

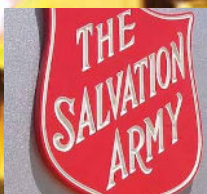
THE Melbourne Anglican

APRIL 2024, No 634

Hope to reach thousands in city's centre

Two new services at St Paul's Cathedral have launched on the same weekend, each aiming to connect with a need in the city centre. Gather at St Paul's aims to reach young people living in central Melbourne, many far from home, and desperate for meaning and belonging. Meanwhile, dozens of people attended the launch of a St Paul's ministry to Farsi and Turkish speakers, many from non-Christian or Muslim backgrounds.

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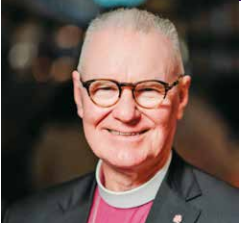
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A Sabbath principle remains important today

■ Archbishop Philip Freier

Hidden in plain sight in the 24 hour a day and seven day a week activity of our modern world is a truth that offers us deep wisdom.

The Jewish and Christian Scriptures speak of a foundational principle in Creation – that on the seventh day God rested. God looked and saw all that had been created and declared it good. God's rest was the capstone of the days of Creation so rest on the seventh day was ordered for his people. Disputes about the observance of this principle both within and between these religious traditions can easily obscure the value of the Sabbath principle to our world. While it is important for believers to make their own reckoning of God's claim on their lives and their time there is also something in this Sabbath principle that is of universal importance.

Synagogues and churches observe this Sabbath rhythm, a rhythm that is etched into the way we reckon time and count the days of the week. This was a pattern that was reflected in other related practices of ancient Israel, not just a Sabbath day but also a Sabbath year and, on the 50th year, the Year of Jubilee. At these anniversaries the people rested, the fields and vineyards rested and at the Year of Jubilee, the one that followed seven sevens of years, property rights were restored and the social

order recalibrated to the divinely ordered state of affairs. Obviously enough the people of antiquity had as much problem with these observances as we would if we take the utterances of the prophets Nehemiah and Jeremiah as evidence of their failure.

“The Sabbath principle asserts that six-sevenths is enough. Enough time to work, enough time to manage our affairs and most importantly, enough time for us to rest as God did.”

Why wouldn't the people of those ancient times, anxious about their crops and fields have struggled? For them and particularly for us these seem like preposterous claims. Not stopping with the assertion that enough is enough, the Sabbath principle asserts that six-sevenths is enough. Enough time to work, enough time to manage our affairs and most importantly, enough time for us to rest as God did. While the people of antiquity had a different understanding of the limits imposed on humanity we

often act is if there are none, or if there are, they are there to be broken. In agriculture we celebrate double and triple cropping and even push to achieve four crops a year. We have bred sheep to consistently birth twins and triplets. In this and many other endeavours, more and bigger are the watchwords. Investment products that exceed the market average, schools with extraordinarily good year 12 results or skyscraper apartment buildings, fit naturally into our expectation that limits are to be exceeded and transcended.

All of our constant activity has not made a more just society where all can thrive and participate. To the contrary, exclusion and loneliness seem to be at an all-time high. I hope that you can find time to pray this prayer for alignment to God's purposes:

*Almighty God,
you alone can bring order to the unruly
wills and passions of sinful humanity.
Give your people grace to love what you
command and desire what you promise,
so that in this changing world
our hearts may be fixed
where true joys are to be found.
Amen*

Philip Melbourne

THE Melbourne Anglican



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Balinese church leaders the Reverend Dr Ni Luh Suartini and the Reverend Wayan Mariasa.
Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

Trip sparks new ideas

Two Balinese church leaders have been encouraged to try new ideas for ministering to people in need after their visit to Melbourne. The Reverends Dr Ni Luh Suartini and Wayan Mariasa from Bali's Christian Protestant Church visited churches to learn about their work helping people with disabilities and those in need. Dr Suartini said it was important that churches worked together in following Jesus' call to be community role models and care for disadvantaged people. *Jenan Taylor*

Brian Rosner to finish role as Ridley College principal

■ **Elspeth Kernebone**

The Reverend Dr Brian Rosner has announced he will finish his role as principal of Ridley College at the end of 2024.

Dr Rosner said he decided to finish after much prayer and counsel, seeking God's wisdom for his future in the Kingdom of God and in serving God, speaking in a video on the Ridley College website.

The Ridley College board confirmed it had met to plan for the process of appointing its next principal, in a message on the college website.

Speaking in the video, Dr Rosner said he counted it an enormous privilege to have served as principal of Ridley College.

"My heart is full of gratitude for so many things," Dr Rosner said.

"For dedicated students and graduates, for excellent colleagues, for members of the board, for the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, our archbishop and bishops, for the encouragement of Peter Adam and Graham Cole, two previous principals, for our generous supporters, and for my wife Nat and our family, for coming along for what has been sometimes a pretty wild ride."

Dr Rosner said he would spend 2025 on research leave, and return in 2026 as a lecturer at the college, focussed on teaching, speaking and writing.

Dr Rosner has been principal of Ridley College since 2012.

Ridley College announced the news on its website with a message from board chair Seak-King Huang and acting principal the Reverend Dr Andrew Judd.

Ms Huang and Dr Judd said everyone had benefited from Dr Rosner's enthusiastic teaching and preaching, warm and collaborative style of leadership, world-leading biblical scholarship, and passion for promoting the gospel.

Ms Huang and Dr Judd urged people to pray that God would continue to provide for the college and help members conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel, that Dr Rosner would finish well as principal and serve God fruitfully in years to come, and for the board as it began its search for Ridley College's next principal.

No employment relationship between Salvation Army and dismissed officer

■ **Elsbeth Kernebone**

The Fair Work Commission has deemed there is no employment relationship between The Salvation Army and a former officer, dismissing his application for unfair dismissal relief.

Fair Work Commission deputy president Andrew Bell found there was no intention to create binding contractual relations between officer Peter Hobbs and The Salvation Army. Mr Bell said from this it followed Mr Hobbs' unfair dismissal application must be dismissed.

Mr Hobbs served as an officer for The Salvation Army between 2009 and 2023. He was dismissed from his role on 6 September 2023. He made an application to the Fair Work Commission for relief from unfair dismissal on 26 September 2023.

In 2007, Mr Hobbs signed a declaration accepting undertakings of an officer, that stated "I understand and agree that there is no contract of service or employment nor any other legal relationship between the Army and me", before he entered officer training. He signed a reaffirmation of these undertakings in 2009 before receiving his Officer's Commission.

Mr Bell found the parties did not intend to subject their agreement to the adjudica-

tion of secular courts. He said it followed that "there is no employment relationship between the parties".

Mr Hobbs submitted three reasons why there should be found to be an employment relationship, notwithstanding the terms of the 2007 undertaking. These were:

- That the 2007 undertaking purporting to disclaim any employment relationship is inconsistent with the reality of the arrangements between the parties.
- That even if an employment relationship did not arise upon his commissioning as an officer, it commenced once he started being paid.
- That the relationship between the parties reflected in the undertakings of the Officer's Covenant were concerned with the "spiritual" relationship between parties. It is stated "such a spiritual relationship can co-exist with an employment relationship."

The Salvation Army disputed that any dismissal was unfair. It also contended that Mr Hobbs was not an "employee", and therefore not a person capable of obtaining remedy for unfair dismissal under the Fair Work Act 2009.

Mr Bell said The Salvation Army's position was clearly reliant on the 2007 Undertakings, and what it described as the fundamentally "spiritual" relationship between the parties.

Mr Bell said the intention of the parties was expressly and unambiguously stated in the 2007 undertakings, and that intention disclaimed any employment. He said the objectively ascertainable subject matter of the agreement, the status of the parties to it, their relationship to one and other, and other surrounding circumstances all supported that agreement.

"Here, the Officership within The Salvation Army was a manifestly religious 'calling'. It was a calling for life, eschewing material gain and outside employment, among many other matters," Mr Bell said.

Mr Bell said The Salvation Army would provide Mr Hobbs' "basic needs" only. He said Mr Hobbs was not paid a wage or salary, nor did he have defined hours, but the fundamental relationship was that "an officer voluntarily undertakes to work for God, in Salvation Army service, without guaranteed financial provision of any kind." He said these factors were supportive of the intention expressed by the 2007 undertaking (as reaffirmed), which was to deny the existence of an employment relationship or adjudication of disputes in a secular court.

Mr Bell said Mr Hobbs gave express undertakings that disavowed any legal relationship between the parties.

Hopes to make Indigenous Anglicans safer in church

■ **Jenan Taylor**

A senior Aboriginal cleric hopes to make the Church a safer space for Indigenous Anglicans through a new Victoria-wide justice body he has been tasked to create.

The body will be made up of Indigenous Anglicans who will represent and promote the interests of First Nations church members.

The Reverend Canon Glenn Loughrey will lead the five-year Anglican Province of Victoria First Nations ministry, mission and justice project.

Canon Loughrey said the landmark body would ensure there were pathways for Indigenous people in the Church and that mission and ministry were conducted in culturally appropriate ways.

He said this was important as a gospel-related way of acting and giving

people permission to be who they were.

"The Church doesn't always feel safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be in. We want to be able to feel that wherever we go, and whatever part of the Church we're in, that we are recognised and accepted for who we are, not who we might become," Canon Loughrey said.

He said it would closely resemble the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council, and would comprise both Indigenous church leaders and lay ministers.

Reconciliation Action Group chair the Very Reverend Dr Andreas Loewe said Canon Loughrey's role was aimed at building a greater sense of understanding between First Nations Australians and the Church. Dr Loewe said it also aimed to create opportunities to foster Indigenous ministries in Victoria.

He said Melbourne synod members had pushed for some time for such a recognition of Indigenous Anglicans in Victoria.

Dr Loewe said the province created the role because many people in the church didn't want to wait anymore for recognition of Indigenous Anglicans in Victoria.

Bishop of Bendigo Matt Brain said the province believed the Church should heed what Indigenous people had asked of Australians if it was going to be part of a just and fair nation.

He said the province wanted the project to be a NATSIAC-endorsed, worked example of First Nations ownership and responsibility for ministry to the Anglican Church of Australia.

Bishop Brain said this was important because in time the national Church would consider how First Peoples were recognised within its constitution.

Homes for homeless a step closer

■ Jenan Taylor

A group of faith charities is closer to offering homes to people experiencing homelessness after agreeing to build an affordable housing project.

The Village will build long-term rental homes for people facing homelessness on land owned by Emmaus Christian Community, a group of South Croydon Anglican parishioners.

The charities want to enable people who would otherwise have no home to live well in affordable, long-term housing.

It comes as the Council to Homeless Persons declared in a 2024-25 state budget submission that homelessness in Victoria was at crisis point.

Project designers, homelessness shelter charity Stable One said the Village was part of the organisation's mission of offering care and God's love.

Managing director Jenny Willetts said the initiative used a supportive housing model that helped tenants who might be disconnected, lonely, or have physical and mental health needs settle in.

She said for the housing to be affordable, the rent would be at least 25 per cent below market value.

Under the model, Emmaus Christian Community will offer pastoral care and church connection, Habitat for Humanity will manage construction and maintenance, and Servants Community Housing tenancy referrals.

Ms Willetts said Stable One would coordinate the project, and provide "placemakers", or community development workers who lived onsite to help residents'



Emmaus Christian Community chair Bruce Bickerdike signs the agreement for The Village with Stable One, Servants Community Housing and Habitat for Humanity leaders. Picture: supplied

"It's not about creating huge developments, but rather little communities connected to a church."

Jenny Willetts

settle in and enhance their wellbeing.

She said a major challenge was funding, with Stable One needing to raise at least \$2.5 million.

Emmaus Christian Community chair the Venerable Bruce Bickerdike said the agreement allowed it to fulfil a long-held vision of developing affordable community housing.

Secretary Peter Latham said working with the other organisations would foster close connections between South Croydon Anglican and the wider community, through pastoral care provision at The Village.

He said Emmaus members believed it was important that the Church reach people in the community, irrespective of where they were.

Ms Willetts said Stable One hoped that the project would someday become a model for similar small-scale housing ventures.

"We want to be able to say here's a model that works, that we've tried and tested, and we'll support you with everything we've learned to help you do the same. It's not about creating huge developments, but rather little communities connected to a church," she said.

Victoria has the second highest homelessness rate in Australia according to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures from the 2021 Census.

The project is planned to build 10 homes for people experiencing homelessness.



The Village housing project architect impression.

Picture: supplied

One in six Diocesan, Assistant bishops a woman across Australian church

■ **Elsbeth Kernebone**

Leadership of the Anglican Church in Australia remains dominated by men, with just one in every six current Diocesan or Assistant bishops a woman.

Advocates for women's leadership say the ratios force questions about the systems and processes that have created the disparity.

It comes after March Workplace Gender Equality Agency Statistics showed women make up just 35% of those receiving the top quarter of salaries in the Australian workforce.

Eighteen of Australia's 23 dioceses do not have a woman in the role of Diocesan Bishop or Assistant Bishop, according to statistics drawn from diocesan websites on 8 March. Just one diocese, Perth, has only women in the roles of archbishop and Assistant Bishop.

Of the 36 Diocesan or Assistant bishops in Australia, 30 are men and six are women. Australia has one woman serving as archbishop, and four men.

Melbourne diocese Diversity and Inclusion Working Group chair Genieve Blackwell said the national gender ratios reinforced the picture of male dominance in the church, forcing questions around the systems and processes that created that outcome.

She said to improve gender ratios in national leadership, each diocese needed to include women meaningfully in the life of

the church, in a way that used their gifts.

In Melbourne, Bishop Blackwell said the working group hoped to collect diversity data that would tell a story about the situation and guide effective solutions.

Bishop Blackwell said the church in Melbourne could only be a compelling, outward-looking presence in its communities if it lived out its faith with integrity. That meant it needed to hear everyone's voices, remembering they were equal in the eyes of God.

"The parishioners, the congregations, represent a huge diversity of people, so surely the leadership should also represent a huge diversity of people."

Elaine Lindsay

Bishop Blackwell said the group hoped to see an equal representation of male and female vicars, and members of governing bodies, with at least 40 per cent representation of each gender.

The group hopes to collect data on gender balance and other aspects of diversity across spheres such as the year of discernment, selection conferences, curacies, paid employees, licence holders, leadership in governance bodies, wardens and parish nominators.

Bishop Blackwell said the data would influence recommendations to Archbishop in Council around systems, processes and reporting arrangements, to increase the proportion of clergy from diverse backgrounds in the Melbourne church.

Movement for the Ordination of Women president Elaine Lindsay said many members felt that women priests were not given all the opportunities afforded to male priests in the early days of their ministry.

She said many were posted to small parishes, received only part-time stipends, had fewer opportunities for further training, and were sidelines in decision-making.

Dr Lindsay said having women in leadership enriched decision-making in the church, and helped younger women to see there was a place for them in the church.

"If the church is the family of God, you've got to have everybody in there. The parishioners, the congregations, represent a huge diversity of people, so surely the leadership should also represent a huge diversity of people," Dr Lindsay said.

Dr Lindsay said her dream was to see an equal representation of women and men in leadership in the Anglican church in Australia.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency published data on the gender pay gap for every Australian employer with 100 or more employees in February.

The data relating to bishops in leadership includes only bishops in a Diocesan or Assistant bishop role in a diocese.



Melbourne ordinands in 2022.
Picture: Janine Eastgate



Callum Dawson, Amy Footson, Tom Footson and Scott Walker hope Gather at St Paul's will reach young people in Melbourne.

Picture: Elspeth Kernebone

Bringing belonging to city's young

■ Elspeth Kernebone

A new city-centre congregation has launched in Melbourne, aiming to connect with those among the thousands of young people living nearby.

Gather at St Paul's hopes to provide a family-like home for young adults in

Melbourne, where they can know their identity as God's children. Leaders hope to reach people desperate for meaning and belonging, many far from home.

St Paul's curate and church planter the Reverend Amy Footson said the congregation aimed to reach the thousands of university students and young adults living in

Melbourne's centre. Mrs Footson said St Paul's hoped to provide a home to these people, where they knew their identity as part of God's family, and could gather as a family to worship God.

Gather meets at St Paul's at 6pm on Sundays. More information is available at: cathedral.org.au/gather.

Farsi service to meet 'huge need' in inner Melbourne

■ Elspeth Kernebone

Nearly 85 people attended the launch of a new Farsi and Turkish-focussed ministry at St Paul's Cathedral, coinciding with the Persian new year.

The ministry will seek to reach students from Iran and Turkey living in the city centre, as well as ministering to travellers and others from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Ministry leader the Reverend Pedram Shirmast said the team hoped to help anyone who came to St Paul's feel accepted and welcomed among the Christian family at the diocese's mother church, whatever language or culture they came from.

"I would love to prepare this opportunity for people to come and engage or shape a Farsi or Turkish or multicultural group there. The vision is [that] it doesn't matter what language or background, we are all welcome to worship God in that language," Mr Shirmast said. "It's a huge need for ministry,

and we are just at the peak. I hope to see more people and more fruits in the future, all growing in the Lord's love and knowledge."

Mr Shirmast said the outreach was open to anyone from a non-English speaking background, but focussed on Farsi and Turkish speaking people. Farsi is the modern Persian language, spoken in Iran.

Mr Shirmast and his wife the Reverend Leili Shirmast will share leadership of the outreach, as curates at St Paul's in addition to their curacies at Deep Creek Anglican.

Mr Shirmast said he noticed that even during the busyness of study and work, many of the students from Iran and Turkey found time to rest in God and receive ministry at the cathedral. The ministry will run as a weekly Eucharist service on a Saturday, in Farsi and English. Mr and Mrs Shirmast will be at the cathedral all day each Saturday, to speak to visitors. They also hope to start small groups, and engage with Christianity Explored and Alpha courses.

Dean of Melbourne Andreas Loewe said they hoped to engage the many Farsi and Turkish speakers coming to the cathedral, a large group among visitors. He said the Farsi ministry was designed to be another avenue into the Kingdom of God, for people to know there was a place they could come to encounter Jesus and be built up. He said one third to a half of the new year celebration attendees were Christian, and the others were Muslim background or seekers.

Dr Loewe said he had found that Farsi speakers at St Paul's wanted nurturing in their own language. He said St Paul's hoped to focus on how it could use its beautiful space to be missional, particularly through training and sending.

"You start by coming in as a tourist, and you may end up leaving the cathedral as an ordained priest," he said.

St Paul's ministry to Farsi and Turkish speakers launched on 16 March, with a celebration of the Persian new year Nowruz.

Right to hire Christians vital: Schools

■ Elspeth Kernebone

Christian schools fear their existence would be threatened if the federal government adopted recommendations in a recent Australian Law Reform Commission report into religious educational institutions' right to discriminate.

Tabled in Parliament on Thursday, the report recommends the removal of sections of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* and the *Fair Work Act 2009* that allow religious schools to discriminate in employment in accordance with the doctrines of their religion.

Representative bodies say if adopted, the commission's recommendations would prevent Christian schools hiring staff that shared their belief, diluting schools' religious ethos.

Australian Association of Christian Schools executive officer Vanessa Cheng said the association was disappointed by the ALRC recommendations, as they removed protections for Christian schools allowing them to employ staff that shared their values and beliefs.

Mrs Cheng said the removal of section 38 of the *Sex Discrimination Act* – as recommended – without any additions or balancing clauses would remove protection for religious schools against claims of discrimination.

She said the removal of the right to discriminate threatened the existence of Christian schools, as it removed the point of difference for parents choosing these schools, which was staff's modelling of Christian values and beliefs.

Mrs Cheng said Christian schools did not want to expel students based on their sexuality, but did want to teach their beliefs and maintain their culture and ethos.

The Australian Law Reform Commission Report recommended the removal of section 38 of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* and the exclusion of religious educational institutions from certain exceptions contained in the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

Section 38 of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* provides for educational institutions to discriminate in connection with employment of a member of staff, or in the provision of education, in accordance with the doctrines or teachings of a particular religion, in good faith, to avoid injury to the religious susceptibilities of adherents of that religion.

The sections of the *Fair Work Act 2009* named contain exclusions for educational



Picture: iStock

“There is a kind of assumption here that religion is like a toxic substance that needs to be managed, quarantined or neutralised.”

Michael Bird

institutions to take certain actions in accordance with their doctrines, in good faith, and to avoid injury to the religious susceptibilities of adherents.

Ridley College deputy principal the Reverend Dr Michael Bird said if adopted, the recommendations would dilute school's religious ethos, as they might be required to employ people who did not adhere to their faith, values and religious tenets.

Dr Bird said the Law Reform Commissions seemed to be assuming a hierarchy of rights which put religious freedom at the bottom. But he said the erosion of one right could have a knock-on effect of weakening the overall structure of human rights protections.

He said the Law Reform Commission also appeared to treat the International Covenant of Human Rights' statements on religious freedom as something that needed to be sidetracked, bypassed or minimised in their legal application in Australia.

He said it would be fair to allow schools

to insist on a religious requirement for teaching faculty, and to require schools not to treat students with prejudice or punitive action because they identified as LGBTQIA+.

“There is a kind of assumption here that religion is like a toxic substance that needs to be managed, quarantined or neutralised,” Dr Bird said.

“I do find that there is an assumption that basically all people of faith have an inherent prejudice against all LGBTQIA+ people, and are simply incapable of living in difference.”

The ALRC report comes after Anthony Albanese promised before the 2022 federal election that a Labor government would protect teachers from discrimination at work, while maintaining the right of religious schools to preference people of their faith in the selection of staff.

Mr Albanese also promised to prevent discrimination against people of faith, and act to protect all students from discrimination on any grounds.

In a statement, Attorney General Mark Dreyfus said the government would continue to consider the advice to the government provided by the ALRC report.

Mr Dreyfus said no one should be discriminated against because of their faith.

He said no student or member of staff should be discriminated against because of who they were. And, he said, at the same time religious schools must continue to be able to build and maintain communities of faith.

Mr Dreyfus said the government would seek to enhance protections in anti-discrimination law in a way that brought people together.

The National Catholic Education Commission warned that the ALRC's recommendations to remove exemptions for religious educational institutions would severely limit faith-based schools' ability to operate and teach according to their ethos.

Executive director Jacinta Collins said religious freedom was a fundamental human right, and Parliament had a responsibility to make sure parents could continue to choose a school in line with their values and beliefs.

Ms Collins said Catholic education remained committed to advocating for legislative frameworks that respected the religious identity and mission of Catholic schools, while ensuring a fair balance with other protected rights.

Equality Australia and the Australian Law Reform Commission were approached for comment. The Office of the Attorney General declined to comment further.

Push to ban LGBTQIA+ ‘conversion’

■ Jenan Taylor

Advocates in Tasmania will push to have sexual orientation and gender identity conversion practices, including faith-based practices, banned to protect LGBTQIA+ people from harm.

Tasmania’s draft anti-conversion bill says it will ban harmful sexual orientation and gender identity conversion practices.

But LGBTQIA+ advocates and mental health professionals criticised the draft Tasmanian bill saying several exemptions provided opportunities for conversion practices to continue.

Opponents of the ban, including the Catholic archdiocese in Hobart, also rejected the draft legislation, saying it was unnecessary because there was no evidence conversion activities were happening in Tasmania.

The Liberal government introduced the proposed bill for public feedback in December.

Advocates said they would push government to redraft the legislation, speaking ahead of Tasmania’s March election.

The proposed bill defines conversion practices as actions that try to change or erase sexual orientation or gender identity.

It says support or guidance provided to a person by their family, or in religious or spiritual settings does not constitute a conversion practice.

LGBTQIA+ advocates said the draft needed to address the risks and harms caused by conversion activities similarly to Victoria’s strong anti-conversion laws.

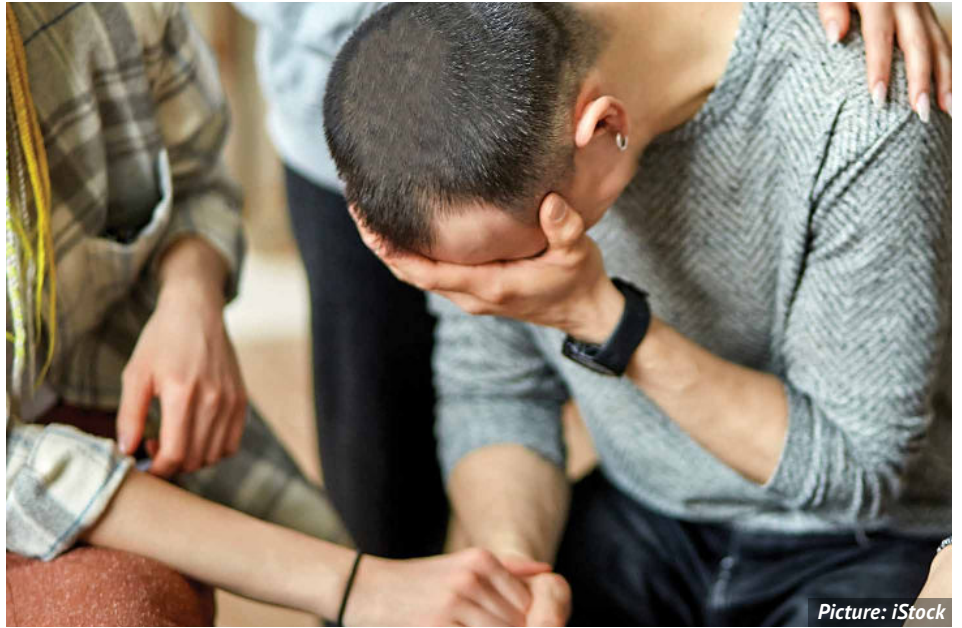
They wanted to see the bill ban unqualified people from assessing, diagnosing and treating LGBTQIA+ people as if they were broken or at fault.

Christian survivor of conversion practices Glen Worrell said he would push for an outright ban on all conversion practices from government, because he didn’t want others to go through what he had.

A former member of an Anglican church, Mr Worrell said he endured conversion practices there and in other groups in NSW and Tasmania for 21 years.

This included repeated prayer ministries and exorcisms at various church retreats and ministries, where he was told it was compulsory for Christians to be heterosexual or burn in hell.

Despite hoping they would help him change, the practices left him feeling increasingly depressed and scared because



Picture: iStock

“There are people who are no longer with us, because of the guilt and the shame that they couldn’t carry, because it didn’t work. And that is so sobering because I was nearly one of those statistics as well.”

Glen Worrell

they didn’t work, Mr Worrell said.

He said he was aware of many others who were similarly affected by conversion practices.

“There are people who are no longer with us, because of the guilt and the shame that they couldn’t carry, because it didn’t work. And that is so sobering because I was nearly one of those statistics as well,” Mr Worrell said.

He said there was a prayer group that was still active in conversion activities in Tasmania.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Hobart rejected the proposed legislation saying it was unnecessary and dangerous, because it was based on a lie about the human person and human sexuality.

The archdiocese said in a statement that despite the bill’s exemptions the proposal’s underpinning view was opposed to reality and to Catholic teaching on human sexuality.

The archdiocese said as far as it was

aware from public reporting, no complaints about coercive practices had been made to Tasmania’s police.

The Australian Christian Lobby and Christian Schools Australia also criticised the draft bill when it was released in December, saying it was legislation for a non-existent problem.

Advocacy group Equality Australia said it wanted stronger laws to stop people using Tasmania as a haven for conducting conversion practices.

Spokesperson Rodney Croome said he knew of people who were sent to the state for conversion practices because they were legal there, unlike in neighbouring states.

The University of Tasmania reported in 2021 that five per cent of LGBTQIA+ Tasmanians experienced conversion practices. It found many community members were worried about how religious organisations might influence their lives, and wanted the government to legislate against conversion practices.

Uniting Church of Victoria and Tasmania leader the Reverend Fiona Morrison said in a recent video the church supported banning conversion activities because they harmed people’s mental health and wellbeing.

Ms Morrison said as Christians the church believed everyone was a child of God and therefore believed in dignity for all.

The Anglican Bishop of Tasmania Richard Condie declined to comment until after the election.

If you or a loved one need support, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636. If life is in danger, phone Triple Zero (000).

Standing together will help those most vulnerable: Pacific church leader

■ Jenan Taylor

Australian faith communities have been urged to tackle inaction on climate change that is leaving Pacific Islanders more exposed to rising seas and natural disaster, by a Pacific leader.

Pacific Conference of Churches general secretary the Reverend James Bhagwan warned “carbon bombs” of coal, oil and gas projects in the region would devastate many in Pacific Island nations.

Leaders from a range of groups including the Uniting Church gathered to discuss faith and climate in the Pacific at a recent Edmund Rice Centre social justice webinar.

Mr Bhagwan called on participants to consider how to address the climate crisis and its effects on the region together. He said Christians were called to serve as caretakers of God’s unique creation and had a prophetic role to tackle the effects of climate change, including injustice.

He said about 80 per cent of the world’s population identified with a faith tradition, which presented a huge opportunity to mobilise to protect the planet.

Mr Bhagwan said climate change was the single most significant security threat facing Pacific Islanders even though they contributed less than one per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Despite this, hundreds of “carbon bombs” including coal, gas and oil projects were being rolled out in the region, including in Australia, to add to the problem.

“If we’re waiting for the end of days for Jesus to come and fix things, what about all the creatures suffering now? That is an excuse to not act. Our role is to deal with suffering now.”

James Bhagwan

Their effects could amount to physical, spiritual and economic death for many Pacific Island nations, Mr Bhagwan said.

In 2023 the Australian National University reported that the Pacific was one of the

areas most vulnerable to climate change. Its effects include food and water insecurity, and damage to health and wellbeing, including from climate-induced displacement.

Mr Bhagwan said standing together could help faith communities better support the most vulnerable communities and amplify the voices of those struggling populations at a regional and global level.

Mr Bhagwan said Indigenous Christian communities could also share their Pacific knowledge with other Indigenous communities so that there was collaboration in responding to the climate crisis.

Where churches engaged with those in power it was important they used those relationships to shift the conversation to one of care for struggling populations, and for the planet, he said.

Replying to a participant’s question about navigating some beliefs about leaving things to Jesus to take care of,

Mr Bhagwan said Christians shouldn’t wait.

“If we’re waiting for the end of days for Jesus to come and fix things, what about all the creatures suffering now? That is an excuse to not act. Our role is to deal with suffering now,” he said.





David Graham and other St Luke's Cockatoo food ministry volunteers provide free food and a warm smile.

Picture: Jenan Taylor

Hope vital as hunger hits more people

■ Jenan Taylor

A Dandenong Ranges' church foodbank is offering more people a listening ear and food aid, as cost-of-living pressures continue to cause stress.

Each week volunteers at St Luke's Cockatoo Food Store load its shelves with fresh fruit and vegetables, and pack fridges with meat, drinks and snacks. The food will be given for free to people who would otherwise struggle to afford it.

In the last year, the food store has experienced a near-50 per cent increase in the number of people seeking help.

Volunteers also encourage people experiencing hard times to sit and talk for a while.

Coordinator David Graham said he and his wife Julia ran the ministry that way because they believed it was what God wanted of them.

Mr Graham said in the last year the food store had a 48 per cent increase in the number of people looking for help.

He said a rising number seemed to be struggling with their mental and emotional

health because of increased living pressures.

"They have longer faces than normal and seem to need more cheering up. We've referred many to other counselling or financial services, but we've had some say that we're the first people they feel they can speak to," Mr Graham said.

"We do feel we're having a positive impact as an emotional support mechanism and neighbour."

David Graham

"We do feel we're having a positive impact as an emotional support mechanism and neighbour."

He said many people came to the ministry because they'd been turned away from other charities for not being on their books or not having a healthcare card.

Mr Graham said lately they had been

approached by householders who were fully employed but who struggled with food security because of the steep rise in their mortgage repayments.

In February Foodbank Australia said there was a record high demand for food relief across the country, driven by the cost-of-living crisis.

Chief executive Brianna Casey said in a statement that groups who had never before experienced food insecurity were being affected, such as young professionals and mid to high-income earners.

St Luke's congregation member Coral Belfrost said volunteering at the food store allowed her to give back to the community.

Ms Belfrost said it could be daunting for people to ask for help, and simply showing them a friendly face could make a difference.

She said she particularly enjoyed getting to know people's names and what was going on in their world.

"Sometimes you do hear about their problems, and if you say, 'Would it be okay if I prayed for you?' they're happy for you to do so," Ms Belfrost said.

'Keep praying for Ukraine's suffering'

■ **Elsbeth Kernebone**

Ukrainian Christians have urged Australians to keep praying for peace, as the Russian invasion of Ukraine enters its third year.

Australian Ukrainians say they are doing everything they can to help with the situation in Ukraine.

More than 10,000 Ukrainian civilians have died, and more than 10 million been displaced, since Russia's invasion in February 2022. At least two million homes have been damaged or destroyed.

St Peter and St Paul Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral parish priest Father Andriy Mykytyuk urged Australian Christians to keep praying for Ukrainian victory, and sharing truth about the situation in Ukraine.

Father Mykytyuk said many countries were tiring of news about Ukraine, despite the continuing war.

He said Ukrainians in Australia were trying to raise their voices, to share about the situation.

Father Mykytyuk said people were dying, including young people and children, and children were also being kidnapped.

He said Ukrainians in Australia were worried for their family members who were still in Ukraine.

Father Mykytyuk said he knew churches in the captive parts of Ukraine had been destroyed, and some priests arrested, but

didn't know what had happened to them. He said even churches outside the dangerous territory weren't safe, as they never knew when a missile would come from the sky.

But Father Mykytyuk said churches were still active, praying and helping people who had lost homes and belongings. He said Australians needed to keep praying, keep sharing the truth, and to stay attentive to the situation.

"War is still there, people are dying, children are dying."

Andriy Mykytyuk

"War is still there, people are dying, children are dying," he said. "It's not good, because in the 21st century in a democratic society, one country just decided to take another. All the values of the democratic society are broken. It's not good."

In December 2023, United Nations Human Rights high commissioner Volker Turk said his office's documentation indicated gross violations of international human rights law in Ukraine, and serious violations of international humanitarian law, primarily by Russian forces.

Anglican Overseas Aid disaster response and resilience coordinator Tim Hartley said on the ground responders were balancing

the needs of the ongoing humanitarian crisis with integration of those who had been displaced for a longer term into host communities.

AOA's partner Lutheran World Federation is providing shelter and psychosocial support in front-line Kharkiv, such as community heating centres, building reconstruction, and psychological first aid.

Mr Hartley said access to shelter, relief and counselling helped people stay in their home in Kharkiv. He urged people in Melbourne to continue providing material support, and supporting political leaders who wanted to help Ukraine.

The Anglican Diocese in Europe published a prayer from Christ Church Kyiv warden Christina Laschenko on its website, as it commemorated the second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February.

Ms Laschenko asked for prayers for peace, for those who had fled their homes, and those unable to leave their homes. She prayed for civilians who had suffered and would suffer, from war, or the consequences of war.

"We pray for the victory of truth, rightness, justice, mercy and peace. Confirm what is founded on truth, and establish your love in our hearts: that justice may abound on the Earth, and all peoples rejoice in your peace," she said.





Millions of internally displaced people in war-torn Sudan need food and shelter.

Picture: supplied.

Millions need urgent help in Sudan war

■ Jenan Taylor

More people in Sudan need life-saving relief from hunger, disease and gender-based violence as its war continues, faith and humanitarian groups say.

More than 13,000 thousand people have been killed and millions have fled their homes since the conflict broke out in Sudan in April 2023.

Anglican churches in Sudan said they were grappling with how to support the growing numbers of people in need.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs urged the United Nations in March to sound the alarm that the conflict could spark the world's largest hunger crisis.

Human rights and emergency relief groups also warned the war was fuelling gender and sexual-based violence, and disease.

The Anglican Diocese of Kadugli in the Nuba Mountains said thousands of internally displaced people were struggling to access humanitarian relief because there were few aid groups on the ground.

Bishop Andudu Elnail said in a recent video the political instability and conflict in the country had driven out many humanitarian and media organisations.

Bishop Elnail said this made it difficult for the outside world to know what was

going on, and that many people were dying in the silence.

He said the diocese located in the Nuba Mountains had helped some of the 300,000 internally displaced people who fled to the area in November 2023.

Bishop Elnail said through Anglican Aid they were able to provide them with sorghum, mosquito nets, medicine and other aid.

But he said a further 121 refugees had recently arrived in the mountains looking for food and shelter, and the church now had to choose who most needed the help.

Bishop Elnail said it was critical they received proper shelter as many would die from disease and lack of sanitary conditions with May's rainy season approaching.

He said they most needed food, plastic sheets and blankets, medicine and safe drinking water.

Caritas Australia said last year a partner in South Sudan reported more than 4000 refugees a day arriving at a transit camp. About 90 per cent were women and girls.

Humanitarian Emergencies lead Sally Thomas said the rates of gender-based violence and sexual violence were particularly disturbing. She said in the six months after conflict erupted 4.2 million people in Sudan needed gender-based violence services.

She said that number was expected to increase to more than six million in 2024.

Ms Thomas said Caritas Australia was supporting its partners there to distribute aid for internally displaced people, including food and gender-based violence protection.

Anglican Aid said its partner in South Sudan was able to get emergency aid to beneficiaries through a network of safe passages. But chief executive Tim Swan said despite petitions from many external parties and months of violence, there had been little meaningful progress towards peace.

Africa based human rights NGO DefendDefenders reported in January that the conflict was unlikely to end soon because of the absence of diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire.

Human Rights Watch said in March it wanted the United Nations Security Council to take immediate action including sanctioning people who obstructed aid access in Sudan.

In December the Australian government pledged \$10 million in humanitarian assistance to Sudan and neighbouring countries for protection and help for displaced people.

To donate to the Diocese of Kadugli, Nuba Mountains, via Anglican Aid visit: anglicanaid.org.au/projects/sudanese-idp-relief-nuba-mountains.

To donate to the work of Caritas Australia's partners in Sudan, visit: caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/sudan-crisis.



The Reverends Graeme Vines, Edwin Rami and Maree Vines.

Picture: supplied

St Alfred's overjoyed to meet partner

■ Maree Vines

Former CMS missionary Wendy O'Brian was delighted to meet a former student recently, the Reverend Edwin Rami, whom she taught at the Northern Territory's Numbulwar Primary School. Mrs O'Brian saw Mr Rami during CMS Victoria's annual conference, during a recent visit to Melbourne.

Mr Rami, ordained in 2023, is now the minister at the Church of the Holy Spirit at Numbulwar. He was in Melbourne as part of his ongoing professional development. At Numbulwar, Mr Rami works alongside St Alfred's link missionaries Josh and Steph Mackenzie.

During his stay Mr Rami attended St Alfred's Sunday services, and on the second week read one of the lessons in Wuboy, the original language spoken at Numbulwar. He shared his desire to reach out to the young people and to teach them how to read the Bible. He was particularly interested in the all-age liturgy for communion at St Alfred's for this reason. With the Reverend Ben Clements who celebrated that day, Mr Rami spoke about the value of using words that everyday people understand to explain Christian ideas and practices. It highlighted the importance of Bible translation into Indigenous languages

and the challenge of ministering in a multilingual community.

Another priority Mr Rami shared was the need to train up leaders for ministry in the church. In particular, he is working to empower people to contribute to the Sunday service with public speaking roles.

Mr Rami was also able to share both his vision and the challenges of ministry in a remote community with the St Alfred's Cross Cultural Prayer Group and the Reconciliation Group.

It was positive to see how St Alfred's support of Josh and Steph Mackenzie is contributing to Mr Rami's mission, and the building up of the church at Numbulwar. We now have a much more informed idea of how to pray for this work. It is hoped that a group of people from St Alfred's may be able to make a return visit to Numbulwar. Mr Rami's visit was the start of building relationships between our two churches and becoming partners in the gospel.

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, Philippians 1:3-5 NIV

The Reverend Maree Vines is a former CMS missionary and congregation member at St Alfred's Blackburn North.

Vicar to aid connections across cultures

■ Jenan Taylor

A Melbourne vicar hopes to bring attention to the loneliness and isolation many international students experience in a new volunteer multicultural advisory role.

St Dunstan's Camberwell vicar the Reverend Jobby John has been invited to encourage better cross-cultural understanding and friendship among diverse communities by the Southern Metropolitan Advisory Council.

Advisors aim to share the concerns of people from a variety of backgrounds with the council.

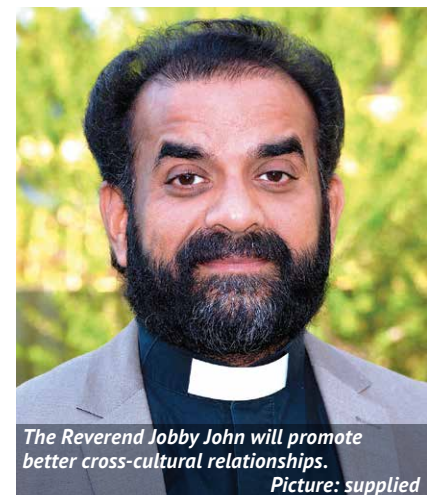
Mr John said as an immigrant it was important for him be able to amplify some of the concerns of a range of people from different contexts.

He said he was in regular contact with multicultural groups through his work in churches and education settings, in particular international students.

Mr John said, for instance, people from the Indian community often told him they struggled with loneliness, faced racial discrimination, and needed help adapting to the cultural changes in Australia.

Parish warden Maxine Farrar said Mr John brought a real heart and gentleness to his dealings with people.

She said he actively supported different congregations and would find a way of reaching church members who were more comfortable speaking other languages, including conducting services they would understand.



The Reverend Jobby John will promote better cross-cultural relationships.

Picture: supplied

We must pick up our dreams to create a safer world

■ Penny Mulvey

Do you remember what you dreamed for yourself as a child? Pause and think for a moment. Perhaps you dreamed of being the Prime Minister. Maybe a world-renowned ballerina. Or a fireman.

Attending a Micah Women's Leadership Dinner in Blackburn last week, our guest speaker, global women's rights advocate, Asuntha Charles, spoke about the power of dreams.

Asuntha has spent the last 25 years advocating for children's rights in Afghanistan, Philippines, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Bangladesh, and wherever she goes, she asks children about their dreams.

When Asuntha posed her question to a group of children in Afghanistan, "What are your dreams for when you grow up?" one girl stood up and boldly said to those gathered, "I want to be the first woman president of Afghanistan."

"I will make sure there is enough to eat and my country develops."

Asuntha told the gathering of more than 80 women, that she wanted to take up this young girl's dream.

She told us that the world had failed in responding to the difficulties in Gaza. Asuntha feels personally responsible for every child who has died.

"What else can we do?" she cried



Women at the Micah Women's Leadership Dinner.

Picture: Penny Mulvey

from deep in her heart. "What creative solutions can we find?"

A voice popped up out of the gathering, "How do you keep your hope alive?"

A great question.

"Stories I hear from children," was Asuntha's response. "They are still hopeful, even in conflict areas. When they have so much hope, how can I lose hope?"

Micah Australia executive director the Reverend Tim Costello reminded the gathering that the very first words in the Bible, "God spoke..." remind us that God is an advocate.

Micah Australia has launched *Safer World for All*, an advocacy campaign the

organisation plans to run over the next three years.

Mr Costello spoke of a polycrisis, the period the world is now in. COVID-19, spiraling debt, rising inequality, cost-of-living crisis, climate crisis – these all make up this polycrisis. These individually serious issues, together threaten to derail the hard-earned progress to improve the lives of millions in the world.

Dreaming for a better future will not happen without specific prayer and specific action. Asuntha Charles reminded us to pick up our dreams. How about you find yours and contribute to a Safer World for All.

Celebrating 96 years, 72 ordained

■ Graham Thurley

Along with marking his 96th birthday on Sunday 25 February among family friends and the congregation of St George's Red Hill, the Reverend Peter Prentice celebrated 72 years since his ordination as a priest.

After training at Ridley College, Peter spent five years as curate at Warrnambool, time in the Parish of Merino and in the Diocese of Wangaratta. He later worked for the General Board of Religious Education. Peter was chaplain at Trinity Grammar for 10 years, and for 11 at Camberwell Grammar. In 1987, Peter moved to the Mornington Peninsula and became associate priest in Sorrento-Rye. He then had time at Painesville, running a milk distribution business, and being available for locum work at Sale Cathedral and other Gippsland parishes. It came as a surprise to

some parishioners to see Pete the Milkman in vestments, but his warm and generous nature was always welcome. He then moved back to the Mornington Peninsula, most recently worshipping at St George's Red Hill. Again defying the urge to retire he was involved in relief and locum stints in parishes around Melbourne. Into his 90s Peter has continued pastoral care connections with people through visits to people who are housebound and in residential aged care. As he enters his 97th year Peter celebrates the connections he has made through his ministries, and in the community. Having been blessed by vicar, the Reverend Fiona Goy, Peter gave the blessing as we concluded worship. Well done good and faithful servant.

The Reverend Graham Thurley knows the Reverend Peter Prentice through their shared past membership from St Peter's Mornington.

From the editor



Light shines on our front cover. In it, we see the light St Paul's Cathedral is bringing to two communities in Melbourne who need it: Farsi speakers and young people (P7). This light of hope shines throughout the edition. We read about a church building homes for people in crisis (P5), how church planting can bring light to Melbourne (P17), and how the Diocese of Central Queensland brings light to a dark place (P22). Our reviews consider how grandparents can share Jesus' light (P24), and how the Church can do the same (P23). Darkness is also clearly present. Millions are suffering in Ukraine, in Sudan and in Gaza (P12-13, 16). It's a contrast the Reverend Professor Mark Lindsay speaks into, asking how we can rejoice in the light of Christ's resurrection, while surrounded by the world's darkness (P18-19).

Elspeth Kernebone, editor

Can light break through in Gaza?

■ **Tim Budge**

It started off light-hearted, almost like a reunion. Forty rag-tag pilgrims with different signs, Palestinian flags and lots of familiar faces, people who have walked for social justice for a long time. It was also a great idea: to walk up to 40 kilometres, marking the distance from the north to the south of Gaza, on Ash Wednesday.

As we walked through the northern suburbs, there were lots of encouraging toots from cars and positive comments from passersby and shopkeepers.

At Thomastown, we stopped at the war memorial and took part in a moving liturgy, recognising that allied troops fought and died in Palestine. It felt restorative.

All Saints Anglican church in Preston welcomed us in, gave us coffee and food, and anointed foreheads with ashes. Outside the Aboriginal Advancement League in Thornbury, we sat on the grass, sang songs, and were reminded of how dispossession and colonialism rob people of land, lives and hope. The mood was becoming more sombre.

At the Saint George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral, we gathered to hear a young Palestinian woman give a personal insight into the complexities of being a Palestinian.

Then we heard stories from Christians in Gaza, of houses bombed, of 300 people living for weeks at the Church of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza City, which then itself was bombed.

The story seemed bleak and hopeless, because life there has only become worse since those words were written.

I was reminded that visiting that church in 2018, I'd marvelled at its history and noted Gazans' pride in this place of worship. Some 1600 years after its establishment, parts of it have collapsed under Israeli Defence Force attacks, as has most of Gaza Strip.

I was reminded of Gazan friends, people whose homes I had visited. I have not heard from those friends since October. Nor have I heard of others: patients, staff and volunteers at the al-Ahli Anglican Hospital who helped with my research.

Into that silence I have inserted images of bombed houses and apartments, of killed and injured family members, of displacement, of hunger and fear. Probably, many of my friends were forced to walk from Gaza City to Rafah to escape the first wave of destruction. And still they wait and try to escape the next, inevitable wave of bombs.

I was reminded deeply of abandonment, of how our government, much of the worldwide church, and so much of public opinion has

abandoned the people of Gaza. In any other country and conflict, the language would not be so careful, or accommodating of an aggressive military force. Somehow, Gazans, including my friends, have brought this on themselves.

With grief, I was reminded of the Garden of Gethsemane: abandonment, betrayal, aloneness, and the spectre of death looming.

Where does light and freedom appear in all of this? I am not sure.

Somehow, it broke through in the Easter story. Will it also happen in Gaza? Are we ready for it? Does our sense of our own place in the world allow for solidarity, for prayer, action and hope? Do we have the courage to see this conflict as the possibility of a breaking open, in the same vein as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the sudden release of Nelson Mandela, the courage of Rosa Parks tipping the balance for Civil Rights in the USA?

This is our moment to align with the arc of justice, but only if we have the courage to refuse the abandonment of the people of Palestine, to embrace solidarity and to see the possibility of the light of the gospel story in the Holy Land in the 2020s.

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

Vacant Appointments as of 20 March 2024:

St Agnes, Black Rock; Christ Church, Brunswick; St Michael, North Carlton; St John, Camberwell; St Philip, Collingwood; Redemption Church, Craigieburn; Parish of Gisborne; St Oswald's, Glen Iris; St Thomas, Langwarrin with St Peter's, Pearcedale [from May 2024]; Parish of Mornington-Mt Martha; St Aidan Noble Park; Ormond Anglican Parish; St Aidan, Parkdale; Pascoe Vale-Oak Park; Mullum Mullum, Ringwood; St Luke, Vermont; St John, Wantirna South; St Thomas, Winchelsea

Appointments:

BHONSLE, The Revd Prashant, appointed Parish Minister, Anglican Parish of Hume, effective 19 March 2024
CHIA, The Revd Fiona, appointed Parish Minister and School Chaplain, Christ Church, South Yarra and Christ Church Grammar School, effective 10 March 2024
KOREN, The Revd Robert Zvonko, appointed Area Dean Extension, Area Deanery of Hume, effective 18 March 2024
LOHMEYER-COLLINS, The Revd Philippa, appointed Parish Minister as Canon Pastor, St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, effective 21 April 2024
MAURACHER, The Revd Claudia, appointed Area Dean, Area Deanery of Frankston/Kingston, effective 31 March 2024
NEWMARCH, The Revd Caroline [Ruth], appointed Area Dean, Area Deanery of Waverly, effective 28 February 2024
SHIRMAST, The Revd Leili, appointed Assistant Curate, St Paul Cathedral, Melbourne, effective 13 March 2024
SHIRMAST, The Revd Pedram, appointed Assistant Curate, St Paul Cathedral, Melbourne, effective 13 March 2024
SNIBSON, The Revd Joel David, appointed Parish Minister [from Assistant Curate], St John, Diamond Creek, effective 13 March 2024
TUN KIN, The Revd Moe Win, appointed Vicar [from Priest-in-Charged] St Stephen's Karen Authorised Anglican Congregation, effective 21 April 2024

Permission to Officiate:

CAPPER, The Revd Dr John Mark, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 18 March 2024
OLLINGTON, The Revd Bruce Rodney, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 18 March 2024
PEDERSEN, The Revd Kevin John, appointed Permission to Officiate within the Diocese of Melbourne, effective 5 May 2024

Resignations:

CHEUNG, The Revd Jessica, Parish Minister, St James, Ivanhoe, effective 28 April 2024
JOUSTRA, The Revd Jan, Area Dean, Deanery of Melbourne, effective 1 April 2024

March 2024 Clergy Moves Corrections – Apologies to:

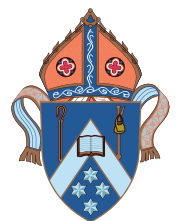
Resignation:

FURPHY, The Venerable Jennifer, Vicar, St Agnes, Black Rock effective 17 March 2024 and Archdeacon, Archdeaconry of Dandenong, effective 31 March 2024
LOUGHREY, The Revd Cannon Glenn William, Vicar, St Oswald's, Glen Iris, effective 31 March 2024

Ordination to the Diaconate:

GREENHAM HANCOCK, Cara Rhiannon, Assistant Curate, St Stephen and St Mary, Mount Waverley, effective 10 February 2024

Clergy Moves



Church planting is pivotal to our future. Here's how it can flourish



Picture: iStock

■ Bree Mills

In today's rapidly evolving society, the Anglican Church continues to shine as a beacon of faith, tradition, and community. However, the growing reality is that fewer and fewer people are stepping through the doors of our churches.

Addressing this requires an intentionally prayerful, strategic, and collaborative effort. Here, I believe, church planting and revitalisation will play a pivotal role. At the very least, the journey ahead will demand three things from us.

A fresh posture

Our fundamental message of God's love and the gospel of Jesus Christ remains unchanged, as does our reliance on God's leading and empowering, but our mindset and posture as Anglican churches must change. In post-Christendom Australia, we must transition from the posture of a traditionally influential church to adopt a missionary stance, actively engaging with our communities and demonstrating the gospel's relevance to their lives. The witness of our churches, and our ability to love our communities will be the measure of our influence and respect in Australian culture.

In this changing culture, collaboration, not competition, will be key to seeing our diocese flourish. Not every church is able to plant a new church, congregation, or local ministry expression, but every church can pray for these and learn from them. Church plants, which often serve as incubators for new ideas, can benefit the entire diocese as they share their learnings. Existing churches have wisdom of years to offer, as well as the

structures to support innovation. With all the external challenges we may face as a church from our changing culture, we need to be working collaboratively together, united even in our diversity.

Embracing diversity

The Diocese of Melbourne has witnessed a growing variety of church planting models over recent years, from neighbourhood and resource churches, to micro churches. This "mixed economy" of planting approaches, advocated by former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams, enriches our missional capability to *make the word of God fully known* in Melbourne. Such diversity will be necessary moving forward, not replacing the parish church, but rather enhancing its ability to fulfil its missional purpose.

Not only will we need a diversity of models, but we will need them in a diversity of locations for church planting. In Melbourne planting into the growth corridors is a high priority. The *Victoria in Future* project suggest an extra 845,000 people are expected to live in the cities of Wyndham, Melton, Hume, Whittlesea, Casey, and Cardinia by 2036. Yet, we also acknowledge the need for church planting among migrant communities, with a view to longevity for future generations. And, we recognise the need for urban infill planting and revitalisation of older parishes whose local demographics have changed significantly over the years. Strategic, varied efforts will be necessary to meet the needs of a changing demographic landscape.

Cultivating leadership

A crucial component of our strategy is the development of future leaders, providing

them the opportunity to test their calling and exercise their gifts. While this may take some time to develop in its fullness, it is heartening to see the increased ethnic diversity in our planters, and more women planting churches. Of course, as we see increasingly diverse people offering themselves for planting and revitalisation opportunities, our training pathways and programs will need to diversify to adequately support and equip such leaders. We have put a team of experienced church leaders and church planters together to help us respond to this challenge and will share more of this in due course.

Moving forward

Finally, I want to encourage you to pray for our church planting and revitalisation efforts. You can get regular updates by joining the Plant Anglican Melbourne Facebook group, including information on prayer nights planned for coming months. For those interested in church planting or seeking help with revitalisation, I want to encourage you to reach out and open a conversation using the details below.

As I have journeyed around the diocese meeting leaders I have been encouraged by their hope, their passion to see Jesus known across Melbourne, and their willingness to work together to see the whole diocese flourish. There is a sense of movement, energy, and a deep trust that God is at work. So, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." (Hebrews 10:23)

The Reverend Bree Mills is Canon for Church Planting in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

Our proper Easter feasting is a service to

■ Mark R. Lindsay

This year, the entire month of April falls within Eastertide, that period of 50 days that stretches from the Easter Day feast of our Lord's resurrection, to the exuberant joy of Pentecost. If the whole of March this year was devoted to Lenten solemnity, then the whole of April is devoted to feasting, not fasting. Indeed, Tertullian – that wonderfully enigmatic Christian apologist of the late second century – insisted that fasting, and even kneeling in worship, were to be expressly forbidden for the entire period between Easter and Pentecost, such was his devotion to the celebratory nature of the season. Slightly more than a century later, Athanasius of Alexandria echoed Tertullian's injunction, urging Christians to “rejoice and be glad” for the entire “seven weeks [from Easter] to Pentecost”.

Such indeed may be wise and appropriate counsel. As the *Gloria* rings out again during the Easter Vigil – sung for the first time since the start of Lent – it heralds the joyful proclamation of the resurrection, and ushers us into a time of grateful celebration. Why would we want to deprive ourselves of such a season, or foreshorten it by even a day? What more counter-cultural thing can we as Christians do than to celebrate and rejoice in the risen Christ in spite of all that surrounds us in the world? What greater expression of our scandalously foolish faith, as St Paul would have it, than to refuse the culture of death and suffering that is so daily and visibly evident?

And yet, in doing so, do we not also run

the risk of relishing in a certain cognitive dissonance?

By feasting and rejoicing in the light of Christ's resurrection, but equally in the shadow of our contemporary tragedies, do we risk appearing hopelessly out of touch with the world in which we live? As Canadian theologian Philip Ziegler has recently reminded us, the extent of present-day evil and suffering is such that it could be plausibly (though not Christianly)

“What more counter-cultural thing can we as Christians do, than to celebrate and rejoice in the risen Christ in spite of all that surrounds us in the world?”

surmised that God has abandoned the world, and left it in Satan's power. Poet David Adams Richards has similarly noted that, if we are honest about our past, we must admit that we live “in a world where evil sparkles”. We recognise unimaginable suffering – one thinks of Gaza, but also of Kiev and Haiti, as well as the non-human earthly life that is being daily suffocated to extinction through humanity's over-consumption of the world's resources. So, does it not seem dissonant to spend seven weeks in a festive celebration of life's triumph over death? Might our “foolish faith” be viewed not merely as risible, but as recklessly

callous – indifferent, even, to the plight of our time?

This, of course, is neither a new phenomenon, nor a new risk. Christians throughout the centuries have routinely been criticised for so gazing on the heavenly hereafter that we are assumed to be wilfully ignorant – or worse, dismissive – of the troubles of this world. Taking seriously those scriptural commands to set our minds on heavenly things (Colossians 3), we have been frequently judged for not caring sufficiently about earthly things. And to our shame, the accusations have not always been misplaced. Surely this is not the sort of celebratory feasting that Eastertide enjoys? Surely, if our Christian hope in life after death refuses the reality of the death out of which our new life emerges, it is not really a Christian hope?

Perhaps we might turn again to Athanasius for assistance. For in the very festal letters in which he urges his readers to “keep the great [Easter] feast” for those full seven weeks, he also admonishes them to “remember the poor, and show kindness to strangers”. Indeed, throughout the Easter letters that Athanasius wrote over the 45 years of his episcopacy, there is an acknowledgment of pain and suffering, trial and trauma, that afflicts both Christian and non-Christian alike. To put it otherwise, his is not a resurrection faith that feasts and rejoices in a present reality of vanquished evil. It is not a resurrection faith that turns a blind eye to the ever-present tragedies that beset our lives, as though our Easter celebrations desensitise us to, or inoculate us against, those sufferings. On the contrary,

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:
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the soul



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it is a resurrection faith that acknowledges that our hope in evil's defeat is eschatological, not contemporarily historical. Never doubting Christ's triumph, nor does Athanasius presume a sudden disappearance of tragedy and trauma.

Rather, he calls us to "keep the feast" in a way that is appropriate to the truth of what we remember and live by. Unlike those who think that feasting "is in the abundance of food" Athanasius reminds us that our proper Easter feasting is "a service of the soul", in which we "persevere in virtuous conduct, repenting as is our duty, of all that [and who] we have neglected..."

There is a sombre recognition in Athanasius's Easter letters that our Eastertide joy at Christ's resurrection – and our consequent joy that we now also live in and through his risen life – is not a denial of this present world, but a deep commitment to it, in all of its pain and suffering. As the German Lutheran martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, 1600 years after Athanasius, "In the resurrection, we acknowledge that God has not given up on the earth but has personally won it back... Thus, those who affirm the resurrection of Christ in faith can no longer flee the world..."

Our Eastertide feast is indeed and rightly should be a time of celebration and joy. But it is so as a deep and holy embedding of ourselves in the painful realities of this present world, and not as a cognitively dissonant indifference to them. Only when our celebration of Christ's resurrection from death takes as seriously the death as it does the new life, is it really a Christian hope, and a Christian celebration.

The Reverend Professor Mark R. Lindsay is Joan Munro Professor of Historical Theology and deputy and academic dean at Trinity College Theological School.



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We can make sense of the intersection

A divine instruction in Jeremiah 6 is to, “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths ...”. Early Christian history is full of enriching insights, yet most of us know very little of these ancient times.

In this article, Doru Costache, Research Director at ISCAST: Christianity and Science in Conversation, explains a helpful model from the “ancients” that contemplatively brings together the knowledge of science and the wisdom of faith.

■ Doru Costache

If there is something representative of modern ways of thinking, it is compartmentalisation.

Compartmentalisation tries to understand something by breaking it into pieces, without concern for, or sensitivity towards, the whole. It misses the forest for the trees. We count the trees, but fail to see the forest as something more than the individual trees. And, at the practical level, it is compartmentalisation that sadly leads us to cut down real trees to “develop” the land, without realising that we work towards our own extinction – not only that of the iconic koalas. Aside from forests, though, the impact of this trait is far reaching, ranging from personal worldviews, to academic standards, economics and politics.

Faith, science, and the plight of nature

The signs of this way of thinking are frequently visible, but I wish to highlight a particular aspect: the inability to bridge different thought worlds. A case in point is where people, even many Christians, commonly believe that the worlds of faith and science exclude one another and cannot be made into a “whole”.

Less obvious situations betray the same compartmentalising mindset. For instance, some Christians juggle their belief in the doctrine of creation with an indifference to the destructive exploitation of nature. The dots are not connected: nature and creation

are somehow separate, not made a whole.

Since this separation of thought worlds can prove unhelpful, Christians could learn wisdom from history. Here is one lesson.

An early Christian model

Clement of Alexandria, who died about 215AD, was a Christian philosopher, an interpreter of Scripture, a priest, and a teacher. He encouraged his students to think differently about reality by keeping all things together. Knowing that all things are called to unity (Colossians 1:17; Ephesians 2:14), he devised a contemplative method that emphasises the commonality of things, beyond their distinctiveness. The trees and the forest, so to speak. The following account summarises various passages from Clement’s *Miscellanies*.

Clement’s method progresses through three steps. First, it begins with the believers gathering sound scientific information about the objects under consideration. Then, after learning whatever they can, they interpret the findings from the viewpoint of faith, by referring to scriptural passages or the congregation’s worship, for example. Third, with God’s grace and depending on their purity of life, they advance towards a divine – Christlike – insight. Conversion enables them to think like Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5) and, under Christ’s guidance, they advance to a comprehensive view of reality, beyond analysis. This last part of the method is tough and where my

competence fails. But the first two steps come easily after a while.

How does it work?

Let’s take an example: the harmony of the ecosystem, God’s creation. Environmental sciences tell us that cooperation is the way nature works. In ecosystems all things do their bit for the good of all things and do so together. What matters is that the rule of life is not the *zero-sum* game of loss, irrational competition, senseless killings, and the survival of the fittest. A careless eye sees only competition, conflict, and violence in nature, but the contemporary sciences bring to the fore its harmony and balance – cooperation, not competition.

Clement reached similar conclusions by deploying scientific tools from Aristotelian physics, Galen’s medical research, and the Ptolemaic astronomy that emerged during his lifetime. He found that the universe’s parts, although different, are connected to one another.

The second step requires interpreting nature’s beauty and harmony from the viewpoint of faith, leading believers to understanding, enrichment of life, and the correction of errors. To that end, Clement uses such aspects of faith as the congregation’s choir and hymns as analogues of nature’s harmony. Here, the congregation’s song requires the singers to follow the choirmaster, to pick up the tune, and to be mindful of the whole choir. The same goes for nature, which “sings its song” under the choirmaster’s direction, with the participation of all, and for the benefit of all.

In the same way, we can interpret the current scientific description of the world. We can express the harmony of the environment by referring to Psalm 19:1-4 or by comparing it to the fellowship of believers. Thus, in nature all things work as

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of science and faith



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the members of a choir do, and they reach wholeness under the direction of the divine choirmaster. As well, all things in nature hold together as we, Christians, unite in fellowship. Likewise, the Christian “choir” should be like nature, where all things cooperate for the life of all. In so doing, we learn from nature, God’s creation, and we deepen our appreciation for it.

Clement’s first two steps bridge the worlds of science and faith, doing so effortlessly and with great profit. His method is not about asserting the superiority of faith over science or of science over faith. It is about establishing the competence of both and acting upon this realisation. Science analyses: counting the trees and describing them. Faith synthesises: interpreting the trees as part of the forest.

Concluding thoughts

The final step of the method – achieving divine insight – exceeds my pay grade. To see divinely, according to Clement, means being in God’s proximity – closer to God than I have yet arrived. Nevertheless, Clement speaks of mature believers who have a sort of prophetic insight. As he describes them, people who know what and how things “are, will be, and have been” – a knowledge somehow rooted in divinity, beyond the human mind. This sounds incredible, but I take him seriously. Other Christian writings support this possibility. For example, during an ecstatic experience, the Irish bishop St Columba perceived the whole cosmos “unified as a single ray of the sun” – an insight or experience that goes beyond analysis and interpretation.

Clement’s view of reality, divine and insightful, can enable us to transcend the culture of compartmentalisation and, until we attain the divine insight of the third level, we take comfort in practising the first two steps of the method, making sense of things at the crossroad of faith and science. As well, by embodying our faith in a corresponding way of life, we might offer a chance to trees, forests, koalas, and ourselves to escape extreme “development” and the spectre of extinction.

The Reverend Dr Doru Costache is the ISCAST research director and Associate Professor of Theology at the Sydney College of Divinity. He is a Romanian Orthodox priest, and the Selby Old Fellow in Religious History of the Orthodox Christian Faith at the University of Sydney Library.

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Hope reaches remote Queensland

■ **Elsbeth Kernebone**

It can be one or two hours' drive to get to church in central Queensland. Many localities only have a dozen or so residents. Hopelessness and suicide are big problems in the often brutal industries of mining and farming.

It's a contrast to a fast-growing coastal strip that also forms part of the region, filled with young families and retirees.

In both areas, the Anglican church is seeking to reach people with hope.

Melbourne residents have a chance to hear about the region at the Bush Church Aid Victorian annual dinner, from the Bishop of Rockhampton in the Diocese of Central Queensland.

Bishop of Rockhampton Peter Grice said he hoped to open people's eyes to another aspect of God at work in the world: the hard but exciting ministry in Central Queensland. His diocese faces two inverse challenges. It must meet the needs of a sparsely populated interior with an aging population, and those of a fast-growing coastal strip.

For the coast, this means ministering to young families and retirees putting down

new roots.

Inland, the diocese is seeking to renew and continue its ministry sustainably. It's an area where many drive hours to get to church, and some churches only meet at Christmas and Easter. The area has about 20 ministry units, covering 50 or so localities.

Many face hopelessness and suicide. Bishop Grice said the church was letting people down if it didn't share hope in Jesus with these people.

"Once you're away from the coast, you've got mining and farming, both of which are very brutal industries," Bishop Grice said. "If we can offer hope in that space it's certainly worth doing, and keeping the doors open at all costs."

Bishop Grice said he was encouraged by how willing people in rural areas were to travel vast distances to meet. The churches that meet at just Christmas and Easter will have 40 or 50 people to those services, in a locality with maybe a dozen residents.

Bishop Grice said reaching communities without full-time ministers was a creative challenge, and a testament to the faith and commitment of people in these areas.

He said to create sustainable ministry in

rural areas, they prayed a lot, and tried initiatives to support lay people. This included a lay development program, now in its second year, that sought to build up, equip and encourage lay people. Bishop Grice said he took joy in the eschatological, big picture hope in eternity, but also in the hope that came through seeing people grow.

BCA Victorian regional officer the Reverend Adrian Lane said he was praying that out of Bishop Grice's visit, God would raise up men and women who would see the need to work in remote areas.

Mr Lane said the Central Queensland diocese was going through a tough time financially, and finding clergy. But Mr Lane said he had been impressed by Bishop Grice's faithful commitment to the gospel of grace in difficult circumstances.

He urged people to pray God would raise up people from Melbourne to serve in Central Queensland, so people would know God loved them.

The BCA Victorian dinner will take place on Saturday 20 April from 5.30pm. It will also feature Strathfieldsaye BCA supported workers Rob and Michelle Edwards. Find out more at bit.ly/BCAVicAGM2024.

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A reminder that our confidence is in God

Picture: iStock

■ Elspeth Kernebone

Stephen McAlpine. Futureproof: How to live for Jesus in a culture that keeps on changing. The Good Book Company, 2024.

Unsurprisingly, *Futureproof* is a good read. It is challenging, encouraging, relevant and practical.

Author Stephen McAlpine received the 2021 Australian Christian Book of the Year Award for his previous book, *Being the Bad Guys: How to Live for Jesus in a World That Says You Shouldn't*.

Futureproof follows on from that, framed around the question of *How to live for Jesus in a culture that keeps on changing*.

In it, McAlpine weaves a tapestry that shows a broader cultural narrative, incorporating an impressive number of strands, from modern culture, to trends, world events, and specific news stories. He draws through this a thread of biblical analysis, interpreting passages and relating them to our culture, and what that means for us as Christians.

Futureproof is a calm book, despite addressing a confronting topic: the cultural change which many Christians are anxious about.

But McAlpine returns focus to the assured future of the church. He repeatedly argues that Christians need to be a non-anxious

presence, in an increasingly anxious society. He reminds us of hope we have in the return of Jesus and the new Creation – and the assured future of the church. And, for the large part, his tone is calm. It's measured and analytical, and retains the perspective of someone who is sure the church's future is assured in Jesus.

McAlpine argues that Christians can and should engage with our culture with godly self-control, while holding firm to the orthodox truths of the faith. He argues that Christianity is at its most compelling when followers are living the truth of the gospel. And, he offers practical ways to do both.

McAlpine gives readers the tools to understand our society through his analysis. I found particularly helpful his identification of the "social imaginary"; the only way a society can imagine its world. Here McAlpine quotes Carl Trueman's summary of "the intuitive moral structure" of our Western social imaginary, that "prioritizes victimhood, sees selfhood in psychological terms, regards traditional sexual codes as oppressive ... and places a premium on the individual's right to define his or her own existence".

This idea of an intuitive moral structure helped me identify the premises behind chains of reasoning I've recently heard in conversations with people who are not Christians. For instance, that people describe

seeking a personal "truth" rather than objective truth. McAlpine argues, "Western society promises ... that we can find ultimate meaning and purpose as we look within ourselves." If this is the case, satisfaction with a truth that is merely a personal rather than an objective, starts to make more sense. I hope that with this deeper framework for understanding people's worldview, I'll be able to ask better questions, and give better answers!

Throughout, McAlpine frames a clear problem – and he frames a clear solution (reductively: Jesus), and practical actions. His suggestions are specific, and they're clearly relevant. For instance, "adopting" the lonely, fostering children, and demonstrating self-control on social media.

Ultimately I found this book encouraging. It is easy to feel anxious in a combative, hostile culture, on a planet gripped by war, with the temperature ever rising. *Futureproof* reminded me that our hope and our confidence is in God, and that we have a real hope beyond the here and now.

I would encourage you to read *Futureproof*. I think it has the real capacity to encourage you – and to help you understand our culture, engage with it well, and publicly make a case for the gospel.

Elspeth Kernebone is editor of *The Melbourne Anglican*.

A challenge to grandparents



Picture: iStock

■ Bishop Graeme Rutherford

Ian Barnett (ed), Tim Costello (fwd). Footsteps For Future Generations: The Faith Legacy Grandparents Leave. Growing Faith, 2023.

In an average week, my wife and I spend two days with grandchildren – we have 13 of them! I have often wondered how to make the best use of that time. Sad to say, only one out of our five children is an active Christian. On taking grandkids for walks to the shops, they have a very clear idea of what they want – an ice-cream or lollies! Contributor Christine Jensen quotes her father-in-law’s motto – “keep your mouth shut and your wallet open!” I resonated with that! But, as Christine and all the other contributors point out, there is much more to a grandparents legacy than buying gifts.

I have mostly confined my Christian legacy to teaching choruses I learned from my early adolescent “beach mission” days, such as *Build on the rock* or *Wide, wide as the ocean*. Our singing is accompanied by actions which enhance the fun we enjoy together. But this book poses a deeper and more significant challenge than singing happy choruses together.

A variety of grandparents, many of them personally known to me, contribute to the chapters that make up this slim, but profoundly, theological and practical little book – *Footsteps for Future Generations: The Faith Legacy Grandparents Leave*. The editor begins by drawing attention to the fact that

in our culture “old age” is often regarded as the “departure lounge” where we spend a lot of time waiting to be called up! This book is a challenge to adopt a different mindset. Mention is made of the prominence of phones and devices in homes today. I have to admit, that I have found this a real challenge. On one occasion, I found myself so annoyed that I felt that it was a waste of time bothering to visit the family concerned! But this book offers a correction to my self-inflated perspective. It is a challenge to resist bitterness, to tell funny stories of my own childhood, to help with school homework, and above all, to pray regularly for each of my 13 grandkids, all very different but equally loved. Even in this I was challenged. As one contributor says: “We should not only pray for our grandchildren – we should pray with our grandchildren.”

And yet, as Michael Raiter points out in his chapter, some kids may not want us to have any spiritual influence on the grandkids. One of my sons and his partner are atheists. They have one daughter. Michael’s words struck a chord with me! Internally I struggle to find a balance between my desire to share my faith with my granddaughter, and the importance of respecting her parents’ wishes – even though in my heart of hearts I grieve it.

This is far from being a simplistic, naive book. In the words of contributor Kel Richards: “It’s easy to assume that the society around us is the way it has always been – much like the world in which we grew up.

It is not so”. Children can be emotionally affected by bullies at school or online. The same contributor says: “Everyone in the world lives in one of two kingdoms: either the Kingdom of Me or the Kingdom of God”. The most loving thing we can do for our grandchildren is to pray for their salvation. Peter and Christian Jensen regard intercession as the chief investment grandparents make in the lives of their descendants. They write: “Even as we are very restricted by disease and aging, we can still exercise the power of prayer. Indeed, even if we are cut off from our family by distance or painful alienation, they are still being watched over by the Lord who sees all things, and we may and should speak to him constantly about them.”

I found the chapter by Keith and Sarah Condie particularly affirming, in stressing the importance of exercise, which can be a challenge as we progress in years. They give some very useful tips on how. One such tip is to “nest your movement habit into another habit”. For me, most days begin with an early morning swim, then a half-hour walk nested into a morning coffee!

In his closing chapter, Ian Barnett quotes the words of CT Studd’s famous poem which sum up the message of the entire book: “Only one life, ‘twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.”

Bishop Graeme Rutherford is a retired Assistant Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, and grandparent to 13 teenagers and children.