


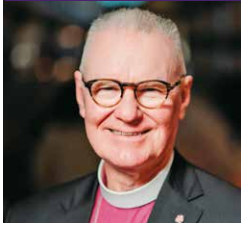
THE Melbourne Anglican

DECEMBER 2023, No 631



Where are You in the rubble?
In the chaos and pain?
Like a roaring tumult the sky falls
The earth swallows up
So what hope in a tiny Christmas babe?
What price a silent night?
Help us to be still... and know
Emmanuel... God with us

NAVY
SMITH



May you find the peace of Jesus at work this Christmas

■ Archbishop Philip Freier

Our journey to Christmas this year is a heavy one. World events are distressing with chaos and conflict escalating at a rate beyond our comprehension.

It was a different age with different tensions, but the world of Jesus' birth was not a time of ease or peace. The *pax romana*, effectively a peace that the Roman Empire forged through the annihilation of their enemies, was still incompletely accomplished throughout the land of Israel. The whole of Jesus' life was lived in the unfolding shadow of these ancient world events.

The journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem was on account of the Roman census, a sign to Israel that they were being incorporated as a defeated people into the Roman Empire. Any romantic notions we have about the Jesus' birth in the stable of Bethlehem need to be measured against the powerlessness of Joseph and Mary in the face of the demands of their times. The escape of the Holy Family from King Herod's edicts points to the complexities that are alive in such world events.

As always happens, the little and the least in the affairs of the world experience

“Starting with ourselves, we seek to extend this gift of God in Christ to a fractured and broken world.”

the greatest suffering in these struggles for power and control.

This was the world in which the incarnation of the Son of God took place. Jesus' birth is at the same time highly contextual but also wonderfully timeless in what it declares about God's love in a broken world. As we make our journey to Christmas, I hope that we do this with the assurance that God is always present with us in the turmoils of the world.

The Australian community is at this same time making a journey towards the future informed by the negative outcome in the referendum about a First Nations' Voice. The analysis will undoubtedly continue for some time. Throughout the 120-year history of the Australian Commonwealth, constitutional change has been difficult to achieve with most referendums failing to gain support.

I think that there is a danger in our present circumstances of interpreting the referendum result as somehow pointing to an anti-Indigenous consensus in Australian society. There have been some early indications that bipartisan positions at a state level around the country have been abandoned on the basis that “the people have spoken”.

In that light the importance of the Yoorook Justice Commission is significant. Yoorook's work is to open up the impact of colonisation on the Traditional Owners and First Peoples of Victoria. It is the most systematic attempt to explore this question so far. I commend to you the materials on the commission's website as resources to deepen your understanding of this work. It is also important that this work continues to be supported across the divergence of opinion on the referendum.

May you have a blessed Christmas and find the peace of Jesus, the Prince of Peace at work in your heart, your home and your relationships. Starting with ourselves, we seek to extend this gift of God in Christ to a fractured and broken world.

THE Melbourne Anglican



The Melbourne Anglican
ISSN 1324-5724

Chief Communications Officer
– Michelle Harris
mharris@melbourneanglican.org.au

Editor – Elspeth Kernebone
ekernebone@melbourneanglican.org.au

Journalist – Jenan Taylor
jtaylor@melbourneanglican.org.au

Journalist – Maya Pilbrow
mpilbrow@melbourneanglican.org.au

Advertising –
ads@melbourneanglican.org.au

Design & Layout – Ivan Smith
ads@melbourneanglican.org.au

Subscription Enquiries
tma@melbourneanglican.org.au
Annual Subscription \$40

Printing – Intellimail International

Published by:
Anglican Media Melbourne,
209 Flinders Lane Melbourne VIC 3000
ph 9653 4269
tma.melbourneanglican.org.au

f @MelbourneAnglican
t @MelbAnglican

Vacant Appointments as of 15 November 2023:

St Paul, Boronia; Christ Church, Brunswick [from April 2024];
St Michael, North Carlton; St John, Camberwell; St Philip, Collingwood;
Redemption Church, Craigieburn [from January 2024]; 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:

BRAND STARKEY, The Revd Maria Alena, appointed Vicar, St Barnabas, Glen Waverley, effective 22 March 2024
CLEMENTS, The Revd Benjamin, appointed Parish Minister, St Alfred Blackburn North, effective 14 November 2023
HARPER, The Revd Andrew, appointed Manager of Spiritual Care, Austin Hospital, effective 13 November 2023
KEMPSTER, The Revd Hugh John, appointed Senior Chaplain, Melbourne Grammar School, effective January 2024
RANKIN, The Revd Elizabeth Helen, appointed Vicar, St Peter, Ocean Grove with All Saints, Barwon Heads, effective 18 January 2024

Permission to Officiate:

OGUNDE, The Revd Mecka, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 26 October 2023

Resignations:

FRASER, The Revd Emily, Assistant Priest, Christ Church, South Yarra and School Chaplain to Christ Church, Grammar School, effective 7 January 2024 to take up an appointment in the Diocese of Tasmania
SANDERSON, The Revd John, Reimagining the Future Officer, Anglican Diocese, effective 1 October 2023
DILLON, The Revd Kristen Maree, Assistant Curate, St George, East Ivanhoe, effective 17 December 2023



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

Clergy Moves



The Reverend Candice Mitrousis was set to be ordained a priest on 25 November, with 12 others.

Picture: Vanessa Macaulay

‘I have work for you to do’: Candice follows call in work with children

■ Jenan Taylor

Ahead of her ordination to the priesthood, the Reverend Candice Mitrousis can recall the moment she was called to service.

It was at a Community of the Holy Name retreat during a special event for ordinands.

“I was holding a plate of peas and looking at these ordinands, thinking that was never going to be me because I’d never wanted to be a vicar of a church,” Mrs Mitrousis said. “As clear as can be, I heard God say to me ‘It’s not about you. I have work for you to do.’”

Involved with children’s ministry for close to 10 years, Mrs Mitrousis believed she had a gift for it, and was prepared to remain a lay minister forever.

She grew up in a large extended family, and would often be found around the babies and younger children.

Mrs Mitrousis went on to immerse herself in roles that involved teaching, leading and encouraging children, including coaching them in callisthenics.

Through her lay children’s minister role at St Augustine’s Mentone, Mrs Mitrousis built

good relationships with school chaplains at Mentone Grammar and Mentone Girls Grammar.

She enjoyed working with children so much, she resisted anything that would take her away from it.

But after realising that God’s work was not about what she wanted, Mrs Mitrousis began the discernment process.

It dawned on her that being ordained meant she could still follow a calling to work with children.

Since being made a deacon in February 2023, Mrs Mitrousis has been assistant chaplain at Yarra Valley Grammar three days a week, and a curate at St Stephen’s and St Mary’s Mount Waverley.

Around school children she regularly faced the kind of questions that occupied adults, Mrs Mitrousis said.

“From ‘Why does God allow bad things to happen?’ to ‘Who created God?’ the kids are trying to work out what life is about, and are very open to faith,” Mrs Mitrousis said.

She said her experience building sturdy children’s ministries at St Augustine’s gave her some solid ideas about how to spark the

interest of younger children in the church.

For parishes struggling to get children through their doors, that perhaps could mean rethinking the need to have young people in the pews on a Sunday.

“Many are involved in different activities then, so you have to be okay with doing something other than a Sunday morning service. Could a breakfast club at a nearby primary school, work instead?” Mrs Mitrousis said.

She said she worried about the future of the Church, if young people dropped away.

But Mrs Mitrousis encouraged Anglicans to keep trying to reach them, because the faith they seeded in children just might fruit one day. Intent on focussing on both parish ministry and school chaplaincy, she said she dreamed of someday seeing a church just for children.

“It would be a space that stays a kids’ church all week, and where they were the focus and the programs were all about them,” Mrs Mitrousis said.

The Reverend Candice Mitrousis will be one of thirteen people ordained on November 25 at St Paul’s Cathedral.

Hope and haven for one man in tide of

■ Jenan Taylor

If all goes well, Joshua Pietras' new home slowly taking shape in the backyard of an eastern suburb property, will be done by Christmas.

The modest bungalow will mark the end of a period of homelessness that started when Mr Pietras' mother, whom he was caring for, passed away in 2022.

Mr Pietras, then 51 and a qualified chef, was unable to afford the house, and started couch surfing.

He ended up with close relatives, but financial tensions strained the relationship, and Mr Pietras found himself friendless, unemployed and on the street with nowhere to go.

Fear of being alone at night, and the unceasing cold and hunger, drove Mr Pietras to a community organisation who referred him for emergency accommodation to a church participating in the Yarra Valley Winter Shelter program.

He arrived silent, anguished and withdrawn, expecting to sleep alongside potentially dangerous strangers, and to have to shoulder people's judgment.

Instead, he found the church shelter comfortable, the meals hot, and the volunteers compassionate and respectful.

The experience changed his life.

The Yarra Valley Winter Shelter is a project of Stable One, a faith charity network that has been working since 2016 to help churches better support people experiencing homelessness during the coldest season.

This year, 134 volunteers from eight different churches in the Yarra Ranges area and the wider community came together to

look after the needs of 23 shelter guests.

Stable One managing director Jenny Willetts said the volunteers' skills and experiences were a blessing to the project.

Most came to it because they wanted to do something that made a difference for those caught in the area's rising tide of homelessness, Ms Willetts said.

Wandin, Seville and Mount Evelyn Anglican Parish congregants, along with their part-time vicar the Reverend Ross Duncan, were among them.

"The motivation to help comes from our humanity rather than our material ability to provide for them. But it's not about self affirmation for us, but about what these people need."

Ross Duncan

Mr Duncan said his parishioners participated because they had a heart for people who were really struggling with life.

"The motivation to help comes from our humanity rather than our material ability to provide for them. But it's not about self affirmation for us, but about what these people need," he said.

Mr Duncan said he felt that as a professional counsellor he could offer those who were particularly traumatised his help, as there were often other issues underlying financial stress and homelessness.

Mr Pietras said people were more than willing to give him their time at the three churches at which he sheltered.

Having absorbed countless criticisms from loved ones and strangers about his circumstances, he hungered for discussions that didn't revolve around money and survival.

The easy conversations the volunteers offered, often over shared mealtimes, nourished him.

"They showed me there was no shame in my situation and that I had a lot more in me than I thought," Mr Pietras said.

During daylight hours when the shelters were shut, he usually wandered shopping centres to pass the time.

But on Sundays, when the Wandin Baptist Church kept its doors open all day for the guests, Mr Pietras was able to spend more time with the volunteers and like-minded others in his situation.

He began to feel more comfortable around them as the weeks passed, and started to socialise more often with them outside shelter hours.

Through one of these friendships, Mr Pietras met Bruce Weston, a retired chippy, and father of a longtime Stable One volunteer.

Mr Weston offered to build him a place to live long-term, and a caravan on his property to stay in before this.

Used to having a tenant in the caravan or people who weren't family members living in his household, Mr Weston said he'd always believed solid relationships were good for people.

"I love company, and I love people's stories," he said. "The more we open to each other, the more we realise we're all pretty



We're changing!

THE
**Melbourne
Anglican**

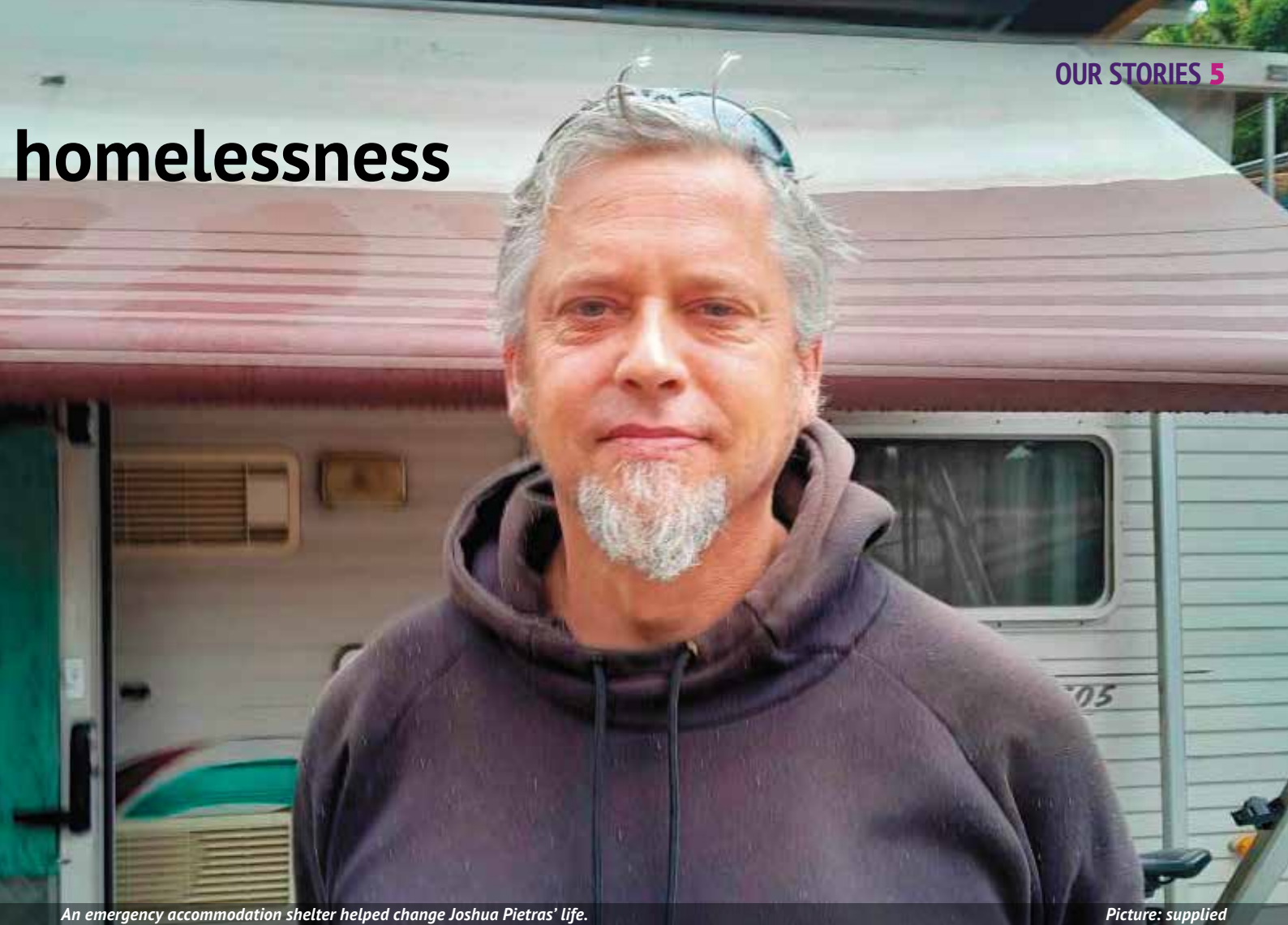
In 2024 *The Melbourne Anglican* will still come to you monthly, but in a slightly different form. We'll be publishing four print editions, and seven-online only editions.

This change will allow us to continue to serve readers with a print magazine, and to connect with a broader audience, while showing financial and environmental responsibility.

**ACCESS
THE
E-EDITION
ONLINE**



homelessness



An emergency accommodation shelter helped change Joshua Pietras' life.

Picture: supplied

much the same, really. We react the same way to things, we get scared, we laugh. We're not all that different."

While Mr Weston tinkers away at the bungalow, Mr Pietras has been preparing for job interviews, and is optimistic about the future.

He said he could see himself volunteering at the winter shelter next year.

Reflecting on the 2023 season, and Mr Pietras' experience, Ms Willetts said the Yarra Valley shelter had fulfilled its goals.

She said it was never just about finding

"I have had strange little things happen, and there seem to be signs ... It's almost like God saying 'I'm here, I'm real. Just open your eyes and look'"

Joshua Pietras

people a place to live. Walking with and caring for people, and strengthening churches to work together for that purpose, were among its major aims.

Though not religious, Mr Pietras said the compassion and fellowship he received changed how he felt about himself, restored his trust in others, and made him aware of a bigger picture.

"I have had strange little things happen, and there seem to be signs," he said. "It's almost like God saying 'I'm here, I'm real. Just open your eyes and look.'"

A step back in time to celebrate rich, 170-year ministry

■ **Maya Pilbrow**

One of the oldest Anglican churches in Melbourne has celebrated its 170th anniversary with a historical re-enactment of a typical 1853 service.

Christ Church Hawthorn's anniversary service used the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* and followed the conventions of church services from the 1850s.

Parish priest the Reverend Andrew Dircks said he hoped the anniversary service would help people appreciate the parish's rich heritage. He said he wanted people to

understand better what church would have been like for the original parishioners at Christ Church.

Mr Dircks said the differences between services then and now were stark, with archaic language and minimal congregational participation. He said services today were far more informal and inclusive.

Mr Dircks said engaging with church history was fundamental to Christian faith, which was grounded in the history of Jesus Christ.

"We should take history seriously," he said. "We personally weren't present 170 years

ago or 2000 years ago, yet these historical events were real."

Mr Dircks said certain historical events provided the foundation for faith and life today and it was worthwhile to pay attention to history and try to understand it.

Parishioner Jenny Bock said 170 years of church history was a cause for celebration.

"We're still going," she said. "As a church, we're not dead yet."

Christ Church Hawthorn will celebrate the 170th anniversary of the church's foundation stone being laid on Sunday 19 November.

CHRISTMAS TOY APPEAL

You can **help every child** have
a Merry Christmas this year



\$35

Can help buy toys
for a child in care



\$65

Can help provide new
sports equipment



\$150

Can help feed
two families on
Christmas Day



We are relying on **your support**

Email us at **toys@anglicarevic.org.au** for more
information or to find out how to donate new toys.



Scan here
to make a
difference.

Public pantry pulls in hungry, helpers

■ Jenan Taylor

A byside church hopes its public pantry will help ease food stress for people in its community and reduce food waste.

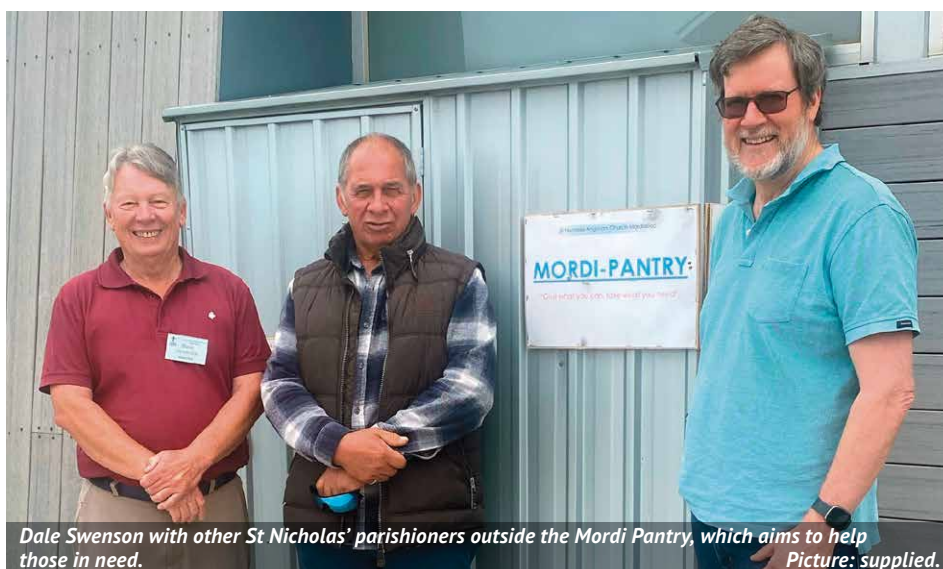
St Nicholas' Mordialloc has opened a food pantry in its carpark to help people struggling with rising prices access food.

The Mordi Pantry food cabinet is a free initiative that encourages people to trade a donation of excess food including home-grown produce, for another item.

Church warden Dale Swenson said people with nothing to give were encouraged to take what they needed, with the rising cost of living.

Mr Swenson said the pantry gave St Nicholas' and its members the chance to extend hospitality towards people who would normally never approach the church. It's part of efforts to become a more welcoming church, as it adopts the diocese's *Reimagining the Future* initiative.

Mr Swenson said plenty of people were already contributing food items, even though it had only been open a month, including members of the general public.



Dale Swenson with other St Nicholas' parishioners outside the Mordi Pantry, which aims to help those in need. Picture: supplied.

He said many were also collecting from the pantry, showing some of the need in the general population.

He said the pantry had lots of support among the local businesses, some of which had donated food.

Mr Swenson said he had received a call from one man who said he didn't come to church but had access to lots of food products and wanted permission to

put the excess in the cabinet.

"He said, 'I think it's a fantastic idea, and I'm not really a church-going person, but maybe I'll come down at special times, Christmas, Easter, things like that.' I said 'You're more than welcome to pop down anytime you want and if you find it welcoming and would like to continue coming, do that. If you don't, that's fine, too,'" Mr Swenson said.

The
Greatest
Gift!

*"In him was life,
and the life was the light
of all people. The light
shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did
not overcome it."*

John 1:4-5 (NRSV)

Living in a rural village in Pakistan, Radha knows the taste of poverty. But it is childbirth that caused her the greatest anxiety. Complications can be a death sentence for women like Radha.

This Christmas, you can bring light and life by helping to prevent women dying in childbirth and giving babies the best start in life!

For just \$40, you can support Tearfund's local Christian partners to provide pre and post-natal care for women like Radha.

tearfund

Christmas Appeal 2023

Donate now

tearfund.link/23catma
or call (Toll Free) 1800 244 986



Healthier clergy, families, churches under

■ Jenan Taylor

Anglican leaders in parts of NSW believe their full-time clergy have better mental, spiritual, emotional and physical health after adopting a five-day working week model.

Bathurst and Newcastle dioceses and Sydney's Norwest Anglican parish say their full-time ministers are able to focus more of their free time on family life and personal recreation under the shorter working weeks.

The leaders believed the approach was helping to foster healthier work practises and resilience among staff.

It comes after delegates at the 2023 Melbourne Synod endorsed a motion calling for a review of clergy working hours.

Bathurst Bishop Mark Calder said his diocese introduced a five-day model at the start of 2023 because it was concerned primarily about the welfare of its younger clergy who were just starting their careers, especially those with families.

Bishop Calder said Bathurst had many new, young clergy with families, and six days was unsustainable for those families.

He said the diocese had questioned the

usefulness of clergy having one day to get full rest, do chores and spend quality time with their children.

"How is that meant to work and function in real life, and be good for family values? We just felt six days was unrealistic, and that we needed to take the pressure off them," Bishop Calder said.

He said he believed that people could see the benefit of the model, but hadn't yet done a survey.

"We just felt six days was unrealistic, and that we needed to take the pressure off them."

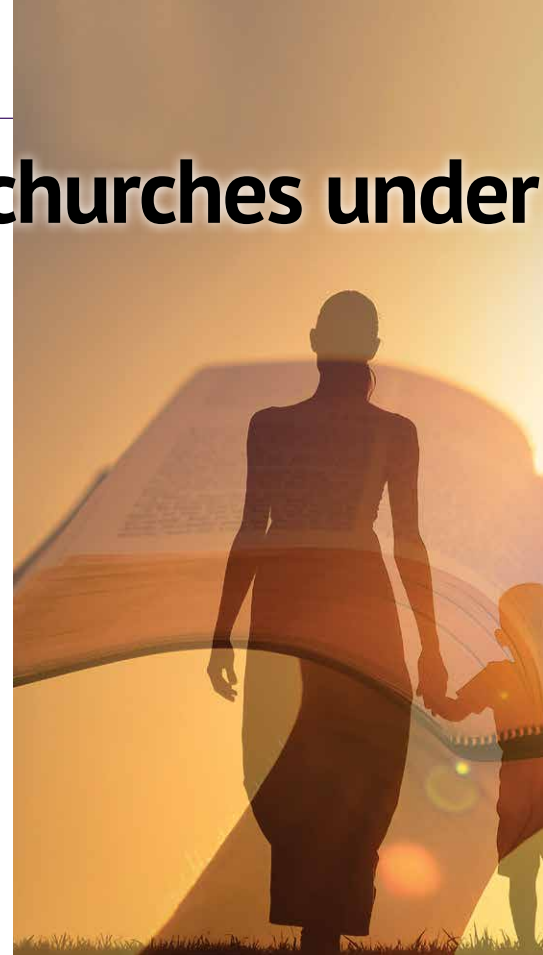
Bishop Mark Calder

The Diocese of Newcastle said a focus on clergy wellbeing motivated its change to a five-day approach, based on 40 hours of ministry.

A spokesperson said the new model had not affected the stipend rates of the full-time ministers, and was strongly

supported by clergy and laity.

She said since its introduction clergy reported getting better at taking time off, and many had spoken about taking care of elderly parents and children and focusing on physical exercise and other recreation





WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN JOB?

SCAN ME



In a world that often seems consumed by material pursuits and self-interest, many yearn for a deeper connection between their faith and their daily work. They seek a 'Christian job' not simply as an occupation, but as a vocation that aligns with their values and serves a higher purpose.

Christian Jobs Australia has been at the forefront of this mission and has consistently connected individuals with opportunities that align with their faith and values.

A Christian job is defined by the principles of Christ's love, compassion and service. It's about practicing humility, integrity, and kindness in the workplace, and recognising that work is a way to express one's faith.

A Christian job is not confined to a specific industry or title. It transcends sectors and job descriptions.

We are all called to be the salt and light of the world. In doing so, we transform our jobs into a testament of our faith, living out the Biblical principles of love and service that define a Christian job.

Christian Jobs Australia stands as a living testimony to this powerful truth, inspiring us to infuse our work with the light of Christ's teachings.

As we seek to fulfil our roles with love and integrity, let us remember that the most remarkable Christian jobs are those that touch hearts, heal souls, and bring glory to God.



➔ www.christianjobs.com.au

five-day week model: Interstate leaders



Picture: iStock

during that time.

In Newcastle's experience appropriate work-life balance and self-care was yielding staff who were more reflective, grounded and resilient, the spokesperson said.

Bishop Calder said it was early days yet

for the model in Bathurst, but he hoped those working conditions would help the diocese retain and attract clergy.

He said full-time clergy's stipends remained the same, but the diocese had left part-time clergy to negotiate their pay terms with individual parishes.

Faith Workers Alliance executive officer the Reverend Chris Bedding said more Anglican dioceses were having conversations about moving to a five-day model, including Perth and Brisbane.

Mr Bedding said he believed it was motivated by increased awareness of burn out and a better understanding of its impact in communities and on individuals.

A recent clinical psychology study found that the top three reasons Australian ministers considered quitting was job stress, loneliness and that their families were suffering.

Norwest Anglican senior minister the Reverend Pete Stedman said his parish moved to a five-day model for clergy 13 years ago. He said when he'd started at Norwest there were young families, and he wanted husbands to feel they could spend time with their wives, and dads to be able

to spend time with their children.

"We realised that people serve well if their home and familial relationships are stable and healthy," Mr Stedman said.

He said five ministers worked 50 to 55 hours across a five-day week ministering to a congregation of about 1000 people, and he wanted them to be able to rest really well on their two days off. Mr Stedman said he believed it helped their ministry be sustainable.

Mr Stedman said working 50 to 55 hours a week, as compared to the Australian standard full-time week of 38 hours, worked for Norwest ministers and was necessary to do the job given its large congregation.

The Reverend Luke Whiteside who seconded the motion at the Melbourne Synod 2023 said there was an incredible privilege in ministry of service.

"But the Anglican Church as a whole needs to do the work of addressing some of the theological concerns of working in a new regulatory system, and look at how that may or may not create helpful, gospel shaped patterns of work and engagement," Reverend Whiteside said.

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.



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.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas. Thank you.

Scan the QR code to donate.



© 2023 Brotherhood of St. Laurence
ABN 24 603 467 024, ARBN 100 042 822

Donate today: bsl.org.au/donate-xmas23-tma



Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

Equipped for the future: Emerging leaders graduate

■ Robert Miller

Seven trainees graduated from the Equip Training Program at St Jude's Carlton on October 26. Equip helps churches and ministry organisations run effective traineeship programs to raise up the next generation of ministers for the church.

The program was originally launched by Dr Peter Adam in 2001, and has since trained dozens of people for ministries in Melbourne and around the world. Graduates of the program have gone on to serve as vicars and lay workers, missionaries in places as diverse as Japan and Niger, theological college lecturers, and church planters.

St Jude's trainee Bridget Penington reflected that "The program has been an engaging and fun source of learning alongside my church-based ministry traineeship. Having input from a variety of different teachers has been really valuable, and I've really appreciated having a cohort of other trainees to learn together with and to pray together with



each week."

Equip is a two-year program for ministry apprentices and new church staff, providing training in leadership, evangelism, discipleship, using the Bible in ministry, and theology. The aim is for trainees to be well prepared for theological study if they choose to do that next. The program runs for one morning a week, and is designed to complement the other

components of ministry traineeships such as individual coaching and on-the-job ministry experience.

Equip director the Reverend Robert Miller said, "It's been a great joy to work with these emerging leaders as they test the waters of full-time ministry – I can't wait to see what they do in the future and how God may use them for His kingdom."



St Philip's Cowes hosts annual breakfasts for many returning and new MOTO GP enthusiasts. Picture: supplied.

Funds, friendships motor along at Cowes breakfast

■ Jenan Taylor

A Phillip Island church's traditional hot breakfasts for MOTO GP enthusiasts, and community members attracted plenty of diners this year.

St Philip's Cowes parishioners and local volunteers served 66 kilos of sausages, bacon and tomatoes, about 70 dozen eggs, and 56 tins of baked beans alongside about 45 loaves of bread, and endless cups of coffee in its annual Grand Prix

breakfast offering.

The church has hosted the \$20-a-head fundraising breakfast every year that the Moto GP has run at Phillip Island since 1989.

Organiser and deacon the Reverend Erena Norfolk said it was St Philip's major fundraiser and monies went primarily towards the upkeep of its community hall, one of the island's oldest buildings.

She said in past years the Grand Prix breakfasts raised enough money for the

church to build a bigger kitchen in the hall for the community food program, and to kit out a smaller meeting room for parishioners and other groups.

Ms Norfolk said behind the scenes the church members and volunteers, including two from the Uniting Church, formed an eager team.

In the hall itself, they caught up with motorcyclists and fans who come back year after year, and chatted with Grand Prix newbies.



Jam for Refugees featured musicians and singers such as the North Children's Choir.

Picture: Matt Hrkac.

Day-long jam raises thousands for refugee legal aid

■ Jenan Taylor

A Geelong church hopes to help cover some of the legal aid costs of refugees in its community and increase awareness about their plight through a 10-hour music fundraiser.

St Paul's musical director and show organiser Terence Norman said the fundraiser was part of the church's effort to try to help people whose lives were affected through a combination of upheaval in their own countries and local policies.

"Even though we do have our own struggles, we are fortunate where we are

in Australia, and as Christ teaches us, it is duty to help those who are less fortunate than us," Mr Norman said.

Mr Norman said the line-up would include presentations from refugees and advocates and showcase some of the area's established and emerging musicians.

St Paul's hosted the fundraiser to support its legal fund, in conjunction with the Combined Refugee Action Group.

CRAG co-convenor Paul Coghlan said the group created the fund to particularly help asylum seekers in limbo, navigate Australia's complex legal system and

asylum seeker policies.

Mr Norman said the concert included school choirs and younger musicians among the performers, hoping to encourage a greater awareness among them and their supporters of some of the issues refugees faced in the Australian system.

Mr Norman said concert-goers could expect to hear from a variety of instrumentalists and singers, including the youth ensemble the North Children's Choir, some of whom were children of refugees.

Jam for Refugees raised \$5,500.

Healthcare policy, a biblical view

■ Stephen Duckett

A newly published work draws out themes which should inform healthcare policy from the parable of the Good Samaritan, found in Luke 10.

University of Divinity Religion and Social Policy Network member Stephen Duckett's work *Healthcare Funding and Christian Ethics* was launched at St Peter's Eastern Hill in November.

It addressed themes of: compassion as a motivator, including the question of why we care; inclusivity or social justice as to benefits, who do we care for; and stewardship of resources required to achieve the ends of treatment and prevention, that is, what should be provided.

Three panellists reflected

on the book. Brotherhood of St Laurence executive director Travers McLeod accepted that the three principles could apply more broadly, and were relevant for community services.

Pilgrim College's Associate Professor Robyn Whitaker addressed the book's focus on public theology and the call for compassionate and prophetic Christian voices in the public square.

Finally, University of Melbourne Professor of Global Health Nathan Grills discussed the application of the book's principles to low- and middle-income countries.

Healthcare Funding and Christian Ethics is available through St Peter's Bookroom, bit.ly/46nMiw6.

From the editor



Where are You in the rubble? Our graphic designer Ivan Smith asks this question of God on our front cover, as he wonders how Jesus, the Prince of Peace, makes sense of human events.

We can see what he means throughout this edition. People homeless or hungry in our own city, countries torn apart by war and natural disasters, a climate crisis.

But we also see hope. Churches are trying to help the homeless and hungry, to push for climate action, and to share the good news with the lost. The Reverend Ruth Newmarch describes a hope for churches to be flourishing like a wedding feast. And the Reverend Mike Phillips talks about what we meet for: to nourish our hope for a future together, when a great multitude from many nations gathers around the Lamb's throne, to sing His praises.

Likewise, Ivan's conclusion is one that trusts in that hope: "In the end, the best we can do is to be still and know that God is with us, Emmanuel."

Elspeth Kernebone, editor

Faith groups push for climate action

■ Jenan Taylor

People of faith are set to push coal, oil and gas-producing nations to phase out fossil fuels to help contain rising global temperatures, during a multifaith gathering at an international climate change summit.

Talanoa Interfaith Gathering participants will discuss pressuring fossil fuel-producing nations for a deeper commitment to the transition to renewables and other climate change issues, at the 28th Conference of Parties in Dubai.

The aim is to hear a wide range of ideas about how to address climate change, interfaith meeting organisers say.

It comes as Pope Francis prepares to open the United Nations COP's first ever faith pavilion, a dedicated space for religious communities to discuss how they are addressing climate change.

UN Interfaith Liaison Committee member and Talanoa organiser Bishop Philip Huggins said faith-based actors attended the global conference because they believed they had a sacred duty towards the planet, and were therefore deeply committed to caring for it.

Bishop Huggins said people of faith were important to climate change discussions because they fostered trust and transparency.

He said they could through the tone of the conversation reduce tension and encourage peace and more responsibility around dominant issues.

These included how transparent signatories to the Paris Agreement were about their attempts to cut emissions, Bishop Huggins said.

He said people of faith also recognised



Picture: iStock

“We are there to be important witnesses to the need for a greater level of cooperation.”

Philip Huggins

that for the sake of future generations and all living beings, there was a need for consensus.

“The UN COP is a cooperative venture to implement the Paris Agreement and contain the rise of global temperatures. This one is shadowed by international conflict and we are there to be important witnesses to the need for a greater level of cooperation,” Bishop Huggins said.

He said the Talanoa gathering was also an opportunity for people to meditate and pray towards a beneficial COP 28.

Bishop Huggins said the meeting format drew from the Talanoa Dialogue, a Fijian Indigenous people's approach to problem solving.

He said participants at this style of discussion were encouraged to consider and address who they were, where they wanted to go, and how they wanted to get there. The approach tried to make sure every voice was heard and respected, not just those of the elites.

Bishop Huggins said there was a greater respect for Indigenous wisdom in the global environmental advocacy and solutions space, including traditional wisdom about how to approach issues, and how to look after environments.

The gathering was set to take place at Christ Church Jebel Ali Anglican parish in Dubai on 30 November, and include a panel of religious leaders and United Arab Emirates officials, small group discussions, and an interfaith service.

Royal Melbourne Philharmonic presents its annual concerts of traditional Christmas music and readings

Carols in the Cathedral

3 spectacular performances at St Paul's Cathedral

Fri 15 Dec at 8.30pm and Sat 16 Dec at 2pm and 7pm

Andrew Wailes conductor Roy Best tenor Stefan Cassomenos piano
Andrew Bainbridge organ Jeremy Kleeman bass baritone
Roland Rocchiccioli, Julie Houghton readers Box Hill Chorale,
Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir, National Boys Choir of Australia,
Melbourne University Choral Society, RMP Orchestra soloists,
RMP Brass and Percussion, City of Melbourne Highland Pipe Band

BOOKINGS: www.rmp.org.au Early booking advised!



Our People, Our Stories



Welcome

It's been an exciting time at Anglicare Victoria, with the recent launch of our new Team Better Tomorrows regular giving program.

Generous Victorians who are passionate about education can get behind Team Better Tomorrows with monthly donations that fit into their budgets and help more kids in out-of-home care access TEACHaR, our personalised tutoring program that helps young people stay in school and develop a love of learning. Their ongoing commitment means we can plan ahead and expand the program to as many vulnerable kids as possible, which is just fantastic.

The work we do wouldn't be possible without our donors, including the schools and businesses that support us by raising funds and collecting food and toys for our emergency relief programs. In this magazine, you'll read about the remarkable contribution the Brighton Grammar School

community has made to Anglicare Victoria over the past 25 years – more than \$100,000 in cash donations and goods that have meant we can provide clients experiencing homelessness with hot meals and access to showers and laundry facilities at St Marks in Fitzroy.

Thank you for your continued support of Anglicare Victoria. I hope you enjoy reading this and hearing about some of the incredible things you have helped us achieve.

Paul McDonald
CEO Anglicare Victoria

Get Involved for Better Tomorrows

In order to provide a range of support services to help disadvantaged Victorians to rise above their difficulties, we rely on the generosity of volunteers and supporters.

Thanks to the various skills, efforts and donations of our volunteers and supporters, we're able to make significant change in the lives of vulnerable Victorians.

Your support can really make a difference.



Scan the QR code to find out
how you can get involved
and lend your support.

Faith in Action

A Century of Giving

It is our greatest pleasure to highlight the goodness, generosity and tenacity of Anglican parishes. St Luke's Vermont has been supporting children and families in need for almost 100 years.

As a parish group, they have supported our emergency and annual appeals, along with emergency relief and family services programs in the Eastern region. As with so many parishes, there have been sausage sizzles, luncheons, garden parties, Christmas card sales and other activities along the way.

St Luke's Auxiliary and St Luke's Partnership Group member Joan Nethercote recounted on several occasions, attending auxiliary meetings as a child, sat on her mother's knee. Later in life, Joan opened her expansive garden and home to host visitors, again to raise funds for Anglicare.

Her contribution to fundraising and social activities organised by St Luke's partnership group was prolific, as were so many other notable members over the past almost 100 years.

Cheryl Buckland, who along with Rosie Freeman have been fundraising and socialising with this group for more than 50 years, noted 'the way we support has changed considerably over the years.

We used to hold luncheons for volunteers and staff alike at the Lilydale office. They were delighted to come along and be looked after as our guest, which was an absolute pleasure to reward them for their selfless giving of time and skills for their clients."

Another significant opportunity to give back was the Christmas shop where clients (along with their assigned caseworker) were given an appointment to 'shop' for gifts to give their children, providing them with a real shopping experience.



AVPG St Luke's Committee members at work in the kitchen.

Like so many Anglican churches, St Luke's sold Christmas cards in aid of Anglicare Victoria both in their church foyer and at church meetings.

St Luke's Vermont, continue their support for Anglicare Victoria through fundraising activities in their community, knowing that their partnership delivers impact and outcomes for vulnerable children and families. Anglicare Victoria was recently invited to speak about community issues at a men's community breakfast, humbly hosted by St Luke's in Vermont.

We're here to help.

If your parish would like to raise funds or have an event to support Anglicare Victoria, please call us on **1800 809 722** or email **giving@anglicarevic.org.au**

Would your school like to be a changemaker like Brighton Grammar School?

Changemakers

Brighton Grammar School

Dating back as far as our records show, Brighton Grammar School has been a devoted supporter of Anglicare Victoria. In the last 25 years, the school has contributed over \$100,000 worth of essential supplies including food, toys & gifts, and much-needed cash donations.

As part of their Community Service program, Brighton Grammar School students are invited to “think beyond themselves” and embrace the idea of philanthropy in their day-to-day. Every student from Prep to Year 12 is involved.

One of their greatest initiatives is the “Ute Full of Food” fundraising food drives, when at the end of every term, a selection of boys from various year levels, make the pilgrimage to St Mark’s in Fitzroy to deliver non-perishable grocery items collected during the term. Nowadays, it’s actually a fully stocked van with volunteer students helping load the van on campus and tirelessly unpacking the goods on arrival at St Mark’s.

The Community Centre at St Mark’s extends a helping hand to people experiencing both primary and secondary homelessness.



With the support of donors like Brighton Grammar School, Anglicare Victoria offers vital resources including emergency relief, case management, hot meals, and access to essential facilities like showers and laundry services. These provisions are designed to not only address immediate needs but also to help restore a sense of dignity and stability to those who are struggling.

The story of Brighton Grammar School’s unwavering commitment to help people less fortunate than themselves, is not only heart-warming, but a testament to the power of education.

Team Better Tomorrows

Future Inspiration

When they became foster carers, Rebecca and her husband Stewart were surprised to find that welcoming additional kids to stay fitted so neatly into her family’s life and routine.

“As a teacher I have strategies I use at school every day which help me manage situations that arise at home. Having a good idea of what behaviours are age-appropriate, as well as understanding that each child’s learning and development needs are different, has also meant I’ve been able to better connect with each of our foster kids,” Rebecca said.

For Rebecca, helping these vulnerable young people achieve their goals and dreams is a priceless reward, and one young boy in particular has made a lasting imprint on her heart.

Helping these children fulfil their dreams can be expensive, and foster carers only receive a small government payment to cover basic costs. Thanks to our Team Better Tomorrows supporters, carers like Rebecca can access funding to pay for activities such as football or dancing – meaning kids in out-of-home care don’t have to miss out on the little things that happy childhood memories are made of.

We
need:



Toys for
Christmas
time



Christmas
Food
Hampers



Registration for
food collections
for Winter 2024

Penny can be contacted on **0447 174 261** or via email at **partnerships@anglicarevic.org.au**.

Everyday is Different

Emergency Relief

The rising cost of everyday essentials has meant that many new families have visited Anglicare Victoria's 16 emergency relief sites for assistance in 2023.

Staffed primarily by volunteers, these sites provide groceries, nappies, and petrol vouchers for those in need. They also provide gifts for children whose parents and carers can't afford birthday and Christmas presents.

One of these dedicated volunteers is Mona, who has been volunteering with the Anglicare Victoria team at Mission House, Fitzroy for almost ten years.

"Every day is different," Mona said, "We get a lot of donations from schools and parishes, so I count those and restock the shelves before the clients arrive."

For clients like Kelly*, emergency relief has been a lifeline. "I was pretty much at zero, that's why I needed to access the service. It really helped us out, and not just financially. It was a tremendous relief," she said.

Kelly and our other emergency relief clients also benefit from vouchers to cover with the cost of prescription medication, and an onsite financial counselling service that can help them with bills and budgeting.

At the end of a busy shift, the smiles on clients' faces are proof positive of the difference the service is making in their lives. "It really helped our family get by every week," Kelly said. "It meant that we didn't have to go without."

.....

**"The need in the community is increasing because of the cost of living,"
"We rely on the food, toys and pet food we receive from our donors.
Without them we just couldn't continue."**

- Mona Anglicare Victoria Volunteer.



FOLLOW US ON SOCIALS



anglicarevic



@AnglicareVic



@anglicarevictoria



anglicare-victoria



AnglicareVic

'Keep aiding vulnerable in Afghanistan'

■ Jenan Taylor

The international community is being urged to keep donating to aid for Afghanistan's most vulnerable earthquake-affected populations, as they experience ongoing consequences.

Some have warned that women and children are likely to have been disproportionately affected by the natural disasters.

More than 1480 people have been killed and tens of thousands affected since the first of multiple earthquakes flattened Afghanistan's northwest region in early October.

Aid groups including Act for Peace and Caritas Australia said thousands of people lost their homes, and many were resorting to makeshift shelters.

They feared women and children were acutely affected by the situation, as data from the United Nations Women's agency revealed that women represented 60 per cent of the injured.

Caritas Australia humanitarian emergencies lead Sally Thomas said women and children were always among the most vulnerable, as they already experienced

extreme disadvantage, related to a dire humanitarian situation.

Ms Thomas said the earthquakes' rural location also affected women especially, as they would have been working and looking after families in their homes, while the men were likely to have been working outside.

UN Women's agency surveys of women survivors found that their most urgent needs included shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene, protection, and appropriate clothing.

Act for Peace, Tearfund Australia, Caritas Australia and CARE Australia launched urgent appeals, and anticipated the approaching winter would aggravate the situation for the vulnerable.

The agencies said they focussed on getting blankets and clothing to people, and in some instances were also trying to address urgent repairs to homes.

Act for Peace fundraising and marketing manager Ruthann Richardson said the delivery of women's hygiene kits was already a part of the organisation's response.

Ms Richardson said the organisation was also delivering winterised tents which

meant women could cook inside safely. She said longer term considerations would include building bathing places, communal kitchens and homes.

Ms Thomas said Caritas Australia's partners were trying to address the needs of families and women by providing emergency shelter, access to clean water, medical supplies, food and other essentials.

Tearfund Australia's international partnerships manager Hedda Ngan said its partners' responses included cash aid for women and children, people with disabilities, the widowed and the aged.

But Act for Peace echoed CARE Afghanistan's worry that the international community's attention was elsewhere.

Ms Richardson said she was concerned that with all the turmoil unfolding in other places across the globe, support for Afghanistan's vulnerable communities would diminish.

The Act for Peace appeal for Afghanistan is available at bit.ly/40LLRKO. The Caritas Australia appeal is available at bit.ly/3QPb9D7. Tearfund Australia's appeal can be found at: bit.ly/3QKuDcd. CARE Australia's appeal is available at bit.ly/3R7j14f.

*'For where two
or three are
gathered in my
name, there am
I among them.'*

Matthew 18:20



The Ministry team from Sojourners Church at Werribee Football Ground
Photo: Jerome Cole Photography

Church these days is not just about buildings.

Church is done on beaches, in cinemas, in homes and even at footy grounds!

But innovation comes with a cost. And starting from scratch is never easy.

This Christmas we ask you to support those who gather in God's name by helping us to find spaces and places to worship, build congregations and give the gift of community.

You can do this by making a **donation today** to the Melbourne Anglican Foundation.*

www.melbourneanglican.org.au/melbourne-anglican-foundation

*Merry
Christmas!*



**Melbourne
Anglican
Foundation**

*Donations to Melbourne Anglican Foundation to build and revitalise churches are not tax-deductible. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation this Christmas, **please consider donating to one of our Funds** so that our parishes and chaplains can continue to support and gather youth, migrants, refugees, and those experiencing disadvantage at this time of the year. You should always seek your own tax advice.

Direct debit please call (03) 9653 4220

Email foundation@melbourneanglican.org.au to request a Westpac Direct Debit form.

**All donations
over \$2 to one
of our Funds are
tax-deductible**

Mercy drives anti-slavery ministry

■ Jenan Taylor

Matthew Clarke and his wife Annabella Rossini-Clarke were visiting Fiji when their friend's prison rehabilitation program gave them the idea for a dedicated anti-human trafficking ministry.

Prisoners who were being visited by their fathers and had their support, especially in the final six months of their sentence, were unlikely to reoffend.

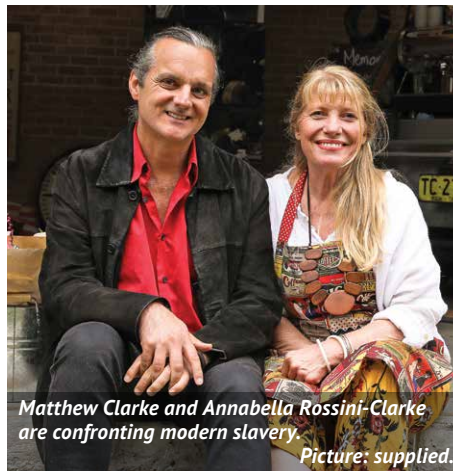
Inmates who continued to be ostracised and shamed by family and friends usually ended up back behind bars.

Their friend worked with the villages the prisoners came from, encouraging the sense that mercy was something that needed to be put into action.

Mr Clarke's computer science background had taken him to work in South Africa, and with international children's charities.

Through these experiences, he saw how so many young people in poverty were unshielded from slavery, and he longed to confront the worsening problem of human trafficking.

The idea of putting mercy into action threw a light on how they might approach



Matthew Clarke and Annabella Rossini-Clarke are confronting modern slavery. Picture: supplied.

the root of the matter.

Both raised as Christians with a strong sense of peacemaking, Mr Clarke and Ms Rossini-Clarke decided to turn their attention to probing the effectiveness of anti-slavery approaches, using this idea of mercy.

Ms Rossini-Clarke has long used hospitality ministry to try to help people who struggle with life.

From the back of *Little Pearl*, her teardrop-shaped caravan, she created a coffee cart enterprise in 2011 to raise money to train midwives in Ghana, and had been

doing so since 2013.

The tiny venture has grown into two caravans through which the couple have been able to attend to their antislavery project as well.

Believing in the power of coffee and conversation, Ms Rossini-Clarke uses her talents to build community for their projects and find anti-trafficking partners they can work with.

The couple chooses to be independent of funding sources and large organisations where they would potentially be restricted.

They believe this way they are free to ask the tricky questions that often need to be asked, including what's going on inside the minds of both human traffickers and people who generate demand for slavery or slavery-produced goods.

On the next *Everyday Saints* podcast, the couple share how their work is helping larger anti-trafficking bodies rethink their methods, and what small grass roots initiatives have achieved with similar ideas in other spaces.

Everyday Saints features the faith stories of those from Melbourne and beyond. You can find the podcast at bit.ly/EverydaySaints.

THE Melbourne Anglican

Love the letters section?
So do we!

Write to us at
editor@melbourneanglican.org.au.

Letters must be less than 250 words, and include your full name, address and phone number for identity verification. They may be edited for clarity, length and grammar.

Anglicans in Development

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2023

Building strong communities together



Please support Nungalinga and Wontulp-Bi-Buya colleges, so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may receive the training they need to lead their churches and communities.

Donations to this appeal are *Tax-deductible*



DONATE ONLINE at
www.abmission.org/Christmas2023

Image mural: The Jubilee mural was created jointly by students in Nungalinga College's Art and Faith group. Both images: © Nungalinga College. Used with permission.



For thriving churches, we need to be willing to change

Picture: iStock

■ Mike Phillips

I have an ongoing debate with my father, which I'm in danger of losing. Ten years ago, when I left maths teaching to train for Christian ministry, he was more than a little bemused, though not surprised. To him, I was joining a declining institution with a dim future. Unfortunately, recent data only reinforce his case.

I asked what he thought the median Sunday attendance was at Anglican churches in Melbourne and Geelong.

He thought for a moment or two ... "Maybe 120?"

He's a bit too optimistic. Even in 2001, the answer was 85.

Today, that number is 42.

This means half of the 200 or so Anglican parishes and authorised congregations in our diocese have 42 or fewer people meeting together on an average Sunday. Total average Sunday attendance for the diocese has declined from about 20,000 in 2005 to about 13,000 today. Both large and small churches are declining – the largest 10 per cent of parishes now have 26 per cent less people coming than in 2006.* No doubt COVID is part of this decline, but there must be deeper issues behind this long-term, widespread trend. Size is not the only measure of fruitfulness, and good ministry can happen in small churches, but this decline is deeply saddening, and we must not ignore it.

It's a grief we all must share, whether we attend a large or a small church. It must spur us to action. Not to heap blame or shame on smaller churches. But to make courageous decisions about how we can best reach Melbourne and Geelong with the good news of Christ, through local gatherings of God's people.

I realise that this is emotionally fraught. My grandparents joined their local Anglican

church when it was planted in what was then a growth corridor more than 60 years ago. When we packed up their home a few years ago, I found the order of service from my aunt's confirmation in the 1960s. Eighty names were listed to be confirmed that day! This year, their parish had fewer than 40 attendees on an average Sunday.

Now in their late 90s, my grandparents still grieve their church's decline. My grandmother was still attending the Bible study group well into her 80s. My grandfather did regular maintenance there for decades. They don't want to see it merged with the parish three kilometres away, let alone closed and sold. But the plight facing their church is decades in the making. Humanly-speaking, it won't be easily turned around. Given the pressures on our human and financial resources, would we be faithful to try? Could we better honour my grandparents' faith and good works, to say nothing of honouring Christ, by planting in Officer or Donnybrook or Truganina instead, where people have to travel a lot more than three kilometres to get to an Anglican church?

Unless we face the reality, we cannot expect to see change. We will need faith and vision and much prayer. We will need to ask hard questions and be willing to change. Is it possible that we have sacrificed gospel vision for Melbourne for something else we value? I fear that, in the name of a certain kind of diversity, we've spent more effort propping up unfruitful churches and constraining fruitful ones, rather than pruning the unhealthy and allowing the healthy to flourish and multiply.

This is a genuine challenge of leadership, for laity and for clergy, at the diocesan level and at the parish level. Without determined vision, sustained effort, and bold hope in God's promises, we are simply managing decline.

Because no parish, no authorised

congregation is forever. No diocese is forever. God's church is forever, but our parishes are not. In God's kindness, new churches are planted, and congregations grow. Sooner or later, though, they decline, and sometimes they need to close, with due thanksgiving for how they have served the Lord and their local community in their time.

Of course, Sunday gatherings are not the only measure of our ministry. This figure doesn't take into account many other important things, like small group Bible studies, nursing home services, week-day services, youth groups, evangelism and outreach initiatives, pastoral visiting or playgroups. It doesn't reflect sector ministry in schools or hospitals, prisons or the defence forces.

But Sunday attendance remains a critically important measure of the health of our diocese. Sunday services are where God gathers his people to hear his word preached and to receive the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper duly administered. As we gather on Sunday, our hope is nourished for our future together, as Revelation 7 describes: a great multitude from many nations, gathering around the throne of the Lamb to sing his praises.

This future, God's future, is not in doubt. It's this vision that prompted me to bemuse my Dad and serve the Lord in Christian ministry. It's this vision that sustains me in ministry. I hope and pray that God will continue to use Anglican churches to gather and prepare Melburnians for his future.

The Reverend Mike Phillips is campus minister at St Jude's Anglican Church Parkville.

* These figures are calculated from parish self-reporting of average Sunday attendance, published in the yearbook for synod of the respective year (obvious errors have either been adjusted or excluded). This year's data can be found on pages 121-126 of Part B of Synod 2023 reports.

Enrich your Christmas, try concentrating

■ Andrew Malone

Last Christmas I fell out of love with the carol *The First Nowell*. Having sung the familiar words all my life I was embarrassed only now to realise that the traditional opening verses portray the shepherds as faster than the wise men to spot the star in the east. Presumably the shepherds also used its unceasing light to navigate to baby Jesus in his manger.

Many Christians are as oblivious to the problem as I was. We are so accustomed to standard nativity scenes which mingle shepherds and magi and their respective sheep and camels. There's always a manger, often a stable and other animals, usually an angel, and of course the star itself.

When we pause to prepare Sunday School lessons or Advent sermons, we remember that all these elements are drawn from two separate gospels. Some of us approach the gospel stories as detectives: we pick up a clue from this one, a line from that one, and we reconstruct a composite identikit picture. Traditional Christmas cards display the resulting synthesis.

Fusion may be all the rage in certain restaurants. It sometimes aids our Bible reading. But piecing together separate accounts can also detract from the storytelling goal that each evangelist had as he penned his gospel. Concentrating on one gospel at a time can enhance our grasp of each message. Considering each angle on the story – separately – can enrich our appreciation for the miracle of the incarnation and its ultimate purposes.

Luke's gospel

Luke loves to champion underdogs. It's his gospel that most welcomes outsiders and outcasts, that praises neighbour-loving Samaritans and foregrounds the women who contribute to Jesus's ministry, that records the salvation of tax-collectors like Zacchaeus and heralds Jesus's concern "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

So it is little surprise that it's Luke who makes space for the shepherds. Of all the characters competing for attention, Luke chooses these unlikely contenders to be the first who hear and spread the angelic announcement that the world's Saviour, Messiah and Lord has arrived. Despite the

sanitised images we present in our reconstructions, shepherds were hardly considered upstanding members of society. They kept odd hours away from other people. Their interaction with animals could preclude them from religious activities. Some may have supplemented their meagre incomes with more clandestine revenue sources. They were generally distrusted and not permitted to testify in courts of law. Even if it is unkind to characterise them as bordering on nefarious, they were prime examples of the poor and the lowly – the kinds of people for whom the birth of the Saviour was indeed good news of great joy (Luke 2:8-15).

Who are the invisible in our communities today? Do I notice the woman clearing tables in the food court? Do I acknowledge the man sweeping the public toilets? Do I condemn the foreign accent when I dial the call centre, or curse the delivery rider on the footpath? These are among today's shepherds. And Luke would have us visualise that it's such as these to whom God sends the herald angels and the proclamation of God's rescue.

And it's with these that the eternal Son of God identifies. We must resist romanticising



Help the broken people of Nagorno-Karabakh

120,000 hungry and traumatised Christians were forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in Armenia in the last week of September. Among the refugees are 30,000 children.

Could you help Armenian Christian refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh?

You can also make a donation online at

www.barnabasaid.org/help-karabakh-christians



on one gospel story

the rest of Luke's scene. The manger was indeed a food trough, hardly a mother's first choice of crib (Luke 2:16-20). His dedication offering was that made by poorer parents (Luke 2:22-24; Leviticus 12). We talk about the adult Jesus being willing to "get his hands dirty" among his fellow humans. That experience started on his first night with human flesh.

Matthew's gospel

Some of us prefer a more regal picture of Jesus. It certainly befits his royal prerogatives. It may less offend our sensibilities. We're reliant on Matthew's gospel for this angle.

When Matthew views the "raw footage" available to him, he selects and edits the scenes that remind us of Jesus as king. He ultimately presents events either side of Christmas rather than Christmas itself. The birth of Jesus is dispensed with in a single verse and almost as incidental to the wider story of the rise of King Jesus.

Rather than an annunciation to Mary, Matthew records an angelic alert to Joseph. This lets Matthew recall a similar announcement of pending rescue made

to an earlier king of Judah (Isaiah 7). And before this alert, in a move valued by some cultures and opaque to others, Matthew devotes seventeen verses to a bespoke genealogy (Matthew 1:1-17). Matthew underscores key events in Israel's history: the calling of Abraham, the rise of King David, the shameful punishment of the Babylonian exile, and the birth of Jesus the Messiah. God had long planned that Abraham be the forebear of many nations and kings (Genesis 17:1-16). God had raised up David to lead the people, and had exiled them for their disobedience. And it's within this socio-political environment that Matthew paints Jesus' arrival.

So it is as God's ideal king that we read about Jesus and the post-Christmas events of Matthew 2:1-12. The magi follow the star as a royal portent. They ask King Herod where they might find King Jesus. They locate Jesus (now a "child" in a house, close to two years of age) and present him with royal gifts and obeisance.

Royal-watchers may resonate with this presentation of Jesus. Those with less regard for such politics – or for God's plans to work through the Israelites and their

Davidic monarchs – may find it difficult to warm to Matthew's account. Every book of the Bible is a cross-cultural experience for twenty-first-century Western readers, and we may need to work harder to identify and respond to Matthew's portrait of Jesus as a Jewish king.

Our gospel?

Some families debate which are their favourite characters in a nativity scene. It might be just a way to pass conversation, or it might alter how we choose our Christmas cards or arrange our own nativity scenes at home or at church.

I wonder what advantages might come if we were to choose only half the scene each year. What questions might it spark if we presented only shepherds? With whom might we better connect if we proclaimed only magi? In a world overloaded with so many competing voices, perhaps Christians could take a leaf from the Evangelists' books and focus on only one angle at a time. Which might you choose, and why?

Dr Andrew Malone teaches in biblical studies at Ridley College.

What will be the greatest gift you give this Christmas?



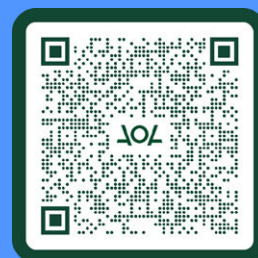
Sreyleak
11 years old.

Imagine a world with no books.

That's the sad reality for Sreyleak and her remote Cambodian community. With no resources, it's not surprising that 27% of children drop out of school.

Your Christmas gift of just \$20 can provide five books for Sreyleak's school and help start a library to fight illiteracy.

Scan Here



1800 249 880
www.anglicanoverseasaid.org.au



AO Anglican
Overseas
Aid

This remote town might feel like heaven

■ Elspeth Kernebone

Photographs of Exmouth show endless clear blue-water beaches, with expansive horizons.

The nearby Ningaloo Coast is world heritage listed. It is known for its reef, for whale sharks, sea turtles, rays, humpback whales, and a network of underground caves.

The town is gateway to the reef, where people dive and swim.

It's part of a 6504 square kilometre municipality, but most people live in Exmouth itself, a town of 2800.

Its population swells in winter, as people visit during the cooler months. Many people in town spend their spare time fishing, or just enjoying the environment.

Exmouth residents, the Venerable Simon Roberts and Alison Roberts, can see much lostness, just as anywhere. Some people are escaping difficulties, others just living for the enjoyment of life – a hedonistic lifestyle in a beautiful location.

Mr and Mrs Roberts are there for neither. Instead, they hope to bring people something that will satisfy more deeply than either escape or enjoyment: a relationship with God.

They moved to Exmouth around the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, Mr Roberts is rector of Exmouth and Onslow Anglican Church and archdeacon of the Pilbara.

Their goal is to maintain and grow a gospel presence in Exmouth, and for the gospel to be working in people's lives. In the smaller, even more remote Onslow it's the survival of the church and real spiritual vitality, in whatever form that comes.

It's much less structured than ministry in Sydney, where Mr and Mrs Roberts moved from. In Sydney, their parish had three services on a Sunday, a staff team and a busy church life.

In Exmouth, there's one Sunday service, a couple of Bible studies during the week – and a few other weekly activities. They hope to start an after school club in 2024.

Mr Roberts said this setting meant sharing the gospel was a much more focussed task of consciously engaging with the community.

Sometimes it's busy, but Mr Roberts more often has to ask, "Okay, what's on the agenda this week?"

The pair has focussed on building relationships with people, and taking up opportunities to share the gospel as they do.

They've involved themselves in the

community, invited people to church, and to courses such as Christianity Explored.

Mrs Roberts' work at a café has been part of this. So far, she's had the opportunity to share the gospel with most of her colleagues, and invited some to do Christianity Explored, one of whom took up the offer.

She's found that the transience of the population has prompted her to be more intentional in conversations, to take opportunities, and to dive in – because if she waits, they'll leave.

Many of the Exmouth churchgoers also volunteer for the town's ambulance service – two volunteers at a time provide paramedicine for Exmouth – both to get to know other volunteers and to serve the community.

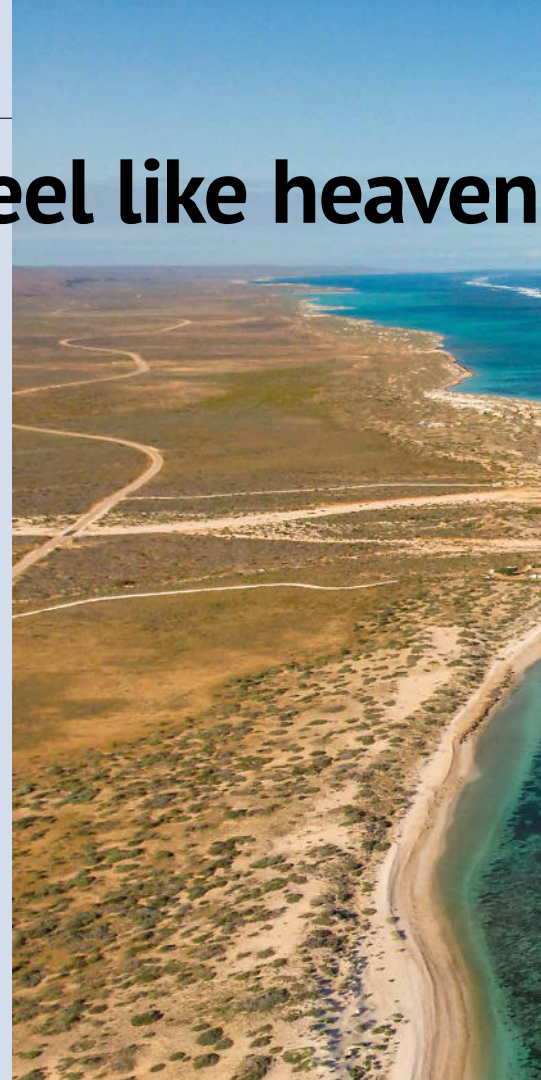
"For those who know our church members, they know these are people who are serious about other people, and their commitment to other people," Mr Roberts said.

"Hopefully that means that as people contemplate the gospel, they know ... we have a real interest and genuine concern for people."

Reaching people without natural connections to the church is a big challenge in Exmouth. The large group of young workers on tour boats, who spend most of their time working, partying, or enjoying the outdoors are among these.

In the city, there were so many more people, that you could focus on reaching the people you already had connections with, Mr Roberts said.

But in a small town, they can see exactly what the town looks like. And, with one



"Some people already think they're in heaven, other people there's a lot of lostness that they don't know how to deal with. But in all those cases, the gospel is the remedy."

Simon Roberts



The Venerable Simon Roberts and Alison Roberts.

Picture: Simon Roberts

but it has a great gospel need



The Ningaloo Coast. Picture: Simon Roberts

other church, a Pentecostal church, they know they will be the only ones to proclaim the gospel, to everyone in the town.

This means keeping the Bible central, the message of Christ crucified central and inviting people to church.

"If people give Christ a hearing, there's a lot there that can be gained. But it's breaking through. Most people live in Exmouth because they get to enjoy all the things God has made, be it Ningaloo Reef, or just the fishing or the sunshine, all that kind of stuff," Mr Roberts said.

"But there's a real lack of understanding of the Creator, why we're created, who we are as God's creatures, all those sorts of things. Some people already think they're in heaven, other people there's a lot of lostness that they don't know how to deal with. But in all those cases, the gospel is the remedy."

Mr and Mrs Roberts would love to see the gospel work in people's lives – and the survival of a church in a genuine, multigenerational way.

In Onslow, they would love to see a church community of Christians gathering around Christ and his Word with the spirit present, which ideally meets weekly. The town 400 kilometres north of Exmouth has a church with a handful of members, which Mr and Mrs Roberts visit monthly.

In their ministry they've been encouraged by opportunities to share the

gospel, by growth of understanding in their congregations, and by answers to prayer.

For instance, Mrs Roberts was recently able to share about Jesus with her boss's husband, who said he'd never set foot in a church before.

And Mr Roberts sees people in the congregation growing in the richness of who God is, and what he has done for them, often through reading a part of the Bible they haven't read in a long time and making new connections, recently 1 Samuel.

They've also seen answers to prayer,

with a new family coming to the Onslow church in the last month, just as they were wondering who would be left in the small town's congregation.

Mr Roberts said working in Exmouth and Onslow had given them both a new perspective on the challenges of ministry in remote and regional places and the importance of the financial support of ministries such as Bush Church Aid.

It's driven home for him the importance of gospel generosity among churches, and the connections Christians share as one body of believers, across Australia, and worldwide.

He said people in remote and regional places needed someone to proclaim the gospel, and to encourage them in the gospel, as much as in cities.

Exmouth and Onslow are very different to Sydney. But similar to many places, Mrs Roberts said, it was not until touched by illness or death that people thought beyond the current life.

Mr and Mrs Roberts urged others to pray for ongoing Christian witness and gospel growth in both Exmouth in Onslow, particularly among children and youth.

"There's a great need in remote and regional areas, and great gospel poverty. There's still heaps of towns that either don't have a church, or don't have a gospel-proclaiming church," Mr Roberts said.

"There's all sorts of towns in the Pilbara that are quite small towns, but virtually nothing going on in terms of gospel ministry.

"Everyone needs to hear the gospel, everyone needs salvation in Christ."



The Exmouth carols service.

Picture: Simon Roberts

'Flourishing like a wedding feast': Ruth's

■ Nils Von Kalm

When the Reverend Ruth Newmarch emigrated with her family to Australia at the age of 17, she had no idea how much her Indian upbringing would shape her in later years.

Raised in the bustling city of Bangalore, and the daughter of a minister in the Church of South India, life for Ruth was full of engagement with people of different faiths.

"Where we lived there was a mosque very close by, so I woke up every morning to the call to worship. That was just part of the music of waking up," she said.

"I would also be woken by the chiming of the church bells. There was a Big Ben-style spire on the church, very much like an English church, set up by the Church of England for British soldiers and their families who lived in the part of Bangalore where we lived."

There was also a Hindu temple in her street, and lots of places where people would do puja, the Hindu worship.

Being surrounded by other faiths was a normal part of life for Ruth, and many people played a significant role in shaping the type of person she would become. "Missionaries who taught me had a significant influence on my faith as well as my sense of responsibility to the world," she said.

The Reverend Vinay Samuel, for a time her father's curate, was probably one of the most significant influences. He later taught developing leaders in the majority world through the Oxford Centre for Christian Studies.

"If God has a vision of vibrant communities of giftedness and the care of the lonely, the lost and the marginalised, and the dynamic of community and mission being generated and flourishing, I want to be a part of that."

Ruth Newmarch

The way that Samuel and his wife Colleen lived impacted Ruth deeply. Starting a church plant in a slum area of Bangalore, Ruth said they had an enormous effect on their community. "They touched a lot of people through their ministry, including workshops on mechanics, school tuition, sewing for ladies and many other ministries to the poor," she said. "Out of that grew a school, an orphanage for babies who were often left at the train station, and an industrial kitchen that provided meals to a Muslim stone-cutter community. It was the church reaching into the community."

The organisation of Vinay and Colleen's ministry and how it built over decades struck Ruth most strongly. They believed in the church as the centre out of which



came societal transformation. Added to that was the effect of the relationships that their ministry cultivated. "The violence that often erupts between Muslims and Hindus rarely happens in that precinct,"

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.



ANGLICAN
DIOCESE OF
MELBOURNE

Reporting Child Abuse in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

1 If a child is in **immediate danger** at any point **CALL 000**

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

Police
Child Protection
Kooyoora Professional Standards (see below)

What is Child Abuse?

Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to:
Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Family Violence, Sexual Abuse, Grooming and Neglect.

Who can report neglect and abuse of a child under the age of 18?

Children, Parents, Staff, Volunteers, Anyone.

What sorts of things must be reported?

All child safety concerns must be reported:

- Disclosure of past and present abuse and harm
- Allegations, suspicions or observations
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct

CONTACT NUMBERS:

POLICE 000

CHILD PROTECTION: 13 12 78 (After Hours)
North **1300 664 977** • South **1300 655 795** • East **1300 369 391**
• West (Rural) **1800 075 599** • West (Metro) **1300 664 977**

KOYOORA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS 1800 135 246

hope for churches, Christians



The Reverend Ruth Newmarch.

Picture: supplied

Ruth said. "When people asked why, it was found that Vinay and his team had great relationships between every group in the area. The centre also serves the community, so no one would touch that

"I saw the power of the gospel not just done on Sundays but done in real life throughout each day."

Ruth Newmarch

area because they were a place of peace. They were an enormous influence on me in terms of the dynamic nature of the church."

With all this in mind and the influence of Vinay and Colleen Samuel, Ruth came to Australia wondering where it would all lead. It was quite a culture shock for her. "Having to reinvent yourself where nobody knows you was a challenge," she said. One part of that challenge was that she never met any of the original inhabitants of Australia. This was vastly different to growing up in India. So, on a personal pilgrimage of sorts, she went to Groote Eylandt, off the coast of the Northern Territory, to live in Angurugu, the Aboriginal community on Groote. "It was a way to connect with the real owners, as I saw it, and feel some peace about being in a land that belonged to somebody else," she said.

Eventually ordained after many years in children's ministry, Ruth became the vicar at St Philip's in Mount Waverley. She sees her current ministry at St Philip's being influenced by her time in India. Knowing nobody when she arrived in

Australia caused her to want to make her faith relevant and mission-focused here. "If God has a vision of vibrant communities of giftedness and the care of the lonely, the lost and the marginalised, and the dynamic of community and mission being generated and flourishing, I want to be a part of that," she said. "I am always looking for the blessing of the other and how we can be in it together where all are cared for and have compassion and connection and a joy in the other."

Ruth is excited by the idea of building, creating and imagining community.

"I have lived experience of this in India, so I have an antenna that sees it out there," she said. "I love the way cultures can be refreshingly different and I want to find out about the connections between us all.

I have seen compassion before my eyes, and I want to replicate that here. In India, I saw the power of the gospel not just done on Sundays but done in real life throughout each day."

Drawing her inspiration from the Scriptures, Ruth is passionate about replicating that same power of the gospel at St Philip's. "The Bible keeps drawing us to a good dynamic, flourishing like a wedding feast, but it is not specific," she said. "The specifics are very minimal in the Bible, but it is leading us towards something very exciting. Putting flesh on the bones of that is what churches and Christians need to be all about."

It's a long way from the streets of Bangalore, but Ruth Newmarch is doing all she can to be part of that flourishing.

Bethel Funerals

*We're for Compassion,
not for profit.*

To find out more
bethelfunerals.com.au
or call our Mitcham office and chapel
on **03 9873 8866**



Valuable text supports worth of science

Do you wish to learn more about the interaction between science and our Christian faith but find the written resources too academic? In this book review, ISCAST fellow Dr Edwin El-Mahassni introduces us to a book that makes that conversation much more accessible.

Graeme Finlay. God's Gift of Science: Theological Presuppositions Underlying Exploration of the Natural World.

Eugene: Cascade Books, 2022.

The author of *God's Gift of Science*, Dr Graeme Finlay, is a cancer researcher and teaches scientific pathology at the University of Auckland.

The book is written for the general public although some knowledge of science and theology on the part of the reader would be helpful. Finlay's style is engaging, and the book's content is complemented by contemporary sources to back the arguments. The book gets neither bogged down in specific scientific theories nor does it delve into deep theology as it makes a case for how the axioms or presuppositions of science are perfectly reasonable under a Christian worldview. Those wishing to learn more about the interaction between science and theology would benefit greatly from reading the book.

In Chapter 1, Finlay goes into some detail to prove that science is not sufficient to serve as a foundational basis for the nurturing of propositions regarding reality. He notes that science cannot deny the importance of aesthetics, ethics, purpose, and so on, and yet it cannot account for these qualities. He discusses the roots of what is now called the philosophy of science and takes the reader through a quick tour of science in Ancient Greece and the

Medieval period, all the way to the present day. The author makes the point that modern science and a biblical worldview go hand-in-hand, unlike the discordancy found in other cultures present and past.

Chapter 2 focuses on making a case for a divine creator as the agent of the world's existence. Plenty could be written to note why creation needs a monotheistic divine creator. But, if that were the only key area of discussion, then there would be nothing separating Christianity and many other religions like Islam and even Judaism itself. However, Finlay makes the point that we not only read in the Bible that God is divine and almighty, but that God speaks and reveals himself to humanity and redeems his people. This reminds us of the importance of listening to God, of being receptive to him – a receptivity that can occur and can be fruitful even within scientific endeavours.

Chapter 3 continues the theme of a personal God. This time, however, the focus is on God's creation, the idea of humanity, and how these connect with science. Again, Finlay contrasts the thoughts of Ancient Greece and Judaism with the emphasis in Christianity on God creating us in his image. Finlay then delves into slavery and its abolition as a precursor to, and in contrast to, advances in medicine, literacy, and the institution of universities in the West. It would have been useful to compare this to the Golden Age of Islam, but this is probably outside the scope of the book. The author finishes the chapter by discussing objectivity, human limitations, and the link to the pursuit of truth – truth which presents itself through scientific pursuits.

Chapter 4 is provocatively titled "The Death of Science". This title comes out of the argument in the book that science operates on presuppositions stemming from the nature of God – yet there has been a loss of



Christian influence within science in recent times. The chapter aims to carefully place boundaries around what science is and what it is not. For instance, it argues that the ancient practices of Indigenous cultures cannot be considered "science" but rather "accumulated cultural wisdom" because those cultures did not seek to understand

For an Anglican Approach



SELWYN ALLEN FUNERALS
Selwyn & Geoff Allen

Tel: (03) 9888 1672

Email: enquiries@selwynallenfunerals.com.au
www.selwynallenfunerals.com.au

- Selwyn and Geoff Allen, and their caring staff, offer personal, dependable service with over 100 years combined experience
- All areas, any time
- Secure pre-arranged and pre-paid funerals



Geoff Allen

Selwyn Allen



Accredited Member



Looking for the prayer diary?



Use the QR code or find it online at bit.ly/ADOMprayerdiary.

within Christian framework



Picture: iStock

“The author makes a fine case for how axioms of science are perfectly reasonable when considered from a Christian worldview.”

Edwin El-Mahassni

ascribe meaning to various parts of creation.

Chapter 5 compares some of the extraordinary claims that can be found in the Bible, such as the need to be like a child to enter the Kingdom of God, or the equation “happy are the poor”, with the incredible breakthroughs that sometimes appear out of nowhere in scientific fields such as cosmology, quantum physics, medicine, and biology. Finlay makes the analogy that counter-cultural and counter-intuitive characteristics can be found in both the gospel revelation and science. This approach is apt because modern readers might not be aware that some of the most incredible discoveries in science were surprising and unexpected – such as the Copernican revolution.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, differs from all the other chapters. In preceding chapters, Finlay looks back in history, weaving in philosophy, diverse cultures and societies, and key discoveries in science. In contrast, this chapter looks at the current situation. Bringing in specific biblical passages to support humanity’s responsibility for the environment and using mathematical modelling like the global ecological footprint, this chapter addresses the issue of justice, where the notion of justice lies

within the intersection of science and human living. A clear example of this link between the science of the environment and justice for humanity, is the case where companies negligently release toxins into river systems – damaging the environment and unjustly damaging the livelihoods of communities downstream.

Overall, the book is a valuable introductory text to support the value of natural science and the pursuit of science within Christian theological presuppositions. By continuously interweaving biblical claims with scientific discoveries, both past and present, the author makes a fine case for how axioms of science are perfectly reasonable when considered from a Christian worldview. While an interest in science before reading this book would be beneficial, it is certainly not a requirement. However, a comparison with other monotheistic religions would have been interesting. Also, in Chapter 6, the more mathematical focus and the discussion of justice and democracy seem to be a little out of place compared to the other chapters. But, as noted, it is a worthwhile read for those interested in forming a grass-roots level, yet still comprehensive understanding, of how the Christian worldview can be used to underpin or buttress scientific pursuits.

Dr Edwin El-Mahassni has PhDs in pure mathematics from Macquarie University and philosophical theology from Flinders University where he sought to apply models from the philosophy of science to the development of Christian doctrine. He also holds master’s degrees in theoretical computer science, theology, and project management. He has been in the public service for over 20 years and has a keen interest in the dialogue between faith and science.

God’s Gift of Science is in paperback from Cascade Books.

More on the dialogue between science and Christianity can be found at iscast.org.

the universe but simply live with it. While this may be true in some sense, there certainly were ancient civilisations that sought, through poly or monotheistic religions, to obtain meaning from the natural world. The chapter then proceeds to list some of the statements by prominent atheistic scientists who veer outside their field of expertise and

1 in 3 are lonely, especially young people.

We need:

More love

More kindness

More community

More heart.



You can help people become more connected, supported and whole.

**Go to
www.korusconnect.org.au/donate
today.**

Thank you for your Christmas gift!



A: Locked Bag 3 SURREY HILLS VIC 3127 P: (03) 9811 0999 ABN: 59 004 240 779





Picture: iStock

Hopeful reminder that the local church is part of a global story

Matt Brain. God is Enough: The Alpha and Omega of the Church. Mulgrave: Broughton Publishing, 2021.

■ David Sullivan

***God is Enough* is a stimulating, imaginative, and challenging book that explores the role of the church in partnering with God in the working out of his redeeming purposes for this broken world in general, and at a parish and an individual level. Indeed God's people find themselves "caught up in God's plans and activity". Bishop of Bendigo, Matt Brain couches his analysis and solution in the book in very practical terms, making it very readable for everyone.**

While Bishop Brain readily acknowledges that there are challenges and dangers facing the church, the air is nevertheless filled with possibilities and hope. The author notes that while being a part of the church is the most glorious calling, nevertheless, we also find ourselves immersed in "the drudgery and fractiousness of working with each other on the simple things that make communal life happen". One of the most important challenges for God's people then, is finding a way of working together at the place "where ordinary life meets the extraordinary, where the sacred meet the profane". The tension created at this intersection point makes us susceptible to showy or misleading traps, Bishop Brain writes. Importantly, however, as becomes evident throughout the book, what presents as a point of tension for us as human beings, is not a problem for God, who "[triumphs] over our weakness". That is, God works through our weaknesses to achieve his purposes.

Bishop Brain does a fabulous job in unpacking "five common pitfalls". His analysis brought a smile to my face because these pitfalls *are* so embarrassingly familiar. However, they are more than offset by his 10

reasons to be hopeful. What makes Bishop Brain's analysis so powerful, is that it challenges the reader to reflect on who God is, who we are, and what it means to be church – individually and together in community. Bishop Brain provides a biblical vehicle to process our reflection by employing the body metaphor in identifying and highlighting the church as "both the many and the whole". The use of gifts, given by God to all individuals for the building up of the Body of Christ is integral to this discussion. Bishop Brain's discussion establishes the uniqueness of every individual and their gifting in contributing to the coherence of the whole. Fundamental to this enterprise is love, he writes, "because love is the tangible artefact of the gifts operating each for the other". To quote my wife, "We don't get through the drudgery if we don't have love". Invariably, he writes, we know we are doing well when love reigns.

"We are continually reminded that the local church remains a part of a global narrative in which God remains the main character."

God is Enough challenges and inspires us to imagine what the future might look like, encouraging us to reach out beyond what we see in the present. That surely is our inspiration to act in the present. What I like about Bishop Brain's approach is that he is not challenging us to make dramatic changes or sharp U-turns, but to prayerfully make sensible, commonsense changes, led by God's Spirit. His suggestions of change are usually a matter of degree rather than world-shattering turnabouts. We then trust God to multiply

our works, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes. For example, recognising that even interested people may find church services and activities incomprehensible or confusing, Bishop Brain urges us to "change language of attraction to that of translation", and leave it to God's grace and Spirit to change people and hearts. Bishop Brain's approach lets God be God, for it is God, not us, who grows his church and who is transforming the world and its people. It is God, not us, who is establishing his upside-down kingdom.

Despite the declining numbers in the church, the horrors of abuse and scandals, we read that there is an abundance of evidence for us to remain encouraged. There are fundamental truths that remain intact, such as the resurrection, God's transforming power, a global DNA that connects Christians around the world as the Body of Christ, and the global church franchise system that must surely be the envy of other organisations. On the global scale "there are green shoots of growth everywhere".

Bishop Brain's book is thoughtful and exudes hope. His style is well-grounded and down to earth. His references to "St Silas (by the Overpass)" and some of its members keep the book very relatable. At the same time, we are continually reminded that the local church remains a part of a global narrative in which God remains the main character. The book challenges us with important questions that persist beyond the reading of the book. "What is your call?" and "Who is it that God has made you to be?" and "What has God equipped you to do?" are sample questions. If we are to get the most out of this book, we do well to grapple with, reflect on, pray about these important, sometimes ultimate questions, while remaining in prayer to God who is always enough.

The Reverend David Sullivan is vicar at St John's Frankston North with St Luke's Carrum Downs.