

# THE Melbourne Anglican

JULY 2024, No 637



## 'I am the way': Children find life in the jungle

St John's Diamond Creek is sharing the way to life with primary school children this winter through its annual school holiday program. Dance, games, music craft and Bible teaching will help the children learn about Jesus' identity through John's gospel. The church hopes attendees will learn they need Jesus to find their way through the jungle of life.

**Story – P9.**



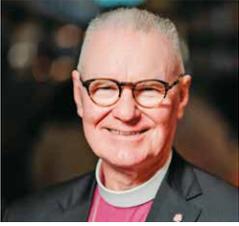
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Cult targets Melbourne's youth



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Honours celebrate service



**P19**  
Renewed presence in Wallan



# Democracy expresses Jesus' words of love for neighbour

## ■ Archbishop Philip Freier

**A little more than a generation ago, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 seemed to prefigure the triumph of democracy over totalitarianism.**

Hopes were embraced that other places would embrace democracy and reject the rule of military or party strongmen. The Arab Spring that started with the forced resignation of the Tunisian president early in 2011 swept through North Africa and the Middle East over the next few years. Responses were complex, with some societies fragmenting into warring groups, others enduring foreign intervention and all causing a massive refugee crisis. Stability has returned to some countries like Egypt as a result of a military coup. The unrest has continued, with great cost to human life, in Yemen, Libya and Syria and most recently conflict has resumed in

Sudan. A wider scan across the globe would reveal its own story but the optimism of the triumph of democracy that was imagined in late '80s and early '90s seems far less certain now than it did then.

On the positive side for democracy there have been successful elections in Indonesia, India and South Africa. Given that between them they constitute over 21 per cent of the world's population, that is a weighty counterbalance to the failures of democratic aspiration elsewhere. If the recent elections for the European Parliament are added, 30 per cent of the world's population have expressed their democratic choice just in these four polls. Democracy still faces headwinds in many places, even in the United States, the country that has long claimed to be its greatest exponent. Time will tell whether popularists make a headway in the forthcoming elections in France and the United Kingdom and what will be the

result in the Biden-Trump Presidential rerun. Are the seeds of democratic aspiration only dormant in China, awaiting for the right time to flourish or has the heavy hand of the party eliminated them entirely?

Should any of this matter to Christians? After all, Christianity found its first legal acceptance in the Byzantine Court, hardly an example of democracy. While Christians have endured and even flourished under all kinds of human social organisation, it is at least arguable that our modern expressions of democracy are influenced by important Christian principles. The link between Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas is often made to account for concepts like the "common good" and the necessity of the governed to ultimately consent to those who govern them. Reformation thinkers reshaped the social value and thus political importance of the individual with their emphasis on the immediacy between the Christian believer and sacred Scripture.

The words of Jeremiah 29, "... seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare", speaks to a generous theological tradition spanning several millennia. Democracy is part of this generous response of faith-filled people to the world around them, an expression, in Jesus' words of "Love of neighbour".

### Vacant Appointments as of 25 June 2024:

St Alfred, Blackburn North (from September 2024); St Agnes, Black Rock; Christ Church, Brunswick; St Michael, North Carlton; St John, Camberwell; Redemption Church, Craigieburn; Parish of Gisborne; St Alban, Hamlyn Heights; St Oswald, Glen Iris; St Thomas, Langwarrin with St Peter, Pearceedale; St Mary, North Melbourne [from October]; St Thomas, Moonee Ponds [from mid-August]; Parish of Mornington-Mt Martha; Ormond Anglican Parish; St Aidan, Parkdale; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; Mullum Mullum, Ringwood; St Luke, Vermont; St John, Wantirna South; St Thomas, Winchelsea

### Appointments:

**ADDLEY, The Revd Roxanne**, appointed Area Dean, Area Deanery of Corio, effective 24 June 2024  
**GOULBOURNE, The Revd Russell**, appointed Parish Minister (From Assistant Curate), Christ Church, Brunswick, effective 27 May 2024.  
**LOUGHREY, The Revd Canon, Glenn William**, appointed Archdeacon, Reconciliation, First Nations Recognition and Treaty, effective 30 June 2024  
**MCDONALD, The Revd Mark**, appointed Area Dean, Area Deanery of Camberwell, effective 6 May 2024  
**MILLARD, The Revd Joshua**, appointed, Youth Development Director for Church Missionary Society, Victoria, effective 26 June 2024.  
**SANTASELAN, The Revd Packianathan**, appointed Area Dean of the Deanery of Glen Eira, effective 16 June 2024.  
**SOMA, The Revd Chaplain**, appointed Parish Minister, Parish of Jika Jika, Preston, effective 27 May 2024.

### Permission to Officiate:

**SENN, The Revd Patrick**, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 27 May 2024.

### Resignations:

**BENNETT, The Venerable Vanessa**, Vicar, St Thomas, Moonee Ponds and Archdeacon, Archdeaconry of Essendon, to take up Position as Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Canberra Goulburn, effective 15 July 2024  
**SENN, The Revd Patrick**, Parish Minister of Merri Creek Anglican Church, effective 29 February 2024.

### Retirements:

**TAYLOR, The Revd Jonathan**, Vicar, St Alban, Hamlyn Heights effective 13 October 2024 and Area Dean of Corio, effective 23 June 2024.

### Obituaries:

**BUFTON, The Revd Elizabeth Anne**, 19 June 2024.



## Clergy Moves

Clergy Moves is compiled by the Registry Office and all correspondence should go to [registrar@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:registrar@melbourneanglican.org.au)

## The Melbourne Anglican



The Melbourne Anglican  
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Head of Communications – Penny Mulvey  
[pmulvey@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:pmulvey@melbourneanglican.org.au)  
 Editor – Elspeth Kernebone  
[ekernebone@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:ekernebone@melbourneanglican.org.au)  
 Journalist – Jenan Taylor  
[jtaylor@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:jtaylor@melbourneanglican.org.au)  
 Journalist – Hannah Felsbourg  
[hfelsbourg@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:hfelsbourg@melbourneanglican.org.au)  
 Advertising – [ads@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:ads@melbourneanglican.org.au)  
 Design & Layout – Ivan Smith  
[ads@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:ads@melbourneanglican.org.au)  
 Subscription Enquiries  
[tma@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:tma@melbourneanglican.org.au)  
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 ph 9653 4269  
[tma.melbourneanglican.org.au](http://tma.melbourneanglican.org.au)  
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Moonee Ponds vicar the Venerable Vanessa Bennett will become Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

# Vicar set for Canberra bishop role

■ **Hannah Felsbourg**

**A Melbourne vicar aims to inspire women to embrace church leadership as she becomes an Assistant Bishop in Canberra and Goulburn.**

The Venerable Vanessa Bennett said her goal was for the communities of her new diocese to know the hope of Jesus in a troubled world.

Mrs Bennett said she would support Canberra and Goulburn's Bishop Mark Short to enable parishes to share the love and truth of Christ and nurture people's faith.

She said she wanted hope in Jesus to encourage the communities amid disillusionment with everyday experiences.

Mrs Bennett was convinced by the evidence for Christianity as a teenager. She decided that if God was real, He

deserved her full commitment.

She was ordained as a deacon in Sydney, but as a woman was not able to be priested until she later became rector of the parish of West Goulburn.

Mrs Bennett served as St Thomas' Moonee Ponds vicar for the past eight and a half years, and Essendon archdeacon for the past five.

She attributes God's provision to her transition from being unable to serve in broader leadership roles in Sydney to now becoming a bishop.

"It will be good to be able to encourage women to use the gift that God has given them across the whole spectrum of opportunities of service and leadership," she said.

Mrs Bennett said it was difficult having to move and say farewell to people she has built relationships with

through her ministry.

However, a benefit of engaging with different church communities over her career was being able to learn from their unique styles and gifts.

Mrs Bennett is an avid squash player and has competed in world championships against some of the top players in the world.

She said squash was a great way to stay grounded, connect with people outside the church, and share her faith in a relatable way.

Mrs Bennett said she would miss going to the MCG for the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne but looked forward to following the Manly Sea Eagles in the NRL in Canberra.

Mrs Bennett's consecration will take place on Saturday 24 August 2024, 11am at St Saviour's Cathedral in Goulburn.



St Jude's Carlton UniChurch assistant minister Sam Oldland often sees Shincheonji recruiters in his congregation.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

# Students approached by cult recruiters

■ Hannah Felsbourg

**A cult group has been targeting university students across Australia, spreading teachings that diverge from mainstream Christianity.**

Campus ministry workers report that Shincheonji Church of Jesus has been actively recruiting on university campuses, approaching people to bring them into the cult.

Workers fear the cult will draw people away from Christianity. SCJ believe salvation is exclusive to members and is only obtained through good works.

St Jude's Carlton UniChurch assistant minister Sam Oldland said SCJ recruiters tried to infiltrate the church by attending services and inviting people to their Bible study groups.

Several members of UniChurch found freedom from SCJ teaching and have shared their testimonies of leaving the cult to help others who might still be involved with group.

Mr Oldland said the SCJ recruiters visiting the church never revealed where they were from but ex-SCJ members in his congregation

had identified them.

He said SCJ drew people away from the true gospel, and many who left the cult abandoned Christianity entirely.

University of Melbourne Christian Union worker Bryn Weightman said many students he worked with had been approached by the cult.

He said SCJ recruiters used casual conversation to determine if someone was a Christian then invited them to meet the recruiter's mentor.

Many of the students were approached at Melbourne Central Station in the CBD or at South Lawn at the university, but quickly realised something was strange.

One student was approached by a stranger on a similar train line to them and had a lengthy conversation about various biblical topics.

The stranger said the student reminded them of their mentor and suggested they all meet up together.

The student sought advice from the Christian Union, asking if it was a cult, and they confirmed it sounded like SCJ tactics.

Mr Weightman said other Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students workers

from across the country reported seeing SCJ activity on their campuses.

He said universities were a place where young people could explore who they were and what they wanted to do with their lives.

This opened the way to share the hope and forgiveness of Jesus on campus, but also for cult groups to recruit.

Mr Weightman said it was important for students to be aware of the differences between Christian organisations and cult groups operating on campuses.

He said CU were looking for ways to differentiate themselves from cults and show that they were associated with the university.

Mr Oldland advised Christians to be patient, consistent, and available to friends involved in SCJ, as the cult often isolated recruits from other communities to maintain control.

He said SCJ recruiters cultivated manipulative friendships with young Christians to bind them to the group, making it harder for them to leave.

Encouraging them to learn more about the cult and read the testimonies of ex-members was vital to empower them to see the red flags for themselves.

# ‘Deliberate’ infiltration of churches

■ **Hannah Felsbourg**

## Anglican leaders fear a cult operating in Melbourne could lead young people away from Christ.

Ministers are urging young Christians to be wary of Bible study invitations from strangers, as they may be from a group called Shincheonji Church of Jesus.

Most Anglican churches in the Jumbunna Episcopate have been approached by this group, and leaders believe the issue extends beyond that area.

A Melbourne vicar said his biggest concern was SCJ drawing people away from the gospel of Jesus.

In the past year at least two people left his parish to join SCJ. He requested anonymity for pastoral reasons.

The vicar said SCJ teaching seemed innocuous at first but on further examination strayed from orthodox Christianity.

He met with two group members who explained they did not believe in the divinity of Christ or salvation for those outside of SCJ.

The vicar said as well as drawing people away from the true gospel, SCJ isolated them from their former communities.

“The amount in which they get involved means that they’re cutting themselves off from other supports,” he said.

“In the end their whole social network, their whole life really, ends up being in that Shincheonji bubble. And so, the cost of leaving it for them becomes higher and higher.”

The vicar said that it was difficult to

identify SCJ members as they often did not say where they were from or used different names such as New Heaven and New Earth.

For this reason, it was important young Christians and church leaders knew how to recognise this group, as young people and leaders were most likely to be SCJ targets.

Diocese youth ministry consultant Brian Holden said churches should verify the background of any new group before engaging in joint activities.

*“It is a bit disturbing that there are people deliberately trying to infiltrate our churches with strategies. And not just one church, but the majority of our churches.”*

**Graeme Peters**

He said he recently heard from vicars from Geelong and Melbourne’s fringes who were unknowingly approached by SCJ to run joint youth events.

He said more than a decade ago Brighton Church of Christ ran a joint Bible study with two members of SCJ, and most of the church members who attended the study left the church for SCJ.

Mr Holden said a danger of SCJ was that they isolated new recruits by cutting them off from their existing communities.

Because of people joining SCJ they often no longer communicated with their friends and families and viewed their former church as unbiblical.

“That’s one of the red flags that is really hard to see because it seems like these people really want to spend time with you to get to know you, to teach you about God,” he said.

St James’ Dandenong vicar Reverend Graeme Peters said SCJ tried to get Anglican clergy to attend their events to add credibility to their teaching.

Mr Peters said he was twice invited by people who said they were from a Bible study group in the CBD to come and share with them but had declined.

Twice, pairs of youths came to his church asking identical questions about the problems with young people today and his thoughts on the end of the world.

He mentioned the encounters at an archdeacon’s meeting and another vicar present recognised it as the activity of SCJ.

Mr Peters spoke at a recent Anglican clergy conference about his experiences with SCJ and estimated 90 percent of those present had interacted with the group.

“It is a bit disturbing that there are people deliberately trying to infiltrate our churches with strategies. And not just one church, but the majority of our churches,” he said.

SCJ Melbourne was reached out to for comment.

If this story raised issues for you or someone you know, support is available from Lifeline on 13 11 14.

**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**

# Help vulnerable children like Maria build a new future!

***Maria fled to Uganda to escape the war in South Sudan, running from the shooting with her parents and siblings.***

She says she was one of the lucky ones who made it out with her life. Her friend did not.

"We were the same age," the 15-year-old says softly. "When she was trying to move... war was there. She died in that war."

There was no war in the Ugandan refugee settlements. But Maria and her family faced a new enemy there – hunger.

A second meal per day was a luxury. There were many days when she ate nothing at all.

Despite her hunger, Maria did her best to concentrate in class. She knew that education held the key to building a new future.

"In South Sudan, I didn't go to school. I was not knowing anything," she says. "But when I came here, they taught me how to speak English and how to write."

With the help of friends like you, Maria became one of thousands of hungry refugee children to receive a hot, nutritious meal each day at her school through Feed The Hungry – a global organisation committed to fighting hunger and helping the most vulnerable to live a full life.

**And your generous, tax-deductible support through Feed The Hungry can help more children like Maria receive the nutritious food they need to thrive.**

A hot, nutritious meal at school changes everything for Maria. She explains the difference between hunger and a hot meal in her life, saying:

"When I feel hungry, I feel like I don't talk to anyone because... I have no energy. But when I eat... I will be telling the teacher the answers because I'm very strong now!"

**Just \$6 feeds a child like Maria for a whole month at school. More than a meal, you're providing a future!**



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# ‘Meet Jesus’: A call for all to follow Him

■ Jenan Taylor

**Two eastern suburbs churches hope a new evangelism program will help their members to talk to friends, family and colleagues about Jesus.**

St John’s Blackburn and partner church Holy Trinity Doncaster will run the Meet Jesus initiative to encourage people to learn about and follow Him.

The initiative is an Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students creation, for churches and university groups wanting to stimulate evangelism in their communities nationwide.

St John’s and Holy Trinity senior associate pastor the Reverend Mark Chew said it was important members felt confident and enthusiastic about introducing people to Jesus.

Mr Chew said it was only through hearing about and putting their faith in Jesus that people could form a relationship with God.

He said members used resources based on the Scriptures to initiate one-on-one conversations with people about faith, under the Meet Jesus initiative.

He said this engagement would be expanded at designated Meet Jesus church services and events to which members could bring their friends.

Mr Chew said those steps might help



members overcome hesitancy about talking to people about Jesus, even beyond the life of the program.

He said being able to talk to people about faith was positive for church culture.

“It’s a part of who we are as Christians. It’s not just something we do as part of a project. It’s a natural part of being a Christian to want to share Jesus to others,” Mr Chew said.

AFES senior member Amy Just said the organisation designed Meet Jesus to encourage a collective effort from gospel-centred organisations, including churches and university campus groups.

She said it also offered them the chance to connect with each other and gave them the benefit of being part of a nationwide movement.

Mr Chew said St John’s and Holy Trinity were also attracted by the opportunity to be united with other churches under the initiative.

He said he hoped members would be excited about being part of a wider movement given so many other churches were also running the project.

For more information about Meet Jesus, see [meetjesus.au](http://meetjesus.au).

## Evangelism drive to bring hope across Australia in 2025

■ Hannah Felsbourg

**Church leaders hope Australians will come to Christ through a project equipping churches to share their hope in Jesus.**

Hope25 is a collaboration within the Anglican Church of Australia aimed at focussing on evangelism from Easter Day to Pentecost Sunday in 2025.

The project’s mission is to provide parishes with the tools they need to share their faith within local communities.

Project officer the Reverend Wayne Schuller said the ethos of the project was to gather wisdom from the diversity of the church.

This was valuable as Christians were able to offer hope amid Australian’s concerns around things like climate change and the cost of living.

He said Hope25 was assembling a variety of resources to make sure every

parish found a way to share the hope of Jesus that was specific to their context.

One resource he had been testing was video course Hope Explored which introduced Christianity in just three weekly sessions, making it easily accessible.

Mr Schuller said effective ministry could start with people in the pews who were often inspired to share their faith by going back to the basics of the gospel.

The hope is that people would come to Christ, but also that mature Christians would be encouraged in their walk by seeing new people embrace the faith.

Melbourne committee head Bishop Paul Barker said it was an ongoing responsibility for church leaders to support parishes to reach out to those outside the congregation.

He said the purpose of creating a national project was to foster a sense of encouragement, enthusiasm, and unity

among parishes to serve their communities.

National committee member Reverend Kate Beer said she was encouraged churches could unite in their shared hope in Jesus despite geographical and stylistic gaps.

She said it had sparked a lot of energy to see the Anglican Church working together so beautifully.

“I’ve seen that kind of contagious sense of ‘Actually this is what we’re on about and ... this is a shared thing ... that we have hope in Jesus, and we want to see others find that,’” she said.

“Just to see people from all different churches ... people who wouldn’t normally know each other or have much reason to be working together, to see them gather the contagious joy.”

More information about the project can be found at [hope25.com.au](http://hope25.com.au).

# 'We must pay fair share for damage'

■ Jenan Taylor

**The Australian government has been urged to compensate Pacific Island communities for climate change-related damage, including flooded homes and degraded drinking water and food crops.**

Religious and civil climate advocates warned many Pacific Island communities faced loss of lives, livelihoods and infrastructure beyond their ability to recover economically.

Organisations including Common Grace and Oxfam Australia said Australia had a moral obligation to financially support its poorer neighbours because its activities contributed to their climate-related devastation.

They said despite verbal support for a new loss and damage fund Australia had withheld any payments since it was established in 2023.

Common Grace said it was time Australia paid its fair share of compensation to vulnerable communities, including Pacific Island nations, because it benefitted hugely from the use of fossil fuels.

Creation and Climate Justice coordinator Jane Kelly said mitigation and adaptation had done some good, but Australia's climate funds needed to respond to the reality Pacific Islanders' faced.

Ms Kelly said Christian Australians had a duty to stand in unity with the struggles of Pacific Islanders and their calls for better care.

She said along with fighting desperately to save their homes they were leading calls for global surface temperature increases to be limited to 1.5 degree Celsius.

"As Christians we talk about caring for humanity, and our Pacific Islands neighbours are our brothers and sisters in humanity, and in Christ," Ms Kelly said.

"We need to recognise our role in their struggles and speak up to tell our government and opposition they need to move



Picture: iStock

***"As Christians we talk about caring for humanity, and our Pacific Islands neighbours are our brothers and sisters in humanity, and in Christ."***

Jane Kelly

more boldly and strongly on action against climate change."

Anglican Torres Strait Islander leader Dr Rose Elu said her community wanted purposeful climate action from the Australian government because the destruction it experienced was beyond its ability to adapt.

Dr Elu said the Torres Strait Islands were

her people's God-given lands and it was heartbreaking to contemplate leaving them.

Dr Elu said the government's band aid solutions including building sea walls and recommendations to increase sand bagging were ineffective.

She said homes, burial grounds and drinkable water were being destroyed by encroaching seas, and increasingly intense storms.

Oxfam Australia acting Policy and Advocacy lead Julie-Anne Richards said the damage hitting many Pacific countries was deepening inequality.

Ms Richards said Vanuatu had suffered about 60 per cent GDP loss because of cyclone damage, and some villages in Fiji were already relocated because of rising sea levels.

She said governments, communities and aid agencies were unable to focus on the health or education of affected populations, and were dealing with infrastructure and housing rebuilds instead.

Ms Richards said Australia had a moral responsibility to compensate them properly, and needed to contribute upwards of \$100 million dollars to the loss and damage fund.

"Unless there is funding at the scale that is really going to support communities on the frontline of climate impacts, we're not going to be able to continue to move forward from a development point of view," Ms Richards said.

"We're going to be at best standing still, but more likely walking backwards instead."

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water referred to a 2023 statement on climate finance.

In it, the Australian government welcomed a United Nations Climate Conference decision to operationalise a new fund for supporting developing countries to respond to climate impacts.

It said it looked forward to the new fund delivering for the Pacific.

## New Bishop installed in Southern Queensland diocese

**Southern Queensland has welcomed a new Anglican bishop, with the consecration of the Right Reverend Sarah Plowman.**

She has taken on the role of Bishop for the Northern Region, stretching north to Bundaberg.

Bishop Plowman said she was excited to hear the stories of faithful people across the region, and to help them flourish.

"I have already noticed a real hunger in the region to explore new ways of being 'church' – models that don't stick to the rigid expectations of the past, instead drawing upon rich traditions while springing forward in hope and with imagination," she said.

Bishop Plowman was ordained a deacon in 2004 and a priest in 2005.

Most recently, she was director of Discernment and Formation for the Diocese of Southern Queensland, and an Honorary Canon of Brisbane's St John's Cathedral.

She has also worked as a chaplain and associate chaplain at several Anglican schools in the diocese.

Bishop Plowman was consecrated at St John's Cathedral in June.



Sue Jetten, Maddy Bialecki, Victor Jetten, Daniel Pilkington, Kylie Pilkington, and Tania Grinton prepare for the program.

Picture: Andy Barras

## Kids find Jesus in the jungle at St John's

### ■ Hannah Felsbourg

**More than 100 primary-aged children will hear the gospel at St John's Diamond Creek this school holidays.**

The action-packed Going Bananas school holiday program will include dance, music, craft, science, games, and biblical teaching.

The initiative aims to instil faith and leadership skills in young participants, providing them with a solid foundation for their lives.

St John's generations minister Maddy Bialecki said she hoped young people would come away from the program alive with the

knowledge of who Jesus was.

This year's theme for the program is Jungle Rumble. Its message was that it was a jungle out there, and people needed Jesus to help them find their way.

Mrs Bialecki said group teaching would be followed by small group discussions covering Jesus' identity through John's gospel. She said the program used biblical principles to provide a toolkit to navigate what it meant to be a Christian and to celebrate it.

Team coordinator Kylie Pilkington said the program's focus on mentoring fostered a core group of invested volunteers, ranging from 12 years old to over 70.

Ms Pilkington said the program provided an accessible pathway to church because people brought their children to the event even if they would not normally attend a Sunday service. This experience also brought people back to the church who had not attended for years and opened conversations with them about the gospel.

"Ultimately we're trying to speak the truth of Jesus into kids' lives, so we want the kids who are participating in the program to love what they're learning, learn to love Jesus, and take some of those truths home and speak them into the lives of their family as well," Ms Pilkington said.

## Transforming lives one hour at a time through friendship

### ■ Hannah Felsbourg

**Vulnerable children are receiving life-changing support through Melbourne churches' participation in a nationwide mentoring program.**

Kids Hope empowers volunteers to support primary students to excel in life, offering the volunteers the opportunity to do meaningful work.

St Thomas' Burwood and St Hilary's Kew are among churches nationwide sending trained volunteers into schools to spend time with students who are struggling.

Volunteers spend an hour each week with a child doing activities such as

cooking, sports, arts and crafts, or chatting.

St Thomas' Kids Hope director Melinda van der Westhuizen said she eagerly looked forward to her one hour each week with her mentee. She said after just a few weeks of mentoring, children attended school consistently, participated in class more, and were more willing to try new things.

Ms van der Westhuizen said their Kids Hope partner school told her they would love to have more mentors. She said with the proper training and checks, any church member could become a mentor.

"The most important thing is just being there, listening, and being patient and consistent. That is it, and it's an absolute

joy," said Ms van der Westhuizen.

St Hilary's Kids Hope director Libby White said participating children's emotional resilience increased, they enjoyed coming to school more, and they performed better in classes. The children often had a tough time at school or home, and did not receive much attention from parents. The consistent presence of an adult provided them with the care necessary for healing and growth.

Mrs White said the central idea of being a Kids Hope mentor was to be a friend to a child.

More information can be found at [kidshope.org.au](http://kidshope.org.au).

# Honours roll in for Anglican service

## ■ Jenan Taylor

**Albert Park parishioner and specialist physician Jo Anne Douglass has been appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia.**

Professor Douglass was named in the King's Birthday Honours for her distinguished service to medical research, to clinical immunology and allergy, to respiratory medicine and to tertiary education.

She holds leadership roles in hospital and academic settings, and on advisory boards, and gave expert witness in the coroner's court about food allergies and thunderstorm asthma.



Professor Jo Anne Douglass.

Professor Douglass said the strong Christian values she was raised with, including kindness and truth, underpinned her career path and all her work choices.

She said she was fortunate to have a long, varied medicine career that enabled her to see patients, do research, and grow hospitals and clinics.

A member of Parish of the Parks, Professor Douglass said she returned to church when she had children.

"I really needed to think about what was worthy for the future generation and what values I wanted to give my children in terms of how to live a good life. I started to look to the church for that at that time of my life and found it immensely comforting," Professor Douglass said.

Parish of the Parks vicar the Reverend Sophie Watkins said Professor Douglass was grounded, compassionate and diligent, and worked with deep humility to care for people in a multitude of ways.

"We are so proud to celebrate this recognition of her work and swell with delight to see those letters after her name," Ms Watkins said.

## 'Great joy' for St Mary's

**Melbourne Anglican and paediatric endocrinologist Christine Rodda has been made a Member of the Order of Australia.**

Associate Professor Rodda was recognised for her significant service to paediatric endocrinology, to medical research and to tertiary education.

She said her faith was a vital part of her work, and she hoped to encourage other medical professionals to see it as vital to their endeavours too.

The St Mary's North Melbourne parishioner served at Western Health for 10 years, and headed paediatric endocrinology at Monash Health for 13 years.

She has also been Honorary Associate Professor at the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne since 2014, and Clinical Associate Professor at Melbourne Medical School since 2012.

Associate Professor Rodda said she knew since high school that she wanted to work in healthcare, because she loved making things better for others. She said as a researcher and a clinician she was motivated by Luke 12:48, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."



Associate Professor Christine Rodda.

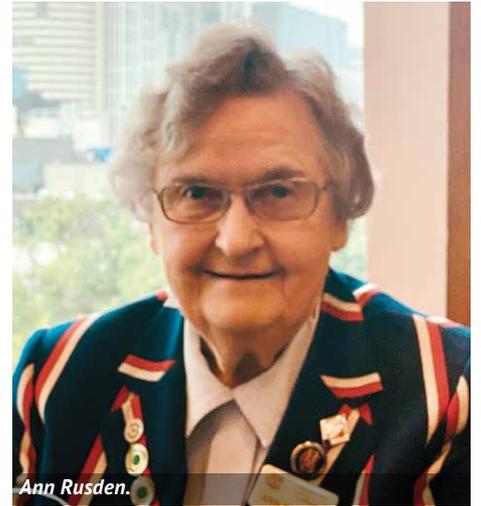
Her citation mentioned her leadership of the Australia New Zealand Society for Paediatric Endocrinology and Diabetes, and membership of the Victorian Medical Women's Society, among other achievements. Now retired, Associate Professor Rodda said she hoped to see the medical sector in Australia put more value on spirituality in end-of-life care.

St Mary's vicar the Reverend Jan Joustra said Associate Professor Rodda's recognition was a great joy to the church community.

## 'Shining beacon' earns honour

**St Paul's Cathedral member Ann Rusden has received a Medal of the Order of Australia, in recognition of her service to education, and the community.**

Miss Rusden's strong Christian values drive her advocacy for chaplaincy programs and Christian education in state schools.



Ann Rusden.

Her contributions include voluntary work at St Paul's and at the Melbourne Cricket Club, and education leadership roles, including being Camberwell High School principal from 1987 to 1992.

Miss Rusden said an abiding passion was championing religious instruction in schools because it gave students an opportunity to learn about Christianity, and benefit from its values. Miss Rusden said her time spent working in education was also extremely rewarding because it gave opportunity to positively influence young people. She taught religious instruction and financially supported chaplaincy because she believed these were very necessary.

"As a practicing Christian, I feel strongly that all students should have the opportunity to know about Christianity," she said.

"Many young people now don't have the benefit of what I had as a youngster when I went to Sunday school and church."

Miss Rusden first attended St Paul's with her parents in the 1960s, and became very involved with it largely through her Friends of the Cathedral membership later on.

Dean of Melbourne the Very Reverend Dr Andreas Loewe said it was a delight that Miss Rusden was recognised, because her love for St Paul's was a shining beacon.

He said she had built good relationships with many people at the cathedral through being engaged in an array of significant roles.

## Capturing faith's faces

■ Jenan Taylor

**A Melbourne minister hopes to encourage his parishioners to better recognise themselves as people of faith through a photographic project.**

Holy Trinity Port Melbourne assistant priest the Reverend Joseph Emmanuel has taken portrait photographs of parishioners capturing the spirituality in their faces at church.

Mr Emmanuel hoped the photographs revealed to each person something new about themselves and each other, and sparked reflections and conversations between them about their faith.

"It was a new journey for them when they engaged internally with those pictures. The photos brought up all kinds of emotions, memories and even healing in some cases," Mr Emmanuel said.

"I started to feel as if God wanted me to do more portraits to show them their better side."

Mr Emmanuel said the light in churches made him want to photograph the parishioners, along with the Gerard Manley Hopkins poem about Jesus in ten thousand places, and faces.

## Tidy-up for church laws at special mid-year synod

■ Jenan Taylor

**Melbourne Synod has passed legislation to make sure the diocese meets its legal child-safety requirements in a special June session.**

The synod also voted to change the *Melbourne Archbishopric Act 2024*, to remove gender specific language.

The *Professional Standards Uniform Legislation Amendment Bill 2024* ensures dioceses using the 2016 *Professional Standards Uniform Act* – Melbourne and Bendigo meet child safety requirements under secular law.

Before this, professional standards legislation was contained in two acts:

the *Professional Standards Uniform Act Adoption Act 2016* and the *Professional Standards Uniform Act 2016*.

Mover Bishop Genieve Blackwell said the bill covered three key refinements, the definition of misconduct, clearances, and matters relating to the work of the Professional Standards Committee and board.

She said the bill mainly amended to the *Uniform Act* to facilitate these. The main changes were:

- Extending the definition of misconduct.
- Requiring a lay Church worker to hold a clearance for service before holding or performing the work of a prescribed role, office or position.

- Updating powers and functions of the Professional Standards Board, Professional Standards Committee and the Office of Professional Standards.
- Updating drafting to use gender-neutral language.

The synod also made changes to the *Melbourne Archbishopric Act 2024*, to make the wording clearer, remove gender-specific language, and remove provisions that have been superseded.

The synod also took up its broom for some "necessary legislative housekeeping" in the *Statute Law Amendment Bill 2024*, amending the *Archbishop in Council Act 2018* and the *Parish Governance Act 2013*.

# Payments vital for asylum seekers

■ Jenan Taylor

**Faith-based charities say denying asylum seekers better financial support is leading to worsening health problems and the risk of escalated crime in the community.**

Christian crisis organisations including the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project are supporting growing numbers of asylum seekers because federal government payments are being made available to fewer people.

They said it led to more asylum seekers being plunged into destitution and deep distress.

It comes as refugee and asylum seeker advocacy groups criticise the Australian government for cutting funds to the status resolution support program in the recent federal budget. The program provides payments to help people seeking asylum, who have no other form of income, meet basic living costs.

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and Refugee Council of Australia said the government had slashed the program by more than half, while allocating \$604 million to off-shore processing policy.

They said government funding on the SRSS program shrank from \$300 million to \$16.4 million in the last nine years.

The ASRC said there were 88,500 people seeking asylum in Australia but only a

small number could access support services because of continuing funding cuts and tough eligibility criteria. Little more than 1500 people were being supported through the program at December 2023, according to Department of Home Affairs data.

BASP project coordinator Sister Brigid Arthur said the government's cuts were building a problem for Australia.

Sister Arthur said without some minimum payment many were sleeping rough, had no money for food or for absolute basics and were becoming destitute.

She said some were so desperate there was a risk they could turn to crime to get by, and the lack of a safety net also placed many at a high risk of suicide.

Sister Arthur said her organisation used community donations to help the refugees pay rent and utility bills, but it couldn't take on everyone. Often it ran out of food because of the added numbers in need.

Salvation Army Asylum Seeker and Refugee Service manager Major Karen Elkington said homelessness and mental stress had increased among the people the organisation supported. She said it was becoming all too common for the group's workers to find themselves trying to console those who had attempted suicide.

Major Elkington said the charity did what it could, but was unequipped to help people with the complex mental health

challenges they faced because of their situation.

ASRC chief executive Kon Karapanagiotidis said the demand for crisis support would increase as living costs skyrocketed and the government stepped further away from its responsibilities.

He said it shouldn't be up to charities to fill the support abyss while asylum seekers waited up to 10 years to have their protection claims processed.

He said people should be treated humanely, and given work and study rights, and Medicare access so they could support their families while they waited.

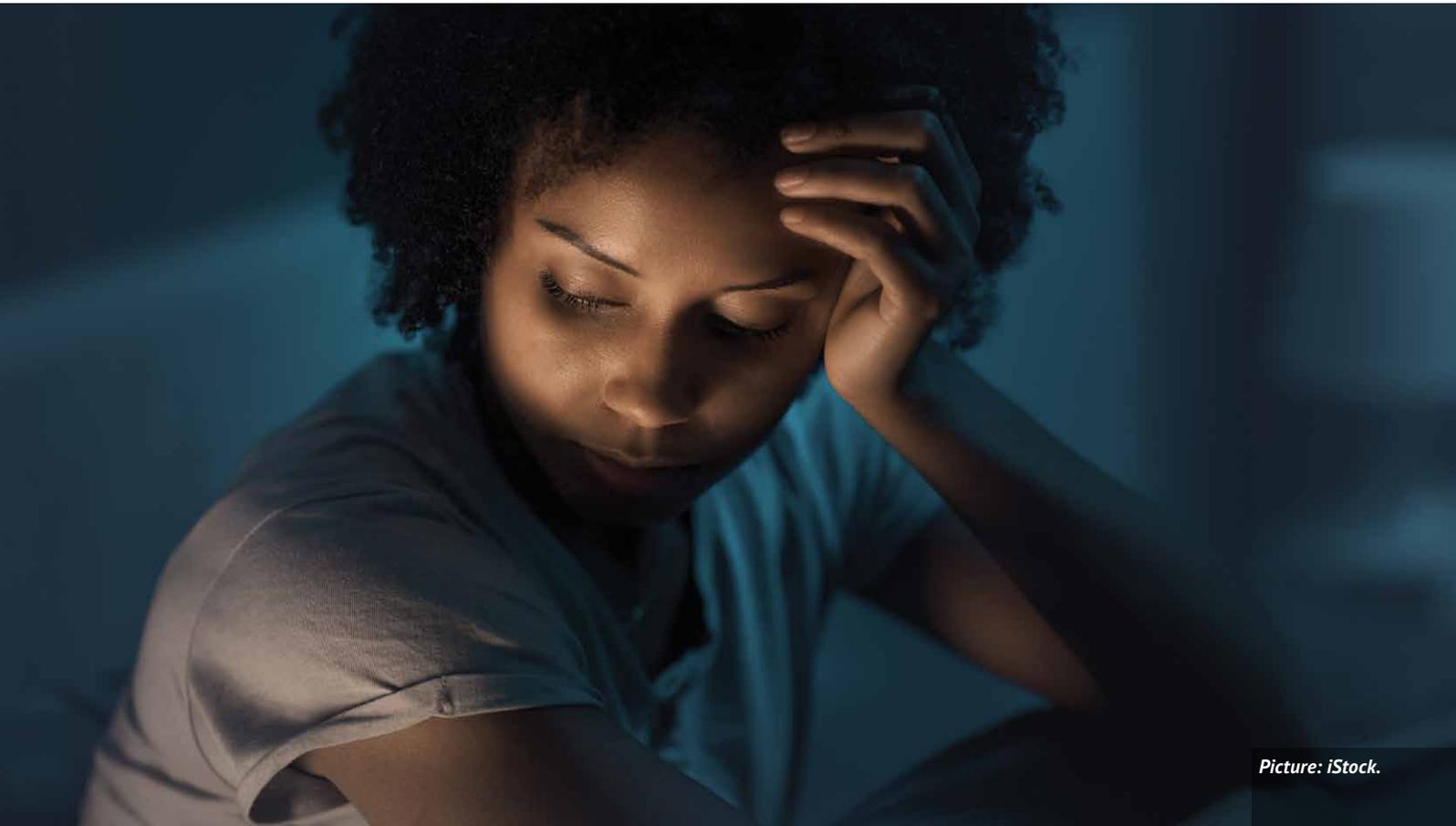
Sister Arthur said the federal government ought to give asylum seekers a lifeline by providing them an allowance on par with what Australian citizens received. She said continuing to deny them the help they needed was a blight on Australian society.

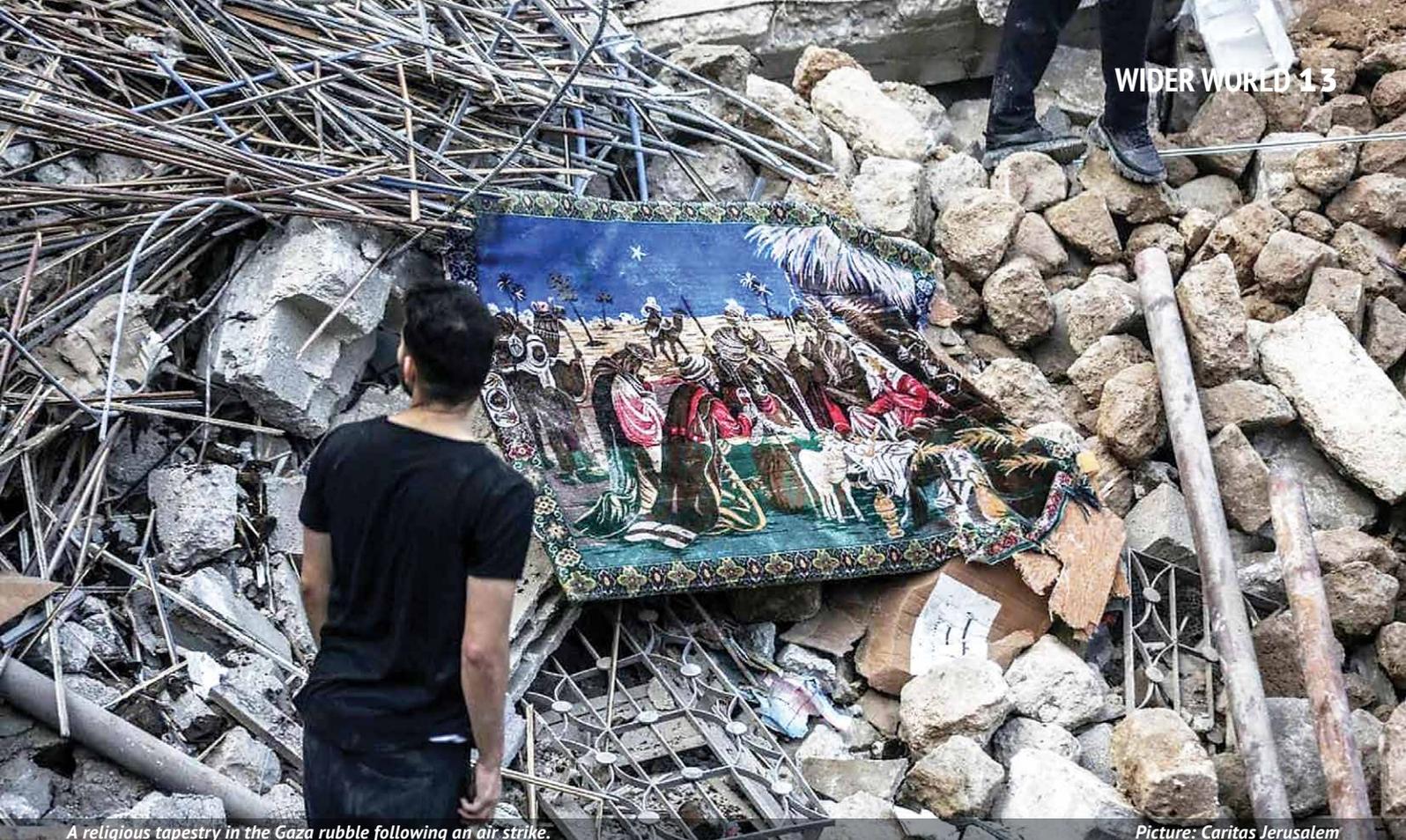
"We're not talking about millions of people. We're just talking about one relatively small cohort," Sister Arthur said.

The Home Affairs department said it had made no cuts to status resolution support services payments. A spokesperson said the SRSS was a demand-driven program, and funding aligned to recipient numbers.

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If you or someone you know needs more assistance, please try Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636.





A religious tapestry in the Gaza rubble following an air strike.

Picture: Caritas Jerusalem

# ‘Keep hope alive for peace’: Gaza call

■ Jenan Taylor

**Australian Christians have been urged to call for permanent ceasefire and a two-state solution to protect civilians trapped in the Israel-Gaza conflict.**

Aid leaders want Christians to push the Australian government to continue pressuring Israel for a peace deal, to curb the mounting casualties and suffering the crisis has caused.

It comes as 19 international agencies including Médecins Sans Frontières warned the humanitarian response in Gaza was crumbling because of Israel's escalated assault on the city of Rafah.

They said Israel's ongoing offensive had reduced security and humanitarian access, despite international mediators continuing to negotiate for a ceasefire deal and hostage release proposal.

More than 37,000 people have been killed in Gaza to 27 June, and 86,429 injured, since the conflict began in October.

Micah Australia, Oxfam Australia, Act for Peace and Caritas Australia said unimpeded humanitarian access was crucial as people in Gaza were physically and psychologically traumatised, sick and starving.

They said a ceasefire would enable humanitarian aid to deliver food, water, shelter, medicines and fuel.

Oxfam Australia Humanitarian head Lucia

Goldsmith said more than a million people had fled Rafah and more than two-thirds of Gaza's population were sheltering in central Gaza.

Ms Goldsmith said they faced appalling water and sanitary conditions, which deepened concerns about disease risks.

She said in one area with only 121 latrines for about 500,000 people, an estimated 4000 people shared each toilet.

Ms Goldsmith said the only border crossing open for aid delivery was in an active combat zone and delivery was also hampered by long Israeli approval processes.

Act For Peace chief executive Elijah Buol said its aid partner in Gaza delivered medical care and medicines via a mobile clinic.

Mr Buol said the closed border crossings had severely diminished the organisation's ability to operate because it was unable to procure or deliver the life-saving materials.

He said women and children were suffering because the organisation was running out of pain relief and antibiotic medications for them, and because they were starving.

Mr Buol said it was important that Christians advocated for and prayed for peace negotiations to succeed, so that medicines and proper food could be allowed through again.

Micah Australia executive director the Reverend Tim Costello said it was important

that Christians spoke up for a two-state solution as well.

Mr Costello said two states was the best hope for a sustainable peace and justice in that region because it would mean both states would be self-determining, giving their people rights.

He said it was a mistake to believe Israelis and Palestinians could never co-exist, because more than a million Israeli Palestinians had lived peacefully in Israel with citizenship since 1948.

He said Christians could reject the binary view of a Jewish versus Muslim clash of cultures, because fear of the other was exactly what the gospel addressed.

“Christians, through their faith, have the resources to keep hope alive for peace, dignity and rights for all,” Mr Costello said.

Ms Goldsmith said Oxfam Australia's partners in the Occupied Palestinian Territories also hoped both parties to the conflict and the international community would agree on a two-state solution.

“I think it's the only way we can see those populations living in safety and security,” Ms Goldsmith said.

You can donate to appeals for Gaza at Act for Peace on [actforpeace.org.au/gaza-emergency](https://actforpeace.org.au/gaza-emergency), Oxfam Australia at [oxfam.org.au/donate/palestine-gaza-crisis-2023](https://oxfam.org.au/donate/palestine-gaza-crisis-2023), and Caritas Australia at [caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/gaza-crisis](https://caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/gaza-crisis).

## 'For peace, Christians must work for unity'

■ Jenan Taylor

**Christians have been urged to embrace unity to address justice issues, at a Victorian Council of Churches public gathering.**

Attendees heard how ecumenism offered opportunities for hope and love in a fractured world. These justice issues included climate change and gendered violence.

Speaker, World Council of Churches president, the Reverend Dr Jerry Pillay said it was only through unity that peace could flourish in the world.

He said Christians were living in a world broken by sinfulness and death, in which communities were experiencing multiple crises. But, he said these crises gave Christians opportunities to become peacemakers.

Dr Pillay said this was important because Christian communities had a responsibility to address such injustices, hold up hope, and work together.

He said accelerating climate change, rising economic inequality and growing human rights violations were among the most pressing issues.

He spoke of how South Africans of many faith backgrounds had rallied together to overcome the repressive Apartheid regime, to illustrate why unity and justice were inseparable.

"It is only through unity that Christians can find solutions that speak of justice," Dr Pillay said.

Attendee Salvation Army Major Karen Elkington said she was struck by the similarities between Dr Pillay's description of international problems and what Australians were dealing with.

Major Elkington said Dr Pillay's encouragement to work together collaboratively spoke of collaborating with other Christians as well as with people of other faiths.

She said it was a reminder that people were so much stronger and better when they worked together.

Major Elkington said it told her it was important that Christians ought to focus on reaching out to many others if they were to be upholders of peace.



Volunteers at the St Hilary's Hope annual food drive.

Picture: supplied

## Charity combats cost-of-living crisis

■ Hannah Felsbourg

**A Kew church charity renowned for its annual food drive will continue to quietly feed and clothe hundreds of people through its many other food and material aid ministries.**

St Hilary's Hope initiatives run throughout the year and have a significant role helping people in the community who struggle with cost-of-living pressures.

St Hilary's Hope director Mike Urwin said these efforts supported Anglicare Victoria in their efforts to meet a growing demand for food aid from families.

He said volunteers collected food recovered from supermarkets by charity SecondBite and delivered it to Anglicare,

in one initiative.

Mr Urwin said St Hilary's Hope also managed an op shop that provided affordable goods to the community and built relationships through its public-facing venture.

He said it also partnered with Kids Hope, an organisation that trained volunteers to mentor kids from a local school.

"I think ideally charitable work is done quietly by people just getting on with it. You could argue the food drive is the unusual thing," Mr Urwin said.

The continuous efforts of volunteers at St Hilary's Hope are vital to maximising the effectiveness of their charitable outreach and impact on the community.

## From the editor



**How exciting! I count at least three stories about Anglicans sharing their hope in Jesus with others.**

We can read about churches inviting people to "Meet Jesus", and plans for a nationwide evangelism drive (P7). Plus St John's Diamond Creek is helping children find Jesus in the jungle of life (P9).

And that's on top of the Reverend Prashant Bhonsle's hopes of bringing an Anglican presence back to Wallan (P19).

It's also exciting to hear about other ways Melbourne Anglicans are working in the world. We have a vicar taking up an Assistant Bishop role in Canberra-Goulburn (P3), St Thomas' Burwood members supporting vulnerable children (P9), or Anglicans honoured for their contributions to society (P10).

I hope you are encouraged hearing about God's work in the world through His people.

**Elsbeth Kernebone, editor**

# ‘Here I am Lord, send me’: Join in God’s work worldwide

■ Wayne Walters

**Discovering Tanzania through participation in a mission with international ministry organisation SOMA has been a delight.**

Having never been to Africa, my first experience of the enthusiastic welcome and gracious hospitality has been deeply heartwarming.

I saw the hand of God move in ways that lifted my own faith to another level and filled me with expectation and thanksgiving to the amazing God we serve.

SOMA (Sharing of Ministries Abroad) is an international network of Anglicans birthed at Lambeth 46 years ago by a group of bishops who felt the call of God to “take care of the nervous system of the Anglican Church”.

SOMA does this by responding to an invitation from a bishop of any diocese, to send a team to provide teaching with practical application on the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and of the church.

In Tanzania we piloted a two-day training conference with the bishop and selected clergy from five of the 28 dioceses. Each of these freshly-trained diocesan groups then travelled to their diocese, accompanied by two SOMA team members. Here, they ran conferences with gatherings of clergy and lay leaders from multiple deaneries. By this means thousands of key leaders across five



Offering healing prayer at Dodoma Training.

Picture: supplied

dioceses received refreshment, inspiration and training for the mission of the church they undertake in very challenging circumstances.

SOMA missions are currently planned for Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan in October and November of this year, and there is a cry from Zanzibar for a SOMA team to go within the next 12-18 months.

Come and join me and others to be

part of what God is doing around the world and discover more of God’s power and plan for your life in the process.

The Reverend Wayne Walters is vicar of St Michael’s Beaumaris.

Those interested to learn more about supporting or participating in a SOMA mission can go to [somaau.org](http://somaau.org) or email national director Melinda on [contact@somaau.org](mailto:contact@somaau.org).



St Stephen’s Anglican Karen youth in training for volleyball and caneball. Picture: supplied.

## Games offer Karen youth friendships

■ Jenan Taylor

**A Werribee church hopes to encourage young Karen people in the wider community to find friendship and connection through its volleyball and caneball tournament.**

The sports are very popular in Myanmar and are a key part of youth and adult ministry activities in the St Stephen’s Anglican Karen Authorised Congregation.

Church leaders hope their upcoming tournament will help them reach young, unchurched Karen people and those who might have drifted away from their Christian roots.

Players swat the ball over the net using their hands, or in caneball, their feet, head and shoulders. The

high-energy moves often draw cheering spectators.

Children and families program leader Christina George said many second generation Karen Australian teenagers were drawn away from church life and became involved in antisocial activities. She said the church wanted to cultivate strong relationships through which the teenagers could learn they could put their faith in God.

Vicar the Reverend Moe Win Tun Kin said the tournament was an opportunity for St Stephen’s young members to encourage friends to view church differently, inviting them to participate in something that might enjoy.

The tournament will run on Saturday 6 July from 9am to 5pm at Eagle Stadium Werribee.

# We must stand against anti-Semitism

**The big issue facing Australia today is anti-Semitism. Yet our church leaders appear to have been strangely silent.**

There has been a massive rise in threats to and attacks upon Jewish people, their supporters and their interests since the evil Hamas attack in Israel on 7 October. No ethnic or religious group should live in fear in Australia.

It is imperative that the church takes a clear stand now because in the past churches have initiated persecution of Jews, or have not stood against it. Yet biblically the children of Abraham have a unique place in God's purposes.

Criticising the Netanyahu Government is not anti-Semitism; that's a privilege of democracy. The Old Testament prophets reveal Jews to be the most self-critical people on earth.

Anti-Semitism is a threat to us all. Former treasurer Josh Frydenberg recently observed, "It is after all not just the Jewish community that is under attack, it's Australia's social cohesion that is under attack and the very values that underpin it."

Many have warned and history shows that anti-Semitism does not end with Jewish people. Bob Hawke warned that if the bell tolls for Israel, it will toll for all mankind. Jews are the scapegoat for other ills.

**Bishop Ian Palmer**  
Mount Duneed



*Anti-Semitism is a threat to Australia's social cohesion, writes Bishop Ian Palmer.*

Picture: iStock

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Letters must be less than 250 words, and include your full name, address and phone number for identity verification. They may be edited for clarity, length and grammar.

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# As the people of God, we must help those in crisis

Picture: iStock

## ■ Penny Mulvey

**We are in winter. The days are short, the nights are cold and for those sleeping rough, daily life is hard.**

In fact, Melbourne is experiencing a health emergency. People who are on the street are likely to die 30 years earlier than those with stable housing.

Melbourne temperatures have been hovering close to zero this June, and country Victoria has dropped into negatives. Living in the inner city and working in the city centre, I see too many people trying to warm themselves on the cold pavements, a bowl and a note in front of them, desperate for coins. I feel helpless and ashamed. Why do I avoid eye contact and walk past quickly?

There are several organisations working collegially to assist those who are homeless. The City of Melbourne has launched a draft Homeless Strategy 2024-2030.

“Homelessness is something that people experience; it is not who they are,” it states.

It is important for all of us to meditate on those words. Organisations like the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Launch Housing, Anglicare Victoria, Melbourne Zero Network and National Shelter know this all too well. They see daily the devastating impact being without secure and affordable accommodation has on a person’s life.

The city’s strategy recognises that a collective response is needed and that we all have a part to play in changing the narrative for those whose lives leave them without shelter. The word “zero” in Melbourne Zero Network is there for a very specific reason. This alliance wants to make zero street homelessness a reality in Melbourne’s centre.

This year’s Rental Affordability Snapshot undertaken across Australia by Anglicare

provided no surprises. The RAS shows that the most vulnerable – students, job seekers, those with a disability – are struggling to find affordable rent.

Anglicare Victoria chief executive Paul McDonald, described finding an affordable rental, for those on low incomes, as “needle-in-a-haystack stuff”.

“It’s a terrible situation ... and it is time the federal government recognised this national housing crisis and turbocharged commitments to prevent further calamity for families and individuals searching to find affordable housing,” he said.

Affordability has declined in Melbourne. Only 0.27 per cent of rental properties in metro Melbourne were affordable for people on income support. Just 14 per cent were affordable on minimum wage. Both have decreased since 2023. Median rents have also risen sharply. In metropolitan Melbourne these rose by 14.3 per cent, in regional Victoria it was almost seven per cent.

Victoria is growing faster than any other state. Demand is outstripping supply, pushing rents higher. Rising house prices are adding pressure to the rental market. As property prices increase faster than wages, Victorians on income support and minimum wage are competing with higher-earners for rental properties.

Anglicare Victoria poses the question in its 2024 Rental Affordability Snapshot: “What can we do? Australia needs a national strategy to end youth homelessness, particularly for those leaving state care.”

As Christians, we need to take notice of these statistics. Only 2.9 per cent of social housing is leased to people under 24, even though people aged 12 to 24 make up about a quarter of homeless people.

Anglicare stresses the need for a housing strategy to address youth homelessness. It also calls on the state government to seek better collaboration with the federal government as rising house prices and a fast-growing population put further pressure on an already-undersupplied rental market.

Anglicare’s Diocesan and Parish Partnerships program manager Chris de Pava provides support to 25 parishes across Victoria who are providing practical assistance to those in urgent need of basic everyday needs. Seventeen of these parishes are providing emergency relief, three offer breakfast programs, including St Peter’s Eastern Hill, which provides sit down meals seven days a week and St Mark’s Fitzroy, which also provides showers, washing machines and comfy couches.

Until COVID, 40 parishes were donating food to the St Mark’s program. Unfortunately, that support was another casualty of the difficult pandemic years.

Wherever we live, be it the CBD, the outer suburbs, a country town, there are people living rough. As Christians, how do we respond?

It is overwhelming, as individuals, to quite know what to do. But as a church, as the people of God, together, we can start by talking to organisations like BSL and Anglicare. We can do our own research. We can talk to people on the street and find out what might help them. We can visit other churches with programs, such as St Peter’s Eastern Hill or St Mark’s Fitzroy.

There are still two more months of winter. What can you do? If you or your parish have stories about your work with those who are homeless, please email [tma@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:tma@melbourneanglican.org.au).

# Our Christian life is an imitation game

■ Michael Bird

Many years ago, one of my doctoral students stumped me with a question. He asked, “What is the one thing that Paul said that he taught in all the churches?” Flicking through my mental search engine, I thought it was “justification by faith,” or “God’s grace,” or “Preach the gospel”.

The answer was none of these.

Then my student pointed me to 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, when Paul writes:

“Therefore I urge you to *imitate me*. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of *my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.*”

Later in the same letter, Paul exhorts the Corinthians again, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Looking slightly broader, I would argue that that Paul’s letter to the Philippians is replete with calls to imitate Jesus, the example of Paul and his associates, and other Christians who are mature in the faith. Paul says towards the end: “Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do” (Philippians 3:17).

For Paul, at the centre of his teaching was neither doctrine, nor sacrament, nor experience, but a pattern of life, a way of living, and habit of holiness rooted in Jesus as it attempted to replicate Jesus.

For Paul, Christian faith is mimetic, it is about the imitation of Jesus.

At one level, this is natural to us. We learn largely by imitation. Monkey-see, monkey-do! We replicate what is around us if it works. We rehearse the things that have been handed onto us. Or else, we pattern ourselves after what and who we admire.

Imitation is inevitable, whether it is our parents, our role models, our colleagues, or the things we fill our minds with. We have a habit of copying the best and worst of what we observe around us.

Accordingly, if we take Paul as our starting point, the life of faith includes beliefs, praise, prayer, proclamation and participation, but it is fundamentally imitation. It is a life that seeks to be conformed to the pattern of Jesus, dying to self and living to God, to empty ourselves of all but love, to take the form of a servant, to serve rather than be served, to find joy in giving rather than receiving.

**“We decide instead to be shaped by the story of Jesus, his life, his teachings, his example, and the instruction of the apostles.”**

What makes that so hard is that the world constantly assaults us with temptations, distractions, and anti-types that command our attention and obedience. All advertising is premised on persuading people to be acutely selfish, self-centred, and self-gratifying. Remember, the motto of L’Oréal Paris is “Because you’re worth it.” There is Mastercard’s slogan “Priceless” or Nike’s “Just Do It!” All of this is designed to make us impulsive and indulgent.

Yet what makes us holy is that we find the strength to resist these attempts to distort our desires, and to conform us to the pattern of worldly idols. We decide instead to be shaped by the story of Jesus, his life, his teachings, his example, and the instruction of the apostles.

In Reformed theology there is a celebration of union with Christ, a blessed union with a dividend of a twofold grace whereby we receive the righteousness of Jesus for justification and the holiness of Jesus for our sanctification. Yet to that we must add going on with Christ, following him in the way, radiating holiness, announcing the kingdom, keeping his words, announcing him as the Word of God made flesh.

I suspect that the gap in our holiness, the ditch in our discipleship, is a failure to cleave to Jesus as both our Saviour and exemplar. We must have both, you cannot have only one. We must bind ourselves to Jesus as the one who loves us, gave himself for us, and who urges us to take up our cross and follow him.

Indeed, the purpose of all theology, says Kevin Vanhoozer, is that those who bear Christ’s name, would learn to walk in Christ’s way.

The goal of our instruction, then, is that we would be Christ-formed, a mixture of participation, instruction, and imitation in a Jesus-centred way.

The result is truly evangelistic. We become the only Jesus that may people ever meet, the only window into the Christian life people ever look into, and the only icon of Jesus that comes to life before beholder.

Here I would shift from St Paul to St John, and urge us to consider how imitation of the Lord Jesus makes us radiate with love to all around: “This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus” (1 John 4:17).

The Christian life is then is an imitation game!

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The Reverend Dr Michael F Bird is deputy principal, director of research and lecturer in New Testament at Ridley College.



# A new presence, a simple call: Wallan

■ Prashant Bhonsle

*The Reverend Prashant Bhonsle is leading a church plant to develop an Anglican presence in Wallan. He hopes to begin a worship congregation that will become a centrifugal force in the community. The plant is reaching out to potential members through information sessions in July.*

**Church planting hadn't been part of my story to this point. But I am finding it a real adventure becoming part of one in the making and remaking stage. Wallan is giving me that thrill!**

Our church is recommencing the Anglican ministry in Wallan – stopped during COVID in 2021 – in a new location that belongs to the diocese.

The previous congregation in Wallan was small. But this means the Anglican presence is not totally new. Even before we came to Australia we were told of the growth in the northern corridor, and the need of the ministry here. From the time I took the decision to come here, I prepared myself to unlearn and relearn in a new context.

The son of a priest in the Church of North India, I grew up around the church. Faith is part of our family story, a beautiful gift passed down from generation to generation.

My inner call came by observing my father reading, writing and ministering to others. I became convinced God existed, through logic, reason and philosophy.

My theology was shaped outside of seminary when I was confronted with the real situations of the people in the caste-ridden Indian society. Throughout the Bible we find God's preferential option for the poor. Jesus began His ministry with the Nazareth manifesto, to preach the good news to the poor, the captives, the oppressed.

As a program team leader with the Justice and Development wing of the Church of North India, I worked with congregations to spark interventions across society. We developed participatory models, where congregations, women's groups and youth groups integrated issues of the community in their liturgy and practice. This generated leadership, spearheading change.

A Melbourne parishioner visiting Kolkata helped me see the role I could play ministering in the evolving, multicultural society here. I realised I could offer the gospel in this context. My wife the Reverend Dr Satvasheela Pandhare – now leading the Hume parish – was also convinced she had a



*The Reverend Prashant Bhonsle hopes to restart an Anglican presence in Wallan. Picture: supplied*

role as an ordained priest and chaplain.

As I considered ministry in Wallan, I realised the challenge of secularism, the “no need of God” in our life attitude of people. And these people have diverse needs and real struggles in life.

Communities and young families need care. A strong community, bound in genuine love and concern for each other will always thrive. So, I call upon people to come together, to pray, to sing, to worship, to talk with each other, empathise, resonate, have fellowships in a safe and sound environment. Here we can sustain in mutual love, affection, understanding, and thereby share joy and peace. Worship goes hand in hand with our service work. I am hopeful that, having understood the community's felt needs, with vision and foresight, we can collaborate more with Anglican agencies, ecumenical networks and mission partners, city council and others. Our work has a simple vision: to be inviting, welcoming and replenishing. I am sure God who offers life abundant to all without discrimination will help us be an inclusive and inviting community.

I take ministry as a rare privilege. It fills me, it gives me joy and I love it. I also humbly acknowledge the Anglican presence of our former congregation in Wallan, who ran the race and kept the faith. I hope those who were part of that story will participate with their experience and wisdom in this new Anglican chapter in Wallan.

Any growth story comes with challenges. It is one thing to minister in an organised set up of church ministries, altogether another to co-create a community that drives its mandate of engagement and service in the world, while being firmly rooted in faith and spirituality.

It is important especially in our new, changing and challenging context. We have people of other faiths, ideologies and orientations joining us every day. Wallan's projected demographics are increasingly diverse. These people bring their own spirituality, beliefs and practices to the fabric of Wallan. We need to engage daily, build bridges, and know that truly we are a “Land of the Spirit”. God is already at work here and we simply need to participate in His mission in Wallan. To me, therefore, the call is simply to be inviting, to be welcoming.

I cannot make a difference alone, it must be a joint endeavour. I see my role as a community enabler, following on the footprints of Jesus. I hope that we can form an inclusive, participatory, safe space for all in Wallan. As God leads, I hope to be part of His work to bring positive social change in the community, so all can flourish. I thank the Hume Anglican Parish for their role in Wallan's church growth story.

Wallan community members can join an information session on 16 July at 7pm at the Wallan Neighbourhood House to talk about relaunching an Anglican presence.

# We can think of Genesis 1 as a ‘true myth’

The creation account in Genesis 1 is both foundational for Christian doctrine and one of the Bible's most challenging texts to interpret. Here, Anthony Caruana reflects on a recent article which proposes that the creation account of Genesis 1 is “true myth” that joins truth-telling with storytelling. The original article, by Alan Dickin, is from *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*, published by ISCAST—Christianity and Science in Conversation.

As one of the most foundational Scriptures for Christians, the creation account in Genesis 1 has also, across the centuries, been one of the most challenging to interpret.

In the fifth century AD, St Augustine of Hippo warned that naively interpreting Genesis 1 as a literal account “could provoke ridicule of the Church”. In his view the account was written to convey the idea that God created the universe in an instant, to help humans understand the process of creation. In contrast, the Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin held that Genesis 1 narrated a literal six-day creation.

Today, of course, a scientific understanding of the universe challenges a “literal” understanding of Genesis 1’s creation in six days. But neither would many of today’s Christians concur with Augustine’s “instant creation” idea!

Dr Alan Dickin, Emeritus Professor of Geology at McMaster University Ontario, Canada, takes a helpful approach to understanding Genesis 1 in a recent ISCAST journal article.

Dickin and others use the word “myth” to describe the Genesis 1 account. Contemporary Christians may push back at the idea of myth because it seems to represent a fable, a fairytale, an imagined story. However, in its original sense, and as applied to Genesis 1, “myth” combines *truth-telling* with storytelling. This “true myth” of Genesis 1 provides us with a deepened understanding of creation that science

**“Our modern minds grapple with inspired Scripture as edited or orally-shared stories and sometimes have difficulty with that notion.”**

alone cannot achieve. Let’s look further at the rather circuitous route the “true myth” of Genesis 1 has taken to reach us.

## Where did the Genesis 1 account come from?

Was Genesis 1 simply a recorded divine vision to Moses? Dickin questions this idea. Rather, he suggests the account documented by Moses is most likely a retelling of a well-known story. The reference to the creation week as the model for the Sabbath, included in the Fourth Commandment brought down from Mount Sinai, implies the creation story was already known to the Israelites.

Dickin also notes strong literary differences in the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 that challenge the idea that Moses wrote Genesis 1 from a vision.

Genesis 1’s account uses *Elohim*, which is plural, while in Genesis 2 and when God reveals himself to Moses at Mount Sinai in Exodus the name *Yahweh* is used, which is singular.

While Genesis 1 gives a sequential, day-by-day account that establishes order from primordial disorder, Genesis 2 takes a far more personal approach that starts almost immediately with the creation of humankind. Genesis 2’s story-like character is reflective of Sumerian writings.

To Dickin and others, these differences amount to evidence that the creation account in Genesis 1 comes from a different literary source to the Genesis 2 account, or a different author. Genesis 1 was likely written in the time of Solomon, with the second creation account, the Fall, and the story of Cain and Abel written many centuries before. If the two accounts coexisted, Dickin suggests that the two stories would have become intermingled because they were typically shared orally.

So, if Genesis 1 was not a recorded vision, where did it come from? Dickin proposes that the creation account of Genesis 1 is material inspired by the Flood story of Genesis 6. The idea that the Flood of Genesis 6 amounts to the “undoing” of creation is not new. For example, if Genesis 1 represents the establishment of order by separating the heavens from the earth and land from the seas, then the Flood reverses that. Elaborating further, the Genesis Apocryphon, found amongst the Dead Sea scrolls, notes that the flood waters recede to recreate order and that Noah (in Dickin’s words) “is invited to rule over the earth in a manner very similar to the blessing of Adam on the sixth day of Genesis 1.”

## Creation in Genesis 1 as a ‘true myth’

Our modern minds grapple with inspired Scripture as edited or orally-shared stories and sometimes have difficulty with that notion. Dickin emphasises a way for the modern mind to understand Genesis 1 that appreciates its roots.

*For an Anglican Approach*



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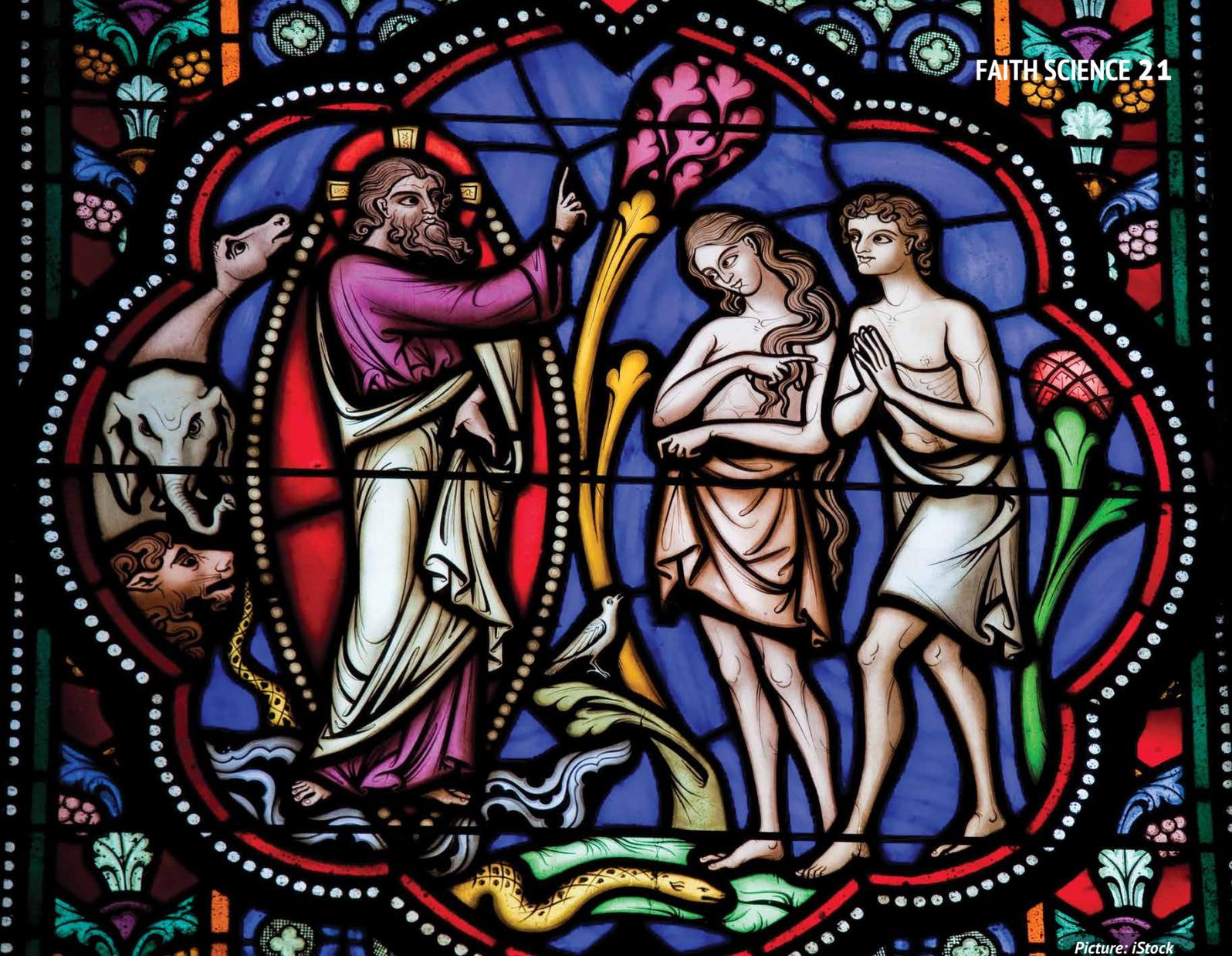



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Picture: iStock

The creation narrative of Genesis 1 fulfils two deep human needs, both for those long ago and for us as contemporaries: the requirements for truth-telling and for storytelling. Dickin notes that, while our modern culture sometimes pits those two against each other, ancient culture integrates them in a genre called *myth* – from the Greek work *mŭthos* which simply means “story”. The concept here is that as myth, Genesis 1 embodies truths in the form of story.

Science tells us the creation of the universe did not take place according to a

**“The concept here is that as myth, Genesis 1 embodies truths in the form of story.”**

literal “six-day” interpretation of Genesis 1. Yet, Dickin points out that Genesis 1 as “myth” still has a historical basis. Genesis 1 was inspired by a real flood, a turning point of human history.

In this form of “true myth”, Genesis 1’s revelation of biblical truths is more

approachable, more integrated with the human drama, than would be possible through a purely scientific account that fails to connect emotionally with ancient or modern audiences.

Anthony Caruana has worked in the technology arena for almost 30 years. He is a journalist and has written for major daily papers and technology publications in Australia. He completed a post-graduate diploma at Ridley College and maintains a keen interest in exploring the intersection between faith, culture, and technology.

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# I doubted, but this is a brilliant success

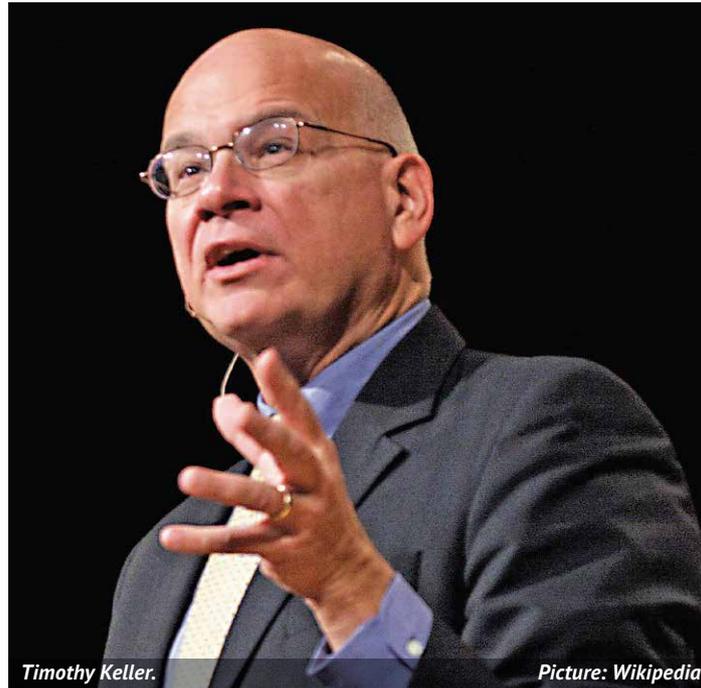
■ Rhys Bezzant

Collin Hansen. Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation. *HarperCollins Religious US*, 2023.

**God in Gotham? It wasn't too long ago that the ideas of thriving Christian ministry and downtown New York City were poles apart.**

No new church had been built in Manhattan for 40 years, that is until 2012 when Redeemer Presbyterian Church opened a new building. Of course, several of its campuses scattered around the city still rent premises. Indeed, one of their plants meets in the auditorium of the New York Society for Ethical Culture, a 19th century atheist society which is happy to rent out their lecture theatre on Sundays. But today in some circles, New York has become synonymous with refreshed ways of engaging post-Christian culture. If it is possible there, it is possible anywhere. The leadership provided by Tim Keller at Redeemer in NYC has been game changing.

In his recently published biography, Collin Hansen has written a magnificent survey not essentially of Keller's life but of the intellectual and spiritual influences which profoundly shaped him. It was truly absorbing. We learn about his education, mentors, and capacious reading. These took a bookish undergraduate, who grew up in a legalistic Christian home, and made of him a leading apologist, evangelist, and pastor in the later 20th and early 21st century. To be honest, I was sceptical of the project to publish a biography not a year after Keller's death from pancreatic cancer in 2023. But it succeeds brilliantly because of its modest aspirations. A journalist, Hansen's prose was crisp, the chapter and section divisions roughly following



Timothy Keller.

Picture: Wikipedia

Keller's career were helpfully focused, and his conclusions judicious. A full-scale biography awaits.

Keller became a Christian and cut his teeth in student ministry with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania during the late and turbulent 1960s. He trained for the ministry at Gordon-Conwell in Massachusetts, not long after the amalgamation of the two schools (incidentally led by former Ridley principal Stuart Barton Babbage). Perhaps surprisingly, he then took up a Presbyterian pastorate in a working-class town, Hopewell, Virginia, whose claim to fame was advertised on its road sign: "Welcome to Hopewell, chemical capital of the South." His professorial style was successfully matched to a social demographic hungry to know the Scriptures. He learnt how to communicate in new ways. He was subsequently called to teach preaching at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, after which he took up the reigns of a church plant in Manhattan in 1989, and stayed there for the remainder of his ministry life. His impact in Australia has been

significant, for the church-planting organisation City to City was his brainchild.

Hansen does well not just to name the thinkers who have influenced Keller, but also summarises their theological commitments and outlines the story of their intellectual transmission. Keller's legalism was transformed by reading Luther on the nature of grace, and he read the Puritans voraciously to discover how they understood the dynamics of the spiritual life. One of his most significant theological interlocutors has been Jonathan Edwards, 18th century pastor in Massachusetts whose project was to present the Christian faith using the category of beauty and thereby to address the human head, and heart, and hands together. In our fragmented world, this vision of harmony has proved particularly useful in Keller's engagement with culture.

After his wife Kathy introduced him to the writings of the Inklings, Keller lived in the worlds of Narnia and of the Rings. These fuelled his commitment to the imagination as a strategy to renew society, and to refresh the church's engagement with the cities of

this world around it. Indeed, Kathy had a correspondence with CS Lewis from when she was a young girl! Many lecturers impacted Keller, for example Ed Clowney, Elisabeth Elliot, Richard Lovelace, and RC Sproul. His early Arminian sentiments were replaced with more self-consciously Reformed commitments during his theological education. In later life, he became friends with sociologist James Davison Hunter at the University of Virginia, with whom he investigated how any social movement might make an impact in the late modern world. The answer: networks. Keller was good at this.

His theological style was irenic and coalition-building. No wonder he helped found The Gospel Coalition. His extraordinary church-planting and church health manual, *Center Church*, amply demonstrates his spiritual and ecclesiological vision. He wanted to join doctrinal clarity, personal piety, and cultural engagement, which together would shape the church's witness and outreach. His theoretical and practical approach to diaconal ministries, in Hopewell or in Manhattan, was a significant element in his missional thinking. Of course, Keller's prodigious output in publications is matched by his homiletical legacy. He did not set out to be a megachurch pastor, but perhaps that is at the heart of his success. He glories in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which "provides a non-oppressive absolute truth, one that provides a norm outside of ourselves as the way to escape relativism and selfish individualism, yet one that cannot be used to oppress others" (p250). We need the insights Keller gleaned from his reflection.

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

# Join in a journey to be shaped together

■ **Claire Harvey**

*Kate Pocklington. Shaped by the Spirit: Being formed into an outward-focused people. SPCK Publishing, May 2024.*

**Kate Pocklington's readable series of reflections on Christian formation draws on her significant experience serving on, and leading, cross-cultural missionary teams.**

She writes with creativity and deep honesty, painting vivid pictures for readers. Her desire that God's people be formed for mission, as an outward-focused people, is evident throughout. Her hunger for the glory of God among the nations is palpable.

However Pocklington equally doesn't hold back in naming some of the painful challenges associated with discipleship-in-community, including as an Australian woman.

Part one of *Shaped by the Spirit* lays the foundation for all that follows, highlighting the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit – the grand designer – in forming us. The crucial role of prayer is emphasised as God's "shaping pathway", with the clear end goal being that we might "take up and carry on the mission of Jesus Christ in the world."

Part two offers 11 different materials that God uses to shape His people for mission, drawing a parallel between recycling or repurposing, with the Spirit's work in reforming and transforming us. Pocklington works through the following key shaping-aspects of our lives: our family of origin; people of personal influence; the role of suffering

and pain; our unique gift-mix; opportunities to learn and unlearn; the richness of diverse cultures; the wisdom that comes with age; opportunities and challenges relating to gender, both for women and for men; the gift of being part of a team or community; and finally the mutual-exchange that occurs through ministry service.

Part three highlights specific areas in which some of the deeper and most crucial aspects of formation will take place. Pocklington identifies these three areas as being a tenacious trust and hope in God; the choice to be open, trusting and vulnerable with others; and the necessary role of radical forgiveness, both given and received.

Pocklington highlights that this book is the fruit of her labours during the gift of a sabbatical season. Her love of writing is evident as she crafts colourful illustrations drawn from her rich, deep and wide experience across life in four different nations. It is a significant achievement, to write so honestly about not just the highs and glories, but also the evident challenges and real pain of team-based missionary service. And, it is an achievement to do so with humility, respect and a commitment to preserving the dignity of others throughout the process.

The author clearly needed to be highly selective throughout her authoring journey, especially for such a succinct and readable text. But, if there were to be a sequel to this book I would be interested in an exploration of the role of nature or creation in forming us, as well as our engagement with younger generations, whose perspective can be so

different to our own. More and more I also find myself reflecting on how our eschatology, or beliefs about our longer-term future, form us and our way in the world!

*Shaped by the Spirit* would make a wonderful resource for mature readers who are starting out on their own journey of discipleship. It might especially suit those who might have encountered Jesus but who now find themselves wondering "where next?" in terms of the pathway toward unity and maturity in Christ. I would certainly commend this book to women. Many of us will resonate with a range of the scenarios and difficulties faced by Pocklington as a woman in ministry, and will likely also appreciate the insightful way she draws out lessons for all of us. Even more so I commend this book to men, especially those who work and minister within organisations where women's voices can be so much harder to properly hear. Even better would be for mixed groups, with a diversity of age, life-stage, gender and culture, to embark on the learning journey together! This book itself presents an opportunity to be formed through a collective journey as a community of attentive readers. With 18 short, readable chapters, it could become a key text for a fortnightly small group across a year!

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Claire Harvey worked in the Pioneers of Australia office 20 years ago, which included processing team support donations for Kate! She is mum to Sarah and Micah, and a member of The Village Church in Mt Eliza. Claire is People and Culture manager for a not-for-profit aged care provider, bookkeeper for ISCAST, and serves on the boards of Ethos and CoPower.

## A masterpiece of insight and pastoral warmth for all

■ **Paul Barker**

*Andrew G Shead, Walk His Way: Following Christ through the book of Psalms (IVP, 2023).*

**Singing, saying, and chanting the Psalms is an integral part of our Anglican worship. Whether together, antiphonally or taking verses in turn, for centuries the Psalms have formed the backbone of Christian, and Anglican, praise and prayer.**

For a time, I found many psalms a struggle to enter into. I was not in the miry deep, with enemies on every side, with my life under threat or God far from me. On the other hand, I did not rejoice in regular trips to Jerusalem or its temple. But over time, as I have read,

reread, preached, taught, recited and sung the Psalms, they have encroached further and further into my soul and spirit. I have grown to lament and praise, to intercede and trust, more and more deeply, and the Psalms have played a significant role in that.

Andrew Shead explores eight psalms at length, namely psalms 1 and 2, 32, 69, 88, 91, 118 and 147, in a work originating in his Bible talks to the CMS Summer Conference in NSW in 2022. The chosen psalms illustrate the main genres (lament, praise, etc) in the Book of Psalms. Shead also uses these psalms as anchors for understanding the storyline within the Psalter. Each is placed in the context of the flow and emphases of each of the five books of psalms, tracing the story of Israel, kingship and the projected hope

for the future beyond exile. In addition, each psalm is explored not only within an Old Testament theological framework, but also in its appropriation for Christians, and each is then applied pastorally.

Shead thus draws the readers to follow the invitation of the Psalms to walk in God's way, through trials and joys, and ultimately to walk therefore in Jesus' way.

This book is a masterpiece of both insight and pastoral warmth. It is a book for all Christians, written accessibly and clearly. It will open up the Psalms for a richer appreciation and experience, as well as pastoral benefit, and I highly commend it.

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Bishop Paul Barker, Jumbunna Episcopate, has taught Old Testament in several seminaries for 35 years.

# Loneliness looms large, is friendship the cure?

Picture: iStock

## ■ Angela Cook

Rebecca McLaughlin. *No Greater Love: A Biblical Vision for Friendship* Paperback. Moody Publishers, 2023.

**In November last year, the World Health Organisation launched an international commission into loneliness, declaring it to be a pressing global health threat – as bad for you as smoking 15 a day! It's an issue across generations and locations, from the Hikikomori in Japan to teens in Africa struggling with both their physical safety and increasing feelings of isolation.**

If loneliness is the next pandemic, then, what is the cure? In Rebecca McLaughlin's little book *No Greater Love: A Biblical Vision for Friendship* she gives us a hopeful solution: friendships of love, based on Jesus' example of love for his friends from John 15:12-14: "My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command."

Jesus' call to love each other is ultimately a call to Christian community and friendship. Friendship that will be an answer to loneliness will be friendship that is shaped by Jesus' sacrificial love, so that it is cross-shaped and sacrificial in nature. McLaughlin is seeking to reclaim the value and dignity of friendship in both the church and wider community. She writes, correctly in my experience, in chapter 7: "The inbuilt differences between marriage and friendship are vital to the health of both relationships. Much pain in our society has come from muddling up friendship and marriage: on the one hand, treating sexual relationships as opportunities for exploration with multiple people and

on the other hand, devaluing the role of friendship as a place for emotional intimacy and fulfilling exploration." McLaughlin seems to be pushing strongly against casual friendships, although she does acknowledge the defining freedom in friendship as opposed to marriage.

***"Friendship that will be an answer to loneliness will be friendship that is shaped by Jesus' sacrificial love, so that it is cross-shaped and sacrificial in nature."***

Angela Cook

The book starts by reminding us of the high call of Christian relationships, including friendship, and then reminds us that Christians are called to be a family. "Healthy Christian friendship grows on the trellis of Christian family love," McLaughlin writes. This idea of being spiritual brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers does come up again in Chapter 8, as McLaughlin argues for healthy expressions of male-female friendships. But, it doesn't really feel like the familial metaphor and the overlapping reality of friendships is explored fully or shown how it can work in practice. McLaughlin rather focusses on maintaining the sexual purity of friendships, and helpfully reflects on her own same-sex attraction when considering this topic.

Other chapters in the book reflect on the idea of purpose in Christian friendships as a place to encourage and spur each other on in faith and mission and how we might do that together. McLaughlin also

uses the work of C.S. Lewis and Dietrich Bonhoeffer on friendship. In his work *The Inner Ring*, Lewis exhorts Christians to look outward rather than inward in friendships, rather than chasing non-existent relational exclusivity. Bonhoeffer reminds us of the high value of friendship and the need to work hard on love and forgiveness to live together in peace.

The theological vision is strong and inspiring, but the book is not as practical or fulsome as I would like when addressing how to develop and care for different sorts of friendships in the busyness of life. For example, McLaughlin talks about walking once a week in the evening with a young mum friend. I feel like if I suggested evening walks with working parents of young children in my parish they would laugh (or yawn) in my face! There is a real challenge to keep investing in deep friendships as life's seasons change, geography, marital status, work. These can all be challenges to loving and being loved as friends and it can feel hard to ask people to sacrifice their time for the sake of friendship.

After reading this book I did find myself texting my friends more often, being more proactive to love them without asking for anything in return, and thinking about how I can love my friends as Christ loved me, not just for what they can give me in our friendship. It is a book that is an easy read, full of nice examples and analogies, and reminders of basic biblical truths about relationships. Perhaps its strongest contribution is an encouragement to love your friends and reach out with care, as Jesus our friend has done for us.

The Reverend Angela Cook is vicar of St As Merri-bek and Area Dean of Coburg.