

The Gippsland Anglican

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“A day of healing and celebration” Belinda Seabrook’s ordination as Priest

Sally Woollett

The ordination of the Rev'd Belinda Seabrook as Priest was witnessed by clergy, family and friends on 28 November at St Paul's Cathedral in Sale.

The Rev'd Canon David Head, Regional Dean of the Western Region and Rector of Morwell, delivered the Ordination address – his last service before retirement, having given his final service in his own parish on the previous Sunday (page 4). Canon David described Belinda as “a woman of deep and questing faith” and priesthood as a “high and a most demanding calling.”

Noting the timing of the ordination, shortly after the Feast of Christ the King, David said that the related Gospel, from Matthew Chapter 25, was a beautiful fit with the theme of challenge and preparation he explored with Belinda over her ordination retreat.

The Gospel text includes Jesus' long discourse on the Mount of Olives, culminating in Jesus talking of the Last Judgement. Jesus says “All the nations of the earth will be gathered before the Son of Man, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” David described how the righteous were shocked to hear Jesus say that we will all be judged on our capacity for compassion and inclusion; on love without condition or expectation – feeding the hungry, welcoming the strangers, visiting those in prison. “What Jesus is saying,” said David, “is that simple, gracious acts have eternal consequences ... if we ignore such people then all our piety counts for nothing.”

David explained his belief that this was an ordination sermon of sorts that Jesus gave to his disciples, making important points about ministry and service that still have relevance today.

Dovetailing with David's sermon was the reading from the Book of Ezekiel (34:11-16,20-24), read by friend of Belinda's and member of Leongatha Parish Brigid Kennedy, in which Ezekiel describes God saying, “I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ... I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged ...”.

Cantor the Rev'd Dean Spalding sang the ancient ordination hymn *Come, Holy Spirit, Our Hearts Inspire* as Ministry Development Officer the Ven Graham Knott and Examining Chaplain the Rev'd Brian Norris presented Belinda as a candidate to Bishop Richard. Following the Exhortation and Examination, and the Laying on of Hands, Belinda shared Communion in one kind only due to COVID restrictions – firstly with her daughters, Katherine and Eleanor. The Offertory Hymn was led by a small group of singers, with others joining in silently.

In his words of affirmation, Graham described Belinda as “an extraordinary curate in leading the broken to Christ” – helping new people who are discovering Jesus and witnessing through their faith. “Your heart is for all God's little people, including your own,” he said, referring to Belinda's daughters.

Mothers' Union President Maryann Ashton presented Belinda with an Anglican prayer book and announced MU's new endeavour to encourage recently ordained clergy (page 5).



Photo: Christine Morris

Belinda Seabrook sharing Communion with her elder daughter, Katherine

“To say I am overwhelmed would be the understatement of the century,” said Belinda as she expressed thanks after her ordination. It was the first day since March that she had been able to see some of her family members. She thanked her parents for being “who you are and the way you raised me.” She hoped people would recognise the day as one of healing and celebration. She asked her daughters to “remember the dignity, joy and deep love here in this room.”

Belinda thanked David for his ordination address, saying she very much enjoyed the

conversations she had with him during her retreat.

Belinda is currently full-time Assistant Curate at St Peter's Leongatha. A significant part of Belinda's role in the church is the strategic development of ministry, in line with the vision of St Peter's parish: ‘Preparing the way for the love of Jesus Christ to reach all people.’

Since becoming a Deacon in February last year, Belinda has developed “a deeper realisation that God doesn't need everything perfect to move in powerful ways. Last year in ministry was incredibly fruitful with many people coming to faith

through the waters of baptism, reaffirming their faith through confirmation and others being received into the Anglican Church. It was an incredible year.”

COVID has amplified and deepened her sense of call to ministry.

Speaking before her ordination, Belinda said she is looking forward to “gaining more ministry skills and a deeper understanding of Jesus ... to seeing the church grow and more people come to faith ... to having a chance to get to know more of the clergy in the Diocese and working together more.”

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Editor: Sally Woollett
0407 614 661
editor@gippsanglican.org.au

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GIPPSLAND DIOCESE VACANCIES
Drouin
Trafalgar

“There is always light ...

... if only we're brave enough to see it; if only we're brave enough to be it.”

So US National Youth Poet Laureate, Amanda Gorman, ended her offering at the inauguration of the new US President on 20 January. If you haven't yet viewed it, I encourage you to do so.

Gorman versified the vision that Joe Biden has set before the American people, echoed by former presidents and leaders from 'both sides' of US politics: a vision of shared purpose, of unified action and of a common humanity. A vision without 'sides'; for surely if recent experience has reminded us of anything it is that we are all on the same side.

As Prior Cyprian of the (Roman Catholic) New Camaldoli Hermitage in California put it in his New Year's Eve Vigil reflection: "If you're human, you're family." Cyprian here echoes Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, "Brothers [and sisters] all" – a treatise poetically contextualised and condensed, yet in no way reduced, by Amanda Gorman's timely tribute.

As a diocesan family, we are in the process of renewing our vision. This has been a measured and reflective journey, begun in the midst of last winter's most stringent COVID restrictions, looking ahead to the light

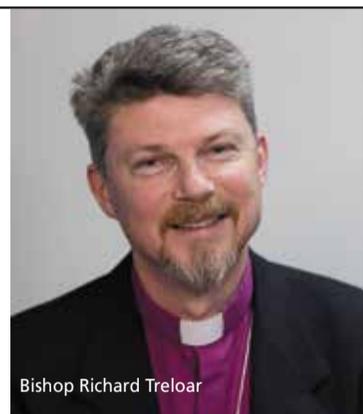
of Eastertide and beyond.

A number of groups have connected with this work to date including diocesan staff, the Executive Committee, clergy of the Diocese, Bishop in Council, Southern Region Deanery and Synod.

Early in Advent all parishes and other ministry centres were invited to contribute by way of a focus group exercise. Perhaps your faith community has already taken up that opportunity to pray, reflect, and help shape our sense of shared purpose, unified action and common humanity in the Body of Christ.

Those who have been introduced to the process would be familiar with the acronym CREDO, which captures the five key components of the process: Consult, Reflect, Engage, Dream, and Pray – in Latin, *oremus*, giving us the 'o' for *credo*, itself a Latin word meaning 'I believe'.

Our consultations so far have yielded some rich reflection, high levels of engagement and daring dreams, and the process is being ever more deeply grounded in prayer. As we await feedback from the focus groups, and draw on this and earlier input in drafting a renewed vision, I commend to you the following prayer:



Bishop Richard Treloar

*O God,
your Son taught us to
pray that your Kingdom
would come,
and your will be done on
earth:
kindle in our hearts that
just and gentle rule;
stir up in our churches
the courage to proclaim
your love;
renew in us the same
mind that was in him,
who emptied himself,
taking the form of a
servant.
Be thou our vision,
O God,
quicken us with your
grace, and call us into
your future;
show us your purpose
for this Diocese of
Gippsland,
so that we may share
in your mission to the
world in Jesus Christ
our Lord,
who is alive and reigns
with you in the unity of
Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for
ever. Amen.*

We have already heard from our clergy and people some of the things we value most about our diocesan family – including its culture, collegiality, diversity, and generosity – along with some things we find challenging – including issues around sustainability and rapid societal changes. We have encountered a hunger for spiritual growth, mission and discipleship, and an aspiration to reconnect with our wider communities in new ways. And we have identified some of those fundamental 'identity markers' that centre us, freeing us to think and love expansively, such as being authentically Anglican, having our integrity rooted in Kingdom values, and treasuring and nurturing the ministry of all the baptised.

We are aiming for a first iteration in the new light of Eastertide, with a launch of the renewed diocesan vision for 2021–2024 at our Synod in May. I am excited to see what shape it will take with your prayerful participation and the guidance of Holy Spirit.

“There is always light if only we're brave enough to see it; if only we're brave enough to be it.”

+RM

Prayer around our parishes

“That we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith...” (ROMANS 1:12)



BAIRNSDALE

Faithful hardworking parishioners in their ministries and mission; fruitful relationships with Gippsland Grammar (Bairnsdale) and our residential and aged care centres, and the blessing of Johnno's Outreach Centre and Men's Shed

Resources and people to support and develop youth and family ministry



AVON

- Growth of our all-age and family ministries
- Deepening connections with the wider community
- Calling and equipping of volunteers and leaders (current and new)

The ability to support our local and wider community in recovery from drought, bushfires and pandemic; of livelihood and lifestyles and of our environment and wildlife, and continued strengthening of connections

BASS-PHILLIP ISLAND

COVID restrictions inspired us to move from prayer and hymn books to services and hymns presented on a screen. We give thanks for the way that everyone has accepted this. It has been welcomed by those with poor eyesight. Online worship resources have also been well received. Please pray for those producing the presentations and online resources

To cope with the many worship services and travel between churches, and allowing for fellowship after the services, we are trialling different services and service times. We give thanks for our Lay Readers. Please pray that everyone will give the new routine a fair trial

We give thanks for the leaders of our many planned Lenten study groups. Please pray that restrictions will allow these to go ahead



Photo: Kath Kent

We are thankful for the funds raised from school holiday book sales and from other fundraising ventures. Please pray for our ongoing financial difficulties

A COVID Christmas

Rev'd Christine Angus

The COVID-19 virus made 2020 an unpredictable and difficult year. Our churches are now open throughout the Dioceses but some COVID-19 restrictions and all the associated difficulties still apply. But a closer examination of the Christmas story suggests that the first Christmas, the Christmas of Christ's birth, was also a difficult time for Mary and Joseph. To comply with a decree from the Emperor Augustus to register at a census Mary and Joseph had travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The town was teeming with travellers and accommodation was limited. This would have been a very difficult experience for Mary, who was heavily pregnant, and for Joseph. The inns were full and doors were slammed in their faces. They were a picture of poverty with neither room nor lodgings. They were forced to shelter in a stable and share their accommodation with the animals.

That night Mary gave birth to a son. She lay the small infant in the animals' feeding trough, a manger that became the first crib for the Christ Child. But this was no ordinary birth. This was the birth of the Incarnate Son of God as John's Gospel reminds

us, stating that:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have come to see his glory, the glory of a father's only Son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1, 14)

At Christmas time we celebrate this profound event. We acknowledge that Christ was born in a stable and would later die on a cross for our salvation. Christmas is a story of love. It reminds us that God's love is so immense that He sent His only Son to live among us to forgive our sins, and to bring us the promise of eternal life.

This small baby, born in the poverty of a stable, challenges us to remember that all lives are valuable in the sight of God. Indeed the Christmas story confronts us with the reality that it is pointless to be sentimental about the doors slammed in the faces of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem if there is no room in our own hearts for those in need. The birth of the Christ Child challenges us to look into our hearts and raises questions about how we live.

Christmas reminds all Christians that they are called into God's service of love. That is, to love and serve God and our neighbour.

The days of Advent (the season of preparation before Christmas) provide an opportunity for each of us to examine how well we have engaged in this service. God's incarnate Son served the poor, the lonely, the disadvantaged, the refugee and the homeless. Thus, to ignore the needs of these individuals with whom Christ so closely identified might suggest that the true spirit of Christmas had been missed.

The true spirit of Christmas lies in the reality that God's love is available to everyone. This spirit is brought to fruition when Christ is born into the stable of our heart and we reach out to those in need. Christmas is indeed a wonderful celebration but it is important to remember that this time of the year can

also be difficult for those who live alone or for families who struggle to make ends meet. In the spirit of Christmas there are many ways to reach out to these neighbours. At this time of the year many charities are seeking volunteers to assist with packing and distributing Christmas hampers. Similarly, donating to Anglicare, the Missions or to your own favourite charity is another way you can assist. Or, perhaps in the Christmas spirit you might visit a lonely neighbour or leave a small homemade Christmas gift or card on their doorstep.

However, Christmas is also a time to appreciate and give thanks for our own families. Christmas trees and a visit from Santa bring joy to children but it is also important that the Christmas story is told and lived out in our homes. Encouraging the family to gather around a crib for prayer and discussion is a wonderful way to convey the real meaning of Christmas to children.

Traditionally Christmas is also the time of year that families attend church together. Changes to our normal celebrations are challenging. In recognising these challenges we might reflect back to the difficulties experienced by Mary and Joseph on that first Christmas night some 2000 years ago.

Courtesy Diocese of Ballarat



Photo: Patrick/Unsplash

Around the world

River Jordan baptism site free of landmines

Sally Woollett

On 10 January, an Epiphany procession was able to pass safely near the traditional site of Jesus' baptism on the River Jordan, since it was declared free of landmines earlier this year.

Christian clergy and pilgrims can now safely pray at the churches on the site.

The HALO Trust began work to clear Qasr al-Yahud, the site of the

baptism of Christ (pictured), on the West Bank of the River Jordan in March 2018 following a global fundraising campaign. In October of that year, HALO deminers were the first people in 50 years to enter the Franciscan Church at the site.

The Trust has programs in 26 countries, clearing landmines and similar dangerous devices so that land is safe for families to return. Since 2014, they

have partnered with the Israeli National Mine Action Authority and the Palestinian Mine Action Centre to clear landmines in the West Bank.

Regarding HALO's work, the Archbishop of Canterbury said, "In a region troubled by division, clearing landmines at this holy site is a rare symbol of hope and reconciliation. It is truly inspiring to think that pilgrims will be able to worship safely in these churches once again."



Photo: ©The HALO Trust

Farewell to Rev'd David Head from St Mary's Morwell

Carolyn Raymond

The last Sunday of the Church's year, the celebration of Christ the King. A Sunday to affirm the Kingship of Christ throughout the last tumultuous year and celebrate his kingship for the year to come. This was a fitting day to farewell the Rev'd Canon David and wish him well and 'spiritual prosperity' in his retirement. Everyone at St Mary's Morwell wanted this service to express gratitude for his ministry to us, our love for him and to thank God that David has been our companion on our spiritual journey over the past five and a half years.

David's retirement comes after 42 years of service to parishes in Melbourne and Gippsland. His ministry included many roles throughout both Dioceses. We knew that COVID restrictions would be in place for the service, although they would be eased later that very day. So everyone was wearing masks, social distancing, and the numbers who could attend were limited. This limitation meant that many people who wanted to come did not, so that the regular congregation were all able to come. This was generous of those of David's friends and family who decided not to attend. We were all pleased that David's partner, Mark, and dog, Trixie, could be present.

It was wonderful to have Bishop Richard with us for this important service. We sang hymns with enthusiasm through our masks. David gave an inspiring sermon. After the service, Bishop Richard shared with us David's long service to the church both in Melbourne and in Gippsland. He acknowledged the many areas of ministry that David had fulfilled throughout the Diocese. His ministry was to everyone throughout the Diocese as he served in Bishop in Council, in Synod, as a Canon of the Cathedral, as a member of the Servant Leaders committee of Anam Cara, to name just a few of the groups of which he was a dedicated member.

Bishop Richard then acknowledged and paid tribute to Mark: "Being the

partner of someone in ordained ministry is no easy task. Being the partner of an openly gay man in ordained ministry in our Church carries particular challenges. I have greatly appreciated the chance to get to know you a little Mark in your own professional sphere, and your unwavering support of David, even and especially when the Anglican Church of Australia has not extended you the same unconditional support. As a bishop of that Church, and as your bishop, I apologise to you both for the pain and suffering this has caused."

Bishop Richard blessed David and Mark at the altar, giving thanks for their ministry and blessing David in his retirement. Thank you Bishop Richard for blessing

David and Mark on behalf of us all.

Sandra Wagner, our Parish Warden, spoke, thanking David for all he has meant to us. Chelsie, a girl from Sunday School, presented David with a large and fantastic medallion titled 'Best Rector Ever'. David promptly put it on and wore it proudly for the rest of the morning. Sandra gave him a gift card from us all and a large card we had signed. There was also a mug that featured an image of Arthur Boyd's *Ascended Christ* – which adorns the wall behind the altar at St Mary's. We hope David will think about us as he has his morning cup of tea.

All shared a sumptuous lunch, prepared and served by many.



Canon David holding up his retirement mug, presented by Sandra Wagner



Venerable Sue Jacka appointed Rector of St Mary's

Archdeacon Sue Jacka has accepted an invitation to serve as the Rector of St Mary's Morwell, following Canon David Head's recent retirement. This appointment follows the unanimous recommendation of Parish and Diocesan representatives on the Clergy Appointments Advisory Board.

These glad tidings for the people of Morwell will be alloyed with sadness for the Parish of Trafalgar, where Sue has been Rector since February 2009. Sue reflected on her 12 fruitful years in Trafalgar: "I feel that I have completed what God called me to do there, and I believe that there is a good team of lay people to continue the work with a new priest when appointed." With respect to this new opportunity she said, "I will enjoy getting to know the people of the Morwell Parish and look forward to encouraging them in their Christian walk. I am looking forward to the new challenges in Morwell, especially working with The Rev'd Kathy Dalton and the Indigenous community, and members of the Sudanese community."

Sue already knows the parish well in her capacity as Archdeacon of the Western Region since 2018, and as Regional Dean since 2015 – a role that David Head took on when Sue was made Archdeacon. David is delighted about Sue's appointment and the continuity of leadership she will provide after a relatively brief locum ministry, which is being provided by the Rev'd Bruce Charles and Archdeacon Emeritus Clem Watts. During her year of

discernment, Sue undertook placement at Morwell with The Ven Heather Marten, completing a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at the same time. This built on her ministry as Lay Reader at Mirboo North, where she and Ross settled upon moving to Gippsland.

With a background in education, Sue was appointed by Bishop Jeffrey Driver as Chaplain of Gippsland Grammar in 2005, and she has always had a passion for working with young people. Ordained Deacon in 2006 and Priest in 2007, Sue combined this role with that of an Associate Priest at the Cathedral before transitioning into full time Parish ministry at Trafalgar in 2009. She has served the Diocese faithfully and well as a member of The Abbey Chapter, of the Editorial Committee of *The Gippsland Anglican* where she draws on her earlier professional work in media studies, of the (ecumenical) Chaplaincy Committee of Federation University at Churchill, and of the Council of Anglicare Victoria. This new appointment will enable Sue to continue her significant ministry of leadership in the Western Region.

Bishop Richard said, "Please join me in praying for her and Ross in this time of transition; for the people of Trafalgar as they prepare to farewell Sue and seek a new Rector; and for the Parish of Morwell as it makes ready for an exciting new chapter in its life and work."

Sue will be inducted as Rector of Morwell on 10 March.

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Mothers' Union initiative to support new clergy

Maryann Ashton

At the end of the ordination of the Rev'd Belinda Seabrook on Saturday 28 November, I had the pleasure of beginning a new tradition in the Diocese of Gippsland between Mothers' Union and newly ordained priests. As an Anglican organisation, we wanted to take some steps in ensuring that the clergy of our Diocese are aware of Anglican Mothers' Union Australia. This would show our support and encouragement to our clergy. Rev'd Belinda was presented with an Anglican prayer book and a bag with various items from Mothers' Union.

Mothers' Union was begun in 1876 by Mary Sumner, the wife of an Anglican clergyman in the English town of Alresford, in Hampshire. Mary had observed the young families of her husband's parish. She watched the young mothers struggling to make ends meet; she saw the violence that came from the young men, the way the women were treated. She



Photo: Christine Morris

Mothers' Union president Maryann Ashton presenting an Anglican prayer book to the Rev'd Belinda Seabrook at her ordination as a priest in November

knew that the structure and firm foundation of family life were important and she began to do something about it.

Now, in 2021, this statement is on the front page of the Mothers' Union website:

We are a mission agency of the Anglican Church of Australia and part of the worldwide Mothers' Union with links to 84 countries and over four million members who share one heartfelt vision – to bring about a world where God's love is shown through prayer and loving, respectful and flourishing relationships.

Mothers' Union members are often very involved in the day to day operation of church – however, they don't necessarily tell you they belong to Mothers' Union. Often they just get on with things, arrange flowers, clean the church, help with children's work (many members are involved in *mainly music*) make the tea, wash the church linen – tasks behind the scenes. I have known some churches in which, if all the members went on holiday for a few weeks, some of those ordinary things would be missing. Here in Gippsland, our members have been involved with assisting and supporting various groups during and after the bushfires.

Some members are involved in a Listening Room, a place where people can come and chat. There are those who sew bags and collect toiletries, those involved in visiting and raising money – the list goes on.

We are part of the fabric of the church and its calling to the world in which we live. Historically, I am told relations with clergy have been challenging. My prayer is that Mothers' Union is never to be seen as the enemy or even a nuisance but as a source of prayer support, a source of information. We have people on our committees who are happy to speak about or inform on matters overseas or at home, a source of help.

Mothers' Union in Gippsland, like the church in Gippsland, has many ageing members; we need to care for and support each other. May we continue to demonstrate the Christian faith in action.

In the words of Mary Sumner's prayer: "All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. Amen"

For more information regarding Mothers' Union, contact Maryann Ashton at maryannashton423@gmail.com.

Beyond sorry

Cathrine Muston

Is the Church racist? This is a question that historian and theologian Rev'd Dr John Dickson tackles head on in 'Racist Church', an episode of his *Undeceptions* podcast.

Many hoped that the national apology to the Stolen Generations in February 2007 would be a turning point in the relationship between white and black Australia but, 12 years on, little has changed. What role does the Church have in confronting our racist past and in advocating for equal rights for those who continue to experience the effects of it? An uncomfortable conversation to have, but one that Dickson says is necessary, and that also left him with "a bit of a bloody nose."

In this podcast episode, Dickson consults several Christian leaders both in Australia and the USA in confronting the issue of racism in the Church. The episode addresses concerns around the Black Lives Matter hashtag as well as critical race theory, which can be a stumbling block for many Christians. As an historian, Dickson explores aspects of our history and the Church's role in it, asserting that it is only in engaging with the past that we can begin to understand the experience of Indigenous Australians. He weighs the discomfort of the discussion against the persistent, daily experience of racism faced by our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

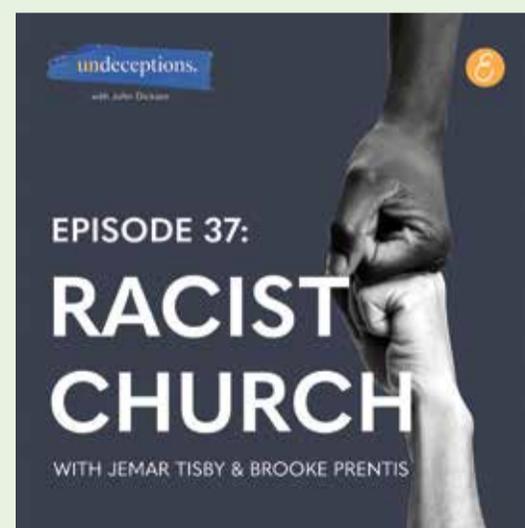
Guests on the podcast include Brook Prentis, a Wakka Wakka woman, spokesperson and CEO

of the Common Grace movement, as well as Jemar Tisby, author of *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Towards Racial Justice*. Tisby argues that many within the Church use the Black Lives Matter hashtag as a way to attack those who are trying to fight racism rather than attacking racism itself. For Tisby it is important not to study critical race theory, but to study and understand history in order to understand that racism is not just about people but policies. Pastor and author Tim Keller argues that as white Christians we need to call out racism, to say "that's wrong" and to understand what the Bible says about corporate racism.

While many will argue that we do not want to rake over the past, we need to acknowledge that for many

the experiences of the past continue to resonate. Dickson argues that as Church we also have a responsibility to acknowledge the evil of racism and to address it where it exists – especially in the Church. The Bible is not racist, but it has been used in the past to justify racist policies and actions.

The conclusion of Dickson and his guest presenters is that racism does not go away, but adapts to the times, and that the only way to properly deal with it is to engage in meaningful relationships with those who experience it. He knows that it is only as we face the uncomfortable aspects of



our history that we are able to address injustice in all its forms and for the church to more accurately resemble Jesus.

Cathrine Muston is Community Development Officer, Anglicare Parish Partnerships. The 'Racist Church' podcast episode is available at <https://undeceptions.com/podcast/racist-church>.



The Rev'd Lloyd George and his wife, Judy, after being presented with their award citations and medallions by Bishop Richard

Coaldrake Award to former PNG missionaries

Pauline Davies

The parishioners at Drouin Anglican Church were delighted to receive a visit from Bishop Richard to their morning service on Sunday 20 December. During his visit, Bishop Richard paid

tribute to Drouin's Associate Minister, Rev'd Lloyd George, and his wife, Judy, both of whom were presented with the Coaldrake Award.

This award, named in honour of former missionary and former chair of Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) Australia the Rev'd Frank Coaldrake, was commissioned

by ABM to be awarded to former missionaries.

The Rev'd Lloyd George and Judy were ABM missionaries in Papua New Guinea from 1997 to 2000. They carried out their work at two Anglican schools, namely the Martyr's School and the Holy Name School.

Avon op shop – we are open!

Gail Wager

The Parish of Avon op shop in Stratford was re-opened under the latest government restrictions for reduced hours on Monday, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10 am to 3.30 pm, last year, when permitted to do so. Our community has been very supportive and happy for this to happen, even under strict COVID-19 restrictions, where customers have complied with the requirements to hand sanitise, social distance and supply their contact details. Volunteers were trained in the appropriate hygiene requirements, and all donations were quarantined for a fortnight.

From the beginning of October, the shop was opened up for a further day, Friday, of each week and these arrangements have continued up to Christmas and beyond.

The latest development is the introduction of an EFTPOS machine in October. This has met the need for contactless payment, and has been welcomed by volunteers and customers alike.

We have been blessed with our volunteers, who ensure the correct hygiene processes are followed. Donations have continued to be received, for which we are most thankful, and these have been stored and cleaned as per the government health authorities' guidelines, which recently have been eased.

Due to the pandemic, we had to delay our Volunteers' Week 'thank you' to our team of faithful volunteers. However, we were able to hold a Christmas afternoon tea at one of the local Stratford cafes to thank our dedicated team of volunteers for their support during what was a difficult and unprecedented year.

Our Op Shop Fashion Show, which was so successful in 2019, could not go ahead in 2020. We are hopeful another such event can take place later this year – so watch this space!

Op shops play a vital role in our communities and, as a parish, we regard our op shop as a ministry, mission and a service to locals and the broader community, and we pray we will continue to facilitate this.



Coordinator Bev Harrap with some of the Avon op shop volunteers



This Lent, ABM asks you to consider making a donation in support of St John's Theological Seminary in Zambia, Asset-based Community Development Project in the Philippines and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mission Grants. Your donation will empower people during this pandemic.

To make a secure donation online, please scan the QR code with your mobile device.

To find out more, please visit abmission.org/Lent21

90 years for Brotherhood of St. Laurence

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) commemorated its 90th anniversary on 8 December, kicking off a year-long celebration.

BSL has launched a history microsite online at www.bsl.org.au/90 and is calling for stories from people in the community about their connection to the organisation.

Co-founded in 1930 by Father Gerard Kennedy Tucker, an Anglican priest, social reformer and activist, BSL has grown into one of Australia's leading social justice organisations.

BSL relocated from NSW to Fitzroy in 1933 at the invitation of Melbourne's Archbishop, to take charge of St Mary's Mission.

Fitzroy, where BSL's headquarters remain today, was then one of Melbourne's most depressed neighbourhoods and the organisation was actively involved in helping the unemployed and the poor.

BSL appointed its first social research officer in 1943 and today has the largest and oldest social policy research centre in a non-government welfare organisation in Australia, underpinned by a strong partnership with the University of Melbourne.

"Today and over the course of 2021, we will be marking BSL's 90th anniversary by reflecting on our rich history and looking towards the future – an Australia free of poverty," says BSL Executive Director, Conny Lenneberg.

"BSL was born in the midst of the Great Depression and, today, our work to address poverty and disadvantage is even more important than ever as we deal with the economic crisis sparked by COVID-19."

BSL is a unique organisation that focuses on creating real, long-term solutions by addressing the fundamental causes of poverty in our community, through its evidence-based approach to services, research and campaigns.

BSL'S RICH HISTORY OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

- The **first BSL op shop opened in 1938** in Fitzroy's now hip Gertrude Street to sell second-hand clothing and goods to the poor of the district. There are now 23 BSL op shops across Melbourne and Greater Geelong.
- In **1946**, BSL opened the **first drop-in centre for elderly men** – the Coolibah Centre, which served as a model for today's elderly citizens' clubs.
- The **first Alcoholics Anonymous group** in Melbourne was formed in **1946** under the auspices of BSL to fight the alcoholism problem that was developing in society.
- A **free milk scheme** set up by BSL in **1948** at Fitzroy's George Street Primary School was later rolled out nationally to primary schools under the Menzies Government.
- One of Australia's **first free legal aid services**
- was set up through BSL in **1952** by the Faculty of Law at Melbourne University.
- Fr Tucker's Food for Peace campaign in the **1950s** grew into **Community Aid Abroad**, known today as **Oxfam Australia**, a leading international development agency.
- In Fitzroy in 1956, BSL supported the establishment of Australia's first generalist migrant settlement support service – the **Ecumenical Migration Centre**.
- Australia's **first large scale recycled clothing operation**, The Salvage Division, was set up in **1957** in Westgarth Street, Fitzroy, collecting goods from across Melbourne.
- In **1964**, BSL established the Hanover Centre – one of the first centres to provide specialised services for homeless people.
- Victoria's first successful **family planning clinic**
- was established in **1967** in Fitzroy as a three-month pilot project for low-income families.
- BSL pioneered **Brotherhood Bins** in 1970 – one of the first charity collection bins in Australia.
- Australia's largest and longest-running financial education and matched savings program, **Saver Plus**, was established in partnership with ANZ in 2003, supporting families and to develop lasting savings habits.
- In **2009**, BSL partnered with three other leading charities to create **Good Start Early Learning**, one of Australia's largest not-for-profit social enterprises, to give children the best possible start in life.
- Australia's first online second-hand charitable bookstore, **Brotherhood Books**, was established in **2010** and now has 60,000 books including rare and collectable titles.

Named after the patron saint of the poor, St. Laurence, BSL was founded in the Anglican parish of St. Stephen in Adamstown, NSW, by Fr Tucker, together with theological students Guy Coleman Cox and Michael Clarke.

Fr Tucker's vision was to serve the community and help Australians affected by disadvantage and poverty. The founding convictions for a transformed and just society remain core to BSL's mission into the 21st century.

"BSL has contributed so much to the community and helped address poverty in Australia, but after 90 years, we still have to fight for fairness, justice and compassion – it's a fight we're determined to win," Ms Lenneberg said.

Many activities and events will take place during 2021 to celebrate BSL's 90th anniversary. BSL would like to share stories from the wonderful BSL community. For more information and how community members can share their BSL story, visit www.bsl.org.au/90.

Courtesy Brotherhood of St. Laurence



Our commitment to a Safe Church

The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland does not tolerate abuse, misconduct and harm in its Christian community.

We are committed to ensuring all people in contact with the Church can participate in a safe and responsible environment.

If you have been harmed by a church worker, or you know someone who has, please contact Cheryl Russell, Director of Professional Standards, for a confidential discussion.

Contact: 03 5633 1573, 0407 563 313, cherylrussell1@bigpond.com

To find out more about Safe Church, and about Safe Ministry resources, visit www.gippsanglican.org.au/safe-church.



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Tribute to Rev'd Tom Pamflett and Rev'd Jock Gibson

Jim Connelly

Two former priests of the Diocese died over the Christmas–New Year period: the Rev'd Tom Pamflett on 26 December and the Rev'd Jock Gibson on 1 January.

Rev'd Tom was ordained in 1960, while in his early 20s. He had studied at St Columb's Hall in Wangaratta (where he met and married his wife, Margaret) and St John's College, Morpeth. The 60th anniversary of his priesting occurred a few days before his death. Tom served chiefly in Ballarat Diocese – at Warrnambool, Nhill, Beaufort and Ballan. In 1985, he accepted Bishop Neville Chynoweth's invitation to Gippsland, and served as

Rector of Wonthaggi from 1985 until his retirement in 1992.

Tom was a fine priest who held firmly to traditional Anglican values. He is fondly remembered in Wonthaggi Parish. He and Margaret retired to Waurn Ponds and, after Margaret's death in 2013, Tom moved to Robina in Brisbane. He was much involved with the Robina Anglican Church, where the funeral was held. Tom is survived by his three sons, Andrew, David and John, and their families.

Rev'd Jock was a late ordinand. Before ordination, he worked chiefly in radio, and served as an Honorary Deacon in Murwillumbah for 12 years, until Bishop Graham Delbridge invited him to Gippsland. He was

priested here in 1976 at the age of 54 and served in three Gippsland parishes before retiring – four years in Neerim South, three years in Foster (now Corner Inlet) and one year in Morwell Parish. In retirement, Jock and Anne lived in Numurkah, near their daughter, Judy. Judy had married a farmer from Neerim before moving to the Goulburn Valley, so Jock continued to have close links with the Neerim South Parish.

Jock was a kindly and caring man, who lived the gospel in his own personality and thoughtfulness of others. The funeral was held at St George's Church, Numurkah. Jock was 97. He is survived by his wife, Anne, and their three children, Jenny, Trevor and Judy, and their families.

We thank God for the service Jock and Tom gave to our Diocese. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.



Doug Van Hoorn: a life well lived

Denise Martin

2020 was a year like no other. There have been times when we had to just live 'one day at a time'. This phrase is the name of a song very familiar to those who have ever been involved in Kairos, the Christian outreach program at Fulham men's prison near Sale. Many Christian men for many years from across all denominations have committed much time and energy to connecting with, caring for and supporting men who have been incarcerated. The Kairos team introduces our God of healing and grace to men starving for forgiveness and reconciliation. A team member who went back time and time again with his own story of redemption was Doug Van Hoorn. This ordinary man was able to accomplish great things because his God asked him to – prompted him and gifted him with a musical talent that spoke to broken people.

Doug's musical and leadership gifts were first used by God in the Cursillo Movement during the mid-1990s. It was the Cursillo experience that fired Doug up to really outreach to others and to use music as a way of expressing God's love and care. He was on the Cursillo team for several years.

Doug was a long-time committed member of St Mary's Anglican Church in Mirboo North. He was usually seen and heard from the music alcove on a fortnightly basis, doing what he did best. Doug

was not just a rock and roll singer from way back, but also a very practical, grounded, warm, generous and non-judgemental man.

Doug did a lot around the church, fixing and providing this and that. It was done quietly with no reward looked for except the satisfaction of a job well done.

Doug was one of those 'warm, safe hug' people who others often turned to in times of trouble. The Van Hoorn house was where you could go to be cared for and nurtured. Both Doug and his wife, Gwyn, were there for anyone who needed some TLC.

Doug passed away nearly a year ago now, although it seems like yesterday. He suffered for nearly three years before that with deteriorating health. Gwyn watched her beloved slowly but surely leave this world behind. Gwyn and Doug were together for 56 years. They loved to work together for God's glory and they loved to see God at work through them.

Doug's favourite Bible verse, Isaiah 41:10

*So do not fear for I am with you;
Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous hand.*

Written by Denise Martin after a cup of tea and a conversation with Gwyn.

Bereavement thanks



Rod Burney: 4 January 1958 – 17 November 2020

Brenda, Sarah and John, Matt, Ellie and Logan, Sue and Peter and families extend our heartfelt thank you for all the love, care and support we have received since the tragic

and unexpected death of Rod. Your prayers, messages, phone calls, visits, food deliveries, cards and floral tributes helped to lift our spirits through this difficult time.

Thank you to all who were able to celebrate his life with us, either attending the service in person or watching via the live stream. Special thanks to Bishop Richard Treloar and Nielsen Funerals for a beautiful service and for your exceptional support.

Thanks also to the first responders, Ambulance Victoria (including the Air Ambulance), Victoria Police and the team at the Alfred Hospital for their care and diligence during these tragic circumstances. Please accept this as our personal thanks.

Brenda would also like to thank her parish – the Parish of Bairnsdale – for their love and support, particularly her Warden, Peggie Arthur, and her office administrator, Jeni Reed, who both went over and above the call of duty. Special thanks to the Regional Dean, Rev'd Lyndon Phillips, and the clergy who assisted in taking services whilst Brenda was on leave – Rev'd Tony Wicking, Rev'd Brian Norris, Rev'd David Valentin, Archdeacon Emeritus Ted Gibson and Honorary Canon Gordon Cooper.

Greg Bennet ordained as Catholic Bishop of Sale

A small gathering of 91 people was present in St Mary's Cathedral, Sale on 8 December to witness the ordination of the Tenth Bishop of Sale, Greg Bennet.

Principal consecrator was the Most Reverend Peter A. Comensoli, Archbishop of Melbourne, assisted by Co-consecrators Most Reverend Denis Hart, Emeritus Archbishop of Melbourne and Most Reverend Patrick O'Regan, Archbishop of Adelaide, former Bishop of Sale.

Before the ceremony, a video of welcome was screened featuring messages to Bishop Bennet from people around the Diocese and beyond. The video was a creative response to the challenges of COVID restrictions. Under normal circumstances, representatives from the parishes of the Diocese, Catholic schools, agencies, charitable organisations, ecumenical and interfaith leaders and civic leaders would formally receive the new Bishop. The joyful and heartwarming video enabled a virtual welcome to Bishop Bennet.

A Welcome to Country was made by Elder Sandra Neilson

before the commencement of the ceremony.

Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli said in his address, "It is a gift to us all that Bishop Greg Bennet has said yes to the Lord, who has sent him to Sale Diocese to proclaim Jesus Christ.

"We pray that his ministry among the people of God in Sale will be fruitful, and that he is welcomed as friend and shepherd."

In his thankyou speech, Bishop Bennet acknowledged the virtual welcome and said he looked forward to "really" meeting all those involved.

Bishop Bennet expressed relief the Ordination had finally been able to occur following a COVID-related postponement in October, after his appointment by Pope Francis on 25 June last year.

In acknowledging the rich history and legacy of the Catholic Diocese of Sale since 1887, he encouraged the Catholic community to work together, and with others in witnessing to justice, mercy, reconciliation and the care of the aged, vulnerable and those in need.

In reference to Pope Francis, Bishop Bennet said, "The Pope models for us in words, and often powerfully

through his actions, what our mission is: We are called to be in engaging with the real experience and heart questions which people face."

"I have become aware of so many local initiatives across our towns and suburbs which need to be celebrated as the Good News in action; these are tangible examples of faith in action which bring joy, care and reflect the servant leadership of Jesus entrusted to his disciples in every age."

Bishop Bennet's mother, Maureen Bennet, along with siblings Leanne, Andrew and James and their families, were amongst the congregation.

Clergy attending included Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Yllana, former Bishop of Sale (now Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn) Christopher Prowse, Bishop of Parramatta Vincent Long, bishops from the other Victorian Dioceses and clergy from both Sale and Melbourne Dioceses.

A choir of eight people with organist Paul Taylor, under the direction of Sophy Morley, provided the music for the Mass. Guests attended a light luncheon after the ceremony.

Courtesy Catholic Diocese of Sale



Bishop Greg Bennet outside St Mary's Cathedral Sale



The ringstone symbol, which in the Bahá'í faith represents the human connection to God

World Religion Day: beginnings in Baha'í faith

World Religion Day was observed this year on 17 January. Held on the third Sunday of January each year, it began in 1950, initiated by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. It is now celebrated internationally by interfaith and multifaith organisations. World Religion Day was founded with the hope of reminding people that religions have many positive things in common and that they have the power to unite us.

The Gippsland Anglican

Q: Is there a faith question you're afraid to ask?

A: Chances are others have that question too!

Send your question to the editor at gippsanglican.org.au or 0407 614 661 and we will publish an answer. (Your details won't be shared or published.)

"Why do natural disasters happen and destroy lives?"
(from a student at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School)

This is a big question, but here are some ideas to start our thinking.

Scientists have shown that the forces that bring destruction – like the movements of tectonic plates that start earthquakes, volcanoes and tsunamis – are the very elements that have begun and sustained this planet and the living things on it – including us. Genetic variation is a big part of the COVID pandemic, yet it is needed for our existence. Our universe is wonderfully crafted for the emergence

of intelligent life. There is a long scientific tradition that sees this as a thing of great beauty, demonstrating God's wisdom.

God has placed us in a world of beauty and danger – a world where death is certain, a world where actions have consequences and the innocent are often victims. There is the problem of suffering, but for those of us who believe in a God of justice and the resurrection there is hope.

We should acknowledge that we share responsibility with God. The impact of disasters on people is greatly magnified by our decisions and actions, whether we do them on purpose or not. Disasters may be preventable

by choosing less risky places to live and preparing for extreme events. Sadly, those who are poor may not be able to make these choices.

Couldn't God have done things differently in creating his universe, while still achieving its purpose? I am not so sure. Can we trust his judgement? Our God, in Jesus, came to walk with us and experienced our suffering. To me, this makes a big difference.

It is easy to think of disaster as judgement from God. However, look carefully in the Bible and you will find that Job, though righteous, suffers, and Jesus tells us not to read disaster as retribution (see Luke 13: 4-5 or John 9: 1-3).

What happens in the world does matter. We are right to be angry about injustice, for instance. But how do we respond to disaster? Do we reject God as a bad idea? Christians through the ages have chosen to trust, then do something about it, even though that might be at great personal cost.

You might like to read:

- Job 38 and 39
- Tom Wright, *God and the Pandemic*, SPCK Publishing, 2020
- Robert S. White, *Who Is to Blame? Disasters, Nature and Acts of God*, Monarch Books, 2014.

Murray Hannah is a scientist with an interest in science and faith.

TRINITY DIARY

Kate Campbell

It is the middle of January as I write and I have just returned from a life-giving walk along Ninety Mile Beach. I have been in isolation at home following a trip to rural New South Wales to visit family and friends after a 12-month separation. My wonderful walk as I absorbed the fresh air, the motion of the waves, the wind and the skies was another of the daily reminders of the beautiful world gifted to us by our Creator God. Nourishing!

A new year has begun and I wonder, as I reflect like so many others on the past year, which held challenges alongside positive insights, what the year ahead might look like.

Study last year was completely online, but with hindsight there were gifts resulting from COVID restrictions: I was able to settle into a rhythm of study remotely from home, like so many who discovered the positives of working remotely, negating the need to travel. The Trinity lecturers did a marvellous job transitioning everything for a positive online experience and I ended the year with good results, albeit through discovering that the more I read and learn the more I discover there is to read and learn. I learnt how easy it is (for me at least) to become distracted and the importance of making note of things for later instead of digressing at the time. A tutor was helpful with processing that!

I have enrolled in further Hebrew studies and New Testament, and my anticipation is that of attending for lectures and tutorials, though it's really a case of 'wait and see'. I look forward to the 'aha' moments, regardless of how they transpire.

One of my favourite novels is *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. It's the story of Mary, a



Photo: Annie Spratt

young girl who discovers an abandoned garden that encourages her to see that there is more to life than she is experiencing – love, joy, friendship, nature, positive thinking and positive experiences. My experience of formal theology study is a bit like that of Mary as she discovers the secret garden: so much to be explored and experienced because I have unlocked the gate. That was my experience when I participated in four years of Education for Ministry and re-affirmed in my study through Trinity. The key to my gate is twofold: trusting my faith and believing in the faith that others have in me.

A recent evening prayer reading was of the calling and commissioning of the prophet Jeremiah, an encouragement for me in my study and ordination journey, and I encourage others to prayerfully and

patiently discern their calling; do not say "I am only ...".

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.

(Jeremiah 1: 4-7)

Kate Campbell is a Diocesan Lay Reader and ordination candidate at St Paul's in Sale. She is also a member of the Registry staff team.

Photo: @charlesc7



The trampoline of joy

Rev'd Daniel Lowe

I was watching some kids bouncing on a trampoline recently and it led me to ponder why trampolines are so much fun. I suspect it is the combination of the physical thrill and sensation of jumping higher than you ever could on your own, paired with the knowledge that when you come back down it will be a soft landing. The key, of course, is in the trampoline mat. Without it, the highs would not be as high and the lows would be potentially very painful! Life can feel a bit like that sometimes.

I think joy, at least in the way the Bible talks about it, can be a bit like a trampoline mat for life. Author and pastor Rick Warren describes joy as "the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation." Unlike simple happiness, joy is not dependent on our circumstances. There are things that make us happy and we should rightly enjoy them. There are also plenty of things that can bring us sorrow. While it is perfectly appropriate to feel sad about some things, sadness does not have to defeat us or overwhelm us. James, the brother of Jesus, writes "My friends, be glad, even if you have a lot of trouble." (James 1: 2). How can we find joy in the midst of sadness? By being reminded that God is with us, even in our misery and regarding our misery, "this too shall pass" (to quote an ancient Persian saying).

In our current circumstances, in the midst of a global pandemic, it is not always easy to be joyful. I know that I need to make a conscious choice to remind myself of my reasons for joy. I need the reminder to lift my eyes from misery and raise my sights to the bigger picture. It might be a beautiful sunrise, a great song or a funny conversation that shifts my thinking but whatever does it, it acts like a trampoline mat – cushioning my fall, then lifting me up again to new heights.

As we navigate these troubled times together, can I encourage you to take time to be joyful. Help your kids to find joyful moments. Acknowledge the worry and sadness of course, but do not let that be the end of the story. Let the assurance of God's compassion cushion your fall and the promise of God's goodness lift you to renewed strength.

The Rev'd Daniel Lowe is Senior Chaplain at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School.

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The Book of the People: HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

by AN Wilson
Atlantic Books, 2015

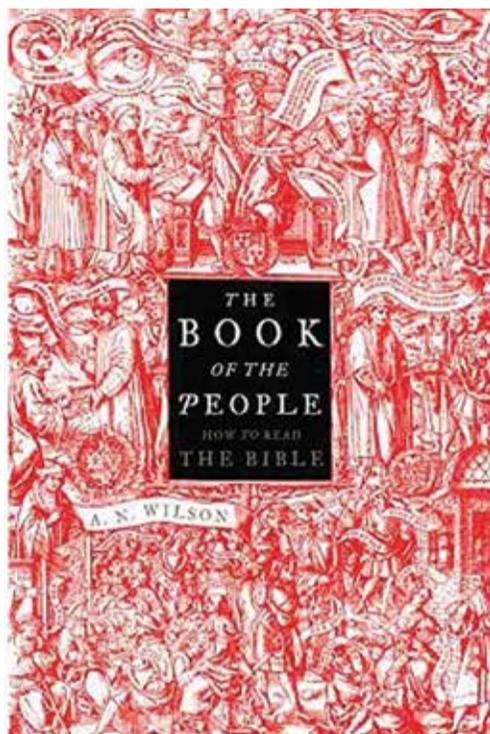
Richard Prideaux

AN Wilson has written more than 45 books of biography, popular history and fiction, and is an occasional newspaper columnist in Britain. He has been in and out of Christianity and when out wrote some withering assaults on the negative value of religion. *God's Funeral* (Abacus, 2009), his scathing account of the decline of orthodox Christianity in Victorian Britain, is salutary reading for all Christians, and his early books on Jesus and Paul are challenging attacks on the historicity of both. In this current book he seems to be embarrassed by these earlier efforts.

Nevertheless, Wilson has never been able to shake off the Holy Spirit and he wrote significant biographies of Christian leaders including CS Lewis, Tolstoy, Dante and Milton. In recent years, Wilson has returned to the Christian faith due to (according to one of his accounts) the simple joy and commitment he found in the Easter parade of his local Anglican church.

One result of this newly found commitment to the authenticity of the Gospel story and the reality of God is this cleverly titled book. In part it is a retelling of the work of a lifelong university colleague and friend he calls 'L', with whom he caught up intermittently as she was writing a book about Christianity, but who suffered a breakdown and never completed the task. This makes for a challenging style because we are never quite sure if it is Wilson or 'L' who is speaking.

In the bulk of the book, Wilson writes demanding chapters on the Genesis narrative, the prophets, Job and the Psalms, and focuses on the notion of 'mythic truth' (my interpretation) rather



is writing it, Wilson presents a stunning analysis of the historicity of the Gospel accounts, using insights from the poet George Herbert as well as Austin Farrer and Richard Bauckham in particular. In addition, he interacts in detail with interpretations of the prints of William Blake.

This is not a book to give to a young Christian, but it might help a seeker who is

than searching for a historical and literal foundation. Drawing on the insights of Erich Auerbach's amazing *Mimesis*, the American poet Wallace Stevens, and the literary approach of Northrop Frye to the Old Testament, Wilson weaves a pattern of analysis that invites readers to look once again and with care to the meaning of the Old Testament text. Parts of these chapters will certainly offend those committed to a more literal understanding of the Old Testament narrative; nevertheless, as always, his interpretation has many spiritual lessons to teach us and will help many 21st-century sceptics and doubters to see the value of the Old Testament in a new and exciting way.

The final chapter about the New Testament is radically different from the rest of the book. Here, with some initial diffidence, as if he cannot believe he

widely read. I think the final chapter in particular will give pause to the prevailing dismissiveness of the Bible in the current Western press and intellectual leadership. Wilson has a deep truth about himself and about God, and to write about it publicly must have been a great surprise to many. I give this book four and a half stars.

Life After Tragedy:

Essays on Faith and the First World War

Edited by M Brierley and G Byrne
Cascade Books, 2017

Cynthia Grove

Some months ago I did a Google search on a single remembered line of a poem I first heard in a sermon about 35 years ago. The line was "Please can I go to 'Ell?" from the poem *Well?* by Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, a chaplain in the British Army during World War I. It comes from a series of dialect poems he wrote during that time. I find this poem incredibly powerful and moving, so I wanted to know more of Studdert Kennedy and his writings.

One of two books I have since purchased was *Life After Tragedy: Essays on Faith and the First World War Evoked by Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy*, written and published in 2017, being the centenary of the award to Studdert Kennedy of the Military Cross for bravery. As a chaplain he chose to be in the trenches with the soldiers rather than back on safe ground; his belief was in the "suffering God", the Lord who was in the trenches with the men while fighting was going on. I was entranced from the foreword, and throughout the essays was inspired, uplifted and challenged. One essay borders on the

abstruse but the whole is significant for the effect on my thinking and my faith. One knows when one has read something very special, and that was true with this book.

Chapter 1 of the book addresses issues around Christianity, church and active faith. How did various denominations and individual clergy respond to the war?

Were the horrors and disillusionment of war causing a decline in church attendance, or was the growth of such leisure activities and aids as cinema and radio to blame for offering alternative ways of spending time? One option that was not adequately discussed was whether faith was lost (in a lot of cases, yes) or were people who were traumatised by the war (service personnel as well as those at home) retaining faith but disillusioned by the church and unable to face the company of others, particularly those who had not experienced the horrors? "I believe in God but not the church."

The seven central essays, each written by different people, cover poetry, preaching, theology, war, service to the community (Studdert Kennedy had a calling to serve the poor) and how thinking has developed from Studdert Kennedy's preaching and life.

I cannot claim that this is an easy book to read but it is a very powerful and rewarding study. Hopefully readers will emerge from the book with many questions about the reality of being Christian.

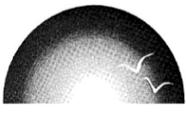
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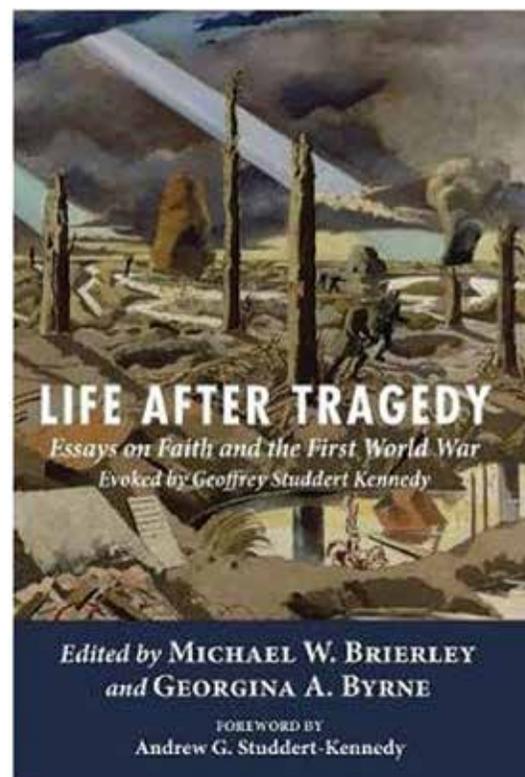
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Abbey West Cottage refurbishments



Over recent months, The Abbey Chapter has embarked on a much-needed major refurbishment of West Cottage and, thanks to some generous donors, major upgrades have been undertaken in both the kitchen and the bathroom. However, there are further needs to be addressed to bring the Cottage up to a suitable standard for families or groups. These

include floor coverings, window coverings, insect screens and a kitchen setting for six, all of which will be implemented as soon as funds are available.

Your assistance with this Appeal will be greatly appreciated and contributions are tax deductible.

For further information, including donation details, please contact Anna at The Abbey (5156 6580, info@theabbey.org.au).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Interfaith inspiration from the Queen of England

I'm not usually into the Queen's Christmas speech, but I must say that I found her 2020 message (www.youtube.com/watch?v=zL9JR0A4yCU) to be internationally interfaith inspiring. Although she began by speaking about how her own Christian faith has strengthened her, she soon mentioned other cultures and faiths, and showed ways that people around the world have spread light during the pandemic. This wonderful "we are all one" viewpoint reminded me of that excellent video on interreligious dialogue that Pope Francis produced with other major faith leaders around the globe (www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKuQqHMhJdY).

In her speech, the Queen mentioned the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and spoke about how so many people during wars prioritised others' lives before their own, and how so many people in 2020 did the same by choosing not to gather. Of course, nurses and doctors serving in

COVID wards have also been dying. The choir in the Queen's video were, aptly, wearing medical scrubs.

Christa Bedwin

Epiphanies at Wonthaggi

On Epiphany Sunday at Wonthaggi and Inverloch parish, the Rev'd Anne Perryman asked her congregations: "Have any of you ever had an epiphany? Would you like to share?" Several people shared and it seemed as if that interlude was complete.

The following Sunday, worship leader Jenny Rivers gave the opportunity, for those who had the courage to be a witness, for people to share what God was doing in their lives. Former Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) missionary Geoff Boer knew God had prompted him on Epiphany Sunday but he had remained silent. He knew he had to share then. He told how, when he first arrived in Mt Hagen, as MAF PNG finance manager, the office had regular visits from mice. His staff jokingly referred to 'the finance mouse'. Geoff decided to deal with this problem. So began a

campaign, employing various traps. He settled into a routine, first thing every morning, of taking the trap, complete with mouse/mice, out the back, to be dispatched by immersion in a tub of water.

One morning the mouse was a particularly feisty character and refused to give in, struggling continually to the surface. Anxious to return to his pressing work schedule, Geoff muttered; "Die, you miserable creature, die!" As he muttered these words of condemnation, the epiphany came. There was no reason why God should not have the same attitude to him as he had to the mouse, and yet God loved him, sending His own son to die to save him.

Other members of the congregation followed Geoff to share their epiphanies, which related to unexpected, overwhelming, otherworldly knowledge of the love and joy belonging to Christ brings. Jenny Rivers shared about a time when this had also happened to her, concluding that it was her wish that everyone in the congregation could have their own personal epiphany of the deep love of God for each one.

Jennifer Boer



Victoria, you know fire.

Victoria was hit hard in the 2019-20 fire season. The 2020-21 season is coming and you know as well as anyone how important it is to plan and prepare. Ensure your home is fire ready, ensure your family knows your plan, and be ready to leave early.

How well do you know fire?



Plan. Act. Survive. Go to vic.gov.au/knowfire



Authorised by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne