

THE Melbourne Anglican

APRIL 2025, No 644

St Peter's Jieeng Congregation looks to the future

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St Peter's Jieeng Congregation members. Picture: Jenan Taylor



‘From fear to faith and hopelessness to hope’

■ Bishop Paul Barker

These days, thousands are eyewitnesses to major events. They are recorded on phones and posted on social media within minutes. But nobody saw the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

There were people at his birth, and a few thousand angels around. A large group witnessed his baptism, and heard a voice from heaven. Multitudes witnessed miracles and a crowd was at the cross. But when the cold corpse began to warm up into a transformed body, no one noticed. No one was watching. The guard outside the stone was oblivious. The women and disciples were yet to arrive.

But Jesus rose from the dead, and the world changed. From fear to faith and hopelessness to hope, the followers of Jesus changed.

An empty tomb confronted them, but seeing, touching, eating with and hearing

the risen Lord Jesus changed them. They had denied him and deserted him. But now they witnessed to him, with boldness and, for some, at the cost of their lives. How else to explain this transformation other than the reality of resurrection.

“like Paul, we can witness to the risen Lord Jesus with confidence and boldness.”

No one's life was more turned upside down than the apostle Paul's. From persecuting Christians, his confrontation with the risen Jesus converted him. And so, he will say to King Agrippa: “And now I stand here on trial on account of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors ... It is for this hope, your Excellency, that I am accused by

Jews! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:6-8)

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead brings all of God's promises through the Old Testament to their climactic fulfilment. And the resurrection of Jesus creates hope, because Jesus is the first fruits of all who believe. His resurrection and overcoming of death is the guarantee that we who believe in him will likewise one day rise in glory to the resurrection life.

There is no other hope that is so substantial. There is no other hope rooted in such history and truth. He is alive! Alleluia! Death has lost its sting, so, like Paul, we can witness to the risen Lord Jesus with confidence and boldness.

Easter Day heralds our season of Hope25. Across the national church, let every parish take up at least one opportunity to witness to their community that Jesus is Risen. Alleluia!

Vacant Appointments as of 31 March 2025:

All Saints', Ascot Vale; St Paul, Caulfield North; St James Croydon Hills with St Mark's Wonga Park; St Mark, Emerald; St Matthew Glenroy with St Linus Merlynstone; St Alban, Hamlyn Heights; St John, Healesville with St Paul Yarra Glen; St Aidan, Parkdale; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; St George's Red Hill; St John, Wantirna South; St Thomas, Winchelsea

Appointments:

AMERI, The Revd Bentollhoda, appointed Parish Minister, Emmanuel Iranian Authorised Anglican Congregation, effective 20 February 2025
CAVANAGH, The Revd Jeremy, appointed Assistant Curate, St George, Malven and Hospital Chaplain, Cabrini Hospital, effective 28 March 2025
KHIN, The Revd Nay Htoo, appointed Parish Minister, St Stephen's Anglican Congregation – Karen Community and Holy Trinity, Lara with Christ Church, Little River, effective 9 March 2025
KOREN, The Revd Robert Zvonko, appointed Vicar, St Thomas, Moonee Ponds, effective 30 April 2025
LAU, The Revd Dr Theresa Yu Chui Siang, appointed Dean of Chinese Department, Melbourne School of Theology, effective 25 March 2025
LOOS, The Revd Gerald Lovell, appointed Vicar, St Matthew, Cheltenham, effective 30 April 2025
NADEEM, The Revd Earnest, appointed Vicar, St Aidan, Noble Park, effective 25 March 2025
SCHULLER, The Revd Wayne Paul, appointed Parish Minister, Christ Church, Berwick, effective 20 February 2025
SOLEY, The Revd Stuart, appointed Vicar, St Mary, North Melbourne, effective 11 June 2025

Permission to Officiate:

HOLMES, The Revd Scott, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 14 February 2025

Resignations:

BHONSLE, The Revd Prashant, Parish Minister, Hume Anglican Parish, effective 31 March 2025
KOREN, The Revd Robert Zvonko, Vicar, St Matthew Glenroy with St Linus Merlynstone, effective 29 April 2025
RUAN, The Revd Esther, Parish Minister, Holy Trinity, Doncaster, effective 18 May 2025

Correction:

COOTE, The Revd Leroy Benjamin, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 16 April 2025 – change of date

Clergy Moves



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Lucy Holmes and Kel McWilliam turn words into action to support women's sport on Positive Media's 89.9 TheLight FM.

Picture: supplied

Proper conversations, not ripping into each other: Christian radio

■ Lesa Scholl

A Christian community broadcaster is paying for girls' sports registration fees in response to a commercial radio disc jockey's comments deriding women's football, and women's sport generally.

Marty Sheargold was last month cut from Triple M after his comments raised widespread anger and were branded "crude", "disappointing" and "unacceptable".

Broadcaster Positive Media has launched an initiative to cover sports fees for girls whose families are unable to afford the fees this term.

It comes amid a social media campaign by a group of women and men challenging sexism in media, aimed at removing shock jocks Kyle Sandilands and Jackie O Henderson from Melbourne's airwaves.

The campaign's hashtag #vilekyle went viral due to the KIIS show's reportedly inappropriate content.

Positive Media, which operates radio station 89.9 TheLight, said its initiative showed what was possible when communities banded together.

Families called in to share their

daughters' passion for sport following the announcement on *The Lucy and Kel Breakfast Show*.

A mother of a year 10 basketballer and soccer goalie said she loved the encouragement it gave her daughter.

Another said "I had to pull over, I'm crying so much ... Thank you."

"We see you, we support you and we're cheering you on every step of the way."

Lucy Holmes

Local businesses also called in, donating thousands toward the initiative.

The show's host Lucy Holmes said they wanted their daughters to know their dreams matter.

"We see you, we support you and we're cheering you on every step of the way," she said.

Positive Media chief executive Clayton Bjelan said Christian radio was dedicated to building hope and community in a media space that had become increasingly

angry and polarised.

"We're not going to have calls ripping into each other or anything like that," he said. "We're going to have proper conversations."

There are three major Christian radio broadcasters in Australia – Positive Media (Melbourne), Hope (Sydney) and Vision (Brisbane) – but many smaller stations across the country are run primarily by part-time and volunteer workers.

Canberra's 1WAY FM General Manager Jenny Anderson said listeners appreciated the sense of community and belonging that they experienced with Christian radio.

"We had one person tell us recently that 1WAY FM is the soundtrack of their life," she said. Other listeners said that on days when they were down, the station gave them hope and encouragement.

"We provide family-friendly content that's safe for little ears in the car, so you're not going to get the shock value," she said.

Mrs Anderson said some broadcasters miss the human connection in trying to sensationalise or entertain.

"We're investing in our listeners, in their spiritual health and their relationships," she said.

"We are pleased to see government funding for people to feel safe and supported to practice their faith."

Elizabeth Stone



Picture: iStock

Federal budget not kind enough

■ Lesa Scholl

Faith and community leaders have welcomed investments in safe places of worship and foreign aid funding in the 2025 federal budget.

More than \$170 million was set aside for social cohesion over five years, including to restore Melbourne's Adass Israel Synagogue which was firebombed in late 2024.

It comes amid growing faith and secular community concerns about hate crimes and violence against Jewish, Islamic, Palestinian and Arab communities, and racism.

Melbourne Bishop Philip Huggins said the rebuilding funding was a kind act and a matter of appreciating the importance of having a safe place of worship.

National Council of Churches in Australia general secretary Elizabeth Stone welcomed the move to address social cohesion.

"A multi-cultural Australia is a multi-faith Australia," she said. "We are pleased to see government funding for people to feel safe and supported to practice their faith."

Additional funding in the attorney-general's portfolio included \$1 million for community-based projects addressing modern slavery and \$0.3 million for a national database for hate crimes.

More than \$5 billion in foreign aid will help Australian associations provide food, clean water, healthcare, education and protection for children in our region.

World Vision chief executive Daniel Wordsworth said this investment was a generous show of compassion to people

living in extreme hardship, such as the one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

"Most people want to be helped where they are," he said. "They don't want to have to make long journeys to get out, to find a situation where their children can have enough to eat."

He said the government was threading a challenging needle, balancing national, regional and humanitarian needs in the face of our own cost of living issues.

But social housing advocates were concerned about the almost \$8 billion cuts in this sector.

Australian Council of Social Services chief executive Dr Cassandra Goldie welcomed important investment in essential

services but said the budget did not do enough to help those who need it most.

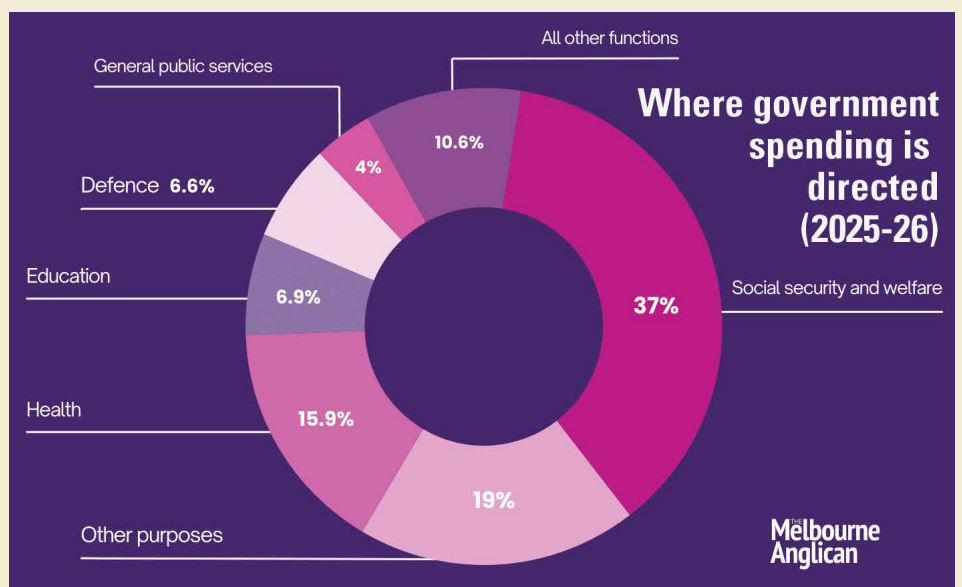
"In the face of a serious cost-of-living crisis ... to give \$7 billion in tax cuts and do nothing to lift people out of poverty is simply shocking," she said.

Mission Australia chief executive Sharon Callister said the budget was a missed opportunity to address the ongoing housing emergency.

"The need for homelessness and housing services has surged," she said.

Ms Callister said Mission Australia's homelessness services had seen a 19 per cent increase in demand in the last year.

"Many people are a rent increase, missed mortgage payment or eviction notice away from homelessness," she said.



Based on Commonwealth of Australia data.

Nominators board members step down

■ Penny Mulvey

A time-consuming workload was part of the reason some people had stepped down from the Board of Nominators, synod members were told in a recent update about the archbishop election process.

Four people have stepped down from the board which originally comprised 18 members when it began formal meetings in August 2024.

In the communique Board of Nominators chair Jenny George reminded synod members that while board vacancies had to be filled if they occurred before the board's first meeting, the same was not true after this meeting.

Dr George wrote that the board members had stepped down for a variety of personal reasons.

She said the board had met 20 times as full board since 10 August, "involving more than 71 hours" of the group's time.

Dr George also explained that individually, board members had put in many hours in small groups focussing on specific topics, such as writing a diocesan profile, analysing feedback from synod members,

and managing board logistics.

The chair also addressed the timelines leading into the election synod and details of a second day if required. Diocesan administrator Bishop Genieve Blackwell has named 23 and 24 May as the synod election dates, but the communique did not lock in those dates.

"My hope ... that conversations are not held behind closed doors or in emails."

Craig D'Alton

In the update, Dr George acknowledged the complexity of the synod act and provided a summary of the processes the committee was undertaking.

Finally, she asked synod members to pray for the board and the diocese, and to not badger board members with questions about their work as this could be problematic for confidentiality.

Some members of the last election synod in 2006 recalled the stress of the

election process.

Commenting on Facebook about *The Melbourne Anglican's* recent article about election harmony, Reverend Dr Craig D'Alton wrote "My own recollections are vivid and even traumatic. I'm sure I'm not alone in that, but I'm equally sure that others will have contrary memories."

The Venerable Dr Colleen O'Reilly wrote in response: "I had actually had a brief period of what I would now call PTSD after the last election. I was a member of the Board and could not speak in the Synods. Remember we had two before eventually electing and did that on an additional night. When I ran into one of the candidates in London much later and he kindly asked about the Diocese I burst into tears when I spoke – me! In tears in public! I felt ashamed of us all."

In further reflections, Dr D'Alton expressed concerns about the election process itself. He believes it is deeply flawed, and a proper overhaul is needed.

"My first hope would be that people leave dirt in the ground rather than flinging it. Second, that conversations are not held behind closed doors or in emails."



The election synod for a new Melbourne archbishop could take place on 23 and 24 May.

Picture: file

Homelessness criminalised fears

■ Lesa Scholl

People experiencing homelessness could be criminalised under an inner-city council's proposal to fine people sleeping rough on its streets, faith and community leaders say.

Port Phillip City Council is considering the fines after a councillor proposed by-law amendments, including outlawing sleeping, lying or sitting on, and residing in temporary accommodation on footpaths or Council land.

Faith and homelessness advocates believe this could penalise already vulnerable people in the community and add to their disadvantage, including potentially eroding their physical and mental health.

Homelessness support charity network Stable One chief executive Katherine Kirkwood was horrified the proposal was being considered.

"There are not enough houses for people. There are not enough homes," Mrs Kirkwood said. "It's literally pushing people further out of their communities, out of places where they might actually have some relationships."

She said she would love to see more communities joining together to do something constructive about homelessness.

"Stable One stands very firmly against any approach that seeks to criminalise living rough because it's just penalising people who are already vulnerable and pushing them further into crisis," she said.

Mrs Kirkwood said Stable One's work was important because it offered connection and treated their guests like human beings.

Stable One guest "Sam" said "Just having a decent meal has improved my mental health – a nice shower and breakfast each morning made me feel like a human again."

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

Many Rooms kitchen coordinator Peter Sellars said the lack of emergency accommodation was a real problem for people who were in desperate need.

He said although Many Rooms fed people on the doorstep of St Paul's Cathedral, many of them went further out of the city to sleep to places like St Kilda.

He said one of the men who came regularly said he would now have to be more cautious about where he slept.

Another young girl had been on the streets for more than four months and was scared to go anywhere.

"I gave her a blanket, I gave her a windshield, I gave her a bag of clothes,

but she wanted housing, and she was very scared," he said.

"Feeding is only a band-aid."

Emergency relief organisation Boroondara Community Outreach coordinator the Reverend Natalie Dixon-Monu said a significant number of people sleeping rough experienced mental illness and trauma compounded by complex medical conditions and self-medicating.

"If you're a paranoid schizophrenic, you can't live in a rooming house with 45 other people who themselves are paranoid schizophrenics or drug users," she said.

She said the current public housing was problematic because it was one-size-fits-all and was run privately for profit.

"We need to provide not-for-profit supported housing so people with chronic mental illness can be in an environment where they can be supported," Ms Dixon-Monu said.

Chair of the Melbourne diocese's Social Responsibility Committee the Reverend Dr Gordon Preece said the housing crisis meant older women were the most likely to become homeless.

"You need some form of wrap-around care," he said.

"It's medical care, there might be financial advice, there might be a range of things that people occupy themselves with," he said.

"It's not just a roof over their head and some food."

Former St Kilda mayor the Reverend Tim Costello said St Kilda was the first council to put rate-payer dollars into social housing, but state and federal funding was needed.

"The big dollars are state and federal dollars for housing. No council can be left to do that," he said.

Mr Costello said it was criminal to have so failed to have enough emergency housing.

He said in any western society in the world, 10 to 15% of its population would be at risk of homelessness due to domestic violence, addiction issues or mental health issues.

Mr Costello said there was no mystery as to why Melbourne had a homelessness and attendant crime situation, because it only provided emergency housing for three per cent.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing 2023–24 annual report said a total of 101,804 clients received social housing assistance.

Homelessness Australia chief executive Kate Colvin said the priority was providing social housing, not criminalising people at their most vulnerable.

"Moving people on who have nowhere to go is cruel," she said. "It won't help communities, but it will harm those who are already struggling."

Port Phillip mayor Louise Crawford said homelessness is a complex issue requiring compassion and a range of agencies working together.

"Rather than targeting individuals, our recent Notice of Motion was intended to help us better understand what we can do as a Council to help address encampments on public land, which have raised safety concerns in our community," she said.

She said the Council would consider the option for changes to local laws at their May meeting.

"If Council then supports proceeding with any local law changes, the next step would be community engagement," she said.

Ms Crawford said there would be a roundtable on the underlying causes of homelessness including representatives from police and service providers in March.



Picture: iStock



Australian University of Theology vice-chancellor James Dalziel.

Picture: supplied

Theology college becomes university

■ Hannah Felsbourg

Thousands of theological graduates will soon hold degrees from an Australian university rather than a college, potentially boosting their credentials worldwide.

The Australian College of Theology has been elevated to university status and renamed Australian University of Theology after an eight-year regulatory battle.

Graduates across 16 affiliated colleges nationwide, including four in Melbourne, will now receive university qualifications.

AUT vice-chancellor James Dalziel said the recognition reflected years of high-quality work rather than a new direction.

He said the court case at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal became necessary after encouragement from the regulator to apply for university status was followed by resistance.

That began an eight-year battle with TEQSA over whether ACT met the requirements to become a university.

The institution officially received university status in December 2024 and began operating as Australian University of Theology in January 2025.

Professor Dalziel said the university designation brought potential benefits including enhanced recognition for graduates working internationally and

future access to research funding.

This funding would become available once AUT was added to specific legislation that governed university research support, a process that could take some time.

Meanwhile, Sydney College of Divinity has deliberately chosen to remain a University College despite having doubled in size over the past three years.

In Australia's higher education system, Australian University status requires demonstrating research at world standard across all teaching disciplines.

University College status acknowledges quality teaching with less demanding research requirements.

SCD dean Stephen Smith said the institution decided against pursuing university status to avoid research compliance requirements that would distract from their mission.

He said SCD produced world-class research, scholarship, conferences and publications – but by choice instead of regulatory requirement.

Professor Smith said his hope was for SCD graduates to be able to help change their corner of Australian society in the name of Jesus.

He said SCD emphasised the broader study of divinity in the classical style rather than the narrow area of theology.

Instead of institutional academics, this approach produced scholars with a heart for mission and ministry who could apply their learning in their local context.

He said growth at SCD resulted from innovations including planting new colleges, with a new start-up college established each year for the past three years.

According to the Department of Education, faith-based education constitutes approximately five per cent of university enrolments in Australia.

More than 8000 students are enrolled specifically in religious studies courses.

Melbourne-based theological colleges associated with AUT are Ridley College, Melbourne School of Theology, Reformed Theological College, and Presbyterian Theological College.

There are now three Australian Universities with primarily theological focus: Australian University of Theology, University of Divinity, and Avondale University.

Other faith-based universities include Australian Catholic University and University of Notre Dame.

Four other theological institutions hold University College status: Moore Theological College, Sydney College of Divinity, Excelsia College, and Alphacrusis University College.

Diverse insights at anti-violence forum

■ Jenan Taylor

Melbourne Anglicans heard about the diocese's gender-based violence work in culturally and linguistically diverse communities at a forum ahead of International Women's Day.

The Preventing Violence Against Women in Multicultural and Faith-Based Communities forum featured learnings from the Safe and Thriving CALD Anglican project, research from Deakin University, and observations from a panel of multicultural clergy.

Panellist the Reverend Xiaoxi Lou hoped the forum would increase awareness about violence in communities, which often was visible, but frequently unacknowledged.

She hoped it would assure people caught in violent situations that the Church supported them, while simultaneously making others aware they too could act to counter family violence.

"Different cultures will often deal with violence differently, and being a voice to acknowledge that God and the Anglican church do not see violence as ok within the family, can help bring light and truth to these situations," Ms Lou said.

The Reverend Prashant Bhonsle participated because he was concerned about the world being divided by gender lines, globalisation, and especially patriarchy.

He believed the focus on growing churches tended not to give long term consideration to how congregations would evolve without integrating gender justice and challenging the patriarchal structures of society.

"We would not really be able to have a holistic, ecumenical and justice-oriented approach in our congregations without that long term thinking," Mr Bhonsle said.

"We need to have gender justice as a core concern running across all our themes and programs of our congregational life right

from the beginning.

"Interpreting the Scriptures with an inclusive dimension is very important for any priest to foster an inclusive understanding."

He said this was important to empower women as well as people with different gender orientations in congregations.

"Unless we affirm that we are all created in the image of God, we will be unable to sail forward," Mr Bhonsle said.

CALD PVAW project officer Sarah Aruliah said the four-year old initiative had given the diocese a better understanding about the CALD space. There were many unique layers that needed to be covered in violence prevention work with respect to faith and multiple cultures.

Ms Aruliah said the diocese was leading the way in intersecting those areas and working with different cultures, but it was still learning in the space and building support networks with other faith-based and secular organisations.

Upside Down Revolution for justice, compassion

■ Jenan Taylor

Christians at this year's *Surrender* convention were encouraged to commit to championing justice for those at the margins, amid the rise of nationalism.

Themed the *Upside Down Revolution* the two-day gathering aimed to explore how Jesus emphasised serving those without a voice and those who did not identify with the religious elite.

Organisers believed it was important to reach out to the oppressed, poor and marginalised, including First Nations people, because that was what God's kingdom was about, amid rising populism, authoritarianism and other tensions.

Conference speakers included Indigenous theologian Dr Anne Pattel-Gray, Missiologist Mike Frost, Agronomist Tony Rinaudo and Aboriginal Christian Leader Brooke Prentis.

Ms Prentis conducted Bible Studies and presented three workshops at the event, two of them together with Auntie Dr Jean Phillips.

These focussed on Aboriginal Christian leadership and ministry, and the importance of truth telling for Christians.

She said the third workshop was about practising reconciliation, and how as Christians, to encourage believers to stand



Picture: iStock

up for justice and solidarity for Indigenous people.

It was more important than ever that Christians understood the truth of what Aboriginal people's lives were like because they faced an increase in racism, including inside the church, and

in disadvantage.

"We're all in a cost of living crisis, but Aboriginal people have been living in poverty, die too young and too often, and don't have the same access and opportunities as non-Indigenous Australians," Ms Prentis said.



'The word of God walks out the door' at Greensborough Christian Book Centre.

Picture: supplied

Bookstore closes, but mission goes on

■ Hannah Felsbourg

Greensborough Christian Book Centre will close its doors at the end of March after more than 44 years of serving the local community.

The ministry space will transform into a drop-in centre focusing on youth outreach, continuing the original 1980 vision of being a place alive, warm, and welcoming.

A thanksgiving service will be held at the end of the month to celebrate the bookstore's legacy.

Christine Kollaris, who has managed the bookshop for nearly 35 years, said the store has been much more than just a retail space.

"We are mission because the word of God literally walks out the door," she said.

"We've had some amazing things happen. We had one lady who came in and she said, 'Do you sell crystal things that help heal people?'"

The customer was looking for something to comfort a friend with cancer, and after being shown various Christian items, left with three gifts despite having no prior connection to Christianity.

"We have no idea how much impact that has in two people's lives," Ms Kollaris said.

The bookshop has been a hub for community events and outreach over the decades, hosting author dinners, live music nights, open mic events and children's book clubs.

One of the most successful events was an author dinner with Tim Costello that drew more than a hundred people, held just before the first COVID lockdown.

About ten years ago, GCBC reopened its coffee shop to provide training opportunities for people with disabilities through Araluen, a disability services organisation.

The space has also served as a sanctuary for vulnerable community members, including those experiencing homelessness.

"We build relationships with the community, but also just provide a safe haven for people," Ms Kollaris said.

All Saints Greensborough vicar the Reverend Julie Blinco-Smith said it was an incredibly difficult and necessary decision to close the bookshop.

She said less people were buying books which had caused similar small and medium bookshops to close.

She said online shopping had increased significantly since the COVID pandemic, affecting demand for physical books.

Ms Blinco-Smith said she had tremendous hope for the future of the space.

The bookshop was originally opened as a Christian presence in the marketplace in April 1980 when the Greensborough Plaza was being built next door to All Saints Church.

Archbishop Robert Dann consecrated and officially opened both the bookshop and what was then called the Turning Point Coffee Lounge.

Ms Blinco-Smith said the vision for the space remained the same despite the change in approach.

"Jesus said 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men and women,'" Ms Blinco-Smith said.

"And so, as followers of Jesus, we're learning to be fishers of people and we're trying a different fishing net, so to speak."

The space will be divided, with half becoming a drop-in centre and half available for commercial tenancy or a social enterprise.

The new drop-in centre will focus on youth needs identified through consultation with the plaza, council, and community police.

Ms Blinco-Smith extended an invitation to the wider church community to consider partnering in the new ministry initiative.

A thanksgiving service will be held to celebrate the bookstore's legacy, prayers that were answered, and vision for the space that was fulfilled.

Attendees are encouraged to bring two books they purchased from the bookshop over the years that significantly impacted their lives.

The service will be held at All Saints Greensborough on Sunday, March 30 at 10am.

The bookshop is currently holding a closing sale with discounts of up to 70 per cent.

St John's celebrates resilience 70 years after fire

■ Hannah Felsbourg

St John's Camberwell commemorated the 70th anniversary of a fire that destroyed their church by supporting a synagogue which recently suffered a similar fate.

The church directed its offering from the commemorative service to Congregation Adass Israel, whose Ripponlea synagogue was firebombed in December 2024.

The gesture recognises a shared experience of religious buildings targeted by arsonists, with St John's having been almost entirely destroyed by fire in 1955.

The Reverend Aaron Ghiloni said Christians should stand alongside those harmed for their religious beliefs, knowing that all were God's children.

In a statement to the congregation, the vicar and churchwardens said the donation was appropriate as it resonated with the church's own experience 70 years prior.

The statement said while governments had a responsibility to protect all citizens, faith communities could work to build solidarity governments were unable to accomplish.

Dr Ghiloni said the 70th anniversary

commemoration honoured the resilience of the church community that faced devastation but chose to rebuild.

"They could have merged with another church, but they chose to continue meeting and worshipping in the church hall during those years while rebuilding."

"Windows were blackened and the roof was gone. It was a really powerful memory that I've never forgotten."

Robin Carter

Robin Carter, who was 12 when the fire occurred, remembered seeing the burnt shell of the church from her tram on the way to school.

"Windows were blackened and the roof was gone. It was a really powerful memory that I've never forgotten," Ms Carter said.

She said hundreds of parishioners turned up the next day to see the damage

and rally support for the rebuilding effort.

Ms Carter said the church community had immediately decided to rebuild, setting up the hall as a temporary worship space by the following Sunday.

She said parishioners cleaned approximately 30,000 bricks from the rubble to reuse in the foundation of the new church.

Many also pledged to donate money for the next three years to pay for the construction of the new church building.

The rebuilt church, designed by renowned architect Louis Williams, was completed in November 1957, just two years after the fire.

An article from *The Argus* dated 22 April 1955, recorded the fire was set by John Thomas McPhee, who told police he lit fires because of the thrill of seeing the firecars.

Mr McPhee was responsible for burning down three churches and two other buildings, causing £122,160 in total damages, with St John's suffering £100,000 of that amount.

The commemorative service included historical displays, photographs, and an 11-second colour video of the church fire captured by a local resident.



St John's 1955 vicar the Reverend Tom Thomas sitting in the remains of the burned church building.

Picture: supplied



Holy Trinity Hampton Park member Stephen Jones and the Reverend Dr Ian Savage.

Picture: Debadip Dutta

Vegemite and vindaloo as Holy Trinity farewells vicar

■ Jenan Taylor

The curries were rich and hot when Holy Trinity Hampton Park's diverse congregation farewelled its former vicar, and parishioners celebrated his social justice ministry.

Dozens of Holy Trinity's current and past members packed the church in early February to honour Reverend Dr Ian Savage's contributions to the local community and to refugees before he relocated to England.

Dr Savage decided to move back to Ely near Cambridge this year to be closer to family, after the death of his wife Frances in 2022.

Many who'd attended Holy Trinity during Dr Savage's leadership from 2000 to 2019 recalled his great compassion for people who struggled, and the influence of this in his ministry.

This included his efforts to help those who were making their way through the morass of seeking asylum.

Former United Nations staffer Jessica Phillips said Dr Savage's refugee advocacy had played a role in bettering her understanding of the many issues surrounding displaced people.

A church member since infancy, Ms Phillips had often observed how Dr Savage would encourage parishioners to think more deeply about accepting people for who they were.

"There were so many mixed messages about refugee communities. On the one hand people were saying they were skipping queues or taking jobs or handouts," Ms Phillips said.

"It was refreshing when Ian brought this other narrative that these people were not a threat and needed help. It made me feel more compassion towards those communities that I might not have because of those negative narratives that were around."

Ms Phillips believed this instilled in her the importance of living and upholding Christian values, especially in how she treated others, and might have influenced her own career path.

Church committee member Susan Rose said Dr Savage had been there for every one of the congregants and made himself available to anybody else who needed support.

He organised an array of community initiatives, including local food programs, recreation outings for young children whose parents were unable to afford to take them out, and volunteered with alcohol and drug programs at Prahran Mission.

She said Dr Savage played a very important role in her faith, and that of her family's.

"I was an atheist and then when I found my faith, I did the rounds from Assemblies

of God to Seventh Day Adventist to try and find a church where I felt that I could fit in," Mrs Rose said.

"Ian helped guide me into a more comfortable place with my faith. He helped guide me into finding a church because church was never anything that our family had done before then."

Stephen Jones, who presented Dr Savage with a jar of vegemite as one of the parish's parting gifts, said the congregation would miss him greatly, as it did his late wife Frances.

After a farewell service overseen by Holy Trinity former locum Reverend Alex Packett, Dr Savage delighted in the massive multicultural feast prepared by the church's members.

He said he planned to focus on further studies in Ignatian Spiritual Direction when he settled back into life in Cambridgeshire.

A fourth-generation cleric in his family, Dr Savage never ever doubted his calling.

"I guess I wanted to go as faraway as possible from home – to Melbourne – to find out what it meant for me and to explore it for myself," he said.

"My father was a Baptist minister, my grandfather an Anglican priest ordained in Ely, and my younger brother was ordained in Ely too.

"The call to ministry was part of a long, complex family story which is still unfolding!"

Uniting jazz funk and mental health

■ Lesa Scholl

From ukeleles to jazz funk, Caroline Springs parish's *Testify* program wants to build opportunities and wellbeing for young performers in their local community.

The Red Door Church hopes to create a platform for supporting young artists and a space for real conversations.

Associate Pastor Joshua Hennessy was inspired to start the program from his own experiences as a young musician in Melbourne trying to find performance opportunities.

Mr Hennessy said he wanted young artists to have a platform where they could showcase their skill and get paid appropriately so they understood they were valuable.

"We're showing people that they're worth something," he said.

He said when he got opportunities he was expected to be



Local Caroline Springs band Quincoction will play at *Testify*. Picture: supplied

grateful for the experience and exposure.

"There wasn't a whole lot of incentive to continue on with your craft...if there was no way to support yourself in doing it," he said.

Testify has entered a unique partnership with youth mental health organisation Headspace.

At the event the musical performances will be intermingled with people sharing their stories of mental health.

Saxophonist and vocalist

Leon Varela-Mauna said he found out about *Testify* on Facebook when he was looking for playing opportunities for his band Quincoction.

He said he got involved because of how important mental health is right now.

"Words cannot describe the importance of having something like *Testify* to say 'It's ok to speak,'" he said.

Mr Varela-Mauna said he appreciated the program's focus on supporting artists from his

local multicultural community.

"We all come together, we share stories, we share traditions," he said. "The community has what they [young people] need."

Mr Hennessy said it would not have been possible to run *Testify* without the support of Melbourne Anglican Foundation's inaugural Youth Grants.

The Youth Grants were awarded to parishes launching innovative youth programs.

Development Manager Nathan Oliver said they wanted to get behind *Testify* because of the positive difference a church could make by giving a platform for young people to discuss mental health issues in their local area.

He said it was also an opportunity for Red Door to show young people the welcoming nature of the gospel.

The first *Testify* event will be held on 11 April.

Auto skills equipping youth for life in Footscray parish

■ Lesa Scholl

At-risk young people are being equipped with valuable life skills to help them transition into independent living thanks to a community initiative at Footscray Anglican parish.

The workshops focus on car maintenance and safety and are run in partnership with Concern Australia, a youth charity that works with disadvantaged young people across Melbourne.

Footscray vicar the Reverend Canon Nigel Pope said the church was excited to use its facilities to give hospitality and welcome to young people.

"This initiative is about more than just skills – it's about fostering belonging, support and a sense of community," he said.

Young people who participated said the program was fun and they learned a lot. They said they liked that the instructor was non-judgemental toward silly questions.

"They made it fun to learn everything," one participant said.

"It was a great program run by good

blokes and I enjoyed it very much," said another.

Footscray assistant curate the Reverend Dr Kezha Angami said practical skills like car maintenance can make a real difference in people's lives.

"We hope these workshops will not only teach but also build confidence and community," he said.

Concern Australia chief executive Judith Atkinson the partnership with Footscray was an exciting extension of the range of workshops and programs they already provide across Melbourne.

"It will be a great way to help build positive community connections for young people as they transition to adulthood," she said.

Funding for the pilot program was provided by Maribyrnong City Council.

Concern Australia grew out of projects initiated by the Reverend Dr John Smith over 40 years ago. It provides a range of services to young people including employment skills, housing and homelessness outreach.



L to R: Bettina Twyman, Reverend Canon Nigel Pope, Judith Atkinson, Jason Cassar, and Reverend Dr Kezha Angami Picture: supplied



Prayers, support after earthquake

Devastation in Myanmar
Picture: Chindwin News Agency

■ Hannah Felsbourg

The international community is sending aid to assist thousands affected by the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in Myanmar.

The 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck central Myanmar on Friday, March 28, 2025, killing more than 1700 people and injuring over 3400, according to United Nations reports.

Rescue efforts continue in devastated areas including Mandalay, Sagaing, Naypyidaw and Magway, with hundreds still missing beneath collapsed buildings.

Anglican Overseas Aid CEO Jo Knight said prayer was an essential complement to practical aid.

"Our offerings are but small in such an overwhelming situation of need, but in God's power He can work to bring healing in such brokenness," Ms Knight said.

She said the church on the ground could be an incredible force for good in the disaster response.

"We send our practical support with our prayers — they go hand in hand," Ms Knight said.

According to Caritas Australia, at least 20 fatalities occurred at a mosque in Mandalay, while the air traffic control tower at Naypyidaw Airport collapsed, killing all staff on duty.

The organisation also reported that a 1000-bed hospital in Naypyidaw was now a mass casualty area, with Mandalay General Hospital full and no longer admitting patients.

AOA disaster response and resilience coordinator Tim Hartley said Myanmar had suffered several disasters in recent years.

He said the country was still responding to Typhoon Yagi which struck in September 2024.

"Myanmar's civil war has directed many national resources toward conflict, severely impacting the country's resilience," Mr Hartley said.

Ms Knight said the earthquake had hit a country already facing multiple humanitarian crises.

"Myanmar's civil war has directed many national resources toward conflict, severely impacting the country's resilience."

Tim Hartley

She said the situation was particularly complex because the earthquake had struck across zones of civil conflict, with some areas held by government and some by rebels.

According to UN News reports, Myanmar has been in civil war since February 2021 when military authorities overthrew the civilian government and launched a crack-down on pro-democracy demonstrators.

Opposition forces have called for a two-week ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid to reach those in need.

Amnesty International reported that more than three million people remained internally displaced from the armed conflict.

Al Myanmar researcher Joe Freeman stated Myanmar's military had a longstanding practice of denying aid to areas where groups who resist it were active.

UN News also reported that despite the earthquake's devastation, some military airstrikes had continued in affected regions, further complicating rescue and aid efforts.

AOA is working through its ACT Alliance partner Christian Aid to deliver emergency assistance.

Ms Knight said local partners through church agencies were already positioned in the affected areas and were currently conducting rapid needs assessments.

Mr Hartley said teams on the ground were traveling to impacted areas to assess, categorise and catalogue the damage and its severity.

He said the initial response would focus on distributing food, water, and shelter to the hardest-hit regions.

Caritas Australia humanitarian manager Sally Thomas said emergency services were battling against destroyed infrastructure and struggling to move tons of rubble to save lives.

She noted that blocked roads and damaged hospitals were hampering recovery efforts in the aftermath of the earthquake.

Those wishing to support Myanmar earthquake relief can donate through appeals launched by Anglican Overseas Aid or Caritas Australia.

Christians beheaded claims

■ Hannah Felsbourg

Christians in the Democratic Republic of Congo continue to gather despite claims of the recent killing of 70 believers in a church.

According to Open Doors field sources, the believers were abducted on 13 February, and later allegedly found dead, some beheaded, in a Protestant church in Kasanga, North Kivu.

They claimed the Allied Democratic Forces, an Islamic State-affiliated group, carried out the alleged massacre after abducting the Christians from the nearby village of Mayba.

North Kivu Anglican bishop Muhindo Isesomo said if church members were still gathering in churches to pray, it was because they had not yet lost trust in God.

He said Christians in both the Beni and Lubero regions of North Kivu province had suffered because of ADF atrocities since 2013.

Bishop Isesomo said many village churches had closed as members fled to urban areas for safety.

He said every day Christians prayed that the violence would stop.

"Christians in the West have to know that people, especially Christians, are suffering here, therefore they are in need of peace, they need shelter," Bishop Isesomo said.

According to Open Doors field sources,

the attack began around 4am on 13 February when militants believed to be from the ADF went door-to-door in Mayba.

Twenty Christians were initially captured.

When the community gathered later to discuss rescuing the captives, the militants surrounded the village and took 50 more believers.

All 70 were taken to an abandoned CECA20 church in Kasanga where they were allegedly killed, with reports claiming there were indications many were beheaded.

Some families were reportedly unable to bury their dead for several days because of security concerns.

Open Doors claimed all 70 victims were identified as Christians from Mayba and surrounding communities. They are currently waiting on a list of names.

"We don't know what to do or how to pray; we've had enough of massacres. May God's will alone be done," an elder of the CECA20 Church said according to Open Doors.

Bishop Isesomo said Christians in safer areas had welcomed displaced people into their homes and offered support including food and clothing.

He said the most immediate needs for displaced people included supplies such as food, medicine, soap, bedding, and clothes.

He urged the international Christian community to support believers in North Kivu through prayer, material support, and

advocacy to government organisations.

Open Doors Australia executive director Anna Hutchins said many believers had fled the Lubero region where the alleged massacre occurred, leaving their livelihoods behind.

She said others chose to remain to maintain a Christian witness in the region, even to those who were persecuting them.

"The Christians who have remained there have remained because they want people to hear about God," Ms Hutchins said.

"If all the Christians flee, then there is no one to share the gospel."

DRC has risen six places to number 35 in Open Doors' latest World Watch List, which ranks countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution.

The organisation reported that 355 Christians were killed for their faith in DRC in 2024, compared with 261 the previous year.

An estimated 10,000 were internally displaced, ten times more than in 2023.

DRC is a predominantly Christian country, with Pew Research Centre estimating in 2010 that more than 95 per cent of the population were Christian.

"I would encourage people to pray to God for their brothers and sisters in this country that might feel far away, but they are family. We are one – we're the body of Christ," Ms Hutchins said.

Minority massacres increase strain on Syrian hospitals

■ Lesa Scholl

Aid agencies warn their ability to respond to recent massacres in Syria has been jeopardised by hospital closures due to funding cuts, including to the United States Agency for International Development.

Closures increased pressure on remaining hospitals by 50 per cent prior to the massacres, compromising their ability to treat patients.

Church leaders across the globe have condemned the targeting of minority groups, including Christians, in Syria.

More than a thousand civilians were reportedly killed in communities on the west coast of Syria earlier this month.

The World Council of Churches joined with the Heads of Churches in Syria to denounce the targeting of innocent civilians, mostly from the Alawite community but also

other minority religious groups.

WCC general secretary the Reverend Professor Dr Jerry Pillay called on all Syrians to work toward a future rooted in justice, healing and peace.

"We must strive for a reconciled society where the dignity of all is upheld," he said.

Save the Children's Syria Response director Bujar Hoxha said 45,000 people have been displaced as a result of this escalation in violence.

"Many children in Syria have already had a lifetime of war," he said. "Now, once again, they have been cruelly thrust into brutality."

Save the Children partner Syria Relief representative "Anas" said there is a shortage of water, electricity and bread.

"Everyone is still scared," he said.

"Ghadi" and his family fled Jablé, one of the massacre sites, on 7 March.

"I do not dare return to my house," he

said. "There are still dead bodies on the road."

Médecins Sans Frontières said west coast hospitals at Latakia, Tartus and Banyas each admitted more than 120 patients with gunshot wounds and other traumas.

In Jisr al Shughur, northwest Syria, the hospital received 94 patients, 13 of whom were dead upon arrival.

MSF provided trauma kits to these areas and were working to open a new project to support the Tartus emergency room, with medicine and mass-casualty response training.

"Many hospitals have been closed due to donor funding cuts, including USAID, which is jeopardising the possible reconstruction of the healthcare system that is already exhausted," they said.

"MSF is calling for the protection of civilians, medical facilities, patients and healthcare workers in Syria."



Bishop Billings with pilgrims in front of St George's Cathedral Jerusalem in 2022..

Picture: supplied

Let Light Shine! for Holy Land college

For those who have had the opportunity to be a pilgrim to the Holy Land by attending a course at St George's College in Jerusalem, the experience is almost always reported to be a life changing one. This was true for Bishop Bradly Billings when he joined the Easter Fire pilgrimage at the college during Holy Week in 2017. Bishop Billings, who now chairs the Australia / New Zealand regional committee that supports the college's ministry, writes of the critical situation now facing St George's College.

■ Bradly Billings

St George's College was founded in 1920 to be a training seminary for Palestinian ordinands.

In the 1960s, as the number of candidates for the ordained ministry fell, the college was transformed into a centre for pilgrimage, hospitality, and spiritual formation, for the worldwide Anglican Communion. The college is co-located with St George's Anglican Cathedral, and the administrative offices of the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East, in a compound 10 minutes' walk from the Damascus Gate in East Jerusalem.

Open to all, lay and ordained, Anglicans and others, it has welcomed thousands of pilgrims from around the world to the Holy Land for a uniquely local experience of pilgrimage, that also strongly emphasises reconciliation between members of the three great monotheistic religions – Christians, Jews, and Muslims.

But the past few years have presented multiple challenges. Unable to welcome any pilgrims during the COVID-19 pandemic, the college was desperate to reopen as soon as it became possible to do so, with resources

running dangerously low.

Pilgrim numbers began to rise in 2022, and the future looked brighter, with courses the college offered in 2023 at near capacity, and 2024 and 2025 courses quickly filling. Then, in October 2023, the conflict in Gaza erupted.

After ensuring the safety of the pilgrims who were in the college on 7 October 2023, St George's closed, and has remained closed since.

With its primary source of income, the fees paid by pilgrims attending courses, now cut off, and with no future bookings to rely on due to the uncertainty of the security situation in the region, resources have again run dangerously low. They are at a point where the future of the college itself, and the livelihoods of its staff, several of whom are local Palestinians, are now seriously in doubt.

A global campaign, *Let light shine!* has been launched in response to this critical situation, with the goal of ensuring the long-term future and viability of St George's, by raising funds from alumni, friends and supporters of the college, and fellow Anglicans, from around the world. Spear-

headed by the three regional committee's – Australia/New Zealand, Britain, North America – the campaign for St George's College asks for spiritual support in the form of prayers, and for tangible support in the form of donations.

The Most Reverend Hosam Naoum, Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, makes this plea to Anglicans everywhere: "We are asking all our friends around the world to come together to help St George's College and to walk with us during these dark times of war and distress. We ask you to be companions on the way so that we may continue to work and serve Christ in the ministry of pilgrimage and love and light."

For those interested in hearing more, an online webinar with the Dean of the College, Canon Richard Sewell, will take place at 5pm Melbourne time on Tuesday 6 May. It will give Anglicans in our region an opportunity to hear about the situation in the Holy Land, together with the challenges facing the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East, and the ministry of St George's College Jerusalem.

Registrations (no cost) can be made here: tinyurl.com/yfvzmz29.

For further details contact bbillings@melbourneanglican.org.au.

Bishop Bradly Billings is a member of the executive and foundation which governs St George's College, a position that entails travel to Jerusalem each year for its annual meeting.

Key to a harmonious election synod?

■ Penny Mulvey

I was a synod representative the last time the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne had an election synod. You might have similar memories to mine. The election synod was political. Some of the candidates being put forward as potential archbishops (they were not present), had their characters publicly besmirched by individual synod members; or the different political groups within the synod voted en masse either against or for a particular leader who had been nominated.

My first experience of a synod meeting was the meeting prior to the election synod. It was reasonably straight forward. Discussions about matters impacting the diocese, voting taking place in the Houses of Clergy and Laity, the synod service etc.

The election synod was a different matter as I mentioned above. Why any clergy person would want to have their name put forward for archbishop was beyond me. Just to go through that process meant that their character was on full display, as members of the two houses gave their opinion about the different candidates. It became a character assassination. Some of the behaviour of synod members was shameful.

One well known member of the clergy agreed to have his name put forward for election, and in one voting round he scored quite highly. No decision could be reached so another vote took place. The same person received two votes!

Ultimately, no outcome was reached at this first election synod. The voting process was put on hold while the nominations committee searched for a new round of potential candidates.

During this time of hiatus, Archdeacon Richard Condie (now Bishop of Tasmania) created a document titled *A Model for*



what binds us together, and to identify issues where we have differences of opinion, with an aim to live in harmony over them.”

His model was to enable conversations between synod members to take place, represented by three concentric circles, the smallest labelled *1st order*, then *2nd order* and finally the outer circle *3rd order*.

Those interested in participating in these conversations were put into random groups

What would you remove and what might you add? This original list is in no particular order:

- The incarnation of Christ
- Singing hymns in church
- Celebrating the Holy Communion weekly
- Inter-faith worship
- The ordination of individuals who are LGBTQIA+
- The divinity of Christ
- The use of liturgical colours
- Attitudes to workplace relations laws
- Lighting of candles
- The authority of Scripture
- Adultery and the fitness for ordination
- The bodily resurrection of Christ
- Women in the episcopate
- The size and composition of Archbishop in Council
- That the Church should be growing
- Using a pipe organ for hymn singing
- Feeding the poor

It was an eye opener for me. One of the people in my discussion group saw “the use of liturgical colours” as a 1st order issue. I was amazed. I didn’t even know what liturgical colours were. I don’t think “women in the episcopate” was much of an issue for me then, but it was important just a year or two later when I started to understand the significance of women in ministry. “The divinity of Christ” and “the incarnation of Christ” would be at the top of my list.

The discussion group enabled us to see things from a different perspective as people from different Anglican traditions sat down and talked to each other. It was a helpful process and has stayed with me.

My prayer for this May’s election synod is that members will be respectful of each other and too, for those whose names are being put forward as potential archbishops.

A Prayer for the Selection of a New Archbishop

*Almighty God, our loving Father,
You have called Your Church to be a light in the world,
a witness to Your truth, grace, and love.
We give thanks for all who have shepherded Your people
and for the faithful leadership that has shaped our diocese.*

*As we seek a new Archbishop for Melbourne,
grant us wisdom, discernment, and unity.
Raise up a leader after Your own heart –
one who will proclaim Christ with courage,
shepherd Your flock with compassion,
and guide Your Church with vision and humility.*

*May the one You call be a faithful servant,
rooted in prayer, bold in mission,
and committed to the renewal and growth of Your Church.
Fill them with Your Holy Spirit,
that they may lead us in love,
standing firm in the truth of the gospel
and open to the fresh work of Your Spirit among us.*

*Lord, in Your mercy, guide those entrusted with this decision.
Protect them from division and self-interest,
and unite us in seeking Your will above all things.
May Your Kingdom come and Your will be done,
in Melbourne and Geelong, in our churches, and in our hearts,
for the glory of Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

Amen.

Conversation. I remember it well, and am grateful that Bishop Condie was able to locate this document.

In the opening paragraph of this model for conversation, Bishop Condie wrote: “What follows is a model that is designed to get us talking about important issues, to come towards some agreement about

and we were invited to look at a table consisting of 17 “issues” and think about whether we saw it as 1st order (essential, unifying), 2nd order (matters of contention) and 3rd order (the non-essential things over which we have liberty).

You might like to consider how you might rate this list of 17 issues. Are they still current?

Election act's blindspot highlighted

■ Philip Nicholls

The process presently underway to elect a new Archbishop of Melbourne has brought into focus some unfortunate outcomes of the *Archbishop Election Act 2022*. Please note that I impute no error on the part of its drafters, nor on the synod that approved it, but rather I seek to begin a frank discussion on how the act needs to be amended during the episcopacy of a new archbishop, should one be elected any time soon, in light of our first application of a new act.

First, it was clearly the will of the synod that approved the act that the Board of Nominators consist of nine clerks and nine lay people, but the act contains no provision for the filling of vacancies after the board has first met.

We are informed by the Chair of the Board, Dr Jenny George, on Wednesday 12 March: that the board currently consists of only six clerks and eight lay people.

The chair and our registrar, Malcolm Tadgell, may believe that filling vacancies after the board has begun its work creates difficulties in briefing new members. They may have a range of reasons, including perhaps seeing other impediments, and I hope that they air them. We cannot know why members have resigned – that is a matter for them – and the implication the above letter imputes, that it may have been due to workload, may seem unfair, I presume, to some board members.

Second, I wish to raise the matter of election of archbishops by synod. I have elicited many positive opinions from synod members about the need to abolish so-called



An election synod is expected to happen in May.

Picture: file

“election synods” and return to a former, but tightened, process whereby the synod elects electors who elect an archbishop in private.

As proposed in the current act, when required, 12 clerks and 12 lay people are elected who can vet candidates and then vote on their suitability. If an elector becomes a candidate, as presently with nominators, they are excluded from the process, or, by virtue of their accepting election as an elector, render themselves ineligible.

A process for filling vacancies would be required here too. This prevents the list of candidates becoming public, which it always will, under the current act, and regardless of implorations of confidentiality. Members of synod could petition and inform their electors who could then get on with discerning the best candidate through the power of the Holy Spirit, without the possibility of a candidate not being elected

and having to face his or her current flock with the knowledge that she or he allowed their name to go forward to be archbishop of another diocese.

If it is the will of the synod which meets with its new archbishop, and I believe it should be, that a future Board of Nominators consist of nine clerks and nine lay people, then the *Archbishop Election Act 2022* must be amended to include provisions for the filling of vacancies after the board has first met.

Also, I believe we should abolish archbishop election synods and return to an elected Board of Electors, ensuring however that a Board of Electors has iron-clad provisions in place to ensure vacancies can be filled so that it never falls below its statutory number of members.

Philip Nicholls is Director of Music, Lay Canon and Child Safe Officer at St Paul's Cathedral.



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The joy and weight of ordained ministry

■ Tim Collison

Before being ordained, I had to write 500 words on: "Why I believe I am ready to be ordained." I found this harder to write than any cover letter. I was not sure I had the temerity to suggest that I could be ready to be ordained. But I quoted two exhortations from the APBA's ordinals for deacons, and priests when I wrote it:

"Christ has called you to the office of deacon. You are to be an ambassador of Christ, serving God as you serve others in Jesus' name."

"Never forget how great a treasure is placed in your care: the Church you must serve is Christ's spouse and body, purchased at the cost of his own life."

As I wrote then, and still believe, these exhortations give me pause. Who am I, who is anyone to hear those exhortations and go through with ordination? And yet, it is those exhortations which also pulled me towards being ordained. I felt called to this role in the body of Christ. In 1 Peter 2 the apostle tells

us that God is building us into a spiritual house, that we are all a holy nation, and each of us stones in that house has a different role.

And I felt called by Jesus to be one of the 'stones' which we Anglicans call "priests". I thought a lot about this calling, this vocation. I was encouraged by the Anglican process which acknowledges that this discernment around your vocation is a two-way process. Others examine you, pray with you and test your vocation. This was important to me understanding the call was a genuine one. So, I felt called, even if daunted by the weight of those words in the ordinals.

I finished my curacy last year, and I've been reflecting on what it means to be in ordained ministry. The first thing I can say is I have not felt this fulfilled in a role before. I've had other roles I enjoy. Other roles I found value in. God's graciousness to me in the call to this ministry is to help me feel that my 'stone' is in the right position in the house!

God's grace is more abundant than we can dare hope for. As well as feeling fulfilled, I've found real joy in being in ordained ministry. To be an ambassador of Christ, to

serve the great treasure which is Christ's spouse and body, is joyful in ways I didn't expect.

"But my church is a great treasure, as is the whole Church. And in God's abundant grace to me, I have the joy of being able to serve them, and with them."

Tim Collison

To see people coming to know the great love Jesus Christ has for them, and committing to serve him has filled me with joy. To see the youth leaders at my church take up opportunities to serve and excel in proclaiming Jesus to the youth group fills me with joy. The joy of celebrating the eucharist with our older saints who cannot make it to church has humbled me. To see the quiet ways members of my church serve brings me life.



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF WILLOCHRA

The Ministry District of Southern Flinders

Anglican Priest

Full Time Position

We seek a Ministry District Priest to minister to, and work with, the people of our rural Ministry District, which is based on the 'Ministering Communities' model. You will be an encouraging leader and an enabler as well as conducting services on a roster basis across small congregations in eight towns. Clergy licensed for local ministry as well as lay leaders will share the service load and look to you as a mentor. The congregations work co-operatively together while maintaining their own different identities. Your engagement with other Christian denominations in seasonal ecumenical services and your participation in the local communities will be both welcomed and rewarding.

The Ministry District of Southern Flinders lies in the northern agricultural district of South Australia. The family sized Rectory is at Jamestown, adjacent the church and hall which is used as a thriving Op Shop serving the community. The other churches are at Georgetown, Gladstone, Melrose, Orroroo, Peterborough, Wilmington and Wirrabara.

Jamestown is 2 ¾ hours north of Adelaide, an hour from the vines of the Clare Valley and the coast at Port Pirie, and 2 hours from Wilpena Pound in the Flinders Ranges. Its medical services include a hospital offering acute and obstetric care. Dental, legal and financial services, schools and retail shops provide everyday needs, while a monthly sheep market draws farmers and agents from across the state.

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

Enquiries to be directed to the Bishop of Willochra, The Rt Rev'd Jeremy James by 15 May, 2025.

Email: bishop@diowillochra.org.au • Phone: (08) 8662 2249



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF WILLOCHRA

The Parish of Whyalla

Anglican Priest

Permanent Position

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

The Parish of Whyalla is centred at St Martin's Church with Rectory and Op Shop in the heart of the city of 22,000. The Church is opposite the Hospital and Health Services. Whyalla is home to Simec Steelworks, multiple primary and secondary schools, public and private, a Campus of TAFE SA and of the University of South Australia. 4.5 hours from Adelaide, it is connected by coach and twice daily flights from Adelaide.

There is opportunity for creative and innovative ministry.

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

Enquiries should be directed to the Bishop of Willochra, The Rt Rev'd Jeremy James by 15 May, 2025.

Email: bishop@diowillochra.org.au • Phone: (08) 8662 2249

One humbling joy that persistently sits with me is the trust people give you. Their willingness to come to you and share what God is doing in their life, and how they might be feeling about that. And then praying with them over and through that issue. The joy of being part of people's lives' in the way Paul calls teachers and pastors to be in Ephesians 4:12-14, to present people mature in Christ is ongoing.

I am so thankful for the opportunities that my church, St Mark's Camberwell, has given me to experience this joy in ordained ministry. Ultimately the joy I have in my role is because as a church, we are the spouse and body of Christ together.

My hope in writing this is not that people think I'm great, but rather that Christ is wonderfully gracious, and calls and fits all of us to the roles he has for us. And my role is only made possible by the participation of the whole church in our call to be Christ's body.

It is easy in today's world to be cynical about the church, even as a disciple of Jesus! But my church is a great treasure, as is the whole Church. And in God's abundant grace to me, I have the joy of being able to



The Reverend Tim Collison.

Picture: Janine Eastgate

serve them, and with them.

I've been told that I often tend to see things through rose tinted glasses. This might be true. And if you catch me in a less optimistic mood I could certainly enumerate some of the costs of ordained ministry. I wanted to focus on the joys, because while I expected to find fulfilment, the regular joy I have in ordained ministry was unexpected.

I am very thankful that we are all

different 'stones' in the spiritual house God is building (1 Peter 2:5). And God puts us in different spaces and roles. The charges in the ordinal are weighty. But if the chance to serve the great treasure that is Christ's body resonates with you, can I encourage you to explore that in prayer, and in discussion with people you trust?

The Reverend Tim Collison is parish minister at St Mark's Camberwell.



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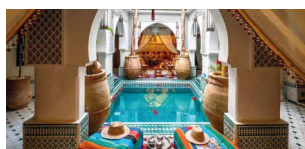
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Emerging leaders encouraged

■ Amy Footson

When I was in my early 20s, I was given an opportunity to work for my local church, and it was during this time that I fell in love with church ministry. I realised the potential for mission through the local church which excited me, and it is when I began to explore my sense of calling to ordination.

A couple of years later, I enrolled in a year-long program, where I journeyed alongside other people exploring church leadership, most of whom thought that they might be called to ordination. I had been involved in lay leadership in different churches in the past, but now I wanted to explore church leadership, ordination, and discern whether God was calling me to ordained ministry.

Being part of an emerging leaders cohort was incredibly valuable, because I was able to ask questions and grapple with different aspects of church leadership in a safe environment, alongside others who were asking the same questions, and were in a similar position to me.

I felt honoured by the investment that my church and the diocese made towards my leadership development and my discernment journey and, looking back, being a part of this cohort and community was one of

the most impactful times in my discernment journey towards church leadership.

I had access to experienced church ministers where I could ask questions, and was given valuable experience. I was also given opportunities to write reflections on ministry during my time, and study one

“Being part of an emerging leaders cohort was incredibly valuable, because I was able to ask questions and grapple with different aspects of church leadership in a safe environment.”

day a week. My church leaders at the time identified the leadership potential I had and encouraged me to invest in exploring my call to ordination and church leadership.

Recalling this, I'm excited by the Emerging Leaders and Potential Planters & Revitalisers Learning Communities the diocese is launching this year. It offers people who are not yet church leaders and

planters, but who want to explore church planting and leadership in the future, the opportunity to explore, ask questions, receive valuable insight and wisdom from experts, and to journey alongside other like-minded individuals.

Having been a part of a different learning community in more recent years, I can say with confidence that the accountability and support that a learning community offers is invaluable for developing as a leader. Journeying with others in similar situations can make a huge difference for development.

Participants are encouraged to think about their own situation and context, reflect upon where they are as a person, and as a leader, gain practical wisdom and input from speakers across the world who are experts in church planting, church leadership and church revitalisation.

If you're someone who isn't yet a church leader but have a hunch that you want to explore church leadership, church planting or church revitalisation, I encourage you to join the next Emerging Leaders or the Potential Planters & Revitalisers Learning Community.

For more details visit melbourneanglican.org.au/church-planting/



The Reverend Amy Footson.
Picture: Janine Eastgate



Participants at the St Peter's Jieeng Congregation anniversary celebration service.

Picture: Jenan Taylor

Strong in dance, strong in faith

■ Jenan Taylor

The ancient air conditioner struggled. The congregation sweltered. But its youngest members bounced into the hall, nonetheless, chirping a Dinka gospel song as they threaded a path through the crowd. Shoulder to shoulder, quick feet slapping floorboards, child after child after child danced for God.

This could have been Juba, South Sudan. Instead, it was a hired public hall, 40 minutes west of Melbourne's CBD. Here, on a sultry Saturday in November, the South Sudanese congregation was celebrating the first anniversary of becoming a recognised a ministry presence in the Melbourne diocese.

The St Peter's Jieeng Congregation started as a plant in 2022 with about 90 worshippers. The throng has tripled since then, defying the trend of the declining Church. Yet its size meant its leaders regularly worried about where to put everyone.

During normal Sunday services, more than 100 members squeezed into the small church the congregation had access to. "At important religious days and events there could be 300 worshippers," added James Atem Mayen, the congregation's safety officer.

Church organisers prepared ahead for the lack of space because they didn't want anyone turned away, he said. Leaders gave

up their seats for elders, pregnant and frail members, and program ministers shepherded children outside the choked venue for prayers or play.

Mr Mayen and other organisers did this now, deftly shifting seats or slipping towards the back of the hall as the arrival of ever more congregants and guests thickened the crowd.

Lack of space was one of the reasons becoming a recognised ministry presence was so important to the congregation.

Its leaders were hopeful, Mr Mayen said, that under the arrangement St Peter's might be able to better secure a permanent place of worship large enough to hold its members, and all its ministry programs.

Then it could pursue its dreams of building a strong local Christian community, and of strengthening the backbone of that cohort, its young people, to become respected leaders in wider society.

Over the next six hours, and in between readings, intercessions, a sermon, and a traditional feast more waves of young people performed for the crowd. A youth choir, robed in purple, thrummed Dinka hymns and liturgies, and teenage and young adult dancers translated further stories of praise and worship through choreographed turns, drops and leaps.

St Peter's had about 130 young congregants aged from five to perhaps 35 years-old, Mr Mayen estimated, and spiritual dancing was one of the things that helped keep them connected to the church.

"Many young people come every week to church, but they usually don't perform during normal services, because there's no room," he said.

Mr Mayen grew up in South Sudan, where Christianity accounts for the faith of more than half the population.

How churches in the newest country in the world were community glue for many believers has long preoccupied a cadre of academic researchers, missionaries and aid organisations.

They documented the Church's role in both worship, and in easing the social, cultural, political and economic wounds many people nursed from an assortment of suffering, including war.

Church was where peacemaking efforts between opposing groups, including different tribes and different generations of people, took place; where they swapped or passed on socio-cultural ideas and ways of expressing faith and prayer.

The pews were often packed with young

Continued over page

people, Mr Mayen remembered, because alongside being disciplined in traditions and values, they were encouraged to celebrate faith through activities like dance.

St Peter's aimed to mirror this approach to grow young generations of Christians, who would contribute to harmony at church, in the Australian South Sudanese population, and in the wider public, he said.

Mr Mayen mentioned he'd invited many guests from outside the church community to the anniversary celebration.

He hoped that witnessing the youths perform, might spark in the guests a deeper interest and better understanding of South Sudanese youngsters than the impressions they might have formed of them from media depictions.

South Sudanese migrants make up a fraction of the wider population, yet their children are often the subject of intense public focus.

Some are scrutinised for their athletic prowess.

But not long ago media and political discussions about these young people were overtly racialised.

They were the kids brawling at festivals and public venues, the troublemakers who made Victorians too scared to go out for dinner, the "African gangs" stealing cars and smashing into police vehicles. They were too tall, too wild, too different to integrate into Australia.

Those narratives ignored that many South Sudanese youngsters were either born or raised from a very young age in Australia, spoke English fluently and often struggled to

relate to what their parents' lives might have been like in South Sudan.

They left the South Sudanese community distrustful of institutions, reluctant to seek help from them, and deeply worried about the harmful effects of these conversations on their children who already battled widespread discrimination.

"While we are focussing on religion, we are also contributing health and wellbeing and a united community."

James Atem Mayen

These effects could potentially drive kids away from school and towards inappropriate influences, they told social researchers.

Mr Mayen wanted to change the conversations about and trajectory for young people. Through the church, they were becoming Christians and good citizens, and were happy to show they were committed to harmony in the community, he said. "While we are focussing on religion, through our activities for young people, we are also contributing to their health and wellbeing and a united community," he said.

These activities were co-designed with children and young people and Mr Mayen believed they prevented feelings of isolation and encouraged better connection and a sense of purpose among them.

The congregation's youth pastor Isaac

Garang Lueth, who is in his late 20s, heads these programs.

Mr Lueth contemplated the rows of young congregants shifting from foot to foot outside the hall, as he described the fragile tie between some young Australian South Sudanese and their lineage.

"Many don't understand their parents, or their own histories because they don't understand their language," Mr Lueth said.

To counter this, he and other volunteers teach participants Dinka, through language classes and through traditional dance, singing and poetry lessons.

It was an important chance for them to learn the words and phrases that helped them understand their origins, and the meanings of the dances, songs and conversations, and speak with their parents, Mr Lueth said.

The participants especially liked the dance because they had so much energy to burn, and saw it as a great way to exercise.

Program leaders also organised competitions with other South Sudanese congregations so the youths could showcase their talents, and skills and aim for excellence.

They planned to teach their young congregants to appreciate and understand different cultures and languages in future and hoped that someday they'd be able to translate and share their Jieeng traditions with others.

But space limits have brought headaches.

The restricted use conditions at their current, too small, place of worship means the St Peter's Sunday School, language and dance classes can only be held on Saturday



*Bishop Billings and St Peter's members.
Picture: Jenan Taylor*



Child members of the St Peter's Jieeng congregation.

Picture: Jenan Taylor

afternoons during a tight time slot. The lack of public transport at these times on brings accessibility hurdles and makes it difficult to schedule activities consistently.

Mr Lueth, who is studying biological medicine, and other program volunteers, often scrap, postpone or juggle their own work, study or social activities to accommodate the needs of their charges.

They have avoided mothballing the young people's activities, so far.

"If you keep cancelling their programs, young people might not behave," Mr Lueth said. "They need their activities to be consistent."

Melbourne diocese Canon for Church Planting Bree Mills estimates the diocese will need about 15 new properties and buildings soon because many new plants were bustling beyond expectation.

Having their own permanent spaces made it much easier for them to grow into full maturity, she said.

But the costs of acquiring new land and erecting buildings meant there was more demand than the diocese was able to resource.

At the celebration, St Peter's warden John Jok briefly contemplated what might happen if it took longer than expected for the congregation to get a permanent site.

It would affect St Peter's ability to grow and to do activities, he said, but not its members' strong hope.

"Our congregation will not be discouraged because it has built tolerance and perseverance. A lot of our members work two

jobs, and they work late, so Sunday services become something they don't prioritise all the time, but church is still very important to us," Mr Jok said. "You see this especially at Ash Wednesday and Christmas and Easter, and the holiest days. Then, our people leave everything, and come and give themselves to God."

"St Peter's has the generations that are missing in most other Anglican churches – children, young adults, young people."

Bradly Billings

The rich savouriness of the traditional South Sudanese feast still hung in the air when episcopate bishop Bradly Billings addressed the congregation about its needs.

He was aware their current arrangements meant people had to wait outside the church and that there was no space where they could have fellowship and share food afterwards.

"You have so many young people and children; many of our parishes and congregations do not have this problem," he said. "We are looking for a larger space that can be available for a longer time, and I pray it will be the perfect place for the future."

In late January, the bishop confirmed that the Parish of St Alban the Martyr agreed to

go into ministry partnership with St Peter's. The South Sudanese congregants would use all the parish facilities including the church every Sunday from 1pm to 7pm.

He was confident the arrangement, starting this April, would be long term, sustainable and mutually beneficial for both parties.

Reflecting on the November celebration, Bishop Billings believed the congregation's composition was particularly promising for the diocese future.

"St Peter's has the generations that are missing in most other Anglican churches – children, young adults, young people like James Mayen who are not just present, but actively involved," he said.

"They take responsibility for governance, lead groups. I feel encouraged when I look around St Peter's and other congregations like this. It's highly likely they're going to go out across the diocese and be future leaders. That's encouraging for everyone."

Mr Mayen was optimistic good things would come from the new provision.

"It's bigger, and we'll have room for all the kids, and they'll have a hall they can use.

"They will be trained on how to pray, on how to read the Bible, on how to dance. And in all these practices, they are being taught to speak in their own language and to know religion in that language.

"There will be another celebration service when the congregation moves into the church," he added.

"You will see. This space will be good for the kids."

Hope can be found in the Statement of

■ Glenn Loughrey

Eddie Gilbert wrote a book in 1972 entitled *Because a White Man'll Never Do It* which is a part of a longer quote attributed to Aunty Alice Briggs which says:

"The only answer is to give them back their land rights and try and let the Aborigine try and rectify what the white man has done because a white man'll never do it."

I recently read this book again and it was as relevant now as it was when written 50+ years ago. Little has changed; it seems that much has got worse. Contemplating the title and the quote from Aunty Alice, I realised it's not that white won't do it, but that he can't.

It is time to name the foundational reason why Australia as a society is unable to recognise, reconcile and share human rights with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in this country. Professor Garry Foley was right on 26 January to say: "The failed Voice referendum showed the greatest obstacle to a better future was Anglo-Australian racism born out of fear and ignorance."

This is my experience and all other reasons given for the Voice's failure emanate from this unholy trinity of devils at work.

Since the late 1970s when this country moved from assimilation after the failure of the extermination policies of the White Australia mantra, it has appropriated ideas of self-determination, rights, reconciliation and recognition as three political phases of engagement with our people.

Each of these policy positions share one significant element – none can occur without the permission of the dominant culture. Self-determination is always attached to funding and the guidelines embedded within them. Failure to act accordingly, effectively as an arm of the government, will see the funding

ceased, and puts a lie to the self-determination. It's up to them.

Rights are not universal. Human rights are available only to those deemed to be human, and those who did not exist (terra nullius and the Voice failure) are not able to access those rights without the permission of the dominant society. This applies to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples statement, which fails because it is administered at the whim of those in power.

Reconciliation in this country is the second phase of the assimilation program. It is all about including us in the dominant society through policies and plans that make individuals, companies and governments feel good about themselves.

"... the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples statement ... fails because it is administered at the whim of those in power."

It is black-cladding and we have been used to give it legitimacy by being employed to implement their policies. It is a key element of the Closing the Gap project. When you become educated, articulate and successful you cease to be Aborigine or indigenous, you become one of them.

We have just exited the recognition stage. This has been the process for several decades and produced the Statement From The Heart which was white anted by the side of politics who asked the Referendum Council to find out what we wanted. *Recognition needs the other to recognise and therefore power remains firmly out of our hands.*

Why Is It So? Why Can't Australia Do It?

To leave it here is cowardice. We need to look at why this is so.

Settler colonialism is the basis of the unholy trinity and is the reason Australia can't recognise, reconcile and institute rights for the original people of this land. What became the White Supremacy project we now know as Australia is the outworking of settler colonialism whose modus operandi is to clear the land of all impediments, including the original people, in order to occupy and utilise the land. Once occupied they have no intention of leaving. They have come to stay.

At the beginning of the Bathurst Wars in 1824 the following response after a stockman was killed by local Aboriginal, William Cox (or perhaps his son) said: "The only way to deal with these vermin is to exterminate them – that includes women and children."

David Marr in his book *Killing for Country* shows how this extermination was carried out.

Australian academic Patrick Wolfe writes in an article published in *Journal of Genocide Research*:

"So far as Indigenous people are concerned, where they are is who they are, and not only by their own reckoning. As Deborah Bird Rose has pointed out, to get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home. Whatever settlers may say – and they generally have a lot to say – the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element."

In this sense the land is deemed to be empty of human beings and therefore they can be managed as one would noxious weeds or feral animals, killing, rounding up

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the Heart



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and domesticating them. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musician, Ziggy Ramo, writes:

“So-called Australia is built upon a lie: that 97% of the population are human. And the others simply ‘Indigenous’, devoid of the same basic human rights.”

The reason Australia cannot engage in dialogue is that there was and remains no one to dialogue with. There are no humans with rights to be included in the constitution or given a voice. There are no humans who deserve better than a life of deficit, incarceration and violence because that is the lot of vermin, those less than human.

“... the circle mat allows us to engage with each other and to begin ... seeing ourselves in the other. It is the process to becoming human.”

There are no humans of value except those we can transform into humans through education, career and property ownership.

There is one suggestion for how engagement can occur which offers hope. Based on the Statement of the Heart and its

key elements: Voice, Treaty, Truth, Makarrata and Justice the circle mat allows us to engage with each other and to begin the lengthy process of seeing ourselves in the other. It is the process to becoming human. I presently use this process in an engagement with Jewish, Muslim and Orthodox clerics and we are about half way through this process after a number of engagements over several months.

The Venerable Canon Uncle Glenn Loughrey is Archdeacon for Reconciliation, First Nations Recognition and Treaty. He presented the above paper at the Whitehorse Friends of Reconciliation Forum in September 2024. It has been edited for publishing purposes.

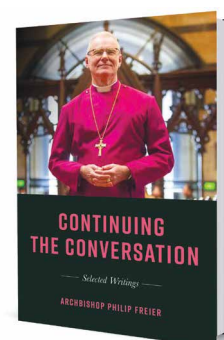
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Hope the 'gift of the gospel', Marmingatha gathering reminded

■ Penny Mulvey

Hope is one of my favourite words. And it appears I am not alone. Anglican dioceses across Australia are participating in Hope25 in this time of Lent leading into Easter. Many of you will be using the Hope25 Lenten series for your daily devotions during this season.

The ministers of the Marmingatha Episcopate gathered for a day's conference at St Jude's Carlton in March, hosted by Bishop Genieve Blackwell, and the keynote from Reverend Canon Dr Rhys Bezzant, Principal, Ridley College focused on hope.

Dr Bezzant challenged the audience to think about what is the leading story of the world in which we live. Could it be 'the age of anxiety' as suggested by American poet WH Auden.

Given the tone exuding from US politics right now, perhaps, Dr Bezzant suggested, we could be in "an age of chaos" or "an age of fear".

He then posed these questions: How should we speak into this world, and what might we bring personally, spiritually, theologically or missiologically?

Excellent questions, but where might we begin?

Dr Bezzant suggested that the motto of many Australians was to live for pleasure now, which he said crowded out any reflection on the future.

"A postmodern culture has no grand story to which we belong," he said.

"Postmodernism was meant to free us from arbitrary power or oppressive narratives, but instead it has led to an anxious generation."

"But in contract, Christians live in hope," Dr Bezzant reminded his audience, "a powerful strategy of resistance to the world around us."

"Postmodernism was meant to free us from arbitrary power or oppressive narratives, but instead it has led to an anxious generation."

Rhys Bezzant

He drew on Romans 5, which lays out the foundations of hope. "Christians can be confident that we are spiritually safe, now and forever, which is hope."

A quick summary of Romans 5, as outlined by Dr Bezzant, explores the different ways the Apostle Paul shows the confidence Christians can have.

The first verse of chapter 5 assures us that we have peace with God through Christ. The Apostle Paul stresses that God's love for humankind is not based on our acts, but on our reconciliation to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This gift of grace comes with no strings attached.

We are offered a certain hope which guarantees a solid foundation in Christ.

Dr Bezzant reminds us that many great Christian leaders have struggled with feelings that have undermined their sense of self but have leaned into the hope promised in Romans 5:3:

"More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."

Dr Bezzant referenced the 19th century pastor, Charles Spurgeon, who regularly struggled with depression.

He told the conference of an engraving in Spurgeon's copy of Pilgrim's Progress. The image was of Christian panicking, swallowed by the depths of a river and going under. The portrait showed Christian's companion, Hopeful, pushing up with his arm around Christian and lifting up his hands, shouting, "Fear not! Brother, I feel the bottom."

That image became an encouraging theme throughout the morning, as different speakers reminded us that "the bottom is good". For Spurgeon, the image captured what Jesus does for us as we experience hard times. "Christ puts his arm around us, points up and says 'Fear not! The water may be deep, but the bottom is good.'"

As Dr Bezzant drew his presentation to a close, he again reminded us that hope is a divine gift, the fruit of the gift of the gospel: "We must not shift from the hope of the Gospel which the world needs to hear."

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Nightingale echo on today's frontlines

■ Lesa Scholl

The current war in Ukraine makes tangible the work of Florence Nightingale in the 19th-century Crimean War.

The Lady with the Lamp is an iconic figure of the resilience and determination of nurses under the most dire and dangerous circumstances.

Nightingale served as a nurse in Scutari during the war that raged from 1853 to 1856.

She is less known for her later work in public health and sanitation, and almost not at all for her work as a theologian, both of which were influenced by her time in a war zone.

Right now, critical care in conflict zones is suffering because the United States has withdrawn from the World Health Organisation and dismantled USAID according to the International Council of Nurses.

ICN chief executive Howard Catton's statement on the role of nurses was reminiscent of Nightingale.

"As peacemakers, nurses play a critical role in healing wounds – both physical and societal – helping to rebuild trust and stability in war-torn areas," he said.

Nursing Association of Ukraine president Tetyana Chernyshenko called on the ICN to help improve the psychosocial state of Ukrainian nurses.

"There are no safe places for nurses," she said.

Many are familiar with the romanticised image of the Lady of the Lamp, but forget the real dangers she faced working in a war-torn area in the same region, also due to Russian invasion, more than 170 years ago.

The hospital was overcrowded and unclean. The blocked drains meant that the floors were covered in excrement.

There were not enough beds, blankets, medicines or food, nor were there sufficient medical staff. More soldiers died from infection because of the dirty hospital than from their war injuries.

These conditions resonate with the malnutrition and want in present-day Ukraine and other conflict zones around the world as medical professionals persist in their determined care, even when the number of injured and ill seems only to increase.

After returning to London, Nightingale struggled with what would now be understood as PTSD. But she also continued her extraordinary work as a prominent social



Picture: iStock

and public health reformer, statistician and theologian.

Nightingale became increasingly reclusive and bed-ridden. She likely suffered from Brucellosis, or "Mediterranean Fever," contracted in the war zone, which can lead to joint and muscle pain, fever and fatigue.

Despite her health, Nightingale used her time in bed productively.

She was compelled by her experiences to develop policies and strategies around sanitation. Some historians credit her with developing the 1875 Public Health Act in Britain, which regulated sewage, water and drainage systems.

In 1859, Nightingale wrote a significant theological work, *Suggestions for thought to searchers after religious truth among the artisans of England*.

Nightingale's theology came from brutally lived experience.

There is greater understanding now about the need to care for the psychosocial wellbeing of health workers in conflict zones. This understanding could not have grown without Nightingale's life and work.

What was remarkable about Nightingale's theology was the entwining of statistical science, public health, mental wellbeing,

social duty and faith.

For Nightingale, theology's purpose was health and well-being. Her practical faith emphasised the importance of being God's hands and feet in the world.

In a recent interview about the Anglican hospital Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, Anglican Overseas Aid chief executive Jo Knight said the hospital workers were Christ's hands and feet.

She spoke of the continued hope of the workers in the crowded hospital meeting the increasing needs of people.

She said she was moved by their continued resilience despite shutdowns and lack of supplies.

"They continue because people continue to come," she said.

While *Suggestions for thought* was not published in Nightingale's lifetime, it was circulated among key thinkers and policy developers including economists, medical doctors and politicians.

Nightingale influenced modern sanitation and medicine far beyond the image of the solitary nurse with a lamp. She directed the education and training of healthcare professionals and brought to the fore public health as a spiritual and material duty.

Why science communication matters in

Talking about science can be challenging, especially in religious settings. Scientist and ISCAST supporter, Jacob Martin, shares some ideas about communicating science effectively in the church.

■ Jacob Martin

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Francis Collins, an evangelical Christian and then-director of the National Institutes of Health in the United States, held a series of Zoom calls with the late theologian Tim Keller. Collins was in charge of coordinating the vaccine rollout during a time of sickness, fear, and mistrust of science.

While Collins talked about the development of the vaccines and his work coordinating pharmaceutical companies to work together, Keller talked about the ethics of what it all meant for the Church. Two highly respected Christian voices came together, building trust in Christian communities for people who may have been wary of those developing the vaccines.

It was a great example of good science communication in action. And that's something we should consider more carefully in our churches.

The way we talk about science matters, especially in contexts like churches where there might be a perception of conflict between science and faith as well as a lack of trust in secular institutions. Thankfully, there's an entire field of study dedicated to studying the most effective ways to communicate about science in different settings, and it's one that we can all learn from.

What is science communication?

Science communication is the study and practice of improving how non-scientists understand science. It considers how different groups of people understand and value science, and how scientists can best

communicate their work to non-experts without being condescending or using too much technical detail.

Science communication isn't limited to scientists. For many people, science communication is their profession: science journalists, communications officers at universities, museum workers, science outreach teams, entertainers, and educators.

"We're facing issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and disinformation; problems that we need to solve together. It's not just up to scientists."

Researchers study how science interacts with and influences society, drawing on research from sociology, psychology, and theories of communication. It considers audiences: who they are, what they care about, how you can connect with them, whether they will trust what you say, and how they might respond.

One central research focus has been to critique the 'deficit model' of communication: the idea that the public doesn't know enough about science, so if scientists just explain the facts, the public will act on their recommendations.

But we know that this approach often doesn't work. Even if knowledge gaps are filled, that doesn't translate to people caring



Dr Jacob Martin.

about science or trusting it more than they did before. Communicating science well is a lot more nuanced than simply dumbing down some technical information and presenting it to someone.

Why does science communication matter in religious communities?

Science is for everyone – including religious people. Elaine Howard Ecklund, a sociologist who studies science and religion, has shown that while religious belief is less common among scientists compared to the general population in multiple countries, there are still many scientists who consider themselves religious.

This is crucial – we need to unite to solve some massive problems. We're facing issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and disinformation; problems that we need to solve together. It's not just up to scientists. We need to get the churches, mosques, and temples on board, too.

But there are challenges to communicating science in religious settings. Those in fundamentalist churches might reject any scientific evidence that seems to conflict with literalistic readings of Scripture. Meanwhile scientism, the worldview that

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science can explain everything, leaves no room for religion.

These worldviews lead to polarisation, driving people further apart as each side becomes more deeply convinced of their core beliefs. Each side views the other as an untrustworthy enemy, intensifying their advocacy for their own “true” position while seeking to suppress opposing views.

Augustine warns against holding views that contradict scientific knowledge of the world. He argued that Christians should engage with general knowledge about the natural world to build credibility when discussing claims that transcend nature.

I define science as the practice of developing quantitative models (or descriptions) about how the natural world normally works. Religion is how we relate to each other and to God, with causes beyond nature. There is some overlap, but they are mostly concerned with explaining different things.

Interpreting ancient religious books can also be challenging. The Bible is constructed of many different genres: poetry, hyperbole, and parable are not meant to be interpreted as fact. God uses analogies and descriptions of the natural world that would be incorrect by modern standards, because they help us understand some theological truths – and God did not make our understanding of the gospel dependent on our intelligence.

How can we be better communicators?

When I think of my own approach to communicating science, I'm inspired and humbled by Jesus's example, especially his ethics around how a person's worth isn't related to their intelligence. We are called to love our neighbours as ourselves: how would I want to be treated if I found science and scientists daunting?

We need to build communities of trust, where we can respect each other's



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differences and grow together. We need to have room for “clumsy conversations” with the freedom to say something that might seem not quite right, and have the humility and generosity to critique each other gently.

I like to look for common ground wherever I can. When I engage with climate sceptics, I make sure to listen and politely disagree, give them up-to-date information, and connect the climate to their values. But sometimes there's not a lot of common ground, and in those cases, I sometimes choose not to continue engaging with them on the topic of climate change because I'm unlikely to connect with them and may instead cause their views to become further entrenched.

However, if they are part of my church community, friendship group or workplace, I will do my best to maintain the relationship. I may be one of very few scientists they know and it's important that different views

are represented in our communities.

A lot of the so-called “conflicts” between science and religion aren't conflicts about science at all, but about morality. We have different views of how we ought to live, and we need to respect those views and acknowledge those deeper issues. But we also need to bring these underlying ideas into contrast with the gospel to dispel ways of relating to the world that are not in step with the God of creation.

Science affects everyone's lives. We need to talk about it, engage with it, and understand how it intersects with our faith. But we also need to work together with respect and love to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing our world.

Dr Jacob Martin is a carbon materials scientist, physicist and nanotechnologist who studies how we can manufacture advanced materials for use in green technology. He is passionate about science communication.

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If world leaders were peacemakers ...

■ Philip Huggins

Imagine if instead of what we saw in the Oval Office ...

If before the public and televised confrontation there had been private, discreet conversations which were carefully mediated.

Conversations through which the complex and conflicting narratives were carefully discussed. Perhaps beginning in shared silence for prayer and meditation. Perhaps agreeing to return to that place of stillness and shared silence whenever this seemed helpful.

Imagine if this important conversation was not at all rushed, but instead given what time was needed to reach an agreement on the next steps.

Imagine if that discreet meeting began with an appreciation for the sustained trauma absorbed over three years by the Ukrainian President.

An appreciation, therefore, of what it had taken out of him to be a leader of his people in the face of a brutal invasion.

Imagine if he was shown empathy and gratitude rather than angry demands that he be more grateful for support his invaded people had received.

Imagine if those speaking of "peace" and the place of "diplomacy" followed the

simple rules for peacemaking conversations.

Interrupted conversations seldom go well and generally end rather badly.

People speak over the top of each other. Their tone of voice becomes aggressive as emotions are further aroused. This often leads to open anger. People may then part from each other badly and unreconciled.

"At Lent, we are opening ourselves up afresh to God's hope and peace."

Philip Huggins

All of this was what we saw.

One can but imagine how the Ukrainian President felt as he left hurriedly.

Especially after such a graceless encounter with people so aware of their power to make his leadership even more difficult.

Instead of interrupting the Ukrainian leader, imagine if the President and Vice President of the United States had listened patiently to him until his sentiments were fully expressed.

Imagine if then there were clarifying questions, asked politely rather than a descent into accusations.

Questions like: 'What do you mean by this? ... Are you saying?'

Imagine, in short, that the hosts had been hospitable.

There is an art to peacemaking.

That important meeting in the Oval Office could have been so much more fruitful if the hosts had just practised a few simple attributes of respectful listening.

It is painfully obvious that our world needs leaders who are genuine peacemakers.

At Lent, we are opening ourselves up afresh to God's hope and peace for ourselves and for all whom we carry in our hearts.


We see in Luke 4.1-13, Jesus' model of perseverance in prayer and in scriptural clarity of action. He is not seduced, for example, by devilish promises of power and glory.

Jesus goes on His giving and forgiving way and we follow, trusting that we will be renewed in the resurrection energy of hope and peace.

What a blessed journey we are making this Lent together. And how necessary, given the state of the world!

Bishop Philip Huggins is a member of Religions for Peace Australia, and Adjunct Professional at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. He wrote the above reflection for Religions for Peace Australia. It has been edited for publishing.





Hope does not mean having blind faith

Picture: iStock

■ Kate Beer

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.
(Hebrews 11: 1-3 (NIV))

Hope, by definition, is a longing for something we cannot yet see. This is true, whether I hope for something abstract, like success, or something concrete, like somebody else to cook dinner!

Hope in Christ is no exception. When a person puts their faith in God, it's true that they hope for something not yet visible. But that does not mean Christians have blind faith!

One of the most encouraging conversations I have enjoyed in recent times was led by a young person, who was sharing what they have *seen* of God's transforming work

in their own life. This person spoke of God's healing work in their personal battle against anxiety and their growing confidence in God, despite challenges, as they have been making decisions to live out their faith in daily life.

"Though we can't see God with our eyes yet, we do see the fruit of the Lord's transforming work in lives!"

Kate Beer

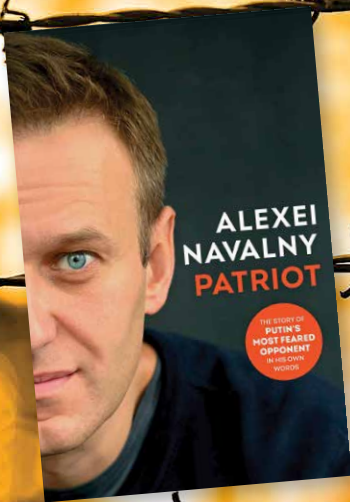
Though we can't see God with our eyes yet, we do see the fruit of the Lord's transforming work in lives! Like the visible universe, which was formed at creation by God from what we cannot see, the invisible work of the Lord Jesus in a person of faith's life can be startlingly visible as they transform before our eyes. When life

challenges leave us wondering if faith in God is just wishful thinking, Hebrews 11 reminds us to look at the fruit of what God is bringing into being.

There is a popular misconception that the end goal of a Christian's hope is just an invisible heavenly prize: pie in the sky when we die. But, that is to miss something crucial in the Bible's teaching. The ancients were commended, not for their morally admirable lives, nor for their blind hope in an unseen future, but for the sturdy hope expressed in their confessional lives of faith. Their lives were visibly transformed by an encounter with the unseen God such that, by faith, each one lived a visible life of witness.

May your hope in Jesus be kindled by encounters with the unseen God and, by a growing awareness of what *can* be seen: the fruit of God's work in the lives of people of faith.

The Reverend Kate Beer lectures in practical theology at Ridley College.



Picture: iStock

Navalny memoir holds faith lessons

■ Elaine Furniss

Alexei Navalny. Patriot, a memoir. Penguin Random House, 2024.

Navalny's memoir covers his fight against the tyranny of Russian leadership under Putin, written in Germany and in Russia up until the time of Navalny's untimely death at the hands of the Kremlin in an Arctic prison on 16 February 2024.

In some senses this is a *War and Peace* kind of memoir. It's long and detailed, it uncovers the underbelly of Russian politics and it provides a vision of a peaceful, equitable Russia, not yet seen.

Divided into four parts – Near Death, Formation, The Work, and Prison – it starts with his Novichok poisoning in Tomsk, Siberia, and subsequent transfer to Germany at the behest of Chancellor Merkel. He describes the experience of the poisoning and subsequent effects, “Then I died ... Spoiler alert: actually, I didn’t”, and recovery.

Navalny then recounts early life experiences as a catalyst for strident opposition to Putin, “I wanted to see a politician appear who would undertake all sorts of interesting projects and cooperate directly with the Russian people ... and one day I realised that I could be that person myself.”

He uses mainly digital means in his work with the Anti-Corruption Foundation, and later, Russia of the Future, to expose the untold wealth of Russian officials in contrast to the sparse lifestyles of the populace.

There are echoes of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as the book then becomes a

prison diary of what happens to Navalny up until his death.

What does Navalny have in common with those we regard as everyday saints and heroes in the last hundred years? He could have opted for relative freedom elsewhere but chooses instead to return to the place of concern to fight directly, (think Bonhoeffer, Aung San Sui Kyi, Martin Luther King).

In anticipating the day of his return, he says: “I’ve decided to start a new life, the way you do every Monday and every January 1.”

Other reviewers have audited the book to find out just “how Christian” Navalny is: A Russian communist atheist up until the birth of his daughter Dasha; his poignant yet funny comments on keeping Lent in prison; and his philosophy of life, which is expect the worst, hope for the best and let Jesus and his family take care of the rest.

However, I found enticing the themes of bravery, valuing the present moment and investing in humour in the face of deprivation, for example in his actions, debate and keen wit in court and with fellow prisoners.

There's pathos in his stories of prison cuisine with extremely limited ingredients: the detailed descriptions of ways in which other inmates can cut up a slice of bread before adding noodles or condiments and heating on a radiator. In Kolchugino Pretrial Prison in Vladimir Region, he's overjoyed that he's been able to bring his plastic jug with a heating element, useless as he first assessed it, given that access to the prison shop is not open to him.

There's his humility as a person of faith, in apologising to other prisoners for overstepping the mark, which often makes

them more wary of him.

He critiques Russian leader Gorbachev's irresolution and half-heartedness but also cites him as one to whom many owe their freedom and who also proved to be totally incorruptible.

He critiques Brezhnev's sending 26,000 Russian soldiers to their demise in Afghanistan while playing political games with the US, and although keen on Yeltsin at first, sees his roll over to Putin as a product of the fact that the working day ended about midday and then he was into the vodka.

He recounts how after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, Russian citizens were forced to plant vegetables nearby to prove to the West that there's nothing wrong here.

In 2025, perhaps this dense and nerdy Russian memoir can be a playbook for being brave in the face of alarming political developments in the West and elsewhere, where current political events in the US, China and Russia, echo the Kremlin's initiating active measures, “Get rid of the person, you get rid of the problem”. As Navalny explains when corruption is the very foundation of a regime, those who battle it are extremists.

This is a memoir but may also be a manual for learning what to do when one feels impotent, dissipated, fruitless. Navalny dares us to be brave, funny, living in the moment, and with faith and hope. And isn't that the essence of the Christian message to which we are called?

Elaine Furniss attends St Philip's Collingwood and Benedictus Church in Canberra online.