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# The Gippsland Anglican

Published in Gippsland Diocese since 1904 **February 2023**



## Summer with SUFM Sharing the story of Jesus

SUFM team member Rufus  
with his puppet friend, Bernie

■ Anna McLean

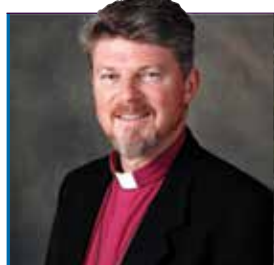
On a morning in early January, a stream of bright blue T-shirts moved down the main street of Inverloch. With one of the group playing the guitar, and passing families on the

way, they extended an invitation to a morning of games, crafts, music, drama, Bible stories – and lots of fun.

Each summer, Inverloch SUFM (Scripture Union Family Mission),

a group of young adults from churches in Melbourne and beyond, travel to this popular coastal spot to run their holiday program for kids and families.

*Continued on page 12*



# Conversion of the heart



In the quiet days of early January I read two books that will continue to speak to me as we move into Lent and throughout 2023.

Our own +Jeffrey Driver's *Grey Spaces: Searching Out the Church in the Shadows of Abuse* (2022) is a reflection on learnings still to be had from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, from the perspective of a church leader who journeyed with victim-survivors.

In *Finding the Heart of the Nation* (2nd edition, 2022), Kaurareg Aboriginal, and Kalkalgal and Erubamle Torres Strait Islander man Thomas Mayor shares something of the journey to and flowing from the Uluru 'Statement from the Heart', and introduces many of the First Nations people who have contributed to that unfolding story.

The Final Report of the Royal Commission and the Uluru 'Statement from the Heart', were both issued in 2017. Both statements call Australians to heed the voices of those who have too often been silenced. Both statements need our ongoing – indeed, urgent – attention.

It is significant that with respect to victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, and to First Nations people and especially their Stolen Generations, formal apologies have been offered by prime ministers (in 2018 and 2008, respectively) on behalf of our federal Parliament.

A decade apart, those apologies continue to hold us to account for the structural evils and systemic injustices that led to them. So too does our diocesan apology to victims and survivors of abuse in 2019 (reproduced in *TGA*, March 2022), and the 1998 General Synod apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in response to the Australian Human Rights Commission's 'Bringing them Home' report, which coincided with the formal establishment of NATSIAC – effectively a First Nations Voice to our General Synod.

In his book, Bishop Jeffrey asks how the gospel might speak again and afresh into the life of a church that is on one level – insofar as it is historic and visible – unavoidably 'institutional', and that has been rightly confronted with its shadow side. This, he says,

is a place of *metanoia*. Often translated as "repentance" ... [the word] has a sense of a profound reorientation, or change of worldview. Beyond necessary expressions of apology and sorrow, and beyond the necessary programmatic or structural changes, this takes us to the deepest question of the church as *being*. (10)

Here Bishop Jeffrey takes up the Commission's challenge to the churches to look further than the safe ministry protocols that were already being put in place at the time of its work. Vital as these are, greater reflection is needed on the underlying causes and influences that made such atrocities possible and impeded appropriate responses. We must attend to the theological, governance and cultural factors identified by the Royal Commission if we are to experience that 'profound reorientation', that 'change of worldview', or conversion of heart.

Thomas Mayor likewise takes us to the heart of matter, in advocating for a constitutionally enshrined First Nations Voice to parliament, as per the Uluru Statement. As with aspects of compliance referred to above, it would be easy with respect to the Voice to focus purely on the mechanics, and some have argued that there isn't enough detail around the proposal to make an informed decision.

Professor Marcia Langton, AM, Yiman and Pitjara anthropologist, who it has been my privilege to meet and hear speak on a number of occasions, reminds us that a great deal of work has already been done to address such concerns. She chaired a Senior Advisory Group – the Indigenous Voice

Co-design Process – comprising Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and convened by former Minister Ken Wyatt, which reported to the federal government in July 2021, having received over 10,000 submissions (voice.niaa.gov.au/final-report#).

Alongside such careful preparatory work, Mayor's collation of voices redirects us to the heart of the problem: disempowerment.

Compounding the impacts of colonial dispossession and intergenerational trauma is the political legacy, even 15 years on from the parliamentary apology, of policy making – and, by any measure, policy failure – that lacks meaningful input on the part of those who are most directly affected by it.

This is especially so since the dismantling of ATSIC after just 15 years in 2005, which is why the constitutional safeguarding of a First Nations Voice is so critical if we are really serious about 'closing the gap'.

Bishop Jeffrey's study works from 'first principles' of ecclesiology to shed light on the temporal dangers and spiritual ills of a 'Father knows best' culture. One of the ways those of us in the church have begun to come to grips with such perils, with the help of The Royal Commission and Child Safe Standards, has been by listening to the voices of children: empowering young people and bringing them into the decision-making processes of church life rather than simply making decisions about them.

It is no less infantilising to presume to know what is best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The time for real, active, humble and sustained listening to First Nations voices, through the instrument they have identified, co-designed and called for, is long overdue.

This moment too is a place of *metanoia* for us: an opportunity for profound reorientation, for a change of worldview, even a conversion of heart.

+RM



**We are Gippsland Anglicans – Committed in Christ, Connecting in Service, Creative in Spirit. We are committed to providing a safe environment for all, especially children and vulnerable people. We acknowledge the First Nations people of this region as the traditional custodians of the land on which the Diocese of Gippsland serves, and pay our respects to past, present and emerging Elders of the GunaiKurnai, Boonwurrung, Bidawal and Ngarigo/Monero peoples.**



# Anglican prayers for Pope Benedict XVI



Chancellery of Republic of Poland

Benedict XVI during a canonisation mass in 2010

The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Bishop Anthony Poggo, has issued a statement following the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, expressing his “great sadness” and assuring brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church of his prayers.

Returning to the UK from Tanzania after preaching the Christmas Day sermon at Christ Church Cathedral in Stone Town, Zanzibar, Tanzania, he said, “It is with great sadness that I learn of the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

With all the member churches of the Anglican Communion I would like to assure His Holiness Pope Francis, and all our sisters and brothers in the Roman Catholic Church, of our prayers, thanking God for Pope Benedict’s outstanding ministry of service to the Church and the world.

“He was an inspiring and courageous teacher, preacher and pastor. His theological wisdom has been of immense benefit not only to Catholics, but to countless faithful in other Christian traditions.”

As part of a separate statement, The Most Rev’d Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, President of the Anglican Consultative Council, Convenor of the Lambeth Conference and Chair of the Primates’ Meetings, said:

“In Pope Benedict’s long life and ministry of service to Christ in His Church he saw many profound changes in the church and in the world. He lived through the Nazi regime in Germany and served briefly in the Second World War. As a younger theologian and priest he witnessed first-hand the discussions of the Second Vatican Council. As a professor and then as an Archbishop he lived in a divided Germany but saw too the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of his homeland.

“Pope Benedict was one of the greatest theologians of his age – committed to the faith of the Church and stalwart in its defence. In all things, not least in his writing and his preaching, he looked to Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God. It was abundantly clear that Christ was the root of his thought and the basis of his prayer.”

Courtesy Anglican Communion Office.

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# A Gippsland Anglican Christmas



Christ Church Foster's beautiful nativity pageant portraying the wonderful message of Christ's birth



Children at St Mark's Yarragon lit the white Christ candles



Libby Willem's sustainable advent wreath, inspired by ACTinG Group messages and held in a bed of rice grains. The blocks can read as HOPE-PEACE-JOY-LOVE-NOEL

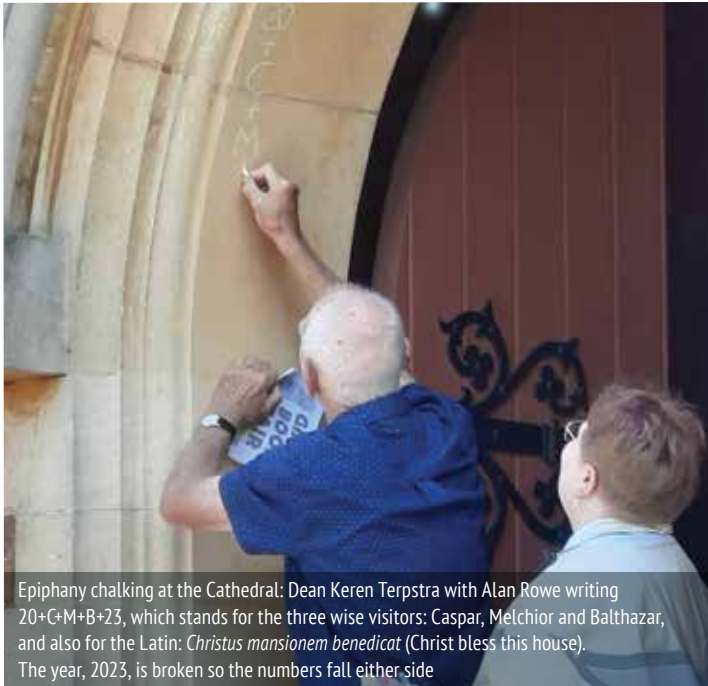


Moe, Newborough and Yallourn North op shop volunteers at their Christmas breakup



The Morwell Citizens Band and soloist Stephanie Morgan led the Carols at a service at St Mary's Morwell. The band included two parishioners, Lauren Kitwood on French horn and young Branigan Kitwood on trumpet







# Honouring both joy and pain at Christmas

■ Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding

This was my first Christmas as Rector in the Parish of Trafalgar and our Parish Council decided to honour each of our three worship centres – Thorpdale, Trafalgar and Yarragon – with one special service each, for the last week of Advent and Christmas. We also added a travelling carollers night with the aid of a minibus, which travelled from the outskirts of Moe to Yarragon, mainly to elders who find it hard to get out to church services. In Thorpdale, we celebrated Nine Lessons and Carols on the fourth Sunday of Advent and filled little St Mark's to overflowing into the narthex, adjourning to the Traveller's Rest afterwards for Christmas lunch. Trafalgar hosted a Nativity service with a costumed Nativity play, carols and barbecue. Yarragon hosted a Christmas Morn service where children finished the lighting of all three centres' advent wreaths.

By keeping our own offerings lean we were able to extend and accept ecumenical invitations with other local denominations. Consequently, Nine Lessons and Carols was well supported by our Wesleyan Methodist friends from Thorpdale. Conversely, many Anglicans attended St Jarlath's Catholic

Church in Yarragon for a Midnight Mass with Fr Bernard Buckley. St Jarlath's was the sanctuary from which Bishop Greg Bennet of the Diocese of Sale had recorded his Christmas greeting – a very beautiful worship space, and the greeting can still be viewed online ([bit.ly/3kcdzR0](http://bit.ly/3kcdzR0)).

I was pleased to accept Rev Moira Dodsworth's invitation to a Blue Christmas Service at the Trafalgar Uniting Church. It is an oasis experience for clergy just to turn up and enjoy someone else's labour, particularly in the week leading up to Christmas Day. The Blue Christmas Service was a tremendously pastoral and comforting service, particularly for those with an empty place at their tables from a recent (or not-so-recent) bereavement or other absence. The tranquil service made excellent sacramental use of candles to mark certain types of remembrance (a central Christ candle, and others representing life's joys and pains, our courage, and those who support us in our pain and sorrow). An empty chair was used symbolically to focus our thoughts and prayers for those who wouldn't be home for Christmas. The service was a beautiful mix

of honest lament and hope.

I'll let Moira's personal introductory words convey the raw authenticity of this beautifully constructed service:

*Tonight, we welcome you to our Blue Christmas service, a service for those of us who are not feeling particularly merry and bright right now.*

*As a mum and a grandma, Christmas is a good time and I have much to be thankful for. But somewhere deep inside there is also sadness and regret that a husband, father and grandfather are missing. This year I have presided at or attended too many funerals including my brother and friends; there are times that are difficult. This season is a time of mixed emotions. Some of our friends and family feel the need to cheer us up, perhaps to avoid these emotions when we just want them to stand next to us.*

In Year A, with St Matthew's confronting birth narratives, we are deeply assured that the child who is Emmanuel, "God with us", does exactly that – stands next to us through both the pain and joy of Christmas.

## Christmas community dinner at Korumburra/Poowong

■ Sue Wilson

On the scale of enjoyment, our Christmas Feast Community Dinner at the Korumburra and Poowong parish was a huge success. Although I arrived on time, the good parking was already gone, but it was our first summery evening with a pleasant warmth so a walk was well in order. Approaching the hall there was the noise of many conversations going on at once: laughter, and behind it all the music from the band inside. Frank was on sax, Phil voice and the guitar, Paul the banjo and Ronnie on the drums. Already we were warming up with some toe-tapping.

An aroma of Christmas dinner spread from the kitchen and the crowd was eager to queue at the server. But first things first and at the front of the stage Marty Shaw brought us to order as we welcomed The Rev'd Canon Dr Fran Grimes to say grace. Behind them on the stage a Christmas tableau sat in place as a background for photographs. The trees – there were two – sparkled with lights and reflections. How welcoming and warm it all looked.



Musicians Frank, Phil, Paul and Ronnie at the community dinner

The wonderful cooks thought they were feeding the 5000, so there was plenty to share and plenty left over to be distributed via Milpara Community House.

The band returned and we sang along and danced in the aisle. Some ventured into the Twist, but the wise among us were happy to sit and watch.

Our Christmas celebration was a combined effort including people from the Uniting Church, St Paul's, St Vinnie's and Milpara, Rotary and the Lions Club.

The evening was an opportunity to give thanks for our abundance, to share the joy of Christmas and to celebrate the birth of our Saviour.



Mick Evers, Christine Morris OAM and the Very Reverend Keren Terpstra at St Paul's Giant Book Fair

## ■ Jan Down

Locals and holiday-makers poured in to the Giant Book Fair at St Paul's Cathedral, Sale, every day for three weeks in January. Coordinator, Christine Morris, and her team of helpers, worked very long hours for weeks on end to prepare and run the fair, which has been a great success, both as a fundraiser and as a ministry to those who came through the doors.

Christine reported that the fair exceeded all income expectations, with more funds raised in the first eight days than last time in three weeks.

Most people who came in were overwhelmed at the size of the fair. One man, when asked if he was looking for something specific, replied that he was looking for his wife! (He did find her eventually.)

One woman found a copy of her family history from around the Barossa Valley. She had no idea how it came to be in Sale, but was deeply grateful. Another very senior woman found a book from her childhood she had been seeking for years. Both women were nearly in tears.

St Paul's donated three bags of books to a teenager (via her aunt) who had lost all her books in recent floods. The girl cried when her aunt told her.

Another story with a very happy ending was of BoBo, five year-old Clemmie's soft sleep toy bunny. It decided to have its own adventure while its family was buying

lots of books. It was found outside and brought in to Arthur at the cashier desk, and fortunately noticed by Christine and kept aside.

Christine received a message that night from Clemmie's mother, Melissa, saying her daughter was very distressed because she had forgotten BoBo. At around 10 pm, BoBo was returned to a very appreciative and relieved child and mother.

The next day Clemmie and her mum returned with a box of chocolates and a handwritten card, which read, "Christine Thankyou for saving BOBO. Love Clemmie."

Christine commented, "This reminded me

that although we are holding the Book Fair to raise money, and are into recycling in a huge way (even leftover books are turned into paper) it is a ministry where we can share God's love. As the song goes, 'they will know we are Christians by our love'."

Christine thanks "all the amazing, dedicated, hard working people who helped get the fair ready and run it, often staying until late at night to restock tables." Cathedral Dean Keren Terpstra also added her thanks to everyone "who gave so generously and dedicatedly of their time and talents to make the Book Fair such an incredible success."



Clemmie with BoBo and Christine Morris





## Accepting and affirming discipleship in Drouin

Bishop Richard and Rev'd Bruce Charles with (L-R) parents Matthew and Stacey, godparents Brent (holding Dustin) and Casey

■ Pauline Davies

In late November a large congregation prepared for a different and thought-provoking service at Drouin Anglican Church. There were three different additions to our regular service: a baptism, a confirmation and a reception of three parishioners being accepted and welcomed into the Anglican Church and our faith community.

Bishop Richard was present as celebrant and preacher, assisted by The Rev'd Bruce Charles and Lay Reader Lacy Biggs. At the

commencement of the service, we were reminded we were entering the season of Advent, and the child to be baptised, held by his godfather, lit the first of the Advent candles, the candle of Hope.

During his sermon, Bishop Richard reminded us that things were happening in our church and that the Spirit was at work, busily raising discipleship and ministry alongside us in a kingdom-ready household of faith and fellowship.

The baptism of three-year-old Dustin was sponsored by his parents, Matthew and Stacey, and godparents, Brent and Casey. Dustin's parents and godparents made the promises for baptism on Dustin's behalf. Dustin remained relaxed and interested when Bruce baptised him with the holy water and anointed him with the oil of the sign of the cross, assuring him of the promises of a new life in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. His baptism candle was lit and handed to him with the help

of his godfather. Bishop Richard led us in welcoming Dustin into the church. Barbara Willingham, diocesan president of Mothers' Union, handed the newly baptised Dustin a present, much to his delight, comprising a beautiful book and card welcoming him into the Anglican Church family.

The Bishop then invited parishioner Alisha Moyle to step forward for her confirmation, together with her sponsors. Alisha, who has been a parishioner at Drouin for some time, is currently studying theology and is also a Lay Reader. Alisha, a popular person on a journey of faith within the church, is supported by Bruce and the whole parish. She is encouraging younger members in their journey of faith as she continues to grow in her calling to ministry.

Finally, Ailsa and John, who had already been baptised and have formerly been communicant members of the Presbyterian Church, together with Alison – who had been baptised and has formerly been a communicant member of the Baptist church – were received into communicant membership of the Anglican Church. John is studying theology, and all three have been welcomed into the spiritual home and warmth of the Drouin parish.

This was a beautiful ceremony, with everyone participating by their observance and inclusion; it felt that we all were one with Christ in faith, love and service.



Bishop Richard and Rev'd Bruce Charles with Alisha





# Celebrating God's blessings in Yarram

Jenny Wicking

People of the Yarram parish with the newly planted Communion Forest olive tree

## ■ Glenda Amos

Bishop Richard came to join us in Yarram in November at our parish dinner and on the Feast Day of Christ the King at Christ Church Tarraville, where two confirmations were conducted.

Forty people enjoyed the parish dinner, with delicious food served by women from the Red Cross. There was much conversation around the tables, with groups from Yarram and Port Albert as well as a group of young women supporting the confirmation candidates.

As well as speaking to those at each table, Bishop Richard spoke about his attendance at last year's Lambeth Conference. Usually held every 10 years, Lambeth is an opportunity for bishops to share, discuss and pray about all sorts of issues faced by the worldwide Anglican Communion.

During his talk, Bishop Richard spoke about the Communion Forest, a symbolic planting at Lambeth Palace. Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, encouraged all at Lambeth to join in this and so the Parish of Yarram planted a special olive tree in the community garden at Holy Trinity Church. The olive tree, from a local olive grower, needed a new home. All those present helped with filling in soil and watering in the tree.

This was the second olive tree to be planted for the Communion Forest in the Diocese of Gippsland, the first being planted in early November at All Saints Poowong

Community Garden.

In the words of Archbishop Welby,

*To plant is to hope, to restore is to heal  
and to protect is to love.*

The following day, we witnessed the baptism of Tara by Rev'd Jenny Wicking and the confirmation of Tara and Anita by Bishop Richard. Both women attend services

regularly. Bishop Richard preached about faith and commitment as shown by Tara and Anita. Christ Church was adorned with beautiful flowers thanks to Sue O'Loughlan. We sang traditional hymns accompanied by Warren Peart on the pedal organ, and our younger parish members assisted Jenny with the water, oil and candle for Tara's baptism.

What a memorable weekend!



Anita being confirmed by Bishop Richard

Jenny Wicking



# Joining the parish family at St Peter's Paynesville



Nathan Le and his parents at St Peter's Paynesville

■ Sue Fordham

On the 23rd Sunday of Pentecost at a morning Eucharist, Nathan Le was baptised and confirmed by Bishop Jeffrey Driver at St Peter's Paynesville.

While baptisms are always wonderful celebrations, this one was especially so as Nathan is an adult who has deliberately and consciously sought out these sacraments for himself.

Nathan has been a part of our congregation, part of our Christian family for a year now. He came as a pharmacist in training to Bairnsdale Hospital and he quickly sought out a church. St Peter's was blessed that he chose us.

From the start, Nathan got stuck into the life of the parish and won the hearts of us all – serving and washing up after morning tea, bringing food to our occasional lunches (he makes a wonderful roast pork) and generally becoming a vital part of our parish family.

Nathan's family and friends travelled from Melbourne to witness this very special event, which was followed by a joyous morning tea.

In the last year or so, St Peter's has experienced a steady growth in numbers and activity, as people such as Nathan and others choose to be part of the warmly inclusive parish family that we are learning to become.

# Improving Latrobe's end-of-life palliative care

■ Jane Anderson

I'd like to share some highlights from the progress report about the changes that have been implemented to improve local end-of-life palliative care services in the Latrobe region.

In September 2019 I released a report, *Achieving Victoria's best end-of-life experience for people in Latrobe*, which included five areas for reform and 12 recommendations for action. In the past year, substantial progress has been made in several areas for action.

I am now committed to ensuring the challenges identified in this progress update are addressed and I encourage the Victorian Government to consider how the recommendations of this work can be implemented to achieve the best end-of-life experience for people in Latrobe.

Service system leaders, palliative care specialists and local communities have demonstrated their readiness for the establishment of a dedicated facility in Latrobe, enabling a greater place of choice.

There are significant constraints within the public health system including a limited number (four) of funded inpatient palliative care beds within the hospital setting. Local services are reporting an increase in demand for end-of-life palliative care and have stated that the existing beds do not meet the current demand. Work needs to occur to undertake a thorough assessment of the local system's capacity to meet current and future demands for inpatient palliative care.

Further consideration should also be given to how contemporary governance brings health services and communities together to share their collective expertise. This could be modelled on some of the emerging work occurring within Victoria as part of the mental health system reform.

I want to acknowledge the efforts of local services and palliative care workers who have demonstrated their commitment to working together to respond to the aspirations of people in Latrobe.

I have no doubt that with the continued

support of the Victorian Government, people in Latrobe and the broader Gippsland region will be able to experience a consistently high standard of end-of-life care that is on par with what they deserve and is offered in places of their choice.

If you, or a group you belong to, would like to share your experiences with me please get in touch with my team on 1800 319 255 and they will organise a time for us to catch up.

The full reports can be found on our website at [lhadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://lhadvocate.vic.gov.au).

Printed copies are also available from the office or we can arrange for one to be posted to you.

If you have any questions about the reports or the information provided, please contact us.





# New Principal for Gippsland Grammar

■ Lisa Baker

Gippsland Grammar has appointed Michele Wakeham as its new Principal.

Mrs Wakeham has been Gippsland Grammar's Acting Principal since June this year. Prior to that she was the school's Deputy Principal after moving to Gippsland in June 2021 from Trinity Grammar School in Kew. Previously Mrs Wakeham received an acknowledgement from Associated Public Schools of Victoria for more than 10 years of longstanding teaching excellence at Geelong Grammar, Melbourne Grammar and Scotch College.

"The appointment of a Principal is one of the most important tasks for any school board," said Gippsland Grammar Board Chair Brendan Shepherd. "Michele has a passion for innovative teaching and learning as well as an inspiring enthusiasm for cultivating a strong community across the school's three campuses."

Michele Wakeham said she was honoured to accept what she described as her "dream role".

"It is a role I feel ready for, excited about and invigorated by and I am looking forward to continue my journey in providing and nurturing the best learning experience and outcomes for students as well as fostering exciting and fulfilling careers for teachers."

Mrs Wakeham said in the time she had been Acting Principal she had been overwhelmed by the support she had received from staff, students, school families, board members, principals from associated schools and members of the wider Gippsland community.

"I now have a much greater understanding of just how much the position of Gippsland Grammar's Principal is both a privilege and an honour and I look forward to meeting the expectations and high standards for what this role demands," she said.

Mrs Wakeham's family includes her husband, Laurie, who is Gippsland Grammar's head groundskeeper, and sons Trystan, Rhys and Bryn, who are all students at St Anne's campus. Mrs Wakeham speaks Japanese, is St Mary's Cathedral's choir director and is a second Dan black belt in taekwondo.

As Principal, Mrs Wakeham will oversee Gippsland Grammar's two early learning centres and two junior campuses in Sale and Bairnsdale, and its senior campus and boarding house in Sale.



Gippsland Grammar's Principal, Michele Wakeham

## ANGLICAN SCHOOLS VCE RESULTS 2022

The 2022 Dux of St Paul's Anglican Grammar School is Xavier Haberl of Traralgon, who received an ATAR of 99.5. Xavier also achieved two perfect scores of 50 for Health and Human Development and History: Revolutions.

Gippsland Grammar's Dux was Sarah Husodo, with an ATAR of 98.55. Sarah is from Sale and is deciding between studying Dentistry or Medicine in 2023.



Xavier Haberl with St Paul's Grammar School Principal Cameron Herbert

The St Paul's cohort have a variety of plans from tertiary study in areas such as health and engineering, apprenticeships, Australian Defence Force traineeships and work.

St Paul's is proud of the way the class of 2022 transitioned back to a full year of onsite learning. They applied themselves to their studies in a dedicated and enthusiastic manner and balanced this with involvement in a wide array of co-curricular pursuits.

Gippsland Grammar Principal Michele Wakeham said, "We are incredibly proud of all students at Gippsland Grammar, including those that have taken the opportunity to secure traineeships and apprenticeships throughout 2022."



Sarah Husodo with her parents, Jemima and Oscar





# Summer with SUFM Sharing the story of Jesus

An epic tug-of-war battle during the SUFM morning program

Wesley Jackson

Continued from page 1

A real mixture of families came to the most recent Inverloch SUFM, which ran from New Year's Eve 2022 until 9 January this year. Some we have known for years, and it was a joy to catch up and hear how 2022 was for them. Some came and joined in briefly in our games: soccer, Spikeball, Kubb or giant Connect 4. Some had seen the "blue shirt people" while we were playing games at the beach, offering free pancakes, or doing face painting and henna, and had been connected to our morning program through those activities.

Some were regular church-goers, and encouraged us as a team by inviting their non-believing friends to the program. Some didn't follow Jesus themselves, but they had some familiarity with faith: their kids went to a Christian school, or they used to go to church. Others had never heard of Jesus, and were perplexed by the 30 or so friendly and kind young adults who were giving up their summer holidays to serve the community.

For all who came to our program, our vision was the same: we wanted to build relationships with people in the community of Inverloch, so that they might know Jesus, and have their lives transformed by him.

To achieve our vision, we spent time

in the park in the morning, focusing each day on a different Bible story that showed something about the character of Jesus. We were trained as a team in Bible storytelling, which started with us stepping in the story ourselves and being personally changed by it. We learned to trust that each gospel story is sufficient in itself to start someone on a journey to knowing God. We had to be dependent on God as we told his stories – in conversation, through drama, through craft – and trust that he would be at work through his word and through his people to make himself known in Inverloch.

We were encouraged to see God at work in Inverloch through our team this year as we depended on him. One family connected with a team member from the same regional town, and when we found out they had never been to church before, we were able to invite them to the Anglican church where we were staying as a team. One family with several neurodiverse kids was welcomed to the program and was introduced to Jesus for the first time. The kids went home with Bibles and thousands of questions for their parents!

At our youth program, young people who were not connected to church showed up

and heard an explanation of Christianity based on John Dickson's *Simply Christianity*. A mum for whom English was a second language was able to read John 3:16 in her heart language and have the good news patiently explained to her by one of our team. God used different people within our team, at different times and in different ways, to make himself known.

We may not see the long-term result of our time in Inverloch this summer, but we trust that God will continue to be at work to draw people to him, and we feel privileged to have played a role in that process.

It has been so good to work in partnership with the churches of the wider south Gippsland community: Inverloch, Wonthaggi, Leongatha and Korumburra. Through their provision of accommodation, food and financial donations, prayer support, shower billets, encouragement, games and other equipment, and much more, we as an SUFM team are enabled to continue our work in Inverloch each year.

Our 2023/34 program will run from Thursday 28 December to Saturday 6 January. Please pray for us as we seek to love God and our neighbour in Inverloch next summer.



## From the editor



Welcome to the first issue for 2023!

If you're into fun and games, I hope you have enjoyed yourselves over summer as much as the young people did at Inverloch's Scripture Union Family Mission program last month. In our cover story, Anna McLean describes the vision of the program as wanting to "build relationships with people in the community ... so that they might know Jesus, and have their lives transformed by him." During the weeklong program, several South Gippsland churches supported the SUFM team in both prayer and practice.

Thankfully there is such enthusiasm among the young adults of SUFM, because they have much work to do. As Graham Stanton reports on page 18, many young people are choosing to leave the church. "Seeing teenagers and young adults drop out of church life has caused heartache and grief for families and churches," he says. Graham is a lead researcher on the Your Story project, in which young adults are sharing their experiences of faith. Researchers have been "humbled" to hear these stories, including those of valuing conversations with others, struggles with mental health, and the challenges of doubt. "Listening well to young people can open a space for genuine conversation," Graham says.

## Fun, faith and conversation

Reflecting on being godparent to their niece over more than three decades (p. 21), an anonymous contributor says that in hindsight they would have "offered a phone call now and then" as a way to have had more spiritual input as their godchild grew up. They recommend accepting the responsibility only in order to "contribute to the next generation", rather than due to feelings of obligation.

In Gippsland, several new parishes have been delighted to support young people and families in their faith journeys, including recent baptisms and confirmations in Drouin, Yarram and Paynesville (pp 8–10).

To promote the safety of children and other vulnerable people, Gippsland parishes are working to address each of the Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards (p. 17), which came into force in July. In light of these standards and the work of The Royal Commission, churches are "listening to the voices of children: empowering young people and bringing them into the

decision-making processes of church life rather than simply making decisions about them," says Bishop Richard on page 2.

Many young people lit candles of the Advent wreath in December, and I hope you enjoy their photos and those of other activities of the season on pages 4 and 5.

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# When God gets you out of your comfort zone

Rev'd Liz Rankin with the conference team and participants, with beanies made by the Wonthaggi/Inverloch parish and the Inter Church Council

## ■ Rev'd Graeme Liersch

It's easy to go through life following the same routine day after day, week after week. It's safe, you know what you're doing and where you're going.

But what if God pulled you out of that routine and sent you on a journey into the unknown, to a place of un-comfortability?

This is exactly what happened to my wife, Susan, and I recently when we were asked by SOMA Australia to take part in a short mission trip to Kathmandu, Nepal.

I had been on short SOMA missions before, but not to Nepal. What would it be like there? How would the people receive us? And what could we possibly give that would make a difference to them as a people, as a nation and as Christians?

It can be hard to know what to expect in situations like this. You can study the people and their nation but until you arrive you don't really know what it's like.

Some questions are easy to gain answers for; others are not so easy. Take for example the question, "Why us"? The simple answer came from God: "Because I chose you." How can you argue with that?

The Anglican Church in Nepal is a growing church and Christianity overall has been growing quite rapidly. In a country of predominantly Hindu faith, in recent

years Christianity has grown from 1% of the population to 5%. This means that the church is quite young, and it needs leaders to come in and help teach the way of the Lord for all people. Rev'd Rinzi is the senior Anglican clergyman in Nepal. Much of the growth of the Nepalese church has occurred due to the vision God gave Rinzi and American pastor John Wimber.

The Anglican Church in Nepal was looking for mature Christians to teach their women about their roles as leaders in the church of today. We were invited by them and the Diocese of Singapore (the governing diocese) to teach at their two-day women's conference.

But what to teach? Other than a broad theme of 'women in leadership' we had little to go on.

Susan and I met with our mission leader, The Rev'd Liz Rankin of Mornington parish, we prayed, and we sought the Holy Spirit's guidance on the matter. What God laid on our hearts was a basic theme of women of the Bible, both Old and New Testament.

As the Bible says in Proverbs 16:9, "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps" (NIV). In other words, it didn't go quite as we had planned. It did to some extent, but in the

end we were led by the Spirit.

On arriving in Nepal, we still had no clear outline of the conference. Not only that, but I was stunned by the level of pollution in the air in Kathmandu. The poor air quality gave me some grief over the ensuing week. However, I was pleasantly surprised by the welcome, our hotel accommodation and the friendliness of the people, especially our Buddhist driver. He was an excellent guide.

The first session of the conference included introductions and a witness talk from a Nepalese woman, which unfortunately we couldn't understand. At lunchtime, Susan was thrown in the deep end to speak with the reminder to make it simple as she had to work with a translator. This was a huge challenge for Susan as she had no experience working with a translator and it was her very first SOMA overseas mission.

Have you ever tried to explain the story of Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel, simply and precisely through a translator? It's not easy, and despite Susan's fears we discovered later that God used the translated words mightily to help women who were unable to have children and had been crying out to God.



For a session on the first day I had been led by God to share the story of the Woman of Samaria, whom Jesus had met at Jacob's well (John 4). She is the first Christian Evangelist in the Gospel of John. Sure, there may be other allusions to evangelism, but it is this woman who went back into town and told the people about Jesus, and they thus believed.

I said to the women at the conference that they could tell their story and how they had come to know Jesus. But – and this is where I almost came unstuck – everyone needs to meet Jesus for themselves. In the Bible story, the people who had heard the woman and believed went out and met Jesus; when they returned, they said to her, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

It was then that I heard the Holy Spirit say, "Some of these women haven't met Jesus personally; offer to introduce them to him." I gulped and made the offer; what followed was almost a stampede.

For the next hour we prayed for these women. Some met Jesus for the first time, others received prayer in the hope for children, others for healing, some for increased faith – all constantly moving

forward to be heard and prayed for.

For me it was very daunting as I was the only male speaker and only one of a few men present.

The next day Andrea, director of the theological college, shared on women in the New Testament. Susan, I and Liz taught on the Gifts of the Father (Romans 12), The Gifts of Jesus (Ephesians 4) and the Gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians).

Again, we finished with a time of ministry where many women came forward for prayer. This time I was working without a translator, but none was needed because the Holy Spirit helped me understand what to pray for. At one stage I was overcome with grief for the women as I became aware that many of them had been raped.

As we continued to minister, all I had to do was raise my hand and begin to pray and the women fell down, slain in the Spirit. In the end I sat down because the Holy Spirit moved through the place just like he did on the day of Pentecost. There were no flickering flames, but he ministered to them, with many speaking in tongues and others laying hands on each other for healing.

All in all it was a privilege to serve God in this way. Needless to say, we were quite exhausted at the end of the day.

On one day of our visit we went to the Christian school established by the Anglican Church and their theological college. They need many books to fill their libraries. During a day off we took the opportunity to visit our now surrogate daughter, Alina, and her adopted daughter, Binu. Their stories are worth hearing, but they are stories for Susan to tell.

On the final day I had the privilege of preaching at Rev'd Rinzi's church to a Nepalese congregation with a translator (on Sundays they have services in English), then that night we flew out, bound for Singapore.

On this short mission trip, I learned to be open minded, allow the Holy Spirit to lead, expect God to do his thing, enjoy the journey and keep praising God.

The women learned and grew as leaders. They learned not only of the inspiring women in the Bible, but to share their story of how they had come to know Jesus – and they received hope and encouragement by the Holy Spirit, who gave gifts to them.

God truly is wonderful, loving and all powerful, and he even uses people like me. Praise God.

---

Rev'd Capt. Graeme Liersch is Rector and Evangelist at Wonthaggi/Inverloch.



Graeme and Susan Liersch with their surrogate daughter, Alina



# New beginning for Office of Professional Standards

■ Marylyn Mathieson

Some changes to the diocesan Office of Professional Standards came into effect from 1 February 2023. They involve both the management of and contact details for the Office. They will not impact on the accessibility or quality of the services offered, but will reflect the slight change of direction that the Diocesan Corporation and Professional Standards Committee (PSC) has recognised is required as we move forward.

Following the retirement of Cheryl Russell as the Director of Professional Standards (DPS) in April 2022, the Gippsland Diocese undertook a search for a replacement. During this process it became obvious that the role that Cheryl had performed so diligently was far more demanding than it was reasonable to expect of any one person. In addition, the changing requirements in terms of increasingly rigorous secular legislation as applied to churches, along with other expectations, meant that access to a wider range of expertise was required.

To this end, and after comprehensive consultation, reflection and prayer, the Diocesan Corporation agreed to appoint Kooyoora Ltd to provide support services in the area of Professional Standards. This includes providing a person to undertake the responsibilities of the Director as defined in the Diocese of Gippsland Professional Standards Act 2017.

Kooyoora Ltd has been operating in this field for more than five years. This independent organisation serves a number of dioceses and organisations across Australia and further afield. Under the expert leadership of its CEO, Fiona Boyle, Kooyoora handles complaints, provides screening and training,

and can handle redress claims. Its vision accords with that of the diocese in that it aims to build "safe organisations, free from violence and abuse."

The expert and experienced staff include Julie Reilly who, as the Deputy DPS for Kooyoora, is the designated person for the duties of the Director for Gippsland. Under the Act, the DPS is responsible to the PSC, and this structure will not change. The PSC will continue to be responsible for the overall management of Professional Standards as set out in the Act. The change of personnel has not changed anything else – in fact this move will enhance the services that can be provided. The only difference is that Julie has the expertise of others in Kooyoora to call upon as required, rather than working in isolation. Furthermore, this move means that there are others who can step in as required to allow leave for holidays etc. – something that had to be done on an ad-hoc basis in the past.

There will be an opportunity for the people of the Diocese to meet Julie and other Kooyoora personnel over the early months of this year. Julie is a Gippslander and she will be working three days per week: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. *Contact with Kooyoora, however, can be made at any time. The office is staffed during normal office hours and there is a message service that operates after hours.*

*Your call will always receive a response.*

Kooyoora will also take over responsibility for managing clearances and screening potential church workers. This work was so diligently performed for the diocese by Brenda Elford-Gray who resigned in August 2022. The advanced resources of Kooyoora in this area will enable the Diocese to be engaged in a more streamlined process. The tireless volunteers, including the parish Safe Ministry Officers, who have assisted in this vital work in the past, will continue to be involved.

New posters advertising the new personnel – along with phone numbers, email and postal addresses – have been forwarded to all parishes. Other material from Kooyoora will also be coming to parishes soon.

Please note the new contact details on this page for any matters relating to Professional Standards.

Marylyn Mathieson is Chair of the diocesan Professional Standards Committee.

## Our commitment to a safe church

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

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# Victoria's 11 Child Safe Standards

## Parish planning and support

The Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards came into force on 1 July 2022. Parishes and the Diocese have 12 months in which to be able to show they have started implementing each one of the standards.

The standards aim to support

organisations to implement child-safe practices to create a culture where the safety of the child is promoted, child abuse is prevented and alleged abuse is taken seriously and acted upon.

While the Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards are about children, parishes

should consider all young people and vulnerable people at the same time.

For further information about the standards and implementation guidance, go to the Safe Ministry section of the Resources tab at [gippslandanglicans.org.au](http://gippslandanglicans.org.au).

1. Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which children from diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
2. Child safety and well being is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
3. Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participation in decision affecting them and taken seriously.
4. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
5. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
6. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
7. Processes for complaint handling and concerns are child focused.
8. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
9. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
10. Implementation of the child safe standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
11. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

Excerpted from *A parish guide to implementation of the Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards* (version 2), prepared by Val Jones and Brenda Burney, Safe Ministry Authority, 2022.





Ruben Hutabarat

# Know any young people you could listen to?

## ■ Graham Stanton

One of the biggest challenges facing the church today is how to engage young people as members of the church. How do we hold on to the young people we have, and how do we reach out to young people outside of the church?

If the future follows the same patterns we've seen in the past, of the children who are currently regularly participating in church life, 72% of them will no longer attend regularly by the time they turn 20. In his 2015 article 'Why young people are leaving the church' (*Pointers*, vol. 25), Philip Hughes says 39% of them will not attend church at all, and 46% of them will claim to have "no religion". Seeing teenagers and young adults drop out of church life has caused heartache and grief for families and churches, and has received a lot of attention in research and youth ministry training.

The church has often talked about young people more than talking to young people. And as Walt Mueller observed, a lack of listening has likely contributed to young people's lack of belonging.

Listening to young people's stories of faith and spirituality is the focus of Your Story, a major new research project funded by Converge Oceania and conducted by researchers at the Ridley Centre for Children's and Youth Ministry and the Australian College of Ministries.

Your Story asks young people to share their experience of faith and spirituality and to tell the story of how they came to hold the faith they have today. The survey leads young people to reflect on the influences and influencers who have been part of their story.

The research is still in the early days of

***If the church doesn't listen, the church can't understand.***

***When young people realize they aren't understood, church becomes a place where they don't belong.***

**Walt Mueller**  
*Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture*

collecting data from teenagers all around Australia, from young people of all faiths and none. Already the researchers have been humbled by the privilege of hearing young people share their experiences of faith.

We've heard warm reflections on the positive influence of children's and youth ministry leaders, such as Harmen,\* who said, "I had a great kid's church pastor who made everything so much fun and for the first time in my life I wanted to be there on a Sunday morning."

Grace spoke about the value of having time to talk with her parents about challenges to faith: "Going through high school, it was difficult to find time to read my bible ... There were a few times where I questioned some bible verses, but my parents were always willing to chat."

Existing research has already revealed that many children and young people are experiencing struggles with mental health and anxiety. Hearing first-hand some of the stories behind the statistics is sobering: Jacqui said, "I have had long-term struggles with mental health and past trauma. I have struggled with the stigma of mental health in the church. People have made me question if I trust God enough due to my anxiety and depression." The prevalence of doubt is also known from previous research, but those experiences become more challenging when heard through young people's own words:

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Demi: *I used to have a lot of questions, but now I'm too scared to ask.*

Kylie (speaking to her faith community): *You made me feel guilty when I had questions or doubt. Saying god loves me isn't enough if I can't feel it.*

Naomi: *[Mum and Dad] helped until I had serious doubts, then I haven't asked them and pretended I'm fine.*

The research has a long way to go. We hope to discover patterns of faith formation among young Australians and to identify the factors that promote and inhibit young people's experiences of spirituality and growth in faith.

One of the early findings is that there's value in asking the questions, even before analysing the data. One young person, on

arriving (finally!) at the end of what is quite a long online survey, said, "Phew! Well, that took a little effort, but I'm glad I did it. The survey asked me questions I've never thought about, and it helped me to see my faith journey in a completely different light. Thanks!"

Not only is Your Story a project for discipleship; administering the survey is in itself part of the task of discipleship. Churches, youth groups, community groups and schools are great places to gather groups of young people to complete the survey together. The Your Story website has leaders' notes to help groups use the survey as part of a general discussion of life and spirituality with young people. We're gathering data up until Easter 2023. If you are 16–20 years old, or you know anyone who is, we'd love you or the young people you know to participate in the survey.

Research like Your Story has given the church plenty of guidelines for how to help strengthen young people's sense of belonging in the church community. Listen to them. Learn their names. Invite their contributions. All these are useful avenues for engaging with young people as full human beings and members of the church.

Ultimately, though, it's not techniques or social connections that keep people in the fellowship of the church; it's meeting Jesus and coming to trust him with our hopes and fears.

Listening well to young people can open a space for genuine conversation. When those opportunities arise, we pray as Paul encouraged the Colossians to pray, that we would be wise, that we would "make the most of every opportunity", and that our conversation would be "full of grace" (Col 4:5–6).

May we be people of grace so that, through us, God would be pleased to draw others to the grace of Christ.

For more information about the Your Story project visit [yourstory.ridley.edu.au](http://yourstory.ridley.edu.au).

Graham Stanton is one of the lead researchers on the Your Story project. Graham is a volunteer youth leader at St Jude's Parkville and is the Director of the Centre for Children's and Youth Ministry at Ridley College, Melbourne.

\* All names are pseudonyms, and quotes are used with permission.




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# Cynicism and glitter pooping jellyfish

MBARI

The bloody-belly comb jelly

## ■ Rev'd Daniel Lowe

It is easy to justify, of course. We are bombarded every day by marketing – someone is always trying to sell something. We live in a digital world in which so much is faked, Photoshopped, curated to sell an ideal. Of course I am cynical. Who wouldn't be? But cynicism leads us down a dangerous path – one well worn by other self-confessed cynics.

First, we lose our sense of compassion for others. In *The Lost Continent: Travels in Small Town America*, Bill Bryson says:

As my father always used to tell me, "You see, son, there's always someone in the world worse off than you." And I always used to think, "So?"

And, without real compassion, we descend into the arrogance of the habitual cynic. In Freud's words (*Letters of Sigmund Freud, 1873–1939*):

*In the depths of my heart I can't help being convinced that my dear fellow-men, with a few exceptions, are worthless.*

Finally, we turn our cynicism on ourselves. As Terry Pratchett put it in *Guards! Guards!*:

*If there was anything that depressed him more than his own cynicism, it was that quite often it still wasn't as cynical as real life.*

As Oscar Wilde said, a cynic knows "the

cost of everything and the value of nothing."

So, what is the antidote to cynicism? For me, it is wonder; a conscious effort to discover the weird, wonderful, surprising and downright amazing things that exist in this world. Things that startle me out of my smug sense of superiority and defy any attempt to mock them. Things that leave me filled instead with a sense of wonder. And the great thing is, the world is full of these sorts of things if we choose to look for them. Once discovered, these wondrous discoveries can begin to reverse the destructive spiral of cynicism.

Let me give you an example. Did you know that there is a jellyfish that poops glitter? Seriously! The bloody-belly comb jelly lives in the deepest depths of the ocean and was first discovered about 20 years ago. It is so sensitive to temperature change that it is very difficult to transport and preserve outside of its natural habitat. Until recently, only a handful of people had been able to lay their eyes on it. The Monterey Bay Aquarium has found a way to keep this super-rare species of marine animal alive and on exhibit. And as if that wasn't exciting enough, they have discovered that it poops glitter! You can even check out the video online (just search for 'glitter pooping jellyfish').

Now here is the logic. If this world can contain something as ridiculously fun as a glitter pooping jellyfish, then it can't be

as underwhelming as cynical me might have thought. And if there are people out there discovering and sharing about these amazing creatures that I was unaware even existed, then clearly humans are not as useless as cynical me suspected. And as soon as I start to value others again, I also rediscover compassion for them. Cynicism conquered by a glitter pooping jellyfish!

Another consequence of being surprised by the world is that it recalibrates my view of God. The smallness of my cynical world requires only a small god that I can direct my cynicism towards. A world that contains wonders beyond my ability to explain points me to a God that is greater than I can possibly fathom. In the words of the Psalmist (19:1-2):

*The heavens tell about the glory of God.  
The skies show that his hands created them.  
Day after day they speak about it.  
Night after night they make it known.*

If I want an antidote for my cynicism, I only need look around with enough curiosity and I will quickly discover that the world is in fact a remarkable place.

A glitter pooping jellyfish may not be conclusive proof of God's existence, but it certainly makes you wonder!

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

# On being or choosing a godparent

I was first asked to be a godparent when a niece of mine was baptised (christened) at a few months old. I agreed mainly because it was the expected thing to do, and supposed to be an honour.

Having grown up in a Christian household, but one without the tradition of godparents, I didn't really know the expectations or responsibilities of such a role.

Being a godparent brings the responsibility of having some spiritual input into the life of a child. It is at the invitation of the parents – implying a 'right' to make such contributions. Typically in the early days that included birthday presents with a Christian theme. In theory I had a 'right' to ask explicit questions about my goddaughter's spiritual health – I will rely on the introvert defence here.

Being a godparent is being someone outside the immediate family for the child to contact in times of need, whether spiritual or physical. Also, a godparent has

the responsibility to pray for their godchild.

Did I do these things and do them well? Probably not all that often or all that well. Relationships change, people move, sometimes the method of expressing our Christianity varies between the parents and godparent – which can be taken as implied criticism and cause tension.

Interestingly, over time the other members of our families have forgotten which person is my goddaughter – confusing her with either of her two siblings. But she has not forgotten and sometimes refers to our relationship; she has mentioned that she looked to me as a role model in some ways.

My goddaughter has not contacted me to ask for spiritual or physical guidance or help in 30 years, which is not necessarily bad – she has had a fairly blessed and strife-free life.

Would I do it again? Yes. Would I do it differently? Yes – hindsight is a wonderful thing. I would do more explicit things: perhaps a Christening anniversary present,

a phone call now and then, and taking prayer more seriously.

If you are considering a godparent for your child, consider carefully. Don't have a godparent for your child because you feel it's expected; do it because you see qualities in someone and you want their involvement in your child's life.

Choosing a godparent for your child doesn't change your role as the most important and closest influencers for your child, but it does add another aspect to their spiritual health. You can help a godparent-godchild relationship by encouraging communication and celebration of events.

If you are asked to be a godparent, don't accept because you feel it's an honour or obligation; do it because you want to contribute to the next generation.

My goddaughter is an active Christian so I guess it all worked out well, although I am not sure that I made much contribution.

This contribution was made anonymously.

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# Religious Freedom in a Secular Age

## A Christian Case for Liberty, Equality, and Secular Government

By Michael F. Bird

HarperCollins Australia, 2022

■ Mark Woods

As an organist, I like to relate complex theological issues to seminal music written by and for Christians. Nowhere is this more apposite than in understanding the debate that is central to Dr Michael Bird's most welcome work.

In 1871, Arthur Sullivan composed the music to Sabine Baring-Guild's *Onward Christian Soldiers* written a few years before. This militant hymn was saved by popular outcry when in the 1980s there was a push to remove it from the United Methodist Hymnal. Although written as the processional for a children's march one Pentecost, and reputedly written in a bare 15 minutes, it became the anthem of choice for the Salvation Army. As an exemplar of the admonition in 2 Timothy 2:3, it survives: "At the sign of triumph, Satan's host doth flee, On then Christian soldiers, on to victory!"

By contrast, The Rev'd Peter Scholtes wrote *They'll Know We Are Christians* for his basement youth choir in 1960s Chicago. It picks up John 13:35.

Given that we are, without doubt, living in a post-Christian society, Bird explores the place of Christianity (and the role of Christians) and the issue of religious freedom in that society.

The author introduces the work by quoting diversely from Pope Paul VI to Bob Menzies – but the most relevant text is, I think, from Cardinal Francis George, the eighth Archbishop of Illinois, who said:

*I expect to die in my bed, my successor will die in prison, and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilisation, as the church has done so often in human history.*

The work is at once a treatise, remonstrance and advocate. Its purpose is simple. As the author says, in Australia and elsewhere "there is both a religious literacy problem and a secular literacy problem."

The book traces the rise of secularism in a post-Christian world (and argues that,

as manifested in countries like Australia, secular pluralism may well be seen as a product of Christianity). The book contrasts this with the position in other countries, particularly those in which the predominant religion is Islam.

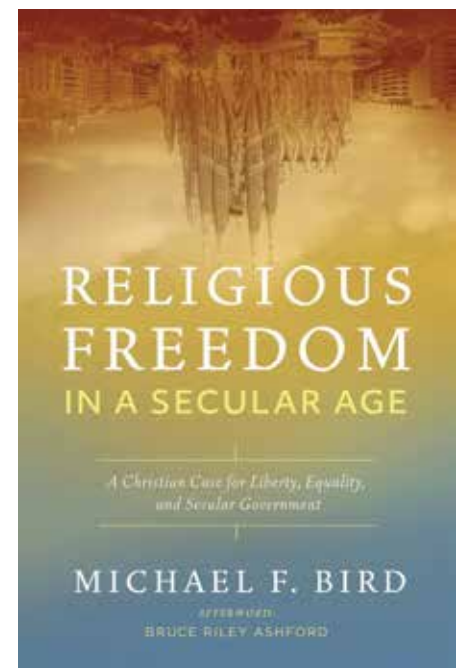
In the case of the former, those countries with a Christian heritage have secular governments that promote religious and cultural pluralism. As to the latter, Bird says that he "doubts Islamic societies outside of Europe are capable of truly secular arrangements(s)," and explains why.

The book also warns Christians of the risks of militant secularisation (which Bird contrasts with secularism) – which, he asserts, is in reality the want of the articulate modern left. A long way from the thinking atheists like Voltaire and Nietzsche are the "angry atheists" of the social media era who despise religion, can draw masses of people to the "never ending salvo of tweets and blog posts to ... keep their disgust of religion afresh." Their message is simple – get religion out of health, education, and society generally. Barely tolerate the private worship practice of those who are of faith.

Of course, it is not as simple as religions employing spin doctors to counter the invective against religions for, among other things, past child sexual abuse, and anti-LGBTIQ+ views. That is because religion is not simply the practice of worship; it is a way of life.

Bird traces the rise of secularism from the reformation and cogently argues that those who see it as more recent or sophisticated than, say, Martin Luther would have, are simply wrong.

One of the most important recognitions is that the author plainly points out the fact that neither Christianity nor secularism are homogenous in themselves. There is no clear consensus view among Christians around issues of human sexuality such as same-sex marriage. Equally there is no clear view among secularists that the works done by Christians in line with Matthew 25:36-40



(whether or not subsidised by the taxpayer) are morally wrong (or at least unnecessary).

Bird canvasses the misuse of secularism by politicians, and gives the particularly apt example of French President Emmanuel Macron and his attempt to "frenchify" Islamic practice for the benefit of the state. Likewise he abhors the harnessing of Christianity by politicians for electoral gain – witness the prospect of Christian ethics and the lifestyle of President Trump being comfortably uttered in the same sentence.

In the end, the author advocates Christian pluralism, and what he describes as the "Thessalonian strategy" by which we "love our neighbours by allowing them to be *other* than us." This is so necessary because "the centre of gravity among conservatives and progressives is the belief that they occupy the moral high ground."

In the end, the myth of the benevolent secular state with atheism as its official religion, asserts Bird, should be taught in the same classes as Aesop's *Fables*. The examples of today's atheist states and their tolerance of freedom of expression and association have made that clear enough.

So we do need religious freedom, and it must be part of the fabric of our community. If that requires legislation, then so be it.

In a thoughtful, if opinionated, afterword to the book, Bruce Riley Ashford summarises Bird's work and advocates the "weaponization" of Christian love as the answer.

The book had a long gestation, but as a clear enunciation of the issues facing the modern Christian it is an informative and thought-provoking read.

# DOMINION: *The Making of the Western Mind*

By Tom Holland

Abacus, 2019

■ Richard Prideaux

This is a rare and exciting book! Tom Holland writes with insight, adventure and extraordinary erudition. In an age when the West has turned its back on the Christian faith, Holland makes a very strong case that the Western world from the first century onwards owes its very existence and life to the spread of Christianity.

Holland begins with the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome but very quickly the reader is drawn into the profound impact of Jesus of Nazareth, his followers and especially the apostle Paul in transforming the Greco-Roman Empire over a period of five centuries.

This is not dull church history for theological students. In each chapter Holland begins with a gripping event that immediately engages the reader – we really want to know the outcome of this

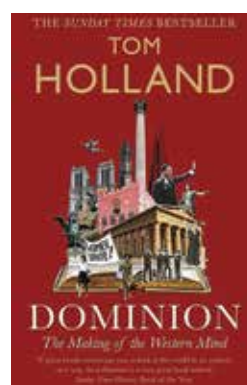
little story and in the process we find ourselves learning deeply about the remarkable transformation of a Roman Empire into a Christian society.

There are three major divisions in this extensive book. Holland divides his story between Antiquity, Christendom and Modernitas.

Each has its own bibliography, which can be annoying when the reader is looking for a reference outside of its section.

At 525 pages plus extensive references, this is a big read – but it is never boring. Each story we know is important. Chapter headings include Athens, Jerusalem, Mission, Belief, Charity, Heaven, Exodus, Conversion, Revolution, Persecution, Flesh, Apocalypse, Reformation, Cosmos, Spirit, Enlightenment, Religion, Science, Shadow, Love and Woke.

All the heroes and the villains of



Western history are on show here and Holland does not spare the horror and chaos alongside the glimmers of hope that shine through in remarkable, often unsung, individuals. Bob Dylan, Tolkien, Quakers, tyrants and popes – no-one is left out. In the end, Holland proves his case. As Christians

flee the West in droves today, and millions in Asia and Africa embrace Christ, the West still demonstrates its Christian cultural heritage, which it cannot shake off. The richest nations of the world have created a world-weary, wealthy monopoly and are burning out, while a whole new Christian third world is rising powerfully.

Speaking about his own faith in a recent *New Statesman* interview, Holland said, “In my morals and ethics, I have learned to accept that I am not Greek or Roman at all, but thoroughly and proudly Christian.”

# Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith

By Michael Reeves

IVP Academic, 2012

■ Richard Prideaux

What a delight to find an intelligible, easy to read and deeply Scriptural account of the doctrine of the Trinity. Michael Reeves, a theological advisor for the English Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF) has written a book about the Trinity I found hard to put down. In five clearly written chapters Reeves asks the question *What was God doing before Creation?* and then spends three chapters dealing with the themes of Creation, Salvation and the Christian Life. The final chapter discusses the uniqueness of the Christian understanding of God.

Although this book is ten years old its ready availability indicates that it has been a popular choice for those seeking to unravel arguably the most difficult doctrine in the Christian faith. Two more recent studies which might interest readers seeking to understand the Trinity are Scott Twain's *The Trinity: An Introduction*, Crossway Books,

2020; and Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity*, Baker Publishing 2021. All three of these books seek in different but helpful ways to ameliorate the complexity and indeed fear that many folk, clergy and lay, feel when asked by a new Christian “how are we to understand the Trinity? Are there three gods or what?” and similar queries.

Reeves has a light touch but manages to cover a vast amount of ground. It is not a “how to” book for Christians. Rather it is a love story about one God in three persons. Reeves demonstrates that the Trinity is *the vital oxygen of the Christian life and joy*. It is understandable because the triune God has revealed himself to us. We do not need theologians five hundred years after Christ to explain the Trinity. The Apostle Paul understood clearly that *Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*. (Philippians 2:11). The Trinity is not a mystery, it is a spiritual truth emerging from the New Testament.

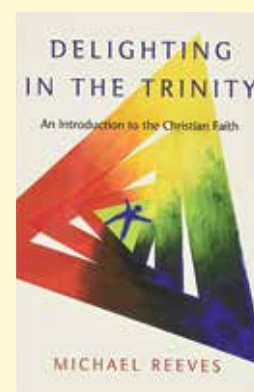
Reeves explains the meaning and joy of the doctrine of the Trinity with clarity,

humour and a wealth of very readable historical data and more particularly with

the help of numerous key figures in the history of Christian faith. Along the way he includes a helpful commentary on Islamic theology about the nature of God, the challenge of Gnosticism, the problem of evil and its explanation, Pelagianism, as well as insights into musical harmony, mathematics and atheism.

Reeves pays particular attention to the Puritans especially Jonathan Edwards' writings but also references Tolkien, Luther, Calvin and Hitchens amongst many others. He is a critic of Schleiermacher and who made the Trinity “a mere appendix to the Christian faith” and is also a critic of Adolf von Harnack who dismissed the Trinity altogether.

*Delighting in the Trinity* is an enjoyable read. I know of no other book on the Trinity that could be said to be “enjoyable”! 5 stars





# Transformation – Now!

*Gracious God,  
we put our trust in you.  
Give us open hearts and minds  
to discern your perfect direction  
for our Mothers' Union:*

*Affirm us in your love  
that we may be bold to  
seek your face.*

*Strengthen us with resolve  
to embrace new ways with confidence.*

*Unite us in heart and mind  
that we may move forward  
with gladness.*

*Inspire us in our faith  
that all things are possible with God.  
Transform us into a people  
empowered by the Spirit,  
overflowing with hope,  
to effectively serve our communities.*

*Amen*

Mothers' Union Prayer for the  
'Re-imagining MU' Conference, July 2022.  
The Mothers' Union theme for 2023–24 is Transformation.

## Coming up

### Securing Food in a Changing Climate

15 February, 7 pm  
Webinar hosted by ACTinG  
(Acting on Climate Together in Gippsland)  
Details page 19.

### Shrove Tuesday in Trafalgar

21 February, 4–6 pm  
St Mary's Trafalgar  
Prepare to get properly shriven and enjoy  
some pancakes and fun.

### 'Faith and Potatoes'

12 March, 11 am  
St Mark's Thorpdale  
Optional excursion to the Thorpdale Potato  
Festival at the Thorpdale Recreation  
Reserve before and afterwards.  
Festival tickets can be purchased online.

### Lenten pilgrimage

20–24 March  
The Abbey Raymond Island  
Bookings: (03) 5156 6580  
info@theabbey.org.au.

## *Walking the land Listening to Spirit Reflecting together*

**Reflection, contemplation and  
moments of silence.  
Appreciating land, lake, sea and sky.  
Being together, blessed by the God  
of all creation.**

Leave behind the everyday clutter  
and make your Lenten pilgrimage  
at The Abbey on Raymond Island.  
Along with guides Dr Cath Connelly  
and Russell Smith, take part in  
morning and evening gathering and  
prayer ritual, and a daily pilgrimage  
walking the tracks around the island.  
For bookings and further information,  
contact The Abbey.

### Lenten pilgrimage

The Abbey Raymond Island  
Monday 20 March 2023  
– Friday 24 March 2023  
0423 400 359, info@theabbey.org.au  
facebook.com/TheAbbey Raymond Island

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