THE Melbourne Anglican
OCTOBER 2024, No 640

# Anglicans join calls for safety, freedom for refugees

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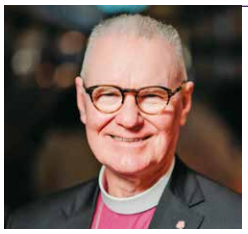
We must appreciate difference

*Picture: Andy Barras*



# For the sake of young people, I welcome tech limits

■ **Archbishop Philip Freier**

**I am pleased that plans are emerging to set an age limit for children opening social media accounts.**

It is clear that interactive screen time has displaced many of the human social interactions that are essential for the social and psychological development of young people. Jonathan Haidt and his book *The Anxious Generation* is a frequent reference point in press coverage of this question. Haidt's proposition is clear. Overcautious parenting and the development of highly addictive social media apps on smartphones are responsible for the rise of anxiety along with mental health issues that young people are experiencing.

Haidt argues that at least four reforms are necessary to manage the present situation. Some can only be achieved by corporate action at the school and societal level as they are beyond the ability of parents and their children to control. His first principle is no smartphones before high school (in American terms this is about the age of 14). Before that children should have only basic phones with limited apps and without internet browser.

Secondly, there should be no social media access before the age of 16. As Haidt says, "Let kids get through the most vulnerable period of brain development before connecting them to a firehose of social comparison and algorithmically chosen influencers". Next, he makes the case for phone-free schools and finally for "far more unsupervised play and childhood independence".

Parenting that is more fearful and thus restrictive on children's independence seems to be a fact across most societies like ours. Urban environments with busy roads don't help. Independent play is more constrained in institutional settings such as schools, as administrators work to mitigate their risks of legal liability. Smart devices that keep children occupied and at home seem a good response to these concerns. The only trouble is that the impact of these devices on the crucial period of adolescent brain development is deleterious.

I hope that the challenge we face is one that can get bipartisan political support. I know that this is increasingly rare but what is at stake is so important and beyond the control of most families just by themselves. Haidt's book, which brings together a wide range of research, is a good place to start. I don't doubt that we have comparable scholars and research in Australia if our politicians need local authorities to help them reach a consensus. I don't underestimate the task of attempting this at the level of state or federal legislation. The power of the big companies behind the technology, especially the software, is enormous. They operate internationally with significant freedom from regulation. They are experts at "influencing" and will no doubt apply those skills and abilities to counter legislative responses.

I encourage you to inform yourself of the issues at stake and when you have, ask your local elected politicians if they have informed themselves about them. How will they work at their level of government to put some limits on this technology for the sake of the young people in our society? Consider your personal use of smartphones in your family situation, is your example one that commends itself to your children or grandchildren?

## Clergy Moves

**Vacant Appointments as of 25 September 2024:**
St Silas and St Anselm, Albert Park; All Saints', Ascot Vale; St Alfred, Blackburn North; Christ Church, Brunswick; St Michael, North Carlton; St Matthew, Cheltenham; Redemption Church, Craigieburn; St Mark, Emerald; St Oswald, Glen Iris; St Alban, Hamlyn Heights; St Mary, North Melbourne [from December]; St Thomas, Moonee Ponds; Ormond Anglican Parish; St Aidan, Parkdale; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; St George's Red Hill [from February 2025]; St Luke, Vermont; St John, Wantirna South; St Thomas, Winchelsea

**Appointments:**
**BRUCE, The Reverend Richard,** appointed Archdeacon and Parish Partnerships, effective 3 October 2024
**CREEK, The Reverend Samuel,** appointed Vicar, Mullum Mullum, Ringwood, effective 4 February 2025

**Permission to Officiate:**
**CRANE, The Reverend Matthew,** appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 12 September 2024
**GOY, The Reverend Fiona Mary,** appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 10 February 2025
**ESNOUF, The Reverend Andrew,** appointed Parish Minister, St Alban, and St Augustine, Merri-bek, effective 12 November 2024

**Resignations:**
**GOY, The Reverend Fiona Mary,** Vicar, St George's Red Hill, effective 10 February 2025
**ESNOUF, The Reverend Andrew,** Vicar, All Saints, Ascot Vale, effective 10 November 2024

**Correction:**
**ALLEAUME-ROSS, The Reverend Dr Kathleen Mary Anne,** appointed Parish Minister, St Stephen, Richmond, effective 10 November 2024.

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

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*With God's help, Canon Matthew Williams set St James' Old Cathedral on a revitalisation journey.* *Picture: Jenan Taylor*

# Faithful ministry fills St James' pews

■ **Jenan Taylor**

**A West Melbourne church has seen huge growth in attendance over the past 16 years in response to efforts to revitalise it through faithful ministry.**

St James' Old Cathedral has grown from 15 people and few young people, to about 80 worshippers, with a strong youth group.

It now offers a distinctive mix of contemporary Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic traditions, and attracts children and young people.

Vicar the Reverend Canon Matthew Williams said St James' blossomed because faithful ministry and investing in the necessary structures for church programs drove the renewal efforts.

He said he avoided setting numerical goals because focussing on maximising size could have unwanted costs for congregations.

Canon Williams decided instead to follow his conviction that the most effective way to revitalise a human community was through being faithful to God in his ministry and trust that He blessed it.

He said this meant loving and caring for the people God had entrusted him with.

"God wants us to grow his church, and so we need to work with the grain of who God tells us to be. That may not be the fastest growth strategy, but it is the better one," Canon Williams said.

He said when he started the renewal project in 2008 most parishioners were unhappy about a new church planting partnership St James' had entered into, believing they might lose their traditions to the plant's contemporary approach.

Canon Williams consulted them about any changes he planned, and focused on doing the ones they valued as well as he could, to earn trust.

Key initiatives included introducing a good choir, and creating children's and youth's ministries.

The youth service formed from a partnership with City on a Hill Melbourne, and is now a group of about 20 young people, some from a variety of churches, some with no faith.

Melbourne diocese Canon for Church Planting the Reverend Bree Mills said the incredible growth in attendance at St James' Old Cathedral attested Canon Williams' unique posture.

She said he saw the value in investing in all its generations, and was particular about what was important to grow the church.

Canon Mills said this included periodically trusting others to preach on Sundays while he ran the children's service, to signal to both groups how important they were to the church.

Canon Williams said St James' growth plateaued at about 80 worshippers in 2017, and has stayed level since.

He is now focused on strategising to enable him to keep looking after the congregation and its ministries without burning out, as the church had lost program leaders to other churches since the pandemic.

Canon Williams said despite the challenges this brought, his focus on loving the people God had given him, and discipling them for their wellbeing, would always remain.

# Expect an Archbishop Jason. Here's why

■ Elspeth Kernebone

Picture: iStock

**It's the question on everyone's lips. "Who will be the next archbishop of Melbourne?"**

Well, we've run the numbers. We can't tell you who it will be, but we can tell you what's likely.

To identify the "classic archbishop" we brought together the technical specifications of each of Melbourne's 13 archbishops, and took the average. Included in this are diocesan bishops prior to the role of archbishop's creation.

We looked at age at taking on the role, country of birth, previous roles, tenure and marital status.

Our search took us as far as the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and wide as the online archive Trove, the sources for nearly all information in this story.

And remember the old maxim, past-performance-is-not-a-reliable-indicator-of-future-performance. Please take our predictions with some salt!

**So … what traits does the typical specimen of a Melbourne archbishop exhibit?**

Let's start with the elephant in the room: the pronouns we're using.

We could use "he" throughout this piece; the numbers are consistent on this demographic feature.

However, given the present archbishop took up his role in 2006, before women were first permitted to become bishops in 2007, we will use "they". It might grate on your grammar (I've heard no one tipping multiple archbishops), but we live in hope.

**So, how old are they likely to be?**

Melbourne's first bishop Charles Perry (1847-1876) stands as the youngest person to take on the central role, at the tender age of 40. Peter Watson (2000-2005) stands as the oldest, at 64.

But, if we take the mean of all 13 people to serve as leader, the next archbishop is likely to be 53.

If we look at the mode (what's most common), it's 55 or 51. Six of Melbourne's diocesan bishops and archbishops have been one of those two ages at appointment, with an even split between the two.

**What experience is the next archbishop likely to have?**

Based on your classic archbishop, in their previous role the new incumbent is likely to have been a bishop in Australia, or a vicar in the United Kingdom, and maybe a canon or subdean as well.

There are a few exceptions to this pattern. For instance, Keith Rayner (1990-1999) was archbishop of Adelaide when he took on leadership of Melbourne, and Frank Woods (1957-1977) was a bishop in the UK.

However, the odds don't favour Melbourne's Assistant Bishops. It's been 40 years since the diocese last elected a Melbourne Assistant Bishops archbishop, David Penman in 1984. Just three in 13 archbishops or diocesan bishops have previously served as an Assistant Bishop in Melbourne. (Bob Dann (1977-1983) and Joseph Booth (1942-1956) are the other two).

**And where will the next archbishop have been born?** Well there's a more than 50 per cent chance it was in England. There's just a 31 per cent chance they were born in Australia. (Although if we take the model of recent years, Australia seems likely. Four out of five past archbishops were born on local ground, and the only exception was David Penman, born far away in New Zealand).

And of course, another critical question. **How long will our new leader reign?**

Archbishops cease to hold office when they reach the age of 70. So it depends a bit on how old they are to start with, and on any unforseen circumstances. Obviously, if your average archbishop – consecrated at 53 – saw out their term, it would be 17 years.

However, for a range of reasons, not every archbishop or diocesan bishop has served his full term. Three sadly died in office, while Melbourne's second bishop James Moorhouse (1876-1886) was translated to Manchester.

Charles Perry remains Melbourne's longest standing diocesan bishop or archbishop – with 28 years in the role. No one else has cleared 20 years. (Frank Woods (1957-1977), Henry Lowther Clarke (1902-1920) and Philip Freier (2006-expected 2025) have all come close, at 19, 18 and a likely 18.)

But using the power of averages, *The Melbourne Anglican* is pleased to reveal our next archbishop's likely term. It is 12.6 years.

**And … marital status?** Married, every archbishop and diocesan bishop has been. Most likely, their wife will be called Jean, Michelle or Karen.

Two former archbishop's wives share the name Jean, making it the most likely option if we go by mode (most common).

But, if we take the following premises:

- Our likely archbishop is 53
- His wife is probably about the same age

We can make a case for Michelle or Karen as being the top options for the next archbishop's wife. Michelle was the most popular girl's name in 1971 in Queensland and NSW, Karen was the second most popular girl's name in NSW, fourth in Queensland. (We couldn't find Australia-wide name data for 1971, but we're willing to depart from our thus far rigorous processes to consider Queensland and NSW data as likely broadly representative.)

And so – the big ticket item – **the archbishop's name?** Well, surprisingly, in 176 years of the Melbourne diocese, and 13 incumbents, no names are repeated – so averages offer us nothing.

But if we assume they're 53 … if it's a woman, we already know their name. If our new archbishop is a man, we can use the same method. So, we can expect:

Archbishop Jason or Archbishop Michelle.

At a few points, specific retirement dates were unclear, and so the exact tenure was unclear. Every effort was made to confirm these, but please take our apologies for any errors. With thanks to the diocese's archivists who checked the December 1990 *The Melbourne Anglican* to confirm Keith Rayner's exact consecration date, which was quite close to his birthday.

# Review call as holiday home costs soar

Heathcare chaplaincy, minimum age for membership and Code of Conduct requirements on synod agenda

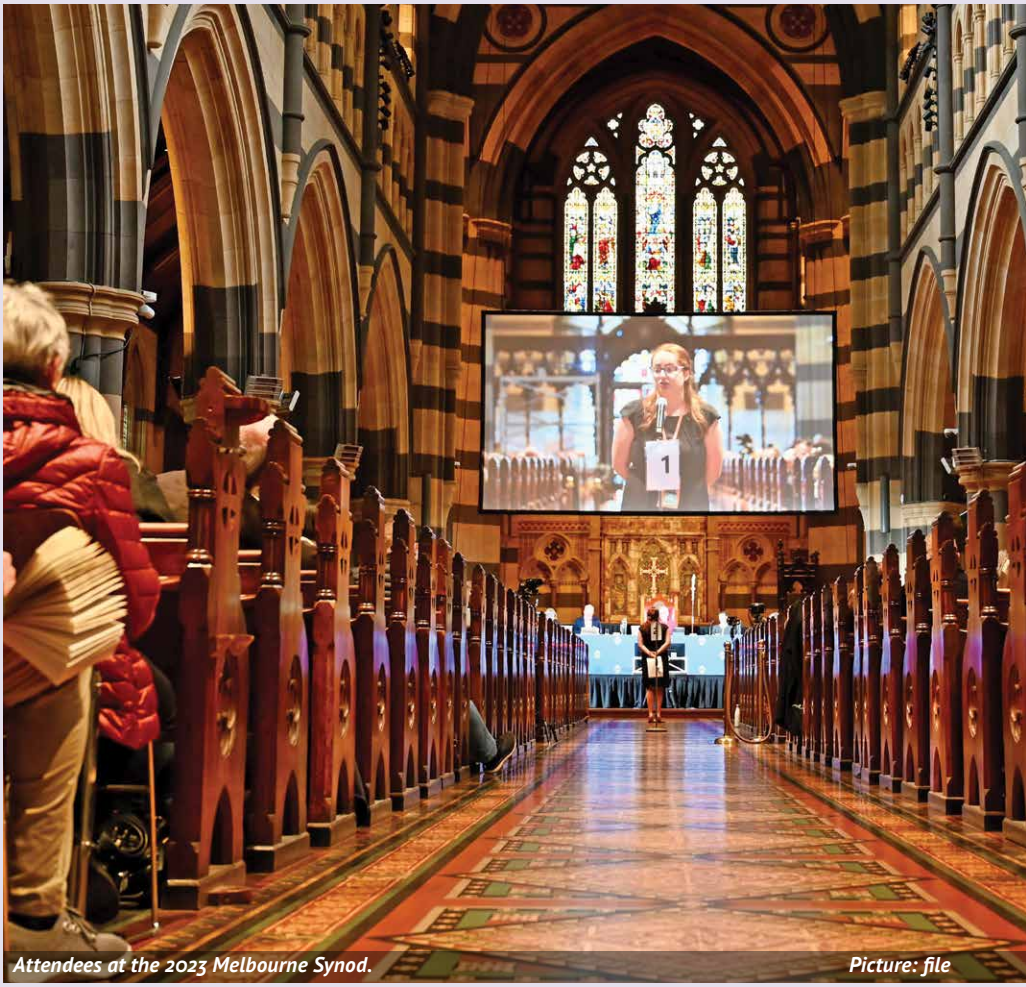
■ Jenan Taylor

**Diocese-owned holiday units on Phillip Island are now more expensive to book than commercial properties because of a new management agreement, according to a motion to be discussed at October's synod.**

It calls for synod to request a review of the management arrangements of these and other diocese-owned holiday properties.

Representatives will also be asked to encourage endowments to aid the provision of Anglican healthcare chaplains in Melbourne's hospitals as part of a *Healthcare Chaplaincy* motion.

The minimum age for parish and synod membership, and child safety and wellbeing code of conduct are also up for debate at the 55th synod from 9-12 October.



*Attendees at the 2023 Melbourne Synod.* *Picture: file*

### Holiday accommodation

Delegates will be asked to request a review of the Latham and Rose Trust's management arrangements of diocese-owned holiday units in Cowes and Point Lonsdale.

They are asked to note that accommodation prices in Cowes are no longer reduced for diocesan workers, and marketed at rates higher than commercial properties.

This has come after a new management agreement with real estate agency First National Phillip Island.

The motion also calls for a review of the trust's charitable purposes, and whether management arrangements of the holiday properties align with these.

The Reverend Dr Christopher Porter will move the motion, which will be seconded by the Reverend Dr Luke Hopkins.

### Healthcare chaplaincy

Synod will be asked to encourage endowments to support the creation of a sustainable funding mechanism for part-time Anglican chaplains in Melbourne's hospitals.

Archbishop in Council agreed to consider funding part-time chaplains to three trauma hospitals if additional funding arose from endowments, according to a Reports to Synod paper.

A healthcare chaplaincy working group formed after the 2023 Melbourne Synod requested consideration of this funding in the 2025 budget, in a report submitted to AiC in May.

The *Healthcare Chaplaincy* motion also asks representatives to recognise and affirm healthcare ministry in the diocese's future strategic plans, and encourage parishes to support the ministry financially, and through partnering with it.

The diocese ceased hospital chaplaincy funding at the end of 2023, and state government funding finished at the end of June this year.

The Reverend Dawn Treloar will move the motion, which will be seconded by the Reverend Melanie Moore.

### Minimum age for parish and synod membership

Representatives will be asked to direct the Children and Youth Ministry Steering Committee to identify the law changes necessary to enable parish and synod membership of any person who is confirmed, without waiting until they are 18 years old.

The motion also asks synod to bring a bill to establish this change to the next synod session.

The Reverend Graham Stanton will move the motion, which will be seconded by the Right Reverend Genieve Blackwell.

### Code of Conduct for Child Safety and Wellbeing

Synod members will be asked to request the archbishop, bishops and AiC review a clause in the diocese's current Code of Conduct for Child Safety and Wellbeing.

The clause reads: "All people covered by this Code must not … engage in any conduct to change or suppress a child's gender identity or sexual orientation".

The motion asks that this review includes advice on the interpretation of the clause, and the categories of people required to commit to it.

The Reverend Canon Dr Peter Adam will move the motion, which will be seconded by the Reverend Jerome Dias.

Reconciliation, people seeking asylum, disability inclusion and accessibility, and evangelism campaign Hope25 are also on the synod agenda.

The 2024 Melbourne Synod is scheduled to take place from Wednesday 9 October to Saturday 12 October.

# ‘Churches can protect against harm’

■ Jenan Taylor

**Churches have been told they have the tools to stop men’s violence against women at a national conference.**

About 200 people from a range of denominations gathered at the Anglican Church’s Ten Commitments conference to discuss faith community efforts and responsibilities in violence prevention.

Speakers included Our Watch chief executive Patty Kinnersley, and Queensland University Technology School of Justice Professor Michael Flood.

Professor Flood told participants faith settings had protective anti-violence advocacy tools and approaches, including religious texts and teachings that emphasised love, care and respect.

He said these resources could prevent perpetration of violence because perpetration was a social product

“Perpetrators are made not born. The husbands and male partners who put 30 people a day into hospital, they don’t come out of thin air,” Professor Flood said.

He urged participants to reframe the issue of domestic and family violence so that the perpetrators were far more visible and accountable.

Professor Flood said doing so enabled the formation of data about gendered violence, who perpetrated it, and why they did it.

“Perpetration, ultimately, is the problem we must solve if we’re to head off domestic, family and sexual violence,” Professor Flood said.

> ***“Whenever they [victims] tried to report it to the police, no one wanted to listen to what they had to say. It is hard. This is a deep problem.”***
>
> **Monica Matoc**

Anglican priest and conference participant the Reverend Monica Matoc said Dr Flood’s presentation resonated deeply with her because she knew victims of violence who had struggled to get justice.

“They suffered through a lot, and whenever they tried to report it to the police, no one wanted to listen to what they had to say. It is hard. This is a deep problem,” Ms Matoc said.

Participant, Uniting Church minister the Reverend Charissa Suli, said the presentation affirmed that as a church leader she could motivate youth pastors to nurture children and youth to have healthy attitude towards relationships.

Tweed Heads Presbyterian church minister Michael Boyd said he was at the conference to be better equipped to lead his church to respond to domestic violence.

Mr Boyd said his local government area had one of the highest per capita domestic and family violence rates, and he wanted to link in with other church and community groups to help address this.

McKinnon Reformed Presbyterian Church elders Brandon Fisher and Graeme Hart said they planned to use their conference learnings to encourage young men in their congregation to reflect on their identity.

They said they wanted youths to understand how society’s expectations of them could be different to who they were in Christ.

Mr Hart said if the Church could wear a light for the gospel in addressing gendered violence in its communities, then people in the wider population could see that God made a difference, and find hope.

Attendee and Ridley College associate lecturer the Reverend Hannah Craven said it was heartening to see collaboration between churches, faith-based organisations, and other community groups, working together for the same goal.

“It’s been wonderful to see and hear about what dioceses across Australia are already doing, and to recognise the powerful and important influence faith communities can have in fostering equal and healthy relationships,” Ms Craven said.

*The Reverend Monica Matoc at the Ten Commitments conference.*
*Picture: Jenan Taylor*

If you or someone you love needs confidential information, counselling or support contact 1800 RESPECT.
In an emergency phone triple zero (000).

# ‘Meet Jesus’ attracts hungry for truth

■ Jenan Taylor

**Melbourne churches are attracting new people through an evangelism program designed to encourage them to learn about and follow Jesus.**

St Jude’s Carlton and Holy Trinity Doncaster with partner church St John’s Blackburn ran Meet Jesus in conjunction with the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

Church leaders and members believe the initiative appeals to many people curious about Christianity because of its format which includes designated Sunday services, and person-to-person conversations about Jesus.

St Jude’s vicar the Reverend John Forsyth said there were more visitors, including about 50 non-Christians, when it ran Meet Jesus services across three Sundays in August.

Mr Forsyth said there was also much higher demand than expected for a Gospel of John resource book that program participants gave people when they told them about Jesus.

He believed the church’s concerted effort to make the services more welcoming, including by clearly explaining to visitors who Jesus was, played a large role in this result.

Mr Forsyth said parishioners were also encouraged to think about who they could invite to the services, and pray for them.

He said members were more willing to invite their friends because they realised it was an exciting thing to do when they saw others bringing friends to services.

St John’s and Holy Trinity senior associate pastor the Reverend Mark Chew said quite a few new people attended the churches’ designated Meet Jesus events, and they continued to come.

Mr Chew said this was encouraging for the congregations because it gave them more confidence that by being courageous about speaking about Jesus, they could introduce people to the Bible.

St John’s parishioner and Monash University student Melina Halford said the initiative gave her the chance to invite a non-Christian friend to church.

Ms Halford said her friend was a Muslim student who had been interested in investigating Christianity but was uncomfortable about going to a church.

She said he attended and enjoyed the service, including hearing testimonies of people who shared how they met Jesus.

Ms Halford said Meet Jesus helped her reframe how she approached evangelism in church and at university because it helped her talk about Jesus in a clear and concise way.

“Even the Meet Jesus title helps us as Christians to frame what we’re trying to do when sharing the gospel with people,” Ms Halford said.

“We’re not trying to convert on the spot, but to show and tell them who Jesus is. For some people we interact with that’s enough, and for others we get to journey with them as they Meet Jesus and build a relationship with him.”

AFES senior member Amy Just said the program was also reaping good results across several university campuses.

She said a recent Meet Jesus event drew around 300 Christian Union students from various campuses, and at least 45 said they invited friends.

Ms Just said organisers believed working collaboratively and sharing positive stories on social media generated enthusiasm and encouraged people to talk to others about Jesus.

She saw an increased hunger at campuses for knowledge about Christianity, and believed the burden of pressure to find an individual path and be materially successful drove this.

She said at the same time there was a growing push and prayer at Christian institutions round the country to see people engage with Jesus through the gospels.

Ms Just said this created an opportunity to let more people know they could find truth, certainty and purpose in Jesus.

# ‘We need to act urgently, we need to raise our ambitions’

■ Elspeth Kernebone

**Multi-faith communities are calling on Australia’s major political parties to commit to divesting from coal and gas, as community-members gather for a week of climate action.**

Organisers want both the Labor and Liberal-National parties to improve their policies ahead of 2025’s election, saying there is an urgent need to reduce carbon emissions before 2030.

Among the commitments they hope to see are an outline of specific plans to phase out coal and gas, financial assistance provided to Pacific neighbours, support for a global Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, and investment in clean energy.

St Paul’s Cathedral was among the churches hosting an event to call for action.

Dean of Melbourne Andreas Loewe said Australia needed to act, as its neighbours in the Torres Strait and the Pacific were quickly losing land and habitat.

Dean Loewe said he hoped to highlight the faith community’s very strong views a about climate action, driven by the belief that the world was a gift of God, and God’s good creation. He said this included stopping the extraction of coal and gas to arrest the climate emergency.

Dean Loewe said he wanted the government and opposition to make firm commitments to uphold the Paris Accord, and to give a precise roadmap. He said the faith groups wanted a commitment to international accords to reduce carbon emissions, and to reach net zero in the framework agreed at various COP meetings.

“For me as a Christian this has a gospel imperative, because we are given this world as good stewards, and we haven’t been good stewards,” Dean Loewe said.

Among other calls, ARRCC is calling for commitment from both major parties to:

- End new coal and gas projects.
- Outline their plan to move away from coal and gas towards clean energy, and provide a date by which they will phase them out completely.
- Get public money out of the coal and gas industries.

Australian Religious Response to Climate Change community organiser Tejopala Rawls said people from different faiths acting together sent a clear message that religious traditions were unified on climate change.

He said calls from faith communities made it clear that action on climate change was a mainstream message, not confined to a small or elite urban subsection of society.

# Ban gambling ads in full: Advocates

■ **Hannah Felsbourg**

**Christian advocates are calling for a full ban on gambling ads to protect vulnerable Australians as Labor discusses reforms to limit gambling ads on television.**

Advocates believe a full ban is necessary to protect young people who are at a higher risk of developing a gambling addiction after being exposed to gambling advertising.

Chief advocate the Reverend Tim Costello said the Alliance for Gambling Reform believed gambling harm would only be reduced effectively by a full ban on gambling advertising.

He said the greatest predictor of later addiction to gambling and the harm that came with it was seeing gambling advertising as a child.

"If you want to protect children, you have a full ban. If you want to protect bookies' profits, you have a partial ban," he said.

Mr Costello said the AGR was pleased when the Murphy report, a House of Representatives committee report, released in June 2023 had multi-partisan support for a full ban on gambling advertising introduced over three years.

He said, however, that the new policy being proposed by Labor for a partial ban on gambling advertising was watered down beyond recognition.

He said only a complete ban would reduce harm, as proven when partial bans on tobacco advertising failed to lower smoking rates among children.

Mr Costello said Australia had the greatest gambling losses in the world, 40 per cent higher than the nation that came second.

He said gambling harm included marriage breakdowns, up to 20 per cent of suicides, a threefold increase in domestic violence, and theft.

"[People who commit crimes to fund gambling addictions] go to jail. The foreign sports spending agencies keep the profits," he said.

Mr Costello said at least 13 back-benchers said the proposed gambling advertisement limit policy was insufficient, and Labour had yet to announce whether it would be accepted.

Wesley Mission chief executive officer the Reverend Stu Cameron said gambling reform was more than a justice issue — it was a gospel issue.

He said the gambling industry preyed on vulnerable people, but Jesus gave Christians the example of bringing freedom to the oppressed.

Mr Cameron said the Murphy report was thorough and was based on evidence from public health experts, academics, and people with lived experience of gambling harm.

He said the report's 31 unanimous recommendations, including a full ban on gambling advertising, should have been implemented in full.

He believed these measures were necessary to curb the influence of the gambling industry and protect vulnerable communities from addiction and harm.

Mr Cameron said research showed being exposed to gambling advertising made young adults more likely to become addicted to gambling.

He said a 2020 NSW Youth survey of teenagers aged 12 to 17 showed 30 per cent had participated in gambling in the past year.

The survey showed one in 50 teenagers aged 12 to 17 was already an at-risk gambler, even before they were legally able to gamble.

"Thirteen-year-olds today have never seen a game of AFL or NRL without it being associated with gambling products," he said.

Mr Cameron said Wesley Mission founded the first dedicated gambling support service in Australia where they provided counselling services.

He said Christian organisations would continue to render assistance to those experiencing gambling harm, but that it was important to question the system that led to such harm.

He urged Christians to be informed on the issue of gambling reform and said they could write to their MP to ask them what their position was on the issue.

For assistance with gambling harm please call Gambler's Help on 1800 858 858.
If you or anyone you know needs support, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

# Call for Anglican input on Melbourne's next archbishop

■ **Elspeth Kernebone**

**Anglicans have been urged to share their thoughts on what Melbourne needs in a new archbishop as the diocese's board to nominate candidates prepares to report on its initial findings to synod.**

Anglicans can also submit the names of potential candidates to the board for consideration.

The Board of Nominators has indicated that the synod for electing a new archbishop will not be held before May 2025. It must be held no later than 10 August 2025.

Board of Nominators chair Jenny George said input from the community helped the board choose candidates around whom the diocese could unite.

Dr George said the board wanted Anglicans in Melbourne, particularly synod representatives, to tell them what the challenges were for the diocese, and what the diocese was excited about.

She encouraged people to pray for the process, to seek God's guidance and prepare the diocese itself for a new leader.

"We want to make sure that the next archbishop is able to unite the church around an exciting vision of the future, is able to help the church grow, and is a person who will be respected and followed across the diocese," Dr George said.

Dr George said the board would particularly try to engage communities which might not otherwise find it easy to participate in the consultation, such as people who did not speak English as their first language.

Dr George said at October's synod there would be a chance for members to hear about the input the board had gathered so far, and give their own feedback.

She said this would contribute to a set of questions and selection criteria, which the board would then be able to use as part of the discernment process, and report back to synod on.

At present the Board of Nominators has 16 members, including Matthew Crichton, Jenny George, Ian Gibson, Ian Harper, Fiona McLean, Chris Sadler, Michael Shand, Dianne Shay, Peter Sherlock and clergy Kirsty Brown, Farag Hanna, Andrew Livingstone, Andreas Loewe, Christopher Porter, Ben Wong and Alison Taylor.

A survey is available on the Board of Nominators website: boardofnominators.org.

*SparkLit national director Michael Collie with award-winning author Danielle Treweek.* *Picture: supplied*

# Singleness work wins national prize

■ **Hannah Felsbourg**

**A quest to revive the theological significance of singleness in the church has culminated in Australia's latest Christian Book of the Year.**

*The Meaning of Singleness* offers a profound exploration of the significance of singleness within the Christian life.

The work by the Reverend Danielle Treweek was named Australian Christian Book of the Year at the annual SparkLit awards night from among 10 shortlisted works.

Dr Treweek said her pastoral ministry among single Christians revealed a lack of theological depth in the church's teaching on singleness.

She said she suspected eschatology was an overlooked area in relation to singleness and pursued a PhD to explore the topic and write a book.

Dr Treweek said for the first 1500 years of the church, the value of the unmarried life in light of eternity was well-established, though sometimes expressed unconventionally.

She said marriage was rightly rehabilitated during the Reformation but in the process, singleness was diminished, a legacy that had persisted for the last 500 years.

She was surprised to realise that her instinct was a deep memory within Christian tradition. As she explored further, she discovered that these ideas were not new but incredibly old.

> ***"It's meant to exercise our theological imaginations, informing how we think about, understand, love, value, and dignify single people in the church."***
>
> **Danielle Treweek**

Dr Treweek said that while single Christians needed the church, the church also needed single Christians.

Her book explored the importance of singleness now in light of the life to come, where believers would all be single.

She said being single here and now served as a foreshadowing of what Christians' relationships would be like as resurrected men and women who were not married.

Dr Treweek said the book was meant to spark conversations, encouraging readers to discuss its ideas with one another.

"The book was only ever designed to be a conversation starter, a way for us to actually enter into a new, biblically faithful, yet imaginative conversation," Dr Treweek said.

"It's meant to exercise our theological imaginations, informing how we think about, understand, love, value, and dignify single people in the church."

Judges praised Dr Treweek for taking on sacred cows and naming Christian leaders who veered away from the Bible to privilege marriage and devalue singleness.

"Dani presents us with a vision of the church that is far more inclusive and faithful to Scripture," said the judges.

"Taken seriously, this book will change the way churches operate, preachers preach, Christian organisations act, friends befriend, and, crucially, how we love and are loved."

*Social Responsibilities Committee member Audrey Statham (second from right) joined with the protestors.* *Picture: Andy Barras*

# 'One day longer, one day stronger'

■ **Jenan Taylor**

**Anglicans are being urged to stand with asylum seekers and refugees calling for better pathways to permanency in Australia.**

Hundreds of refugee activists have camped outside government and ministerial offices in capital cities across Australia for weeks in protest against visa insecurity since July. Many have been in limbo in Australia for more than a decade because they were subjected to a "fast track" refugee determination process that denied them protection.

The Melbourne diocese Social Responsibilities Committee and Bishop Philip Huggins are advocating compassionate pathways to permanency for refugees after the federal government scrapped the fast track system in July. They said many asylum seekers were mentally, emotionally and spiritually traumatised, and financially disadvantaged under the system because of the uncertainty it cast over their lives.

SRC member Dr Audrey Statham said the committee supported the refugee encampments, and believed Anglicans needed to stand in solidarity with the protestors.

"We need to acknowledge the pain of this vulnerable group of people who came here seeking our protection," she said.

Dr Statham said the SRC wanted a fair and better resourced merits review process, that included alternative pathways for permanency, to replace the fast track system.

She said it also wanted people seeking asylum to have access to basic income support so they could have dignity of life while they waited to have their cases resolved.

She said without better protections many asylum seekers faced destitution and poverty because temporary bridging visas gave them little or no access to health care and work rights.

University of NSW researchers found the fast track process had many flaws including longer and costlier delays, and more negative decisions on protection applications than other processes.

They revealed that most of the people subjected to the system came from countries where armed conflict and human rights violations were well-documented, including Iran, Sri Lanka and Somalia.

The researchers reported in early August that more than 9000 people who were refused protection under the process, and who lost court appeals, were still without permanent residency.

Tamil refugee and protestor Rathi Barthlote said she came to Australia 16 years ago and was exhausted and heartbroken by the fast track process.

Ms Barthlote said her case was heard in court a few years ago, and although her immigration lawyer said she was cleared to live in Australia, her application was rejected again shortly afterwards.

Despite the cold weather, and being traumatised by neo-Nazi taunts, she was determined to camp outside the Department of Home Affairs until the protestors were granted safety and freedom.

"I am scared, and we are mentally stressed, but we say to ourselves, 'One day longer, one day stronger'. That's what we think about," Ms Barthlote said.

Bishop Huggins believed the home affairs minister needed to use his discretionary powers to give the 9000 refugees in limbo permanent residency.

He said he recently wrote to minister Tony Burke to exercise his ministerial discretion for people in this situation, and urged Anglicans to do the same.

Bishop Huggins asked Anglicans to pray that Australia showed a united and compassionate face to the world's displaced people.

A Department of Home Affairs spokesperson said each asylum seeker case was assessed on its merits, and took into account the individual circumstances of the case and the most current and relevant country of origin information. The spokesperson said people who didn't engage protection obligations, who were not awaiting a merits or judicial review outcome, and who had exhausted all avenues to remain in Australia, were expected to depart Australia voluntarily and might be provided assistance to depart.

# Warning new NT laws will hurt children

■ Jenan Taylor

**Indigenous Christian have struggled to express how disappointed they are as the Northern Territory's new government plans to lower the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10 years old.**

They warn it will increase the rate of children being held in detention.

It comes as the Country Liberal Party won the NT election in a landslide victory over Labor.

Chief Minister-elect Lia Finocchiaro vowed to reduce youth crime, including by immediately putting youth justice in the hands of Correctional Services, and reinstating school truancy officers.

The NT was the first jurisdiction in Australia to raise the age of criminality to 12 years old, effective in August 2023.

National Indigenous Bishop Chris McLeod said one Closing the Gap target was to reduce the rate of young people in detention by 30 per cent by 2031, but the NT move would only increase this.

Bishop McLeod said factors such as lack of safety and housing led to criminal behaviour, and money was better spent addressing these systemic issues.

He said reducing the age of responsibility to 10 years old appeared to be ill conceived, because early detention set youths on a path of recidivism.

He said the change also appeared to be done to project an image of being tough on crime even though there was no real prospect of a positive outcome.

"Sounding tough on crime is not the same as dealing with it in a way that makes important changes [that] keep our children and the communities around them safe," Bishop McLeod said.

"Lowering the age only exacerbates the problem and 'kicks the can down the road.'"

The CLP said during its election campaign the legislation was part of its plan to reduce crime through early intervention, addressing the root causes and real consequences for repeat and serious offenders.

Ms Finocchiaro said in a statement the planned laws came after the murder of a 20-year-old bottle shop worker last year by a 19-year-old who was on bail at the time for a previous aggravated assault.

Anglicare NT chief executive Craig Kelly said it was distressing to see a retrograde approach to the responsibility age, and that many advocates lobbied for years to raise the age.

Mr Kelly said the NT government should be tough on the causes of crime rather than on youths for whom it had a responsibility to provide a safe environment.

He said very young children would be sent to jail rather than into diversionary projects, because there was no diversionary system prescribed by the incoming government that had appropriate care.

Mr Kelly said the government's plans went completely against an Aboriginal justice agreement that was done in consultation with Indigenous communities.

He said it included investments for alternatives to detention that would have a significant effect on prevention and intervention, and support young people in their own homes and communities.

"This will not help reduce crime. This will actually cause crime down the track," Mr Kelly said.

Christian social justice organisation Common Grace said the retrograde plans were a further betrayal of Australia's Indigenous people still reeling from the loss of the Voice referendum.

National director Gershon Nimbalker said the legislation would further sting Indigenous people and communities who were already disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system.

He said Common Grace would continue calling for measures that treated youth crime as a public health and social issue rather than a criminal justice problem, because such measures gave support, love and care.

"We understand the need for communities to feel safe, and we think all communities have a right to feel safe, but let's invest in things that work and look after our children at the same time," Mr Nimbalker said. "It'd be a great act of reconciliation to say as a nation, 'We care for your children. We want to see them flourish, too, and we're going to spare no effort and no expense to see that happen', rather than say 'They are a problem and we're going to see them incarcerated.'"

The NT Chief Minister-elect was contacted for comment.

# Common ground vital as referendum ramifications still felt

■ Jenan Taylor

**Indigenous church leaders say the Church in Australia has continued to show little support for Aboriginal people almost a year since the voice referendum.**

Australians voted against the proposal to recognise the First Peoples through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in October 2023.

The decision and tone of the campaign left many Indigenous people and communities devastated and grieving.

Newcastle diocese reconciliation director the Reverend Canon Dianne Langham said she received many negative reactions from people in various parts of the church during the referendum campaign. She said the outcome exacerbated racism.

"Some people perhaps felt the result gave them permission to be negative. It was very, and it is very overt, and has been very hard to deal with," Canon Langham said.

She said it was important that non-Indigenous and Indigenous people strived together to see what they had in common, because this could foster unity instead of division.

Indigenous elder and Anglican minister the Reverend Ray Minniecon said the biggest disappointment for many First Nations people was a lack of a supportive response from the Church.

Mr Minniecon said Indigenous people didn't expect an apology from any denomination, but wanted to know whether churches would change their attitude.

"It's about what they will they do about their racism towards Aboriginal people," Mr Minniecon said.

Mr Minniecon said Indigenous people always had hope, and for him it was that non-Indigenous people would acknowledge that they were on stolen land, and take responsibility for this.

The Wesley Centre for Theology, Ethics and Public Policy director the Reverend Dr Robyn Whitaker said it was important that non-Indigenous Christians were honest about their contribution to the harms Indigenous people experienced. These included worse access to healthcare, higher incarceration rates and poverty.

# A life built around the Eucharist: Naomi's

■ Elspeth Kernebone

**As sacristan at St Peter's Eastern Hill, Naomi Johnson's role is to enable the liturgy. And, for her, each day the role is a gift. Afterwards, most days, Ms Johnson goes to study for her master's at Trinity College Theological School.**

**What's your role title? How long have you been doing that for?**

I joke that my job involves moving objects from point A to point B. I take care of everything behind the scenes so that liturgies can happen as they're supposed to.

That's everything from keeping the linen cared for, to setting out and packing up after mass, or caring for vestments. It's everything that needs to happen so that mass can happen, so that the priests can walk in and know that everything they need is exactly where they expect it to be.

There's also weddings and funerals. I'll provide a service, handing out booklets, showing people to bathrooms, taking care of any sort of little emergencies. It could be someone needs a safety pin or a glass of water or is feeling unwell.

It's basically being there to see something that needs to happen and do it before anyone else. To hand the thing as the person realises that they need it.

**How did you end up in the position you're in? How do you see it fitting in the big picture of God's work in the world?**

I found a home at St Peter's straight away after moving back to Melbourne. I was in the choir quite quickly, and since then, I've quietly become very much a part of the community which has been such a blessing.

One thing I love about this place is the centrality of the Eucharist. We have the Eucharist every single day of the year, and part of my job means I have to be at the Eucharist. So my life is literally built around, coming to say morning prayer, having the Eucharist, and everything else flows from that.

I value that the Eucharist is always the Eucharist, it doesn't matter what I'm bringing to it. It doesn't matter if I'm distracted at mass, if I'm angry at myself for forgetting to do part of my job, if I'm struggling with questions of faith, or if I'm super engaged. The Eucharist is always the Eucharist. And it's always a gift, and it's always a grace, regardless of what I bring to it.

> ***"For me, [Eucharist is] a drawing of God's life into our own lives and being drawn into God's life in turn."***

We sit down together in the morning before the Eucharist. And we say morning prayer. And the Psalms are the Psalms, and they offer us a gift. And sometimes we're in the headspace to take them and sometimes they're not, but that grace is always there.

I can come here and I know the sacrament is there, our Lord is in His tabernacle in that sense, even though our Lord is equally present elsewhere. There is a sense of right, okay, everything is fine, because this is the same.

**How do you see your role fitting in the big picture of God's work in the world?**

In this role I am enabling the liturgy to continue. This role means that the priests can just walk in and know that everything is ready for mass, everything is ready for Evensong. It means that they can turn their mind to prayerfully approaching whatever the liturgy is. It's very much a behind the scenes role. But the role facilitates the liturgy, which is the most important thing we do here.

Everything else that we do here, our breakfast program with our homeless guests who come each morning, all our other ministries, flows from the Eucharist and flows from the gift we are given in the Eucharist. To be part of that, even on the periphery, making it happen, is a really important way of serving God's work in the world. And it means that people can take the Eucharist, and then go out and do their own ministry fed by that experience.

The Eucharist is our Lord's real, embodied presence in the world. We are literally eating we're taking into our body, our own being, our Lord's presence, as God takes into God's being our life. So the Eucharist is this concrete experience of that. For me, it's a drawing of God's life into our own lives and being drawn into God's life in turn.

The fact that consecrated hosts are sitting in that tabernacle up there. And we know they're there. And it's almost never empty. It's a concrete reminder of God's presence, in everything that we do.

**What is your dream for this ministry? What do you feel like your calling is?**

I've valued at St Peter's that I've been asked to write, be part of a group writing weekly reflections for our pew sheet. That's the sort of ministry that I would like to develop in the future: being able to offer and to have more people offering that sort of educational focus, enabling people to connect differently or more deeply with the Scriptures.

I love the Old Testament. So for me, if

The Melbourne Anglican

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# story

*St Peter's Eastern Hill sacristan Naomi Johnson.* *Picture: Elspeth Kernebone*

more people were talking about the Old Testament, I'd be really happy. But I'd love to see a really, really well-educated laity, and a laity that could access the type of educational opportunities I've been fortunate enough to have.

I'm giving myself this time in my life to pray and reflect and to walk the path trustingly, knowing that I am being drawn down a path, and that that path is a loving path and is of God. I would like to do more academic work, I don't know whether that's within ordained ministry or not. I do know that I can't imagine my life away from a church like this.

I can't imagine not being enmeshed in a community like this, and building my life around Eucharist in prayer. What that looks like, is up to God at this stage.

**What encourages you in your work?**

I am very lucky with the people around me incredibly encouraged. I'm grateful to God, every day for the people around me. Father Michael, who's the rector here is a brilliant, brilliant human being a beautiful priest, a great mind. He has been a mentor and very encouraging.

I found some good friends in this place. There's a small community, that's a very loving, caring community. This is one of the places in the world where I can be myself. And that's not something I take for granted. Having a community of prayer, and a community surrounding the Eucharist is really important to me.

But also, the rhythms of prayer and mass here are very, very sustaining. So even when I'm not able to be here, knowing that I'm saying, evening prayer and compline with Christians all around the world at different times, that I'm tied into a community that is really nourishing.

**What's one thing you'd like Christians in Melbourne to know about your work?**

I would love people in Melbourne to know that this place is here and what is being offered. And just the constant and objective grace that being offered.

That it's not about one of the things I hear from a lot of Christians is, "I didn't pray because I didn't feel God's presence, or I didn't take communion because I wasn't in the right headspace". I feel so sad when I hear that because it's always there. It's always objective. It's like the ground.

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# Geelong church aids refugees trapped in legal limbo

■ **Hannah Felsbourg**

**A Geelong church is turning to the airwaves to raise awareness and funds for refugees navigating the complexities of the Australian legal system.**

St Paul's Geelong and the Combined Refugee Action Group will present a three-hour radio jam featuring musical performances and interviews with advocates for refugees.

Funds raised will go towards the CRAG Geelong Legal Fund, which provides asylum seekers with vital legal aid.

St Paul's musical director and program organiser Terence Norman said Christians had a duty to help vulnerable refugees.

He said it aligned with Christ's instruction to love one's neighbours.

"Somebody once pointed out to me, he didn't say, 'Look, it would be quite nice if you loved other people.' He commanded us," Dr Norman said.

Dr Norman said many refugees were stuck in legal limbo, unable to work or secure permanent residency without assistance.

The CRAG Geelong Legal Fund would help them navigate complex immigration processes required move forward with their lives.

*The choir performing at St Paul's Geelong and CRAG's Jam for Refugees in 2022. Picture: supplied*

The broadcast will feature a range of musical performances, including choirs, orchestras, and school groups, offering a mix of classical, modern, and jazz music.

There will also be interviews with refugee advocates, including author Hugh Mackay, discussing the importance of supporting refugees.

2024 marks the fourth Jam for Refugees at St Paul's, which has typically been held in person at the church.

However, due to unexpected building damage, the event has shifted to a radio broadcast, as it did during the COVID pandemic.

Dr Norman hoped the radio format would help reach an even larger audience than usual.

The *Radio Jam for Refugees* will be broadcast on 94.7 The Pulse on Sunday 27 October from 2 to 5pm. Donations can be made through the event's GoFundMe page.

# Melbourne church turns refuge for hunted couple: Vicar

■ **Randle Bond**

**The Reverend Randle Bond was in his PJs having a lazy morning with his children, when he heard a knock on the door. It was a pair of fugitives, seeking to hide from the law.**

**Oh ... and there was a TV crew! Andy and Deb Dunt were taking part in reality TV show Hunted, in which Australians try to outsmart a team of trackers, including former army and police investigators.**

**With the help of Mr Bond's father, Andy and Deb were able to hide until the last minute before their extraction. Deb didn't quite make it, but Andy swam to a victory worth thousands.**

With my pastor hat on, I would call our church a total God set up for Andy and Deb Dunt in their Hunted journey.

The connection couldn't have worked out better. My church was meant to be a potential first place to stay that their main contact Josh had set up. I was actually never meant to see them.

A friend who used to work here was their first contact. He knew them from Adelaide and described them as a great Christian couple. I said yes and Josh was sorted with the key. At the last minute he had to go interstate for a funeral. But they had the details and we had some food in the fridge ready to go. When they didn't turn up in the first couple of days, I assumed they'd been caught. We took the food out of the fridge, removed the hidden key and went back to life as normal.

Sixteen days later there was knock on my door. I looked out the window and was surprised to see cameras. Immediately I realised who it must be. I was having a lazy morning with the kids in my PJs. No way was I going out in them for a TV appearance! After a quick switch I met them out the front and set them up to stay the night in the church. It was a safe place to take refuge: multiple exits, easy visibility of what was going on outside and a potential network of people who love to help.

Immediately Andy and Deb began to hatch a plan for how to get to the finish. They weren't expecting anything from us and had saved up money to pay for a ride to the finish. When they mentioned the general vicinity of the evacuation point and the potential timing, I wasn't going to be able to get them the whole way. I was booked in to visit a 104-year-old man and it was an important visit that I didn't want to reschedule.

My wife Katie, who'd come to discover the excitement, chimed in "Your Dad lives over that way". They were a little concerned about him being over 70 and the finish being stressful. I reassured them that rally driving was his retirement hobby (those tyre squeals you heard may have been real). So we put in a call, he took a couple of hours to get back to me. I was surprised he was actually in Melbourne! He happened to be available and when we talked timing he had an appointment in Elsternwick (half-way) the next morning. It was a perfect handoff.

# Teen travels 7500km for baptism at St Thomas' Burwood

■ **Hannah Felsbourg**

**A teenage Christian from China recently flew over 7500 km to Melbourne to be baptised.**

Aaron joined several others at St Thomas' Burwood who chose to affirm their faith through baptism in recent months.

He was not able to make this significant step in his faith journey in China due to religious restrictions in his home region.

St Thomas' Chinese congregation minister the Reverend Tzeh Yi Chan said when Aaron's mother heard congregants at St Thomas' were being confirmed, she wanted her child to have the same opportunity.

He said Aaron belonged to an unofficial church in China, so it was difficult for him to be baptised there. Even the official church did not allow baptism for minors in his region.

Aaron's mother was able to connect with Mr Chan through a friend of hers who attends St Thomas' Chinese congregation and asked if Aaron could be baptised there.

*Baptisms at St Thomas' Burwood.* *Picture: supplied*

Mr Chan said he interviewed Aaron to make sure he knew what baptism meant and around three months later he and his mother flew to Melbourne to visit the church.

He also went through an intensive course with Mr Chan to fully prepare. He picked up the material eagerly and once ready was baptised in front of the congregation.

Mr Chan said Aaron and his mother felt free to enjoy the services at St Thomas' without the fear they would normally have in China of the police coming.

Before leaving, Aaron asked his mother to embroider a cloth showing their journey from China to Burwood. It was presented as a gift of thanks to Mr Chan.

St Thomas' lead minister the Reverend John Carrick said Aaron was one of several people baptised at the church this year.

He said it could be daunting for those being baptised to share their testimony in front of the congregation, but it helped to strengthen their faith.

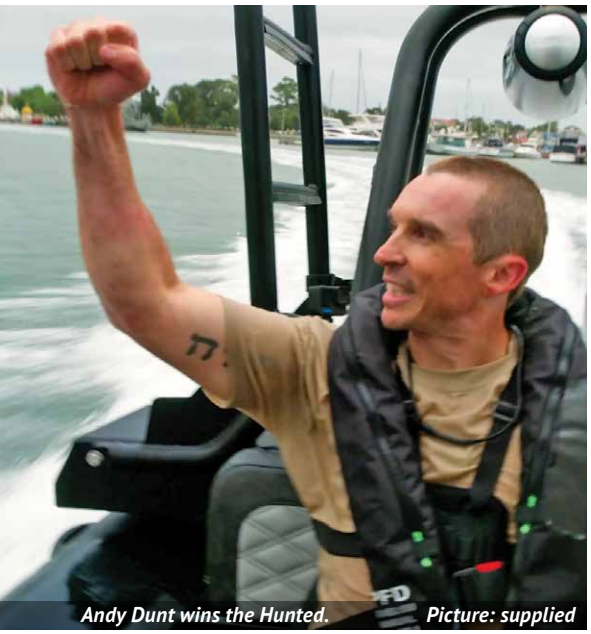
Being baptised was a way for them to affirm that they previously lived their own life, but now identified with Christ and his death and resurrection.

Mr Carrick said witnessing young people be baptised was especially uplifting for the church community.

"When Christians see people are becoming new believers there is that real sense of hope that the church is going to continue," he said.

"We're reminded that it's not all up to us, that Christ said that he will build his church, and we worked with him toward that."

# opens doors to provide safe haven



*Andy Dunt wins the Hunted.* *Picture: supplied*

I could still make my appointment.

Then the most amazing fact, which they didn't let on at the time, was Dad lived just two minutes along the foreshore from the finish! None of this would have happened if Andy and Deb visited us first, or only met their mate Josh. What an amazing set up! It almost sounds scripted …

Andy and Deb operated with such kindness and poise in the face of what must have been a hugely anxious time. As we pulled up in Elsternwick, Andy took a moment to share his appreciation for the work of the church and the help it brings to those in need. He gave us the money they'd saved to get them to the finish to help us with the work we do in the community.

As they went off to the finish, I went back to life as normal. I visited the 104-year-old and shared a special moment with him and his wife, reassuring him of hope in the face of death. He died one week later.

And the final miracle: somehow my kids managed to keep a secret for five months!

So with my pastor-priest-vicar-shepherd-prophet-evangelist hat back on, I would say life is a complete set up by God, not just found in a church by people with titles, but available to anyone willing to lend their ear and follow. He can work even in the lives of those on the run! But if you're actually on the run from the law, he probably also has a better path.

The Reverend Randle Bond is minister of St Barnabas' Balwyn.

## From the editor

**Farewell!**

After three years at *The Melbourne Anglican* I will be leaving the week this is published.

It's been an honour to serve the Anglican community through this role. I've loved hearing your stories of God working in and through our community. Thank you for sharing them so generously with us. I hope we've been able to encourage you through sharing the life of the church in Melbourne and beyond. I'll be praying for the diocese as we enter an exciting new phase.

God bless!

**Elspeth Kernebone, editor**

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# Every single tree counts as a blessing from God. Please, join in!

Picture: iStock

■ **Philip Hughes**

**One of the delights about living in Australia is the wide range of amazing animals, plants and landscapes on and around our continent.**

There are colourful birds, animals that exhibit extraordinary behaviours, exquisitely adapted insects and reptiles, and breathtaking landscapes. Our tropical rainforests, eucalypt woodlands, grasslands, and wetlands are all enchanting places to visit because they are so varied and are home to an amazing variety of life. Our mountains, rivers, oceans, and deserts all have something to add to the richness and experience of life and often provoke a sense of awe at why they should exist and why they should be so varied, enchanting, and often mysterious. Many of us will have a favourite natural place to visit, or a particular plant or animal that reminds us of the creator who made it all possible.

However, on closer examination, there is increasing awareness that Australia's natural environment is not faring well. Some mammal, bird, frog, plant, and reptile species have become extinct in recent decades and many others are now endangered. Our climate is changing, our oceans are warming and becoming more acidic, and forests and woodlands are disappearing. Many parts of God's creation are now degraded or lost because of our actions.

The federal government's recent *State of the Environment* report announced that the state of Australia's environment was poor and deteriorating, a result of increasing pressures from climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution and resource extraction.

When Anglicans recite the creeds, participate in liturgy, read Scripture, and pray we affirm our belief that God is the creator of everything, and that this universe belongs to God and is sustained by Christ.

Our obedience to God, through the combination of our spiritual and physical lives, should therefore contain elements of caring for what God has created. We should contemplate whether our environment is just the scenery and resources for our lives, or whether our physical environment truly matters to the way we live as Anglicans.

Confronted by the worldwide threats to God's creation the bishops of the Anglican Communion assembled at the 2022 Lambeth Conference launched the Communion Forest, as part of the church's response to the environmental crises.

The Communion Forest is an opportunity for people across the Anglican Church to engage in practical aspects of creation care such as renewing, protecting, and restoring parts of the natural environment. It is a practical, spiritual, and symbolic response to the current environmental and biodiversity crises and is an act of Christian hope for all God's creation including humanity.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby encouraged Anglicans to join in the initiative, saying to plant was to hope, to protect was to love, and to restore was to heal – to share in God's reconciling work in all creation.

Many members of the Anglican Communion have wholeheartedly responded to the challenge of caring for God's creation. For example, a revegetation program was initiated in the Solomon Islands, fruit trees planted in South Africa and Papua New Guinea, mangrove forests restored in Mozambique and the Philippines, blessing of an ecological sanctuary in Brazil, a planting and stewardship initiative in Canada, planting trees for special occasions in Malawi, and nature protection in El Salvador are just some of the initiatives implemented by Anglicans.

In Australia, the Diocese of Gippsland committed the land of The Abbey at Raymond Island to be part of the Communion Forest. The Abbey welcomes all people to a place where they can reflect on their spiritual life while immersed in the beauty of God's creation. There are many opportunities for Australian Anglicans to care for God's creation by participating in the Communion Forest whether by planting a single tree or engaging in a landscape project. Maybe there is some land at your school, campsite, around church buildings, or in your neighbourhood that could be nurtured by your community.

As the Australian provincial representative, I would like to invite you to take part in the Communion Forest scheme because every single tree counts as a blessing from God.

---

You can find out more about the Communion Forest at: communionforest.org.

Philip Hughes is the Australian provincial representative to the Anglican Communion Environmental Network.

# May we as Melbourne Anglicans learn

■ **Bob Derrenbacker**

**Many years ago, when I was just starting out as a biblical scholar, I was taught that the Bible, as the Word of God, had no internal theological conflict, was void of any historical contradictions, and if there were any, these were superficial and easily remedied. But as my career took shape, my research focused in on the New Testament gospels, particularly through using a gospel synopsis – a printed resource that lays the texts of the gospels out in parallel columns, allowing for a comparative or horizontal reading of passages. I realised that while the four gospels all tell a story of the life of Jesus, there were not just differences but also points of conflict between these accounts.**

Here are just three examples. While all four gospels relate the story of Jesus being anointed by a woman with costly ointment, Matthew and Mark tell the reader that the event occurred in the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany during Holy Week; John says that it also occurred in Bethany, but in the house of Simon the Leper before Holy Week; Luke tells of the event occurring during Jesus's ministry in Galilee in the house of Simon the Pharisee. As well, the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) tell the story of the so-called "cleansing of the Temple" occurring during Holy Week, late in the narrative after the Triumphal Entry by Jesus into Jerusalem. On the other hand, John's gospel conveys this event very early in the ministry of Jesus. Likewise, the synoptics tell of the crucifixion of Jesus occurring on the first day of the Passover festival; in John's gospel, it occurs the day before, on the festival's "day of preparation".

> ***"It has been said that the Anglican Communion is one of the most culturally and theologically diverse Christian traditions in the world today."***

These are just a few examples of the places in the gospels where one observes difference and even some factual disagreement. For me, when I was a young biblical scholar, seeing this conflict was unsettling and a bit jarring at first, especially in light of my preconceived notions around the nature and authority of Holy Scripture.

But as my calling matured, and as I worked with the gospels in my synopsis, I learned to live with difference between the four narratives accounts of the life of Jesus and came to appreciate the differences that I observed when reading the gospels. I came to understand that I shouldn't expect absolute consistency and uniformity in the gospels. Difference allowed each gospel to stand out on its own, permitting me to see the gospels as four distinctive portraits of Jesus written by four different theologians and evangelists. Paying attention to difference enabled me as a scholar to see what was important to each gospel writer and to consider the potential literary relationships between these texts.

The early church recognised difference and distinctiveness among the four gospels. Perhaps as early as Saint Jerome in the late fourth, early fifth centuries, four different symbols began to be used to represent the

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF WILLOCHRA

The Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula

**Anglican Priest**

Permanent Position

We are seeking a priest who will minister to our Ministry District and community with love, energy and understanding, who will maintain the cohesive nature of the Ministry District enabling the ministry of 'the people of God' and be involved in community activities. Minister the Sacraments and preach the Gospel in such a way as to encourage members of the Church to grow in their understanding and practice of their faith.

**The Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula is centred at Minlaton (St Benedict's) on the Yorke Peninsula of South Australia.** The Ministry District consists of the congregations of Ardrossan, Maitland, Port Victoria, Minlaton, Mt Rat, Curramulka, Port Vincent, Stansbury, Edithburgh, Yorketown, Corny Point and Warooka.

Minlaton is a progressive country town in a highly productive farming area, 2 ½ hours from Adelaide. All facilities are available.

***We invite your interest in this position.***
***Your questions are welcomed.***
***A visit for inspection is certain to please.***

Enquiries should be directed to the Bishop of Willochra, The Rt Rev'd Jeremy James by 30 November, 2024.
Email: bishop@diowillochra.org.au • Phone: (08) 8662 2249

# to appreciate difference

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four New Testament gospels: an angel or a man for Matthew, a lion for Mark, an ox for Luke, and an eagle for John. These four symbols represented the four gospels as each being a distinctive portrait of Jesus.

Our own Anglican three-year Sunday lectionary acknowledges and appreciates this difference as well, with readings for each of the three years coming from one of the synoptic gospels, mixed with distinctive readings from the fourth gospel along the way.

What results is the view that while we have four distinct portraits of Jesus in the four gospels, we do not have four Jesuses. Instead, despite their differences, all four gospels present a common picture of Jesus. He is the miracle-working Son of God and teaching Messiah who calls a group of disciples, who confronts political and religious power, who is betrayed, arrested, condemned to death, crucified and buried in a tomb, and rises from the dead.

More recently, I begun to think that in many ways, the observation of difference, distinctiveness, and even disagreement among the four gospels is perhaps an appropriate analogy for our experience as Anglicans, especially in the broad and diverse Diocese of Melbourne.

> ***"Our ability to learn to live with and appreciate this difference sets us apart from other dioceses in the Anglican Church of Australia."***

It has been said that the Anglican Communion is one of the most culturally and theologically diverse Christian traditions in the world today. Melbourne is, in many ways, a microcosm of this diversity! We see it across the diocese from City on a Hill, to the Anglican Parish of Box Hill, to St Peter's Eastern Hill! Our parishes reflect the liturgical and theological spectrum of "low church" or Evangelical to "broad church", to "high church" or Anglo-Catholic. They also display the linguistic and cultural diversity of greater Melbourne, with at least 16 different non-English language groups reflected in 41 different parishes or congregations across our diocese.

As such, our ability to learn to live with and appreciate this difference sets us apart from other dioceses in the Anglican Church of Australia. We do need to acknowledge that we do have differences across our diocese. Sometimes these differences have been acrimonious; we should not minimize difference or describe it as only superficial. But the analogy of difference in the gospels calls us to both acknowledge and appreciate these differences, and to allow difference to inform us of the diverse distinctives one finds in our diocese.

As Anglicans, we all follow the same Jesus, the Jesus revealed to us in the New Testament gospels. But we also need to remember the other important things that unite us, things like our Anglican liturgy based in the Prayer Book, worship that includes daily prayer and the regular celebration of the Eucharist, hearing the Scriptures publicly read and homiletically expounded, and a deep commitment to evangelism, mission and social justice.

May we, as lay and ordained members of the Diocese of Melbourne, learn to not just live with, but also appreciate, the difference that we see across our broad and diverse Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

Canon Associate Professor Bob Derrenbacker is dean of Trinity College Theological School.

# Our true identity is found not in gender,

**The current, thorny gender debate is about the relation between our selves and our bodies. In this article, Gareth Jones, Emeritus Professor of Anatomy in the University of Otago in New Zealand and an ISCAST fellow, teases apart gender categories and moves us toward a Christian perspective.**

■ Gareth Jones

**Years ago, I read Jan Morris's memoir *Conundrum* about the transgender experience, which predated current debate by decades. Its opening lines have never left me: "I was three or perhaps four years old when I realised I had been born into the wrong body, and I should really be a girl. I remember the moment well, and it is the earliest memory of my life."**

My reaction was one of intense interest and empathy as Morris traced the many years of tortuous transition from a highly respected male journalist to an equally respected female travel writer. This was a human story that stretched the margins of my own understanding as a person and a Christian. It was an early illustration of the transgender experience far removed from the strident advocacy of recent years, since it took place in a culture unacquainted with today's individualism and notions of gender fluidity.

Back then, people like Morris were the exception and most people accepted their own maleness or femaleness, although some would have had their private doubts. Now, navigating gender is much more complex, making it essential to understand gender categories as we form a Christian perspective.

## The challenging landscape

Before discussing transgender issues from a Christian perspective, it's important to define some key terms as they are used in contemporary discussions around gender identity.

At birth, sex is assigned as male or female based on biology. Most people feel that their gender – their experience of what "maleness" or "femaleness" means in society and culture – matches the sex they are assigned at birth.

However, some people experience gender dysphoria, where they feel that their gender does not match their assigned sex, and this causes significant distress. The term "transgender" applies to individuals whose sense of gender does not align with their birth-assigned sex. Many, but not all, will experience gender dysphoria, and may take action such as medically transitioning from male to female or vice versa. Further, some may feel that they don't fit anywhere in the binary model of male and female, but somewhere in-between or outside of this, and identify as "nonbinary" or "gender-fluid."

> ***"The rapid rise of discussions about transgender identities in recent years stems from the rise in moral relativism, extreme individualism leading to the notion that humans are in complete control of their own destinies and bodies."***

Some people are born intersex, which refers to a range of biological conditions where an individual is born with ambiguous gonads or genitalia. This often results from developmental variations, such as missing, incomplete, or duplicate sex chromosomes, or other genetic abnormalities that affect sex hormone levels and function, leading to mixed male and female characteristics.

In Scripture, we can think of eunuchs as being a comparable category to intersex individuals. Here, eunuchs are perceived as outsiders, morally suspect, neither male nor female.

However, Isaiah predicted a time when they would be included with God's people (Isaiah 56:3-7). Jesus affirmed them in the context of teaching on marriage (Matthew 19:12) where three types are mentioned: eunuchs at birth, castrated males, and a third category open to debate. Philip also welcomed a eunuch into the church on the road down from Jerusalem (Acts 8:26-38).

In calling his disciples to learn from eunuchs, Jesus taught them to learn from those whose gender identity was not secure, and that gender identity is not the central value in the kingdom of heaven. For Christians, this is an extremely important principle that can be applied to not only intersex individuals but to the other thornier categories of gender identity.

## Responding to gender dysphoria

The rapid rise of discussions about transgender identities in recent years stems from the rise in moral relativism, extreme individualism leading to the notion that humans are in complete control of their own destinies and bodies, and the fading of Christendom.

For some, transgender identification is seen as an ideology, but the transgender rights movement strongly rejects this label. Unfortunately, anyone questioning the validity of someone's gender identity is condemned by some as *transphobic*. Simply exploring trans issues makes trans individuals feel vulnerable, leading to conflict.

Within a culture of gender affirmation, gender dysphoria has increased dramatically, with transitions encouraged. This has led to the use of puberty blockers in children, followed by cross-sex hormone therapy. Puberty blockers suppress the production of estrogen in females and testosterone in males, and are promoted as safe, fully reversible, and beneficial for mental health.

However, there is a growing body of opinion questioning these claims and proposing psychological support rather than hormone therapy. The 2024 Cass Review commissioned by NHS England concluded that the evidence base for prescribing hormones was weak. Hormone therapy also poses long-term risks to bone health, and impacts on psychosexual and gender identity development.

Although the Cass Review aims to strengthen scientific integrity and validity, many have opposed its conclusions, and Professor Cass has received considerable abuse. Professionals in these areas are reluctant to discuss the treatment of children if those children question their gender identity. The debate is so toxic that some are deterred from carrying out crucial studies because it will put their reputation at risk.

Nevertheless, following the Cass Review, the NHS stopped routinely prescribing puberty blockers to under-18s, with the UK government imposing indefinite restrictions in England to address risks to patient safety. In contrast, both Australia and New Zealand are more supportive of child gender

# but in God

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> ***"A human being's true identity, transformation, and meaning are not to be found in their gender, but in fellowship with God through a living faith in Jesus Christ."***

transitions, with New Zealand having no minimum age for starting puberty blockers, leaving decisions to the child and their family based on consent.

### Finding a Christian perspective

Amid this complex landscape, Christian psychologist Mark Yarhouse proposes three lenses through which to comprehend gender dysphoria: integrity, disability, or diversity in *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*. These three perspectives can be seen as stemming from three ethical positions: integrity from creation ethics; disability from fall ethics; and diversity from kingdom ethics.

Christians differ in the emphasis they place on one or more of these lenses when faced with conflicting situations. Many find the integrity lens, which upholds birth-assigned sex and gender, most consistent with Scripture. However, differences in human development seem to demand input from one or both of the other approaches.

As we all live in a context that is both personal and cultural, this may not perfectly reflect ideal maleness or femaleness. This is where the disability lens comes into the picture, and its association with therapy, although any management of dysphoria is to be the least invasive possible. Gender dysphoria is viewed as resulting from the fall, rather than a moral choice, and so the individual concerned is not responsible for the dysphoria.

Diversity is a radical alternative and holds that the sex/gender binary in creation may not be prescriptive. The emphasis is on gender choice rather than biological essentialism. Although this challenges a male-female binary model, it emphasises the importance of belonging to a community that understands and accepts broken people.

A Christian approach takes very seriously male-female complementarity, but also recognises that this complementarity does not always apply. For some people, developmental pathways have gone askew, and they need support, empathy, and encouragement. But modifying and enhancing people, especially children, should only be done with enormous caution.

Christians should hold firmly to the fundamental biblical imperatives of loving others, and showing kindness and respect towards those who are intersex or transgender. A human being's true identity, transformation, and meaning are not to be found in their gender, but in fellowship with God through a living faith in Jesus Christ.

Gareth Jones is Emeritus Professor of Anatomy at the University of Otago in New Zealand and an ISCAST fellow. His latest book is *At the Margins: A Life in Biomedical Science, Faith, and Ethical Dilemmas.*

# Accessible introduction to Adventism

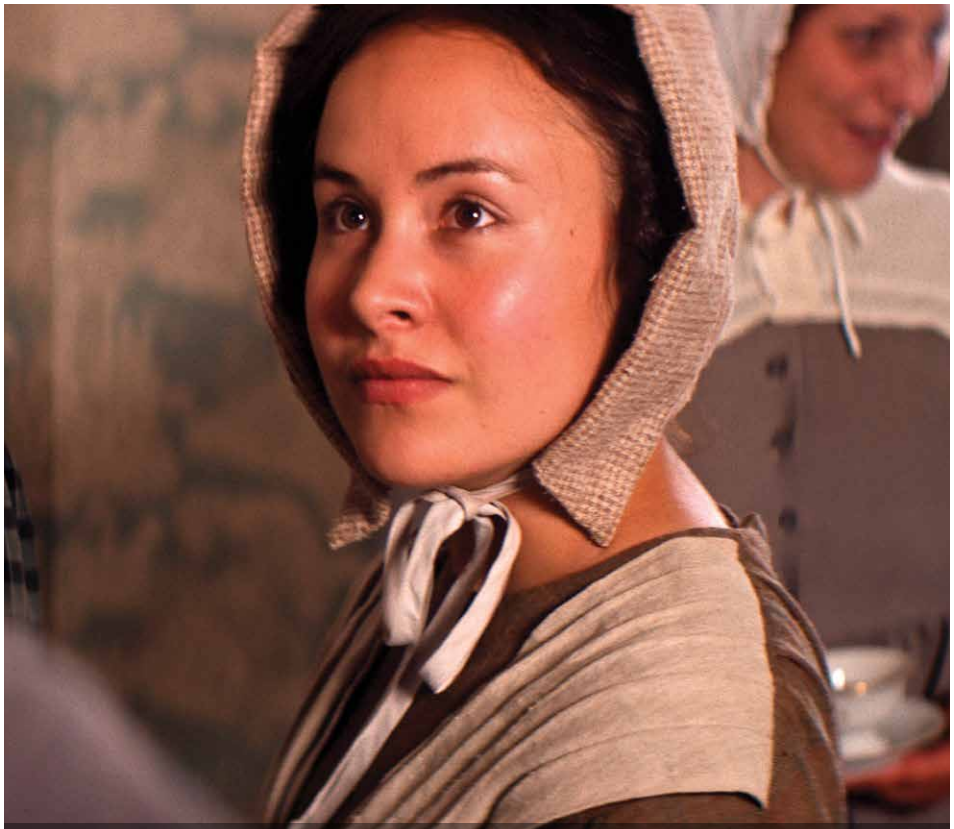
■ Hannah Felsbourg

***The Hopeful* serves as both an introduction to Adventist history and a personal homage to director Kyle Portbury's Adventist roots. The film seeks to foster understanding of the faith while educating viewers about its formation.**

After predicting Christ's return in 1844, William Miller (Bill Lake) sparks the Millerite movement across the United States. When the prophesied date passes, an event later dubbed The Great Disappointment, many believers struggle to maintain their faith. Among them is a young woman, Ellen Harmon (Tommie-Amber Pirie), whose prophetic visions lead the remaining followers and ultimately shape the early foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Alongside her new husband, James White (Stephen MacDonald), Ellen travels the country, spreading their beliefs and looking toward Christ's eventual return.

*The Hopeful* is a 90-minute abridged version of Portbury's 2016 film *Tell the World*. With more than an hour of content cut, it benefits from tighter pacing while retaining key plot points. New scenes featuring early Adventist missionary J. N. Andrews narrating the story to his children are woven in to provide crucial context. This approach successfully conveys important story elements without bogging down scenes with excessive detail, though at times the pacing feels rushed, diminishing the emotional impact of key moments.

A new soundtrack, featuring pop songs by Grammy Award winner Jonas Myrin, accompanies the film. While well-produced, the music clashes with the period setting, creating a jarring contrast that detracts from the film's tone.



*Ellen Harmon (Tommie-Amber Pirie) features in film The Hopeful.* *Picture: supplied*

The film remains focused on the central figures of the Adventist movement, with a clear emphasis on faith and perseverance, especially through Ellen G. White. While this perspective will resonate with those familiar with the story, viewers seeking a deeper dive into differing viewpoints or historical complexities may feel the lack of broader context.

*The Hopeful* succeeds in recounting the early history of Adventism and will likely resonate with those already connected to or curious about the faith. However, viewers seeking a more nuanced historical exploration may find themselves wishing for greater depth. It serves as a tribute to the Adventist community and an accessible introduction to their origins but may have limited appeal with broader audiences.

*The Hopeful* will be released in cinemas on 17 October.

**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**

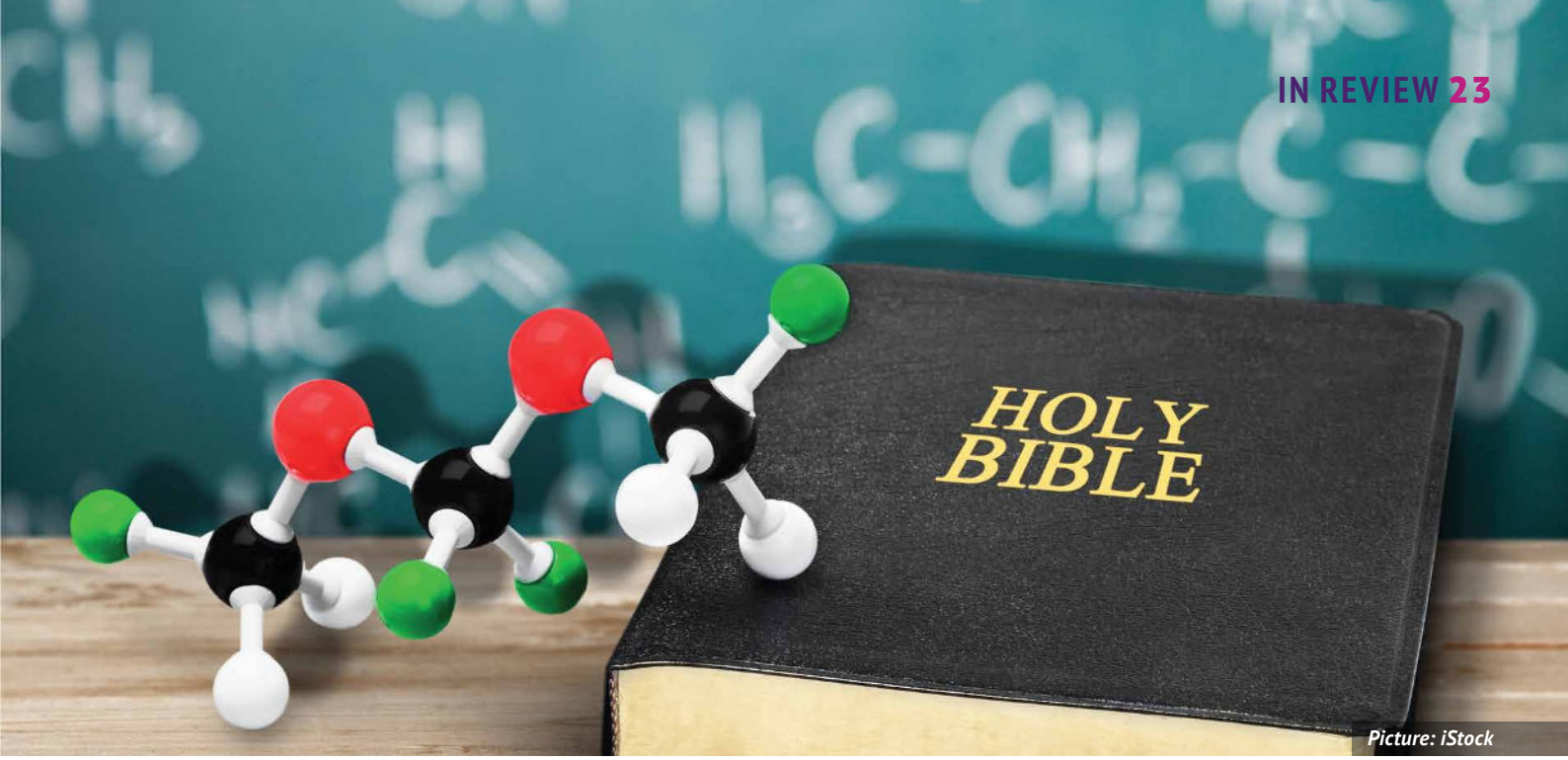
2 **All suspicions or reports of child abuse must be reported to:**
Police
Child Protection
Kooyoora Professional Standards *(see below)*

**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**
**KOOYOORA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS 1800 135 246**

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# A thoughtful take on scientific rigor and Christian faith

■ **Alexandra Banks**

*Phillip McKerrow.* Faith of a Maker: Reasons for Believing in Jesus. *Ark House, 2024.*

**In *Faith of a Maker* Dr Phillip McKerrow, an emeritus professor of computer science, offers a unique perspective on the intersection of faith, science, and technology. Drawing on his extensive experience as an engineer and roboticist, McKerrow presents a case for belief in Jesus Christ that aims to appeal to those with scientific and technological backgrounds.**

The book is structured around key themes in science and engineering, with each chapter exploring how these areas relate to the Christian faith. McKerrow begins by examining the Maker Movement and its implications for understanding God as the ultimate Creator. He then delves into topics such as engineering, science, mathematics, axioms, time, design, robots, and AI, using these as lenses to view Christian theology and apologetics.

One of the strengths of McKerrow's approach is his ability to speak the language of STEM professionals while addressing spiritual matters. He effectively uses analogies and examples from science and technology to illustrate theological concepts, making the book particularly accessible to readers from technical backgrounds. For instance, his discussion of frames of reference in mathematics is an entry point for exploring how humans orient themselves in relation to God.

McKerrow's treatment of the relationship between faith and science is nuanced and thoughtful. Rather than pitting the two against each other, he argues for their compatibility and even complementarity. His exploration of topics like the fine-tuning of the universe and the limitations of scientific inquiry in addressing metaphysical questions provides a balanced perspective that acknowledges the value of scientific research and the need for faith.

The author's anecdotes and experiences as both a scientist and a Christian lend credibility to his arguments and add a human touch to the discussion. These stories help to ground the theoretical concepts in real-world applications and demonstrate how faith can coexist with a rigorous scientific mindset.

However, the book does have some limitations. While McKerrow's approach may resonate strongly with those from STEM fields, readers without this background might find some of the technical discussions challenging. Additionally, while thoughtful, his apologetic arguments do not break significant new ground in Christian apologetics. Those familiar with the works of authors like C.S. Lewis or William Lane Craig may find some of the reasoning familiar.

The book's final chapters focus more directly on Jesus Christ, exploring his life, death, and resurrection from both historical and theological perspectives. McKerrow makes a case for the historical reliability of the gospels and the significance of Christ's resurrection, though these arguments are relatively brief compared to the earlier chapters on science and technology.

One notable aspect of the book is McKerrow's emphasis on the practical implications of faith. He discusses how belief in Jesus has impacted his own life and work and challenges readers to consider how faith might transform their perspectives and actions.

In conclusion, *Faith of a Maker* contributes to the ongoing dialogue between faith and science. McKerrow's unique background allows him to bridge these two worlds in a way few other authors can. While the book may be most effective for readers with scientific or technological inclinations, it provides insights that could also benefit a wider audience.

The book thoughtfully explores how one can maintain both scientific rigor and Christian faith, challenging the notion that the two are inherently incompatible. For those grappling with questions at the intersection of faith, science, and technology, McKerrow's work provides a helpful resource and a compelling personal testimony to the compatibility of Christian belief with a scientific worldview.

Dr Alexandra Banks is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Stellenbosch University's Gender Unit. With a PhD in Philosophy from Charles Sturt University, her interdisciplinary research explores the intersection of theology, trauma studies, and the arts, focusing on feminist perspectives and visual reparation.

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# Should we fear AI? A biblical perspective

*Stephen Driscoll*. Made in Our Image: God, artificial intelligence and you. *Matthias Media, 2024*.

■ Diane Hockridge

**Artificial Intelligence suddenly seems to be everywhere, and everyone has an opinion about where AI is heading and how we should engage with it.**

This recent flurry of interest is partly due to the entry of ChatGPT into the public arena in late 2022, which brought "generative AI" to general attention. If you are in any way connected with teaching or education, you will have heard of ChatGPT and the ever-growing range of "large language model" generative AI tools, that respond to our questions in an enticingly human-like manner.

To what extent should we engage with these new AI tools? To what extent should we be cautious? Is generative artificial intelligence conscious, and does it pose an existential risk to humanity? These are some of the questions Stephen Driscoll deals with in this very readable book, which offers a biblical perspective on artificial intelligence.

Driscoll believes something big is happening. He says we are currently experiencing an exponential leap, which sometimes occurs in technological advances. The future is going to be different, and we need to sit up and take notice. Christians need to engage with these questions, he says, because we have something concrete to offer to the conversation about the place of AI in our lives.

This book takes us through a biblical framework, touching on the key points of creation, sin, the cross, and new creation to help us frame our response to AI. It is not however, a dry or academic biblical theology, rather Driscoll insightfully diagnoses and responds to some of the key issues we currently face. For example, the chapter on creation and AI helpfully homes in on our society's obsession with questions of identity. As humans created in God's image, our humanity identity involves far more than our intelligence. God made us humans from "dust" (created matter) and gave us his breath of life. Artificial intelligence, Driscoll says, remain firmly in the "dust" category. Generative AI tools can mimic human communication, they can analyse massive amounts of data in the blink of an eye, they are becoming smarter and more impressive every day, but they do not have "spirit", they are not human.

The chapters on human sinfulness and the cross take us into some scary but realistic scenarios. Generative AI language tools (like Chat GPT, Claude, or Microsoft CoPilot) are fed large amounts of information from the internet and instructed to imitate human language. Perhaps not surprisingly, these tools initially tended to replicate the kind of nastiness and abuse that fills the comments sections of websites or social media platforms. That is, they mirrored human sinfulness. Such responses need to be trained out of the AI tools through "reinforcement learning". The human (or potentially the AI) that does this reinforcement learning therefore has enormous power in deciding what is a "good" response, and which responses need to be trained out of the AI. As Driscoll says, our understanding that humans are innately sinful leads us to conclude such power will be misused, even where there may be good intent.

Despite the potential for misuse of AI, the overall tone this book is hopeful, and it is frequently entertaining. By helping us to think about AI in relation to the big biblical ideas of creation, sin, redemption, and new creation, Driscoll encourages us to be realistic about the impact of these new technologies, while also looking for positive ways to use them for good.

Driscoll has certainly taken on a challenge in writing this book. It's difficult to talk about "artificial intelligence" in general because AI is in fact many different things. This results in some inconsistency in Driscoll's language – at one point AI is described as "us (humans), but free of our very limited biological brains and erratic memories", at another it is described as "more in the category of smart calculator than human person".

It's also challenging to write about AI because the pace of change is ridiculously fast. Driscoll acknowledges this book is written for this time, and some of its content will date rapidly, but its consideration of AI in the light of the biblical framework will add to its longevity. This book offers easily understood and biblically based principles to guide Christians in responding to AI. If you are wondering whether or how to use AI, in your workplace, in your ministry, in your personal context, this book is a good place to start.

Diane Hockridge is a faculty member of Ridley College.