

THE Melbourne Anglican

FEBRUARY 2024, No 632

Inner-city oasis feeds hungry

St Stephen's Richmond is putting roots down in its community, literally. The church has launched a set of planting beds which will support a nearby food support centre and help build connections with passersby. The beds are already blooming, as are the relationships.

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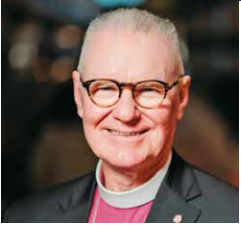
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Faith in action has encouraged me in church growth initiatives

■ Archbishop Philip Freier

I'm glad that we can start the New Year with our second "Leading your Church into Growth" training. Clergy and lay leaders will join with our local and visiting facilitators to share knowledge that can have immediate impact in our local ministry contexts.

We had a great response to the program when it was first offered at this same time last year. I have been encouraged to see these ideas being applied in parishes when I have visited them through the year. I'm also glad that we can share this training with leaders from other dioceses in Victoria, it is always good when we have communities of practice across a diversity of church contexts.

LYCIG has been a very useful resource as we have worked through some of the Reimagining the Future scenarios. Developed in the first instance as a resource for the Church of England it is good that the Diocese of Christchurch in New Zealand started with LYCIG at the same time as us, and now the Wellington Diocese has also run a training program. These international networks are a good resource as we participate in the ongoing development

"Connection between the local community and the things that our faith in Christ calls us to do is powerful."

of LYCIG. Keep us in mind and in your prayers during the three days of training that start on 27 February.

The consistent tenor of comments in the correspondence I received at Christmas convinces me that we are all feeling weighty emotions as we contemplate world affairs. Alarm at things that we did not expect to happen in places where we hoped for better outcomes is a shared response in our community. It is also clear that many people are wanting to be agents of change in the world but struggle to find a way to connect their intention with what is going on around them. Our public narratives tend to project our frustration onto our political leaders at the same time as we often fail to recognise the moral failures that lead to so much unhappiness.

James 2.26 is salient, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead." Whether it is English conversation classes for new arrivals to Australia or food and relief programs for the poor and homeless such examples of faith in action have really stood out to me as I visited some of the parishes that participated in the 2023 LYCIG training. Connection between the local community and the things that our faith in Christ calls us to do is powerful. I have also been touched to hear how sincerely and naturally the LYCIG prayer is prayed in parishes that had members attending last year. It is included here for your encouragement and use:

"God of Mission who alone brings growth to your church, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions, and power to our witness. Help our church to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to you, and in service to our local community, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

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Vacant Appointments as of 23-01-2024:

St Agnes, Black Rock; Christ Church, Brunswick [from April 2024]; St Michael, North Carlton; St John, Camberwell; St Philip, Collingwood; Redemption Church, Craigieburn; St Mark, Fitzroy; St Paul, Geelong; Christ Church, Melton; Parish of Mornington-Mt Martha; St Aidan Noble Park; St Aidan, Parkdale; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; Mullum Mullum, Ringwood; St Luke, Vermont; St Thomas, Werribee; St John, Wantirna South; St Thomas, Winchelsea

Appointments:

GARANG AKECH, The Right Revd Jacob Deng, appointed Bishop in Partnership, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, effective 18 January 2024

JUERS, The Revd Mark Andrew, appointed Vicar [from Priest -in-Charge], St Mary, Caulfield with St Clement, Elsternwick, effective 19 January 2024

LOPEZ, The Revd Jonathan, appointed School Chaplain, Hume Grammar School, effective 22 January 2024

MORRIS, The Revd Christopher John, appointed Hospital Chaplain, Calvary Health Care Bethlehem, effective 4 January 2024

NICHOLLS, The Revd Denise Jane, appointed Area Dean Extension, Area Deanery of Yarra Plenty, effective 4 February 2024

WHITESIDE, The Revd Luke Anthony, appointed Vicar [from Curate-in-Charge] Anglican Parish of Upper Yarra, effective 7 February 2024

Permission to Officiate:

HARRIS, The Revd Canon Gregory Emsmere, appointed Renewal of Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 2 January 2024 for his national work with Bush Church Aid

Resignations:

LOPEZ, The Revd Jonathan, Assistant Priest, Anglican Parish of Banyule, effective 31 December 2023

PHILLIPS, The Venerable Helen Leanne, Vicar, Parish of Mornington with Mount Martha and Archdeacon of Frankston, effective 25 March 2024 to take up a position in the Diocese of Adelaide

PHILLIPS, The Revd John Henry, Parish Minister, Parish of Mornington with Mount Martha, effective 25 March 2024

Obituaries:

COOK, The Revd Frederick, 10 January 2024

GRAY, The Revd Norman, 19 December 2023



Clergy Moves

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



Summer Under the Son participants Emma Payne and Laura Cumming.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

Victorians gather to lift up their eyes

■ Elspeth Kernebone

Hundreds of people have gathered to lift their eyes to God's work throughout the world at the Church Missionary Society of Victoria's annual Summer Under the Son conference in Melbourne.

The conference featured speakers such as Province of the Indian Ocean archbishop James Wong, CMS cross-cultural gospel worker Tamie Davis, and missionaries Lauren Raiter, and Derek and Rosemary Snibson.

Keynote speaker president of CMS Australia Archbishop Kanishka Raffel said he hoped to see people know Jesus through the conference, in line with the CMS vision.

He said CMS conferences around Australia were a wonderful way for people to start the year, by lifting their eyes to a world God had made and focusing their lives on how to serve the nations.

Preaching on the Psalms, Bishop Raffel said they contained imperatives to Israel to declare to the nations the glory of God, invitations to the nations to join in the praise

of God such as Psalm 117, and the anticipation of the nations being grafted into the people of God such as Psalm 2.

Bishop Raffel said he had been tremendously encouraged by CMS cross-cultural workers at Summer Under the Son, who lived their lives in the obedience to which Jesus called all his disciples.

"Their testimony of God's faithfulness, the demonstration of their love to people that they are sent to be amongst, their sense of God's power and presence among His people everywhere. I just find that enormously encouraging," he said.

Dr Davis said Summer Under the Son was a great opportunity for people to lift their eyes beyond their own borders after some rough years, to see what God was doing in the world, and praise Him for it.

She said one of the brilliant aspects of her study was witnessing directly the sophistication and efficacy of Tanzanian theology in its context.

Dr Davis said Australians could find it hard to get past stereotypes about Africa,

so they often missed the good things God was doing there. She said African theology could challenge Australians about their own theology and ideas, and help them think flexibly.

For instance, Dr Davis said Africa was sometimes associated with the prosperity gospel, which was often thought of a heresy which exploited the gospel. But in her study, Dr Davis said she saw how Tanzanian women held a theology of prosperity because they had read the Bible for themselves, and found an empowering message of prosperity within it.

Summer Under the Son director Alex Edsor said the conference was an amazing opportunity for people to hear stories they could only hear in a closed environment, from missionaries in a secure location.

She said the gospel was moving in ways that people did not realise or hear about publicly, travelling through leaders disguised in their local nation, transformed by Christ and sharing the good news behind closed doors.

'Life changing, eternally challenging' call for Melbourne's new priests

■ Jenan Taylor

Melbourne's new Anglican priests were reminded that following God's call to holy orders was life changing and eternally challenging during their ordination service.

Thirteen men and women were ordained as priests in a service at St Paul's Cathedral on 25 November in front of family, friends, clergy and parishioners.

Diocese of Adelaide Assistant Bishop Denise Ferguson encouraged the new priests to keep their spiritual foundations firm during the sermon.

Bishop Ferguson linked the account of Jesus commissioning Peter to feed his sheep in John 21:15-19 to the challenges of ministry that all the disciples faced when they decided to follow Him.

Being ordained was a stepping stone

on a journey that was a life changing, and eternally challenging commitment, Bishop Ferguson said.

"Ordination whether as a deacon, priest or bishop is like baptism. It can't be erased or undone," she said. "Those who are follow the call to holy orders, do so with great courage and conviction."

She said following the call was a ministry of holiness, visibility, presence, servant leadership and commitment that demanded much from priests.

As a ministry of visibility, it meant that they were inescapably God's representatives in the world. It could bring joy, recognition and privilege, but could also be lonely and isolating when difficulties arose, she said.

Bishop Ferguson said nothing could prepare priests for this experience, so all

they could do was ensure their spiritual foundations were firm.

"We must stay plugged into the source, regular nourishment with daily prayer, engaging with Scripture and waiting on God in whatever way connects us so that we can recognise and respond when Jesus calls us," Bishop Ferguson said.

"These are essential to the Christian life in general and critical to those who are called into holy orders."

The 13 priests ordained by Archbishop Philip Freier were: Tereaza Audo, Elizabeth Bolton, Tzeh Yi Chan, Tim Collison, Aaron Ghiloni, Zhitao He, Zhuhong Li, Weiyi Lou, Rebecca Mading, Johnwerni Maryoe, Monica Matoc, Candice Mitrousis and Pedram Shirmast.

See picture gallery – P24.



Thirteen new priests were ordained at St Paul's Cathedral in November 2023.

Picture: Janine Eastgate.



Refugee families took part in a retreat at Coolamatong
Picture: supplied

Sanctuary embracing new arrivals

■ Jenan Taylor

Refugee families played soccer, danced, sang and feasted at a new holiday retreat, which organisers hope will help them feel more at home in the Australian community.

Volunteers from St Thomas' Burwood and other churches took about 60 children and adult refugees to East Gippsland just after Christmas, for many it was their first Australian holiday.

The inaugural Sanctuary Family Retreat aimed to be a safe and supported space where humanitarian refugee and asylum seeker families, and the church team could relax and get to know each other. The camp was a joint initiative of Embrace Sanctuary Australia and Scripture Union Australia.

Embrace chief executive Naomi Chua said the team wanted to offer families culturally-aware, trauma-informed hospitality and care, as many of the refugees spoke no English and carried high levels of trauma.

Ms Chua said many of the families had recently arrived from the Middle East, and among them were families who fled Afghanistan when the Taliban took over. Others had lived a decade of uncertainty in Australia as they waited to hear about their visa status.

But Ms Chua said they had all been excited at the prospect of having a break in the countryside and seeing native Australian animals.

"This is beyond their wildest dreams that they could come away and have a holiday



An Afghan participant decorating volunteer Cathy Altmann with henna.
Picture: supplied

and have fun activities for the kids and be welcomed into a community," Ms Chua said.

Retreat director Chris Helm said the camp aimed to help make refugee families feel as supported as possible by making connections and getting away from the difficulties of their experience as refugees.

Speaking ahead of the camp, Mr Helm said the team wanted the participants to feel the love and welcome of a Christian community without feeling they had to adopt a doctrine of any kind.

"We hope to be a blessing to these recently arrived families," Mr Helm said.

"At the same time, in the same way that the gospels talk about encountering Jesus in unlikely people or unlikely places, we're quite excited about how we might be going to encounter Jesus in these people and families and how they're going to be helping us as we interact and grow together."

He said many parishioners, including children, put their hands up to run workshops and games for the refugees at the retreat.

Mr Helm said they hoped to bring the refugees and church team closer together in ways that transcended language, through activities such as soccer, canoeing, and a co-created piece of art.

New blooms bring bounty, connection

■ Jenan Taylor

An inner-city church's flourishing community garden project is making it easier for people experiencing hardship to get fresh, healthy food.

St Stephen's Richmond installed and planted wicking beds last October but already spring onions, tomatoes and coriander are blooming under towering sunflowers.

The church hopes to better serve people experiencing hardship, connect with community and care for the land, through the garden.

Community chaplain the Reverend Michael Wood said the beds allowed St Stephen's to supply fresh produce to the Richmond Churches Food Centre.

An ecumenical charity aimed at increasing food security, the centre serves many disadvantaged people, including those from a nearby public housing estate,

Coordinator Francis Flood said the centre had recently seen a climb in demand for food.

In January it helped almost 100 households a week, access fresh meal supplies, double the number that it usually served at this time of year.

Mr Wood said the community garden's



The Reverend Michael Wood said the garden sparked conversation.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone.

plentiful, swaying plants sparked conversations from passersby who normally wouldn't speak to church staff.

Vicar the Reverend Dr Nick White said he hoped through these chats people would want to deepen their relationship with

St Stephen's, and associate what the garden symbolised with what the church offered.

"They walk past and see the great flowers and say, 'These are enormous!' There is sense of life springing forth. It is a sign of life," Dr White said.

Joint group helps teenagers grow in faith and friendship

■ Elspeth Kernebone

A multi-church youth group is giving Christian teenagers a space to develop their own faith as they grow up in an increasingly unfriendly culture.

Leaders say it's also an important chance for teenagers to connect with other Christians their age, as many come from churches without lots of other young people.

The Inner North Youth Group caters to teens from churches without many members their age, forming a combined youth group of about 25 people, including from four partner churches.

Leaders say it gives the children opportunities to explore faith, ask questions and connect with Christians peers during a formative time.

They hope the model will help other churches minister to young people in their own context, partly through training and equipping leaders.

Inner North Youth Group youth minister Tom French said leaders wanted to give

young people the chance to explore faith, ask questions, and be challenged during an important time for faith formation.

He said feedback was that group members were starting to think about faith in their own context, such as at school or with their friends.

Mr French said the group helped young people and families stay in their existing churches by giving them a space to connect with their peers, as many came from churches without many youth.

He said his dream for the youth group was that it continued to support churches in the inner north, and that other people would be able to learn from their model for ministry in their own context.

Mr French said to equip more people for youth ministry the group aimed to hire two people in trainee roles. This would be anyone who was keen to consider youth ministry as a vocation.

Merri Creek Anglican senior minister the Reverend Dr Peter Carolane said he hoped to see young people disciplined, have a strong

faith in Jesus, and go on to be Christians as adults through the work of the youth group.

He said putting energy into youth ministry targeted a huge need, as many people growing up in the church disappeared during their teenage years if there was nothing for them.

Dr Carolane said he hoped to see a big new push for youth ministry in the Australian church, as it seemed to have been put on the backburner – which was ultimately leading to fewer people being ordained.

He said for this to happen, senior ministers would need to fund youth ministry positions, re-arrange ministry practices to be relevant for youth, and there would need to be role models for youth ministry.

Dr Carolane said the flow-on effect of deprioritisation of youth ministry was a lack of people being ordained. He said as fewer people came through youth group, fewer wanted to be leaders, which made it harder to employ youth ministers, which meant there were fewer young people in the church, and fewer coming forward in leadership.

Service sees Anglicans earn honours

■ Jenan Taylor

A prominent theologian, a stem cell scientist and a tireless women's rights advocate, were among at least eight Anglicans from Melbourne diocese recognised in the 2024 Australia Day Honours List.

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

Research scientist **Associate Professor Ngaire Elwood** was also appointed AM for her significant service to medicine, particularly through stem cell research.

Holy Trinity Williamstown member **Carol Willis** was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community through a range of roles.

Other OAM recipients included former Church Missionary Society medical missionary **Ruth Judd**, Vermont South parishioner **Roslyn Bryant**, St Peter's Brighton Beach member **Christine Fitzherbert**, and Holy Trinity Lara member **Ian Thomson**.

Another Holy Trinity Williamstown parishioner, **Wilma Roberts**, also received an OAM.

Professor Lee's citation highlighted her roles as a member of the Doctrine Commission at the Australian Church and her position as Stewart Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity College Theological School.

An ordained minister in the Uniting Church from 1984 to 2008, Professor Lee said she went there because she couldn't be ordained into the Anglican Church.

Professor Lee said she felt her calling was to be a teacher, of the New Testament in particular, a vocation that was very important to her as a priest.

Professor Lee said she grew up in the Free Church of Scotland, which inspired her and gave her a sense of spirituality and God. But, it was also a church with a very conservative, disapproving stance towards women, which she needed to break free from.

Mrs Willis' citation mentioned her decades-long volunteer work with Anglicare Emergency Relief Williamstown, and the Newport Food Pantry.

It also highlighted the Inspirational Women award she received in 2013 for her contributions to women's rights.

Mrs Willis said she counted supporting the needs of women from 1974 on through her membership with the Sunshine International Women's Committee as her



greatest role. Much of that revolved around advocating for women, particularly those from disadvantaged communities in the western suburbs.

Mrs Willis said receiving the OAM made her feel that people perceived her contributions with confidence.

Associate Professor Elwood has been director of the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne Bone Marrow Donor Institute Cord Blood Bank since 2007.

An Anglican Parish of Gisborne member and parish councillor, she has also headed Murdoch Children's Research Institute Cord Blood Stem Cell research since then.

Associate Professor Elwood said one of her most satisfying achievements was the number of patients she had been able to help through the Cord Blood Bank.

There umbilical cord and placenta blood is collected, processed, stored and put on an international directory for the treatment of leukaemia and other blood disorders.

Associate Professor Elwood said her science research journey started from her own diagnosis and experience of bone cancer and leg amputation as a teenager.

She spent 18 months in the children's hospital and during that time became interested in learning about ways of

curing cancer that were less toxic than chemotherapy.

Brought up with a strong faith background, Associate Professor Elwood said it was that and the support of family and friends that sustained her, particularly during her illness.

Former St Mark's Camberwell congregant Miss Judd's citation highlighted her humanitarian service, spanning almost 30 years as a Church Missionary Society medical missionary.

It also mentioned her contributions as a past president and volunteer of Christian charity Medical Mission Aid. Chair Barry Kelly said in a Medical Mission Aid communique that Miss Judd's outstanding service was a Christ-like example of caring for the marginalised and vulnerable.

Her belief that every human was created in God's image and therefore equal value and worth led to her work as the first Australian nurse in Nepal.

Holy Trinity Williamstown parishioner Ms Roberts' awards citation mentioned her service on the parish council, and her warden role across 20 years. It also highlighted her leadership of the Ada Cambridge Book Group at the church, and her decades-long contributions to education.

South Australian bishop stands aside after secret marriage

■ Elspeth Kernebone

An Australian Anglican bishop who stood aside after concealing his marriage to a junior priest under his supervision has acknowledged his decisions were “suboptimal”.

Bishop of The Murray Keith Dalby stood aside on 8 December after secretly marrying the Reverend Alison Dutton, an assistant curate in his diocese, in Queensland on 22 August.

Bishop Dalby said he and Ms Dutton had wanted to be transparent about the relationship, but had felt constrained by church structures. He said they had planned to reveal the marriage in early 2024.

Anglican Primate of Australia Archbishop Geoff Smith said the situation raised questions about transparency, conflict of interest, professional boundaries and trust.

The Diocese of The Murray sits in the southeastern part of South Australia, incorporating 13 parishes including some in south Adelaide. Bishop Dalby has led the diocese since 2019.

Ms Dutton was among the first women ordained as priests in the diocese, on 12 August 2023.

“Professional boundaries are really important for vulnerable people, but neither of us are vulnerable people.”

Bishop Keith Dalby

Bishop Dalby said he and Ms Dutton were married on 22 August in north Queensland, by a civil celebrant.

Bishop Dalby said they had planned the wedding very quickly, realising they had feelings for each other in May or June of 2023, and deciding in July to get married. He said prior to that they had only seen each other three or four times a year.

Bishop Dalby said their reason for keeping the relationship a secret was that he was actually under an Episcopal Standards Board investigation at the time for allegedly



Bishop Keith Dalby.

Picture: file

having an inappropriate relationship with Ms Dutton in 2022.

“All we were trying to do [keeping the marriage secret] is be sensitive of the sensitivities of the diocese. That’s what we were trying to do, whether that was right or wrong I don’t know – hindsight is a wonderful thing. You can only do what you can do,” he said.

“There may be an issue of professional boundaries, but quite frankly Alison is 43, and I’m 62 and we’re quite capable of figuring out our own professional space.

“Professional boundaries are really important for vulnerable people, but neither of us are vulnerable people.”

The Murray diocese administrator notified parishioners of the wedding in a statement read out at services on 31 December, saying it was important to provide details of the circumstances.

The statement said that on 7 December it was revealed that, unknown to the Diocesan Council, Bishop Dalby had married an assistant curate in the Parish of the South Coast.

It said the Diocesan Council considered that the disclosures surrounding the marriage declaration presented insurmountable implications, and Bishop Dalby agreed to step aside at a council meeting on 8 December.

“As you can imagine we are disappointed that it became necessary for Bishop Keith

“We are disappointed that it became necessary for Bishop Keith to stand aside but believe it is in the best interests of the Diocese as a whole and for the couple themselves.”

Diocesan Council

to stand aside but believe it is in the best interests of the Diocese as a whole and for the couple themselves,” the statement said.

Bishop Dalby said the situation was a great opportunity for the diocese to demonstrate forgiveness and reconciliation.

But he said while forgiveness was a response to wrong done, he didn’t know if he would say that that he had done something wrong.

“I’ve made suboptimal decisions. Is getting married wrong? It’s not. Is not telling people about it at the time wrong? Some people would say so, but there’s always extenuating circumstances,” Bishop Dalby said.

“It’s very easy to go back and second judge it and talk about it afterwards. But it’s not always easy to make the best decision at the time.”

In mid-January, a spokesperson for the primate said the Diocese of The Murray was waiting for a response from Bishop Dalby to decide its next steps, which was delayed as he was on personal leave and then annual leave.

The spokesperson said an administrator Archdeacon Simon Waters was filling the role of bishop.

Bishop Smith said it was unfortunate that the situation was likely to be destabilising for the diocese, cause distress and confusion among people within the diocese, and will not assist in the mission of the church.

“I continue to pray for a resolution which provides a just outcome, and the capacity for the diocese to move forward in its ministry,” Bishop Smith said.

Where to now? Churches reflect on justice during Aboriginal Sunday

■ Jenan Taylor

Churches should pray and reflect deeply on Aboriginal Sunday after the Voice referendum left many Indigenous people hurt and confused, a church leader said.

National Aboriginal Bishop Chris McLeod said he wanted churches to ask, “Where to now” for Christians and First Nations justice, as many Indigenous people were devastated that nothing had changed.

It came as more than 100 churches nationwide prepared to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal people and the injustices they experience on Aboriginal Sunday, January 21.

Bishop McLeod said he wanted all churches to pray and reflect deeply on Aboriginal Sunday and beyond about why Christians voted “No”.

He said he wanted them to question whether worshippers followed Christian teaching about justice and standing with the marginalised, or their own fears and the untruths of the “No” campaign.

“We are further behind now in achieving justice for Indigenous people and understanding the injustices Indigenous people face because the nation and many Christians have stopped listening,” Bishop McLeod said.



Picture: iStock

“We are living under the continuing Great Australian Silence. That has been reinforced by the rejection of the Voice and the dubious claims of the ‘No’ campaign.”

Retired Anglican priest the Reverend Janet Turpie-Johnstone said she wanted churches to encourage Christians to start engaging with Indigenous Australians through exploring their local history.

If people looked at their local stories they might start to ask how things happened and why, and understand Aboriginal people’s perspectives, Ms Turpie-Johnstone said.

She said reconciliation had not happened yet because settler Australia had not reconciled itself to history.

She said many Australians were still avoiding these issues and even saying they had no effect on Aboriginal people, without realising the consequences of their denial.

Merri Creek Anglican was among those running an Aboriginal Sunday service.

Senior minister the Reverend Dr Peter Carolane said it was important to recognise this was the first Aboriginal Sunday since the referendum and prioritise healing prayer because of the result.

Dr Carolane said Merri Creek engaged with Indigenous issues beyond Aboriginal Sunday including through starting every service with acknowledgment of country.

But people didn’t always understand why the church would do so.

“Some think Aboriginal issues are political, and why bring politics to church. But we’ve tried to normalise it at our church to show that actually Aboriginal reconciliation and our colonial past is a justice issue for us as Christians, that we can’t ever forget about. That’s why it’s important just to keep engaging,” Dr Carolane said.

All Saints’ Greensborough senior minister the Reverend Julie Blinco-Smith said Aboriginal Sunday was important to its worshippers because of their long history of building good relationships with Indigenous people. She said All Saints’ focus would be on prayer for all Indigenous people and a harvest of trained Indigenous Christian workers for ministry.

Australia Day a problem no matter the date: First Peoples

■ Jenan Taylor

Equality and justice for Indigenous people should be the focus of conversations around 26 January because First Nations people were still excluded in Australia, an Anglican leader has said.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people see 26 January as a day to grieve, while other Australians prepare to celebrate on the public holiday.

Aboriginal leaders say they want the Church to support them to have Australia Day abolished.

Wiradjuri man the Reverend Canon Glenn Loughrey wants discussions about Australia Day to centre on how to bring about justice for Indigenous people, rather than on the date.

Canon Loughrey said it didn’t matter what day was set aside for Australia Day, as it would be problematic.

“For First Nations people who have not been included in the significant moments of this country and have no treaty or voice and have never ceded sovereignty over our lands, no day that celebrates Australia will include us,” Canon Loughrey said.

He said 26 January was particularly controversial because it was the day that identified a particular point in history that was very tough for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Canon Loughrey said the referendum polarised people’s positions on Indigenous justice and gave many permission to take extreme stances about 26 January.

trawloolway man, the Reverend Canon Dr Garry Deverell said he wanted the most visible church leaders to comment publicly on problematic the day was for Aboriginal people. He said that would help create a safer environment those struggling with Australia Day to say how they felt about it.

Dr Deverell said he and other National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council leaders had invited the Liturgy Commission in 2020 to consider revising the Australian Lectionary reading options for Australia Day.

The aim was to make them less confronting for Aboriginal people by replacing them with biblical texts of lament and hope, he said.

He said Aboriginal Christian leaders just wanted the Church to support them in their call for Australia Day to be abolished on 26 January.

“[Indigenous Christians] have been protesting about January 26, on January 26, as Invasion Day, since at least 1938,” Dr Deverell said.

“It would be lovely if the Church got on board with this, but at the moment the prevailing culture is one of silence, which doesn’t help us.”

More displaced, hungry worldwide

■ Jenan Taylor

Millions of people went hungry, faced violence and were forced to flee their homes in 2023 while being forgotten in the shadow of other global crises, humanitarian groups say.

People in the world's poorest nations struggled to access food and find refuge mostly because of armed conflict and the effects of climate change.

Almost 300 million people faced hunger in places such as sub-Saharan and southern Africa, and parts of Asia, and more than 110 million fled their homes.

Act for Peace and Tearfund Australia feared that hunger and forced displacement were becoming protracted and unshakeable issues that many in the international community were desensitised to.

Act for Peace partnerships and programs head Geoff Robinson said forced displacement was one of the world's largest crises, and a significant issue in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Mr Robinson said it was often driven by armed conflict and exacerbated by climate change-related events, such as cyclones, drought and food insecurity.

The UN OCHA reported in late December that in Sudan fighting was having devastating effects on civilians and their needs were at an all-time high.

The agency said a key concern was the protection of civilians with reports of increased sexual and gender-based violence, family separation and child recruitment.

But Mr Robinson said global displacement was rarely highlighted in the news, because it was an incessant issue.

He said overlooking it meant women and children in particular were at increased risk of violence, and of not having their basic human rights provided for, including access to education, food, and shelter.

Mr Robinson said the humanitarian groups trying to help them also experienced setbacks, including decreased funding from donors because the matters remained overshadowed.

This meant humanitarian needs would often outstrip available resources, from emergency aid to the staff who could provide training or support to help people become more resilient.

Mr Robinson said he was most concerned about Afghanistan, where women's rights had been severely eroded in the wake of the



Picture: iStock

“The situation there continues to decline and all the development gains that were had in the last 20 years just eroded on a daily basis. The abuse of rights against the country’s women and girls can’t be understated.”

Geoff Robinson

Taliban’s return to rule in 2021.

Mr Robinson said although Afghanistan suffered the first of several major earthquakes on the same day the crisis in Israel and Palestine began in October, attention on the area had trailed off.

“The situation there continues to decline and all the development gains that were had in the last 20 years just eroded on a daily basis. The abuse of rights against the country’s women and girls can’t be understated,” Mr Robinson said.

Tearfund Australia International Program Director Mary Gaiho said more than 250 million people faced acute food shortages, and the majority of them were in Afghanistan, Yemen, Myanmar, Sudan and Pakistan.

Ms Gaiho said children were wasting away from malnutrition, as access to adequate food and water declined.

She said climate change-related disasters, ongoing conflict inside and outside their borders, and continued economic fallout from the pandemic were driving the crisis.

But Ms Gaiho said the struggles with hunger of those countries were unlikely to capture the attention that was needed to address food security, because it had become a protracted issue.

She said people in the developed world rarely tuned in to news of weather disasters in those areas, many of donors gave money where they had geopolitical interests, and events in Gaza and Ukraine had taken much of the donor and media energy.

Ms Gaiho said this threatened to worsen the situation for people who were already in dire need and made them vulnerable to any economic or climate change shock.

She said it created a loop in which they were always having to deal with different crises, so they were always experiencing turmoil.

The implications of being forgotten meant intensified poverty for the people, intensified injustice, more local turmoil, potentially even more people seeking refuge, and humanitarian aid staff battling exhaustion and pessimism about their ability to recoup or make further gains with their work.

Ms Gaiho said it was important that people continued to pray for those affected countries, try to understand the complexities of what was happening there and donate where they could, in order to break the cycle of disadvantage.

Churches wrap arms around refugees

■ Jenan Taylor

Anglican volunteers in Melbourne's east are supporting a growing number of humanitarian refugee families under a new community sponsorship project.

St Thomas' Burwood, St Hilary's Kew and St Alfred's Blackburn North are among six churches providing hospitality, safety and a new beginning for people forced to flee their homelands.

The project aims to help local churches provide settlement support to humanitarian refugees over a 12-month period, by giving financial, housing, education and emotional assistance. It is an initiative of faith charity Embrace Sanctuary Australia and NGO Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia.

Embrace Sanctuary Australia chief executive Naomi Chua said the volunteers were heartbroken at what many forcibly displaced people faced, and wanted a tangible way to help them.

Ms Chua said members of her parish St Thomas' decided to do this by working with congregants from St Hilary's to provide wrap around assistance for a Middle Eastern family that arrived in November.

She said they pooled their experiences, skills and resources to help the family find housing, settle in and develop a sense of

connection and belonging.

St Thomas' parishioner the Reverend John Altmann said the church joined the initiative because it wanted to give practical support to people in the surrounding community.

Mr Altmann said members felt that working in partnership with other churches increased their ability to better aid the asylum seeker families.

"They went from not knowing how to go about helping refugees settle into the community to their entire church communities becoming involved ..."

Naomi Chua

St Hilary's parishioner Ian Wallbridge said his church decided to participate because of its long-held interest in helping refugees settle in Australian society.

Ms Chua said the project equipped the churches through resources such as trauma-informed care training, and helping

them understand how their unique gifts could help refugees.

She said it was a privilege for the parishioners to be able to welcome the refugees at the airport, and help them navigate their sense of loss.

It was also a way for the congregations to live out their biblical mandate to help strangers.

"They went from not knowing how to go about helping refugees settle into the community to their entire church communities becoming involved in a process that has been both stressful and joyful," Ms Chua said.

She said there were more than 110 million refugees world-wide, and the project gave the churches a deep appreciation of the scale and urgency of the problem.

Ms Chua said St Thomas' and St Hilary's were now considering taking on another family.

Ms Chua said Ringwood Church of Christ, Bundoora Presbyterian and Flow Pentecostal church were also involved in the community sponsorship scheme.

She said St Alfred's was preparing to receive its first refugee family in January.

The federal government's intake of humanitarian refugees in 2023-24 is set at 20,000 places according to the Refugee Council of Australia.

Faith leaders seek aid for men held in Papua New Guinea

■ Jenan Taylor

Religious leaders in Port Moresby have urged the federal government to transfer to Australia all the remaining refugees it detained in Papua New Guinea under an offshoring arrangement, amid mounting concerns for their mental health.

The Catholics Bishop Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands wrote to the Minister for Home Affairs Claire O'Neil in mid December to show humanity and end the suffering of the 61 men stuck there.

It comes as more than 500 Australian health workers raised concerns about the refugees' health, including severe depression symptoms and their reduced intake of food.

In an open letter the Catholics Bishop Conference of Papua New Guinea general secretary said the organisation observed first-hand how healthy men were succumbing to the ruthless arrangement put in place by the previous Australian government.

The Reverend Father Giorgio Licini wrote that the men were wandering the streets with no food, and that he wished the Australian officials could see and feel their suffering, too. He said his group's major concern was that some of the refugees were critically ill with mental health conditions.

Mr Licini said the group knew of at least 12 refugees who were severely ill, and they were particularly worried about the prospects of those men.

He said Australia and New Zealand must accept them before it was too late.

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre said in a statement in mid-December that Australian and PNG authorities had committed to evacuating 16 refugees suffering serious health conditions to Australia for medical treatment.

Mr Licini said since the Australian government ceased funding refugee service providers, including hospitals and hotels, in PNG they faced immense hardship. He said because of that the refugees' rentals could

not be paid, the vouchers they were given for food and other material needs were not being released anymore.

Mr Licini said some faith groups were giving support but they were reluctant to provide financial aid, as it would allow the government to say someone was looking after them.

According to the Refugee Council of Australia the federal government spent \$343 million for offshore processing in PNG and Nauru in 2021-2022.

Mr Licini said people who wanted to help the refugees should insist the Australian government transfer them to Australia.

The Diocese of Melbourne passed a motion at the 2023 synod to call on the federal government to bring the PNG refugees and asylum seekers to Australia and let them live in the community while their resettlement options were being considered.

The Home Affairs minister has been approached for comment.

Black Rock's Christmas lights shine as a beacon to hope

■ **Elsbeth Kernebone**

A small Melbourne parish shone the light of hope this Christmas quite literally, with a staggering display of Christmas lights.

St Agnes' Black Rock aimed to be the brightest place in the area for Christmas. It had spiral lights, it had Christmas trees, it had reindeer. It made people gasp.

The church's aim was to engage with the community through what the community was interested in at that time of year.

And people couldn't walk past the church. Vicar the Venerable Jennifer Furphy said the lights made people gasp, and stop in their tracks.

It opened up conversations for her and parishioners with people who had seen the lights about the hope they symbolised.

Mrs Furphy said the spectacular brought light into the gloom of climate change, war and economic struggle. She and her husband lurked with intent near the lights at night, to chat with admirers about hope.

"It's a really dark year, it's a really dark news with the wars, and climate change,



St Agnes' Christmas lights. Picture: supplied

people are very subdued this year. So we want to say regardless of all of that darkness we think that there is some hope for the world, because of God's love. Jesus came to bring hope to the world," Mrs Furphy said.

"It's bringing light into the darkness of the gloom of climate change, the gloom

of the wars, and the economy."

Mrs Furphy said having lights on the outside of the church symbolised that it was coming to where the community was. She said St Agnes' was a small church, with an elderly congregation, but its congregation had a passion for the love of God, and a love for other people.

Decade bringing hope to dark places: Chaplains celebrated

■ **Cathrine Muston**

When a chaplain serves 10 years in prison with the Anglican Criminal Justice Ministry they are given a brick, literally.

In pre-decimal Australia the £10 note was brick red. So when somebody was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, they were said to have received a "brick".

This year ACJM awarded a brick to senior chaplain the Reverend Rob Ferguson, who has served in seven prisons during his 10-year incumbency, including 10 years at Hopkins Correctional Centre in Ararat.

In the 11 years since Anglican Criminal Justice Ministry initiated the award, seven of our Anglican chaplains have received their brick. This includes two of our current prison chaplains the Reverend Phillip Gill and the Reverend June Robertson.

The role of a prison chaplain is one that requires tenacity and commitment. Chaplains care for everyone regardless of who they are and what they have done, while not condoning the behaviour that has put them there. This is a difficult line to walk, where the grace of God is central for



The Reverend Rob Ferguson (right). Picture: supplied

both chaplain and prisoner.

Prisons are life-changing places, not always for the better. They are a place where the one thing that many have is time: time to sit, reflect or ruminate. It is here that our chaplains can bring the light and hope of the liberating message of Jesus. They have a unique and vital ministry creating sacred spaces and a community of faith in the hard, cold, multipurpose rooms

of correctional centres.

Once their sentence is complete, a prisoner will be released and must find a way to engage again with family, friends and the broader community.

It can be important to have someone to walk alongside you during the transition back into the community – especially someone who has shared something of what they have been through inside. Chaplains often continue to support people in this way. They can also refer people to the Get Out for Good program which provides further social and emotional support for people through drop-in centres and one-on-one friendship support.

Prison chaplains are Christ's ambassadors to those in prison, taking the good news that reconciliation with God is possible for everyone, even (or especially) from dark places.

If you are interested in the work of the Anglican Criminal Justice Ministry and would like to talk further, please contact Kate Schnerring on 0428 398 993 or at kate.schnerring@anglicarevic.org.au.

Generations team up to remember real significance of Christmas

■ Jenan Taylor

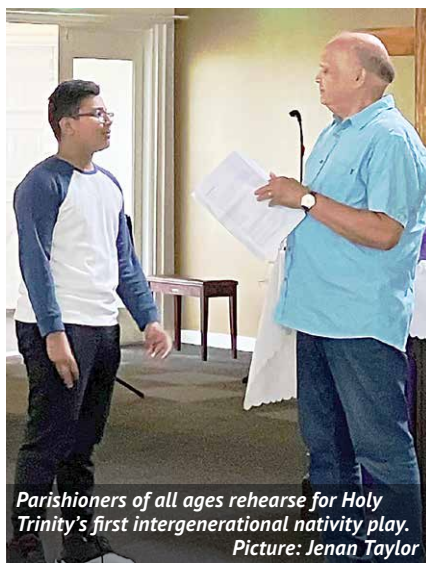
A small outer suburbs church with a budding family membership hopes its intergenerational nativity play will remind people of the true meaning of Christmas, and bring young and old congregants closer together.

Holy Trinity Hampton Park's Christmas play featured 18 children and adults in the roles of Mary, Joseph, the angels, shepherds, and contemporary writers who wrestle with how to modernise the story of Jesus's birth.

Entitled *The Beginning*, it was adapted from writer Dave Wagner's play of the same name, in which actors try to conceptualise a modern nativity for today's youth.

Vicar the Reverend Argho Biswas said he was moved to do the play because of the intense focus on Santa Claus and commercialism, particularly among young people.

He said he wanted the performers to not just think about acting, but to start thinking about how God worked while they were doing so, and he hoped how they delivered their interpretation



Parishioners of all ages rehearse for Holy Trinity's first intergenerational nativity play. Picture: Jenan Taylor

would help audience members reflect more acutely on what made the original Christmas story so special.

Congregant Debadipta Dutta said being in the play made him consider what it might have been like if Jesus was born in modern times.

Teenage parishioners Jaden and Maku said working with the older people in the play encouraged them to think more about the history and origins of Christmas.

Opening doors for new arrivals

■ Glenn Buijs

On Saturday the 20 January, REACH West Epiphany Hoppers Crossing officially launched its Refugee and Migrant Housing program.

This program will offer newly arrived refugee or in need migrant families 12 months housing at a low cost. Its aim is to allow families to establish themselves within the community while saving money and taking part in training to help them find employment.

At the official opening Epiphany Anglican vicar the Venerable Glenn Buijs said housing affordability, employment and education were the three concerns parishioners consistently named. In response the parish has established a Community Centre, offering programs aimed to improve the employment opportunities of new arrivals, and a foodbank that also assisted new arrivals with rent and household goods.

Mr Buijs said he was grateful for the Community of the Holy Name whose generosity allowed the housing project to go ahead. He said that in purchasing two houses for the housing program, the CHN continued its long tradition of caring for the most needy and vulnerable.

He said the community was founded by Sister Esther in 1888 and instrumental in establishing the Mission to Streets and Lanes, and that the project was a continuation of its long legacy.

After viewing the properties, guests enjoyed a smorgasbord of Karen and African food, singing and dance at Epiphany Hoppers Crossing.

To make a tax deductible donation contact the Venerable Glenn Buijs on 0414 848 060.



Celebrations at Epiphany. Picture: supplied

How Sunday School is helping adults learn about God

■ Jenan Taylor

A country parish's ministry is helping adults unfamiliar with the Church and the Bible learn about God in the way children would.

Christ Church Daylesford has been holding Sunday School for Grownups an informal, simplified form of Bible study for people new to the Anglican church or church in general.

Sunday School for Grownups coordinator Yvonne Deans said the ministry aimed to be a comfortable, small group setting in which people could get to know about the Bible and the church, and not be afraid to ask questions. Mrs Deans said some participants had gone on to engage with more in-depth discussions about the Scriptures since the classes started 15 months ago.

She said she started the program because there were congregants who

came to faith as adults but hadn't gone through Sunday School or hadn't had the chance to engage with the Bible stories that many church people might have heard about for years.

Mrs Deans said Christ Church had older members and many asked about the readings that were being covered in church services, saying they didn't understand them, and the church wanted to help them be more comfortable.

Some members have also gone on to participate in Alpha courses, and wanted to probe further.

She said it jogged and clarified participants' memories of some of the biblical stories their parents had told them, and led many to ask further questions.

Some of these included curiosity about the difference between Judaism and Christianity, as well as interest in how the Anglican church was run, Mrs Deans said.

We must also value chaplaincy more

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A modest proposal for Anglican education, P20-21

I think it's an excellent idea however there may be financial constraints through accruing HELP debt and wanting to set up home and have family – not having life on hold for ever.

There is also the need to perhaps value the chaplaincy role more. Would the schools consider putting in more chaplains? Would they consider its value in many areas, such as emotional and spiritual support?

It seems that the diocese around are dropping chaplaincy, their most valuable theologically trained apologists who understand the spiritual journey and its personal significance across the life stages.

Would the diocese consider more youth workers and camps as well!

Josephine Snowdon

Some good basic ideas here! As someone with teaching and chaplaincy experience in Anglican, Catholic and independent Christian schools over 25 years these are matters I've long pondered. The starting



Picture: iStock

point is the grassroots values for the school or the system. The low-fee more recently established Anglican schools had much potential with strong local community-based support. Discussions and working groups in specific schools might have greater potential to encourage school-based initiatives than top-down strategies. In a chaplaincy role I would occasionally have the opportunity to provide staff development sessions.

Fay Magee

I think this is a very difficult thing to achieve and it is very rare to see it. I spent a little while as a low-fee Anglican school chaplain in Perth when there was a model of trying to co-locate parishes with schools. It was very hard for me to see the gains it could make for parish life. Parental attitude seemed to be, "We're paying good money for them to get religion at your school, why would we go to church, too."

It seems to me that religious education and participation in religious services and

ceremonial in a compulsory setting (as most schools are) is counter-productive and ultimately gives students some form of protection against engaging fully with the faith.

I hear a few years ago of a chaplain in a Victorian school who persuaded the school leadership to allow chapel to be voluntary. It was allowed, and it seemed to be more engaging, but I never heard how the practice went.

As a final reflection, I know that understanding our identity as Anglicans is something worth making clear to all those who work for us in schools that bear the name, but the objective is not promoting Anglicanism; rather it is to guide, encourage, nurture young people and perhaps staff towards taking up the way of living the Jesus called all his followers towards – Christian discipleship is what we might call it. This has never been an easy task and is perhaps more difficult in our age than the average level of difficulty over the ages.

John Clapton

THE Melbourne Anglican

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



ANGLICAN
DIOCESE OF
MELBOURNE

Reporting Child Abuse in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

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

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

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

Who can report neglect and abuse of a child under the age of 18?
Children, Parents, Staff, Volunteers, Anyone.

What sorts of things must be reported?
All child safety concerns must be reported:
• Disclosure of past and present abuse and harm
• Allegations, suspicions or observations
• Breaches of the Code of Conduct

CONTACT NUMBERS: **POLICE 000** **CHILD PROTECTION: 13 12 78** (After Hours) North **1300 664 977** • South **1300 655 795** • East **1300 369 391** • West (Rural) **1800 075 599** • West (Metro) **1300 664 977** **KOYOORA PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS 1800 135 246**

In mourning, we pray for a miracle

■ Susan Wahhab

Since the fateful year of 1948, the Palestinian people have been suffering persecution, occupation and dispossession.

For us Palestinians life froze on 14 May 1948 when we were dispossessed of our homes, so that the Jews could declare the state of Israel on our lands. The source of today's conflict dates to 1948.

We call that event Nakba. More than 750,000 people were dispossessed from their land and thrown out to the West Bank, Gaza strip, Jordan, Lebanon and other Arab countries, and were refused entry back to their homes in what is now Israel.

Since occupation in 1967 more than a million Palestinians have been imprisoned in Israeli jails. More than 50,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished, hundreds of thousands of olive trees uprooted, thousands of children kidnapped in the middle of the night from their homes to Israeli jails, refugee camps sprayed with skunk or tear gas to make life unbearable for the residents, thousands of checkpoints have choked the towns and villages, water has been stolen and sold back to us at exorbitant prices. Palestinian produce has been destroyed to force us to buy Israeli products, olive harvest stolen, trees and water springs poisoned to destroy farmers livelihoods, students have been imprisoned for speaking out, thousands of young and old killed. All to ensure Palestinian lands in the West Bank are taken to build the illegal Israeli settlements.

My maternal and paternal grandparents were among them. My maternal grandparents were forced to leave Jaffa with nothing, and hired a truck to take them and the young children to Amman, where they stayed for couple of years before they decided to leave and settle in Ramallah. They locked their home and took the key.

My paternal grandparents were not lucky enough to find a truck. They were forced to leave their newly-built home and shop with hardly any possessions and walked from Ramleh to Ramallah for three days through the mountains. They walked during the night and slept during the day, carrying young children. Thousands walked with them on what was called the Lyd death march. They saw people die on the way.

My grandparents believed once the fighting ended, they would go back to their homes. So they left everything behind – clothes, furniture and hid their gold and money inside pillow cases and bed

mattresses believing it was safer to leave at home than take it with them. They were told the war would not last more than couple of weeks. They locked their homes and took with them the house key.

The Nakba led in the loss of their home, business, land and their social and familial network that was in Jaffa and Ramleh.

Eventually my grandparents built a life for themselves in Ramallah and their children grew up and had children. They helped build Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus, Gaza and many towns and villages across the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank.

“The international community needs to be fair to the Palestinian people.”

But my grandmothers never stopped talking about Palestine – to us the grandchildren. They didn't want us to forget Jaffa and Ramleh and hoped for decades that they would go back to their homes. My grandmother Widad passed away in Sydney 25 years ago, and gave the key to my uncle to pass it down to his son. For us the house key is our land title deed.

Millions of Palestinian grandmothers have joined in this ritual of passing the key down. The house key became a symbol of Palestinian resistance and quest for justice. At the entrance of many refugee camps in West Bank and Gaza, a large key greets the residents and guests. Our Nakba memorial events feature the house key. For us the key is the truth. The key is testament to our ownership to the homes and land we have been dispossessed of. The truth is the key and the key is that truth.

Therefore, the events of 7 October 2023 cannot be seen as isolated. It was a horror day and the loss of innocent lives and destruction should be condemned. The 75 years of repression, dispossession and persecution has climaxed in 2023. And this injustice cannot be ignored. The sacrifice has been too immense. The international community needs to be fair to the Palestinian people.

Months into this war and a ceasefire has not occurred. More than 25,000 Palestinians have died most of them women and children and over 62,000 injured, maimed and burnt. Much of Gaza is now

destroyed. Infrastructure, schools, hospitals, bakeries, mosques, churches, homes, office buildings, shops, restaurants, universities. The aggression of the Israeli government should be condemned. This is a war crime and the perpetrators need to be prosecuted.

Our families in Gaza's two churches – Saint Porphyrius Orthodox Church and the Holy Family Catholic church – have been sheltering since the first week of the war. They lost their homes and businesses to the bombardments in the first week of the war. We have been in contact with them hearing one tragic story after another. The bombing of the Orthodox church killed 20 distant relatives, whole families (mum dad and children) and injured 18 family members. The Catholic Church compound housing the injured and disabled was shelled by Israeli tanks last week making it uninhabitable. Mum Nahida Anton and daughter Samar Anton were killed by an Israeli sniper, and seven people were injured including my cousin's husband.

This war has been traumatising for us. Our Palestinian Christian community and the Palestinian Muslims lost immensely dear life and country. We cannot fathom the extent of the bombing. It's gone beyond self defence and is an act of revenge, mainly on defenceless refugees. They are now made refugees for the seventh time.

Once you see the dispossession since 1948 to 2023, you cannot unsee it. The “conflict” is a front of land grabs and ethnic cleansing.

As I wrote this, Christmas was a few days away. I did not listen to Christmas songs and didn't watch Christmas movies as I usually do. This Christmas we mourned death and destruction. Our community has been praying for peace on Zoom every night. We are finding solace and strength in Jesus Christ, so that we can find the courage to choose love and peace over the hatred, revenge, anger, and pain that have gripped all of us, be we Palestinians, Israelis, Jews, Muslims or Christians.

Despite the pain of death and destruction, each of us must confront the shadow of injustice and make a personal commitment to justice, striving for peace, equality, and reconciliation.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

Suzan Wahhab was born in Jerusalem and grew up listening to Nakba stories in occupied Ramallah. She is the President of Palestinian Christians in Australia and is an accountant and financial strategist.

Christians cannot look away from Gaza,

■ Tim Budge

“This used to be paradise,” Suhaila said. “You could drive to Gaza City from anywhere, sit on the beach, buy local fresh oranges. It was beautiful, it was so relaxing.”

We are sitting in one of the few remaining seaside restaurants near Gaza City. It is November 2014 and Suhaila’s statement is both believable and implausible. The beach is there, the stunning Mediterranean Sea is there, the seafood is wonderful, as is the Palestinian hospitality. Squint and this could be Crete or Cyprus.

However, this is Gaza in the 21st century. It was bad in 2014 and worse again when I visited the hospital in 2018. Untreated sewerage flows into the ocean because there is not enough diesel to run the EU funded treatment plant. Harvests of strawberries and other produce are abundant, but are arbitrarily stopped from export. Fishing is restricted, with Israeli patrol boats ready to push the fishing trawlers back if they travel further than six to 12 kilometres. Entry into the strip is like entering a prison. As a white, Western male, it is inconvenient but possible for me to travel in and out, and requires permission from the Israeli and Gaza immigration. For most Palestinians, exit is an impossible dream. Jerusalem, with its churches and mosques, is only 75 kilometres away but it might as well be on another planet for Palestinians.

Suhaila Tarazi is director of the Anglican al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City, the oldest hospital in the Gaza Strip. The hospital and Suhaila are living institutions: fearless, universally well-respected and passionate about tending to the sick and improving local health systems, while trying to respond to wave after wave of bombing and destruction from the Israeli Defence Forces. On these trips, I am in Gaza on behalf of Anglican Overseas Aid, to work with the hospital on their lifesaving breast cancer screening project. The project provides free screening and works with resilient and tireless women’s community groups to change attitudes and support women facing a cancer diagnosis or treatment. Up to 40 per cent of women are unable to leave Gaza to get radiotherapy treatment, since this is not allowed in the strip, reinforcing the sense of imprisonment and the arbitrary oppression imposed on all Gazans.

During my 2014 visit, I was driven around suburbs that were newly destroyed, building after building flattened, people

“This is collective punishment and it only extends and exacerbates the cycle of human rights abuses, destruction and aggression that has been churning for the last 75 years or more.”

living in the rubble, with their furniture and wood stoves among the concrete and collapsed stairways. Even clinics and disability centres were not spared. On my visit in August 2018, my room was shaken when the Israeli Defence Force demolished a five-storey community centre a kilometre away from where I was staying.

Now it is 2023 and a wave of total destruction has been unleashed. On Wednesday, 18 October, I woke to the news that the al-Ahli Hospital had been hit by another missile, the second in four days. Initial reports were that 500 people had been killed, although that number has been revised down. The IDF was initially blamed, but there is widespread debate about the source, trajectory and capacity of the missile. The old adage about truth being the first casualty in war is ever true now. The World Health Organisation reported 203 Israeli attacks on health care between the 7 October and 28 November.

I was in tears for most of the next few days, heartbroken as to what might have happened to people like Suhaila, or Issa, Ibrahim, Mohammed, Samira, Mahmoud and others: doctors, accountants, nurses, drivers, and the hundreds of people sheltering in the hospital compound. Information slowly trickled in, as people there were almost totally cut off from communications. Those I did contact or receive news about, including Suhaila, appear to be still alive. But in the understated, very Palestinian words of one friend and colleague, they were “not good”. As I write, the news has come in that the hospital is now closed and unable to continue operating.

These are temporary and isolated stories of survival, among a huge, ever-increasing



toll of death, injury and destruction. One child is killed in Gaza every 10 minutes. More than 25,000 people have died. About 1.9 million people are displaced in an area a quarter the size of Geelong. People are queuing three days to get enough flour for one day’s bread. Destruction is not

we must speak up



People in Northern Gaza shelter in their bombed home in 2014.

Picture: Tim Budge

limited to combatants, to the members of the terrorist group Hamas. Destruction is raining on pregnant women, on children – who even if they survive will carry trauma forever. Poets, writers, journalists are being killed. Even the third oldest church in the world was bombed, despite being a refuge

for Christians and other citizens.

I'm struggling to respond, as are many, many others. I have been in humanitarian work for 30 years but it is Gaza which affects me the most. In part it is the combination of the personal connection to wonderful people there and their suffering,

as well as the facts: the massive destruction that is without parallel and without justification. This is collective punishment and it only extends and exacerbates the cycle of human rights abuses, destruction and aggression that has been churning for the last 75 years or more.

I take some small comfort from the waves of support for Palestine and Gaza in Australia and elsewhere. I am relieved that Australia has changed its voting pattern at the United Nations General Assembly. People are starting to wake up to the horror of life in Gaza and how this wave of total destruction needs to stop.

However, the call to speak out against injustice needs to be taken up and amplified within the Christian church. We cannot look away. We cannot take refuge in old tropes about the Promised Land when our brothers and sisters in Gaza are paying the price for this one-sided view of history. We need to listen again to our call to be peacemakers, to seek justice, to demand that nations turn missiles into ploughshares.

“People are starting to wake up to the horror of life in Gaza and how this wave of total destruction needs to stop.”

We must speak up, attend rallies, pray for peace and justice in the Holy Land, and listen to Palestinian as well as Jewish friends. We must tell our politicians that children and unarmed civilians must never be the target of bombs. We must tell them that Australia should not export military equipment to Israel. We must push back on all messages that dehumanise, that blame and justify punishment of the many instead of the few. This is our role as the church and followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. I hope we can live up to that calling at this crucial time.

Tim Budge has been a development and humanitarian worker for over 30 years. He has a PhD in development studies and now lives on Taungurung land in central Victoria.

'I don't think God's finished with me yet'

■ Elspeth Kernebone

Peter Young is 62, he has 30 years' ministry experience, and his Bible college peers of the '80s are starting to retire.

But instead of winding down, Dr Young is about to take a step into something new. On 10 February he will begin his life as an ordained minister when he is deaconed at St Paul's Cathedral.

Why be ordained only eight years from retirement? Well, Dr Young just doesn't think God is done with him yet.

He has spent most of his career working in mission, living in Nigeria and Thailand with his family. After he returned to Melbourne in 2022, ordination seemed to be what God wanted.

Dr Young said being so close to retirement meant he was not particularly ambitious, he was just taking the next step.

"I don't think I'm building a career in this, I'm just moving into what God wants me to do next," he said.

"We'll see where he leads next. Because ... there's not too many things that are permanent with God. He leads us into things that we might not expect at the start of the process."

During his curacy, Dr Young will work to start a new 5pm congregation at St John's Blackburn to reach people living in newly built, high-density housing in the area. This will be through Holy Trinity Doncaster.

Dr Young said he would have his L Plates on, despite his decades of experience, as he had mostly worked in a very different cultural milieu.

He said he was excited to learn more about Australian culture during his curacy, particularly the experiences of young people who are likely to make up most of the congregation.

He's also keen to grow his pastoral experience and learn about the administrative side of running a congregation in Australia.

"I'm still very much a learner, I'm a rookie like every other curate starting out," Dr Young said.

"I've got a few miles under my belt but ... maybe that's all part of the mix in what God can use in any of us."

But Dr Young said he hoped to use existing skills in sensitivity and cross-cultural relating while ministering to the people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds living in Blackburn and Box Hill.

Dr Young's work overseas began with three years working in Nigeria as a

pharmacist in the 1980s, with the Sudan United Mission.

He saw and prayed about a lack of theological training and depth in the parts of the Nigerian church during his first period in Nigeria, and realised that God was calling him to be part of the answer to his prayers.

So, he returned to study at Ridley College, then worked in Nigeria again with his wife Elspeth for 16 more years.

Dr Young first taught at Bible college, then was involved in a theological education by extension program.

He later worked in internationalisation with Pioneers in Thailand, engaging with

the changing nature of mission work to help younger sending countries and groups work out their approach. During this time he travelled across the world, to Latin America, North America, Asia, Africa, Oceania and Europe.

One thing Dr Young is grateful for is that when he is ordained, his 95-year-old father will be able to attend. He himself worked in the Diocese of Melbourne after originally being ordained in the Diocese of Quebec, Canada. In fact, Dr Young will be the third generation in his family to be ordained in the Anglican Church.

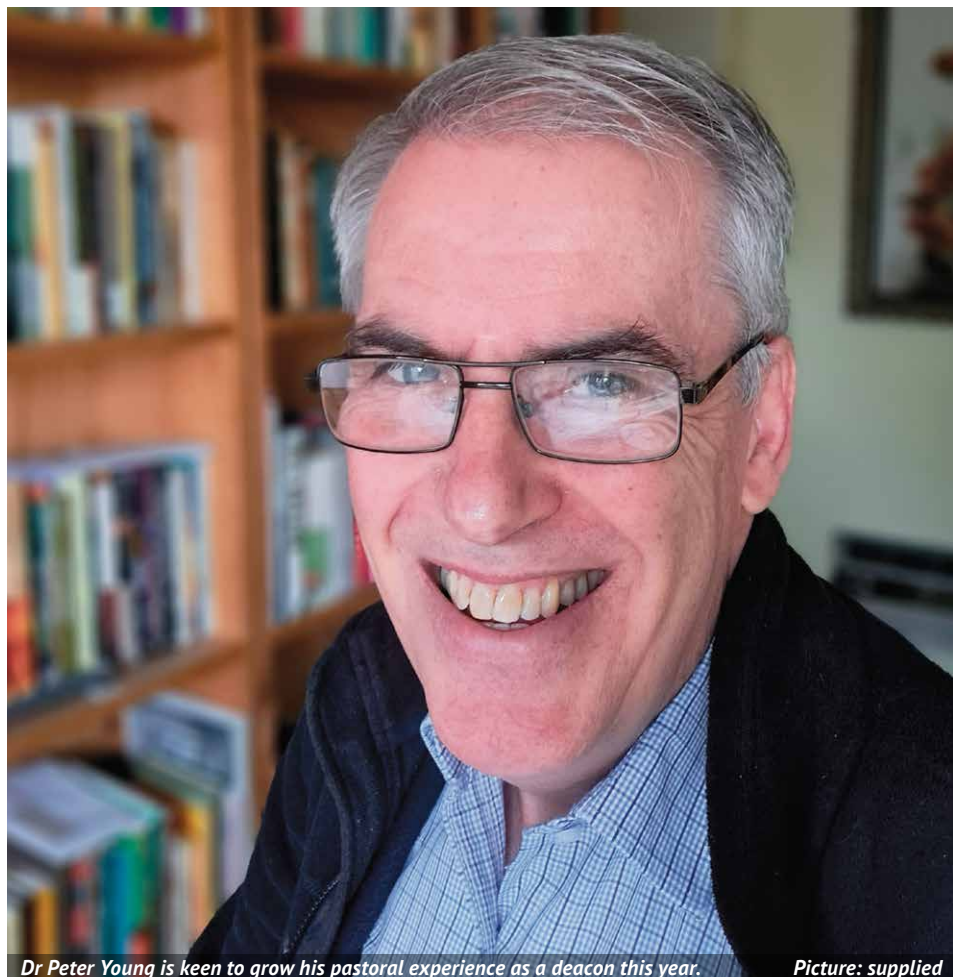
For Dr Young, the threads he sees throughout his career are teaching God's Word and involvement in cross-cultural mission. He joined the Year of Discernment feeling he wanted to use his teaching and preaching skills in Australia. During this period, Dr Young said confirmation from godly people built his confidence that ordination was the right path for him.

"It hasn't been one thing, it's been a slow evolution of that," he said.

"I don't think God's finished with me yet. I'm 62, but I still think that God can probably even use an old bloke like me."

"I've got a few miles under my belt but ... maybe that's all part of the mix in what God can use in any of us."

Peter Young



Dr Peter Young is keen to grow his pastoral experience as a deacon this year.

Picture: supplied

Love for God draws Cara to ordination

■ **Elsbeth Kernebone**

When Cara Greenham Hancock told her family she planned to join a monastery, her mother said, “That sounds like the sort of thing you would do.”

It did. As her faith deepened in her early 20s, Ms Greenham Hancock had explored how she could give herself fully to Jesus and his church.

And while exploring this, Ms Greenham Hancock joined Tymawr Convent in rural Wales in late 2020. Here she began the seven-year discernment process towards life vows.

But, three years later, Ms Greenham Hancock is back in Melbourne about to make a lifelong commitment to the church, but a commitment of a different kind. Instead of life within a religious community, she will minister in the wider body of the church, as an ordained Anglican minister working in a parish.

On 10 February, Ms Greenham Hancock will be ordained a deacon at St Paul’s Cathedral, before beginning a role as an assistant curate.

A desire to be given fully to Jesus and his church led her to seek life in a religious community. Likewise a desire to be fully given to Jesus and the people of God led to her desire to serve as an ordained minister in Melbourne.

At Tymawr convent, Ms Greenham Hancock joined in a life structured around prayer. The sisters gathered once daily for Eucharist, four times daily for offices of prayer, singing Psalms and Scripture, and spent two hours daily in personal silent prayer.

Ms Greenham Hancock said after months spent living in that rhythm, everything became prayer.

She said living in a religious community meant learning through the discipline of living together in love, which was inseparable from loving God.

At the same time, Ms Hancock was doing manual labour for the first time in her life. Planting, weeding, harvesting, laying paths, shovelling snow. Working with her body and with creation, she read Scripture differently.

Ms Greenham Hancock’s path to faith – and to ordination – began as a seven-year-old in a non-Christian home, who asked to go to church. It took her through a period as teenage university student, new to Melbourne, who wrestled with the idea of redemption, but wasn’t a member of a church



Cara Greenham Hancock is excited for the future of the church.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

community and wasn’t ready to claim the label of Christian. It took her through a time of growing in faith, soaking in prayer and the Scripture, looking to give herself fully to Jesus, exploring this life as a member of a religious community.

But the path didn’t lead to life in a convent.

As part of her discernment at Tymawr, Ms Greenham Hancock visited Melbourne. It stirred her up inside so much that, so in consultation with the order, she returned for a year to study and work at Christ Church Brunswick.

Her time in Melbourne made her feel alive, and that she had something to offer. Formed by new ways of praying and looking at people, she felt that she had the best of both the convent and the parish life.

Ms Greenham Hancock didn’t remain at Tymawr Convent, but she wouldn’t be the same person now without her time there. She sees it as having slowed her down and made her gentler with herself and with others, as she saw more of the gentleness of God.

She refers to herself with a borrowed Jesuit phrase, as a “contemplative in action”. To Ms Greenham Hancock, this means a serious commitment to personal prayer, and a focus on the Lord. It also means taking the fruits of that prayer into the world, looking at

people in that light, meeting their needs and treating people in a Christlike way.

Back in Melbourne it began to just make sense for Ms Greenham Hancock to put herself forward as a candidate for ordained ministry.

To her, it was about the feeling of completely being given to Jesus and completely being given to the people of God at the same time. And it was the feeling of being at the threshold of the church in the wider community, where people encounter and are drawn in to the truths of the faith.

Now, as she readies herself for ordination, she knows what that community is – for now. In February Ms Greenham Hancock will begin her role as an assistant curate at the Parish of St Stephen and St Mary Mount Waverley.

Ms Greenham Hancock isn’t sure what shape her life will take as an Anglican minister, although she feels drawn to parish ministry. But she is finding more and more peace surrendering to that.

“The church is going to be very different in 10 years’ time, we’re at a time of change and facing all sorts of challenges, and I don’t find that daunting, I find that quite exciting,” she said. “[I’m] very excited. There’s so much newness, so much adventure, so much discovery ahead of me: new people, a new part of Melbourne to discover, new church traditions, a new way of church life.”

A modest proposal for Anglican education

■ Fergus King

We might assume that most young people think about faith in explicitly religious contexts, but statistics suggest otherwise. In Australia, about one-third of students are educated in a religiously affiliated school. This gives us a great opportunity for mission within the educational system.

This got me thinking about how we in Melbourne minister in areas that identify themselves as Anglican, such as our schools. There is a significant Anglican school presence within the Melbourne diocese. Many of these schools would describe their aim as delivering education within an Anglican ethos. This ethos embraces two elements: a worldview and a behaviour, both informed and shaped by Anglican theology. That is, it is an expression of Christian faith that has been shaped by Scripture, the ancient teaching of the church, the expressions of theology that emerged in the period after the European Reformation and, more recently, the understandings drawn from Christians of non-European cultural backgrounds.

However, recognising this Anglican ethos leads to an auxiliary question. Anglican teachers are highly qualified educators in their disciplines, but what qualifies them to teach in that Anglican ethos? How do we, as the Church, make sure they are theologically articulate and able to deliver that specifically Anglican ethos that lies at the heart of claimed school identity? Are there lessons we can learn from other faith-based schools, particularly the dominant player in faith-based schools, the Catholic Church?

It is a requirement within the Victorian Catholic school system that teachers complete professional development including Catholic curriculum, religious education and faith development, and Catholic

identity, culture, tradition and theology. This is because witness is fundamental to the role of the Catholic educator, as it is within Protestant schools. An educator who is both supported in and witness to their faith provides students with a real and tangible example of Christian attitudes and behaviour.

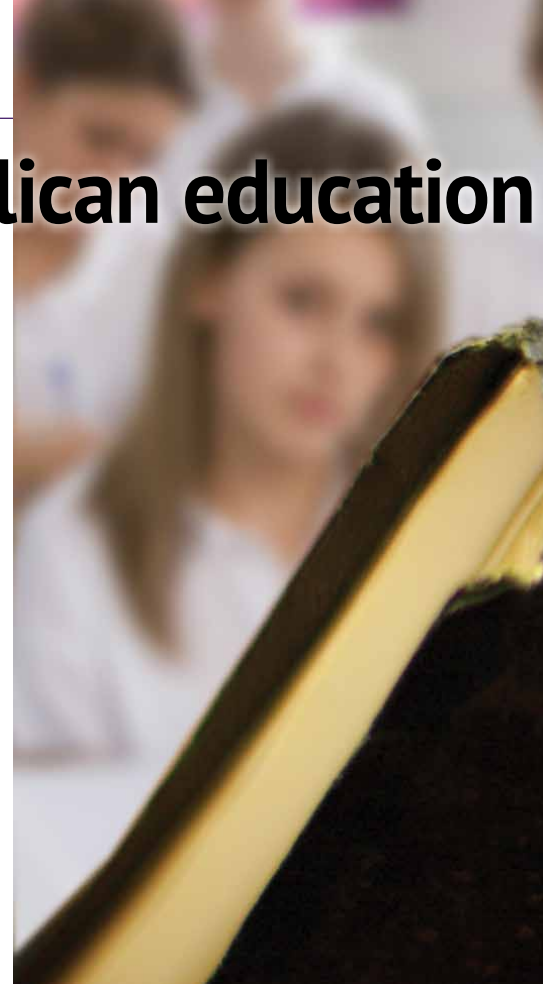
The Australian Catholic University offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses

“Anglican teachers are highly qualified educators in their disciplines, but what qualifies them to teach in that Anglican ethos?”

in Biblical Studies and Christian Theology which can support teachers in gaining the theological qualifications they need to lead within the Catholic school setting. This is because many other universities simply do not offer opportunities to either study or teach religious education, because many schools nationally do not offer religious education.

This then raises the question of whether similar practices could inform the formation of Anglican teachers? Given that there are no Anglican universities comparable to Catholic institutions, post-graduate qualifications would seem to be the best pathway. In a diocese like Melbourne, we might then ask how we can achieve this outcome.

The answer exists already: the Anglican theological colleges, Ridley and Trinity offer opportunities for teachers to gain qualifications in theology, pastoral care and



ethics. Both colleges offer postgraduate qualifications ranging from certificates to degrees. Increasingly, these qualifications are nested within each other, meaning that a student may enrol in a shorter qualification and later transfer those credits to a more substantial qualification. Thus, one might start with a certificate and proceed to either a diploma or degree. Such enrolments and qualifications would sit within the requirements for professional development within the Australian education system. For those wishing to expand their knowledge without pursuing a qualification, units might also be studied by audit.

What might pre- or post- service teachers study in a short certificate course?

First, it would be crucial to undertake an introductory course in biblical studies, given the foundational role that Scripture has in all expressions of Anglicanism.

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Picture: Dreamstime

Scripture is the touchstone of Anglican theological identity and ethos. Knowing Scripture is something that we all implicitly acknowledge as valuable and to be desired. In parish settings, it is the purpose of the sermon. Additionally, “texts and traditions” may be a course delivered in religious education courses, and in some schools, it has been delivered by people with no theological qualification. Teachers need to be able to “do theology” to mediate an Anglican ethos to students. Understanding of the subtleties of reading Scripture for its maximum effect is crucial to theology.

An Anglican ethos cannot be built on Scripture alone. Those wanting to know what such an ethos entails also need to study the history of the Church and the doctrines which emerged after the Bible. Anglicans stand within a theological trajectory which starts in the New Testament

“To know the history and development of the Anglican Communion, the Australian Church, and how all that hangs together offers us the chance to explore our place in global and Australian history.”

period, engages with the great councils of the early church which formed the creeds, and then was reshaped in the controversies of the 16th century Reformation in western Europe and after.

To know the history and development

of the Anglican Communion, the Australian Church, and how all that hangs together offers us the chance to explore our place in global and Australian history. In turn, that allows us to see what is distinctive about Anglican identity and the positive contribution it may make to public life.

So, there it is, a modest proposal for what Augustine titled a Christian Education which would equip not just teachers, who prompted this reflection, but all lay Christians, for Anglican ministry and mission today.

To enquire about study opportunities contact Jess at Admissions@ridley.edu.au or Joanne and Fergus at tcts@trinity.edu.au.

The Reverend Dr Fergus King is Farnham Maynard Associate Professor in Ministry Education and director of the Ministry Education Centre, Trinity College Theological School.



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Rescuing young people from the myth

Dr Sarah Wilson is a biologist and program director for ISCAST—Christianity and Science in Conversation. In this article, she outlines the background and motivation for her work with ISCAST.

It is now 90 years ago that some of the greatest scientists of the 1930s gathered from around the world to hear a series of lectures hosted by the California Institute of Technology. At the conclusion of one of these lectures the most famous scientist in living memory, Albert Einstein, rose to his feet, applauded, and exclaimed, “This is the most beautiful and satisfactory explanation of creation to which I have ever listened.”

Einstein was praising George Lemaître, a Belgian Catholic priest and scientist, who had just explained a theory of how the expansion of the universe arose from a primeval atom. Today this is understood in popular culture as the Big Bang. At the time it was an unorthodox theory of how the universe came into existence, but now almost universally accepted by scientists in that field.

Lemaître was a brilliant scientist, nominated for the Nobel Prize twice, but equally committed to his spiritual life. During a brief period of fame, Lemaître was interviewed by the *New York Times* where he shared his views on faith and science. “I was interested in truth from the point of view of salvation and from the point of view of scientific certainty. It seemed to me that both paths lead to truth and I decided to follow both.”

Sadly, as we fast forward almost a century, a tired, time-stained view of disharmony between science and faith continues to propagate in Western culture, greatly influencing how young, unchurched people view Christianity and how some Christians mistrust science.

Today, teenagers are more aware of the benefits of science than ever before. They embrace it and use it creatively in many ways adults could never have dreamt of. At ISCAST we are delighted that young people are excited by scientific and technological advancements. As a Christian organisation committed to both mainstream science and the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are also compelled to convey to students that science and faith are not in conflict.

Recently we asked 600 high school students attending a Victorian independent



Dr Sarah Wilson.

Picture: supplied

“I don’t think there is a conflict between evolutionary theory and what the Bible teaches. I think there is a conflict when we try to get the Bible to answer questions it wasn’t set out to answer.”

Mike Clarke

school: “Do you think science and Christian faith conflict with each other?” Sixty-four per cent responded with a resounding, “Yes.”

We were not at all surprised by the findings from our small study. Although the number surveyed was low and not representative of the diversity in Australian society, the results are consistent with the feedback from the thousands of school students that ISCAST staff and volunteers listen to each year. The catchphrases, “I believe in science so I can’t believe in God” or, “Science deals with facts while Christianity only faith” reflect the outlook of many of the young people we meet.

There are two major areas of concern for the church arising from young people’s perception of conflict between mainstream science and Christian belief: 1) it has the potential to destabilise the established faith of Christians and 2) it creates a barrier for the unchurched to take Christianity seriously.

International studies performed by the Barna Group show that the churches’ anti-science views are a major reason young people leave the church in the United States. In Australia, anti-scientific views from churches have led some young people to abandon their faith.

Former La Trobe University Life Sciences head Professor Mike Clarke has spoken of being visited by many distressed Christian students during his career, asking him how he could be both a follower of Christ and an evolutionary biologist. Some of these students came to Clarke deeply concerned by what they were being taught about the origin of living things, including humans, which was totally incompatible with the teachings of their church, their parents, and the school they had attended. They were worried that an acceptance of evolutionary theory would signal the start of a spiritual decline eventually leading them to abandon their Christian faith.

These students sought counsel from Professor Clarke who is widely known to be a Christian. After decades of being both a faithful Christian and respected scientist he concluded, “I don’t think there is a conflict



of conflict



Picture: iStock

between evolutionary theory and what the Bible teaches. I think there is a conflict when we try to get the Bible to answer questions it wasn't set out to answer."

Perhaps a more worrying problem in Australia are the views of unchurched young people – that there is an irreconcilable conflict and mutual exclusivity between mainstream science and committed, orthodox Christian faith. This belief, captured in our snapshot survey, becomes a barrier to accepting the gospel and an issue the church needs to take seriously. If any unchurched person presupposes that being a Christian requires rejecting much of mainstream science, how can we expect them to listen let alone seriously consider the gospel?

So, why do people believe that Christianity conflicts with science?

The myth of conflict has long historical roots. These can largely be attributed to misunderstandings: either about the circumstances of historical events (e.g. the so-called Galileo controversy) or about what science is and where its limits lie.

The responsibility for this barrier to

“What a tragedy that some young people won't even consider Christianity because of misunderstandings about science and faith!”

Sarah Wilson

the gospel lies in part with Christians who are convinced that a faithful reading of Scripture entails a, “young-earth creationist” position, which denies much geology and biology. But their message can be so overbearing that a commitment to this literalism can seem less like a disputable matter and more like a requirement for salvation. Because of these strong views, many unchurched young people think that all Christians refute evolutionary theory. ISCAST knows this view is common in

Australia because we are consistently questioned about the perceived inconsistency between evolution and the Bible by students during our school visits.

What a tragedy that some young people won't even consider Christianity because of misunderstandings about science and faith!

Out of this concern grows ISCAST's commitment to helping the church put to rest the myth of a science–faith conflict. To this end, we are creating science and faith resources for churches, teachers, and students. Our most exciting of these resources is a package of 10 topic-based videos that help unpack issues of science and faith using interviews with a range of distinguished scientists, theologians and other experts.

The lasting fruit from a generation of young people free of the conflict myth will be more effective evangelism as well as Christians confident that science is humankind's way of understanding God's creation, rather than a threat to undermining the sovereignty of God and the Scriptures.

Dr Sarah Wilson is happy to be contacted by churches and schools at sarahwilson@iscast.org.

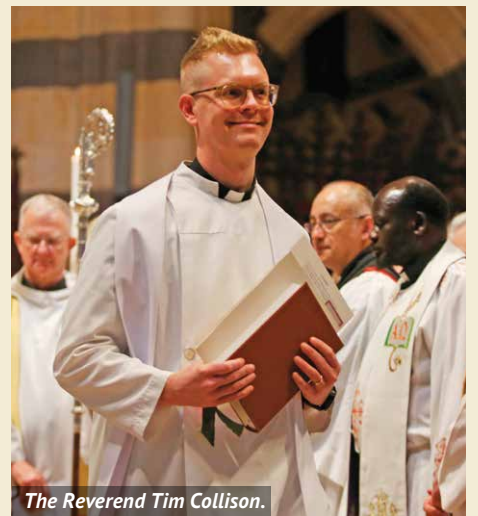


Family and friends gathered at St Paul's Cathedral in November to witness 13 people take on the role of priest.

Pictures: Janine Eastgate



The Reverend Tzeh Yi Chan with supporters.



The Reverend Tim Collison.



The Reverend Rebecca Adut Mading.



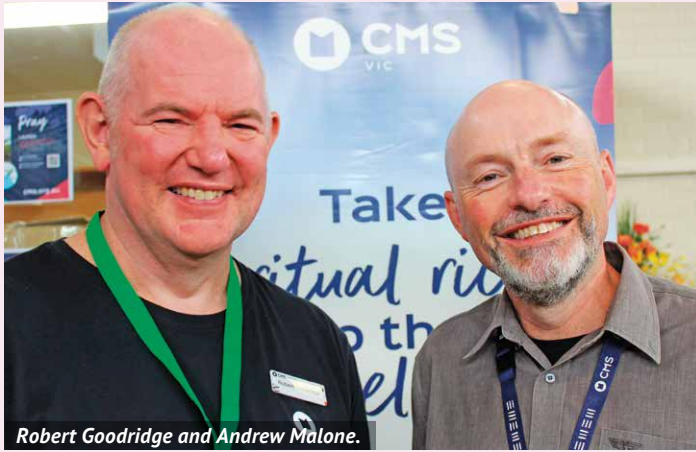
Supporters gathered with new priests to celebrate the ordinations.



The Melbourne diocese's new priests at their ordination.



New priest Monica Ayor Matoc after her ordination.



Robert Goodridge and Andrew Malone.



Philippa Lohmeyer-Collins and Janis Lampard.



Barbara Clarke and Sandy Errey.

Hundreds of people came together at CMS Victoria's Summer Under the Son.
Pictures: Elspeth Kernebone



Hilton Jordan and Daniel Youssef.



Richard Pearson and Jan Shattock.



Enqi Weng and Wayne Chan.



Dave Fuller and Steve Sonneman.



Anna Forsyth, Dean Troth and John Forsyth.

In clearing up, my perspective grew

■ Penny Mulvey

How did you see the New Year in? Mine was spent cleaning, sorting, driving to an op shop (several times) to drop off “stuff”. The kind of jobs many of you might have done before – once, twice or even more.

With my two sisters, I was rummaging through, putting aside and discarding the belongings of a loved one. Not just any loved one, but the one who brought me into the world. The three of us had come together for the second time to empty our mother’s house.

The woman who had outlived two husbands – my very strong-willed mother – had fallen (yet again) in the early hours of a Friday morning in late 2022, and this time death had claimed her.

My father had died many years before. In fact, the last time I saw Dad alive was at my wedding when I was just 22. I flew up to Sydney and went to the funeral home before the funeral to say my farewells. I remember it so clearly. The body in the box was not my Dad. He might have had his physical attributes, but he did not have the spirit, the life, that defined him. Without that spark that gives us life, he was very much an empty vessel.

And so it was with my Mum. Part of the role of funeral homes is to “pretty up” our departed loved ones. We provide a suit or favourite dress, maybe some nice jewellery, and the funeral staff do the hair, put on some makeup, do what they can to support family members farewelling their beloved.

All that was in our past as we gathered at Mum’s home to sort through her life, each of us making different decisions about what should go, what might be worth keeping. Would that item have resale value? Is this letter worth keeping? Sometimes it was granular and sometimes the decisions depended on who was doing the sorting.

One of my sisters is quite sentimental. The other is entirely pragmatic. I’m more the former than the latter.

You might be asking why I am writing about this? You might not want to know, or you might have sorted through relatives’ houses before and be quite experienced at this essential task.

We collect so much of everything over a lifetime – clothes, precious items such as antiques, jewellery, letters, cards, pieces of art, kitchen items (so, so many!!), plants, friendships, furniture, books, photos, photos and more photos.



Penny Mulvey and her Mum. Picture: supplied

But what does one person’s life come down to? Maybe that’s the fundamental question. And even though I thought I knew the answer to that question regarding my Mum, in going through drawers and cupboards, I saw more of her than I had seen with my daughter eyes. A silly thing perhaps, but I was stunned to find a certificate awarding a teenage Pam her Grade V in Music Theory. My mother had never demonstrated any knowledge of, or interest in classical music when I was growing up. I had to persuade her to let me play a musical instrument. There was also a certificate for the Pianoforte.

In the small safe was a range of cheap jewellery, and an old letter from an insurance assessor that had valued every item of furniture, vase, china, painting, persian rug etc etc in the house. The letter dated back to the 1970s. Totally irrelevant now. Why had she kept it?

My mother was not a woman of faith. I tried to have conversations about God with her in the latter part of her life, but she was not interested. She did not want to talk about death and she had a strong aversion to funerals. I suspect she feared death, as many do. This is one of the strengths of faith. It gives language for death and it gives permission to talk about death as well.

What I did discover as I read cards that I and others had written to her over the

years, and as I read copies of letters she had written to others? I saw a larger view of her than I had formed. I had always known she was generous. Mum had trained as a physiotherapist. She was smart. She was strong. She was immensely capable.

I had interviewed her about her life in the last few years and had put together a book. She was thrilled. But that did not reveal to me what some letters did. Mum tried to right broken relationships in her later years. She had written beautiful letters to two key people in her life with whom things had gone south. I don’t know whether those letters reached their intended sources, and I don’t know whether they made any difference, but I do know she tried.

My mother had lived a full life. I know without a shadow of a doubt that she loved me. And I am glad I was able, with my sisters, to undertake this job, for as I scrubbed cupboards, or stopped to look at photos or a letter, Mum felt present. Was I doing a good enough job? Why did I keep that item but not the other?

I also claim, with confidence, that God is the God of love who wants all people to be with him and the heavenly host, and so I hope that she, along with Dad, are with the multitudes in heaven.

Penny Mulvey is interim chief communications officer at the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

A clear case for freedom in God's word

■ Teaha Cameron

Patricia Weerakoon with Robert Smith and Kamal Weerakoon. *The Gender Revolution: A Biblical, Biological and Compassionate Response*. Newtown: Matthias Media, 2023.

Reading this book is like being splashed with cold water. Some might find it refreshing, while others might find it abrasive. The authors are aware that their book is landing in a space where conversation is uncomfortable, however necessary. Gender fluidity and transgenderism continue to become more common in our world. The stakes on conversation and action around it only continue to rise, particularly in Victoria. It's tough being a Christian and trying to understand how to love well in this time. This book strongly, clearly, and effectively explains one perspective and approach to doing so.

This book is backed by extensive expertise, written by an authorial team with medical, theological, and pastoral backgrounds. Patricia Weerakoon's academic and professional experience in science, biology, and sexual health, brings an earnest and knowledgeable voice to this discussion. This is backed by biblical and cultural awareness from Robert Smith and Kamal Weerakoon. Their stated intention is to bring to light the dangers and concerns transgender discourse raises, and to provide a perspective, a truth grounded in science and Scripture, that brings hope and brings people back to reality.

They use a very helpful analogy of a tree in understanding human sexuality. The biblical perspective on human sexuality sees biological sex as the trunk, the grounding foundation of sexuality, in which the branches of gendered behaviour, gender identity, and sexual orientation flow out of like branches. They demonstrate there is a grounding reality in which we find meaning outside of ourselves, by looking towards God, our creator, and that the body is a temporary home which will be made perfect when Jesus comes again. They contrast this with "the transgender ideology" which uproots the tree and flips it. Here, the foundation of human sexuality is found in gender identity, a moving, ever-changing state of internal feelings, in which biological sex, gendered behaviour, and sexual orientation are altered or redefined to align with the individual's sense of gender identity. It suggests that reality is defined by the self, and people find their own meaning and identity by looking

inward, seeking a fleeting freedom through our own control.

If you're someone who wants to understand the concern from the Christian perspective as well as the hope that the gospel holds, then this book is for you. The entire book makes a clear case for the ways in which the underlying messages and behaviours of the belief systems around and practice of transgenderism, poses a threat biologically and biblically, giving clarity and understanding behind the feelings Christians have around this subject. As their discussion moves from people trying to find meaning apart from God into biblical discourse, I felt almost a sense of relief. There is so much hope in what God says and has designed. The gospel truly holds the answer and the truth that the world needs. There is so much freedom in God's word and there is a grounding reminder of the identity and intention that is found from being created on purpose by God.

"The book brings balance to the affirmative perspective on transgenderism that is so prevalent, with loving concern about people's health, wellbeing, and spirituality."

If you've only heard the world's affirmative side of the story and need to balance perspective, this book is for you. It suggests reasons for the psychological and spiritual unrest people experience, those within the transgender community and outside of it, in a sobering portrayal. There is a heavy emphasis on the dangers of manipulating typical functioning of the human body for the sake of psychological comfort, especially when it comes to puberty. The book brings balance to the affirmative perspective on transgenderism that is so prevalent, with loving concern about people's health, wellbeing, and spirituality.

If you're a person who struggles to compassionately interact with those in the transgender community, this book is not for you. Compassion is not the strength of this book. The book is framed with the intention to separate the transgender "ideology" from

"I fear it could leave readers with zeal against transgender ideology that overshadows seeing the people behind the ideology."

the transgender person. Though great effort was taken, and with a degree of success, the distinction between the two, at times, was not as clear cut. Extreme cases where individuals have left humanity as well as gender behind, wanting to be identified as a "furry", are used to make the point of how far things can go. However this lumps everyone in with the extreme, which is not an accurate representation of the transgender community. Emotive words are used consistently throughout the book to clearly convey tone. Their direct perspective, though powerful and full of truth, can come across as lacking compassion. There are mentions of the poor mental health statistics, the prejudice that often comes from the people of Jesus, and how we need to love people. However the acknowledgements can feel shallow. I fear it could leave readers with zeal against transgender ideology that overshadows seeing the people behind the ideology.

The last two chapters of their book provide the compassionate application well within Christian contexts, giving worked examples for how the respond in a church, Christian school, and family context, which are clear, concise, and helpful. When trust and relationship is built, you can follow the advice to come in with a firm truth, delivered with compassion. However, the examples given are very specific and address situations with pre-existing institutional policies to lean on or a history of trust in the relationship. I would caution readers to sit on the ideas they've presented and think further about their impact and how they would be delivered in various other contexts. This book holds so much knowledge, expertise and research, as well as an earnest heart and intention to bring about truth, so it is still worth the read.

Teaha Cameron is the workshop coordinator for Big Kids' Table, a ministry that exists to create safe, honest conversations about Kingdom identity and sexuality for youth and young adults of faith and their communities.

A challenge to shallow reflection on singleness' place in the Christian tradition

Picture: iStock

■ Rhys Bezzant

Danielle Trewick, The Meaning of Singleness: Retrieving an Eschatological Vision for the Contemporary Church. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2023.

Singleness is not a fate worse than death, though in many of our circles you might get the opposite impression. Whether at workplace social events, or in being welcomed at church, awkwardness results when it is discovered that a person is single. How did we get to this? And what can Christians do about it?

Danielle Trewick's book, *The Meaning of Singleness*, is a singular achievement and begins to answer the question. Emerging from her doctoral work at St Mark's National Theological Centre in Canberra, Trewick's argument draws from deep wells of Scripture, Christian history, and personal insight on contemporary pastoral practice. She writes to challenge shallow reflection on the place of singleness in the Christian tradition, and indeed to challenge unreflective commentary on passages of the Bible that are central to debates about singleness and marriage. At heart, Trewick argues that both singleness and marriage can only be understood when viewed through eschatological lens. In different ways, they provide insights into our ultimate heavenly hope. In the new world, the marriage between Christ and his bride will be consummated, for which marriage now is a picture. In the new world, we shall all be like the angels, for there will be no giving or taking of marriage then, as Jesus teaches. Valuing both singleness and marriage in the church should not be a nil sum game, where esteeming the one necessarily degrades the

other's worth. Surely we can do both at once.

The first part of the book provides a salutary survey of present pastoral care of single members of the congregation in the context of singleness in society at large. Trewick's assembling of statistics about contemporary Australia is sobering. These reflections are incisive, and quite frankly disturbing. When in most churches single people number one third of the adult congregation, how can we be so impoverished in the care we provide? The second part of her book names various assumptions about singleness in the church, in effect that singles are "lacking authentic self-actualization in the areas of love, intimacy, romance, sexual satisfaction, friendship, and even general happiness" (p49). And of course, there are different kinds of singleness too: those never married, those divorced, those widowed, those pursuing a life of celibacy in their same-sex attraction. Christians have absorbed so much of the secular worldview around us. Indeed, we have especially breathed in its eschatological air. Without realising it, we are caught up in the dominant storyline of our age which highlights self-expression of the sexual kind, without situating our lives within a bigger frame of meaning and purpose. How we need teaching on a better story with Christ at the centre.

In the third part, Trewick takes up several provocative case studies from Christian history in her project of Christian retrieval. Her overview of approaches to "virginity" – the word often used in the early and medieval periods for "celibacy" – was eye-opening, as moderns are confronted by an extraordinary range of examples and views. We meet monks like Anthony and Pachomius who chose singleness, popes

like Callistus II who legislated singleness for clergy, Aelfric of Eynsham's encouragement of virgin-marriages, and of course Augustine's teaching on the topic which so shaped the Western church's life. Trewick reminds us that "early and medieval virginity was theologically esteemed precisely because of the profoundly eschatological and communal dimensions considered indigenous to it" (p126). Investigations of the theology of John Paul II and Stanley Hauerwas offer contemporary reflections, from very different perspectives, on the nature of the body, the community, and the future.

The pastoral guts of the book appear in the final section, under the headings of "Telling the Time", "Making the Meaning", and "Continuing the Conversation", where Trewick pulls together the various threads of her argument to deal with the concern that "the unmarried form of Christian life has become both largely unintelligible, and so also largely uninhabitable for the majority of its protagonists" (218). She speaks to spiritual parenthood, expansive sexuality, faithful friendship, and genuine self-denial which is more akin to "glorious self-donation", in her conclusion to encourage new ownership of the experience of being single – which is distinctly not defined around being the opposite of marriage or the absence of a partner!

Trewick's efforts in writing this book were acknowledged in being awarded the IVP Readers' Choice Award for Best Book on Cultural Engagement in 2023. As an Australian author, we can be doubly grateful.

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