the movements of his wife and family with veiled threats.

Mr Falahati's mother-in-law Haide said plainclothes police would wait outside her front yard and show her their guns every time she left the house with her grandchildren.

Mr Falahati said his interrogators threatened to arrest his wife Sara and make him listen while guards sexually assaulted her.

Originally from a nominally Muslim family, Mr Falahati said he found Jesus in 2002 after an acquaintance invited him to her church. He began studying theology and met his wife in 2005 through an underground church.

Mrs Falahati's mother and sister soon began attending as well. Mrs Falahati said she came from a prominent Muslim family, so her decision to convert to Christianity along with her mother and sister was dangerous.

Mr Falahati said his interrogators were angry with him for converting his wife's family. He was eventually released from prison, but the harassment and threats continued.

"I remember receiving a threat from my interrogator who said, 'If you decide to stay in Iran, just remember that some of the trucks don't have good brakes and they might roll over you,'" he said.

A week after he left prison, he said he narrowly missed being run over by a car

being driven at high speed. In that moment he realised what the interrogator meant.

Mr Falahati and his family fled Iran after his release from prison, arriving in Türkiye in December 2015.

He said the family faced more difficulties in Turkish refugee camps.

They did not receive identification papers, working rights or financial support as refugees.

Earlier this year, the family received protection visas from the Australian government and were able to enter the country.

They have since reunited with close family friends and recently ordained deacons Pedram and Leili Shirmast.

Mr and Mrs Shirmast knew the family when they were all refugees in Türkiye. When Mr and Mrs Shirmast came to Australia four years ago, they thought they had said their last goodbyes.

Mr Falahati's eight-year-old daughter Hana said coming to Australia was like a dream.

"I couldn't believe that this is real. Is this a miracle in our lives? For three days, I told Roya 'Am I dreaming or is this real? If it's not real just let me wake up,'" she said.

Throughout their ordeal the Falahati family has found strength in their faith.

"During that time, God showed me in practical ways that He is with me and protects me, which gave me encouragement," Mr Falahati said.

*Interview translations performed by Pedram Shirmast

Plant grows among new communities

■ Jenan Taylor

A western suburbs church plant has drawn increasing numbers of people from refugee communities.

The Tarneit church plant has engaged a growing number of regular worshippers, the majority of whom are refugees from Pakistan.

Reach West Epiphany Hoppers Crossing launched the house church in October 2022, in response to a rapidly growing multicultural population, many of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim backgrounds.

Authorised senior lay minister Dr Kezhalezo Angami said the aim of the plant was to engage with as many of them as possible by providing multilingual church services.

Dr Angami said many of the new arrivals in the area were Pakistani families who had come via Thailand where some



endured “illegal” resident status for up to 10 years.

He said 27 Pakistani congregants including children had started worshipping only in the last two months, but he expected that the number would double by the end of the year.

Dr Angami said he ran the

services along with a Pakistani pastor and that worship, including many of the songs, was conducted in English, Hindi and Urdu to make them feel comfortable and welcomed.

“Most of the refugees who have come to the house church are from a Christian background, and though all have different

stories, they’re related to being persecuted for their beliefs,” he said.

Originally from India, Dr Angami served as a missionary and a theological lecturer before coming to Melbourne.

He completed doctoral studies in missiology at the University of Divinity in 2018, then settled in Tarneit with his wife and daughter to work with Epiphany Hoppers Crossing as a church planter.

He said the Tarneit plant, a foodbank and an electronic magazine were some of the tools through which the church was connecting with the community.

Dr Angami said he was considering ordination but, in the meantime, now that the house church had young families and new members were arriving, he was looking forward to being able to establish a children’s ministry at Tarneit.





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Funding fears for hospital chaplaincy

■ Jenan Taylor

Hospital chaplains in the Melbourne diocese face an uncertain future as major funding cuts to the health chaplaincy program loom.

The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne has announced it will cease funding chaplains by the end of 2023.

Archbishop Dr Philip Freier said in an internal circular that the decision to cease funding arose from an organisational and budget review of the diocese.

Dr Freier said the diocese was exploring ways to maintain its presence in public hospitals and was waiting to hear whether the state government would continue to fund spiritual care programs there.

Health chaplaincy coordinator the Reverend Dawn Treloar said not knowing whether there would be state government support complicated the ability to plan the delivery of the program, and clouded the outlook for the chaplains themselves.

But health sector spiritual care peak body the Spiritual Health Association said in a recent federal budget submission that the Victorian state government's core funding into health chaplaincy could not be relied upon to be ongoing.

Archdeacon for Diocesan Partnerships the Reverend Dr Nick White said the diocese was weighing up alternative chaplaincy program funding models.

Dr White said the diocese provided 80 per cent of financial support for the program. He said the remaining funding came from the Victorian government through the Spiritual Health Association and philanthropic assistance.

Dr White said it was possible some



Picture: iStock.

spiritual health care models might develop out of joint backing from state government, philanthropists and hospitals, or from hospitals employing chaplains directly.

Ms Treloar said nine chaplains delivered care in seven hospitals across the Melbourne diocese. She said funding model considerations in each instance had to include the chaplain's employment status, and the healthcare provider's policies and priorities.

But she said not knowing whether government funding would continue made planning difficult, and left chaplains feeling unsure about their future.

She said they cared deeply about supporting people, but there were some who were the sole income earners for their families and had to consider paying bills.

Ms Treloar said the ideal model would be one where hospitals provided most chaplaincy funding, and the diocese's chaplains could deliver Anglican-specific care.

She said many hospitals valued how chaplains had cared for staff during the COVID pandemic, as well as patients and their families.

But Ms Treloar said how the ministry was perceived varied according to a hospital's priorities. She said many people no longer understood what the church did.

Ms Treloar said it was possible to count the number of people chaplains saw every day, but the effect of their care went beyond numbers. She said figures wouldn't show the sacramental ministries that were done or that some were with people who professed to have no faith.

She said many sacramental moments were with family members, some of whom might even be hostile initially, but who asked the chaplain to pray for them and said they were profoundly moved by their experience.

"We are blessed to be there. We are given opportunities to share the very worst moments in people's lives. And to hopefully provide comfort for them, to provide them with an awareness of God's love for them. And that's what keeps all of us going," Ms Treloar said.

The Victorian government has been approached for comment.

“conversations
with the
archbishop”

The Public Purse



The Government has far too many demands on its resources to meet the needs of Australians as it might wish. Its budgets are stretched, from \$368 billion for nuclear submarines plus long-range missiles for defence to the ballooning costs of national disability, from the problems in public housing to the separate issues in hospitals and the health system. Around half of Australian households receive some sort of government payment. The demands are near infinite, the means are decidedly finite.

Join **Archbishop Philip Freier** and his guests – Grattan Institute CEO **Danielle Wood** and **Phil Dolan**, Executive Director of Melbourne University's Institute for the Future of Business – as they discuss more integrated ways of coping and what must be non-negotiable.



Danielle Wood
Grattan Institute CEO



Phil Dolan
Institute for the Future of Business

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Admission is free, but you are asked to register with TryBooking at <https://www.trybooking.com/CIBDS>



Subs invest in war, not peace: Pacifists

■ Maya Pilbrow

Religious groups have criticised the government's nuclear submarine deal, saying it won't lead Australia to God's peaceful kingdom.

St John's Anglican Cathedral Brisbane dean the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt said the AUKUS trilateral defence agreement with the United States and the United Kingdom would not lead to a more peaceful world.

He said the purpose of religion was to help people flourish and that the AUKUS agreement was not the way to build a peaceful society at home or abroad.

The AUKUS agreement will see Australia acquire and build long-range armed nuclear-powered submarines to be deployed in the Indo-Pacific.

The agreement is estimated to cost 0.15 per cent of Australia's GDP over the next 30 years, or between \$268 and \$368 billion.

Dr Catt said he worried increased military spending on nuclear technology would come at the expense of social services.

He was concerned about Australia's role in a global context, saying he feared the agreement meant continuing to exist in the shadow of the US.

Dr Catt said involvement in previous US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had been unnecessary and destabilised both countries. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi and Afghan civilians are believed to have been killed during the wars in both countries according to the Iraq Body Count Project and the nonpartisan Cost of War Project.

Dr Catt said he understood the need for defence, but the AUKUS agreement felt like another example of ideologically driven aggression from the US. Instead, he said doing God's work and creating peace required



Photo: iStock

challenging the way society operated.

"From an Anglican framework, the fourth mark of mission is about transforming unjust structures," he said.

University of Melbourne School of Social and Political Sciences Professorial Fellow Derek McDougall said there were many Christian perspectives on issues of national security and defence. Professor McDougall is also a member of the Uniting Church of Victoria. His research focusses on international relations and Australia's role in the Asia-Pacific.

Professor McDougall said there was a strong pacifist tradition within the Christian church and peacemaking and peacebuilding had broad support. He said his personal view was that AUKUS would not reduce tensions in the Indo-Pacific region.

Professor McDougall said new long-range submarines that could operate off the coast of China were more likely to exacerbate conflict.

"In terms of a general goal of human wellbeing, avoiding war should be a primary goal," he said.

Professor McDougall said there were also many examples of Christians justifying war in certain circumstances, most notably the just war tradition.

Anglican Bishop to the Australian Defence Force the Right Reverend Grant Dibden said God desired peace, but that force was sometimes necessary to protect the weak and needy.

Bishop Dibden said nuclear-powered submarines would be a deterrent to war.

He said AUKUS was about reducing the chances of conflict in the region and strong defences resulted in peace.

Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee convenor Harold Wilkinson said his church believed in finding peaceful resolutions to conflict.

He said Quakers believed there was God in everyone, and that pacifism was the result of that belief.

Mr Wilkinson said the AUKUS agreement concerned him.

"Strengthening our relationship with the United States in a military sense, we believe is definitely going down the wrong track," he said.

Mr Wilkinson said pacifism was often unpopular.

"The number of people talking about peace is far less than the number of people talking about war," he said. "There may not be a lot of people who will support us, but we believe it's right."



Photo: iStock

UN torture watchdog

■ Maya Pilbrow

A United Nations specialist has labelled Australia's policy of indefinite detention for asylum seekers and immigrants inhumane.

Detained migrants spend an average of 732 days locked up with no idea when they might be released, according to the Refugee Council of Australia.

UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Alice Edwards said spending even three months detained in legal limbo could be defined

Hollingworth to give up ministry roles

■ Elspeth Kernebone, Jenan Taylor

Former Archbishop of Brisbane Peter Hollingworth has announced he will return his Permission to Officiate after the Diocese of Melbourne's Professional Standards Board determined he had committed misconduct in seven of 10 complaints made against him.

The board also determined that Dr Hollingworth could continue in the positions of ministry he held at that point.

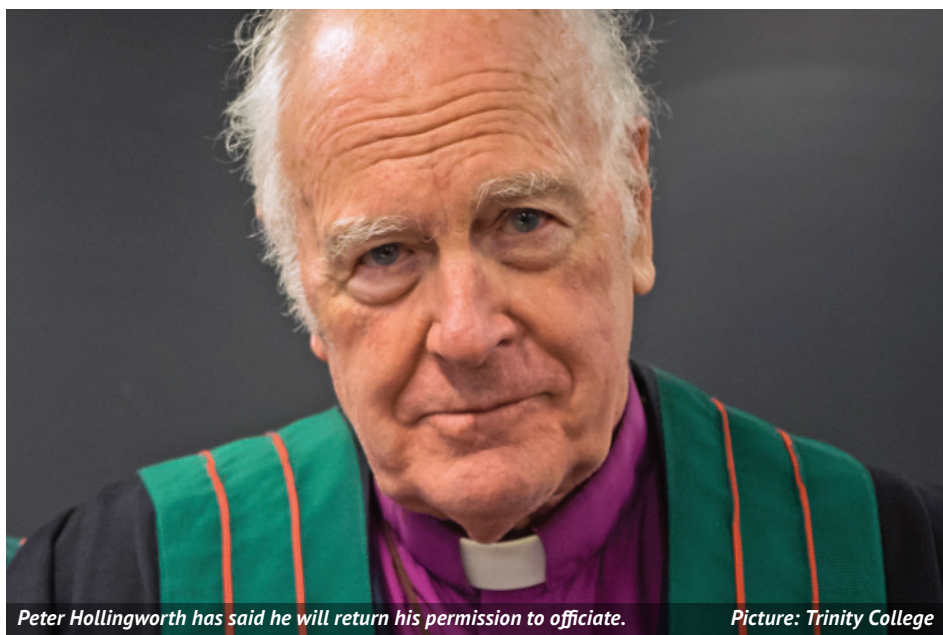
Dr Hollingworth said in a statement on 12 May that he was concerned his continuing to exercise priestly functions as a bishop was a cause of pain to survivors, saying he wanted to end distress to them and division within the church. He said he had told the Archbishop of Melbourne that he would be returning his permission to officiate.

In April the Professional Standards Board found that in about late 1993 and in 1998 Dr Hollingworth without proper justification permitted John Elliot to remain in ministry, when he knew Elliot had sexually assaulted children and that he posed a risk to the safety and wellbeing of children.

It determined that he had committed misconduct by in about 1995 permitting Donald Shearman, who he knew had sexually assaulted a child, to retain his permission to officiate, among other findings.

In his 12 May statement, Dr Hollingworth said as Archbishop of Brisbane from 1990 to 2001 he was ill-equipped to deal with the child abuse issue. He said he did not commit a crime, and did not cover up sexual abuse, nor was he an abuser.

"Like some other church people, [I] was too defensive of the church on the advice of



Peter Hollingworth has said he will return his permission to officiate.

Picture: Trinity College

lawyers and insurers. I say that as a matter of context, not as an excuse. I have lived with my failures every day since," he said.

"It is more than 20 years since allegations against me were first made. There have been five separate inquiries, including the five-year inquiry by the PSB. They have occupied countless time, energy, emotion and expense for many people.

"Many times I have acknowledged that I made mistakes and issued apologies. My regrets have become even more profound over the years, as we have all gained a better understanding of the impact of child sexual abuse through the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse and other investigations."

Archbishop of Melbourne Philip Freier said he would seek advice as to the effect of the resignation of permission to officiate on the implementation of the Professional Standards Board determination.

Dr Freier said he continued to pray for all who had been involved in recent public debate about Dr Hollingworth's standing within the church.

Survivor support group the Blue Knot Foundation president and executive director Cathy Kezelman said she was pleased that Dr Hollingworth had chosen to step down from his ministry functions.

"It's taken a long time, and it would have been good to see him take full accountability much earlier, and also to see the professional standards body reach this conclusion itself," Dr Kezelman said.

She said she believed that there were survivors who wanted to appeal the findings of the tribunal.

Dr Kezelman said that appeal still needed to go ahead, and that it would be good if that resulted in consistent accountability in the Professional Standards Board's decisions.

calls Australia's migrant detention 'inhumane'

as degrading, inhumane or psychological torture.

Speaking to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Thursday morning, Dr Edwards said those harmed by Australia's policies deserved reparations.

Amnesty International Australia refugee rights advisor Graham Thom said detention conditions had consistently been shown to be damaging.

"I think it is only just that people should be allowed to seek some form of recompense for that treatment," he said.

Dr Thom said he hoped Dr Edwards' criticism would motivate the government to change migrant detention policies.

He said Australia had a dreadful international reputation regarding treatment of asylum seekers.

Dr Thom said he wanted to see Australia abide by our international obligations. He said we needed viable options for people to challenge their detention along with explicit timeframes for when changes would happen.

Embrace Refugees Australia refugee

development consultant Naomi Chua said indefinite detention caused irreparable damage.

She said many of the individuals and families she had worked with had been stripped of their agency and their hope after dealing with the trauma of detention.

Ms Chua said refugees were hindered in becoming productive and contributing members of society due to the devastating mental health impacts of indefinite detention.

Many struggling to pay for rent, food

■ Jenan Taylor

More people are lining up for community service support as living pressures and the housing crisis bite, frontline workers say.

St Mark's Fitzroy Community Centre coordinator Wayne Gleeson said the number of people attending meal programs had doubled in recent months.

St Mark's, and St Peter's Eastern Hill, provide food, shower and laundry assistance to people experiencing primary and secondary homelessness.

Mr Gleeson said more than 100 people accessed the support programs each week. He said among the new faces were many single men, as well as several women fleeing domestic violence.

Some also made enquiries about housing assistance, Mr Gleeson said.

It comes as new Australian Bureau of Statistics data showed that living costs for all households were at a record high.

According to the bureau, higher prices for health, housing, food and interest charges had contributed to increased living costs for all household types.

The report followed Anglicare Victoria's annual rental affordability snapshot which showed a shortage of affordable rental properties in the state.

Only 100 properties were affordable for Victorians on income support, but for people on Youth Allowance or JobSeeker payments not a single affordable property



was available without putting them into rental stress.

Mr Gleeson said many people who sought assistance at St Mark's and St Peter's were from regional towns, such as Shepparton, or were from interstate.

He said although that kind of migration was nothing unusual, the influx had risen since the pandemic.

"There's probably more supports available with regard to their needs in comparison to where they're from, but they're coming here because they think that there's more accommodation options available," Mr Gleeson said.

Mental health ministry Boroondara Community Outreach workers said a lot more people were coming to service and that most were struggling to afford to meet rental payments, whether they were in private

rental or rooming house situations.

Coordinator and minister the Reverend Natalie Dixon-Monu said even if people received pension or payment increases, it was swallowed up by their rent.

Ms Dixon-Monu said the majority of people BCO supported were prison leavers, many of whom lived in rooming houses, women escaping domestic violence, migrants on protection visas, and people with severe mental illness.

"These are people who are already at the bottom of rung of the ladder, and this [cost of living] pressure is just pushing them off. Even those who used to be able to afford their rent now can't afford their rent at all, because everyone is being pushed down," Ms Dixon-Monu said.

Christ Church Geelong parishioner Jan McGowan said the church's community meal program had had experienced a surge of people, among them an increasing number of women.

She said the program had been running for more than 30 years and that some individuals who were accessing the service appeared to be returning, because there were cards on the system to show they had been there years before.

Ms McGowan said that housing was definitely a problem and that it appeared several people were sleeping rough.

"We don't ask questions, but we do know because we've noticed that they are carrying their worldly goods with them," she said.

Cost of living measures fall short of needs: Agencies

■ Maya Pilbrow

Increases to welfare payments outlined in the federal budget will not do enough to alleviate poverty, Anglican social justice organisations say.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers announced several measures in this year's budget aimed at providing relief to rising costs of living.

These include lifting the Jobseeker rate, increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance and expanding access to support payments for single parents.

Brotherhood of St Laurence executive director Travers McLeod said the budget demonstrated the government's willingness to tackle issues affecting low-income households.

"We're pleased to see a shift in focus

towards improving the lives of those who are facing poverty and disadvantage compared to the budgets of the past few years," Mr McLeod said. "We hope it is the start of a sustained effort across multiple budgets to make poverty reduction a much greater national priority."

BSL said it welcomed moves to reduce energy and healthcare costs and support the education and care workforce. But it said the government's plan fell short of expert recommendations to address poverty.

BSL said the Jobseeker hike of \$40 per fortnight was well below the substantial increase recommended by the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee and Women's Economic Equality Taskforce.

Anglicare Australia executive director Kasy Chambers said in a statement that

an Anglicare survey found one in three welfare recipients had as little as \$7 per day to live on after paying rent.

Australian Council of Social Service chief executive Cassandra Goldie said in a statement the \$2.85 per day increase to Jobseeker would still leave more than one million people in poverty.

Dr Goldie said the planned increase was less than a sixth of what the EIAC recommended.

Anglicare Victoria regional director Michael Oerlemans said the Jobseeker rate would total \$51 per day for single people with the new increase. He said this was well below the poverty line of \$69 per day, based on ACOSS inequality research.

Mr Oerlemans said he was overall pleased with the direction of the budget but more could be done.



St Hilary's Hope volunteers collect bags of food for the appeal, which supplied several community support services.

Picture: supplied



Mission House worker Maddi Cavallo.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

Hope drive helping those in hunger

■ Jenan Taylor

A church food aid initiative has gathered hundreds of bags of food to support those struggling, as demand increases from community services organisations.

St Hilary's Hope organisers said charities it supported desperately needed more food and grocery supplies before the 6 May drive. These charities included Camcare and Boroondara Community Outreach.

St Hilary's Hope director Mike Urwin said one agency that usually supported people in the Asian community and leant towards items suited to them, was requesting anything as its shelves were always empty.

Another had also reported being in desperate need after receiving less than normal during its Christmas appeal, Mr Urwin said.

Boroondara Community Outreach workers said 52 new people had approached it for emergency relief in the first few months of 2023, and nine had come forward in one week.

Mr Urwin said more than 150 volunteers signed up to help at St Hilary's Hope, including parishioners from a Methodist and a Baptist church, while 13 supermarket branches had also agreed to participate.

Anglicare Victoria's emergency relief centre Mission House received about 800 bags full of food from the St Hilary's Hope collection in mid May.

Mission House emergency relief coordinator Sam Horsburgh said the donations would let it continue to offer food support to those in need while using its funding to provide other services, such as financial counselling and crisis payments.

Mr Horsburgh said food support could make a massive difference to people struggling financially, who had been hardest hit by inflation and increases in the cost of living.

"Ultimately the goal here is to lift people out of systemic, long-term poverty, and this is the first step, making sure people have full bellies."

Sam Horsburgh

"If people know they're fed, their kids are fed, and that the pantry is full, they can start focussing on other things. It's one less thing to worry about," Mr Horsburgh said.

"Ultimately the goal here is to lift people out of systemic, long-term poverty, and this is the first step, making sure people have full bellies.

"When these economic times happen,

and these situations happen, the poorest are the ones who are suffering the most, and that's true at the moment."

Before the drive, St Hilary's Hope volunteer coordinator Neil Morrison said volunteers letter dropped near the church, and others manned donation tables outside the supermarkets on the day.

Volunteers then sort the donated goods and truck them to agencies.

St Hilary's Hope has run a food drive for more than three decades. It usually takes months of planning. Volunteers from St Hilary's Kew, St Silas' North Balwyn and St Augustine's Mont Albert support the drive.

Mr Morrison and Mr Urwin said they were confident that the drive would be successful again, and the fact that there were so many volunteers showed that it worked in the community.

Boroondara Community Outreach coordinator and minister the Reverend Natalie Dixon-Monu said it depended on local council and church assistance to be able to help its community, and that the food drive supplied non-perishable food and grocery items, including oil for cooking, washing powder and toilet paper.

"It is massively helpful," Ms Dixon-Monu said. "It means we don't have to turn to Foodbank all the time and can save money to purchase meat for the meals we cook."

Women urged to trust Jesus' teachings

■ **Maya Pilbrow**

Hundreds of women gathered to worship and study the gospel together at the Entrust Women 2023 conference.

Women of all ages met at New Hope Baptist Church for the May conference.

The morning began with worship songs led by an all-women band before event MC Sarah Allen introduced the first of two keynote speakers, both members of Anglican parishes.

Holy Trinity Doncaster lay minister Fiona McLean spoke on John chapter 14, looking specifically at verse 6, "I am the way and the truth and the life".

She said Jesus' claim to be the truth was emotionally and intellectually satisfying because it fulfilled a need for objective truth.

Ms McLean said living in a post-truth world made it difficult to trust the beliefs and narratives of others.

She said relativism had shattered our world into shards of individual truth, so no one got a clear picture of reality.

"Whom can we trust? Who's telling the truth? Brittany Higgins or Bruce



Fiona McLean spoke about John chapter 15 at the Entrust Women conference. Picture: Entrust

Lehrmann? George Pell or his accuser?" she said.

Ms McLean said in a world where many Christians had troubled hearts, it was

comforting to be able to accept Jesus as utterly trustworthy.

She said there was no life without Jesus, and that life must be accepted on His terms.

The second keynote speaker Laura Paul discussed John chapter 15.

Ms Paul said the Jesus' statement "I am the true vine" was not a command for his followers to bear fruit, but a request that they abide with and reside in the word of God.

Ms Paul said this message was especially important for women, who were often expected to multitask and perform emotional labour.

She said bearing fruit meant making space to meditate on Jesus' teachings.

Ms Paul said we lived in a world that struggled with obedience, but it was important to obey Jesus thoughtfully in our hearts even when we did not fully understand his commands.

The conference also featured testimony from converts and Christian book reviews.

Entrust has been running conferences for eight years.

Vacant Appointments as of 22 May 2023:

St Eanswythe Altona/St Clement Altona Meadows; St Martin, Belgrave Heights; Parish of Box Hill; Brimbank; St John Chrysostom, Brunswick West; St Faith, Burwood; St Mark, Camberwell; St Catharine, Caulfield South; St Philip, Collingwood; Mount Dandenong; St John the Divine, Croydon; Holy Trinity, Hampton; St Peter & St James, Kilsyth/Montre; Christ Church, Melton; 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 Mark, Reservoir; St Mary, Sunbury; Christ Church, South Yarra; Christ Church, St Kilda; St Luke, Sydenham; Parish of Upwey/Belgrave; St Thomas, Werribee; St John, Wantima South; St Matthew, Wheelers Hill; Christ Church, Whittlesea with St Peter, Kinglake; St Thomas, Winchelsea with Holy Trinity, Barrabool

Appointments:

BILLINGS, The Right Revd Dr Bradley Scott, appointed Assistant Bishop, Oodthorpe Episcopate, effective 1 May 2023
CARRICK, The Revd John Mark, appointed Vicar, St Edward's Blackburn South, continuing as Vicar, St Thomas Burwood, effective 23 May 2023
COOK, The Reverend Angela Jane, appointed Vicar, St Alban and St Augustine, Merri-Bek, effective 13 April 2023
JOSEPH, The Revd Bijumon, appointed Vicar, St Matthew, Ashburton, effective 26 May 2023
KETTLETON, The Revd Joel, appointed Parish Minister, St John, Healesville with St Paul, Yarra Glen, effective 8 August 2023
PROWD, The Right Revd Catherine (Kate) Jane, appointed Assistant Bishop, Monomeeth Episcopate, effective 1 May 2023
SMITH, The Revd Andrew, appointed Vicar, St Matthew, Pantom Hill with St Andrew, St Andrews, effective 20 July 2023
SUBRAMANIAM, The Revd Priyajayanth (Paul) George, appointed Vicar from Priest-in-Charge, Holy Apostles, Sunshine/Braybrook, effective 15 May 2023
TROUSE, The Revd Philip, appointed Prison Chaplain, Melbourne Immigration Transit Authority, effective 19 April 2023
WONG, The Revd Canon Lui Ben, appointed Vicar, TIMA Anglican Parish, effective 3 May 2023

Permission to Officiate:

SOMA, The Revd Chaplain Jackson, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 5 May 2023

Resignations:

SMITH, The Revd Andrew, Vicar, Parish of Mount Dandenong, effective 20 July 2023

Obituaries:

GREEN, The Revd Ross, 26 April 2023
KELLY OGS, The Revd Roger Farquhar, 28 April 2023
SCOTT AO, The Revd Dr John Fraser, 24 April 2023

May 2023 Clergy Moves Corrections – Apologies to:

MILLARD, The Revd Joshua Tyler, appointed Parish Minister (from Assistant Curate) St Thomas Burwood, effective 22 March 2023.



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

Clergy Moves

Revamped journal to bring Christians world-class views

■ **Jenan Taylor**

A Christian science organisation hopes to help Australians explore the connection between science and faith through its recently launched and revised academic resource.

ISCAST journal *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology* aims to promote constructive conversations about faith and science by publishing rigorously written articles and reviews from Australian and international scholars.

Executive director the Reverend Dr Chris Mulherin said ISCAST revised the 18-year-old publication to bring it in line with the few other scholarly journals of its kind in the global marketplace.

Dr Mulherin said there were missional implications to publishing work that addressing faith science connections but few resources existed because people were unaware of their significance.

He said many orthodox Christians were unconvinced these conversations were possible because they believed that science and faith were incompatible, and that people had to choose between them.

Dr Mulherin said ISCAST appointed a research director and worked with an international editorial advisory board to ensure the journal published double blind, peer reviewed material.

Published annually, the first issue launched early in May. The journal is available at journal.iscast.org.

Walking with thousands for peace

■ Jenan Taylor

Eltham parishioners and community members joined a wave of meditators focused on peace during a global celebration of labyrinths.

St Margaret's Anglican congregants walked the church's labyrinth for peace on World Labyrinth Day.

Celebration organisers at The Labyrinth Society sought to have people meditating in every time zone across the world.

St Margaret's locum the Reverend Dr Linda Fiske said the crises in Sudan, Ukraine and Afghanistan were at the forefront of most people's minds.

Dr Fiske said walking a labyrinth could be seen as a metaphor for life with the journey being long and arduous, and with unexpected turns.



The Labyrinth at Rye Anglican Church from above.

Picture: supplied

"When you stand outside the labyrinth and look in, you can't tell what the path is. You might go off in one direction, and then find yourself doubling back. Within the first few minutes, you come quite close to the

centre. And then next thing you're sent right back out to the edge again," Dr Fiske said. "It has an intriguing aspect of moving towards knowledge, understanding oneness, but then also finding that there's the

unexpected, involved as well."

Dr Fiske said the labyrinth at St Margaret's particularly attracted people who professed to be unbelievers but who had a deep love of nature.

She said she sometimes watched people approach the church grounds on Sunday mornings and go straight to wandering the labyrinth.

Dr Fiske said the walk started with a short discussion about aspects of prayer and then walkers could choose to focus on the birdsong in the bush around St Margaret's to enter into a meditative state.

For those who found walking uncomfortable or too difficult, there were also labyrinths sketched on A3 sized sheets so that they could still complete the winding journey with their fingers.

Remote parish raises thousands for Vanuatu recovery

■ Jenan Taylor

Members of a community nearly destroyed by the Black Summer bushfires turned out in droves to provide disaster assistance to migrant workers from Vanuatu recently.

The Cooperating Parish of Croajingolong came together for a fundraiser for 15 men living and working in Mallacoota whose communities in Vanuatu had been devastated by cyclones in early March.

Category 4 cyclones Kevin and Judy battered the Pacific nation within 48 hours of each other, and the area was also shaken by a magnitude 6.5 earthquake in that period.

St Peter's Mallacoota minister the Reverend Jude Benton said that they heard that their families, residences, crops, livestock and water supplies back home had been significantly impacted by the violent storms.

Ms Benton said that having been through life-changing disaster themselves, locals were keen to help the men.

"As a community we are aware of how blessed we have been, and so I thought as a community we should respond to the plight of the ni-Vanuatu men and their



The Reverend Jude Benton, community members and migrant workers from Vanuatu. Picture: supplied.

families, and support them in prayer and finance at this time," she said.

The community gathered donations and organised a concert with a music line up that also involved the Vanuatu workers and local talent, in mid-March.

At the festive event, close to 200 people packed out the small church and dug deep for the cause, Ms Benton said.

Overall, the Mallacoota community raised more than \$17,000, which included

donations from a special offering service at St Peter's, the church op shop and the bowls club.

Ms Benton said the workers were so moved by the parish's efforts, they reciprocated by helping with a community garden and maintenance works at sister church, St John's Cann River.

She said the whole experience had been joyful and of benefit to everyone involved, including the workers' families in Vanuatu.

Using God's gifts to serve Lesotho

■ Jenan Taylor

The Right Reverend Vicentia Kgabe, Bishop of the Diocese of Lesotho, has no time for those focused on creating age, gender, sex, race or class roadblocks. She says the Anglican Communion has more serious matters to solve.

When Dr Kgabe was consecrated Bishop of Lesotho in December 2021, she was sixth female Anglican bishop to be installed in Africa.

Months later Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby invited her to preach at the opening of the 15th Lambeth Conference.

Her widely acclaimed sermon has been frequently referred to since then. Dr Kgabe has also spoken at several other gatherings and churches overseas in the last year. This June she will visit Melbourne for the Diocesan Ministry conference.

Bishop Kgabe's outlook is rooted in the very challenges Lesotho faces.

The Kingdom of Lesotho is an independent nation perched among mountain terrain in the middle of South Africa. It is half the size of Tasmania but, at 2.2 million people, has four times its population.

Poverty is widespread, and HIV AIDS and tuberculosis have ravaged the country, leaving a wave of homeless orphans, few schools and a fragile medical system.

Immersed in energising the church to take practical action to help the community, Dr Kgabe said she has come to realise that God had long gifted her to meet the tests.

Dr Kgabe was born in Johannesburg in 1976, a dangerous time for black South Africans, and particularly school children.

After a few years, Dr Kgabe's parents felt unable to bear the on-going violence and sought to flee to Lesotho.

Loathe to risk exposing their daughter to a place they had never been before however, they left her in the care of her grandmother in the large Johannesburg municipality of Soweto. For the next 11 years, Dr Kgabe attended school, made friends, developed crushes, and through her grandmother, came to love the Church.

"It was not an option at all," Dr Kgabe said. "My grandmother made it clear that anyone living under her roof would attend church every Sunday, whether they felt like going or not."

Dr Kgabe said she went on to help with altar service, got involved with the youth groups and learned about leadership.

She loved it so much that at just 16 she

decided priesthood was her goal.

After graduating high school, Dr Kgabe eventually studied at residential seminary The College of Transfiguration.

She chalked up postings in several churches around Johannesburg, became an ordained priest and pursued a PhD.

Dr Kgabe became principal at the same seminary where she had been an undergraduate. As the youngest person in that role, she worried people might think she was too inexperienced. But she drew on her memories of studying there to discern what could be changed for the better.

One of the programs under her leadership aimed to give students with opposing views on the church's approach to gender and sexuality the chance to have constructive rather than inflammatory conversations.

Reflecting on that time, Dr Kgabe said she could see that heading the college prepared her for her current ministry.

There also seemed to be a pattern in where God placed her, and she could trace it all the way back to her youth.

Among the ruinous impulses of the apartheid government was a policy to divide black South African communities along language lines. But Dr Kgabe's grandmother wasn't prepared to let her travel far just to get to a school where they spoke her language. So Dr Kgabe ended up at a nearby Sesotho-speaking school and came to know a language of the nation where she would one

day lead the Church.

Realising that God had always been in her story made Dr Kgabe all the more determined to use the gifts He gave her to serve Lesotho.

She believes that if more people in the Church used their talents to serve the community, they might find a way to address the problem of people leaving it.

"We can't say to people who are hungry 'We will pray for you.' That's not enough. How do we feed those people? How do we clothe the naked, shelter the homeless. It is the gospel's imperatives that we are called to do. That's where having a prophetic voice and ministry of presence is required of us," she said.

Dr Kgabe believes these challenges are not unique to Africa. She said the worldwide Church needed to act in practical ways to address issues such as these.

She said the Church would always face other hurdles and disagreements, including about resistance to change, women in leadership, issues of race, social standing.

"It's an entertaining conversation for those who have time for it to say 'Women don't belong in the church.' But I don't have time for that. The world needs us to really be debating about serious things that bring hope in life," she said.

While she is in Australia, Dr Kgabe is keen to build on partnerships and collaborations pertinent to furthering ways that the Church might solve its problems.



Dr Vicentia Kgabe.
Picture: supplied

Call to remember Congo through trial

■ Jenan Taylor

When the Reverend David Boyd and his wife Prue packed up and left their house in the Democratic Republic of Congo for the last time in 2022, it was with great reluctance.

The former Church Missionary Society missionaries had spent a total of 18 years there and say they will never forget the people or the place.

They want Australians, and Anglicans in particular, to not forget Congo either.

A country that has borne several conflicts, the DRC is rich in natural resources including rainforests, and minerals such as cobalt and copper. Yet, it is among the five poorest nations in the world.

The Boyds arrived in DRC, known then as Zaire, in 1986 and took up their missionary roles in Bukavu, a city edging a great lake on the Congolese-Rwandan border.

Hoping to be agents for change, Mr Boyd taught at churches, Bible schools and in the community among a variety of other tasks, while Mrs Boyd went on to set up the country's first two public audiology clinics.

They forged close connections with parishioners including women's groups, families and students, and other community members, and came to know the customs and nuances of local life.

Fear was a constant for many Congolese, fear of being rejected by God because of sin, of poisoning, and of witchcraft, Mr Boyd said.

Often, he and community members would discuss how, as Christians, they could deal with those matters.

Reflecting on the country's troubles Mr Boyd said bad policy decisions, the actions of neighbouring states, unrest, and the relentless, unethical extraction of mineral resources drove much of Congo's instability, including widespread poverty and displacement of people.

Human Rights Watch reported in 2022 on the strong link between the area's conflict and the deep international interest in Congo's resources and land.

Mr Boyd wants people in developed countries to be more aware of the practices of international corporations involved in mining.

Stakeholders in multinationals benefitted directly from the profits, as did some of the country's elites, while economic utility rarely if ever made its way to the general population, he said.

Mr Boyd also wanted Australians to be aware of how much they, and their first world



David and Prue Boyd want Australians to remember the Democratic Republic of Congo. Picture: supplied

counterparts indirectly reaped from many of the extraction practices.

"A lot of cobalt comes from Congo, and of course diamonds have been mined there at great human cost. Much of what is mined goes into the manufacture of mobile phones and batteries that people use," he said.

Further research has found that most of the world's cobalt supply came from the DRC, and that it was linked to child slavery, displacement of people, severe health impacts, and multiple fatalities.

The effects of the Ukraine war in the last year including a shortage of fuel, and a new evolving crisis involving the Congolese army and a rebel movement M23, has added to the situation.

Increased numbers of displaced people arriving in Bukavu and other populated areas has also escalated tensions, and food prices have become astronomical, Mr Boyd said.

Expatriates including missionaries of all denominations have faced multiple difficulties. People have been kidnapped, travel out of town has been difficult, and everyone has been advised to act with extra caution.

Some missionaries are on standby to leave with a moment's notice, which makes it hard to think in terms of continuity.

"If people know they might have to leave quickly, their work just waits, and so the once considerable size of the missionary force has also fallen," Mr Boyd said.

Even so, the potential for continued Australian Christian involvement is huge.

Many of the NGOs and the UN contingents in Congo have become more aware of having good relationships with Christian organisations and churches, particularly pastors, if they want to bring about change in communities, Mr Boyd said.

Local and international Christian organisations as well as churches have also played a huge role in trying to help refugees and displaced people.

The ABC reported last year that school programs run by Christian organisations such as the Good Shepherd also provide feeding programs which go some way towards helping to alleviate the crushing need among families.

Although Congo's troubles, made it easy in some ways for many Australians to turn their attention elsewhere, Mr Boyd said it was important they remembered the importance of continuing to work there.

He pointed to the great satisfaction and confident relationships he and his wife had reaped from working with the church, and in the wider community, and being where they thought they could help out.

The presence Australian Anglicans had established in the region since the 1980s, and the support they received from people was very strong, Mr Boyd said.

"More than ever, they should not give up on Congo."

Fears for national anti-conversion laws

■ Jenan Taylor

Christians in India face mounting intolerance because of the country's state-based anti-conversion laws, amid fears such legislation will be implemented nationally.

Faith-based and human rights groups have reported an increase in anti-conversion violence against minority communities in India, including Christians and Muslims.

Open Doors Australia said its local partners received 600 reports of persecution incidents against Christians in the first three months of 2023 alone.

Communications specialist Jordan Scott said these reports came particularly from states where the anti-conversion laws were in place.

It comes as a senior political figure and proponent of the anti-conversion movement Ashwini Upadhyay continues to push India's Supreme Court for tough measures against conversions by coercion or deception, and a national rollout of the laws.

Twelve of India's 28 states have adopted the laws which give people the right to spread a religion, but not the right to convert by coercion, according to research body the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

Critics believe the recent adoption by more states is politically motivated and reflects growing Hindu nationalism.

An Indian representative from a non-government organisation expressed concerns about moves towards national

anti-conversion laws.

The representative, who requested anonymity for fear of retribution, said the laws' interpretation and application was the central problem.

She said the laws' wording referred to forced conversion but didn't define it. Because of this any action or service undertaken by someone from a Christian background or organisation could be viewed as a covert method to entice people to Christianity, and therefore as forcing someone to change their beliefs.

This affected organisations that helped India's most deprived communities, and the disadvantaged people themselves, the representative said.

She said many were from lower caste and tribal communities who lived in remote and hard to access areas, and that assistance for them ranged from providing microfinancing and resources such as goats to help them start a livelihood, to providing free medical treatment and equipment that they otherwise could not afford.

Misinformation about the services Christian organisations provided also led to allegations that they were forcing people to convert, the representative said. She said hate speech narratives were widespread and were also being normalised and proliferated through some media outlets.

Her concerns were echoed in a recent letter from 93 senior retired civil servants to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, about

the harassment of Christians and the rise of hate speech.

They noted the contribution of Christians and Christian institutions to the country's education, health and social reform sectors, including throughout the COVID pandemic, and that beneficiaries were from all faiths.

An Australian international development worker, who also asked to remain unnamed for fear of retribution, said harassment had stepped up to a new, personal level. He said initially it targetted faith-based and large, secular NGOs, forcing them to reduce their services or even shut. But the worker said police and anti-conversion activists were attacking and jailing individuals accused of forced conversion activity.

Ms Scott said the anti-conversion driven attacks against Christians could be particularly brutal.

She said that the first attack this year was on 1 January, when activists torched a church.

"Every Christian in India, especially in those states with these anti conversion laws, knows that they could be arrested at any time, simply for preaching Jesus, even in the confines of their own church," she said.

Ms Scott said Open Doors was working with local lawyers and advocates to help those being persecuted. She said the international community could help through prayer and by supporting the organisation's efforts to help Christians in India.

For more details visit opendoors.org.au.

Call for unity, love, prayer as Myanmarers endure brutality

■ Jenan Taylor

The Australian representative of Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government has called for Christians to show solidarity in efforts to address the country's brutal military regime.

Dr Tun Aung Shwe asked Christians to share their love for and pray for the Myanmar community during a recent service at Holy Trinity Port Melbourne.

Speaking as a guest, Dr Shwe described the recent Easter massacre in Myanmar during which the country's junta airforce attacked and killed several civilians.

Myanmar has long struggled with civil strife and repressive rule, but a military coup in 2021 wrecked plans for democratic reform.

Dr Shwe said despite the on-going repression, members of the Burmese

community held on to a deep sense of optimism which helped them remain resilient. He said their love of freedom and of hope encouraged them that their human rights and democracy would be restored, a sense that they hoped to keep alive in the younger generation.

An organiser of the April National Day of Prayer for Just Peace in Myanmar said that diaspora communities in Australia reflected that optimistic outlook.

Baptist Union of Victoria multicultural consultant the Reverend Meewong Yang said she hoped to see more public awareness about the trouble in the region.

"The yearning of our hearts is that those with power to end the violence will do so. That those who know this is wrong, perhaps some of the military, will walk away from the company of the perpetrators," Ms Yang said.



Dr Tun Aung Shwe. Picture: supplied

Aid spending up, but lagging inflation

■ Maya Pilbrow

The recent federal budget will stabilise Australia's overseas aid spending after years of neglect, but it will still rank near the bottom of OECD nations in terms of generosity.

Spending on official development assistance has increased by \$117 million since the Albanese government's first budget in October according to the Australian Council For International Development. Official development assistance now stands at \$4.77 billion.

Micah Australia national director Matt Darvas said he was pleased the Labor government committed to increased aid spending but saw the budget as filling a funding hole left by the previous government.

"Australian aid was left in quite a strong downward position when the last government left office," he said.

Mr Darvas said Australian spending on aid as a percentage of gross national income had reached a historic low of 0.19 per cent.

"Inflation is going up. Australia's economy is growing. The aid budget is not keeping pace," he said. "We're becoming less generous."

The budget outlined \$36.8 million over four years in new funds to help the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade deliver Australia's international development and humanitarian assistance program. A new \$1.9 billion government package will support Pacific Island countries over five years.



Picture: iStock.

The government will also spend \$8.8 million on disaster risk reduction and preparedness in the Pacific and give \$14 million to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund.

ACFID policy and advocacy advisor Brigid O'Farrell said the 2023 budget put international development on a steadier footing following cuts to the aid programme in recent years.

But Ms O'Farrell said funding increases had to be understood in the context of inflation and overall spending.

She said aid spending had gone from 0.71 per cent of the overall budget in October last year to 0.7 per cent this year.

This year's budget focuses on five key areas. These are delivering cost-of-living relief, strengthening Medicare, growing the economy, broadening opportunity and strengthening the budget. Spending

measures include a \$11.3 billion pay rise for aged care workers, \$5.7 billion to improve Medicare, \$2.2 billion to amend the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and \$3 billion on energy bill relief.

Anglican Overseas Aid chief executive Jo Knight said she was pleased the budget addressed climate impacts in the Pacific, but was disappointed by funding reductions for other regions.

Funding for Sub-Saharan Africa reduced by 15.6 per cent over last year according to ACFID, despite a food security crisis in the Horn of Africa that Ms Knight said was approaching famine conditions.

Ms Knight said government spending was needed to address humanitarian crises.

"We can do lots with the support of the Australian public, but there are times when you need the scale of government to step in."

Millions more face starvation amid Sudan conflict

■ Jenan Taylor

Conflict in Sudan is putting pressure on food programmes in the region amid one of the worst hunger crises on record, aid officials have warned.

The United Nations Refugee Agency estimated that 100,000 people had fled Sudan, a number that could surge to 800,000 in coming weeks. Hundreds of thousands more are internally displaced.

The fighting in Sudan erupted in mid-April after a power struggle between two rival military groups turned violent, according to *The Guardian*.

UN World Food programme representatives reported on 8 May that up to 19 million people could struggle to find a meal a day. This is four million more than 2022.

Anglican Overseas Aid said in South

Sudan where its partners operated, escalating numbers of displaced people had crossed the border adding to the existing pressures in refugee camps.

Disaster Response and Resilience Coordinator Tim Hartley said food insecurity in the Horn of Africa was already heightened because flooding in South Sudan, and prolonged drought in other areas had destroyed crops.

Mr Hartley said that AOA through its partners delivered cash and voucher assistance to the neediest in the communities.

He said even though the assistance amounted to US\$60 per household, it usually had direct effect because people chose how they spent it. But the influx of people limited the effect of that assistance because it sent prices up while cash amounts remained at US\$60, Mr Hartley said.

But he said another effect of the fighting was the lack of security in bordering areas. This made it difficult for AOA's partners to deliver aid and to even travel to target communities, because of access considerations and security costs.

UNWFP said in early May that the security situation in Sudan was precarious and that the program had to consider the security and the safety of its workers before it could decide where to distribute food.

In May the federal government announced \$6 million in relief for the area, with \$1 million pledged to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the remainder to international partners. But humanitarian authorities say Sudan needs more, urging the government to commit \$25 million to support peace and development.



First service of newly merged parish

About 85 people make up the new congregation of St Alban's and St Augustine's Merri-Bek.

Picture: supplied

■ Maya Pilbrow

A newly merged congregation has run its first combined service, bringing together the parishes of St Augustine's and St Alban's Merri-bek.

The two congregations became one during the service in the St Alban's building, where the Reverend Angela Cook was affirmed as vicar of the new parish by Bishop Genieve Blackwell.

Ms Cook said the church was full, with around 85 people attending from both the St Alban's and St Augustine's communities.

Parishioners previously from St Augustine's enjoyed exploring the new church grounds, Ms Cook said.

"There were about 15 children having the time of their lives in the sandpit," she said.

Ms Cook said one parishioner brought a cake decorated with the parish's emblem.

Bishop Blackwell said St Alban's had started as a daughter parish of the original St Augustine's a 100 years ago.

She said a stained-glass window depicting the Good Shepherd in St Alban's had originally come from St Augustine's.

Bishop Blackwell said the readings that day included the passage from John chapter 10 where Jesus says he is the Good Shepherd.

"It's a beautiful culmination, isn't it? For various reasons we chose [April 30] and the reading turned out to be 'I am the Good Shepherd,'" she said.

Churchwarden Shane Giliam said it was fun to see everyone and get to know people he hadn't met before.

"It was really good to meet together. God in the Bible does call us to meet together as His people," he said.

Ancient, holy music returns to Melbourne churches

■ Kirralee Nicolle

Melbourne churches are being offered performances of ancient church music to help them access contemplative worship forms by a newly-formed group of choral singers.

Chorus Ecclesiae is a choral group of mixed professional and volunteer singers offering performances of Gregorian chanting and sacred polyphony, which is a kind of liturgical music from the early Renaissance era to churches across Melbourne.

Director and conductor Shanti Michael said she hoped to make Gregorian chanting and sacred polyphony a living heritage for the church.

"For worship purposes, you never really want a heritage to die out," she said.

Ms Michael said the group formed to provide more paid opportunities to church musicians and offer churches a chance to enjoy traditional forms of music, they might not otherwise be able to afford. She said

she wanted congregants to hear the music and see its value without feeling that the atmosphere of their church was changing.

Ms Shanti said these musical forms were an established tradition in some Melbourne churches, but not all churches could access it.

She said that during her upbringing in a Catholic church, she had encountered Gregorian chanting. But she didn't enjoy it until she started participating in the form and realised how relevant it was to liturgy and church events.

"When I started doing it, I realized how beautiful it was," she said. "And when done well, it is very transcendent."

Ms Michael said that as a woman of colour, there were few classical directors with her cultural heritage. She said directors in this area were incredibly talented and experienced, but it was important to create pathways for women and women of colour to lead in church choral music.

Ms Michael said a combination of grants, donations, fundraising and crowdsourcing funded Chorus Ecclesiae. She said they were very grateful to the Reverend Dr Alex Ross at St John's East Malvern and St Agnes' Glen Huntly for an initial seed grant and the chance to perform.

Dr Ross said Chorus Ecclesiae provided a service which was often be taken for granted. He said what they had to offer was useful for the wider diocese to be able to benefit from the gifts of musicians.

He said Gregorian chanting and sacred polyphony were once typical of church music but had also attained popularity in secular spaces. Father Ross said they provided a contemplative space for worship which spoke to the mystery of God.

"I think that there's a beauty and a holiness to the music which invites us in," he said. "It's really a way of bringing it back to its roots and bringing us back to church to enjoy it."

Ministry aims to ease money squeeze

■ Jenan Taylor

A Cockatoo church's financial aid ministry is trying to ease hardship for an increasing number of people through its no interest loan scheme.

South East No Interest Loans says it has experienced a surge in new loan accounts and that in February alone it had approved more than 97 loans.

Manager Sue Barbieri said prior to COVID the Emerald-based office was handling about 80 loans a month, and that that had dropped to 60 a month during pandemic restrictions.

Ms Barbieri said there were now more than 750 loans on her team's books, the highest number in its 15-year-old history.

No interest loan programs are an initiative of Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand aimed at providing Australians with access to safe and affordable credit. They are funded by the federal government's Department of Social Services in partnership with National Australia Bank.

According to Good Shepherd from September 2022 to February 2023, its no interest loans impacted almost 40,000 people in Australian households compared to 31,274 at the same time the previous year.

Ms Barbieri said in recent years her team had started to look after the finances of people in the local hills area as well as

those in Cranbourne and Pakenham, and as far away as the Mornington Peninsula.

She believed that while the current financial climate drove many loan applications, domestic violence and mental health issues also played a role.

"It's an extra bonus that, even if we don't verbalise it to community members in need, we can act as Jesus would in their lives."

Sue Barbieri

Ms Barbieri said most applications were for car repairs, white goods and school essentials. She said the loans were designed to avoid placing approved applicants under any added hardship, while combatting predatory lending initiatives.

She said in one instance, an applicant who had lived in the rough was finally able to secure a caravan.

Ms Barbieri said it was likely that without access to the no interest loan, he and others like him would turn to payday loans or to unacceptable money lenders.

Some might even face eviction, be forced into rental agreements or just go without, she said.

In 2021 Melbourne University research found that payday style financial products tended to entrench disadvantage by charging added fees, among other practices.

A parishioner at St Luke's Cockatoo, Ms Barbieri said the program started when the church together with Monash Health, the local neighbourhood house and a township committee, identified a need for community financial counselling for the area's many disadvantaged families.

Ms Barbieri said the staff and volunteers were the busiest they had ever been, but that they had a heart for wanting to make people's lives easier.

She said because the loans didn't cover money for food, groceries and utilities, the service often worked in conjunction with the church's other ministries, including its food aid initiative, to stretch their capacity to provide help for people.

Ms Barbieri said she had done pastoral care work, including helping with funerals, and that her faith had a great deal of bearing on her focuses.

Set to retire before being asked to head South East NILS, Ms Barbieri said the work had brought extra opportunities to help change people's lives.

"It's an extra bonus that, even if we don't verbalise it to community members in need, we can act as Jesus would in their lives," Ms Barbieri said.



Staff and volunteers at South East No Interest Loans.

Picture: supplied

We must support people in hospital

We were dismayed to see that the Anglican hospital chaplaincy program is to be defunded, a decision which will reduce outreach, the reverse of the espoused position of the diocese. Hospital chaplaincy is the very service an outward-facing church should provide.

Hospital chaplains bring the church to people, there when a person is most in need, available to talk about spiritual things, most importantly, from an overtly Anglican perspective. The inevitable result of defunding the health chaplaincy service is that there will be a marked reduction in these conversations. Patients will be less comforted, spiritual conversations will be less frequent, their spiritual needs less likely to be addressed and they will have fewer opportunities to receive the sacraments.

The suggested Anglican alternative is for parish priests to do more. Most priests already visit parishioners in hospital, but no parish priest can spend much time in a hospital with people who aren't parishioners, even if they could get hospital permission to do so. What is planned is less support for parishioners in need, no support for non-parishioners, and additional work for already overburdened parish priests.

Otherwise we have a hope for a magic pudding from government to emerge to provide additional spiritual support, naively equating the work of hospital employed spiritual care practitioners and church chaplains.

The de-funding of hospital chaplaincy is a symptom of a church withdrawing unto itself. It is a church reducing opportunities to support people when they are most in need.

Di Clark and Stephen Duckett

St Peter's Eastern Hill.

Di is an Honorary Lay Pastoral Minister and Anglican hospital chaplain. In a previous role, Stephen was responsible for health department funding for hospital chaplaincy.

A Voice is justice

With regard to the point of Jeffrey Fong (May 2023) that every group in our community should have a representative in the Voice to Parliament, he and those of that opinion have overlooked one important point.

Our constitution mentions only one group specifically, giving the federal government the right to make laws about Aboriginal Australians. There is no mention of Chinese, Vietnamese, African or Jewish Australians

in the Constitution. So, if Aboriginal Australians are specifically mentioned in the Constitution already, there is no injustice in the Voice for being only for them.

It is also important to recognise that there were no Chinese, Vietnamese, African or Jewish people among the first inhabitants of this country. The Voice will allow the formal recognition that Aboriginal Australian were already here.

Experience of this constitutional provision for making laws affecting Aboriginal Australians has shown that federal governments need such a Voice to advise them about the needs they must meet and the situations they need to take into account.

Edward Millar

Frankston

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Mental health is a daily struggle for many people. We must love them

■ Nils von Kalm

For most of my adult life, I have struggled with anxiety and depression. For millions of Australians like me, mental health is not just an abstract “issue” people talk about. It is a daily struggle.

Being a Christian has sometimes exacerbated these struggles. Misunderstanding, moralising and over-spiritualising are common in the church. Thankfully though, the church is also a place where I have received the most beautiful love and compassion.

Whatever the response has been, the church has an opportunity to show more love to the millions of people in this country who struggle with mental health. Australia has some of the highest rates of mental illness in the world. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as of July 2022:

- More than 40 per cent of Australians aged 16-85 have experienced a mental disorder at some time in their life.
- More than 20 per cent of us have had a 12-month mental disorder.
- Anxiety is the most common group of 12-month mental disorders, affecting more than three million Australians.
- Young people are particularly affected. Almost 40 per cent of Australians aged 16-24 years have a 12-month mental disorder.

Statistics are easy to quote, but I ache inside when I remember that these are people's lives. Chances are that you either know someone in the above categories, or you yourself are experiencing a mental disorder.

The church has a mixed record when it comes to approaching mental health. I have heard and read many stories of love, compassion and healing for mentally ill people in the church. On the other hand, only just over a third (37 per cent) of Australian church attenders said the support they received from their church for their mental illness was adequate, according to the most recent National Church Life Survey.

I have heard too many stories of moralising and over-spiritualising of mental health in the church. They include admonitions to “just pray more”, that their mental illness is a sin, or that they “have a demon”. Such responses are not only ineffective, they are abusive and are therefore the very antithesis



Picture: iStock

“If someone is struggling with mental illness and you have absolutely no idea how to help, it's ok. Just go and be with them.”

Nils von Kalm

of a Christian response.

We wouldn't give advice like this to someone with a broken leg. So, why would we give it to someone with a mental illness?

The British researcher and author, Johann Hari, in his book, *Last Connections*, says that the question we need to ask those who struggle is not, “what's wrong with you?”, but, “what happened to you?”. Ask anyone struggling with mental illness and you will most often hear about severe trauma they have experienced at some point in their lives. As such, compassion is the only adequate response.

So, how did Jesus deal with people struggling with what we might describe as mental illness? As is the case today, such people in Jesus' day were among the most marginalised, oppressed, devalued and stigmatised in society. The gospels show that he approached them as people made in the image of God, with full dignity and therefore fully deserving of love.

What then can a compassionate and practical response from the church look like? In my experience, both as someone who has experienced mental illness and someone who works with those suffering, I suggest the following:

- Ask God to give you a sensitivity to people who struggle and to respond with love.

- Saturate yourself in the gospels until you see the overflowing compassion of Jesus for people who struggle.
- Learn the stories of people with mental illness. Listen to them and tell them you hear them.
- Don't give advice unless it is asked for.
- If you tell people you are there for them, make sure you are. People struggling with their mental health have experienced enough rejection and empty promises.

It's ok if you feel inadequate in knowing what to do. Often we don't know what to say, or we think that if we do say something, it will just make it worse. So, we don't get involved. Meanwhile, the person needing help suffers alone.

You may have heard the old story of the grandfather who was depressed. Many people went to him to help. They spoke to him, gave him all sorts of advice, tried to cheer him up, but nothing worked. One day, after a little child spent time with him, the grandfather felt a lot better. Everyone was amazed, and they asked the child what she did. The child said, “Nothing; I just sat there with him and didn't say anything”.

Never underestimate the power of loving presence. If someone is struggling with mental illness and you have absolutely no idea how to help, it's ok. Just go and be with them. You might just save their life.

If you or a loved one need support, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636. If life is in danger, phone Triple Zero (000). Nils von Kalm is a Melbourne writer who focuses on the links between Christian faith and culture. He can be found online at linktr.ee/nilsvonkalm.

Lay ministry a homecoming for ex-OT

■ Maya Pilbrow

Josephine Snowdon has been thinking about trauma for a long time.

A former occupational therapist turned full-time lay chaplain, Ms Snowdon's career and faith have been driven by a desire to help people manage the pain in their lives.

Ms Snowdon said lay chaplains such as herself were capable of supporting people in a wide variety of ways. She has worked in hospitals as well as in disability support, social welfare programs and aged care.

Ms Snowdon said lay chaplains provided many services, including bedside prayers, helping people manage transitions of health and guiding those facing questions of faith.

She said she felt blessed to enable others spiritually but her journey to lay ministry was not straightforward.

Ms Snowdon grew up in a non-observant Christian household. Her paternal grandfather had been an Anglican minister. She and her siblings were all baptised, but the family didn't go to church on Sundays.

She recalls seeing family members struggle with mental health and trauma from a young age.

As a teenager, Ms Snowdon was invited by chance to a Scripture Union youth camp where she met likeminded young people and experienced a spiritual awakening.

She was confirmed in her faith and became involved with the Church Missionary Society. She also began exploring theology more, looking at the relationship between trauma and faith.

As a student Ms Snowdon was drawn to occupational therapy, seeing it as a practical way to help those dealing with traumatic experiences. Working in this field during the 1980s and 1990s, she helped people with physical and other types of rehabilitation.

Ms Snowdon said she always had the sense a person's spirituality was central to how they managed their life. It was an unpopular belief at this time among most occupational therapists.

"It was very 'medical model,'" she said. "There's often a chasm between the spiritual type of thinking and the medical type."

In the mid-1990s a shift happened when Canadian research suggested spirituality should be incorporated into the OT model.

Ms Snowdon said these developments prompted her to begin studying theology, pastoral care and ministry. This led to her entry into chaplaincy.

But Ms Snowdon said at university there was a focus was on seeking ordination. It felt as if ordination was seen as the only worthwhile endpoint of theological study. That wasn't what she was aiming for.

Ms Snowdon said she enjoyed the freedom of conducting theological research in spirituality and disability, but she faced some difficulties in this area.

She said her background in OT gave her valuable and valid insights into people's spirituality, especially those with disability. She said understanding spirituality in people with disability could challenge some traditional theological perspectives.

She said lay ministry was a way to provide practical outcomes and spiritual direction to people in need.

During her time working at Anglicare agency Samaritans in Newcastle she worked with staff delivering services to families in stress with children going into care, people being released from prison, people living with disability and victims of natural disasters.

However, her chaplaincy position was made redundant during a wave of cost cutting in 2021.

Ms Snowdon said lay vocations needed more support. She said ordained people were often prioritised for chaplaincy positions but lay ministry was an opportunity to explore new ways of doing things, using the skills of people in the community.

Ms Snowdon said lay chaplains usually understood spirituality as broader than religion, given that many people might not have faith backgrounds. She said older people might have a matured faith that was broader than when they were young and that people with disability might have different understandings of religious concepts and perceptions of their faith.

Ms Snowdon said she was focused on her current work as a lay chaplain at an aged care residential community as well as advocating for and creating opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in parish life.

Nevertheless, she said her experiences in lay chaplaincy made her feel she was fulfilling her calling.

"It's like coming home to your central self," she said.



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Arabic Christians find refuge in Coburg

■ Maya Pilbrow

When the Reverend Canon Farag Hanna began serving as a locum at Holy Trinity Coburg, the Anglican parish had five Arabic speakers.

Now the church's Sunday services in Arabic regularly see hundreds of people.

Mr Hanna, who has served at Holy Trinity since 2016, said between 40 and 50 people had joined the church each year for the past seven years.

Many have Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi backgrounds.

Mr Hanna said the church supported families attending, many of whom had fled dangerous situations in the Middle East and arrived as refugees.

"They came here, they lost everything. They are broken, emotionally, financially, spiritually, physically," he said.

Mr Hanna said he and his wife Ragaa would go with parishioners to appointments at hospitals, prisons, schools, and Centrelink offices to help translate and offer moral support.

He said his family were crucial to helping parishioners feel welcomed and at home in the church.

Mr Hanna said it was important for parishioners to know that the church supported them and would hear their problems.

He said Anglicanism was new to most of the parishioners who came from Orthodox, Catholic and nondenominational churches, while a few families had converted from Islam.

Mr Hanna grew up in Egypt in an Orthodox family. He lived in a majority Muslim community and said he never paid much attention to his faith growing up.

He said he knew very little about Christianity until he met some Christian



The Reverend Canon Farag Hanna with his family outside Holy Trinity Coburg.

Picture: supplied

students at university when he was 19 who read the Bible with him and introduced him to theological discussions.

Mr Hanna said it was a dangerous time to be Christian in Egypt during this period. He said it was risky for his Christian friends to visit him, but they persisted.

After several weeks, he said he spent an entire night praying by himself in his room.

"I was asking God, 'Who is right?' Are the Muslim people right, are Christians right, are the Orthodox right, or Protestants?" he said.

Mr Hanna said he experienced a moment of clarity, as if a light had turned on.

He hurried to see his Christian friends at university, and they encouraged him to study

theology at with the Presbyterian Church.

After six months, he went home and started the first evangelical church in his village. Mr Hanna said he faced persecution for running a church where Muslims converted to Christianity, so he left Egypt and moved to Jordan.

He said he began teaching at a school run by the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem, where he first encountered Anglicanism.

Mr Hanna said growing up in the Middle East, he had seen many different types of worship and he liked the accessibility of the Anglican liturgy.

Mr Hanna said his own journey to faith helped him connect with Arabic families who often had no experience of Anglicanism.

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A constitutional monarch may prevent a

■ Michael Bird

As I watched the coronation of King Charles III, I was in two-minds as to whether this was an unholy and grotesque syncretism of church and state, or whether it was a testimony to how the Christian gospel has formed the peoples of the United Kingdom. The answer: most likely, it was a bit of both.

Yet as I watched the proceedings, it reminded me of why I have proudly recanted my former ill-informed republican sympathies and turned to support Australia remaining a constitutional monarchy.

The best argument for constitutional monarchy is that it separates authority (majesty, sovereignty, honour, and dignity) from power (the capacity to coerce and make demands). In our Christianised constitutional monarchy God alone is King. The national monarch serves by divine providential appointment and with the consent of those so governed, while a prime minister serves at the monarch's pleasure, as duly elected by the people.

We could say this: God is the ultimate authority. The monarch is the penultimate authority as the living symbol of the majesty



The Reverend Dr Michael Bird

of the people. The prime minister and his or her government has antepenultimate authority as the civil power.

The advantage is that no government of any party or of any persuasion can hold ultimate authority and wield unfettered power. No one person can combine, either through demagoguery or despotism, both authority and power.

The role of the monarch is rather like the function of the king in a game of chess as

theologian D.B. Hart explains in *A Splendid Wickedness*: "The ideal king would rather be like the king in chess: the most useless piece on the board, which occupies its square simply to prevent any other piece from doing so, but which is somehow still the whole [point of the game]."

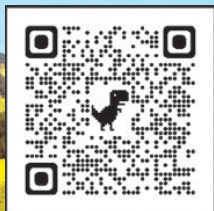
In the past, I've supported Australia becoming a republic because the head of the Australian state should be an Australian! But I have come around to supporting a monarch as a head of state pretty much for the reason that Hart lays out.

In chess, the king is the most important piece, he must be defended. In fact, the whole game, the entire strategy, rides on protecting the king. And yet, the king is one of the most impotent pieces of the board, scarcely better than a pawn, and is certainly not an attacking piece. That's what a head of state should be! He or she has authority, but no power.

In our age, the monarch should have authority as the one who sits above the table of partisan politics, who embodies the majesty, sovereignty, and dignity of the people so governed ... and yet is powerless. Power should reside in the elected officials who

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descent into despotism

govern with the consent of the governed. They manage the affairs of the state to which the monarch gives token approval.

The separation of king and Parliament means there is a separation of authority and power. And the sole purpose of the king is to make sure no evil maleficent ever gets his or her grubby hands on both authority and power. The king should be a symbol of gloriously powerless authority. The king should hold authority over the power so that those in authority can never be all-powerful.

A constitutional monarchy, even if inhabited by dim-witted, geriatric, whose only achievement is turning up to flag-waving ceremonies, having tea and scones with the chief executive of a charity, or even breeding spoiled, attention-craving brats, may turn out to be one of the most efficient ways of staving off a descent of one's country from democracy to despotism.

Yes, I am quite aware that we must wrestle with the sins of absolute monarchy and the evils of the British Empire, that task cannot be shirked off. However, a constitutional monarchy, rooted in Christian tradition, a tradition that gave birth to liberal democracy, with a separation of authority

and power is, I submit, wholly preferable to the fratricidal and fascist impulses that always cast a shadow over republicanism.

And so ...

Everlasting God, we pray for our new King, Charles III.

Bless his reign and the life of our nation.

Help us to work together so that

truth and justice, harmony and fairness

*flourish among us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

God bless the commonwealth. Long live the King!

Michael Bird is an Anglican priest and academic dean at Ridley College in Melbourne.



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Debra Saffrey-Collins (Rev'd)
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Even at work, we live in God's kingdom

Alan Gijsbers at ISCAST (Christians in science and technology) reflects on the shape and form of God's kingdom for the working life of a believing scientist.

Jesus taught his followers to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done."

So, what does this mean for believing scientists today? And for that matter, for anyone involved in work, paid or unpaid? How does our Christian faith affect our daily work, our homes, our politics?

The shape and form of Christ's kingdom

It may seem odd to discuss kingdom in these days of democratisation and republicanism, but Christians believe God rules the universe and that Jesus is our Lord and King.

However, Jesus, by word and deed, deeply challenged traditional views of kingship and authority. He was born in Bethlehem, away from the seats of power like Jerusalem and Rome. He entered Jerusalem on a donkey, not a war-horse. His only crown was a crown of thorns. His glory was the shame of the cross. When confronted by Pontius Pilate, Jesus observed that his kingdom is not of this world, but that his kingdom was more powerful and lasting than the might of Rome. So, any attempt to pray, "Your kingdom come," must grapple with the very nature of what that kingdom might be.

Has the kingdom come or is it coming?

Has the kingdom come, or is it still to come? Jesus came preaching and demonstrating the kingdom and said that the kingdom was among us. However, just before his ascension he told his disciples that he would not restore the kingdom to Israel, but that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit to witness to him to the ends of the earth until he came again.

Christians have been accused of longing for the "pie in the sky when you die," so that they are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly use. But Jürgen Moltmann, in his *Theology of Hope*, rightly points out that the prospect of the kingdom means we will always be dissatisfied with the status quo and therefore we will work hard towards that kingdom which is yet to come (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 15:58). The prospect of a kingdom future spurs us to work towards that future with confidence and hope.



Associate Professor Alan Gijsbers.

"As responsible Christians and scientists we need to live within the laws of science as we imperfectly understand them, at the same time as we seek to honour God."

Alan Gijsbers

Our "social imaginary"

Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age* coined the term "social imaginary" for the way we collectively imagine our social and intellectual life. More than "worldview," it considers how we believe, feel, and imagine our collective world to be. Christians need to grapple with a Social Imaginary of Christ's kingdom in their work.

In praying "Your kingdom come, your will be done," believers are asking for the unseen world of God to impact on the seen world of the everyday.

Scientists think naturalistically, within the frame of the seen world, whereas Christians think supernaturally – the world of God impinging on the world we live in. We think this way because we believe this is how the world came to be – God's creative word created the world. Yet we have learnt through experience that we cannot think magically that God will somehow intervene in unexpected ways. Thus, I cannot, as a Christian doctor, support the action of a patient with insulin dependent diabetes who wants to throw

away his insulin because he believes God will heal him. Within a day or two he will become very sick. This will only be fixed by re-administering insulin. So, I will do everything in my power to persuade the patient to take insulin, but I also recognise the patient's right (however misguided) to refuse treatment. In this instance, prayer is directed towards persuading the patient to make wise decisions within the real world we live in, not the fanciful world he would like to live in. As responsible Christians and scientists we need to live within the laws of science as we imperfectly understand them, at the same time as we seek to honour God.

Righteousness and justice: The expectation of the kingdom

Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness. The first testament points to a chosen people governed by God's laws of righteousness, justice, and mercy. In exile, God's people dreamt of the day of the Lord when a chosen one would banish evil and establish God's reign. This dream under Roman occupation was the context of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom: the spread of justice and righteousness. How this works out in practice will vary for different scientists and technologists, but it will mean being scrupulously honest, just, and fair in all our dealings. This might mean, for instance, to fairly honour the research team which contributed to the new discovery rather than only the professor. In clinical practice it will mean caring fairly for rich and poor alike. But Christ's righteousness is much more than simple law-keeping. It is the outgoing righteousness which embraces the broken and the lost and transforms them into followers of Jesus.

The openness and hiddenness of the kingdom

Jesus teaches his disciples to be light in darkness, so that our good works may bring glory to God, but Jesus also uses metaphors like yeast to point to the hiddenness of the kingdom. It does not go forward through showy public display but through hidden goodness which affects those we live among. For example, in my former clinical practice of addiction medicine this meant a compassionate continual acceptance of people who were often broken and ashamed. The kingdom does not impose its will by force but by the winning of hearts and minds into willing obedience. The kingdom does not use disgraceful or



Picture: iStock

underhanded ways to impose its rule on people. On the contrary, open integrity is part of kingdom values.

Living out kingdom righteousness in a pluralist secular society

Christians are called out of their ghettos and into society. We cannot exist in a parallel world practicing our science isolated from those of other religious persuasions or none. Nor can we leave our Christian commitments at the door and go into work value-free. We live out kingdom righteousness in our work, but we do so in such a way that the honour (not the dishonour) goes to God and not to ourselves.

Righteousness does not only belong to those of faith. God's great providence provides for people of other faiths and no faith to make substantial contributions to the growth in science and technology, which we can all enjoy.

“[The kingdom] ... does not go forward through showy public display but through hidden goodness which affects those we live among.”

Alan Gijsbers

Shaping work in the light of the kingdom

The following examples may help us see how we can meet this challenge:

- An agricultural engineer looking at the science and theology of different forms of traction on farms – from human effort to horses and bullocks to farm machinery.
- Astronomers discovering the wonders of the universe.

- Geologists discovering minerals and mining them in an ecologically responsible way.
- Infectious disease specialists discovering new treatments for community health.
- The discoverer of the electronic ear.
- The restoration of underground forests to replenish a barren landscape.
- Faithful STEM teachers inspiring the next generation of scientists and technologists.

We hope this article can stimulate others to explore what Christ's kingdom looks like in their work.

University of Melbourne Associate Professor Alan Gijsbers is a retired addiction physician and past president of ISCAST. Examples of authors' explorations in applying the kingdom of God to specific fields of work can be found on the ISCAST website at bit.ly/ISCASTKingdomProject.

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Thinking about planting a church?

Recruitment is a vital phase

■ Peter Carolane

There are many different methods of church planting, but they all have three things in common. First, nothing happens without the Holy Spirit empowering and enabling the process. Second, there needs to be a church planter with a vision, skills and energy. Third, there needs to be a team who are willing to join the planter. Plants also usually need a fourth thing: seed funding.

I have most experience with the approach where a church of 200 or more sends a planter and a team of members to establish a new church. This is what we did in 2013 when St Hilary's Kew-North Balwyn sent me to plant Merri Creek Anglican in Clifton Hill.

Then vicar of St Hilary's Stephen Hale, gave me freedom to approach anybody from its congregation to ask if they would consider leaving to be part of the plant. About 40 people (including children) came, and about 15 joined from outside St Hilary's.

People will join a church planting team if they trust the leader and the vision excites them. Therefore, a church planter must be able to win confidence and convey a compelling vision. They have to confidently

look someone in the eye and make the entrepreneur's pitch:

"Would you join my new church plant? I can only tell you roughly where the Sunday services will be located, I don't know exactly how we'll fund the plant. We haven't yet decided the name. And I don't yet know what time the Sunday services will be."

"Any potential recruit will be thinking: Does this vision excite me?"

Peter Carolane

"However, I can tell you what my hopes and dreams are. I can tell you the reasons why I want to plant a church. I can pinpoint the kind of people I'm hoping to reach. I can also tell you the ministry values I want us to embody. But you can also help influence the vision. What kind of church would you like to be part of? What are your priorities? Perhaps we could incorporate your dreams and ideas into the plans?"

The first of the pitch paragraphs is what

scares some people away. The second of the paragraphs is what gets a different kind of person very excited. But any potential recruit will be thinking: Does this vision excite me? Does the leader have what it takes to pull this off? Do I want them as my minister? Will I and or my children have friends in this new church? If the answer is yes to most of those questions, they may join.

The challenge of this recruitment phase should not be underestimated. Much prayer is required. I find that if God wants this plant to happen, then the Holy Spirit will be ahead of the process, working in people's hearts, and preparing them to join.

St Hilary's provided significant seed funding and administrative support for the first few years of the life of Merri Creek. But we were responsible for our own process. If the seed funding ran out, it ran out. We were released into the world to fend for ourselves, but we had been given the necessary help to make sure we could survive.

The Reverend Dr Peter Carolane is senior minister at Merri Creek Anglican.

This is the final of a four-part series on different models of church planting.



Picture: iStock.

Grey Spaces: Interesting questions, but not radical enough

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■ Leigh Mackay

Jeffrey W. Driver, Grey Spaces: Searching Out the Church in the Shadows of Abuse. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2022.

Bishop Driver loves the church and this book is a labour of love. His journey is to reflect deeply on the Royal Commission's exposure of the Anglican Church's failure in recognising and dealing with sexual abuse.

As a former Diocesan Registrar, I found the early chapters helpful to understand the evolution of church structures and how power is largely exercised by the clergy. To be a holy creation and part of the world will always be a difficult balancing act. Working for the church I met the best people I've ever encountered – and the worst. All mixed up together. But encountering the best made it worthwhile.

Bishop Driver draws a number of conclusions:

- “The church [is] out of step with the world around it and responding in ways ... contrary to its own foundational message.”
- Practises and structures supported by tradition have become rigid and less amenable to question and change.
- “The Royal Commission was particularly scathing about how the bishops

“To be a holy creation and part of the world will always be a difficult balancing act.”

Leigh Mackay

contributed to the tragedy of abuse ... in their own leadership, within structures of governance, and in their responsibility for the culture of the dioceses they served.”

In summary, Bishop Driver writes, “[there is] a growing discord between the structures, leadership, and vocational culture of the church and its missional context.”

He then explores some ways to think about these systemic issues. As a retired archbishop he has considerable standing to offer his thoughts. And some are radical. For example, to mitigate against a repeat of past errors he calls for the church (and synod in particular) to be a “space for conflict, critique, and sustained disagreement.” He also acknowledges the cultural challenges this will involve.

But in the unescapable tension between episcopal ministry and management, he is of the view that when they get too close

“the risk is that the latter colonizes the former.” It is unclear what he means. In my experience, in this classic example of clergy-meet-lay space the bishops have the numbers. And the number of Anglican dioceses in severe financial straits I suggest supports my view.

Interestingly Bishop Driver does not mention gender. The influx of so many women into the ranks of the ordained 20-30 years ago had a profound impact on the vocational culture of the Anglican Church. Perhaps it was because so many were of mature age and had such diverse life experiences. It offers a potential case study of how to embrace change.

There are a few sections where Bishop Driver moves from the academic to the personal. They reveal the costliness of his journey and heighten the impact of this important book.

While I think Bishop Driver has not been radical enough, this book does “lift the lid” and pose interesting questions. I wonder who will read this short, dense book and what Anglican synod will be brave enough to engage with the real issues this book identifies.

Leigh Mackay OAM was registrar of the Diocese of Melbourne from 1995 to 2001, and is Canon Emerita of St Paul's Cathedral.

IT STARTS WITH RESPECT

Picture: Dreamstime

- On average, one woman a week in Australia is killed by a partner or former partner.
- 1 in 6 women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15.
- Australian women are almost four times more likely than men to be hospitalised after being assaulted by their spouse or partner.*

*Sources: Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) 2017, 2017 National Homicide Monitoring Program report; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2019, Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story; and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2018, Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia 2018.

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