

THE Melbourne Anglican

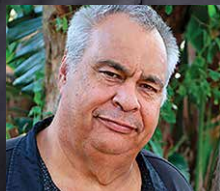
FEBRUARY 2025, No 642

Australia's first succentor: Lydia's journey

Story P15



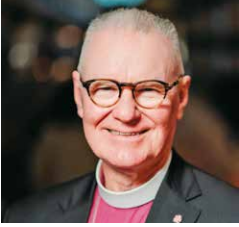
P16-17
A wise, graceful leader remembered



P19
Give thanks to God for His care and gifts



P22-23
Why Rob loves prison



The shared faith of Christians offers the world hope

■ Archbishop Philip Freier

This year marks the centenary of an important gathering of Australian Anglicans in Melbourne over the period 3 to 13 May 1925.

Archbishop Harrington Clare Lees chaired the Australian Church Congress, the ninth to be held since they were first instituted in 1883. In his sermon at the opening service of the congress, the Primate and Archbishop of Sydney, John Charles Wright, remarked on the contrast between the congress and the only other formal national gathering of Anglicans, the General Synod. "A Church Congress has, perhaps, larger scope for creating fellowship than our General Synod. The General Synod is official and elected. The Church Congress

is voluntary, and opens its doors to the rank and file of the Church, without discrimination ... The General Synod takes up many matters upon which opinion is already set and stereotyped, wisely or unwisely. At the Church Congress some subjects have not yet received definite pronouncement, and free interchange of thought may wholesomely

"Christian faith offers the world the divine perspective of the human condition in all its creative greatness and tragically flawed failings."

balance, or correct, opinions."

There is a remarkable photograph at our archives centre of the gathering of church leaders at Lambeth Palace by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, on St Peter's Day 1925. It is an impressive assembly of a wide range of Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican and other leaders who are not named in the caption.

They gathered in remembrance of the 1600th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. The Nicene Creed is but one of the achievements of the Council which set the path ahead for Christian orthodoxy in the undivided Church. This shared profession of Christian faith continues through the Churches of the East and the West after the Great Schism of 1054. With the passing of a further century, we now have the 17th century of the Council of Nicaea before us this year.

Both events certainly had an impetus from Christians reflecting on how the world entered, endured and then emerged from the Great War of 1914 to 1918. The war, and all the sacrifice that it entailed certainly spurred our predecessors in the faith to look for a different and more peaceful trajectory of human society.

Great movements from the United Nations and the World Council of Churches had their early roots in the impulse of this period that there must be a better way and that war on the scale they had suffered must not happen again. What a heartbreak for them that new horrors would unfold in only 14 years with the outbreak of the Second World War. Again, the response to this catastrophe was the building of an international rules-based order that we still benefit from.

Christian faith offers the world the divine perspective of the human condition in all its creative greatness and tragically flawed failings. I think we do well to contemplate these events of a century ago as we look to where our Christian faith is calling us to speak this divine truth to the world. The unity of Christians is hard won and can never be simply assumed but is a powerful witness that what we say to others we apply to ourselves. May we know the depths of God's purposes revealed in Christ as we ponder the world around us.

Vacant Appointments as of 22 January 2025:

St Silas and St Anselm, Albert Park; All Saints, Ascot Vale; St Alfred, Blackburn North; St Paul, Caulfield North; St Matthew, Cheltenham; St Mark, Emerald; St Oswald, Glen Iris; St Alban, Hamlyn Heights; St John, Healesville with St Paul Yarra Glen; St Mary, North Melbourne; St Thomas, Moonee Ponds; St Aidan, Parkdale; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; St George's Red Hill; St John's, Sorrento with St Andrew's, Rye [from September 2025]; St Luke, Vermont; St John, Wantirna South; St Thomas, Winchelsea

Appointments:

CETRANGOLO, The Revd Heather, appointed Vicar, Holy Trinity, Port Melbourne, effective 11 December 2024
FOOTSON, The Revd Amy Ruth, appointed Assistant Curate, Church Planting, Diocese of Melbourne, effective 1 December 2024
GLAZEBROOK, The Revd Louis, appointed Honorary Vicar, St Wilfrid's, Mt Duneed, effective 12 December 2024
GREENHAM HANCOCK, The Revd Cara, appointed Assistant Curate, St Peters Eastern Hill, Melbourne, effective 1 February 2025
LI, The Revd Zhuhong [Ruth], appointed Parish Minister [from Assistant Curate], Holy Trinity, Kew, effective 14 November 2024
LOU, The Revd Xiaoxi, appointed Assistant Curate, All Saints Greensborough [in partnership with St John Heidelberg] effective 19 February 2025
PHILLIPS, The Revd Michael, appointed Vicar, Anglican Parish of Ormond, 31 March 2025
ROBERTSON, The Revd June, appointed Prison Chaplain, effective 1 February 2025
WATSON, The Revd Dr Timothy Daniel, appointed Canon Precentor, The Cathedral Church of St Paul, Melbourne, effective 1 February 2025
YOUNG, The Revd James, appointed Parish Minister [from Assistant Curate], City on a Hill, Anglican Congregation, Melbourne, effective 7 February 2025

Permission to Officiate:

HOLMES, The Revd Scott, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 20 December 2024
LOVEDAY, The Reverend Paul, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 18 December 2024
RAIKE, The Revd Fiona, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 24 January 2025
SMITH, The Revd Alan, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 23 December 2024
SMITH, The Revd Matthew, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 4 February 2025

Resignations:

PATACCA, The Revd Heather Jane, Canon Precentor, The Cathedral Church of St Paul, Melbourne, effective 4 January 2025
RAIKE, The Revd Fiona, Chaplain to Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School, effective 24 January 2025
WALLACE, The Revd Nicholas, Vicar, Parish of St John's, Sorrento with St Andrew's, Rye, effective 28 September 2025
SMITH, The Revd Matthew, Vicar, Parish of St John, Healesville with St Paul Yarra Glen, effective 4 February 2025

Obituaries:

RAYNER, The Right Reverend Dr Keith, 12 January 2025

Clergy Moves





Picture: iStock

Religious, freedom fears warning amid rising hate crimes

■ Jenan Taylor

Muslim, Jewish, Arab and Palestinian people in Australia might feel unable to practice their religion, because of escalating hate crimes and racism across the country, faith and human rights groups say.

In a joint statement, they denounced a recent series of hate crimes, and warned acts of Islamophobia and antisemitism, and anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab racism stoked fear in those communities.

The groups, including Human Rights Watch, Jewish Council of Australia, Australian National Imams Council and Amnesty International, said these incidents also prevented those communities practising their culture and enjoying their human rights.

The recent attacks included the vandalising of a Sydney childcare centre and the firebombing of a synagogue in Melbourne's south-east in December.

They came after intensifying hate crimes against Jewish, Muslim, Arab and Palestinian communities.

The organisations called on all political leaders to stand up against the crimes and acts of discrimination, saying this racism included politicians' denial of the seriousness of Islamophobia, and the media's racist language.

"Political leaders ... should not seek to politicise racist attacks for political gain. Nor should political leaders cause further community division or vilification in their response to attacks. Human rights protections should not devolve into a game of

political point scoring," the groups said.

Melbourne Anglican Bishop Philip Huggins urged Australians to reject hatred and violence after the attack on Melbourne's Adass Israel Synagogue.

Bishop Huggins said it was crucial to recognise that antisemitism could reshape the country.

"People should never be targeted based on their religion, and no house of worship should be violated."

Imam Kamran Tahir

He said it was important Australians valued, cherished and supported the fact that Australia was a healthy, safe and flourishing democracy where people have been able to worship freely and safely.

Bishop Huggins encouraged people to strengthen their bonds of unity against divisive and destructive influences.

He especially asked people to stand in support of the congregation who lost its synagogue, as they comprised the generations who experienced the Holocaust.

"That's why they came to Melbourne – to get as far away as possible from that site and source of the Holocaust after World War II. They've felt safe here, and now there's this surge in antisemitism and it reawakens that very real sense of being isolated and threatened," he said.

"The issue is hate, and people resorting

to violence because of this. And it has implications for everybody, not just them."

Victorian Council of Churches president the Reverend Dr Joseph Leach said hating somebody just because of who they were, was repugnant to the Christian ethos. It was especially so if that hatred was expressed with violence.

He said an attack on any place of worship was an attack on the heart of the very people who worshipped there.

"You can't separate those two out. You can't say, 'I'm just attacking a synagogue or a church or a temple'. No, you're attacking the people who worship there," Dr Leach said.

"That sort of violence against the communities that we disagree with, that has no place in a society driven by the rule of law."

Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black said faiths were human ways to try to better humanity as individuals and as communities.

"Whenever faiths are used as a justification to oppress or persecute others, to scare people or to take life, they lose their claim to authenticity," Rabbi Keren-Black said.

Imam Kamran Tahir of Adelaide's Mahood Mosque emphasised the importance of protecting all places of worship and of strengthening interfaith harmony.

"We are heartbroken to hear of the attack on a place of faith," Imam Tahir said in a statement.

"There is absolutely no justification for such acts. People should never be targeted based on their religion, and no house of worship should be violated."

Healing hope from anti-racism plan

■ **Lesla Scholl**

Faith leaders hope the Australian Human Rights Commission's new plan to tackle ingrained racism will promote justice for First Nations and marginalised communities.

The AHRC launched its National Anti-Racism Framework in November, following several years of community consultation.

The framework was designed to serve as a community-centred approach to eliminating racism.

Aboriginal Christian Leader Brooke Prentis was hopeful the framework would hold people accountable for racism.

She said it was important that the strategy called for truth-telling.

"As Aboriginal peoples, we know that truth-telling will bring healing, and not just for Aboriginal people, but for non-indigenous peoples, too," she said.

Ms Prentis called for a national truth-telling commission where every Australian would

pause to understand our shared history.

She urged Australians to listen to one another with love and compassion.

"That's what I see is missing, even within the church," she said.

"We know that truth-telling will bring healing..."

Brooke Prentis

One of the key recommendations of the framework was to implement the findings from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Ms Prentis noted the importance of this recommendation, and said Aboriginal people were dying preventable deaths in state-run systems.

She said this was an integral matter for the healing of Aboriginal peoples and all peoples to create a better Australia.

Hume Anglican parish priest-in-charge

Reverend Dr Satvasheela Pandhare called for a dedicated campaign on anti-racism in the diocese that could be its statement to the public.

"We can't fix such a strong issue in one go," Dr Pandhare said.

She believed there was a subtle acceptance of whiteness in leadership, and wanted more focus on employment diversity, and the power divisions in educational settings.

Diversity Australia chief executive Steven Asnicar said church organisations needed to lead from the front on anti-racism, and that leadership could not be left to government or individuals.

Mr Asnicar observed that Australia was behind the times in the anti-racism space, with many other countries already establishing human rights acts.

He said the framework was one piece of a bigger picture, and we needed to start evoking a Human Rights Act, which would then actively support that new strategy.

God's Story: Artist's gift to her grandchildren

■ **Hannah Felsbourg**

A new Pitjantjatjara language illustrated children's Bible will bring faith and culture to the next generation of Anangu children.

Godaku Tjukurpa (God's Story) was a vision of the late Nami Kulyuru, a respected artist, teacher, and Pitjantjatjara Bible translator.

Pitjantjatjara is spoken by the Anangu people, who live across central Australia in South Australia, the Northern Territory, and Western Australia.

Project coordinator David Barnett said the book fulfilled Ms Kulyuru's desire of sharing faith with young Pitjantjatjara readers.

"Her dream was to have a book that she could pass on to her grandchildren," he said.

"The children could learn these stories from the Old and New Testaments that she had grown up hearing around the campfire when she was little."

The book includes 54 paintings depicting stories from the Bible, with accompanying text in Pitjantjatjara and English.

Mr Barnett said Ms Kulyuru started the project after noticing children's Bibles in an Adelaide church library and deciding to create something similar using Anangu art.

He said she noted that while English Bibles showed one scene per illustration, Pitjantjatjara art told whole stories in one image through symbolism.



Translator and artist Audrey Brumby with her artwork depicting Matthew 2, "The wise men see and follow the star." Picture: supplied

"[Pitjantjatjara artists] can tell a whole story on a canvas by painting symbols and it shows the whole movement from beginning to end and through time and space," he said.

Although Ms Kulyuru passed away in 2022 after battling a brain tumour, the wider Pitjantjatjara community came together to finish her work.

Many of the artists were also Bible translators who used their paintings to bring the books they had translated to life visually.

One contributor, who worked on the book of Numbers, painted Israel's journey through the wilderness, while another who worked on Joshua portrayed the fall of Jericho.

The Bible Society Australia plans to launch the book in Pitjantjatjara communities in 2025, with a travelling roadshow to display the original artworks.

The book is available through Koorong and proceeds will go toward future Pitjantjatjara projects.



Sonia Joshua, Marlene Andrews, the Reverend Craig Rogers, the Reverend Edwin Rami and Bishop Greg Anderson speaking at Summer Under the Son.

Picture: Hannah Felsbourg

Greatest cultural divide but 'all one in Christ': Summer Under the Son

■ Hannah Felsbourg

Christians from across Australia and global and local speakers united in Melbourne to explore God's mission at the recent annual Summer Under the Son conference.

Speakers included Northern Territory Bishop Greg Anderson, Village Church Brisbane pastor Sam McGeown, and missionaries Chris and Julie Dean serving in Timor-Leste.

Bishop Anderson was joined by Aboriginal leaders from Ngukurr sharing God's work in the NT during the three-day event in Glen Waverley.

The bishop told *The Melbourne Anglican* many people were yet to hear and understand the gospel message in a way that made sense to them.

He said God was bringing together people from every tribe, language, and people group in the new family around Jesus.

He hoped attendees would be excited by what God was doing in the NT because it was so culturally unique in Australia.

"There is no greater cultural distance than between our remote area Aboriginal church people and ... mainstream Australia," Bishop Anderson said.

"We are all one in Christ and in the Northern Territory we see that so clearly."

"There is no greater cultural distance than between our remote area Aboriginal church people and ... mainstream Australia"

Bishop Greg Anderson

At the conference, St Matthews Ngukurr deacon-in-charge the Reverend Craig Rogers reported on how prayer walks were strengthening community bonds.

Marlene Andrews spoke of ministering in courthouses and supporting mothers through Anglicare.

Sonia Joshua shared about the challenges of conducting funerals, her work in schools, and sharing God's love throughout her ministry.

Church of the Holy Spirit Numbulwar minister the Reverend Edwin Rami reported growing male attendance and how Christmas celebrations were bringing people into church.

Pastor McGeown spoke on the book of Ruth, tracing Ruth's journey as a foreigner who was shown favour by Boaz, comparing it to the overflowing favour shown by Jesus to Christians.

Referencing Ephesians, he said Christians were no longer foreigners, but citizens together with God.

He said because of this Christians should understand what it meant to be a refugee, and how to welcome others with the same grace they had received.

Mr McGeown invited attendees to consider how God might be calling them to serve the most vulnerable and unreached people.

Fire no barrier for St Hilary's people

■ Penny Mulvey

Early one morning this January the vicar of St Hilary's Kew, Reverend Adam Cetrangolo, was woken with news the church property was on fire.

Video footage taken by a neighbour captured the intensity and noise of the blaze. The fire fighters' hoses could be seen trying to douse the flames, but the fire had taken a firm hold.

In the light of day, fire out, fire fighters still on scene, the church itself is standing, resolute despite the charred surrounds.

Mr Cetrangolo still found it hard to believe four days later.

"The first thoughts I had were, after all those renovations to the church, this was another interruption to ministry.

"But it's just bricks and mortar," Mr Cetrangolo said. "It doesn't stop us being who we are as the church."

Investigators have ruled out arson, but significant parts of the building, including the kitchen and meeting areas, have been destroyed.

The church office is intact, as is the 1930s-built hall, still holding its head high, despite water damage.

Long term parishioner Geoff Buchanan was initially dismayed that plans for the church building would not take place.

"It then quickly morphed into what caused this, and the extent of the damage. And then as I thought about it, I thought 'here is a challenge,'" Mr Buchanan said.

"But it's just bricks and mortar ... It doesn't stop us being who we are as the church."

Adam Cetrangolo

"We were all a bit surprised, but God wasn't surprised.

"We are all trying to listen hard to know what God wants to do. We are praying for the church and for Adam. Look at it from a spiritual warfare point of view, it would suggest Adam is on the right path given all that has happened.

"He is the sort of fellow who will say ... this is an opportunity to do something wonderful!"

Warden Fiona Hawke, said the church was working with the diocese's property services

head, Steve Richardson, to make sure the site was safe.

She said he had been exceptional and the diocese helpful and collaborative.

"They are involving us in the process and are a real blessing."

Ms Hawke said fire investigators on site were amazed the fire didn't spread further, and she believed God's hands were all over it.

Mr Cetrangolo acknowledged the fire would be harder for those who have had a long history at St Hilary's, but that people were incredibly positive despite this.

"The work doesn't stop. People at St Hil's have done big projects before, and while there is a sadness of losing something, they are also philosophical. We are all still part of God's family."

Other churches in the neighbourhood have also reached out, offering whatever support might be needed.

While the people of St Hilary's would probably be off site for the next year or so, Mr Cetrangolo said his focus would always be the people and ministry continuity.

"I have no idea what our long-term plans are, but we will be exploring a few out of the box ideas," he said. "And in the grand scheme of things, it is just a building."



Fire inspectors survey the ruined St Hilary's building. Picture: supplied



St Paul's St Leonards after the fire.

Picture: supplied

'Show grace ... instead of judgement' after fire: Geelong vicar

■ Jenan Taylor

The leader of a Bellarine area church that was recently gutted by fire says the incident is an opportunity from God to show love and grace to those allegedly responsible for the blaze.

Police charged four people with arson and burglary after flames swept through St Paul's Anglican church in St Leonards in late November.

The church building and its adjoining hall were significantly damaged and will be demolished.

Vicar the Reverend David Willsher said members were trying to come to terms with the loss, and a few were deeply angry with those allegedly responsible for the fire.

He encouraged anyone who was angry about the incident to view it as an opportunity to show grace and concern rather than judgement to other people.

"There are people that have been

charged over this, but we're the ones with the solutions to the problems [they might be facing]," Mr Willsher said.

"There are people that have been charged over this, but we're the ones with the solutions to the problems [they might be facing]."

David Willsher

"We're actually the only people who have got the good news that they need.

And so really, it's a message of hope that we can share with other people."

He said other churches in the parish, and a Catholic church, provided help and hospitality to St Paul's congregation. People from the broader community were also

advocating for them to be able to use a local hall.

Mr Willsher said this support was proof of God's faithfulness to St Paul's, and a reminder that despite the loss Jesus was still walking with them.

As recipients of this faith, grace and love, it was the congregation's great commission now to step up and show that to others.

He said St Paul's was due to turn 110 years old early next year, and was the smallest of the three churches in the Bellarine Anglican Parish.

It had been through some struggles with attendance, but was on the path to growth, having moved its services from fortnightly to weekly recently.

St Paul's monthly Hymns of Faith program attracted people from the wider community as well as its own congregation.

He said ministry programs including the Bible study group were now being held at various members homes for the time being.



'Lifting Our Voices' by artist Kirstin Munchenberg.

Picture: supplied

Relief tinged with grief: Lutheran women's ordination activist

■ Jenan Taylor

A women's ordination advocate in the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand says the Church needs to be safer for women ministers in the wake of its recent decision to endorse their ordination.

Theologian, associate professor Dr Tanya Wittwer believes a major cultural shift and trauma-informed processes are needed to ensure support, respect, compassion and care for women in ministry in the church's structures and decision making.

She said until now women felt unable to lift their voices amid a culture of polarisation and negativity towards those who wanted women to be ordained.

The LCANZ general synod resolved to support a proposal to remove from its doctrinal theses a paragraph which prohibited women from entering pastoral ministry on the basis of the teaching of Scripture in early October.

The Church has tried to introduce women's ordination five times since 2000, but Dr Wittwer said its members had been formally discussing it since about 1985.

She said the struggle to get it endorsed centred around disagreement about the interpretation of two Scriptural verses in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy.

She said despite the Church's advisory body on theology and doctrine concluding in

1999 that there was no scriptural reason to prohibit the ordination of women, a minority continued to stand against it.

Dr Wittwer believed the decision to accept the women's ordination proposal came about now because synod delegates were asked to allow women to be ordained, rather than to embrace their ordained ministry.

She said the Church was embarking on a journey towards accepting diversity in how Scripture was interpreted, and diversity of practice.

According to a LCANZ report, two widely held views persisted within the Church – that only men could be ordained, and that both men and women could be ordained.

The LCANZ wanted to find a way to operate as one church with two different ordination practices, which would enable women's ordination, and allow the continuity of men-only ordinations in LCA communities.

Dr Wittwer said the decision to approve women's ordinations drew both relief and grief among proponents, and optimism that women would be able to be heard and be more visible.

There was a sense of celebration among younger women who felt called to or were studying towards ordination, because they could now see a future for themselves.

But she said the relief for long-time advocates was tinged with grief for the

women who had not lived to see it happen, and for those who were now too old to respond to that call.

"Back in the 1990s, when we were heading towards the first vote in the year 2000 there was a solid group of women who were studying together, and there was the sense of this will be happening soon," Dr Wittwer said.

"Many of those women are now of an age where they feel it's not something that they can do moving forward."

Dr Wittwer said many women who had felt called to ordination had left the LCANZ in the last 20 years. Some headed overseas, and some went to the Anglican and Uniting Churches instead to be ordained.

"There are a lot of women who were nurtured by the Lutheran church, and probably still consider themselves thoroughly Lutheran in their theology, who are already serving in other churches, and I would not anticipate they would return to the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand," she said.

She said proponents were working out the conditions that would best support the positive reception of women in ministry, and were drawing on how the Church overseas, and other denominations in Australia, transitioned to women in ministry.

LCANZ leader Bishop Paul Smith was contacted for comment.

Anglicans' community contributions honoured in Australia Day awards

■ **Hannah Felsbourg**

A rotarian, a chancellor and a dedicated Bellarine region parishioner were among Anglicans honoured in the 2025 Australia Day list.

At least three parishioners from across Victoria received Medals of the Order of Australia for their community service and leadership.

St Stephen's Gardenvale parishioner **Lynette Maskell** said she felt humbled by the recognition for her service to the community of the Brighton region.

"I've lived a very privileged life, and it's nice to give back," Ms Maskell said.

She said her work integrating children with disabilities into classrooms and helping teachers upskill was the most rewarding for her.

"It makes a difference in the children's lives and in the parents' lives because they don't have to battle so much to get rights for their children," she said.



Lynette Maskell OAM. Picture: supplied

Ms Maskell has also worked with St Stephen's Op Shop which supported programs for aged and youth and delivered meals to elderly during COVID among other contributions.

Her philosophy on community service remains straightforward.

"If we all just give a little bit, it makes

the world a better place," she said.

Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland **Roger Blythman RFD** was recognised for service to the community and to the church.

Mr Blythman served as Naval Aide-de-Camp to the Governor of Victoria in the early 1980s and now leads the Navy League's Victoria-Tasmania division.

St James' Drysdale parishioner **Pauline Cline** was recognised for her service to the community of the Bellarine region.

Her contributions include fundraising for St James' restoration fund and animal welfare and involvement in church committees and Drysdale Neighbourhood Watch.

All Saints Anglican Op Shop Barwon Heads volunteers **John and Christine Wheal** were both awarded medals for their service to the community of Barwon Heads.

Mrs Wheal coordinates the op shop's sorting room and Mr Wheal was treasurer there for eight years. He also held various roles with the RSL and local fire brigade.

THE Melbourne Anglican

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Churches central to combating youth loneliness epidemic

■ Hannah Felsbourg

Churches are uniquely positioned to combat youth loneliness through their regular gatherings and ability to foster meaningful connections, according to a new report.

The report by policy and advocacy organisation Publica highlights the significant health and societal risks of loneliness. They compare it to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Publica is calling for solutions including friendship courses, social prescribing, and greater involvement from churches to address the issue.

Executive director Professor Patrick Parkinson said churches could address loneliness effectively because of their reach and role in fostering community.

He said churches needed to emphasise inclusivity and ensure non-believers felt welcome at events.

“We have more than 10,000 churches in communities across Australia, preaching a message of meaning and hope, and fostering community and connection,” he said.

“There’s this misconception that you need to be a believing Christian to attend. That’s not the case with the vast majority of churches.”

Professor Parkinson said the loneliness epidemic was now most prevalent among young Australians aged 18–25.

“This is a stage of life where we are meant to be the most social, yet research in Australia, the UK and the US consistently shows that young adults are the loneliest age group of all – more than the elderly,” said Professor Parkinson.

The report identified societal changes such as technology use, remote work, and delayed life milestones as key contributors to loneliness among young adults.

“This is a stage of life where we are meant to be the most social, yet research in Australia, the UK and the US consistently shows that young adults are the loneliest age group of all.”

Patrick Parkinson

These factors, along with a decline in social group participation, economic challenges, and the impact of online learning, eroded traditional social connections.

This disruption fostered emotional and social loneliness, significantly harming both mental and physical health.

Publica recommended rebuilding community groups, teaching friendship

skills, and using social prescribing to connect people with local activities.

Friendship courses like the Friendship Lab, set to launch in February 2025, were highlighted as a practical solution.

These courses aimed to help young people overcome social anxiety and develop essential relational skills.

Friendship Lab founder Sheridan Voysey said the program was inspired by a question he once faced: “Who can you call at 2am when everything has gone wrong?”

“I remember my pen hovering over the workbook because I didn’t know whose name to write down,” Mr Voysey said.

He said adults often struggled to make and maintain friendships due to busyness, mobility, and lack of knowledge on how to build meaningful connections.

The Friendship Lab course will offer on-demand lessons and live group sessions, with small group options for churches and community groups.

Mr Voysey hoped the program would empower people to develop deep and lasting friendships, ultimately improving their well-being and sense of belonging.

Better friendships were associated with lower rates of anxiety and depression and higher levels of happiness, according to Publica’s report.

For more information or to access resources, visit publica.org.au and friendshiplab.org.



Former Ministry Training Strategy intern Natalie Lim with other young workers at Welcome to the Jungle 2023.

Picture: supplied

Headstart equips young workers to stand out for Jesus

■ Hannah Felsbourg

A Christian ministry program is helping young professionals combat isolation and navigate faith in an increasingly secular work landscape.

Welcome to the Jungle, an orientation evening for City Bible Forum's Headstart program, will connect recent graduates through watch parties across five Australian cities.

2025 marks the initiative's tenth anniversary of helping Christians in their first five years of work stand out and stand up for Jesus.

Former Headstart leader Ron Lieu said the program helped him recognise work was an opportunity to build relationships and demonstrate his faith.

"For non-Christian friends in the workplace, you might be their only connection to God," he said.

Mr Lieu said before Headstart, he thought of work as just something that needed to be done and pushed through.

The program helped him recognise his workplace as an opportunity to demonstrate his faith through excelling

at work as well as to build meaningful relationships.

"I want to be good at my job and want to be honest, I think that comes from wanting to be a good reflection as a Christian in my workplace," he said.

Headstart connects young Christian workers through regular gatherings, with both in person and remote options to make it accessible for people with different work schedules.

Mr Lieu said it provided a space to discuss workplace challenges that weren't typically addressed in regular church services.

Program founder Mark Leong said many Christian graduates felt isolated when transitioning from university to work, believing the lie they were alone.

"Statistically, if you go to large corporations, there'll be hundreds of Christians around. They just haven't been networked together," he said.

Headstart provided them the kind of Christian community they might have had at university, but with other young workers.

Mr Leong said Headstart guided young workers on how to be a positive example

of Christ through doing quality work and how to share their faith with their co-workers directly.

"We want people to stand out for Jesus by being his representative and living a distinctive life, but we also want them to stand up for Jesus by declaring with their lips," he said.

He said the program helped participants develop appropriate ways to express their faith at work.

"It's not going to be standing on your chair yelling that Jesus is Lord like you're a street preacher," he said.

Participants learned to build relationships through regular coffee runs and lunchtime walks with colleagues, and these casual interactions often progressed to after-work dinners, where faith conversations emerged naturally.

Welcome to the Jungle 2025 will take place on 17 February both online and in-person, with watch parties in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, and Toowoomba.

More information is available at citybibleforum.org/event/welcome-jungle-2025.

Ceasefire first step towards peace

■ Lesa Scholl

Aid agencies and church leaders are cautiously optimistic that rebuilding Gaza can begin following the staged ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas.

The conflict, which has raged since Hamas's brutal attack on 7 October 2023, has devastated the region, reportedly leaving Gaza largely uninhabitable.

Caritas humanitarian emergencies lead Sally Thomas said that while a ceasefire symbolised hope, physical suffering and psychological trauma would continue for weeks and months as people started rebuilding their lives.

The devastating war has claimed over 46,000 lives, most of whom were civilians and at least a third of them children, according to aid agencies.

Some analyses have put the number of deaths as high as 64,000.

While many of the deaths were due to military action, other significant factors have been malnutrition, dehydration and disease.

Ms Thomas said that as the threat of bombs and missiles abated, attention needed to turn to providing access to necessities to prevent further loss of life.

"The road to recovery physically and



A ceasefire is the first sign of hope in Gaza.

Picture: iStock, Abdallah El Hajj

psychologically ... will take decades to achieve, but we have the capacity to water the seeds of hope with our compassion today," she said.

National Council of Churches in Australia president Reverend John Gilmore said that the two opposing sides entering a ceasefire for the sake of the people in Gaza was the first sign of hope.

He said that a ceasefire was just the beginning. "The journey of peace is much more significant than the signing of a ceasefire," he said.

Mr Gilmore said that apart from the ceasefire and release of people being held captive on both sides, there needed to be access to humanitarian relief and support for the displaced people of Gaza.

He said that peace meant that communities could live with some level of food, water and housing security.

"I think peace can easily be interpreted as the lessening of conflict, but peace also means people having access to the things they need for daily life," he said.

Ongoing conflict could mean lifelong trauma for children

■ Lesa Scholl

Children in Ukraine's conflict zone face worsening mental and physical health amid their continued exposure to trauma, aid agencies say.

They warned the prolonged conflict and breakdown of relationships would affect the children's development.

It came as the Ukrainian conflict passed 1000 days in December.

World Vision Australia chief executive Daniel Wordsworth said children responded to trauma and conflict in different ways to adults.

Mr Wordsworth said while children were very resilient, they were most affected by disrupted relationships.

Prolonged breakdown of relationships and exposure to trauma and conflict in Ukraine impacted child development, he said.

"I noticed a lot of children who couldn't speak, and...some that were reverting in their fine and gross motor skills," Mr Wordsworth said. "The child I'm thinking about couldn't

speak anymore, but he was even losing his ability to dance."

Mr Wordsworth, who has been on the ground in almost every conflict zone in the last 25 years, said that what was distinctive about the conflict in Ukraine was that it was the first time large civilian cities were in the middle of 21st century warfare.

"You can be almost anywhere in Ukraine and be under threat," he said.

Mr Wordsworth said he was amazed by the remarkable ways humans overcame adversity.

"The danger we have is the absence of hope, not the existence of trauma," he said.

Caritas Humanitarian Emergencies Lead Sally Thomas said increased fighting was displacing people multiple times.

"It's starting to become one of those perfect storms for ... orphaned children and homelessness," she said.

Ms Thomas said that with no clear end in sight for the protracted conflict, there was greater risk to the vulnerable, including the homeless and people with disabilities.

September 2024 was the deadliest month this year with more than 1500 civilians dying.

The elderly and people with physical and mental disabilities were more difficult to move and were often left behind, Ms Thomas said.

Caritas and their partners have shelters that operate as clinics for mental health assistance.

Caritas partners saw the need to provide specialised support for children who were facing years of trauma and lost education.

Ms Thomas said Ukraine's education system was completely broken and that childhood trauma could have lifelong implications for relationships, education and employment.

Ridley College lecturer and author of books on trauma Reverend Dr Scott Harrower said that the emphasis in Ukraine needs to be on recovering a sense of safety, community connections, and a story that goes beyond the trauma.

Make church for everyone

■ **Hannah Felsbourg**

Advocates urged Christians to remove obstacles to full church participation for people with disability during an International Day of People with Disability staff event in December.

IDPwD 2024 celebrations focused on considering how society could embrace a future shaped by those whose perspectives were often overlooked.

Diocesan disability and inclusion officer Virginia McDonald hoped to empower people with disability, their families, and their carers to fully participate in church life.

Speaking at the diocesan event, she said connecting with people with disability was crucial to understanding what worked for them and identifying their strengths, needs, and interests.

She hoped to see more leaders of all abilities in the church, including people with disability serving as clergy, parish council members, and wardens.

She said true inclusion would mean disability was no longer seen as a barrier, with everyone contributing in ways that suited them.

Mrs McDonald said this vision aligned with Jesus' example in Luke 14, where he challenged his followers to invite those with disability to the banquet as honoured guests.

"This act of radical inclusion reflects the heart of God's Kingdom, where those who



*The Reverend Glen Wesley, Virginia McDonald, Jennifer Lumsden, Daniel Giles and Daryl Giles.
Picture: Hannah Felsbourg*

are excluded are honoured guests at God's table," she said.

She said the Church needed to fully embrace people with disability, which meant recognising their dignity, worth, and contributions.

"Inclusion isn't just about accessibility. It's about seeing Christ in each person and being Christ to one another," Mrs McDonald said.

Disability advocate and St Stephen's Richmond parishioner Jill Pickering said physical access to churches would empower people with disability to further advocate for themselves.

She said some simple steps to improve accessibility were large print, hearing loops,

and wheelchair access.

She encouraged parishioners to ask their vicar or archdeacon how their parish supported disability access and what more could be done.

Ms Pickering also encouraged people to speak to those who were different from themselves as this could help people with a disability and those who were shy feel more comfortable in church.

Autism self-advocate Daniel Giles OAM presented visual resources he developed to help people with autism approach social situations including church services.

His design principles, including minimalist design, made the resources more comprehensive and accessible.

Choristers grow into leadership, faith and community

■ **Lesla Scholl**

Being members of the St Paul's Cathedral choir has been instrumental for three young people's music skills, community connection, leadership and faith.

In a few months, Jimmy Hilton will be heading to the United Kingdom to take up a choral scholarship at Hereford Cathedral.

Tyler Clark will complete a diploma of music alongside her science degree.

Alannah Englezakis will undertake either a Bachelor of Science or biomedicine, followed by medicine.

Jimmy, who attended Trinity Grammar, said that the end of school brought a lot of exciting opportunities.

Former Lowther Hall student Alannah said that there were a lot of built-up emotions on results day. "Nervous, exciting, everything at the same time."

"I didn't sleep that much the night before," Jimmy said.

"It feels really good, but strange at the same time," Tyler said. "It's such a big weight off my shoulders to get this year done."

Alannah said that being in the choir has been a journey of self-discovery. She had tried other activities and sports, but the choir gave her a special way to meet new people and develop new skills.

Jimmy had always enjoyed music and singing, so when he joined Trinity the choral scholarship was a perfect opportunity for him to do what he loved.

"I found a group of like-minded people that were my age and kind of like me," he said.

That sense of connection has grown over the years. Jimmy reflected on watching the younger choristers grow, as well as the mentoring he has received from older lay clerks.

Jimmy said that being immersed in the cathedral environment for almost 10 years has helped him to see how people can relate to things spiritually through music.

"That's a really important part of the ministry that we do here," he said.

Alannah said that being in the choir has opened her eyes to how much faith really means to people. Helping with the children's Sunday School has also taught her a lot.

"Some of the children that come, they know so much about their faith, what they believe in, and who they believe in," she said. "They've been able to connect to their faith through a different avenue. I've been able to do that through music."

"Even though we're going to leave Lowther, now, which is pretty scary, we've still got the cathedral to see people and stay connected through St Paul's," Tyler said.

Bishop to focus on inclusivity

■ **Lesa Scholl**

When Archbishop Philip Freier retires in February, Bishop Alison Taylor will be coming out of retirement to serve as assistant bishop for the Melbourne diocese.

Bishop Taylor is a prominent figure in the Australian church, having been appointed as the first female bishop in Queensland in 2013 and being a strong voice for inclusivity in the Church.

Also in February, she will receive her PhD from Deakin University, where she researched the impact of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse on the authority of Church leadership.

The royal commission was a watershed moment in Australia's history, giving voice to thousands of people who had been abused by people in positions of power and trust.

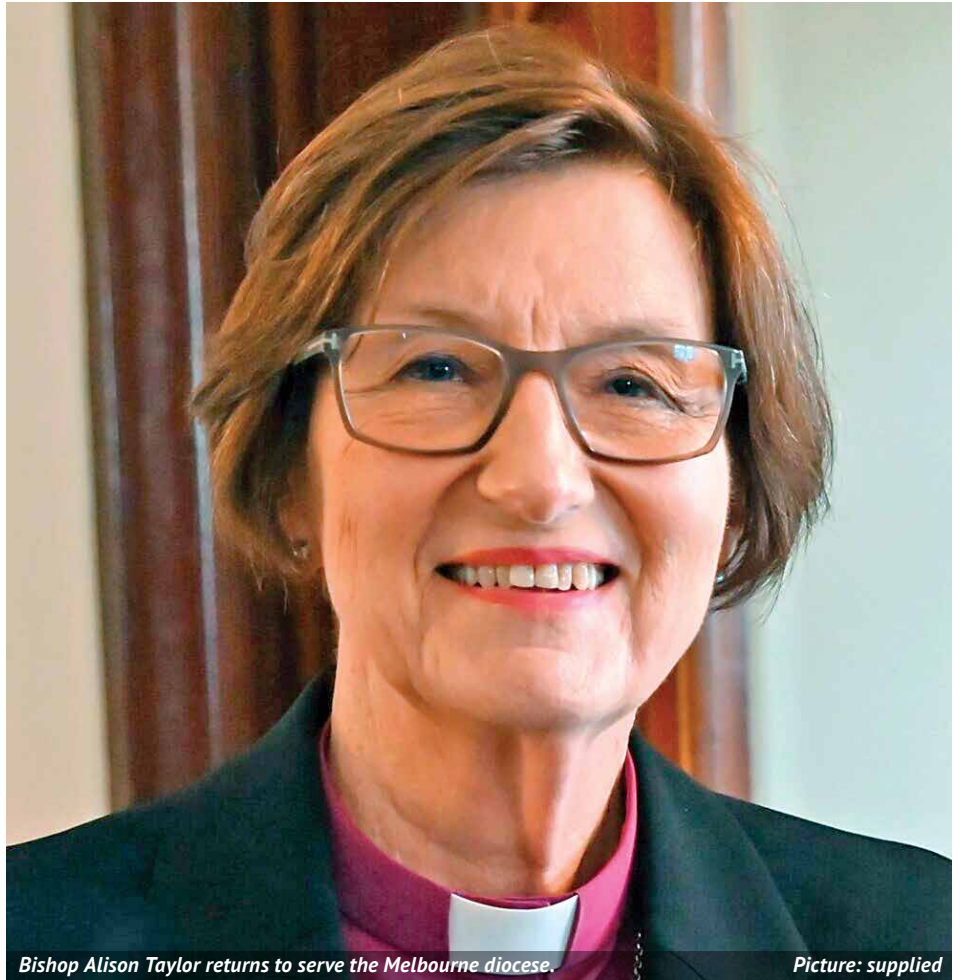
Bishop Taylor said that after the royal commission the Church's moral authority to speak on any matters relating to ethics was left in shreds.

She said that bishops were given fewer opportunities in wider society to speak on matters of public concern. This decreased ability to speak negatively impacted the Church's ability to be inclusive.

Prior to the royal commission bishops spoke out publicly on a range of matters, such as refugees, she said. "Now you don't see that."

"Within the church, I think as a result, we are hearing less about episcopal concern for those people in need in our society who are not actually a part of our church," she said.

Bishop Taylor said that while the Melbourne diocese had a good record on multicultural and non-Anglo congregations, the Church lacked presence in the public



Bishop Alison Taylor returns to serve the Melbourne diocese.

Picture: supplied

"Within the church, I think as a result [of the Royal Commission], we are hearing less about episcopal concern for those people in need in our society who are not actually a part of our church."

Alison Taylor

space on matters of migrants and refugees, a place that used to be held strongly.

She said that the lack of public voice made people feel excluded from the Church.

Bishop Taylor encouraged the church to consider how it could look more inclusive to the broader community and give space to people who are vulnerable.

"For a church to be inclusive it has to include people who are seen to some extent to be morally problematical," she said.

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Steadfast minister appointed Australia's first succentor

■ **Lesa Scholl**

When she left India as a teenager to study in Australia, Reverend Lydia Thangadurai never imagined she would be ordained, let alone become Australia's first-ever succentor.

The succentor assists the precentor in worship and liturgical duties as well as preaching and teaching. It is a rare position, mostly held in larger historic cathedrals in Britain.

Ms Thangadurai was installed into this role at St Paul's Cathedral on Advent Sunday in 2024.

Dean Andreas Loewe said the role was created to address the growing, diverse ministry needs of the cathedral community.

The position was needed to support its extensive worship ministries. These include 16 services a week, two of which are in languages other than English.

Dr Loewe said more than 1100 people worshipped at the cathedral each week, about 500 people attending on a Sunday.

St Paul's also provided many special services, such as memorials.

The succentor role was crucial to being able to sustain excellence in the current offerings as well as to create space to grow.

He said Ms Thangadurai would also take on responsibility for the cathedral's Gather congregation, a growing ministry to students and young families, previously led by the Reverend Amy Footson.

Dr Loewe said having a South Indian minister modelling pathways into ministry was important for a congregation that included many people from the subcontinent.

For the multicultural cathedral community, it was a real bonus for the congregation to have leaders who spoke multiple languages and had the lived experience of English as a second language, he said.

Ms Thangadurai's path to leadership and ordination was not straightforward. She said there were many factors that initially made her hesitate.

"I'm from a foreign country, I don't have my family here and being a woman of a different colour...I thought it was only for people who are very knowledgeable and can present everything in a perfect way," she said.

Ms Thangadurai's story is one of determination, resilience and faith through generations, and of hardship and uncertainty overcome by the grace of God.



Reverend Lydia Thangadurai.
Picture: supplied

During the 1983–2009 Sri Lankan civil war, Ms Thangadurai's grandparents moved their family to Tamil Nadu in India. Later her parents moved to Karnataka.

Ms Thangadurai's decision to move to Australia was motivated by her desire to support her family and help her siblings be educated when her father fell ill.

Visa uncertainties and exploitative work environments made Ms Thangadurai's first decade in Australia challenging, but her connection to her church family at St Paul's gave her strength and support.

She said as a migrant, she had no idea what the Fair Work ombudsman was, and the cathedral congregation helped her through this.

Ms Thangadurai attributed her faith and determination to her upbringing.

Her parents raised her to rely on God more than she relied on them, she said.

"Even though my parents couldn't financially support me, I was strong in myself that if God has brought me here, there is a purpose, and God's not going to let me down," she said.

A special moment for Ms Thangadurai was when her parents were first able to visit her in Australia two years ago for her ordination as a priest.

"I always wanted my family [there] because we are close-knit," she said. "And by God's grace I was able to bring them ... to witness my ordination."

Ms Thangadurai paid tribute to her mother, who taught all seven children the bible from a young age.

"What she has given us, given me, has made me strong, and I am grateful for that foundation," she said. "What she gave is what I am reaping today in the work I am doing."

Before returning to St Paul's, Ms Thangadurai served as curate at St John's, Toorak. She said that being back was both daunting and humbling.

"I'm really humbled for where I am today, and I am really blessed to be at the cathedral and to accept a role where no one has been before," she said. "That in itself is such a blessing, and I will definitely do whatever lies ahead with God's help."



Archbishop Keith Rayner, 1992. Picture: Archives

‘Instrument of God’ Archbishop

■ **Jenan Taylor**

Australian Anglicans mourned the death of a former Melbourne archbishop and pivotal figure in the ordination of women in the Church, in early January.

Bishop Keith Rayner died peacefully, almost eight weeks after his 95th birthday.

Ordained in the Brisbane diocese in 1953, he eventually went on to be Archbishop of Melbourne from 1990 to his retirement in 1999, and Primate of the Australian Church from 1991 until his retirement.

He was well-known for his contributions to the world-wide Church, his support for Indigenous reconciliation, and the poor and marginalised, and his role in progressing women’s ordination in Australia.

Anglican leaders expressed sadness about Bishop Rayner’s death and remembered him variously as a significant 20th Century Church leader, and a humble archbishop, marked by profound theological wisdom.

Archbishop of Melbourne Philip Freier also noted Bishop Rayner’s important

influence on many lay and ordained people.

“He was a key figure, both as Primate and as Archbishop of Melbourne, in the eventual Ordination of the first women to the priesthood in Australia, leading the important National Bishops’ Meeting in 1991, and chairing General Synod and the Melbourne Synod of 1992 which passed the necessary Canon to allow dioceses to ordain women to the priesthood,” Archbishop Freier said.

The Reverends Clem Taplin and Willy Maddock were among the first women to become priests in 1992, their ordinations in Melbourne presided over by then Archbishop Rayner.

Both priests highlighted his integrity in enabling the passage for finalising the ordination of women.

“There were protests around the ordinations and he was a strong and steady helmsman at that time. He was very much the instrument of God, and he was the one who held the ship steady,” Ms Taplin said.

“A holy man, and highly knowledgeable and educated on the life of the church, he was an archbishop who held the diocese

■ **Kate Prowd**

I remember clearly my interview with Bishop Keith during which he made the decision to ordain me to the priesthood. It had been a long six-year wait for some of the women deacons back in 1992, and I was very nervous!

He sat me in his office and impressed upon me gently and firmly that when I became a priest, I must never rely solely on Sunday worship to feed my soul and spirit.

“You will need to create a daily discipline of prayer to sustain and feed you, so that you can be the faithful priest God is calling you to be,” Bishop Keith told me. “Morning and evening prayer are the daily disciplines that clergy can, and should use.”

I nodded obediently, aware that after this meeting I would return to domestic life that included both toddler and baby. How was I to carve out time to do this?!

I returned home rejoicing in Bishop Keith’s willingness to be the first archbishop to ordain women in the Melbourne diocese, and joyful in anticipation of my ordination. From that day and that meeting onward, I committed myself to a daily spiritual practice of making room, and turning up for God.

Bishop Keith continued to encourage me, and, many years later upon hearing news of

my consecration as bishop, he wrote:

“...I hope that amongst the inevitable sorrows and pains of being a bishop you will experience rich joy and fulfillment.”

Our last correspondence was when I wrote to Bishop Keith on the 70th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood in 2023. He acknowledged my correspondence with characteristic gratitude and humility, reflecting on his long life of ordained ministry:

“Thank you so much for your congratulations on my 70 years as a priest. Yes, it has been a long time, with many blessings for which I thank God, and various shortcomings and failures for which I ask forgiveness.”

Bishop Keith now “walks by sight, not faith”, as Bishop Rowan Williams wrote upon the death of former Archbishop of Canterbury Michael Ramsay. The epistle set for Holy Communion the day after Bishop Keith’s death included this verse from Hebrews 1:3a, “(Christ) is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being.” Let us give thanks to God for Bishop Keith’s faithful vocation to Holy Orders, and that his long life and ministry was indeed a reflection of God’s glory and the imprint of God’s very being.

Bishop Kate Prowd serves as bishop of Monomeeth Episcopate.

■ **Leigh Mackay**

I worked with Bishop Rayner for his last five years as Archbishop of Melbourne. As his registrar, I saw him every week. Being a novice, it took me time to get his measure. But I was comforted by the fact that he had appointed me, a 42-year-old woman lawyer, to this role. He knew I would be very different, but he took a risk.

I came to see that he was unpretentious, shy, wise, dedicated and hardworking. Although a conservative, he engaged with contentious issues – divorce, women’s ordination – and was prepared to change his mind. Many times, I saw his pastoral concerns for his clergy.

My fondest memories of him were from the bishops’ meetings which I joined once a month. Before the meeting we shared the eucharist in the Bishops’ court chapel, followed by breakfast with conversation on topical issues such as the Cursillo Movement, and charismatic Toronto Blessing. These mornings gave me valued access to his home, his chapel and his hospitality. It was a model for building a team, a working community.

But I also enjoyed seeing him in action presiding over synod. There he was courteous, clear, across the detail of the agenda and legislation as well as arcane synod procedures.

On the 150th anniversary of the diocese the archbishop allowed us to bring refreshments

hop Keith Rayner dies

together through that journey.”

Ms Maddock recalled Bishop Rayner’s fierce adherence to proper processes, and careful provision for those who did not support the ordination of women.

“On the day we actually learned that ordination was to proceed, any celebrations we were going to have were cut very short by him, because we had to observe a minute’s silence for those that passage would upset,” Ms Maddock said.

“He was certainly a person who was happy to act according to canonical process. But once he got the bit between his teeth about that was there was no impediment. He was quite prepared to put up with anything that followed from that to make sure that it would work out okay.”

Melbourne Anglican lay leader Dr Muriel Porter said Bishop Rayner was sometimes known as “cautious Keith” and “Captain

Keith”, and she regarded him as one of the most significant 20th century leaders of the Anglican Church in Australia.

“At a time when division over the ordination of women was in danger of crushing the national church, he brought sound theological reasoning, deep wisdom and a calming presence, not just to that debate, but in his leadership as both Archbishop of Melbourne and Australian primate,” she said. Bishop Rayner was progressive in his theology but far from radical in his behaviour as he argued the theological reasons for women’s ordination.

Australian Primate Geoffrey Smith gave thanks for Bishop Rayner’s tremendous contribution of leadership.

“Keith Rayner’s life was one of service to God’s church, marked by wisdom and grace, and fueled with prayer,” he said.



Queen Elizabeth II and Archbishop Keith Rayner after the Order of Australia Service at St Peter’s Cathedral, Adelaide, 11 October 1981. Picture: Advertiser Newspapers Ltd.

into the cathedral for the end of the opening synod service. As the sanctuary party started to process down the aisle the champagne corks started popping, too soon!! I was forgiven this breach of protocol.

Gaiters, the senior staff group, used to meet once a year for a quiet day. Archbishop Keith asked us to suggest leaders. I asked for a “lay woman”. That year he invited an Anglican nun from the United Kingdom who led an enjoyable day on the ministry of laughter. I thanked her later saying I’d asked for a lay woman. She said, “I am a lay woman”!

We last spoke in 2012 celebrating the 20th anniversary of women’s ordination at St Paul’s Cathedral. Once I got to the top of a long line of well-wishers, I complimented him on his essay in *Preachers, Prophets & Heretics: Anglican Woman’s Ministry* – about changing his mind. His humble reply: “I’m so pleased I wrote it before my recent health issues.”

Only in retrospect did I really appreciate his scholarship, his deep-rooted faith and his integrity. He was a consummate leader for our diocese and the Church as a whole.

Leigh Mackay OAM is Canon Emerita, St Paul’s Cathedral.

■ Stephen Hale

It would be true to say that when Bishop Keith Rayner was elected archbishop in 1990 we weren’t fully sure what we would get.

He followed on from the dynamic leadership of Archbishop David Penman who had died suddenly in late 1989. We certainly didn’t expect a leader who would give active support for new mission initiatives and who would engage with young people. I was the youth director at the time.

In 1994 Archbishop Keith gave two memorable addresses.

The first was at the National Anglican Youth Gathering, hosted by Melbourne diocese at the Diocesan Youth Camp at Merricks.

Archbishop Keith as both Primate and Archbishop of Melbourne gave two of the morning Bible studies. About 350 people from across Australia attended, and we met in a giant marquee.

One of the talks was about the cross, and the archbishop gave a clear and compelling talk. About an hour after the session finished he hadn’t come to lunch. I went to find him and discovered he was still in the tent praying with some young people!

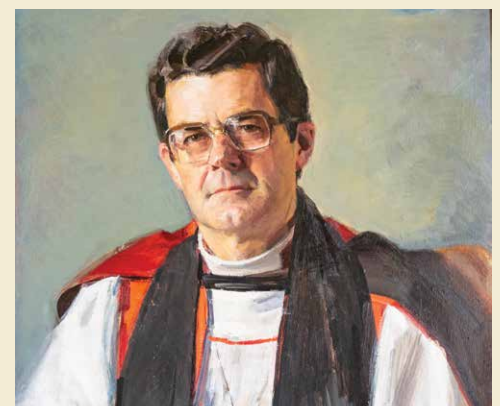
Archbishop Keith also spoke at the first Diocesan Clergy Conference in Bendigo that year. It was a big deal as such a conference

hadn’t been done before and people were just a little sceptical.

The archbishop challenged us to be open for the need to change and that struck a chord at the time. This was backed up by the program where we had a mix of hymns and contemporary music. We also trialled some of the liturgies that formed the basis for *A Prayer Book for Australia*.

Archbishop Keith wasn’t necessarily an innovator himself, but he gave active support to those who were. He was a fine preacher and speaker and surprised us all in all sorts of ways.

Bishop Stephen Hale was youth director from 1988 to 1996 in the Diocese of Melbourne.



Portrait by Hannaford, 1986.

Picture: Archives

Dr Freier's selected writings forthcoming

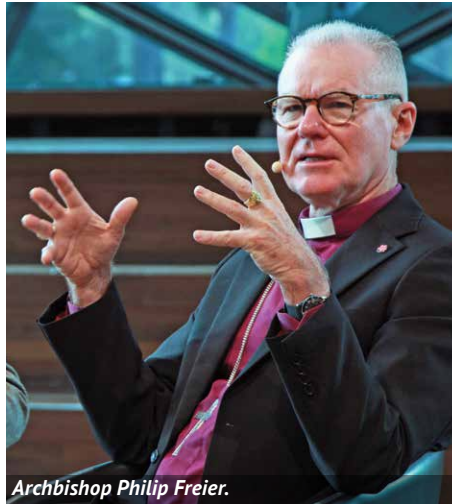
■ Penny Mulvey

Imagine the challenge of trying to select two reflections out of 11 written, for every year the archbishop has been in office?

A little book is being prepared for release in a month or so, featuring 18 years of the archbishop's reflections as printed in *The Melbourne Anglican*. Those who have been regular readers of the archbishop's column will know that Archbishop Philip has tended to comment on issues in the public arena, or significant matters relating to the Anglican Church. His columns represent what matters to him and more broadly to us, as people of the Word.

The columns also captured the archbishop's heart, as he drew attention to important anniversaries and events, his life-long engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and matters of shame for the Church, such as the Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Sometimes, *TMA* topics aligned with his public conversations held at Federation Square, reminding both the church and the broader public that Christianity, while



Archbishop Philip Freier.

no longer the dominant voice, still had relevance in the public square.

In his preface to the book, titled *Continuing the Conversation: Selected writings*, the archbishop explains that the conversations were broadly on the theme, 'What kind of society do we want?'

'My *TMA* words were necessarily different from these discussions as they were responding to the questions, 'What kind of Church does God want in our time?' and 'What kind of Christian discipleship is

needed for our age?'' Dr Freier writes.

The first column to appear in the book dates to 2007, the archbishop's first year in the Melbourne diocese. He wrote on stem cell research, a significant issue of that time. In 2010, he wrote a column about the growing problem of knife violence.

At the centenary of the end of the First World War, he wrote a personal account of the death of a relative, George Freier, a 28-year-old farmer from Queensland at the time of his enlisting in 1917. A shell explosion claimed his life in July 1918.

His final piece in the book is from 2024, on the Yoorrook Justice Commission. He writes:

'Great atrocities were committed against First Peoples in this period of frontier expansion and, to the extent that we remain ignorant about it, we compound the consequences of that injustice in our own day.'

Given the archbishop's heart for Indigenous Australians, his focus on the Yoorrook Justice Commission seems a fitting conclusion to this book.

Details on purchasing this book will be available when it is ready for publication.



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Opportunity to give thanks to God and commit to reconciliation

■ Neville Naden

Australia Day brought with it the chance to reflect on the blessings we enjoy as Australians, the challenges of our shared history, and the call to reconciliation. Above all, a chance to thank Almighty God, the giver of every good gift, for His provision and care for our nation.

26 January marks the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, a significant moment that shaped the Australia we know today. For many, this day brings opportunity to celebrate the freedoms, opportunities, and beauty of this country.

However, it is also a time to acknowledge the harm colonisation brought to First Nations peoples – the dispossession, pain, and injustice that still impacts communities today.

From the earliest days of European settlement, faith in God was present. The First Fleet's chaplain, the Reverend Richard Johnson, preached his first sermon on Australian soil from Psalm 116:12–13: "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord."



The Reverend Neville Naden.

These words remain as relevant today as they were in 1788. They remind us that our response to the blessings of this land should be one of thankfulness and dedication to God.

As an Indigenous Christian, I reflect on the choice I have in responding to our history. I can meditate on the wrongs that have occurred, or I can focus on the good that God has done through it all.

God, in His great mercy, has brought hope and restoration, even in the face of pain and loss. We see His hand in the resilience of First Nations peoples, the richness of their contributions to Australian society, and the

growing movement towards reconciliation.

This January 26 was, again, an opportune time to turn our hearts to God in gratitude and commit to:

- **Thankfulness:** Acknowledging that every blessing we enjoy – from the beauty of this land to the freedoms we cherish – comes from the hand of Almighty God.
- **Reflection:** Facing the truth of our nation's history, recognising the harm caused to First Nations peoples, and seeking to understand its ongoing impact.
- **Action:** Partnering with God's work of reconciliation by building meaningful relationships, supporting Indigenous-led initiatives, and advocating for justice and equity.

May the blessing of Almighty God guide us as we walk this journey together. Like Richard Johnson and the First Fleet settlers, let us call upon the name of the Lord, seeking His wisdom and grace for our nation.

Together, we can honour the past, embrace the present, and move forward in hope towards a future of unity and peace.

The Reverend Neville Naden is Indigenous Ministry Officer at Bush Church Aid.

What we can learn from an obscure Old Testament law

■ Paul Barker

Have you got a parapet on the roof of your house? Bishopscourt doesn't have one. Yet the law in Deuteronomy 22:8 demands a parapet for the roof of the house for ancient Israelites.

It is easy to dismiss Old Testament laws as irrelevant, either because the law is superseded by Jesus, or because we are not Israelite, or because surely we now know better. But Jesus and Paul both uphold Old Testament law, so perhaps we ought to consider this a bit more.

Behind every Old Testament law lies a principle, sometimes stated, sometimes obvious, sometimes a bit obscure. In this case, the principle is stated: safety for people. Flat roofs in ancient Israel were places for work, play, even sleep depending on the season. Parapets provide safety against falling off. The roof on my house is sharply inclined, so no one goes on the roof. A parapet is unnecessary in such a case. So maybe the law can be dismissed?

Typically Old Testament laws provide examples of principles. In this case, the parapet is an example of the principle of safety. The law is not limited to the example. Therefore, even if I do not need a parapet on my inclined roof, this law begs me to consider safety in my house. Are my electrical points safe? Is the kitchen safe? If children visit, or elderly people, is my house safe for them: even floors, child proof doors and gates, and so on.

The principle ought not be limited to our houses. The same should apply to our churches. Our compliance to building codes ought not be a burden, but come from a desire for safety to protect others, as an expression of loving our neighbours.

So too, it seems to me, providing safe churches for vulnerable people. The child safety rules are demanding these days. But safety for children is part of how we express love for others. We should be eager, despite the effort, to ensure our churches are as safe as possible for children, and other vulnerable people.

It is easy to feel burdened by the demands of compliance, whether child safety or OH&S, asbestos and other matters. Many clergy and layleaders feel the heavy yoke of compliance. It can be draining and dispiriting.

Perhaps we can learn again from the Old Testament, which encouraged God's people to delight in his law. For example, the longest psalm, 119, delights in God's law at great length. Psalm 40:8 encapsulates this point: 'I delight to do your will, O God.' I wonder, then, whether we need to remind ourselves of this and cultivate delight in applying the principles of God's law for safety of others. If we delight in God, and in his perfect law, and understand that good law to revive the soul (Psalm 19:7), and if we truly love our neighbours, then we will be refreshed and eager to make our churches, buildings and communities, fully safe.

Bishop Paul Barker serves as bishop of the Jumbunna Episcopate.

In Paul's footsteps

■ Penny Mulvey

The adventure started in Istanbul, November 2024. An Irish man, an English man and 40 Aussies met in a hotel bar, bags packed and ready to go on a pilgrimage/study tour/journey. Whichever word you choose to call it, the tour was a remarkable experience that will no doubt stay with all 42 travellers.

We were about to follow in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, the man uniquely responsible for spreading the Gospel across Türkiye, Greece, Italy, the Holy Land and the globe those many centuries ago.

Our little group did not cover all those regions in a fortnight, but we did travel to Tarsus, Paul's hometown. For those who have tried to understand the conundrum of how the apostle Paul was both Jew and Roman, a strange quirk – Jewish citizens of Tarsus were granted Roman citizenship.

Our trip was a little more comfortable than the many trips the apostle Paul undertook as he preached in cities and towns across Asia – Pergamum, Thyatira, Smyrna, Sardis, Ephesus, Laodicea, Miletus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Tarsus, Joppa, and the list goes on.

He walked. We travelled by plane, car ferry and coach. Some of us even tried out a hot air balloon over the white calcium terraces in Pamukkale on our way to Philadelphia (one of the Seven Churches in Revelation).

And on the journey, our lives changed a little. Many of the group were ordained clergy, most from Melbourne, but as the tour was also a Ridley College subject, they were also studying as we travelled.

How did our lives change? First, it was the experience of being together. New friendships grew and blossomed. Second, we cared for each other. Those who were older and less steady on their feet, were gently supported by other younger individuals. People checked in with others. They ensured no one was left on their own.

And we, certainly I, were filled with wonder. This story, read, heard, spoken aloud, in church, study groups, written about, came to life. The Apostle Paul, the enemy of Christians, so dramatically transformed by his road to Damascus experience, was oozing into our lives as we encountered the early Christian church more than 2000 years later.

We stood where Paul had stood in Iconium, now called Konya. Acts 14 starts,

“At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed.”

From there we travelled to Pisidian Antioch. Acts 14:19 describes what happened to Paul: “Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.” Our study tour guide, the Reverend Dr Mike Bird, theologian and Ridley deputy principal, reminded us that being in this place, we could remember that what God promised our ancestors He fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus from the dead.

What happened at Pisidian Antioch all those years ago, “was part of the one story of redemptive history,” Dr Bird said, “and the promises from God remain for his people now.”

Each day we travelled to a new/old location. A place where, as recorded in the New Testament, Paul had preached, dined, walked, been stoned or whipped. Our little group had joined thousands upon thousands of other Christians who will have gone on the same pilgrimage over these last centuries.

“The Apostle Paul, the enemy of Christians, so dramatically transformed by his road to Damascus experience, was oozing into our lives as we encountered the early Christian church more than 2000 years later.”

On our third day, some of us viewed the extent of the ancient sites of Laodicea and the Phrygian city of Hierapolis from a hot air balloon. The archaeological site is massive. The amphitheatre is used for outdoor events, such as operas. It is both humbling and wondrous to walk around these sites, imagining the people who lived and worked there in around 200 BC.

Laodicea is one of several churches named in Revelation. Chapter 3:14-16: “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the



Old Christian church in Pisidian Antioch.

faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!”

Paul mentions a letter to Laodicea in Colossians, but what the letter contained, and who actually wrote the letter, remains a mystery. Sadly, our study tour did not solve the mystery. Maybe the next group will succeed.

Ephesus! A World Heritage listed site. Not surprising given the extent of the city, the condition of the Baths of Scholastica, the Temple of Hadrian and the Great Theatre. Our group spent some time wandering around this extraordinary site, built in the 10th century BC! The Ephesian Christians were important to Paul. In his letter to the Ephesians, he writes in chapter 1, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better.” (v 17)

I was number 15. Whenever we returned to our coach, we did a count. It provided some considerable amusement. Who would have thought how much you can tell about an individual's personality by how they call out one number! The 'naughty kids' down



Picture: Penny Mulvey

the back of the bus would bring life, noise and wit to just a single number. I suspect the ringleader might have been the delightful Isaac! Isaac brought joy and kindness to all he engaged with. He was loud, funny and passionate for the Lord. I suspect he will be a great minister when the time comes.

Naomi Bird had the challenge of corralling this crazy group of people. She did it with firmness, humour and, at times, resignation, all while feeling unwell.

One of the highlights for me was Gallipoli. We started at Anzac Cove. The memorial was beautifully tended, the big expanse of green grass immaculate. Turning 180 degrees from the ocean are the hideous overgrown trenches of Gallipoli, the place where so many men, both Turks and ANZACS, senselessly lost their lives.

Visiting Lone Pine Memorial was something I had never imagined I would achieve. So, to see my great uncle Frederic Christie Mulvey, a Lance Corporal in the 2nd regiment of the Australian Light Horse Brigade, acknowledged on the second stone within the memorial was remarkable. A hydrological surveyor from Newcastle NSW, young Frederic eagerly signed up in 1914, was on a boat to Egypt in 1915,

arrived at Gallipoli on 12 May and was dead on 14 May. One of many, many senseless casualties on both sides of the war.

Prior to visiting Gallipoli, we travelled to Assos, a small Aegean coastal town, where Paul and Luke rested overnight, as written in Acts 20:13. I suspect the town might look different now – it is a quaint old fishing village situated right on the Mediterranean Sea.

“[We were reminded] that what God promised our ancestors He fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus from the dead.”

Our time in Türkiye was concluding. Soon we would be flying to Athens. But we still had a few more important theological sites to visit. Travelling to Philippi, we went to the site where Paul allegedly baptised Lydia, believed to be the first recorded convert to Christianity in Europe. (Our tour

guide was sceptical about the claim that she had been baptized in that precise small river, but not about Lydia herself.) Lydia was a businesswoman; she traded in purple cloth. Paul and Silas stayed with Lydia after she persuaded them, saying “If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house.” (Acts 16:15)

We also visited the Ancient Theatre of Philippi, a place dear to Paul’s heart. The Roman Road, Via Egnatia, passed through Philippi, and we could imagine Paul walking and preaching as he travelled, spreading the Gospel.

Still more ruins, this time the Ancient city of Corinth, and then to Athens to see the Acropolis, the birthplace of politics and philosophy. Remarkable constructions, made of enormous marble blocks, built to last, so that travellers throughout the centuries have been able to marvel at the strength and beauty of Ancient Greece and the power of the Romans!

And suddenly, the pilgrimage was over. Bags packed. Coach loaded. A few later departures, and we all dribbled away – back to our families, churches, lives, more holiday – but forever touched by each other and the great adventure we had been on.

‘We’re here!’ What Rob wants you to know

■ Elspeth Kernebone

The Reverend Rob Ferguson is Senior Chaplain of Anglican Criminal Justice Ministry. Here, he shares about his work.

Tell us about your role?

I’m currently the Senior Chaplain for Anglican Criminal Justice Ministry, where I began in January 2013. Kate Schnerring (our Prison Chaplaincy Coordinator) and I lead a team of chaplains in 18 secure locations across Victoria, which include adult prisons, youth justice detention centres and the deportation centre in West Melbourne.

At the moment we have about 15 chaplains, and we’re currently recruiting more volunteers, because our aim is to have at least two Anglican chaplains in each of the prisons.

I’m responsible for the training and supervision of our Anglican chaplains, but I also spend two and a half days a week in prisons myself. I’m at Hopkins Correctional Centre, near Ararat, and HM Prison Langi Kal Kal, near Beaufort.

In the prisons, we provide opportunities for people to grow in and practice their faith, so we run worship services and discipleship groups as well as providing pastoral care to anyone and everyone in the prisons. While we are Anglican chaplains, we minister to people of all faiths and none.

How did you end up in the position you’re in?

I prayed “God, take me somewhere I need to rely on You.” And He took me into prisons.

After 12 years of chaplaincy in schools, I felt God was calling me into something different, and I welcomed that call. I wanted to be stretched; I didn’t realise how big the challenge was going to be.

In prisons there’s lots of rules. It’s a very steep learning curve working in secure locations. You can’t take in your phone, you can’t take in your laptop, you can’t take in all the resources you would like. A lot of times, it’s just you and God.

Often the people who want to talk to me and engage with me as a prison chaplain, they want to be honest with themselves. That’s pretty confronting too, and very humbling – to be in the place where people are wanting to strip off the mask that we all wear and have some of the most honest conversations they ever have. Sometimes I feel like I’m on the sidelines listening, rather than participating



and offering things. It’s all between them and God really.

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

God’s all about new creation. It’s 2 Corinthians 5, it’s Revelation 21, it’s Romans 12. It’s realising that we are invited to be a part of God’s new creation, accepting what God has done for us in Jesus, and welcoming what He begins to do in us through His Holy Spirit. In prison, I often say, I did my bachelor’s degree in theology at Ridley, but I did my master’s degree at Hopkins. Because that’s where I learnt what grace and hope and new creation really are.

In a prison context, pastoral care is meeting people where they are, often in the midst of their crises, and walking with them, hopefully to a place under God where there is healing for themselves and

“I prayed “God, take me somewhere I need to rely on You.” And He took me into prisons.”

others. Listening is crucial. And listening with a focus on hearing what people are really going through underneath all of the protective layers we put up when we’re in crisis. And it’s coming with that person, at that place, to God in prayer and really seeking to be present with them and with God in that moment.

Some of the common questions can be, “Is God real?,” “What can God do for me?” Some of the questions from people who already believe are around, “Can God ever forgive me?” and “How can I forgive myself?”

What about prison chaplains



The Reverend Rob Ferguson.

Picture: supplied

For many people, their questions centre around how they're able to heal the relationships that have become damaged through the last few months and years. That's really important, because I see God primarily as calling us to four relationships: a relationship with Himself, a relationship with other people, a relationship with Creation, and a relationship with ourselves. Those sorts of questions really make sense to me. Pastoral care in any context, but particularly in prisons, is centred around those four relationships.

For a lot of people, coming to prison, especially for the first time, can be the point where reality bites. People are confronted with the choices they've made, or the things that have happened to them, that have led to the reasons why they're in prison. The question then becomes, "If these choices haven't been working, what are the alternatives?"

"I get the feeling that I've been blessed a lot more than the people I've ministered to."

How do you see God at work through your work?

My prayer as I go into prison each time, is "Lord, grant me the privilege of witnessing your Holy Spirit at work in people's lives today". And I see this nearly every day I'm in prison. I see it in people's lives as one or more of those four relationships are changed, and healed, and renewed.

In my 12 years in prisons, I've personally come closer to God through the things that I've seen and the things that I've learnt. Like

many people in ministry, I get the feeling that I've been blessed a lot more than the people I've ministered to.

Grace, it's all grace. There's a line in a song we sing in the chapel services, "Keep your eyes on this one truth: God is madly in love with you". I've learnt that for myself, I've learnt that for others, and I've watched others learn that in the most difficult circumstances.

What fruit do you hope to see in your context? What is your dream for this ministry?

Sometimes we don't get to see the fruit, sometimes we do. I want to see people living more wholly in those four relationships, I want to see people growing and blossoming in those four relationships. I'm also a relationship counsellor, my whole life is about people and their relationships. Everything I do is about those four relationships now.

For Anglican prison chaplaincy, my dream is to increase our footprint in the prisons, to be able to reach more people. For myself, it's to be able to be more true and more vulnerable in each of those four relationships; to live out the new creation that God is forming within me.

What encourages you in your work?

Our ACJM chaplaincy team encourage me – our ACJM team get together once a month online, and we care for each other, and we tell each other stories, and we listen to each other, and we support each other. I'm really privileged, because I supervise the other chaplains I get to spend 1-1 time with them regularly as well. And I am encouraged by their ministry, and their growth, and their faithfulness to God. And of course, I'm always encouraged by the men I serve as I see God working His grace in them.

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

We're here! So often it feels like prison chaplains work in a place that people generally don't want to think about. And they definitely don't want to ever believe that they or anyone they love are going to be there. Sometimes it can feel like we're "behind the wall" in more than one way. So I'd just like them to know we're here, and to pray for us.

ACJM is a partnership between the Anglican dioceses in the Province of Victoria and Anglicare Victoria.

A volume for greater love and justice

■ Enqi Weng

Deborah R. Storie, Barbara Deutschmann and Michelle Eastwood (eds). *Reading the Bible in Australia*. Wipf & Stock, 2024.

This edited volume is a welcoming and refreshing addition to Australian academic literature on theology, particularly through its centring of Indigenous perspectives. It is a compilation of chapters responding to Meredith Lake's (2018) multi-award-winning book, *The Bible in Australia: A Cultural History*.

Published a year after the failed Voice to Parliament referendum, this book is timely as it addresses not only the historical role that churches have played in colonisation, but also the ongoing impact this has on Indigenous cultural systems and spirituality, and more broadly Australian landscape and environment.

As a collective of voices, truth-telling is key, as theological reflections centre on topics that address the persistent tension between Indigenous and settler-Australians. This volume concludes with a response from Lake herself, as part of an ongoing dialogue. The edited volume addresses several key themes, with a strong focus on addressing cultural perspectives – broadly conceived – topically.

The volume foregrounds Indigenous perspectives, beginning with a 'Healing Prayer' from Safina Stewart, who also pro-

vided the front cover visual for this volume. Key Indigenous Christian leaders Pastor Ray Minniecon and Dr Naomi Wolfe drew on their lived experiences to illustrate how specific Bible passages can be recontextualised to address the afflictions and violence inflicted on Indigenous people. Professor Aunty Anne Pattel-Gray continues her advocacy for greater awareness of colonial violence perpetrated against Indigenous communities across Australia. Her work also demonstrates the diversity of Indigenous perspectives, as she thinks "it is necessary for Aboriginal people to decolonize themselves and to realize that the Bible is still being used by some to colonize us".

Some closer reading of specific chapters will provide a richer view of what this volume offers, and more poignantly, how as settlers we can critically examine our perspectives of the Bible. Brian Fiu Kolia offers a diasporic Samoan perspective in reading Exodus 12-13. He considers that seeing the Bible from a different cultural perspective can offer fresh ways of thinking and meditating on God's word. In particular, Kolia shares that the Pasifika use of *talanoa* is one that "will allow us to consider questions, perspectives, dimensions, and experiences that Western methodologies do not usually consider". The aim of this approach is also to "stimulate conversation and dialogue". In Kolia's view, adopting the use of *talanoa* to read the Bible differs from the way his

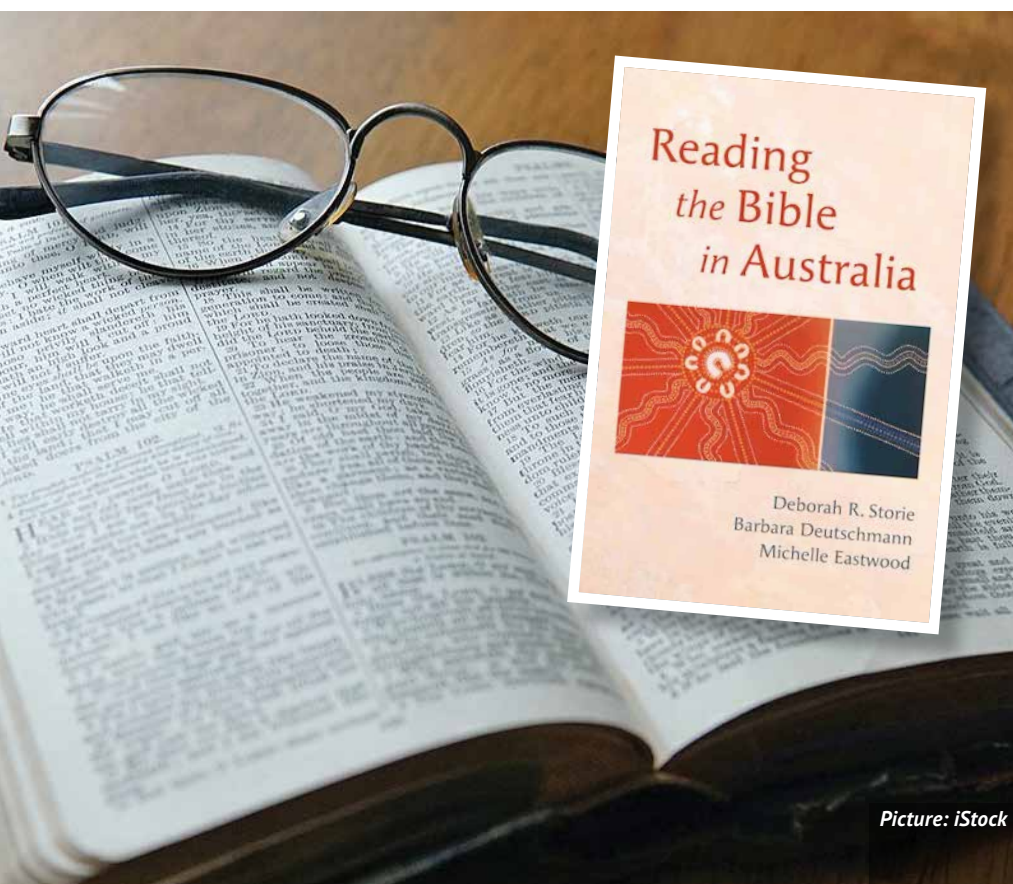
communities have been traditionally taught through Western ways to interact with the Bible.

Mark G. Brett and Deborah Shuh Yi Tan examined the translation of Genesis 1 by Assistant Aboriginal Protector William Thomas in his outreach to Aboriginal people in the Port Phillip District, and how his approach changed across his work. Though initially Eurocentric in his worldview and approach, he shifted to a transliterated approach overtime, as he attempted to present a distinct creator God who is relatable within Aboriginal cultural contexts. This work was short-lived, however, and similar to other historical attempts in Australian history towards intercultural contact and engagement.

Jonathan Cornford adopts an economic perspective in his chapter, as he focused on Jesus' teachings about money and how Australians have historically interpreted this teaching from the time of European settlement. He referenced Donald Horne's thesis on Australia as a lucky country, perceived as so because of its resource richness. As readers, we are prompted to consider who are the benefactors of this luck. The ecological damage that ensues from this perception of luck, through early resource extraction to current environmental crises, were often acted upon based on supposed Christian values. Selective reading, and justification of texts from the Bible have occurred across history, also noted in Michelle Eastwood's chapter on the limited narratives that the Australian Christian Lobby adopts in their conservative Christian public advocacy.

This volume is a significant and timely contribution to contemporary theological and public discourse. It examines the Bible as both a cultural artefact and a message of kingdom redemption and renewal, while also considering the contested and complex history of its introduction to Australia. It emphasises the importance of understanding historical contexts and promotes empathy and justice through recontextualised readings of Biblical texts. I see this volume as occupying that liminal space, of holding onto a hope for a collective capacity for greater love and justice as fellow believers, in anticipation of a reconciliation yet to be fully realised.

Dr Enqi Weng is a Research Fellow, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University and an Honorary Research Associate, Whitley College, University of Divinity.



Picture: iStock



Volunteers at the Flinders St station outreach location.

Picture: Hannah Felsbourg

Christians add voice to Melbourne's public square

■ Hannah Felsbourg

Each Saturday, a dedicated group of Christians gather in Melbourne's CBD to share the message of Jesus in a bustling, multicultural public square.

The outreach team has been present for over a decade, engaging with people from different faiths and cultural backgrounds.

The team aims to have meaningful conversations and challenge misconceptions about their faith in a complex ideological landscape.

St Mark's Spotswood parishioner and Melbourne School of Theology lecturer Bernie Power said the group wanted people to know that Jesus's love was available to all.

The outreach often took place alongside groups including Muslims, Hare Krishnas, and socialists, creating what Dr Power described as a smorgasbord of ideas.

He said he saw this diversity of beliefs in Melbourne's public spaces as an opportunity for Christians to have a voice, rather than withdrawing from society.

He referenced the Benedict Option, a call for Christians to retreat from secular spaces. Dr Power disagreed with this approach.

"If people don't see us there and they see everybody else there, they say, 'Well, Christians have got nothing to say,'" he said.

Dr Power believed that a public Christian presence was vital for people to know the transformation power of the gospel.

The outreach team distribute literature, engage in conversations, and use visual aids, including a quiz board that prompts discussion about what the Koran says about Jesus.

"If people don't see us there and they see everybody else there, they say, 'Well, Christians have got nothing to say'"

Bernie Power

While they engage with everyone from Buddhists to atheists, they also have a focus on Islam, which is prominent presence in the space of public discussion.

Dr Power said that while most people passed by, and some were hostile, many stopped to engage in meaningful spiritual conversations.

He said the outreach started 11 years ago when he and a friend decided to provide a Christian presence in the public square.

Since then, the outreach attracted 15 to 20 volunteers each week, drawing in people from various denominations and

backgrounds who shared a commitment to evangelism.

Over the years, the team has seen around 25 people make commitments to Christ through their outreach, and countless other have engaged in meaningful conversations.

Regular outreach team member Bella Duerkop said her heart broke seeing people walk by with an underlying sadness and hopelessness.

She believed the outreach was a way of expressing to them that there was hope and light.

Miss Duerkop shared a story of an older man who approached the table, burdened by intense negative experiences in a Christian environment.

After hearing the gospel explained in a new way, he said he understood it for the first time. They prayed together and she shared some Christian resources with him.

She said for her, prayer had become a greater focus of the outreach, with many people responding positively when asked if they would like prayer.

Miss Duerkop expressed hope for the future, praying for spiritual gifts such as prophecy and healing to further demonstrate the power of the gospel.

The team has outreach tables at the State Library, the corner of Bourke and Swanston St, and Flinders St between 11am to 4pm on Saturdays.

Jesus, Trump and January 26

■ Peter Carolane

At the inaugural prayer service at Washington’s National Cathedral on 21 January, Bishop Mariann Budde bravely stepped into the role as a prophetic witness to the gospel.

Addressing President Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance directly, Bishop Budde urged compassion and justice, particularly for those marginalised by the president’s newly signed executive orders. She spoke compassionately of the fear felt by LGBTQ children and immigrant communities, challenging rhetoric and policies that risk deepening societal divisions. Her sermon also highlighted the plight of those who labor in unseen roles—the farmworkers, dishwashers, and night-shift workers who contribute to society but live in constant vulnerability due to their immigration status.

Bishop Budde’s resistance to Mr Trump is not new; she made headlines in 2020 when he used St. John’s Episcopal Church for a sham Bible photo opportunity, following the dispersal of racial justice protesters with chemical agents. At that time, Bishop Budde stated, in *The Washington Post*, “Everything he has said and done is to inflame violence... We need moral leadership, and he’s done everything to divide us”.

The reaction to her sermon has revealed the depth of polarisation, with Republican representative Mike Collins posting a video clip on social media, suggesting that Bishop Budde “... should be added to the deportation list”. Speaking truth to power certainly requires massive courage – especially when

the ‘power’ is the United States president, and he has followers who use the kind of violence that led to the attack on the United States Capitol.

Bishop Budde sees bravery as a key part of Christian discipleship, and she wrote about it in her recent book, *How We Learn to Be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith*. She writes that the Christian life is one long, brave journey requiring grace and wisdom. This includes learning to be socially brave – embracing the other and those we find challenging.

“Bishop Budde has modelled a faith that offers meaning and hope, bridging divides not through coercion but through humble and authentic witness.”

The election of Mr Trump is emblematic of the deep divisions in America, political, racial, and economic. We need to pray for the American Church to not deepen these chasms but to bridge them with love and understanding. We should resist the temptation to demonise those with whom we disagree and instead embody the reconciling power of the cross.

Stanley Hauerwas writes in his *Resident Aliens*, about the Church’s problematic entanglement with political power, urging

Christians instead to recover our identity as a “peculiar people” shaped by the narrative of Jesus. Christians, therefore, should not trust in political leaders to bring about the Kingdom of God, and be wary of aligning too closely with any political agenda. Rather, we should bear witness to God’s kingdom of justice, mercy and peace. Following Christ means taking up our cross daily and standing against injustice, even when it comes at great personal risk. It means actively confronting oppression and advocating for the vulnerable.

It’s no surprise that there has been a backlash against Bishop Budde’s sermon. Our modern secular society has pushed faith to the private sphere, marginalising its influence in public discourse: “... *It’s fine to have an Inaugural prayer service, as long as it doesn’t influence my politics*”.

However, Bishop Budde is a great example of the Christian reimagining their role in a secular world, not as a dominant voice imposing her belief, but as a faithful presence that invites others into the transcendent. In the context of politically polarised America, Bishop Budde has modelled a faith that offers meaning and hope, bridging divides not through coercion but through humble and authentic witness. This is the kind of alternative we should be offering the world to the fragmentation and cynicism of our age.

In Australia, Stan Grant reflected on his own experiences as a First Nations person, writing powerfully about the wounds of history and the ongoing struggle for dignity and inclusion in *Talking to My Country*. His insights resonate as we consider the voices

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



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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:
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KOYOORA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS 1800 135 246



Picture: iStock

of the marginalised – both in the USA and here. The rise of Trump has, for many, brought fears of exclusion and increased vulnerability. And as we approach our next federal election over the coming months, we need to be reminded to stand with the least, the lost, and the lonely, advocating for their dignity and proclaiming the good news of Christ's inclusive love.

We experience cultural and political division on January 26. The ongoing debate over Australia Day, celebrated by some as a day of national pride but mourned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Invasion Day, reveals deep divisions within our society. For many First Nations people, this day symbolises the beginning of dispossession, trauma, and the loss of culture and land. As Christians, we are called to acknowledge this painful history with humility, and to listen to the voices of Indigenous Australians who seek recognition, justice, and reconciliation.

In the words of Aboriginal theologian and Uniting Church minister Aunty Denise Champion in *Yarta Wandatha*: "Healing begins when we sit together and listen

"As we approach our next federal election over the coming months, we need to be reminded to stand with the least, the lost, and the lonely."

deeply, not to respond but to understand. Reconciliation is not an event but a way of life". Her wisdom challenges us to embody the gospel's call to unity and peace by prioritising genuine relationships and humility in our engagement with First Nations peoples.

Our faith compels us to pursue a vision of unity that honours the dignity of all people. How might we, as a congregation, engage with this issue in a way that reflects the heart of Christ? Let us commit to learning from Indigenous perspectives, advocating for justice, and being agents of reconciliation in our communities. In doing

so, we embody the gospel's call to love our neighbours and work toward God's kingdom of peace and restoration.

As we seek to be faithful witnesses in these challenging times, let us be encouraged by Scripture. Jesus himself calls us to care for the marginalized, saying, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). And the apostle Paul exhorts us, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). May these verses inspire us to embody God's love and justice in all that we do.

We have an opportunity to model a different way of engaging with political difference and the world's brokenness. Let us commit to being prophetically brave like Bishop Budde – speaking truth to power, while listening deeply, praying earnestly, and acting justly. May we be known as a community that reflects the reconciling love of Christ, offering hope in a time of division.

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

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Picture: Focus Features

Vatican thriller reveals humanity behind papal election

■ Hannah Felsbourg

The Pope is dead. The throne is vacant. His ring, a symbol of his authority, is unceremoniously worked free from his finger – a visceral moment, reminding us that even sacred institutions rest in human hands.

Edward Berger's *Conclave*, adapted from Robert Harris' bestseller, delves into the secretive world of the papal election. After the Pope's sudden death, the College of Cardinals is sequestered in the Sistine Chapel to elect his successor. Cardinal Thomas Lawrence (Ralph Fiennes), the Dean of the College, reluctantly oversees the process amid a personal crisis of faith. Gradually, he sets aside his discomfort with the role to confront the corruption and political plays that unfold over the course of the conclave.

The film's focus on humanity is its greatest strength. The cardinals smoke cigarettes, vape, and use iPhones. We see their hopes and ambitions, their failings and triumphs, and their vulnerabilities. Cardinal Lawrence anchors the story and embodies a steady yet conflicted presence. His early sermon, encouraging the acceptance of doubt, reflects

the film's central theme: the coexistence of faith and uncertainty. It also shows the tension between rigid traditions and the sometimes messy but real nature of faith.

Production designer Suzie Davies' reimagining of the Domus Sanctae Marthae – the cardinals' residence during the conclave – transforms an unremarkable space into a prison-like environment. Shut off from the outside world, it's lit only by clinical artificial light. Coupled with striking red doors and carpets in the hallways, this contributes to claustrophobia and psychological tension, mirroring the locked-up cardinals' precarious positions.

While *Conclave* succeeds in capturing the political manoeuvring and moral complexities of its characters, its exploration of these themes feels restrained. The ideological divides – progressive versus traditional, multiculturalism versus nationalism – are intriguing but often reduced to broad strokes. The narrative flirts with profound questions about faith, power, identity, and corruption but leaves many unresolved or underdeveloped, perhaps deliberately so. A few of these elements will also prove to be controversial to some viewers.

A refreshing element of the film is its multilingual authenticity. Cardinals speak in their native tongues, emphasising the universality and diversity of the Catholic Church. However, the decision to make Cardinal Thomas Lawrence English and Cardinal Aldo Bellini (Stanley Tucci) American rather than Italian as they were in the source novel signals a calculated bid for accessibility and appeal to English-speaking audiences. On the other hand, chosen for his relative anonymity, Carlos Diez as Mexican Cardinal Vincent Benitez (a Filipino character in the novel) delivered a compelling performance in his feature film debut.

Conclave is a thoughtful meditation on the intersection of the sacred and the human. Its portrayal of flawed, vulnerable leaders grappling with monumental decisions resonates deeply, even if the narrative hesitates to push its themes further. Berger invites viewers to reflect on the burdens of leadership and the tension between tradition and progress, reminding us that faith often lives in the space between certainty and doubt.

Conclave was released on 9 January at cinemas.