

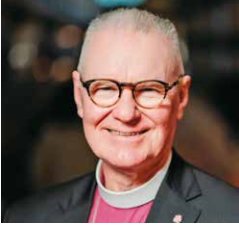
THE Melbourne Anglican

MARCH 2024, No 633

With His stripes
we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5

NAVI
SMITH



In peace and privilege we need reminding of our mortality

■ Archbishop Philip Freier

I always find the liturgy of the Ash Wednesday Eucharist very moving.

This day, when we commence our journey of Lent is marked by readings that call us to be attentive to the integration of our faith and the actions of our life. Lent itself is an opportunity of making a spiritual pilgrimage as we follow the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness, his time of temptation and his resolve to offer himself up for all that would unfold over the days of Easter.

Personally, it is significant for me as I mark the forehead of the people who come forward to receive the sign of ashes. Young and old alike come forward, and as the cross is marked on the forehead, hear my words, "Remember, O mortal that you are dust, and

to dust you shall return."

Confronting words indeed, especially as they combine with the symbolic action of receiving the mark of our salvation, the cross of Christ. Word and symbol bring together the reality of our frail human life, with the great gift of God in Christ for our salvation. The example of Jesus, being alone in the wilderness, and facing the temptations of the devil, calls us to face honestly, the truth of our mortality, and the call to be the peacemakers and reconcilers that Jesus makes.

St Paul's commentary on love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is a fruitful ground for our reflection during the Lenten journey. "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in

wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Bearing and enduring the painful events of the world around us with hope and faith is challenging. Yet St Paul tells us that this is not just possible but the appropriate, even necessary outworking of divine love within us.

So many others in our conflicted world know the fact of human mortality and bear the daily pain of grief and loss through circumstances that are unimaginable for many of us. In our peace, privilege and security we need reminding that the same mortality is real for us too. Even when we are not at ease with the fact of our limited influence in stopping the conflict and healing the pain in the world, we are drawn by holy revelation in the Scriptures to look beyond ourselves to Christ. Looking to Christ for the outflowing of holy love is as true in our day and needs as it was in the time of the Apostles.

May your journey over this time be blessed as you enter more deeply into the truth of divine love revealed in Christ, as you intercede for the people who suffer most because of sin and the brokenness of the world, and as you make your journey towards deeper Christian discipleship.

Vacant Appointments as of 27 February 2024:

St Agnes, Black Rock; Christ Church, Brunswick; St Michael, North Carlton; St John, Camberwell; St Philip, Collingwood; Redemption Church, Craigieburn; St Mark, Fitzroy; St Paul, Geelong; Parish of Gisborne; St Oswald's, Glen Iris; St Thomas', Langwarrin with St Peter's, Pearcedale (from May 2024); Christ Church, Melton; Parish of Mornington - Mt Martha; St Aidan Noble Park; Ormond Anglican Parish; St Aidan, Parkdale; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; Mullum Mullum, Ringwood; St Luke, Vermont; St John, Wantirna South; St Thomas, Winchelsea

Ordination to the Diaconate

BOYD, The Revd Julia Anne, appointed Assistant Curate, St James, Glen Iris, effective 10 February 2024
CAMERON, The Revd Helena, appointed Assistant Curate, St Columba, Hawthorn, effective 10 February 2024
CHIU, The Revd Conrad, appointed Assistant Curate, St Hilary's, Kew, effective 10 February 2024
CHEN, The Revd Xiaojin [Ginger], appointed Assistant Curate, St Barnabas, Glen Waverley Anglican Church, effective 10 February 2024
GREENHAM HANCOCK, The Revd Cara Rhiannon, Assistant Curate, St Stephen and St Mary, Mount Waverley, effective 10 February 2024
HOOD, The Revd Dr Shannon Robert, appointed Assistant Curate, St Alfred's Blackburn North, effective 10 February 2024
PRENTICE, The Revd Luke, appointed Assistant Curate, Anglican Parish of Ormond, effective 10 February 2024
QUINLAN, The Revd Josephine, appointed Assistant Curate, Christ Church, South Yarra, and School Chaplain, Caulfield Grammar School, effective 10 February 2024
TRAN, The Revd Jonathan Viet Quoc, appointed Assistant Curate, Inner West Church, Authorised Anglican Congregation, effective 10 February 2024
YOUNG, The Revd Peter, appointed Assistant Curate, Holy Trinity, Doncaster, effective 10 February 2024

Appointments:

ADAM OAM, The Revd Canon Dr Peter, appointed Parish Minister, St Jude, Carlton, effective 26 February 2024
AJANG, The Revd Mary Awaak, appointed Parish Minister, St John, Footscray, effective 30 January 2024
BLEBY, The Revd Samuel Edward, appointed Archdeacon, Archdeaconry of Frankston, effective 1 April 2024
CONNOR, The Revd James, appointed Vicar, St Paul, Boronia, effective 28 May 2024
CRANE, The Revd Samuel, appointed Vicar [from Priest-in-Charge] St James, Glen Iris, effective 27 April 2024
DAVIS, The Revd Kerry, appointed Vicar, St Eanswythe, Altona with St Clement, Laverton, effective 23 May 2024
KETTLETON, The Revd Kristina, appointed Project officer, Reimagining the Future, effective 26 February 2024
KING, The Revd Dr Fergus, appointed Parish Minister, St Alban the Martyr, St Albans, effective 26 February 2024
MILLS, The Revd Breeana Azelie-Lillian, appointed Canon for Church Planting, The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, effective 19 February 2024
PETERS, The Revd Graeme John, appointed Archdeacon, Archdeaconry of Dandenong, effective 1 April 2024

Resignations:

CONNOR, The Revd James, Vicar, St Thomas', Langwarrin with St Peter's, Pearcedale and Area Dean, Deanery of Frankston & Kingston South, effective 28 May 2024
FURPHY, The Venerable Jennifer, Vicar, St Agnes, Black Rock effective 17 March 2024 and Archdeacon, Archdeaconry of Dandenong, effective 31 March 2024
LOUGHREY, The Revd Canon Glenn William, Vicar, St Oswald's, Glen Iris, effective 31 March 2024
MACPHERSON, Venerable Peter Aggarwal, Vicar, St Alfred Blackburn North and Priest-in-Charge, St Luke, Vermont, and Archdeacon of Kew, effective 30 September 2024
PEDERSEN, The Revd Kevin John, Vicar, Anglican Parish of Ormond and Area Dean of Glen Eira, effective 7 July 2024
WEBSTER, The Revd Dennis Morton, Vicar, Anglican Parish of Gisborne, effective 10 March 2024

Clergy Moves



THE Melbourne Anglican



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St Jude's Parkville member Rosie Stanton with the thankfulness wall created by Sydney Road Street Party-goers. Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

Thankful message

Mums, families, dads, friends, dogs ... coffee. More than 100 people shared what they were thankful for with St Jude's Parkville volunteers at the recent Sydney Road Street Party.

Party-goers wrote what they were thankful for on a paper flower and pinned it to a wall on display for passersby. St Jude's volunteers chatted with people while they created notes, building connections in the inner north community.

Snap close as churches act on fire risk, enact policies

■ Jenan Taylor

Melbourne parishes in some natural disaster-prone areas suspended onsite worship and other activities in response to February's extreme bushfire conditions.

The Anglican Parish of Mount Dandenong and St John's Upper Beaconsfield were among at least seven churches in the Melbourne diocese to roll out their bushfire policies.

It came after fire authorities warned that Victoria faced its most dangerous fire period in years, with high temperatures, strong winds and dry lightning.

Church leaders said their policies aimed to clarify whether to gather for worship and other onsite activities on high risk days.

They said it was important for community safety to have written rules agreed by parish councils that simplified decision making.

The Anglican Parish of Mount Dandenong

suspended its midweek services because of the conditions on Wednesday 28 February.

The parish has an agreement with a church outside the fire danger area where Mount Dandenong members could worship temporarily and even find hospitality for their domestic pets.

Former vicar the Reverend Andrew Smith said the parish also postponed funerals and discouraged wedding bookings in the fire season under its policy. Mr Smith said Mount Dandenong initiated its regulations whenever authorities declared a total fire ban. He said the parish wrote its first policy in 2015 because its council wanted a specific approach for fire danger periods. It wanted a plan that aligned with that of Parks Victoria, and other community organisations, including schools, that closed on total fire ban days.

Mr Smith said before this, some parishioners wanted the church to remain open on

high fire danger days if there were no signs of imminent fire. He said the 2021 storms in the area were a reminder the church needed a policy to stop people coming.

Mr Smith said having a bushfire policy also allowed him to make a personal safety decision without feeling he had to be onsite on risky days.

St John's Upper Beaconsfield also closed under its new bushfire policy, introduced in February.

Vicar the Reverend Shannon Lee said the policy aligned with new fire ratings classifications, so that the church could choose to close on extreme fire danger days.

Ms Lee said the church's new plan would discourage people who might insist on being at the church no matter what.

St Luke's Cockatoo senior minister the Reverend Sandra Solomon said the church was reviewing its arrangements, but on extreme fire days no one was on site.

'Proclaim the gospel of Christ to all'



The Reverend Luke Prentice with his children after the ordinations. Picture: Janine Eastgate

■ Elspeth Kernebone

Ten new deacons have been urged to proclaim the gospel to all as they enter ordained ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

The Reverends Julia Boyd, Helena Cameron, Conrad Chiu, Ginger Chen, Cara Greenham Hancock, Shannon Hood, Luke Prentice, Josephine Quinlan, Jonathan Tran and Peter Young were ordained at St Paul's Cathedral on Saturday.

"In being ordained you are entering into a vocation, the diaconate, a full and equal order."

Bishop Bill Ray

Preacher Bishop Bill Ray urged the ordinands to be ambassadors of Christ as they entered the diaconate, saying they were to proclaim the gospel to all.

He preached on Jeremiah 1:1-19, Acts 8:26-40 – Philip's meeting with the Ethiopian on the road – and John 13:1-18, in which Jesus washes his disciples feet.

Bishop Ray said the passage from Acts told those present that they never knew where God would lead, but they went forth in faith trusting their Lord and Saviour.

"Servant ministry is ... not only enjoying the good things, but it's being there often when people are at their lowest and need help."

Bishop Bill Ray

He said the gospel reading highlighted that they were servants in ministry. Bishop Ray said this meant being there for not just the good things, but when people were at their lowest and needed help.

Bishop Ray urged the congregation to pray for the deacons every day, and read the Scriptures to deepen their own faith in Christ. He said those present took great joy in supporting the deacons to go from the cathedral to give glory to God.

More pictures on pages 18-19.



Uncle Norm Terrick, Uncle Mark Rickett, Brook Prentis and Bianca Manning at *Raising our Tribal Voice for Justice*.

Picture: Jenan Taylor

Adopt truth, love, justice: Gathering call

■ Jenan Taylor

Christians have been urged to adopt love and truth as they raise their voice for justice, at a historic conference about Indigenous spirituality.

Christians gathered to discuss Indigenous spiritual views, including history, colonisation, justice and ecology, at *Raising our Tribal Voice for Justice: An Indigenous Theological Revolution*. It aimed to encourage participants to engage with insights about the oppression of First Peoples, and Australian churches' role.

Organiser, University of Divinity School of Indigenous Studies head Anne Pattel-Gray said she hoped participants would feel enabled to be involved with and lead truth, treaty and restitution negotiations.

"As Christians we're called to lead this. We're being obedient to the call. It's our job. Anything less, we're not Christians," Professor Pattel-Gray said.

Keynote speaker Charles Sturt University Indigenous-Australian Belonging chair Stan Grant encouraged Indigenous Christians to contemplate the power of silence, language,

love, hope, truth and forgiveness.

He urged people to be truly revolutionary as they prepared to raise their voice for justice, by adopting a voice of love and truth.

Professor Grant spoke of his Wiradjuri cultural and spiritual traditions and upbringing that helped inform his search for ways to speak that echoed truth and love.

For him, the Wiradjuri way demonstrated the essence of peace. It encouraged people who met in difference to learn to speak with each other.

"What is an Indigenous theological

revolution? It is to me what it should be for Christians everywhere: A unity in God where we speak through our voices, our history, our cultures, that find an identity beyond identity," Professor Grant said.

"I do not need theology to make me Indigenous. I am blessed and steeped and secure in my Wiradjuri-ness, which opens me toward being in Christ, where my being is joined in unity with others."

Participant the Reverend Canon Dianne Langham said she hoped to get a few ideas at the meeting for talking to clergy about Aboriginal spirituality in the church.

Anglican Diocese of Newcastle reconciliation director Canon Langham said she was trying to help point the Church, including at the parish level, away from persistent colonial attitudes.

"I realise we have a long way to go, and I think we have to not be afraid to push the boundaries," Canon Langham said.

Speakers at the inaugural meeting included Queensland University academic Josephine Bourne, theologian Brooke Prentis, and Maori Evangelical Church leader Hohaia Matthews.



Des Rogers, Professor Anne Pattel-Gray and Professor Stan Grant.

Picture: Jenan Taylor



Holy Trinity Rochester congregation and guests.

Picture: The Anglican Diocese of Bendigo.

Small church united despite flood fear

■ Jenan Taylor

Members of a small central Victorian congregation recovering from catastrophic floods are drawing strength from their church to ease their fears of remaining in a disaster-prone area.

Holy Trinity Rochester was shut when record-breaking floods devastated the town, displacing more than 1000 people, and damaging several buildings, including the church.

In January this year, just months after the church reopened, Rochester was hit with floods again.

Lay minister Sue Jackel said the second flood retraumatised many people, and inspired deep fear about the future, even though it was not as large.

She said Holy Trinity lost many members after the first flood and although it was hard for the remaining ones to live with uncertainty, they were devoted to the church.

A long-time member, Mrs Jackel said a sense of unity was important to the parishioners, and they were striving to

retain that in the fracturing community.

Standing together enabled them to support each other better even through hard times, she said. If they could do that then they could support themselves as a church.

Mrs Jackel said after the 2022 catastrophe many Rochester residents learned that they lived on a flood plain, increasing the risk of further natural disasters.

This, and the scale of damage remaining, meant the flood and a sense of foreboding was still on many residents' minds.

Mrs Jackel said being able to meet for prayer and fellowship in their own church when it reopened, stirred a sense of connection, and made a difference to parishioners' outlook.

"We pray, reflect on gospel readings. That is time together and we feel good. It inspires us even though we still have fear and uncertainty that there might be another heavy downpour and catastrophe soon," she said.

Community chaplain Samuel Kelly said the January floods came so unexpectedly that there wasn't enough time to put in

place strategies to mitigate another disaster.

Mr Kelly said since the January downpour he hadn't yet heard about anyone who wanted to leave.

"I think at this point a lot of the locals have been here their whole life and have decided to just dig in," he said.

Mrs Jackel said Rochester Anglicans had longed to get back into the church in the time it was shut, and the diocese had worked hard to get the building re-established again.

She said parishioners were grateful to the churches in the Bendigo diocese and beyond that opened their doors to Holy Trinity members and supported them in prayer and other contributions.

But they were relieved to get back into their own spiritual home, and were slowly trying to pick up the threads again.

"We all help one another. I usually take the service, a lady who is 94 years old and has been sacristan since year dot is back, and we have a reliable organist," Mrs Jackel said. "We are a small, ageing group, but we are propping each other up in a place where we feel we belong."

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‘Hard, but a great privilege’: Priesthood

■ Jenan Taylor

The Venerable Peter MacPherson never wanted to be ordained. Now he is set to resign after more than three decades as a priest, much of these at St Alfred’s Blackburn North.

Mr MacPherson said his initial reluctance to become ordained stemmed from a shrunken view of what priesthood was about.

He grew up Roman Catholic, but as a teenager cast ordained priests as people who had to be unmarried, wear black and like being called “Father”.

This image stayed with Mr MacPherson even when he became a Christian while studying education at a Catholic college.

It was still there when a friend introduced him to St Jude’s Carlton and he felt a growing enthusiasm for Bible classes and Anglicanism there.

This took Mr MacPherson to Ridley College, and fuelled a conviction that he wanted to answer God’s call to ministry by teaching the Bible.

But it made him resistant when he felt a call to ordination.

“I wasn’t keen. But you wrestle with God, and you find out that you’re not God, and God is God. And so you lose,” Mr MacPherson said.

The battle continued almost until he presented himself for ordination in 1993.

Looking back, there are a few things Mr MacPherson would like to tell his younger, naive self about ordained ministry. One is that it would be hard.

A senior minister at St Alfred’s Blackburn for 24 years, seven of those also leading at St Luke’s Vermont, it’s hard for Mr MacPherson to pinpoint what project most stretched his abilities.

He said in 2000 St Alfred’s was already a busy church of about 200 people.

But with only three staff, it needed a larger ministry team to thrive.

Mr MacPherson was able to grow the staff team, to where it is today – a 13-strong mix of ministers, including students and trainees.

Then there were the church buildings: undersized, outdated and impoverished.

Mr MacPherson said he felt daunted about tackling the building issues, because nothing in his experience or theological learnings had taught him about buildings.

But he threw himself into this new territory. Within a decade, St Alfred’s opened



Peter MacPherson is resigning from his role after more than 30 years as a priest. Picture: supplied

a \$3,500,000 complex, with a 350-seat auditorium for events and worship.

Mr MacPherson repeated the exercise when the diocese asked him to take St Luke’s under his wing.

A bad car park and poor toilets were barriers to attendance, especially for young families and elderly people.

Another challenge as a priest was the unsolvable matters that were part of the traditional role of priests, as spiritual carers and confessors, Mr MacPherson said. These included caring for the ill and old, often until they died, and praying with people as their marriages disintegrated.

He said dealing with some of these things for which there were no easy answers could be painful. Some lingered, leaving him with emotional and mental cuts.

Mr MacPherson said new and young priests today needed to be certain that full-time ordained Anglican ministry was what God wanted from them, because they faced much harder challenges than his generation.

He said he was important that they flourished and didn’t get burnt out if the Church was going to thrive.

Among the pressures they faced were the distractions and discontent that modern technology brought.

“To hold people’s attention with traditional sermon as a monologue, is more difficult now. You might be preaching the traditional central piece of a Sunday service, and you have to work really, really hard to hold an audience’s attention for 20 minutes. That is a tougher ask now than when I started in back in the early 1990s,” Mr MacPherson said.

Priests also navigated added expectations, including being able to handle compliance and risk analysis.

Despite the challenges, Mr MacPherson believed ordained ministry was a privilege and he remained absolutely committed to what God had called him to do.

“I still cannot believe I get to read the Bible, preach the Bible, and help people get to know Jesus. It’s just amazing that people would think that’s something I could be paid to do,” he said. “I would tell my younger self that, too, if I could. ‘Yes, it’ll be hard. But it’s wonderful. It’s a great privilege. Go for it.’”

'We shout and plead with God .. that this

■ Elspeth Kernebone

Australian Christians have been urged to keep praying for peace in Israel and Palestine, as thousands die in the Gaza strip.

Leaders have called on Christians to push governments to action as civilians – many of them children – suffer through ongoing bombardment.

More than 30,000 people have been killed in Palestine since the conflict began on 7 October, and at least 71,000 injured.

The United Nations reports catastrophic levels of food insecurity, a rise in malnutrition in children and pregnant women, and a public health catastrophe.

Palestinian Christians in Australia president Suzan Wahhab said she wanted the Australian government to start sanctioning Israel, as talk was not working.

Ms Wahhab said people in Gaza were starving, and dying from lack of access to medication. She said families she knew in Rafah, in Gaza's south, were sending texts and videos about the bombing, in which she could hear people screaming.

St George's College Jerusalem dean the Very Reverend Canon Richard Sewell urged Christians in Australia to keep paying

"Everybody is carrying this incredible weight of grief and anger that is caused by war. And both sides feel they have a just cause ..."

Canon Richard Sewell

attention to the situation in Palestine, and not to look away because it was too complicated or too much.

Canon Sewell asked Christians to continue praying for a path to peace and justice, and to pressure government to keep alert to the suffering of ordinary people.

He said he wanted the international community to stop excusing the extreme violence being visited on the civilians in Gaza, who were the primary victims.

Canon Sewell said Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Israeli or Palestinian, everyone in the the region was hurting. He said everybody had their own story of why they felt profoundly angry, and why they felt the world didn't take their pain seriously.

But he said Palestinians would say nearly a thousand people from their

community died every week, and the world didn't seem to care.

"Everybody is carrying this incredible weight of grief and anger that is caused by war. And both sides feel they have a just cause, and a right to fight for their existence," Canon Sewell said.

Canon Sewell said he wanted to see the international community put pressure on both sides to release hostages and end the war.

"We shout and plead with God, and for God to change the hearts of world leaders, that this terrible suffering will end, so that how we move on from the killing begins to be considered," he said.

For Palestinians living in Israel, Canon Sewell said the situation felt like a lockdown, because they didn't feel safe on the streets. He said people's social media was monitored and their movements were controlled, particularly younger men, who were often stopped and searched.

He said the West Bank was also like a war zone, just not as bad as Gaza. For instance, Israeli forces were raiding towns, soldiers were killing adults and children, and Israeli settlers were attacking Palestinian homes.

Ms Wahhab said PCIA was helping house

Disciples are making disciples in this Middle Eastern nation

■ Andrew Hinge

This Easter, in the crystal-blue waters of the Persian Gulf, in just one church perhaps a 100 people will go under the waves and emerge as new creations in Jesus Christ. New believer baptisms are occurring regularly Sunday after Sunday in this desert land.

Joe and Denise* are sent from CMS Victoria to help the Middle East in church leadership, pastoral care, evangelism and discipleship. In their country locals are by definition Muslims, but migrants are allowed to attend church. Like migrants everywhere they are in transition, and open to new relationships and investigating the Christian faith.

"Of all the stories of salvation happening here, the story of the three women comes to mind," Denise said. "The story begins with Dianne. She was so humbled by the sacrifice of Jesus that she felt compelled to share the good news with her friend Helen. I was thrilled. When they're sharing what they've experienced with a friend, you see the Holy

Spirit igniting inside them! It's so exciting to see disciples making disciples!"

The story doesn't stop there. At the time, Helen was coming to church sporadically due to a cancer diagnosis. Denise had recently read a book on faith and cancer. One week at church, Denise promised Helen she would loan it to her, but after that, Helen disappeared for some weeks. In time, Denise was able to track Helen down to give her the book.

Denise said, "You know, it was really beautiful. She found it so helpful, it was always pointing to Jesus and saying, God is at work in you through your cancer, not in spite of it."

One Sunday, Helen made her way down to the waters of the Persian Gulf to be baptised. She was welcomed into a Bible study which helped her grow in faith. She quickly became as passionate about sharing Jesus as her friend Dianne.

And, Helen introduced Denise to her work colleague Victoria. Victoria had noticed the complete turnaround in Helen's life

and agreed to come to church. Victoria was baptised in October.

This is only a snapshot of their stories. It took time for the women to accept Jesus, because they were all struggling with issues in their own lives. But the love of others in the church over time means that they are now faithfully following Christ: disciples making disciples, making disciples.

Their story is almost typical in Joe and Denise's church. People are coming to new life in Christ all the time. There is so much need and opportunity like this all over the world. CMS is invited to far more places than we have available missionaries to send. Joe and Denise's church is currently recruiting a small groups pastor.

Contact CMS for more information on how to apply and how to support this work. Pray with us for more and more to have new life in Christ.

Andrew Hinge is communications and marketing manager with the Church Missionary Society Victoria. *All names in the story have been changed.

terrible suffering might end'



Destruction in Gaza.

Picture: Caritas Jerusalem

Palestinian refugee families in Australia, who were deeply traumatised. They could barely think to perform normal functions, and were worried about the future, worried about their visas, and worried about their children.

Ms Wahhab said these families had mostly left north Gaza during the first ceasefire, walking from the churches where

they were sheltering to Rafah, a day's walk. They left behind homes, possessions and businesses.

Ms Wahhab said Palestinian Christians in Australia had been finding and furnishing accommodation for these families, alongside Muslim organisations.

She said the Australian public had welcomed the Palestinian refugee families,

but the organisation still needed funds to support them to settle into their homes.

"They lost everything. I spoke with some families, literally they've got nothing. They're relying on handouts and food vouchers," she said.

Information about Palestinian Christians in Australia's work is available at: palestinianchristians.org.au.

Melbourne Lenten pilgrims walk, pray for peace in Gaza

■ **Jenan Taylor**

Hundreds of Melbourne Christians called for a lasting ceasefire in Gaza during a global walk for peace this Lent.

Ceasefire pilgrims want a permanent end to Israel-Gaza hostilities, life-saving food, water and aid to be allowed into Gaza, and the release of detainees from both sides.

It came as the Israeli military launched airstrikes against Rafah, the last remaining area of refuge for Palestinians trapped in Gaza.

The Melbourne walk was the first of several pilgrimages in 15 countries, and symbolised the journey from Gaza city to the Rafah refugee camp.

Organisers wanted to show solidarity with Palestinian Christians in Australia and the Holy Land who were calling for an end to the suffering.

Pilgrimage movement founder James Harris said it was important to support the Palestinian Christian community to raise an even-handed awareness about the conflict.

He said they struggled to be heard amid depictions that it was a Jewish-Muslim clash.

"About 15 per cent of global Palestinians are Christians who can trace their lineage back to the early church, yet many feel alone and that they are, within the dialogue of the conflict ... invisible," Mr Harris said.

"What's happened in Gaza has been terrible, and I want to show that there's solidarity with them. That support shows Christians are serious about a just peace."

Melbourne Palestinian Christian Njoud

Abu Duou said she longed for the world to realise that Palestinian communities were diverse, speaking in a statement.

She said she wanted people to know they were Christians as well as Muslims, and that they wanted peace and security for all people.

A cradle Anglican now connected with the Uniting Church in New Zealand, Mr Harris said he started the movement because of his personal connections with Gaza.

He said had friends there who were constantly being moved from place to place, and he wanted to walk in prayer with them and others affected by the discord.

Mr Harris said Melbourne organisers invited people of Jewish, Muslim and other faith backgrounds, as well as non-believers to join the pilgrims.

The walk started in the early hours of Ash Wednesday in Mernda and finished at St Paul's Cathedral that evening.

The walks would continue throughout Lent in other cities around the world including Cape Town and Oslo, Mr Harris said.



Picture: iStock



Board game ministry participants come for friendship.

Picture: supplied.

Board game outreach offers safety, friends, faith insights

■ Jenan Taylor

An eastern suburbs outreach ministry is helping Christians and non-Christians who feel alone and disconnected find friendship.

Members of the St Luke's Vermont board game ministry play board and card games, do jigsaw puzzles, carpet bowls and table tennis. Those who prefer to craft, can bring their knitting.

The monthly initiative is focused on cultivating a safe space in which they can combat loneliness and build relationships.

Ministry organiser Jack Thompson said a key goal was promoting honest conversation through developing strong friendships.

He said it was crucial for helping break down barriers between people, and potentially giving them a better understanding of each other's beliefs and views.

"If you start a conversation with someone about faith, before you invest in their friendship or relationship, they won't talk to you. But if you have spent time with them for months, or longer, then they definitely

feel more open to speaking about it and being more vulnerable," Mr Thompson said.

He said the ministry had been running since 2022 and attracted between 25 and 60 participants, more than half of whom were not Christians.

Mr Thompson said they attended because they felt disconnected, not because they wanted to find out about faith.

He said ministry volunteers focused on making the space social rather than religious for that reason.

The laidback, social atmosphere in church surrounds sparked questions and discussions about faith from some of them.

Mr Thompson said first time participants were surprised to find such an event in a church building, but by their third visit they seemed comfortable.

He said now some of the attendees knew people from the church, they came to some church services.

Aged in his early 20s, Mr Thompson said he started the ministry to bridge the gap

between youth group and adult initiatives at church.

He said he felt there was lack of interest groups for young people who had left high school but were not quite old enough for more senior ones.

Mr Thompson became convinced there was a need for ways to tackle isolation because of his own struggles with loneliness while at university during the COVID pandemic.

He believed those feelings of loneliness were universal and that they persisted for many after the pandemic restrictions lifted.

Occasional participant the Reverend Dr Scott Harrower said being able to experience a safe place and safe people were among the ministry's benefits for attendees.

As a mental health and wellbeing expert, he said the healthy, social connection it offered them was valuable.

"Experiencing unconditional, positive regard by others could offer a new chapter in what may be a largely lonely story for many," Dr Harrower said.

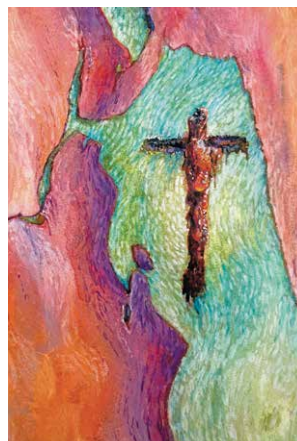
From the editor



Taylor Swift's weekend in Melbourne is still fresh as I write this. It was lovely to see so many people, so excited for a single event. The Reverend John Forsyth's photo on our back page drives home just how many people were at each concert. But John writes, he's waiting for a far greater event: the day when a great multitude is gathered before the throne. Throughout this edition, we have reminders that in Jesus' death and resurrection, we too hope for this day, from our front cover, to an Easter reflection (P13). So if you missed out on Eras tickets, remember: you have hope in an even greater gathering.

Elspeth Kernebone, editor

'With His stripes we are healed'



Our Easter *Melbourne Anglican* front cover is inspired Isaiah 53:5, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement for our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed". The watercolour and pencil image depicts the peeling bark of a spotted gum tree and *gummosis* – a phenomenon where the eucalyptus tree's sap crystallises helping to seal and heal the wound. Ivan's abstract piece is a reminder of the central symbol of Easter – the cross – which depicts not only the suffering and death of Jesus but also his victory over death, offering hope and salvation to believers.

Gippsland Anglican news marks 120 years of service

■ Sally Woollett

Editors past and present, the editorial committee and the registry team have gathered at Bishops court in Sale to celebrate 120 years of continuous publication of *The Gippsland Anglican*, newspaper and now magazine of the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland since 1904.

Diocesan archivist Tim Gibson presented the bishop with a bound compilation of press articles from 1904. Those attending were able to browse some historical photos of Bishops court in Sale, for which the foundation stone was laid in the same year.

Addressing the gathering, Bishop Richard Treolar thanked editors and diocesan staff for their commitment to TGA and its mission of connecting and encouraging our ministry centres across Gippsland.

"With the support of parishes and contributors, *The Gippsland Anglican* has been a vehicle for storytelling, celebration



Editor Sally Woollett with Bishop Richard Treolar and guests at Bishops court Sale celebrate 120 years of *The Gippsland Anglican*. Picture: supplied

and proclaiming the gospel in our region and beyond for 120 years," Bishop Richard said.

"In a digital age it continues to provide a valuable news ministry, serving as a conduit between Gippsland Anglicans, the wider Anglican Communion and our

ecumenical partners – a tangible reminder of the importance of communication.

"Publishing a diversity of views and resources on theology, spirituality and Christian living, TGA invites us to examine complex and pressing social issues through the lens of faith and discipleship."

Songs of praise celebrate women's ordination

■ Daniel Brace

In 1992, the General Synod of the Australian Anglican Church finally passed legislation for women priests, after many

years of advocacy and campaigning. Across Australia 90 women were ordained priest by the year's end.

Since 1992, the church hasn't look back, welcoming many women called by

God to serve in priestly ministry.

Many photographs, articles, conference papers and pieces of legislation from the struggle survive. But what of the songs and music?

Specific songs can trigger powerful memories and emotions, so when putting together a concert of hymns and songs from this important time in the history of our church it's not surprising to learn that the women involved looked forward to hearing them again.

For one leader in the struggle for women priests, Dr Muriel Porter, it's about Psalm 126. "Whenever I sing the Chris Willcock setting of that psalm, with its reference to faithful people sowing seed in tears but coming back carrying the sheaves rejoicing, I remember with gratitude the faithful women deacons who carried on with their ministry despite the long, sad wait for their priestly calling to be vindicated," she said.

Songs of praise, songs of victory, was due to be presented by the choir of St Oswald's Glen Iris on 16 March. It contained works written by Elizabeth J Smith, Peta Sherlock and other women whose works are unattributed. Thanks to Fay Magee for access to her collection of songs and notes.

see

The journal of the Anglican Church in the Dioceses of Melbourne and Dunlop
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see inside

- Minorities guidelines.....p10
- Bishop Challen on grim employment situation.....p3
- Charles Sherlock asks "What is a synod?" in 'My Say'.....p3
- Archbishop cautions state on speed of changep2
- Could General Synod change its resting place?p5
- Parishes on the Move – Ascot Vale parish.....p8

Things are looking up for these deacons meeting with their bishop

PIC - ANGLICAN MEDIA

At last! women priests

General Synod has decided, by a narrow margin, that women may be ordained to the priesthood in the Australian Anglican Church.

It was by a majority of two votes in the House of Clergy that the passing of the provisional 'clarification' canon with its required two-thirds majority was achieved.

(99 present): 69 yes, 30 no; House of Clergy (99 present): 67 yes, 32 no; House of Bishops (22 present): 16 yes, 4 no, 2 informal.

Archbishop Keith Rayner announced the results of the final vote after six hours' debate and asked synod to remain silent for prayer before adjourning. Once outside, many of the women to

joy and relief.

Archbishop Keith Rayner told a press conference that the decision of the General Synod to allow individual dioceses to decide on the ordination of women to the priesthood was one of the most significant actions taken by the Anglican Church.

"It will be greeted with support and relief by the majority of the Synod fairly accurately reflects the mind of our church. There will, however, be a substantial minority who will be uneasy at this outcome," he added.

Commenting on media reports which referred to the possibility of division in the church, the archbishop said: "The Synod debate will. This gives confidence as we face the future.

"I believe the overwhelming majority of Anglicans want to see our church move ahead to fulfil its mission with unity of purpose. There will be a period of working through a new situation and there will be some anomalies for a period. I believe that with patience and goodwill these can be overcome in time.

members of the church who are opposed to the ordination of women to the priesthood that they still have their full place in the life of the church. The bishops have made it clear that they will respect the conscientious convictions of all members of the church," he said.

The archbishop will remain 33. Picture: file

AI: 'A gift we need to steward well'

■ **Elspeth Kernebone**

Melbourne Christians have engaged with questions about artificial intelligence technology at a science and Christianity event.

Technological and biblical experts spoke into AI at ISCAST event AI X Christianity: Gospel Wisdom for an AI World.

Panellist, FaithTech Oceania regional manager Adrian Tam said he hoped to impart courage to those attending. He said there were dangers, but Christians could courageously step into the AI space knowing they had a mission, and knowing they had the Holy Spirit.

FaithTech is a Christian tech organisation which aims to help people in the tech industry find community and use their skills to glorify God.

Mr Tam said AI X Christianity aimed to help people engage with AI through a gospel and theological lens, on a practical level. He hoped to hear stories of Christians bravely venturing into the AI space because they saw its potential redemptive impacts.

Mr Tam said Christians also had a huge responsibility to get upstream of AI technology, to shape it from the beginning. He hoped

to see the Christian worldview factored into conversations about the development of AI.

Mr Tam said he hoped the ISCAST event gave Christians deeper understanding of AI, so they could dive into the surrounding questions with more confidence.

"AI is part of common grace, it's part of what God's blessed humanity with."

Adrian Tam

"AI is part of common grace, it's part of what God's blessed humanity with, and it's a gift that we need to steward well," Mr Tam said.

Speaker, the Reverend Dr Arthur Keefer said he hoped to address two of the main attitudes to AI among Christians: uncritical adoption, and absolute rejection. Dr Keefer is a pastor at Scots' Church and honorary research associate at the University of Divinity.

An expert in wisdom literature, Dr Keefer spoke to biblical wisdom's place in an AI world. He said the conversation about AI

was a good chance for people to ask what humanity was about, and what God had to say about what it meant to be human.

When it came to wisdom, it meant asking "How am I taking responsibility for myself, and those around me, in terms of what we're encountering with AI?"

For instance, for Dr Keefer as a teacher AI raised questions around responding to a student who had used ChatGPT to write an essay.

Dr Keefer said wisdom literature did contain elements of optimism, giving reason to think humans could have productive engagement with the world around them.

"It's interesting what some of these books of the Bible emphasise, and what wisdom itself centres around," Dr Keefer said.

"Wisdom has a lot to do with how we relate to ourselves ... a lot of it is getting to grips with ourselves and being the kinds of people who are prepared or have learnt to interact well with the world around us."

AI X Christianity: Gospel Wisdom for an AI World was set to take place on 16 March. It also featured engineering academic Professor Neil Dodgson, Anglican minister the Reverend Dr Chris Mulherin.

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This Easter I see Jesus, I pray my family will as well

Picture: iStock

■ Genevieve Doherty

At Easter when I was growing up, my family had a tradition of going camping.

Every year somewhere different, but always somewhere quiet where we were able to reflect on the year that was just blooming and a summer that had just ended.

I grew up in a non-religious family. My closest encounter with the Christian faith was colouring outside the lines of a nativity colouring page in those lazy weeks of school before Christmas.

Interesting then, that even in my family Easter was a time for reflection and appreciation. I remember a couple of years ago talking to my mum. We remarked that even though we weren't religious, Easter was a time to reflect and engage with our spiritual side.

My relationship with Easter has changed since I converted a year ago. I still find it incredibly grounding to sit in God's creation, to retreat and to listen to his voice, but I have now gained a deeper understanding in knowing about Jesus' sacrifice and His love for His people.

My love for God has grown and grown, and I want to feel ready to make the

commitment of baptism.

I want to let Jesus fully into my life. I want to declare that I am a child of God. I want to promise to follow his ways and to love others as he loves me.

I've always thought Easter to be the right time to be baptised. The perfect time to commit myself to a new life as Jesus committed himself to the cross, honouring that sacrifice he made for his people.

I even began talking to the minister at my church, wanting to learn more about the process, so full of joy that I forgot the communal, outward-looking side of baptism, and the promise I had made myself.

A couple of months ago I watched a baptism for the first time. It made me realise that it was a family-like commitment, and it made me realise I also wanted to be baptised. At this time, I promised myself not to get baptised until I was able to make those vows in front of my whole family. Both my church family and my blood family.

Baptism is more than just a personal commitment to God. It is a commitment to be proud in one's faith and proclaim it with joy and confidence.

I take great pride in my faith. Although I enjoy valuable conversations with my peers about it, I still struggle to discuss it with my

family. I think I fear that because I hold their opinion so highly, if they disapprove it will affect my faith.

While I am developing my own little group of people to support me in my journey of faith, it's still intimidating to step away from what is known and familiar without the people who raised me by my side or truly understanding why I feel the call to do it.

I am working on this. It's been a lot of small steps – like taking my Mum to an evangelistic drawing workshop – and some misunderstandings. But I am confident that one day I will be able to receive the blessing of new life surrounded by all those I hold so dear.

This is still the beginning of my journey of faith, and as my second Easter approaches I trust that God has a plan for my family. I hope that I can continue to hold together my new and old traditions.

And so I won't be getting baptised this year, but I pray that one day my family will all be able to celebrate in the gift that is Easter together. I hope they too will see Jesus' love in his death and resurrection.

Genevieve Doherty is a member of St Jude's in Parkville and Brunswick Uniting Church, and a fine arts student.

What we can learn from the American

■ Rhys Bezzant

We tell stories to children to help them feel like they belong, to know how to find their place in the world, and to give them understanding of their environment. Stories are powerful, yet stories can be dangerous as well if we don't pass them on accurately or if we choose to use them to hurt others.

The same is true of church history. Indeed, I love my job at Ridley for I get to tell stories about God's people through the ages, and to give my students a narrative which helps them better grasp their own beliefs and to develop a sense of belonging. If we are not to be blown around by every wind of teaching, as the Apostle Paul says, we need firm anchors and robust sails. Church history helps.

Yet one of the greatest influences on 21st century Christians in Australia, the church in the United States, is barely known or understood. We need to engage with American Church history urgently to work out how to nurture spiritual health in our land. Both to understand how we are similar, and to understand how we are different.

America was the first country to be born with a mission statement, both in its English Puritan beginnings and in its revolutionary outgrowth, so its sense of purpose easily leads to the exercise of soft power in other nations of the world, in ways both Christian and cultural.

Here are my top 10 reasons for learning about American church history:

One, the Pilgrims who migrated in 1620 and their close cousins the Puritans who came a little later in 1630 were Reformed Christians whose beliefs were not focused on individual conversion alone but on nation-building. Their faith was not confined to the doctrines of salvation but was also concerned with engaging God in politics, economics, culture and mission. They had an expansive vision for science, exploration and nature. One of the first things they did in the New World was set up a university, now known as Harvard, in 1636. They believed in a learned clergy and wanted to outshine the achievements of the England they had left behind, their homeland that some imagined they would return to soon enough. We should beware maligning the motivations and achievements of the Puritans, for their commitment to the missionary potential of education and statecraft was profound.

Two, Americans who travel in Australia

find our country easy to navigate, for we use dollars, speak English, and watch the same movies. One of the most significant differences between our nations is only discovered after living here for a while. We have profoundly different views of authority. The United States has a 17th century Christian foundation with an 18th century Enlightenment overlay, the latter seen most clearly in its revolutionary documents. European Australia was birthed 150 years later at the high-water mark of the Enlightenment, with Christian faith a very present but not essentially substantive foundation. The rationalistic philosophy of John Locke (1632-1704) guided the early Enlightenment in North America, but it was the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) whose influence in Australia shaped different assumptions about authority and morality. For these and other reasons, both in society and in the church, Australians approach authority with more sanguine caution.

Three, when I studied at Ridley in the last century, we would often hear about the Wesley brothers and the birth of Methodism. A great failing in our offerings in those days was that we heard little to nothing about their contemporary in the American colonies, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), pastor, theologian, scientist, philosopher and revivalist. Yet his influence on evangelicalism worldwide has been prodigious. Often dubbed the "American Augustine", Edwards preached and prayed for revival, then explained it theologically when it arrived. He was a polymath. While the philosophers were arguing that God was distant, Edwards explained how Christians could still believe that he was close. He knitted together head and heart in the experience of believers. His is a salutary medicine to contemporary Christianity which divides understanding from emotion, and which expects little from the Lord in terms of conversions or impact.

Four, deeply embedded in the American DNA is the revolutionary spirit, assuming that the golden age lies in the future not the past. It is a spirit which sloughs off authorities which impede that forward march towards a "more perfect union". This political stance has influenced the churches of the United States too. Throwing off English authority in the Revolution meant recreating the Church of England as the new "Episcopal Church," with its model not England but Scotland, and the Scottish Prayer Book as the template for its own. Ever since, there have been

different kinds of Anglicanism in the global church, and this posture of independence has affected other denominations as well. For example, there are literally thousands of American Baptist *denominations*! The revivals of the 18th century, with their talk of individual spiritual agency, reflection on the sovereignty of God in human experience, and an experience of freedom from sin that binds, provided some of the vocabulary for the Revolution itself, transposed into a political key.

Five, the strength of the laity has been a feature of the life of the church in America since the beginnings of the 19th century. As the population moved west, so Christian families were frequently without a church to belong to in the wilderness. Indeed, they often didn't see other human beings from year to year in their isolated locations. Camp meetings brought believers together once a year for preaching festivals and seasons of communion, as Holy Fairs had done in the Scottish Highlands in days gone by. Authority resided less and less in authorised denominational leaders and more in locally validated and gifted lay preachers and pastors. Authority shifted from the one offering the ministry to those receiving it, a common assumption in Australia today. The disestablishment clause of the First Amendment to the US constitution, separating the church from the protection of the state, didn't end Christian ministry but led to the opposite: churches flourished in new and surprising ways! Revivalism decentred clerical power yet provided space for new kinds of parachurches and ministries. We ought not to fear the end of the Christendom project.

Six, traditional theological authorities were further weakened in the wake of the US Civil War (1861-1865), during which Christians in both north and south struggled to understand how the Scriptures should be understood and applied to the morality and politics of slavery. A nation that appealed to the Scriptures for its reason for being experienced deep conflict. Indeed, in the later 19th century, Reformed expressions of theology paramount before the Civil War were frequently rejected and Arminian styles of theologising won the day, especially among emancipated African Americans who prized their freedom to choose God, affirming their agency and rejecting crude forms of predestination. Holiness movements became increasingly subjective in their approach to truth in reaction to the Civil War as well.

church



Picture: iStock

A warning to us: beware of equating the Kingdom of God with any particular nation or political system.

Seven, the American Christian experience has spawned other challenges for the worldwide church. The complexity of US politics, the geographic diversity of the land, and the denominational variety of churches planted, has provided fertile soil for various groupings, such as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Adventists, among other less well-known movements. The Second Great Awakening in the early years of the 19th century, and internal migration in later periods, encouraged febrile breakaway groups, who often had particular utopian or millenarian visions for church and society. A sense of American uniqueness fuelled their own self-confidence. Persecution in the eastern states suggested the necessity to move with the expanding frontier, leading the Mormons to settle in Utah for example. The doctrine of Manifest Destiny, a distortion of the Puritan City on a Hill, gave Joseph Smith and the second generation of Mormon leadership missionary energy which we still encounter. These movements built their ministry in a prophetic (not so much pastoral) key with impermeable boundaries in the absence of much experience of centralised church or government authority.

Eight, from the end of the 19th century, direct American influence in Australia grew markedly. Of course, we still knew ourselves to be imperial subjects. But perhaps this made us more open to the kind of imperial influences dawning in the United States, not least the reach of American revivalist culture, which found a ready home within rapidly industrialising communities and their nation-building agenda. In 1902, a most remarkable event happened in Melbourne,

the so-called Great Simultaneous Mission. The global evangelist Reuben Torrey (1856-1928) from Chicago came to another great city of the Victorian age to conduct a mission. The contribution of the laity especially to the organisation, financing, execution and impact of the mission was extraordinary, building on significant Christian ministry already present in Marvellous Melbourne. With a population of just 500,000, some 17,000 preparatory meetings had been arranged before the mission began, involving 117,000 people. Over six months, every house in Melbourne was door-knocked twice, and tent meetings took place all over the city. At the Melbourne Town Hall, the Exhibition Building, and in dozens of suburban locations, a total of perhaps 250,000 attended the meetings, with many resulting conversions and the establishment of Christian ministries like Ridley College and the Upwey Convention (later Belgrave Heights). Melbourne was lauded as one of the great centres of gospel ministry in the world, though World War I was to chasten aspirations for service.

Nine, Dietrich Bonhoeffer studied on two occasions in New York City before the outbreak of the Second World War. He found his faith massively encouraged by his engagement with African Americans at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, for they were able to connect vital piety with serious social engagement. He took home records of the spirituals they sang, which he played to his students in the seminary of the Confessing Church, of which he was director until it was closed by the Nazi regime. But one of his most searing comments about the United States church was that it was Protestant without the Reformation, meaning that it maintained Protestant values but had lost its sense of historical mooring. It

espoused individual agency but not the social matrix which gave it birth. And this is no less true of Australia, perhaps more so. In a nation where history is devalued, or barely studied at all, our churches commit the same sins of neglect or forgetfulness. May we not so prize our sense of freedom, that we forget the hard-won achievements of our forebears, or fail to appreciate their sense of a bigger gospel story in which they were to play their part.

Ten, modern politics is fractured in ways we haven't known in living memory. Indeed our world feels more dangerous in comparison with the prosperous years of the mid to late 20th century. Many Christians are seeking easy answers and espousing the values of protest parties, whether in Germany, France or the United States. Many Christians in the US who are following Trump are known as evangelicals, though the secular media often confuse conservative values with religious motivations. Surely one lesson that we must learn from American church history is how to disentangle church from state – something purportedly the Americans have desired – even though they seem magnetically drawn to each other again and again. The kingdoms of this world must not be confused with the Kingdom of Christ in this age. Though part of larger cultural currents in modernity, the Australian church must nurture biblical reflection alongside theological acumen to provide both understanding and resistance, with the church in the US as a point of reference to sharpen our self-awareness and the contours of our own distinct mission.

The Reverend Canon Dr Rhys Bezzant is senior lecturer in Church History and dean of the Anglican Institute at Ridley College Melbourne.

A wise book, respecting of evidence: The

■ Charles Sherlock

Temper Longman III and John H. Walton. The Lost World of the Flood: Mythology, Theology, and the Deluge Debate. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Many Bible readers assume that each passage can be read “straight off.” But what happens when this seems to clash with what they know is true? A potent example is the story of Noah and the flood in Genesis 6-9.

We read:

All the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered ... and everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died (Genesis 7:19-22).

Yet no archaeological, geological, or cultural evidence supports such a universal flood. Hence the “deluge debate” which has given rise to the theological stance of “flood geology”. Flood geology essentially claims that the more ancient fossils were buried in the biblical flood a few thousand years ago, a claim which has implications for the age of the earth. This is an example of some Christians seeking to bridge the gap between the sciences and Scripture by introducing a particular theory.

US scholars Longman and Walton, affirm “that the Bible is indeed inerrant in all that it intends to teach”. And they face the issues involved steadily.

Successive chapters are set out as “Propositions”, these claims supported by argument and analysis. The approach sounds awkward, but it works here: the writing is clear, and directed consistently to the topic in hand.

The first four propositions, on interpretive method, argue that biblical authority rests on the interpretation of the events portrayed, read against the events’ ancient background. In the case of the flood (Propositions 5-6), the use of hyperbole to make theological points is key.

“The flood is more than judgement and cleansing. The flood opens the way for sacred space to grow and flourish towards the full ordering of the new creation.”

The last four propositions (14-17) consider how biblical and non-biblical evidence can both be taken seriously. “Flood geology” is dealt with in a contribution by Stephen Moshier (Proposition 15). The final proposition reflects on how science and religion interact, noting other examples of events where the biblical text and sciences seem to conflict.

Propositions one to six and 13-17 frame the book. Reading them, I found myself wondering why such effort is put into “flood geology” by some Christians. The central propositions seven to 11 however, are illuminating. The literary evidence for major floods in the Ancient Near East is set out clearly in seven, and then laid side by side with Genesis 6-9 in eight. In comparing these accounts, the authors show out the sharp

contrast between the needy codependence of humans and the ancient gods and our graced dependence on the one true God. This analysis speaks loudly to how many Australians, even Christians at times, see faith in God as centred around our needs, rather than focussed on God’s purposes.

The flood is more than judgement and cleansing. The flood opens the way for sacred space to grow and flourish towards the full ordering of the new creation.

Proposition 9 is the book’s core: “A local cataclysmic flood is intentionally described as a global flood for rhetorical purposes and theological reasons”. It leads into propositions 10 and 11, which set out complementary “Theological Reasons”. The first, more usual reading, is that the flood is interpreted as divine judgment on “disorder”. But, it asks, where does this lead?

This book keeps a steady eye on God’s long-term gracious purpose of bringing order, initially from non-order – the *tohu wabohu*, “formless void,” of Genesis 1:2 – and far more, from the disorders of humankind and even nature. In this it fits the pattern of the preceding *Lost World* books. Beyond being merely God reacting to human sin, they argue Genesis 1–11 depicts God as truly *creative*. The flood is thus more than judgement and cleansing. The flood opens the way for “sacred space” to grow and flourish towards the full ordering of the new creation.

Propositions 12 and 13 reflect on two other episodes in Genesis 1-11: the “sons of God” story that precedes the flood, and the tower of Babel account that follows it. The authors argue that Genesis 1-11 overall

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Lost World of the Flood



Picture: iStock

“This book keeps a steady eye on God’s long-term gracious purpose of bringing order.”

forms the “backstory of the covenant with Abraham and his family that unfolds in Genesis 12-50” (p 178).

A concise conclusion rounds out the book’s overall argument very directly. It

opens, “we have noted that events are not authoritative; *interpretation* of events by the biblical authors is what carries authority”. This raises two questions in my mind: who interprets? (This brings the church, the communities in which the Bible is read, into play). And how might those who read the Bible “straight off” find this claim?

The *Lost World of the Flood* is a wise book, respecting evidence and open to where the evidence leads. It will help anyone for whom Genesis 6-9 raises issues. These chapters are not as foundational as Genesis 1-3 for a

Judeo-Christian worldview however. So, I recommend that Walton’s earlier *Lost World* books be read first, which I wish had been around when I began teaching theology 50 years ago!

The Reverend Dr Charles Sherlock AM taught Theology and Liturgy for five decades, chiefly at Ridley College, Melbourne. An Anglican deacon and priest, he was one of the drafters of *A Prayer Book for Australia* (1995). He is married to his co-theologian the Reverend Dr Peta Sherlock, living in active retirement in Trentham, Victoria.



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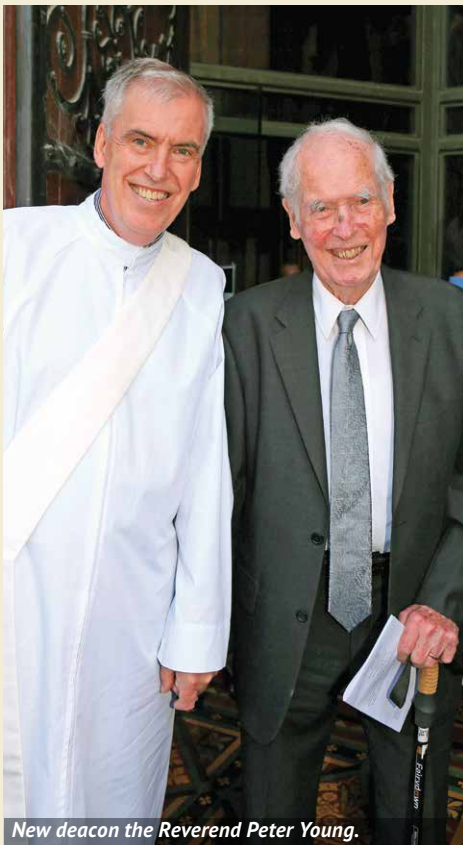
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The Reverends Julia Boyd, Helena Cameron, Conrad Chiu, Ginger Chen, Cara Greenham Hancock, Shannon Hood, Luke Prentice, Josephine Quinlan, Jonathan Tran and Peter Young with other clergy after their ordination.

Family and friends gathered at St Paul's Cathedral to witness 10 people take on the role of deacon in February.

Pictures: Janine Eastgate



New deacon the Reverend Peter Young.



The Reverend Ginger Chen.



The Reverend Julia Boyd.



The Reverend Josephine Quinlan celebrates after the service.



New deacon the Reverend Luke Prentice with supporters.



The Reverend Helena Cameron with supporters after the ceremony.



The Reverend Conrad Chiu after the ordinations.



New deacon the Reverend Cara Greenham Hancock.



New deacon the Reverend Shannon Hood after the ordinations.

'In my upbringing women didn't do this sort of thing': Dorothy Lee

■ Jenan Taylor

A noted Anglican who struggled with low confidence says her Australia Day honour is an award for all lay and ordained women leaders in the Church.

The Reverend Canon Professor Dorothy Lee was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in January for her significant service to the Anglican Church of Australia.

Professor Lee's citation highlighted her contribution to New Testament scholarship at Trinity College Theological School, and to the Melbourne diocese where she is a canon at St Paul's Cathedral.

Professor Lee said she was surprised when she was notified about being nominated and completely shocked when it was successful.

The award was a wonderful validation of how much women in the Anglican Church are able to accomplish, she said.

Professor Lee said the recognition was particularly important to her because few women were in theology and very few

women were being ordained, when she started out.

She said the Melbourne Anglican Church's earlier stance against women's ordination led her to ordained ministry in the Uniting Church instead, where she served from 1984 to 2008.

"We had to wear hats to church. We couldn't pray, we couldn't even read, not officially."

Professor Dorothy Lee

Professor Lee said she viewed being among the first women to fulfil her priestly vocation, and studying and teaching the New Testament, among her major achievements.

But her biggest achievement was overcoming imposter syndrome, Professor Lee said.

She traced that poor self-confidence, especially early in her priesthood, to her childhood in the Free Church of Scotland.

Its conservative, disapproving view of women made any aspirations she had to lead or help make the Scriptures come alive for people seem unlikely.

"In my upbringing, women didn't do this sort of thing. We had to wear hats to church. We couldn't pray, we couldn't even read, not officially," Professor Lee said. "It gave me a sense of tentativeness about whether I should be doing this, and whether anything I did would be as good as what men did."

She said even today many young women wrestled with a lack of confidence because they didn't think they were as substantial as men.

But the constrained environment at the Free Church of Scotland inspired rather than dampened her sense of spirituality and God, Professor Lee said.

It eventually drove her to break free and find a home in Anglicanism instead.

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Students attending
English Conversation Corner,
St Paul's Cathedral.
Photo: Jerome Cole Photography

An honest, supremely hopeful account

■ Rhys Bezzant

Lucy Austen, Elisabeth Elliot: A Life. Wheaton: Crossway, 2023.

At least she and I have this in common: Elisabeth Elliot (1926-2015), prolific author, linguist, American evangelical stateswoman, and wife of martyred husband Jim Elliot, loved reading Christian biographies. Of course, we should read commentaries on the Bible and books about theology. But something remarkable happens when we read the biographies of Christian leaders: we learn to make deep connections between our beliefs, our behaviour, and the broader culture around us. Christian biographies serve as a comprehensive workout for the soul. We need to read them more often.

This magnificent book by Lucy Austen achieves these things. We learn about an extraordinary individual who counted the cost in serving the Lord Jesus, whose ideas were sifted and reshaped during her life, and whose insights into global missions of the 20th century were inspirational for many. Reading so many Christian biographies herself, Elisabeth made herself open to challenges and growth.

A marriage of inconvenience

For many, the most we know about Elisabeth Elliot is that with her husband in the 1950s she tried to reach the Waorani people of Ecuador with the gospel, a tribe that had resisted contact with the outside world with both threats and acts of violence. Jim, with four other American missionaries, was killed in October 1953, leaving Elisabeth a widow with a 10-month-old daughter, Valerie. Having been married for only two years and three months, Elisabeth stayed in Ecuador after Jim's death to support outreach among the Waorani, to offer her linguistic skills to other missions partners, and to write for the evangelical market. Some of her relationships with other missionaries were very difficult, a common story in missionary biographies.

Unresolved griefs and disappointments

Perhaps Elisabeth never really got over Jim's death. In 1963, she decided to return to the United States for good to pursue a writing ministry, both fiction and non-fiction, and to speak at conventions and on campuses. Many of her articles and books reflected on her time in Ecuador. She never quite escaped its shadow. She married twice

more. In 1969 she married academic and Episcopalian Addison Leitch from a very different theological background, who died of cancer five years later. And then in 1977, Lars Gren, a Norwegian student at Gordon Conwell, who was nine years younger, much more comfortable in social settings, and a great help to her ministry. Sadly, she was quick to discover how jealous and controlling both these husbands were. Her earlier fundamentalist background had permitted women to preach and teach in mixed gatherings, women preaching was a non-issue for fundamentalists in Elisabeth's day. But as she grew older, Elisabeth's views became more conservative, and she found reasons to excuse her new husband's abusive behaviour. Alongside teaching and speaking, Elisabeth spent much of her time managing an increasingly voluminous correspondence as her advice was sought on missions, singleness, marriage and issues in relationships. When she began to recognise symptoms of dementia, Lars helped to cover them up. She craved happiness and stability but rarely found contentment.

Power and perseverance

It was a blessing therefore that Elisabeth was an introvert who could enjoy her own company, reminding us that leaders don't necessarily have to seek a platform for validation. She took refuge in reading C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald, David Brainerd, and especially Amy Carmichael (1867-1951). Carmichael was one of Elisabeth's great role models, who as a single woman rescued young girls from temple prostitution in Bangalore, India, served the poor and challenged the powerful. Even when Elisabeth was living in the poorest of shelters in the Ecuadorian jungle, she read and wrote. Her heart for service was nurtured during her earliest formation in the Holiness movement, which taught that power for ministry is to be found when we surrender our heart to the Lord. Her fundamentalist approach to reading the Bible gave her security in difficult days, yet she shed several fundamentalist skins as easy answers to life's questions were scoured away.

Deep movements of the soul

One of the most intriguing elements of her life was how Elisabeth viewed guidance. Intensively, persistently, intimately, she sought the Lord and his individual will for her life. To anchor her decisions, she drew on images and words that she had recently

encountered in the Scriptures, life circumstances that rerouted her, and the desire for a deep sense of peace. As Austen presents the ways that the Lord led her, I found the process incredibly exhausting, for Elisabeth was always second-guessing what the Lord would have her do that hour. With so much tragedy in her life, such an understanding of God's guidance made her rethink if she had followed the Lord's will after all. Her spirituality was both tender and tough.

Questions of missiology

The training Elisabeth had in mission was barely adequate to the task she pursued. Of course, she was trained to expect hardship, which she experienced in spades. When it came to transposing biblical ideas and stripping back North American cultural assumptions, there was a lot to learn. Her linguistic training did give her a head start. She was frustrated by colleagues who hadn't benefitted from the study of language and couldn't appreciate others' worldviews. Her experience of self-propelled missionaries not attached to a mission society for training, support and accountability is a sober tale.

Telling an honest story

In her own writing and speaking, Elisabeth Elliot was determined not to gloss over her negative experiences. She wanted to tell an honest story about how the Lord had led, and how his leading had resulted in great grief not just the glories of the Kingdom's advance. And indeed, Lucy Austen has taken up similar priorities in her own telling of Elisabeth's story, recounting incidents of Elisabeth's pigheadedness, failure to call out sin in others, inconsistencies in her theological system, and doubts about God's providential care. She died in 2015 aged 88. The author searches out as many of her journals, letters, and public writings as are available to tell her story through her own eyes, not just as the widow of a famous martyr. Perhaps because of the honesty, this biography is also a supremely hopeful account of a woman's life of dedicated service with powerful worldwide impact, despite the griefs and pains of her ministry and marriages, as she decided again and again to lean into the open arms of God for solace. Austen provides a detailed and compassionate account of a life well lived.

The Reverend Canon Dr Rhys Bezzant is senior lecturer in Church History and dean of the Anglican Institute at Ridley College Melbourne.

An uncomfortable but important work

■ Barbara Deutschmann

Garry Worete Deverell, *Contemplating Country: More Gondwana Theology*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2023.

Garry Worete Deverell has invited us to a “campfire singalong between country, church, and Bible” in his new book, *Contemplating Country: More Gondwana Theology*. His aim is to explore the meaning of country where he “discerns the voice and activity of the divine.”

For a white, female beneficiary of the colonial project like me, this can be uncomfortable reading. The theologising starts from a very different place than mine. Garry Worete Deverell is a trawloolway man of lutruwita (Tasmania) and his thinking emerges from deep engagement with country. There are lyrical sections on contemplation of country that become a prophetic invitation: “Let us, like country itself, be contemplatives who are willing to die to ourselves—to our hungry and self-serving desire for the phantasmic dreams of modernity—that we might be reborn to that more expansive self that is a deep and abiding kinship with all creation.”

The book emerges at a significant moment in our history when the charge of colonialism lingers from the 2023 Voice Referendum. The debate crystallised for many the core issue that underlies the politics of Indigenous cultures and peoples in Australia: the architecture of colonialism that has created the national culture, while destroying that of the First Nations. Like history, that colonialism is not dead nor even past.

Deverell’s book reveals the cancerous places that colonialism grows, most of them places we forgot to look. Seen through his eyes, colonialism is everywhere, in place names across Australian maps that overlay

Bible terms on local namings, in our national anthem that entrenches *terra nullius*, and in church documents such as the Preamble to the Constitution of the Uniting Church.

Deverell also describes “liturgical out-breaks of colonialism” in the Anglican church following the funeral of Elizabeth II, and the coronation of King Charles. His analysis shows that no Australian church is without its colonial trappings. Even churches that have worked hard in intercultural spaces have struggled to match intention with real commitment to change. Deverell’s account of his work with Uniting, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches makes sobering reading.

“Even churches that have worked hard in intercultural spaces have struggled to match intention with real commitment to change.”

Deverell argues that colonialism reveals itself above all in misapprehensions and narrow interpretations of Scripture. Like other minoritised groups before him, Deverell discusses the uncomfortable readings of Deuteronomy 7-9, and of Joshua and Judges. He challenges our reading strategies and asks, “Have you ever tried to read a psalm, or any other biblical passage as if you weren’t the victim/hero in the story? Have you ever considered the ways in which you, yourselves might be the enemy?” The effect of this whole book is to place the reader into that uncomfortable position.

Yet there is much that is potentially liberating in these readings. Deverell’s challenge to us is to hear the readings of Indigenous peoples. It is precisely at this point that the

exciting dimension of the book begins. He offers brief readings of such diverse texts as Isaiah 58 and Matthew 5, the Book of Wisdom and Matthew 13, the Song of Songs and Hebrews 5 and 7. These are only briefly sketched and as Deverell himself acknowledges, he is not a Bible scholar. These fresh readings are nevertheless an offering to us in the way they stretch our imagination in new ways.

While it made me uncomfortable, *Contemplating Country* did not leave me hopeless or resentful. There is much in the book that suggests ways forward. The section on Acknowledgements of Country contains such wisdom that every leader should read it. There are suggestions for dealing with the local church and its appropriated property. Similarly, the list of practical ideas for meaningful participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the Anglican church is well-considered.

It was thus disappointing to me and many others that the recent Melbourne Synod rejected an opportunity to support such inclusion, on the day before the Voice Referendum in October 2023. Allies put forward a motion that attempted to progress proposals tabled at the Archbishop’s Council in 2018 and a previous Synod in 2019. The motion was amended in a way that gutted its force. “We ended up with a sweet little piece of colonial mythology about reconciliation and charity toward Aboriginal people,” Deverell later reported (*God’s Own Country*, ABM, 2024, p93).

This is a very important book for all leaders of faith communities. Indeed, this is a book for everyone.

Dr Barbara Deutschmann is an Old Testament scholar at the University of Divinity. She worships with St Mark’s Anglican Church in Spotswood.

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Science, story, feeling tell human tale

■ Lachlan Dean

Joëlle Gergis. *Humanity's Moment: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope. Collingwood: Black Inc, 2022.*

Growing up in the modern world is difficult. The access to information and the interconnectivity of the world makes everything seem very big, especially to me, at a time when my presence in the world, as a teenager, is very small.

News and current events appear both very far away and uncontrollable, and very close, and impactful. Nothing affects the world right now quite like the changes in our global climate and environment seen in the past 20 years.

Dr Joëlle Gergis is an Australian climate scientist working at the Australian National University. She teaches two climatology courses and is a lead author for the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report. She is a textbook expert on this issue. In her latest book, *Humanity's Moment: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope*, Gergis talks through the intricacies of climate change, exploring the science behind it, and the feelings. She reminds us that it is okay to cry about this issue, and get angry about it, because humanity must be allowed to be human in this crucial moment.

I found this book difficult to read because it peers into almost every aspect of what is likely one of the largest issues ever faced by humanity. Gergis walks through the future paths that lie ahead, explaining the science as she goes, and allowing the reader to feel the pain that she feels as these issues are laid bare.

I knew a bit about climate science before I read it, but now I see how much more complex the problems are, how much effort these scientists put into their work, and how little appreciation they get in



Joëlle Gergis.

Picture: joellegergis.com

“... grassroots movements can drive the political and societal change needed to make the planet a better place for future generations.”

Lachlan Dean

return. Statistics and evidence are used in conjunction with anecdotes to describe the issues at hand.

As an Australian, Gergis discusses events including the Black Summer bushfires with deep emotion. One heartfelt story is that of the Wollemi Pines, some of the oldest trees in Australia, known as “living fossils”. These trees are only found in one valley in the Blue Mountains and were nearly all burnt

to a crisp by the Black Summer bushfires. Specialist firefighters were helicoptered in when the fires got too close and set up an irrigation system to protect the last of this ancient species. It is personal anecdotes like these that Gergis uses to show us that the feelings about these issues cannot be ignored.

Gergis also explores her feelings about these events with excerpts from her journal from various times in her career. She shows that the scientists that do this work are people with complex emotions and lives that have been affected by the work they do. It is so easy to think of organisations like the International Panel on Climate Change as machines. But Dr Gergis shows that the IPCC is made of people who have devoted thousands of hours to reviewing tens of thousands of scientific papers and tens of thousands of technical comments over multiple years to construct the most scientifically accurate, up to date report on the situation of our planet. One fact that I was astounded to learn is that these scientists do this IPCC work for free, volunteering their time.

This book is a must-read, not only because it is enjoyable and informative, but because it is a guide to all things climate change for all people. It combines science, story and feeling into a display of the full human experience. It teaches us that with action by everyone, grassroots movements can drive the political and social change needed to make the planet a better place for future generations. I feel like I have a friend in Joëlle Gergis, a fellow Australian trying to help everyone else understand the distressing truth and the reassuring future we can choose to have.

Lachlan Dean is a Year 12 student studying VCE Literature and Physics, with a passion for science and its role in solving problems in the world.

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'A burden too great for a mere mortal': Taylor Swift, The Eras Tour

Picture: John Forsyth

■ John Forsyth

Whether you are a lover or a hater, it is impossible to deny the cultural meteor that is Taylor Swift, now in Australia as part of her worldwide Eras Tour. Her concerts at the MCG and Sydney's Accor Arena sold out in hours as more than four million Australians vied for tickets.

I was among the fortunate, securing tickets through one of seven open devices.

On Saturday I joined 96,000 people, ready to be enchanted by Taylor Swift in person. As we walked from Richmond station the atmosphere was carnival-like. Groups of fans ("Swifties") dressed as their favourite Swift avatar walked around trading handmade friendship bracelets, inscribed with their favourite Swift songs. Legions of fans who missed out on tickets "Taylor-gated" outside the MCG, finding any way to participate in this mass cultural moment.

Inside the MCG, the performance was remarkable. Taylor Swift took the entire stadium on personal journey through the diverse musical chapters of the past 17 years of her career.

It was immediately clear that Swift was not there merely to perform for us, but with us. From the opening song *Miss Americana & the Heartbreak Prince* to the final song *Karma* most of the audience sang along, particularly those under 25. Indeed it often seemed the crowd were at least as loud as Swift, if not more so.

The performance took almost liturgical shape, with a predetermined song list and actions (learnt on TikTok of course) that allowed everyone to be part of the

experience. We were treated to 44 songs in 10 acts over three and a half hours with seamless costume changes, a stadium-wide light show, and relentless energy and enthusiasm.

At times Swift performed alone, playing guitar or piano, at others it was a full production with elaborate props, dancers and visuals. Yet somehow, whatever the song, Swift managed to make a personal connection with 96,000 people at once.

It demonstrated one of Swift's most remarkable qualities: her ability to emotionally connect with our desire for both the transcendent and the immanent through her music.

She is an extraordinarily gifted singer-songwriter, seemingly transcending language and culture – and an untouchable celebrity with a private jet and a Superbowl-winning, football star boyfriend.

Celebrities are our modern-day prophets. They tell us how to live, what to wear even what to eat. Yet at the same time Swift seems incredibly down-to-earth and relatable. She has a song for almost every human experience, from love to grief to revenge to pure joy. She is at the same time both the global megastar and the girl next door. I asked a number of Swifties why they loved Swift so much, and most said, "She is authentic", "She gets me", "Her songs are so relatable", or "She put the words to my emotions". To be truly seen and understood and by someone transcendent is deeply attractive.

While Swift's genius lies in her ability to connect with our longings, she is ultimately unable to offer any solutions to our longings

and pain. Indeed, in the chorus of her song *Anti Hero* Swift sings, "It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me", cautioning her listeners to not look to their heroes, like Swift, as their saviour. The second verse hints how fame hinders her from having real, meaningful connections: "Sometimes I feel like everyone is a sexy baby/ And I'm the monster on the hill/ Too big to hang out/ Slowly lurching towards your city/ Pierced through the heart but never killed". The "gift" of being both transcendent and immanent is a burden far too great for a mere mortal.

This of course reminds me of the beauty of the gospel. It declares to the world that in Jesus we have the ultimate transcendence and immanence, as Paul write in Colossians 2:9, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form".

Indeed, Jesus is the only one who is truly able to be both transcendent and immanent.

Although we would agree with Swift that "I'm the problem", Jesus' death and resurrection is the definitive love story, the good news for all eras.

Through our faith in him, we all await the far greater event described in Revelation 7:9-10.

"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"

The Reverend John Forsyth is vicar of St Jude's Carlton.