

# THE Melbourne Anglican

NOVEMBER 2023, No 630



## A light in the worst times

Emergency chaplain, the Reverend Sion Gough-Hughes really just offers an ear to most people. But for those who have been hit by disaster, it can help them shed their initial shock. For Mr Gough-Hughes, his work means seeing the best of people at the worst of times.

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Bombed hospital  
determined to  
offer care



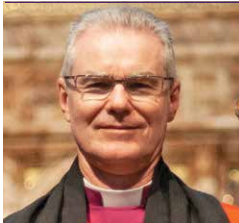
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‘The Church has  
become less safe  
for our people’

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone





# Learn to find the truly sustaining presence of God

## ■ Archbishop Philip Freier

In a world of abundant words Christians must hear the word of God as the resonant and life-giving melody that sustains our journey with Christ.

Stillness, self-reflection and meditation on the words of Scripture are all elements of our listening to God. Like it is with any listening, the competing noise readily distracts us. Our attention is too easily claimed by our desire, our curiosity and our anxiety. Communities of Christians have responded to these realities in a variety of ways.

Whether “driven by the Spirit” or by his own seeking for solitude, there are important times for Jesus when being away from the towns, other people – even his disciples – was important. Finding a place of quietness and separation from the ordinary concerns of life shaped the movement of the desert fathers and mothers of the third century away from the cities and towns of Egypt and Syria into the surrounding desert wilderness. These pioneers have shaped many similar monastic and other movements that seek to imitate Jesus and seek out a quiet and lonely place where they can better pray and experience communion with the Father.

*“Learn to take the journey away from the worldly things that hold your focus so that you might find the truly sustaining presence of God.”*

Plainly enough, Jesus was also highly engaged with the people of his time, meeting them in all sorts of circumstances into which he brought the healing and transforming power of God. It is wonderful how Christian service and acts of love and compassion still cut through the self-centred “noise” of our modern lives and connect us with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. It has been a great delight this year for me to participate in two “student voice” events for high school students from our Anglican schools. I sense something of the same impetus amongst these young people who are eager to speak about their faith and the social transformation they see arising from it. I’m impressed by the faith that these young people have embraced on account of their school participation in worship and

chaplaincy as well as through what they describe as the faith informed “ethos” of their schools.

Music, both soft and loud, also serves to carry the “life giving melody” of Christ’s proclamation to us in worship. A loud organ or high-volume band certainly overwhelms the other sounds that are around us and, along with hymnody, can bring us to a point of clear focus on God. It is likely that personal preference is divided on the question of how loud the music is but there is no doubt that a powerful, even visceral, experience of God’s presence is the outcome for many. It would be interesting to understand if the seekers of solitude also prefer the quieter melodies.

However it works for you, and I’m sure there are many other things that could be added, learn to take the journey away from the worldly things that hold your focus so that you might find the truly sustaining presence of God. “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6.6)

*Philip Melbourne*

## THE Melbourne Anglican



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### Vacant Appointments as of 23 October 2023:

St Eanswythe Altona/St Clement Altona Meadows; St Paul, Boronia; Parish of Brimbank; Christ Church, Brunswick [from April 2024]; St Michael, North Carlton; St John, Camberwell; St Philip, Collingwood; Redemption Church, Craigieburn [from January 2024]; St John the Divine, Croydon; St Mark, Fitzroy; St Paul, Geelong; Christ Church, Melton; St Peter, Murrumbidgee with Holy Nativity Hughesdale; St Aidan Noble Park; St Aidan, Parkdale; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; Mullum Mullum, Ringwood; St Mary, Sunbury; Holy Name of Jesus, Vermont South; St Thomas, Werribee; St John, Wantirna South; St Thomas, Winchelsea.

### Appointments:

**BALDOCK, The Revd John Graham**, appointed Vicar, South Yarra, effective 23 November 2023

**BRAND STARKEY, The Revd Maria Alena**, appointed Vicar, St Barnabas, Glen Waverley, effective with a date yet to be confirmed

**HALE, The Revd James Andrew**, appointed Parish Minister [from Assistant Curate], Parish of Merri Creek, effective 19 October 2023

**POULTER, The Revd Jennifer Marie**, appointed Vicar, Mt Dandenong, effective 16 January 2024

**WAKYEREZA, The Revd Agatha Namarome**, appointed Vicar, St Mark, West Reservoir, effective 6 December 2023

**WHITE, The Revd Samantha Ann**, appointed Vicar, Wheeler’s Hill, effective 17 January 2024

### Permission to Officiate:

**FISHBURN, The Revd Ross**, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 30 December 2023

**MCCOY, The Revd Jill**, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 11 September 2023

**QUESTED, The Revd Fang Ling**, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 27 September 2023

### Resignations:

**CHRISTIANSEN, The Revd Hans**, Senior Chaplain, Melbourne Grammar School, effective 31 December 2023

**FISHBURN, The Revd Ross**, Academic Dean, Yarra Theological Union, effective 30 December 2023

**MCCOY, The Revd Jill**, Incumbent, St Peter’s, Ocean Grove with All Saints, Barwon Heads, effective 11 September 2023

## Clergy Moves



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



Picture: iStock

# Indigenous Christians 'gutted' but will still push for self-determination

■ Jenan Taylor

**Aboriginal Christian leaders say they are frustrated that Australians failed to listen to Indigenous people's calls, after more than 60 per cent of voters rejected a Voice to Parliament.**

Leaders say the outcome seemed to be a rejection of Aboriginal identity, and they were deeply concerned about the vitriol aimed at Indigenous people during the debate.

But they say the outcome has strengthened their resolve to pursue Indigenous self-determination.

trawloolway man the Reverend Canon Dr Garry Deverell said he and many Indigenous Christians felt gutted and would spend a little time trying to get some rest and perspective.

Dr Deverell said he was focusing on encouraging First Nations people to rest on country after they were traumatised by the public discourse leading up to the vote, as it had emboldened racists. He said young people he talked with reported being abused in the streets and trolled online.

Dr Deverell said it was another blow that Melbourne Synod voted to gut a motion that would have committed to work with other Victorian dioceses towards the creation of a permanent representative body of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for Victorian Anglican church. Discussion of the motion was suspended

the day after the synod voted to amend the motion to remove reference to this body.

Dr Deverell said it made him and other Victorian Indigenous Anglican leaders feel that the church was not a safe place for them. He said he had decided to step back informally from the Anglican community for a year to do some discernment because of this.

Speaking through tears, Waka Waka woman Brooke Prentis said it was hard for Aboriginal people to understand their own nation's rejection of them and their call.

The Christian leader and education consultant said it was vital that Aboriginal leaders who could bring healing and hope not stay silent at this moment.

She said it was particularly important to tackle the disinformation that abounded during the referendum campaign.

In contrast, Wiradjuri man, Pastor James Dargin of New Wine Life Church, Wollongong, said he was satisfied at the referendum outcome. He said the Voice was a distraction for those who wanted to push for a republic.

Mr Dargin said he believed the outcome would enable Australians to come together and focus on young people and those who were struggling with sexual abuse, domestic violence, drug dependence and alcoholism.

But Dr Deverell, and Ms Prentis believed that better education for non-Indigenous people and the wider community would be

a step forward on the path to self-determination, which would empower people to make decisions on matters that affected their lives and their communities.

They both criticised a lack of perspective on justice for First Nations' people which they related to many non-Indigenous people's lack of understanding of Indigenous history and experience.

Dr Deverell said more intentional work done with very young people was vital, including better history and cultural literacy programs in schools in poorer areas where there were low education attainment levels.

Dr Deverell said he planned to start campaigning for improved curriculums in schools, in the hope that if there was a similar referendum in 20 years' time, the outcome would be far different.

Ms Prentis said she planned to keep pushing for a truth telling commission, which would help Indigenous people understand their common experiences and non-Indigenous people understand their experiences of injustice.

Mr Prentis said it was education that should happen in churches, workplaces and communities every day.

She said she also hoped to see more Aboriginal Christian leaders given platforms to continue those conversations about truth telling.

But she said it was also up to every Australian, irrespective of their generation, to learn for themselves about the truth.



# Desperate steps for women in limbo

■ Jenan Taylor

**A group of refugee women has called on the federal government to grant permanent visas for all refugees, walking from Canberra to Melbourne to highlight the issue.**

Twenty-two Tamil and Iranian mothers, aged care workers, painters, cleaners, beauticians and hairdressers walked 650 kilometres to campaign for compassionate refugee policies, finishing in October.

The walkers, Refugee Women Action for Visa Equality, also called for work and study rights for all refugees, permanent settlement in Australia for all those from the processing centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, and the repeal of Operation Sovereign Borders with its fast track determination system.

Group member Rathi Barthlote said the women decided to walk because they had become overwhelmed by the anxiety and fear of living with uncertainty about their future. She said they wanted the government to understand what they were going through. Ms Barthlote said the walk was inspired by Sri Lankan refugee Neil Para who was recently granted permanent residency after walking from Ballarat to Sydney, drawing attention to his plight.

The Albanese government announced

a permanent visa pathway for refugees on temporary protection and safe haven enterprise visas in February. But the women, who are on temporary, bridging and expired visas, are among 10,000 refugees left out of the announcement.

Ms Barthlote fled Sri Lanka in 2006 because of the civil war, coming to Australia in 2013. She said she had waited since then for a permanent residency visa.

A carer and a hairdresser, Ms Barthlote said being in limbo meant she had not seen her mother for 18 years, and was not allowed to go back when family members died.

She said among the walkers were mothers with children who had never met their grandparents, and whose children would not be able to go on to higher education.

Ms Barthlote said two students who worked to pay for their studies were also among the walkers. One was studying medicine but dropped out after a few years because she had no way to pay the fees.

Refugee Advocacy Network convenor Marie Hapke said the women walkers had been waiting in limbo for visas for 10 years or more. She said they were among the many asylum seekers who arrived by sea ahead of mid-2013 in this situation, after the Abbott government placed a stay on processing their

claims. Ms Hapke said the fast track determination process the Abbott government introduced, was particularly challenging for refugees. Its many hurdles included an onerous English language requirement and vastly diminished opportunity for refugees to have their cases meaningfully reviewed.

Ms Hapke said it would be hard for refugees, such as the women doing the walk, to sustain hope over an extended period of time, especially if there were few or no prospects at the end.

Among the woman was former aged care worker Mohana who has waited 10 years for permanent residency. In a Facebook video, Mohana said it was anguish to leave her children, but she was walking for security for her family.

A home affairs department spokesperson said the government was focused on providing those who engaged Australia's protection obligations a chance to continue their lives in Australia with certainty and security. They said each protection case was assessed on its merits, taking into account the circumstances of the case and the most current and relevant country of origin information.

Ms Hapke urged Christians who wanted to support the group and other refugees to write to politicians at [bit.ly/RARletter](https://bit.ly/RARletter).



Twenty-two women refugees walked from Melbourne to Canberra for freedom.  
Picture: supplied





Wounded Palestinians at Shifa Hospital after arriving from the bombed Al Ahli hospital.  
Picture: AAP / Abed Khaled

# Gaza Anglican hospital in dire need, determined to continue care

■ Maya Pilbrow

**Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza is determined to continue providing emergency treatment to all people in need, following an attack on hospital grounds that killed hundreds.**

Thousands of people had been sheltering at the Anglican-run hospital when it was bombed on Tuesday 17 October, long-time hospital partners the Anglican Board of Mission and Anglican Overseas Aid said.

As the hospital resumes providing urgent care, experts warn of an oncoming potential massive death toll in Gaza as food, fuel, electricity and water run low following an Israeli blockade.

Anglican Overseas Aid chief executive Jo Knight said Al Ahli Hospital had partially reopened two nights after the attack and was continuing to provide critical care.

Ms Knight said the courage and dedication of the hospital staff was commendable as they were also affected and injured by the attack.

She said seeing the destruction caused by the blast was devastating and felt personal given the decades-long relationship between her organisation and Al Ahli Hospital.

Ms Knight said 5000 to 6000 people had been sheltering in the hospital compound in the days before the blast, with thousands of people moving through the hospital and continuing further south.

She said information was still being confirmed, but Anglican Overseas Aid understood the blast hit a chapel courtyard area within the hospital compound where large numbers of internally displaced people were sheltering.

Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem Hosam Naoum said the Diocese of Jerusalem, which runs the hospital, was determined to keep its institutions open. Archbishop Naoum said two hospital staff members had been injured in the blast which struck a parking lot and courtyard on the hospital grounds.

He said hours before the attack, people had gathered in the hospital courtyard to sing together for peace. Archbishop Naoum said the hospital was a sanctuary for those seeking shelter from airstrikes.

Ms Knight said Australians should call on their federal political representatives to speak up for an immediate ceasefire and to call for the protection of civilians. She said Christians should pray for peace.

Ms Knight said limited humanitarian aid was currently available to Gaza. At the time

of printing, Human Rights Watch said the Israeli government had blocked access to Gaza's water, electricity and fuel after the Hamas attacks that began 7 October.

Ms Knight said resources in Gaza were rapidly running out, and without humanitarian supplies the death toll would be enormous. "We are facing a precipice of humanitarian disaster," she said.

Anglican Board of Mission and AOA are raising funds for medicines, fuel, and food as the hospital continues to provide urgent medical care.

ABM executive director the Reverend Dr John Deane said it would continue to support the hospital and the Diocese of Jerusalem as requested. He said the hospital was a beacon of hope to those in Gaza.

Primate of Australia the Most Reverend Geoffrey Smith echoed the call of Archbishop Naoum for all international parties to help protect civilians.

Archbishop Naoum requested that people stand in solidarity with the church in Palestine and join him in prayer for those affected by the conflict in Israel and Gaza.

Both Israel and Hamas have denied responsibility for the strike. At the time of printing it was yet to be confirmed where the strike originated.

# Green light for health chaplaincy ideas

■ Jenan Taylor

**Anglican hospital chaplains have welcomed plans for a working group to explore alternative health chaplaincy models and funding options, a step requested by Melbourne Synod.**

One chaplain said he was encouraged that AiC would have to develop alternative ideas to keep the program going in some form.

Almost 90 per cent of synod delegates voted to ask Archbishop in Council to create a working group committed to exploring alternative models and funding options.

Motion seconder, the Reverend Christopher Morris said it was a great “green light” for the Church to keep pursuing a valuable ministry.

An Alfred Hospital chaplain, Mr Morris said he felt very affirmed in this ministry to know that an overwhelming majority approved of health chaplaincy.

He said he was encouraged that AiC would have to come up with alternative ideas for continuing the program. The motion asked delegates to recognise the diocese’s financial challenges and regret

its plan to cease funding hospital chaplaincy services.

It asked them to endorse those services’ importance as a critical mission of the church, and note that spiritual care was a vital part of people’s needs in health care.

Synod also debated and rejected an amendment to the hospital chaplaincy motion moved by Dr Muriel Porter.

The amendment sought to change the final clause of the motion, to instead call on Archbishop in Council to urgently reconsider the diocese’s financial plan with the aim of continuing to fund hospital chaplaincy from 1 January 2024.

Dr Porter said hospital chaplaincy was needed especially in the modern age of hospitals, where people without community connections to parish clergy could still be ministered to.

Mr Morris said though the proposed amendment was unrealistic, it was a lovely sentiment and showed many people in the diocese wanted the program to continue.

The diocese announced in April that it would stop funding hospital chaplaincy at the end of 2023, after an organisational review.



Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

## Hopes high as children’s, youth ministry gains support

■ Maya Pilbrow

**Parishes trying to engage with children and young people will be supported by a newly legislated steering committee for children’s and youth ministry, leaders say.**

This may be through helping parishes put in place tailored models for better engaging with young people in their communities.

Synod legislated the steering committee for children’s and young people’s ministry for the diocese in October.

The Reverend Graham Stanton, who brought the bill, said the move encouraged him, as it indicated that people saw children’s and youth ministry as a significant area of ministry in need of focused attention.

Dr Stanton said thriving children’s and youth ministry was necessary to fulfil the diocese’s mission of making the Word of God fully known

He said the steering committee would provide long-term consistent support for children’s and youth ministry in the diocese for the first time.

Dr Stanton said the steering committee’s establishment was a small but crucial step in the long process of encouraging more young

people to engage with church life.

He said the new steering committee would mean more people’s time and expertise was being spent on addressing the challenges in maintaining healthy children’s and youth ministry.

Until now, most of the diocese’s strategic and effective youth ministry work was being done by the Diocesan Youth Ministry Consultant team of Brian Holden and the Reverend Karen Winsemius, Dr Stanton said.

The sheer volume of work involved in supporting children’s and youth ministry was an unreasonable workload for just Mr Holden and Ms Winsemius, Dr Stanton said.

He said the new steering committee would be able to make sure Mr Holden and Ms Winsemius’ work was supported and deployed sustainably across the whole diocese.

Mr Holden said the steering committee would be able to help parishes put in place tailored models to effectively connect with youth in their communities.

He said models to increase children’s and youth engagement in church life were already in place in some churches across the diocese, including food and music programs

aimed at young people.

Mr Holden said the new steering committee would support the implementation of existing plans and resources across a broader range of parishes without having to adopt an ineffective one-size-fits-all approach.

The legislation of the steering committee came after a 2021 synod motion which called for Archbishop in Council to establish a Children’s and Youth Ministry working group. The working group was to review strategies for making the Word of God fully known among the next generation of young people. In 2022 a motion requested the development of legislation governing a permanent authorised standing committee for children’s and youth ministry.

The working group established in 2021 found that diocesan support for children’s and young people’s ministry was precarious, with no established requirement for the diocese to give any attention to children’s and youth ministry.

A review conducted by the working group in 2022 found children’s and youth ministry needed stronger centralised support to thrive.



# Leadership of two top bodies to merge

■ **Elsbeth Kernebone**

**Archbishop in Council members will be made directors of the Melbourne Anglican Diocesan Corporation, after synod passed a bill to alter the diocese's governance legislation.**

The bill was put in response to a February review of the Anglican Centre, which recommended mirroring representation across the diocese's three key governance bodies: Archbishop in Council, the Melbourne Anglican Diocesan Corporation and the Melbourne Anglican Trust Corporation.

As passed, the bill did not alter membership of the Melbourne Anglican Trust Corporation trustees.

Speaking to synod, mover Jenny George said the changes aimed to foster greater understanding, consistency in decision-making and improved efficiency. She said communication between AiC and MADC had always been a bit unclear, with double-handling of some issues, and some issues missed because they fell between the two bodies.

Dr George said the bill would also lessen the workload for people who had previously been members of Archbishop in Council as well as directors of MADC.

Delegate Michael Shand KC opposed the bill, saying the members of the diocesan corporation should be the trust corporation acting as trustees for the church in the diocese – as was the original 2014 governance design proposal.

Mr Shand said if the 17 members of Archbishop in Council were made members

of the diocesan corporation, each would have a statutory right if they became dissatisfied with the management of the diocese to go to court. He said this would give state courts the power to interfere in the diocese's internal governance.

The bill's explanatory memoranda state the recommended changes aimed to foster greater understanding, consistency in decision-making and improved efficiency between them.

As initially published in synod papers, the bill also would have made Archbishop in Council members corporation trustees of the Melbourne Anglican Trust Corporation.

However an amended form was put to the Melbourne Synod, which removed this change.

The Melbourne Anglican Trust Corporation holds property to give effect to any express trusts and otherwise effect for the benefit of the church within the diocese.

The diocesan corporation is a separate, incorporated entity which serves as the employer of diocese employees and for WorkCover purposes the employer of clergy, the legal appointer of clergy, and retainer of the professional standards company. It is also the responsible legal entity for claims against the diocese arising from misconduct of church workers.

Archbishop of Melbourne Philip Freier chairs both AiC and the diocesan corporation. Two directors of the diocesan corporation also sit on Archbishop in Council, the Reverend Megan Curlis-Gibson and Neil Sigamoney.

The act requires the Archbishop in

Council to begin a review these changes to diocesan governance in 2027.

The act also changes *The Melbourne Anglican Trust Corporation Act 2018* to distinguish between “trustees” and the “corporation trustees”, the first being the corporation and the second being the office-holders who collectively constitute the corporation.

The act also clarified legislative head of power for Archbishop in Council making a policy, procedures or other requirements for the identification and management of conflicts of interest actual, potential or perceived, for the diocesan corporation, the trust corporation and Archbishop in Council.

It will require the Archbishop in Council to make regulations requiring the publication on the diocesan website information relating to people holding offices, roles and positions in the diocese, and statistics and other matters relevant to parishes and Authorised Anglican Congregations.

It will also require the diocesan auditor to review whether the Melbourne Anglican Trust Corporation has observed the terms of and discharged its functions under the express trusts and special trusts, and require the Archbishop in Council to report on this to synod.

Bishop Brad Billings, the Reverend Colleen Clayton and Timothy Arnold Moore also spoke in favour of the bill. The Reverends Craig D'Alton and John Forsythe, Aimee Kinda spoke against the bill.

If not already put in force by Archbishop in Council, the changes come into force on 1 March 2024.



Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

# Five-day working week for clergy set for

**A committee will consider a five-day working week for full time clergy in the Diocese of Melbourne after synod endorsed a motion calling for a review of working hours.**

The motion called on synod to ask the Clergy Remunerations and Working Conditions Committee to include a review of the case for a standardised five-day week for full time clergy, as part of its 2024 determination process.

The motion called for this as part of a review of the working hours of clergy and their leave arrangements.

Under the current determination full-time clergy work 48 hours across a six-day week.

The proposal also referenced a desire to support appropriate working conditions for office holders and employees in Melbourne diocese churches.

It called for the synod to affirm the biblical principle of Sabbath rest, and recognise the extent of clergy burnout in moving the motion.

The motion was moved by the Reverend Andrew Bowles and seconded by the Reverend Luke Whiteside.

Discussions about clergy professional development at the 2022 synod also raised the issue of burn-out, along with the elevated non-pastoral compliance and administrative loads on them.

The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne's 2023 synod took place from 11-14 October.

## Kooyoora

Kooyoora's monopoly on professional standards regulation within the Melbourne diocese will remain.

The synod voted to reject an amendment to the *Professional Standards Uniform Act Adoption Act 2016*, passing the *Professional Standards Uniform Act Amendment (Scheme Corporation) Act 2023*.

The 2016 Uniform Act references Kooyoora specifically as the Scheme Corporation, which is the entity providing professional standards services to the diocese.

By rejecting the amendment, synod voted to keep Kooyoora's name in the definition of Scheme Corporation.

The 2021 Melbourne Synod noted the fundamental importance of collaboration across the Province of Victoria, including sharing safe ministry and professional standards resources across all dioceses in the province.

The 2017 Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to



Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

Child Sexual Abuse recommended that the Anglican Church of Australia adopt a uniform episcopal standards framework to hold bishops and former bishops accountable to an appropriate authority in relation to their response to complaints of child sex abuse.

Diocesan registrar Malcom Tadgell opposed the amendment, saying that the Diocese of Melbourne had a uniform act with Bendigo, which should be amended together not unilaterally.

St George's Ivanhoe East representative Coral Tudball also opposed the motion. She said what had not been considered was that if the diocese moved away from Kooyoora in the future, this might place at risk the safe keeping integrity of the confidential data it currently holds.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recognition

Discussion of motion that would have recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglicans in Victoria was not continued, after synod voted on Friday to remove references to the establishment of a permanent representative body of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglicans to represent ATSI Anglican interests in Victoria.

On Saturday 14 October, Bishop Paul Barker moved the motion not be considered further.

## Parish councils

Synod rejected an attempt to allow Archbishop in Council to extend the terms of people serving on parish councils in limited circumstances, through a proposed

amendment to the *Parish Governance Act 2013*.

The amendment would have seen Archbishop in Council given the power to extend terms by one or two years.

## Budget

The Melbourne diocese's budget is set to be restored to near breakeven, according to diocese representatives speaking at synod.

Melbourne Synod voted to receive the diocesan accounts for the year ending 31 December 2022, note the 2023 diocesan budget, and receive the 2024-2026 Diocesan Financial Plan.

Registrar Malcolm Tadgell told the synod these plans would restore the diocese's budget to near breakeven, thanks in part to the making redundant of the two most expensive staff positions and the decision to end hospital chaplaincy.

In 2022 synod received a one-year budget for 2023 showing a deficit of \$1,480,000. The 2022 synod noted no existing plan to return the budget to surplus and asked the Archbishop in Council to bring expenditure in line with income.

The original 2023 budget deficit of \$1,480,000 as published in 2022 was restated to \$2,157,000 in the 2023 synod papers. Mr Tadgell said this was following the effects of changes in presentation and policy.

Mr Tadgell said the revised budget and financial plan allowed the diocese to maintain ministry activity except hospital chaplaincy, fund the Reimagining the Future initiative and church plants, support



# consideration

children and youth ministry and accessibility and inclusion, improve diocesan services including through new IT systems, protect and maintain diocesan assets and ensure the diocese met compliancy obligations.

A budget revision working group reported to the Archbishop in Council in February 2023. The Archbishop in Council accepted the report's 72 recommendations.

These included personnel changes, such as making redundant the positions of general manager and chief operating officer, ceasing funding to hospital chaplaincy, investing in new IT systems and identifying new revenue sources.

Mr Tadgell said spending had increased by \$1,545,000 as compared to the original 2023 budget due to increased audit fees, the inclusion of property depreciation and property security as "above the line" costs, IT and compliance consulting fees, and costs of staffing movements resulting from this year's personnel changes.

## Middle East Conflict

The synod lamented the loss of life and widespread injury in Israel, Palestine and Gaza in the violence of ongoing conflict there. It also condemned the use of violence against civilians in Israel, Palestine and Gaza.

The Reverend Dr Chris Porter moved the motion which asked synod not to take sides in the conflict but to pray for peace for all involved.

Dr Porter said in the face of complex, entrenched and systemic violence it could be hard to know what to do, but the church

could petition and pray.

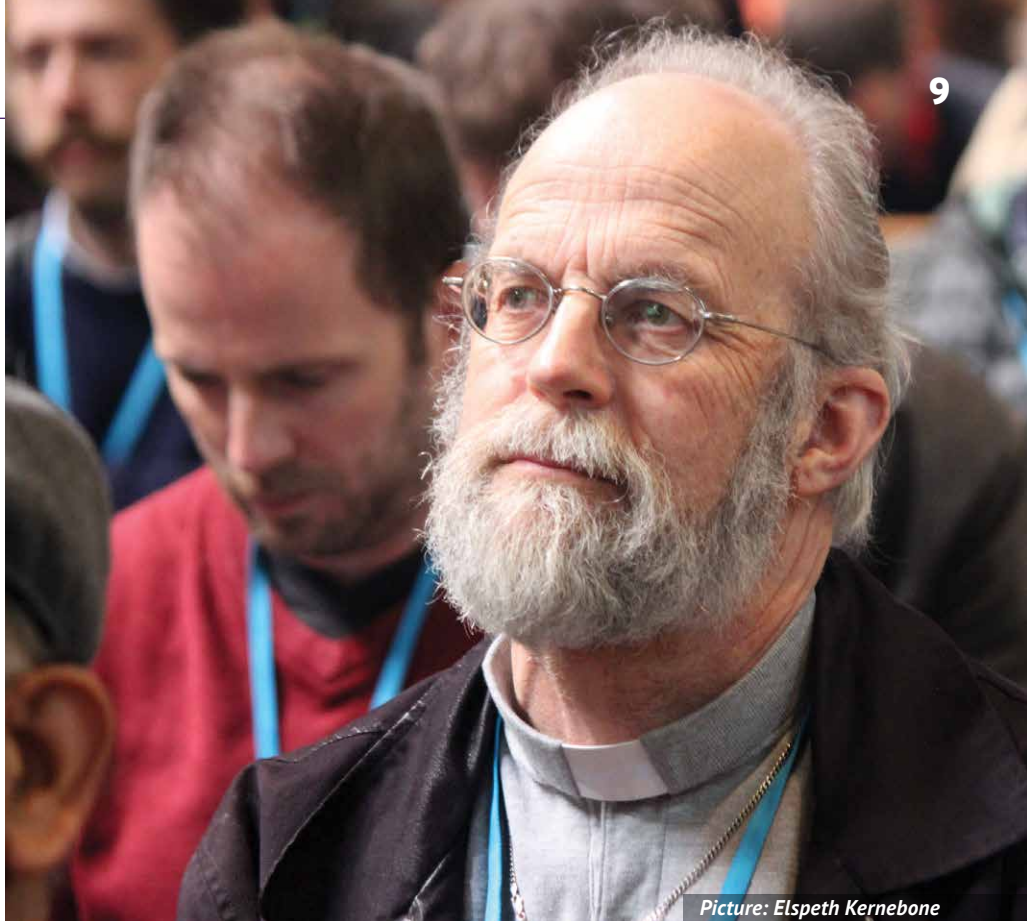
He said the church should urge governments and combatants to pursue non-violent options, rather than continuing to take an eye for an eye.

"The occupation of Palestinian territories cannot justify Hamas' attack on Israeli civilians, and Hamas' attack cannot justify the killing and persecution of Palestinian civilians," Dr Porter said.

The synod voted to condemn the use of violence in Israel, Palestine and Gaza, to call with Palestinian Christians for a peaceful resolution to the Nakba, the cessation of violence, and the pursuit of non-violence options, and to call for prayers of peace in churches on the coming Sunday.

Melbourne Synod also passed motions: commending churches and individuals reaching out to the lost through personal evangelism and courses, urging the Australian government to transfer refugees and asylum seekers still in Papua New Guinea to Australia and to allow them to live in the community, condemning violence in Manipur, India, and standing in solidarity with a Christian minority in India, thanking the Melbourne Anglican Foundation, and embracing celebrations of the International Day of People with Disability.

A motion calling on synod to affirm the diocese remains in full communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury was withdrawn prior to the synod.



Picture: Elspeth Kernebone



Picture: Maria Tan





## You can give children the best start to school this Christmas!

For many young children, this time of year marks the last summer before they begin school. It should be an exciting next step, but families facing disadvantage have limited resources that prepare their children for school. **Please give a gift this Christmas** and help us to give each child, including those with specific needs, a brighter start in life. **Scan the QR code to donate.**



**Debra Saffrey-Collins (Rev'd)**  
Head of Chaplaincy and  
Diocesan Partnerships  
Brotherhood of St. Laurence

It's often said that it takes a village to raise a child – it takes a community and a supportive society. This Christmas, you can help support our programs and give children the best start in life.

Through your generous gift to BSL, you are helping families in your community to reach their potential and to feel connected and supported.

**Wishing you a blessed Christmas. Thank you.**

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Working for an Australia free of poverty



# Celebrating a century of faith, service

■ Jenan Taylor

**An isolated church in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges has celebrated its parishioners' resilience and deep faith as it marks a major birthday.**

St John's Upper Beaconsfield planned to mark its centenary with a service in which members sang their favourite hymns, and recalled their major projects, achievements and trials.

Among them were the Ash Wednesday bushfires, in which the church lost members and which razed its building.

Priest-in-charge the Reverend Shannon Lee said the catastrophe showed the small congregation's steadfast resilience and towering trust in God. That strength resulted in a church that connected, provided support, healing and love to the wider community, she said.

Long-time parishioner Joan Medwin remembers that as St John's ruins smoked, then vicar, the Reverend Roger Rich, threw himself into caring for the village's survivors and fire-fighters. The remaining congregation members helped recovery and relief efforts at the community hall.

Mrs Medwin said residents pitched in when the church rebuilt, enthusiastic to see the town's only place of worship stand again. They completed construction within a year, and the new church opened debt free because of widespread donations, she said.

Historical records show then Southern



St John's Upper Beaconsfield members celebrated its 100th anniversary in October.

Picture: supplied

region Bishop John Wilson described the new building as "a symbol of Christian faith in the One who shared our common life and who died and rose again for our sakes".

Bishop Wilson also described his doubts about whether the small congregation could support a full-time priest of its own at that time. But he concluded it was one of his joys to see St John's people demonstrate their strength of faith and financial ability to do just that.

Mrs Medwin said the church was also where the idea for the first independent ecumenical Christian school in the outer south east of Melbourne was born. Beaconhills College opened in 1982 with 34 students. Today it is a co-educational private school with campuses in Pakenham and Berwick, and about 3000 enrolments.

Ms Lee said the St John's Op Shop was

a key outward facing project. She said members worked with community volunteers in the op shop, and sometimes supported residents with clothing and other goods, when needed.

Church warden Rosz Smith said despite emerging from the pandemic only recently, the op shop performed well.

Ms Smith said as well as supporting the church, it allowed the parish to start contributing money to community projects.

Ms Lee said the church hoped those efforts would go from strength to strength, and continue for many years.

"We want to see God glorified and the community blessed, so we will continue to serve, love and welcome with warmth," Ms Lee said.

St John's was set to celebrate its centenary on Sunday 29 October.

## Church could lift mental wellbeing amid living pressures

■ Jenan Taylor

**Christian and church aid initiatives could help ease some mental health anxieties caused by cost-of-living pressures, experts say.**

Social and political turmoil overseas and in Australia were also among the many issues adding to people's anxiety, they said, speaking about the mental health effects of the cost-of-living crisis at the final *Archbishop's Conversation* for 2023.

Panel member Anglicare Australia executive director Kasy Chambers said placing people at the centre of efforts to ease daily living pressures was something that many churches and Christian agencies did well.

Ms Chambers said more people were asking for more material and emergency aid more often.

She said many churches also ran those services, and sometimes did life changing work because their approach supported people's dignity.

Ms Chambers said public discourse that held people responsible for their circumstances often stigmatised them and potentially worsened their psychological outlook.

Ridley College mental health and wellbeing lecturer Dr Scott Harrower said aside from feeling shame about their situation, people lost a sense of safety, self, and community connection, and that could cause profound mental health conditions including suicidal ideation.

Dr Harrower said there was evidence that deep, sustained relationships were vital for people's sense of agency, and giving them love, friendship and encouragement,

helped them regain that.

He said secular solutions for poor mental health included quick dopamine fixes, but Christianity invited people into something far bigger than a quick dopamine fix.

Dr Harrower said churches and Christian agencies could enrich the aid space by increasing access to simple initiatives that helped ease people's loneliness, and unlocked their empathy so that they might want to help others, too.

He highlighted a successful initiative where a church's monthly board game project provided people with opportunities to socialise with others.

If you or someone you know needs more assistance, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636.

## Devoted senior's voluntary service earns recognition

■ Jenan Taylor

**A Burwood parishioner's voluntary service in a hospital, with babies and children in the community, and people near the end of life, has earned recognition in the Victorian Senior of the Year Awards program.**

St Thomas' Burwood member Annette Ward's unwavering hard work, dedication and selflessness was honoured with a Council of the Ageing Victoria Senior Achiever Award.

Ms Ward mentored other volunteers in the Box Hill Hospital emergency department for 17 years and contributed her talents as a pastoral carer for 18 years at St Thomas', focussing on beginning-of-life and end-of-life support.

She also volunteered at the church's playgroup in that time.

Ms Ward said she volunteered because she loved having deep and ongoing connections with people.

She said it gave her opportunities as a Christian to be able to share the gospel of Jesus with those who requested it.

Ms Ward said volunteering also gave her the chance to make a difference in



Annette Ward has been honoured with a COTA Senior Achiever Award. Picture: supplied

areas of life that she'd always longed to be involved with during her formal working years as a business administrator.

She said caring for babies and children, and giving people near the end of life the best support and companionship possible, was a particular passion.

It gave her some of her richest experiences, Ms Ward said.

Ms Ward said her love for volunteering developed during her school days at Camberwell Grammar where she had many role models who would give of their time and skills to social service projects.

Her parents' and grandparents' readiness to help others also played a large role.

More recently, she was inspired by the encouragement of the Reverend Christopher Appleby and his wife Diane Appleby and Spiritual Health Association chief executive Cheryl Holmes.

"I love the fact that I can learn from people who are younger than me, and that people I knew since they were teenagers could later become inspirational in my life," Ms Ward said.

The COTA Victoria Senior Achiever Awards are usually only given to 10 people each year. Ms Ward was among 14 recipients.

COTA chief executive Chris Potaris said that the larger number this year attested the tremendous impact of the 14 Victorian seniors on their local communities and across the state.

## Gift of dignity reaches community

■ Maya Pilbrow

**An Anglican parish is helping community members look good at low cost by providing haircuts on a "pay what you can" basis.**

The Anglican Parish of St Matthew's Glenroy with St Linus' Merlynston wanted to help disadvantaged community members feel confident and comfortable despite rising costs of hairdressing services.

Parishioner Maree Slegers lent her hairdressing expertise to the parish's new community initiative on a recent Saturday.

Anybody who wanted a haircut could show up, have a cup of tea while they waited, and then receive hairdressing services in exchange for however much money they felt like giving.

Parish priest the Reverend Rob Koren said this was part of the parish's community outreach, and helped the parish fulfil their mission of helping the disadvantaged within their local area.

A longtime hairdresser, Ms Slegers said haircare was important for making people feel confident and good about themselves. But she said many people were having

trouble making ends meet, and pricey haircuts were often the first thing people cut out of their budgets during hard times.

Ms Slegers and one of her colleagues cut and dried hair and gave styling tips to roughly 20 clients over four hours. She said they raised \$540.15, with some clients paying far more than the full price of a haircut. The proceeds will go towards the parish foodbank.

Ms Slegers said it was rewarding to cut people's hair and give them tips on how to maintain and style their hair.

"If I can pass on a skill and be able to educate the client on how to make themselves feel better every single day, that's always a big thing for me," she said.

Parish priest the Reverend Rob Koren said the haircuts were a chance to feel taken care of for community members who might not otherwise be able to afford luxury hairdressing services.

Mr Koren said he was grateful for passionate parishioners like Ms Slegers who were willing to invest in helping others. He said they were planning another hairdressing day with Ms Slegers for late



Maree Slegers helps cut and style a woman's hair. Picture: Reverend Rob Koren

January, so families with kids about to go back to school could access affordable haircuts.

Mr Koren said the church would run more "pay what you can" programs in the future, with people contributing what they were able to in exchange for second-hand clothing or help with gardening. He said the initiative was inspired by a desire to help people in practical ways.

"It's about giving someone the dignity to be able to pay for something they need," he said.



# Exploring Indigenous culture, faith at Nungalinga College

■ Jenan Taylor

**Greensborough church members have grown their understanding of Indigenous culture and faith as part of a cultural immersion tour to a Northern Territory college.**

The group of All Saints' parishioners explored Bible translation and Indigenous art during a week-long stay at Nungalinga College.

Church leaders the Reverends Joy Sandefur and Julie Blinco-Smith said group members also wanted to learn about God's work in the Northern Territory.

Dr Sandefur said the parishioners completed four modules, worshipped along with the students at the college chapel, and dined with them.

She said the interaction with Indigenous students and teachers, as well as the study, was one of the most valuable experiences the group could have had.

"It opened their eyes to the complexity of Aboriginal culture," Dr Sandefur said.

Ms Blinco-Smith said it was an opportunity to learn about Indigenous and justice



All Saint's group including the Reverend Julie Blinco-Smith (centre in blue) and Dr Joy Sandefur (second far right) visited Nungalinga College. Picture: supplied

issues from Aboriginal people, which many of the group had long been interested in.

She said the experience also helped them develop a deeper understanding and love for Aboriginal culture and people, in particular those from remote communities.

"We were deeply moved by Indigenous art, and the symbolism in it, as well as the journey Indigenous students

went on to incorporate a newly forming Christian worldview into their art," Ms Blinco-Smith said.

Nungalinga Indigenous Cultural Experience program coordinator Karen Fletcher said the college's cross-cultural initiative aimed to share the intersection of Indigenous faith and culture.

Ms Fletcher said the program was a chance for visitors to see the faith

Indigenous Christians placed in Jesus and hear the difference that made in their lives.

"Most of our students come from remote communities, and life can be very hard, and yet there is a joy and hope in them that's a great encouragement," she said.

"Having the opportunity to come and be immersed in it is a precious thing to be able to have."

## Community connect through 'fabulous night' at op shop

■ Maya Pilbrow

**An annual festive op shop night has brought community members back to Holy Trinity Lara following a pandemic hiatus.**

More than 150 people waited in line and paid gold coin donations to do some evening bargain hunting in September.

Parish priest the Reverend Roxanne Addley said she was pleased with the level of community engagement the night brought in, as it aimed to bring people onto the church grounds who would otherwise be unlikely to visit.

She said the annual night was a special opportunity for visitors to share a meal and spend time with the parish community in a way that a regular

shopping trip wouldn't provide.

"It's about giving [visitors] a sense of familiarity with our space here," she said.

Parishioner and longtime op shop volunteer Liz Hunter said she was excited to have the special night up and running again. She said having to close the shop and not run special events during the pandemic had shown how much people in the community had come to rely on it.

"Before the pandemic, it was a great social night for a lot of people around Lara, they came and sat and chatted and had a fabulous night," she said.

Mrs Hunter said people were disappointed when no op shop nights were held over the pandemic. She said bringing back the Night at the Op Shop event had

proven popular, with people lining up early to secure their spot last year.

The parish reported 116 visitors to last year's op shop night, the first such event after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic.

This year, with over 150 visitors, the parish met its fundraising goal of \$1000 to help support various ministries. These include a new playgroup initiative as well as regular donations to Nungalinga College in Darwin.

Mrs Hunter said the op shop was beloved not just by customers but by the volunteer staff as well. She said 30 volunteers helped run the shop, and all of them were motivated to make it as successful as possible.

# Extra support needed after earthquake

■ Jenan Taylor

**Faith aid organisations say the needs of the most vulnerable people must be factored into relief efforts in the wake of the Moroccan earthquake.**

A 6.8 magnitude earthquake shook Morocco in September, with the epicentre in the remote Atlas Mountains.

More than 2,900 people were killed, and a further 2,500 people injured in what disaster monitors reported was the strongest earthquake in the region in more than a century.

The International Federation of Red Cross and the Moroccan Red Crescent reported terrain and effects of the quake, such as landslides, created challenges for search and rescue efforts.

Humanitarian Emergencies associate director Melville Fernandez said the agency was responding to the disaster across the region in partnership with other organisations.

Mr Fernandez said focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable people was always a priority in the agency's humanitarian responses.

He said neighbouring countries, including Spain, had sent personnel and

special equipment for the rescue operation, which would be critical in finding people who needed help, and for determining the best response to the disaster.

Mr Fernandez said agencies such as Caritas were working with those rescue operations to provide relief essentials including food, medicines and water, where they were most needed.

The organisation was also focused on preparing for the long term needs of people who no longer had homes to return to, he said.

Anglican Overseas Aid and Caritas Australia said it was likely the disaster would disproportionately affect the most vulnerable people, and it was important to consider their needs.

AOA disaster and resilience coordinator Tim Hartley said women and children, people with disabilities, the sick and the elderly with mobility challenges, were likely to need extra support through every phase of the recovery effort.

Mr Hartley said AOA had no partners working in Morocco, but that their experiences in the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake in 2015, magnitude 7.8, was a significant learning event about response priorities.

He said like in Nepal, it was probable that the Atlas area suffered massive physical disruption, including badly damaged roads and other service delivery infrastructure like drinking water pipelines.

When those things disappeared it was people with disabilities, nursing mothers and small children, that tended to fall off the radar because they couldn't get to aid hubs, Mr Hartley said.

He said once aid groups dealt with the basic needs of shelter, water and foodstuffs, the focus usually shifted to hygiene challenges.

Mr Hartley said when communities were internally displaced and without proper services, people, particularly the most vulnerable, would become susceptible to cholera, diarrhoea, and other diseases.

Caritas Australia said disasters always had outsized impacts on people who needed extra care, and it was important to provide dignified and timely support for them, including ensuring shelters were accessible.

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Caritas Australia has launched an appeal for the Morocco earthquake. For details, see [caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/morocco-earthquake/](http://caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/morocco-earthquake/).

## Giving call as aid agencies face access struggle in Libya

■ Jenan Taylor

**Australians have been urged to donate to Libyan flood relief efforts, as humanitarian groups navigate damaged infrastructure and the legacy of civil war.**

An estimated 4000 people were killed and tens of thousands displaced when powerful Storm Daniel hit north eastern Libya in September, triggering the collapse of two dams which submerged land and swept people out to sea.

Faith-based group Caritas Australia, and the Australia office for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, launched appeals to help the responses of their agencies on the ground.

These include delivering emergency shelter, food and medicines, clean drinking water and psycho-social support.

Caritas Australia said the effects of Libya's long insecurities and the scale of the flood damage were hampering its relief efforts.

Caritas Humanitarian Emergencies associate director Melville Fernandez said it



was difficult to reach affected communities, deliver medicine and water, and access communication, as the storm had destroyed infrastructure already weakened by civil conflict.

Tearfund Australia said Libya's separate governments potentially presented considerable challenges to aid delivery.

The organisation is not directly involved in relief efforts, but is supporting responses as a member of aid network the Emergency Action Alliance.

Effectiveness and Humanitarian team leader Phil Lindsay said Tearfund's experience in and around other conflict zones, was

that relief agencies would need to be able to negotiate power structures, including knowing who to talk to and how to talk to them.

He said when there were migrants and asylum-seekers in the disaster area who were also fleeing others conflicts, as was the case in Libya, it added to the complexity of the response.

Mr Lindsay urged Australians to donate to the appeals and pray for all affected by the Libyan disaster.

Global conflict monitor the US-based Council on Foreign Relations said more than 300,000 people in the country already experienced need before the floods.

It said much of this was related to civil war that had produced two rival governments in Libya in the wake of former leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

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To donate to Caritas Australia, see [caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/libya-floods](http://caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/libya-floods).

To donate to Australia for UNHCR, see [unrefugees.org.au/emergency-response/libya-flood-emergency/donate](http://unrefugees.org.au/emergency-response/libya-flood-emergency/donate).



# Help Armenian Christians: Protesters

■ Maya Pilbrow

**Armenian Australians have called on the Australian government to hold Azerbaijan accountable for ethnic cleansing of Armenian Christians in the Nagorno Karabakh region.**

The Armenian National Committee of Australia organised a demonstration outside the offices of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in September following a military escalation by Azeri forces in Nagorno Karabakh.

The committee says Christian places of worship are being destroyed, and the government is trying to forcefully assimilate Armenians, who are trapped in the region.

Protesters called on Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong to impose sanctions on Azerbaijan and Azeri president Ilham Aliyev.

Amplified by megaphones, Janet Kaplandjian and Carl Melkonian led chants calling for an end to the conflict and for the Australian government to use its power to help the Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh.

Nagorno Karabakh, known in Armenian as the Artsakh region, is a disputed territory between Armenia and Azerbaijan.



Picture: iStock

The region is the centre of decades-long conflict between the nations, with the most recent war breaking out in 2020.

Mr Melkonian said he had been to Nagorno Karabakh and had friends in the region. He said his presence at the demonstration was partly to show support for his friends in Artsakh, but also to seek specific solutions such as a United Nations Peacekeeping mandate for the region.

Nagorno Karabakh is an ethnically Armenian enclave surrounded by Azerbaijan, connected to mainland Armenia by a single mountain road called the Lachin corridor.

About 120,000 Armenian Christians are trapped in the region according to Christian human rights organization Christian Solidarity International.

Since 2022, access to the Lachin corridor has been blockaded by Azerbaijan.

Demonstrator George Boghikian said Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh had no access to food or medication. Mr Boghikian said he was concerned that the current situation mirrored the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

ANC national board member Hovig Melkonian said Christian monasteries and places of worship in Nagorno Karabakh were being destroyed by majority Muslim Azeri forces. He said the Azeri government was trying to forcefully assimilate the Armenians in the region. Mr Melkonian said the actions of Azerbaijan met the criteria of the UN Genocide Convention.

Parish priest of St Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church in Melbourne the Reverend Father Khacher Harutyunyan prayed for Armenian Christians to live in peace in their own homes. He then led the crowd in reciting the Lord's Prayer in Armenian.

Ms Kaplandjian said more awareness of the crisis facing Artsakh was needed. She said the Armenian diaspora needed support from others and urged Australians to put pressure on their local members of parliament to address the situations in Nagorno Karabakh.



Picture: Jerome Cole

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# Chaplains bear vital witness in wards

**Like many others, I am deeply concerned to hear that the Diocese is defunding chaplaincy and pastoral care in hospitals by the end of 2023.**

My understanding is that this action is a cost saving measure to balance the budget and that following a synod motion a working party will consider alternate funding arrangements. The order of these actions seems arguable. What is not arguable is the value of having chaplaincy embedded in health care settings.

Having worked in a large paediatric hospital and in community palliative care for over twenty-five years, I have had the opportunity to work in partnership with many chaplains and pastoral carers. I have seen firsthand how the ministry of Anglican chaplains, pastoral and spiritual carers and those of other faith traditions can make a meaningful difference to the experience of many people. In hospital, adults, young people, children and babies face life changing moments, issues of life, death and living. This is where chaplaincy meets patients, their families and hospital staff. This is where bearing witness, accompanying, supporting and providing the sacraments



Picture: iStock

truly counts. People may not be in the pews but they are in wards and clinics, by bedsides, in hospital corridors, cafes and waiting rooms. This is where chaplains are needed and work.

I hope and pray that appropriate funding can be identified in the diocese to enable this relevant, vital ministry to continue and, if I was being really hopeful, expand.

**Dr Jane E Sullivan OAM**  
Kew East

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## THE Melbourne Anglican

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# We need real inclusion for First Peoples

■ Glenn Loughrey

Over the last six months I have travelled across Australia educating and advocating for the Statement from the Heart, recognition, and a Voice. What began as a hopeful project has descended into trench warfare, hand to hand combat on all sides. Or, that is how it feels.

It began as a response to Malcom Turnbull's government's request for our people to define what recognition in the constitution would mean, and as a commitment by the new Albanese government to implement the statement in full. It became a battle, not for the hearts and souls of Australians, but for political power. I believe this was fuelled by a desire for revenge over losing power, and the fear arising from the stealing of another's land and the subsequent failure to exterminate them from it.

This may seem a harsh assessment, but it is based on 110 presentations, encounters, interviews, and discussions with Australians inside and outside the church. I expected the vitriol in the comment sections of newspapers, letter to editors, TV talk shows, particular news outlets, and experienced face-to-face. But I had hoped this would disappear in a bipartisanship repair of the failures of the past and recognise us through a voice enshrined in the constitution.

What I have heard, seen and experienced cannot be deleted from my memory. Like the vitriol from all sides against Lidia Thorpe, Linda Burney, Warren Mundine, and others, I have had my unfair share. It takes its toll and should not be tolerated, whoever the target. A sadness here is that the onlookers, the public, and those in power, do not call it out. Social and mainstream media claim free speech, and let the most awful things be said to and about those they do not agree with.

For me the sadness is that it comes from within the institutional church I serve, from those who claim to serve Christ in this world. The best barometer for how the wider church thinks are diocesan synods. At point of writing, I have done four synods and the National Bishops' conference. At most I have not felt welcomed with little interaction with those attending except when I initiated it. The responses to my talks have been polite with the underlying sense of, "How dare he speak to us this way?" The motions put have carefully avoided declaring support for the proposal, instead benignly asking Australians to carefully consider the question before voting.



The Reverend Canon Uncle  
Glenn Loughrey.  
Picture: Janine Eastgate

Based on these events, at best I would say the church is split in favour of "No" on this question, unlike in 1967 when the church asked its people to "Vote Yes for the Aborigines". If my assumption is correct, then the church, like society, has become more unsafe for our people. It will become more unsafe after the referendum, regardless of the outcome, because this issue seems to have given permission for racism to be spoken freely.

My sadness deepens when I contemplate this refusal to accept our people's generous invitation of transformational forgiveness: to walk together to repair the fracture in our society. The damage done to our people and our country came with the "occupation" by those made no attempt to legally be here. It was compounded when we were left out of the constitution. This was for two reasons: the belief we were dying out and it was only a matter of time before we would not exist, and as Australia was the last white supremacy project there was no room for colour. Yet the response in the 21st century to our seeking our rightful place as equals in the constitution and with a Voice on matters affecting us has been FUD – fake, unsubstantiated, misinformation – drowning out opportunity to do justice.

I am even more sad when I consider the almost 80 per cent of our people who support recognition and Voice. It is inconceivable to me that Australia appears to be dismissing the majority in favour of a loud minority. This odd mantra of "if not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders don't agree, I must

say no" is irrational but very real. Nowhere else do we make decisions on the basis that not all Australians like a piece of legislation. Normally, the decision favours the majority. So why are we pulling this out now?

Imagine what it will mean for First Peoples to gather in groups, to worship, be at synod or just walk down the street, when we know that most of our fellow Australians have rejected our generous invitation of recognition and Voice? It will feel unsafe and threatening. It is the reason I did not attend synod in person. The journey of the last few months on the road with the Voice has allowed me to see deep into the psyche of Australia, and unfortunately, the Church, and it is disturbing. Once seen cannot be unseen.

Much work will need to be done to ensure future Australia, and the church, are safe places for First Peoples to be. This will involve not just reconciliation action plans but real action that puts us at the centre of society and institutions such as the church. The empty words of promises made and continually broken means we will put little stock in anything but real inclusion and action. First People need to be seen in leadership positions, not just for their own people, but for all and not in a tokenistic way that ticks the boxes, but with real power to change the structures that prevent our people taking their rightful place as equals.

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The Reverend Canon Uncle Glenn Loughrey is vicar of St Oswald's Glen Iris and chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council. He wrote this piece before October 14.

# The Bible comes to us through the love,

■ Dorothy Lee

**We are very confident in speaking about the Bible and holding up a single book, nicely bound together, containing 27 books that we call “New Testament” and 39 (or 46) books we call “Old Testament” or “Hebrew Scriptures”. We are equally confident to see those ancient books and their authors as connected in a direct line to ourselves. So we can refer to Isaiah or Jeremiah speaking directly to us, or Paul or the gospel writers.**

Those attitudes are fine as far as they go. But we need to be aware that they are, at best, a simplification and in some cases even a distortion of the history of the Bible and how it has come down to us. We need to be aware of these issues so we can truly understand how the Bible can be God’s word in human words. Here are some of the factors:

1. Not until the fourth century CE do we have a copy of an actual “Bible”: a single book containing all the books we know in the Bible. There are two of these and they are written on parchment as codices (i.e. books) rather than papyrus scrolls. One is called Codex Vaticanus and the other Codex Sinaiticus, both named either for their current origin or location. They are similar to each other and contain most of the Bible. Codex Sinaiticus is unique in that from the fourth to the 12th centuries thousands of corrections were made in several different hands. Sinaiticus also contains two added books that, in the end, did not make it into the canon.

2. Both codices are written in capital letters without spacing between the words and almost no punctuation. They have no chapters or verses as these were added later: chapters in the 13th century and verses in the 16th. They were written completely in Greek, including the Old Testament, which was based on the translation from Hebrew in the third century BCE. This translation, called the “Septuagint”, was used by Jewish people outside Palestine (particularly Alexandria) for whom Greek was their first language. The Septuagint, which includes the Apocrypha, was the Bible of the New Testament church.

3. Our two codices were not used in translating the Bible into English until the 19th century. The King James Bible was based on a later manuscript tradition that we now consider somewhat corrupted by scribal changes. For example, the KJV includes the story of the woman caught in

adultery (John 7:53–8:11) and the longer ending of Mark’s Gospel (Mark 16:9-20), neither of which is found in the earliest witness, including Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.

4. In addition to these two great codices, there are other manuscripts (from a later period) as well as a growing number of papyrus fragments from even earlier. The oldest of these for the New Testament is P52 which contains a small portion of John’s Gospel, dated to the second century CE. At the turn of the 20th century, a group of papyrus fragments was found in an ancient rubbish tip in Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, which has 52 of the 127 fragments of the New Testament we now have, dating from the second to the fourth centuries CE. Some of this collection is still being released.

***“We need to regard the biblical texts not just as direct communication to us from God, but also as historical documents which have come down to use through the centuries.”***

Dorothy Lee

5. The biblical scholars who have put together our Bible, and who continue to do so in the light of new discoveries, are called “textual critics”. They have to examine various manuscripts to determine what might have been the original form of any biblical book. This branch of biblical studies is on the verge of a revolution, however, as more and more texts are being computerised. Textual critics will soon have all available texts online and can work out more accurately their genealogical relationships to each other. Note that it is texts that they study and not just manuscripts, as the same manuscript with several biblical books might have been copied from a variety of other manuscripts.

6. Two factors complicate things here. Firstly, we do not know for certain that there is such a thing as an “autographed” copy of any biblical book. The New Testament texts, particularly the gospels, originated in written form but were probably communicated public performance. Was there only a single version of Mark’s Gospel

that circulated? Was Q (the likely source of the sayings in common between Matthew and Luke) originally an oral source? Is it possible that John’s Gospel originated two forms, a longer and a shorter version? The ancient world may have produced many literary works but it was largely an oral culture; people had prodigious memories and clear methods of memorising.

7. Secondly, textual critics need to make their decisions on internal as well as external grounds. That means they have to study the texts themselves, trying to work their way back as close as possible to the initial form of the text. But they also have to study internal evidence: the style, the context, the theology of each biblical writer. So, for example, on both grounds – texts within manuscripts and Paul’s own theology – they conclude that 1 Corinthians 13:3 says “boast” rather than “burn”: “if I give up my body that I may boast”, and not as in the KJV, “If I give up my body to be burned.” It would also seem that Mark’s Gospel commences with the words, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, son of God” (Mark 1:1), even though some manuscripts (and some commentators) omit the words “son of God”. Here textual critics work with exegetes to determine the best reading. In some cases, a decision is unclear. Does Jesus say, “I will draw all things to myself” or “I will draw all people to myself” in John 12:34? There is only the difference of one letter in the Greek. Manuscript evidence, textual critics, exegetes are divided on this issue. New evidence may arise to resolve the issue.

## **What are the implications of all these factors?**

Above all, it means we need to look forward to new editions of our English translations that will take into account new discoveries, particularly the computerising of ancient texts and manuscripts. We need not be afraid of new technology. The earliest Christians embraced the book form and abandoned the papyrus roll very early on, ahead of their culture, probably because it allowed them to include a number of texts in the one volume: e.g. the letters of Paul or the four gospels.

It also means that we need to regard the biblical texts not just as direct communication to us from God, but also as historical documents which have come down to use through the centuries. We have received them thanks to the painstaking work of



# labour of many

ΟΥΔΕΝΑ ΙΝΔΟΛ  
ΠΕΝ ΕΤΕΡΑΝ  
ΕΝΗΚΕΙΝ  
ΡΙΟΝΙΟΤ  
ΚΑ ΕΙΤΕ

ΕΤΟΙΜΑΝΤΑ  
ΕΛΘΟΝ ΤΗΝ ΑΡΤΗΝ  
ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΚΑΜΕΟΝ  
Α ΕΤΕΡΑΝ  
ΕΤΟΥΤ  
ΤΟΥΤ

Picture: Creative Commons

countless scribes, female as well as male, who copied, considered and corrected manuscripts because of the love and reverence they had for the Bible as the prophetic and apostolic witness to the Word, Jesus Christ. We are united with them as we read, study, proclaim and live out the sacred text.

We in the West should be particularly grateful to the scribes who translated the Bible into Latin and passed it down through

the centuries in that language, before the original Greek came to the fore. Indeed, we should be grateful to all translators, including Bishop Thomas in the seventh century who translated the New Testament so literally into Syriac that we can construct something of the original Greek text!

We have the Bible today because of loving and hard labour well before the printing press: copying by hand, correcting,

translating, separating words, organising paragraphs, adding chapters and verses. We should be aware that the Bible comes to us inspired not only by God but “inspired” also by those who loved and copied and translated it over many generations.

The Reverend Professor Dorothy A. Lee is Stewart Professor of New Testament at Trinity College, University of Divinity.

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# Can Christians believe consciousness is

**Have you ever wondered about how animals experience the world? Or perhaps plants or an even simpler form of life?**

**Joanna Leidenhag, Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy at the University of Leeds, reflects on the possibility of consciousness beyond human beings.**

**We are all conscious – but how do we understand consciousness? Are other animals and plants conscious? What impact do these questions have on Christian faith?**

My preferred theory is “panpsychism.” This is the view that consciousness is everywhere, a fundamental feature of the universe. I think panpsychism is both true and helpful for Christianity. Panpsychism helps Christians understand humanity’s place in creation and how Jesus redeems the whole cosmos.

## Consciousness beyond human beings

Let’s get clear on the word “consciousness”. Consciousness is the qualitative, subjective experience of what it is like to be a subject, to have a point of view on the world, to experience – even as a minimal hum.

Have you ever wondered what the world is like from the perspective of an animal? If you’ve ever even thought about this, then you already assume that animals are conscious. Imagine I have a dog called Scout. Scout is conscious if it makes sense to say, “I wonder what it is like to be Scout?” Scout is conscious if she experiences the world and experiences my love for her. Scout does not have to be able to think rationally, remember the past, make autonomous decisions, or even have emotions to be conscious. She just needs to have experiences. Maybe my plants experience the sunlight or being pruned.

Panpsychism is the view that consciousness, this ability to experience, is a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of

the universe. The earliest building-blocks, or fundamental atoms, forces, or quantum states of the universe, were conscious in a very minimal sense. These building-blocks then expand, combine, and evolve to eventually make more complex, conscious, living organisms – like us! So, the universe has always included experience and micro-subjectivity (micro, because most of the conscious subjects in the universe are very small and very basic). What a rich view of the universe!

***“Panpsychism is the only view of consciousness that can take seriously the biblical claim that creation sings the praises of God, laments human sin to God, and cries out to God for redemption.”***

**Joanna Leidenhag**

However, not every combination of particles and forces creates a new complex mind. A panpsychist does not think that rocks are conscious, but that the fundamental atoms, forces, or quantum states in rocks (and everything else) contain a very minimal form of consciousness. Living systems or organisms, however, do generate new complex minds that are unified combinations of smaller minds. This would mean that plants, animals, and bacteria are conscious subjects, but rocks, computers, and cities only contain (sometimes very small) conscious parts.

People of European descent are not all used to thinking about minds and consciousness in this layered way, but there is no good reason not to. And there are good reasons to think panpsychism could be true.

Loosely following an argument made by the philosopher Thomas Nagel, panpsychism is the only conclusion that follows from four very probable claims.

First, consciousness is real. No matter how hard it is to explain, consciousness is undeniably part of what it is to be human. Therefore, because humans are material bodies, at least some material bodies are also conscious.

Second, the explanation for consciousness must be congruent with explanations for the physical evolution of organisms. In *The Principles of Psychology* William James wrote, “If evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very origins of things”. If you accept this, it means that minds and bodies are not two separate things, with the soul encased in a body like a bird in a cage. Instead, human bodies are unified conscious living organisms.

Third, we cannot reduce consciousness to purely physical (non-mental) processes. We cannot explain consciousness mathematically, nor as a purely mechanical process, nor in terms of physics. Panpsychists (with others) hold that *quantified* explanations of consciousness omit essential *qualitative* elements.

Fourth, consciousness cannot emerge from purely non-mental matter. There is nothing nonsensical with new physical properties (like, stretchiness) emerging from physical structures, but the emergence of consciousness from non-conscious matter is too big a jump.

If we accept these four very probable claims, what is the result? With Nagel, if consciousness is a real feature of material bodies, which can neither be reduced *down* to, nor emerge *up* from, their material parts, the only remaining option is that these properties are already there! Consciousness

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# everywhere? I certainly do

Picture: iStock

is a fundamental part of the physical world.

## Consciousness and Christianity

Can Christians be panpsychists? I believe so.

A Christian panpsychist claims that when God created everything from nothing, consciousness was included. God doesn't need to add new ingredients to the universe. Since God is perfect, God's first act of creation was perfect and complete, even as creation went on to develop according to God's purpose and under God's guidance. Panpsychism offers a way for Christians to embrace evolutionary theory without giving up on consciousness, minds, or purpose.

Panpsychism means that creation did not have to wait for humanity before it had value or before it experienced God's presence and worshipped the Creator. Creation has always had ethical value and has always been praising God. Panpsychism helps Christianity see the value that all creation has to God.

Panpsychism offers Christian theology a robust sense of kinship between humanity and the rest of the natural world. For panpsychists, humanity is not the only conscious species, nor the only creatures God loves or has come to save. We are not needed

as mediators between creation and God; Jesus alone plays that role as the first born of *all creation* (Colossians 1:15). Panpsychism is the only view of consciousness that can take seriously the biblical claim that creation sings the praises of God, laments human sin to God, and cries out to God for redemption (Psalm 19; Psalm 148; Romans 8:19-23). Humanity's vocation is to cultivate the praise and flourishing of other creatures in worship to the Creator.

Panpsychism also helps us understand more deeply the wonder of Jesus' incarnation and resurrection. One false picture of the incarnation is that Jesus had a divine mind contained in a human body – a fourth-century heresy called Apollinarianism. But, according to panpsychism, minds are inseparable from bodies because every conscious cell is a part of our mind. So, when God became embodied in the incarnation, Jesus also took on a human mind and experienced the world in a fully human way.

Similarly, when Jesus was resurrected from the dead, I do not think his soul just put on a new body, like a new set of clothes. If we accept panpsychism, then something altogether more amazing, with more cosmic

significance, happened – the conscious living organism, Jesus Christ, was brought back from the dead and given eternal life. We, and all creation, are saved as our bodies and minds are joined to his resurrected body by his Spirit.

Panpsychism does not prove Christianity to be true. Rejecting panpsychism does not mean rejecting Christianity. But I think that panpsychism provides the best framework for appreciating the wondrous things that God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

Panpsychism is a difficult word and the idea that consciousness is everywhere might seem strange at first. But panpsychism is also a beautiful way to see the world, that fits with how the Bible describes the creation and the significance of Jesus' incarnation and resurrection. Panpsychism might even help bring Christianity into deeper convergence with cosmological, evolutionary, and ecological sciences.

Joanna Leidenhag, PhD, is the author of *Minding Creation: Theological Panpsychism and the Doctrine of Creation* (2021).

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# 'It's about compassion in a time of crisis'

■ Jenan Taylor

**When the Reverend Sion Gough-Hughes talks of an emergency, it's often the Bourke Street Mall tragedy in January 2017.**

Then, a man drove his car through the strip, mowing down pedestrians and unravelling lives.

Silence was just descending on the toppled pram, the scattered clothing, and the dazed people nearest the worst of the crime scene by the time the Reverend arrived.

The rampage was over, but the crisis was well underway.

Mr Gough-Hughes was among 162 Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry volunteers called to support the community over the next 12 days.

The enormity of that incident regularly makes its way into his thoughts.

"It was the biggest activation that had ever happened to us. It wasn't necessarily the most traumatic, but it was certainly the one that had the biggest impact on those who responded," Mr Gough-Hughes said.

A priest at the Melbourne Welsh Church, Mr Gough-Hughes became a VCC Emergencies Ministry volunteer 12 years ago.

He saw it as a chance to combine his love for helping people in crisis with the logistics and organisational experience he'd gained as a former army officer.

Since then, Mr Gough-Hughes has worked across several roles during bushfires, floods and other occurrences.

Those bushfires and floods could be traumatic and very hard particularly for people who have lost their houses. But dealing with people who had experienced

the horror of watching others being maimed and killed was different, he said.

The ministry's 1200 or so volunteers, who go through rigorous training programs, have been responding to people in catastrophe since the 1970s.

Since Bourke Street, a growing number of councils and other stakeholders have "activated" them to incidents where people were likely to be left traumatised, including natural disaster, suicide, or accident.

***"We don't really offer anything other than an ear. It's not going to cure them, and it's not going to make the situation go away, but it's about compassion in a time of crisis."***

Sion Gough-Hughes

The organisation believes the visibility of the tragedy, the volume of people the volunteers attended to, and the way in which they worked, raised a new awareness of the ministry among the emergency response community, in particular.

Chief operations officer Edmund Murphy said the chaplains engaged with more than 3000 people during the mall incident.

In the 2022 Lismore floods, the first time the ministry's teams were activated to an interstate disaster, they spoke with about 1610 members of the community, Mr Murphy said.

A typical call out for the chaplains might begin with a briefing via phone or at an operations centre or emergency field hub.

Once dispatched, they wander the incident area, handing out advice pamphlets and having significant conversations with whoever might be affected by what has unfolded, including other responders.

"The idea is to help people shed some of their initial shock by trying to be the calm in the sudden storm that's hit them. We listen to them, and talk them down from their crisis point," Mr Gough-Hughes said.

The VCC responders are made up of clergy and lay people from 26 cultures and 11 faith groups. But proselytising is not what they do.

"All the volunteers stand in their faith when they deliver the service, but unless someone specifically requests a prayer, it's not permitted. We don't really offer anything other than an ear. It's not going to cure them, and it's not going to make the situation go away, but it's about compassion in a time of crisis," Mr Gough-Hughes said.

He has never regretted his decision to become an emergency chaplain. Each incident has held important lessons, and each in some way strengthened his belief in humanity.

In both the 2016 and recent September rampages in Bourke Street, it was the determined efforts to help that the onlookers, shopkeepers, and other emergency services personnel made wherever they could.

In the Lismore floods, it was the lady who pulled up in a tea caravan every day to offer a warming drink to whoever was

**The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne has no tolerance for any form of abuse, harassment or other misconduct. All concerns and reports of abuse and misconduct must be reported.**



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**2** All suspicions or reports of child abuse must be reported to:

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Kooyoora Professional Standards (see below)

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000**

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• West (Rural) **1800 075 599** • West (Metro) **1300 664 977**

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1800 135 246**





*VCC Emergencies Ministry chaplain the Reverend Sion Gough-Hughes delivers compassion in crisis.  
Picture: Elspeth Kernebone*

around, simply because she believed they needed it.

"You do see the best of people in the worst of times," Mr Gough-Hughes said.

It moved him so deeply, he wrote a sermon about Jesus looking like a fireman, looking like a nurse, looking like a person grieving.

But the priest said it was hard at some callouts for the chaplains to gauge what difference their efforts made for those most traumatised.

The Bourke Street Mall incident shone

a light on this for them. They could actually see hope returning to people's faces when they engaged with them, Mr Gough-Hughes said.

For him, one person in particular reflected that.

It was around one in the morning while enroute home from the first day's debriefing, when he and a few colleagues came across a man who looked shell shocked.

"We asked if he was okay, and he slumped, and it all just came pouring out over more than an hour," Mr Gough-

Hughes said.

"It turned out this guy narrowly escaped being hit by the car, and then witnessed some of the horrific things that happened. He was in all sorts of distress. At the end, he got up and he went, 'You've saved my life tonight', and walked off. That stuck, that really stuck. It made a difference to me and it makes a huge difference for people."

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# Song-cycle aims to inspire Christian pacifism

Alan Griffiths' new work was inspired by and advocates for Christian pacifism. Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

■ Maya Pilbrow

**A new operatic song-cycle that aims to inspire people to stand up against warmongering will premiere at St Paul's Cathedral.**

Christian pacifist composer Alan Griffiths' new song-cycle is titled *Such A Fine, Sunny Day*. It is the composer's first work exploring themes of nonviolent resistance to war. The premiere will feature performances from acclaimed chamber musicians from Australia and around the world.

Mr Griffiths said he wanted people to come away from the concert filled with hope for the future amidst a conflict-laden present.

*Such A Fine, Sunny Day* was inspired by young Christian anti-Hitler pacifists in Nazi Germany. It was composed during Melbourne's second lockdown.

Stuck inside and isolated with little to do but read the news, Mr Griffiths began to fear the potential of a war with Russia. These fears were only compounded after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Mr Griffiths wanted to speak out against the possibility of the conflict in Ukraine escalating, but he wasn't sure how.

He thought about a German Christian

pacifist organisation called the White Rose, a group of professors and university students from Munich who opposed Hitler during World War II. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, they wrote and distributed pamphlets urging rebellion and non-violent resistance. The group referred to themselves as Germany's bad conscience, ready to remind their fellow citizens of the crimes of the Nazi regime.

One of the members was a student named Sophie Scholl. She was arrested and executed at age 21 after being caught distributing anti-war pamphlets. Her final words are disputed. According to Holocaust scholarship organisation the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, one of the final things she said before she died was, "Such a fine, sunny day, and I have to go".

Mr Griffiths said he was deeply moved by Ms Scholl's actions. He considered his own worries about escalating global conflicts, and wondered what Ms Scholl would have done in a democracy where she had the freedom to speak out openly against warmongering.

Mr Griffiths said he wanted his song-cycle to take people through Ms Scholl's emotional journey.

Mr Griffiths wrote the libretto to capture

the inner monologue of Ms Scholl awaiting her fate. He also included the perspectives of witnesses to her bravery. He included excerpts from the letters she was caught distributing.

Mr Griffiths said he hoped those who heard his music would see the humanity in the work and be inspired to speak out for peace.

He said his pacifism was tied to his faith. He said it made sense for Christians to be peace advocates on a global stage.

"As a Christian, I think the greatest thing we can do for our fellow human beings is to try to get them to go out and have a relationship with [God]. But how can we do that when they're being butchered?" he said. "We need peaceful solutions to conflict."

Mr Griffiths said it was important his song-cycle would premiere at St Paul's Cathedral. He hoped it would be the right place for his message to resonate with Christians.

"If we're going to spread the message of Christ's love and peace, we can't do it with a gun," he said.

*Such A Fine, Sunny Day* will premiere on 25 November at 7.30pm at St Paul's Cathedral. For more information, see [bit.ly/FineSunnyDay](https://bit.ly/FineSunnyDay).