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Truth-telling:

a step on the way to healing and hope

Yoorrook Justice Commission Deputy Chair, Travis Lovett, with Bishop Richard in Melbourne's Federation Square following the final stage of the Walk for Truth on 18 June



Keeping (and changing) the score



'The body keeps the score.' A former Spiritual Director introduced me to this truism coined by psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk in the 1990s. The thesis behind the pithy saying is simple and profound, and supported by more recent advances in neurobiology: the experience of trauma reshapes our bodies and our brains. Jesuit priest Robert J McChesney would add 'soul': trauma reshapes our souls.

McChesney's recent book *The Soul Also Keeps the Score: A Trauma-informed Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, speaks of body and soul, of mental health and spirituality, as 'two languages, one voice in trauma recovery' (see McChesney's article in *Eureka Street*, 4 June 2025). He reminds us that alongside scientific research into the effects and healing of trauma – including vicarious, secondary and intergenerational trauma – the Judeo-Christian tradition has a history of spiritual practices which address its impacts.

Ignatius Loyola, sixteenth-century founder of the Jesuit order, himself suffered and witnessed terrible violence as a young man in the battle of Pamplona. His external injuries manifested in emotional and spiritual wounds that proved no less life threatening.

The Exercises for which Ignatius became famous anticipate some of the techniques of modern clinical practice, including somatic (body-centered) approaches.

Starting from the central mystery of the Incarnation – the Christian belief that in Jesus of Nazareth the very Word of God, the principle of divine reason, took our flesh – Ignatius invites us to discover what can be learned through our bodily sensations. As McChesney explains, God deals with us through our senses ... it is not only the body but the soul, holistically *through* the body, which keeps the score.' (ES, original emphasis).

A key for both Ignatius and van der Kolk in terms of healing has to do with how we access the imagination, and its relationship to memory, which is essential in coming to terms with traumatic events. Only when we can safely face into what has happened

can we begin to move forward.

Van der Kolk commends EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) – developed by Francine Shapiro to treat PTSD in Vietnam War Veterans – precisely because it provides a mechanism for retrieving and reprocessing distressing memories without being overwhelmed by them.

Instead of 'blocking' or 'erasing' such memories (which is a common response to traumatic experience) accessing them beyond the shame, fear, and anxiety they provoke by engaging the body in a holistic approach can open a pathway to imagining how things might be different. McChesney again (ES):

It may be no exaggeration to suggest that imagination is of such critical significance in recovery from traumatic injury that interdisciplinary collaboration between mental health and clinical professionals, on the one hand, and spiritual and pastoral guides, on the other, may be decisive for certain individuals.

Rather than constantly reliving trauma as real and threatening in the present, the integration of memories into the past through interdisciplinary approaches that combine spiritual and clinical methodologies can assist with that wider reintegration of self, including with others and with God. 'Ground-breaking neurobiological advances and somatic-oriented therapies can be complemented by examining trauma's footprints on the soul and spirit', McChesney argues (ES) from a lifetime in spent in pastoral work, including three overseas placements –

Jordan among them – with the Jesuit Refugee Service.

Van der Kolk observes that shame is often a dominant emotion for the traumatically injured. Shame can drive a victim-survivor to try and bury the truth of their lived experience through self-harm, addiction, or other means of emotional numbing. This, in turn, can spiral into destructive patterns of identity formation that may outlive the individuals who first experienced the event or behaviour, resulting in intergenerational trauma.

We have seen something of this – to our proper institutional shame in the church – in victim-survivors of historic abuse, and more recently in the truth-telling crucible of the Yoorrook Justice Commission (see the adjoining statement of the Provincial Bishops on page 3).



Bishop Matt Brain and Canon Shannon Smith (Bendigo Diocese) with Bishop Richard in front of Uncle Glenn Loughrey's glass art installation at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, following the final stage of the Walk for Truth in June

When viewing the testimony of many First Nations people to the Commission, the interplay between shame and intergenerational trauma – and its attendant and persistent systemic disadvantage – came into sharp and confronting relief. So too the evidence of many non-Indigenous people who engaged with the hearings unearthed blockages to the healing power of imagination caused by the repression of corporate memory on account of shared shame.



How can we possibly envisage a better, more just future for all Australians if we cannot bear to hear and tell the stories of our colonial history, and acknowledge its devastating and abiding legacies? As Milan Kundera cautioned, the struggle of humanity against tyranny is the struggle of memory against forgetting. Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* challenges the belief that we are destined to repeat the burdensome weight of our history, personal or communal.

This is why it was so important that the Walk for Truth ended with a celebration of First Nations culture – of First Peoples' resilience and resistance – at Melbourne's Federation Square. Preserving and reclaiming one's essential, inviolable identity is vital in countering the shame inflicted by traumatic injury.

It is also why the annual observance of NAIDOC Week is crucial for Australia's healing from the wounds – physical, psychological, and spiritual – of our past. 70 years on from the formation of National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) in 1955, what began even earlier with William Cooper in 1938 as a day of protest has evolved (since 1975) into a week-long therapeutic celebration of culture – the restorative, integrative, and holistic accessing of collective memory, often through embodied ritual practices – so as to reshape both the present and the future.

Hence the theme of this year's jubilee NAIDOC Week celebration – 'The Next Generation: Strength, Vision, and Legacy.'

Just as it frames an opportunity for younger First Nations peoples especially to own and take pride in the rich diversity of their identities, so too NAIDOC Week invites non-Indigenous Australians to recognise the unique place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our common life, and – healing from shame – to imagine a new, lighter way of being.

+RM



ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA PROVINCE OF VICTORIA

Statement from the Bishops of the Anglican Province of Victoria in response to the Yoorrook Justice Commission's Third Interim Report and Final Report 2 July 2025

The Anglican Province of Victoria stands by the hard truths told during the Land, Sky and Waters Hearings last year, as reflected in the Province's written submissions and the Commission's Third Interim Report and Final Report released on 1 July 2025. Our dioceses reiterate the apologies made during that process.

Policies of enforced segregation and assimilation separated First Nations peoples from Country, language, lore and family, and prevented the practice of culture and spirituality. The Anglican Church was complicit in the implementation of these policies in Victoria.

The cultural genocide that marked the early period of Victoria's colonisation has led to inter-generational trauma and ongoing injustice for First Nations people up to the present day. Systemic racism and structural disadvantage persist in our communities and our churches.

We are grateful for the Commission's reports and acknowledge with contrition its account of the historic and ongoing impacts of the dispossession of First Nations peoples.

We hear the strong recommendations to churches from the Commission in the chapter addressing land injustice.

The matters raised in the recommendations are under active consideration by all Victorian dioceses in relation to current land holdings, regardless of how that land was acquired.

Several dioceses have already resolved to increase the proceeds from land sales directed to First Nations organisations and in support of ministry by First Nations leaders.

We will continue to engage with Traditional Owners, State Government, and the emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council of the Anglican Province of Victoria, in working through the Commission's reports and recommendations.

The Anglican Province of Victoria remains committed to Reconciliation that is founded on truth-telling and expressed in just outcomes for First Nations peoples.

Signatories:

The Rt Revd Genieve Blackwell
Administrator, Diocese of Melbourne

The Rt Revd Garry Weatherill
Bishop of Ballarat

The Rt Revd Dr Matt Brain
Bishop of Bendigo

The Rt Revd Dr Richard Treloar
Bishop of Gippsland

The Rt Revd Clarence Bester
Bishop of Wangaratta

Three Reports from the Yoorrook Justice Commission were tabled in State Parliament on 1 July 2025. Selections of the testimony of +Richard and +Genieve Blackwell on behalf of the Anglican Province of Victoria can be found on pages 314–319 of the 'Truth Be Told' Report, and can be accessed here: <http://bit.ly/410KhWE>.



Reflection, renewal, and refreshing vision

Clergy Conference 23–26 June 2025

■ Ruth Hanlon

What a joy it was for me to return to Raymond Island after 41 years! I was last at The Abbey (known then as A'Beckett Park) for Youth Synod in 1984, before leaving the Diocese for many years.

I love the natural environment, the bird life, the kangaroos and koalas that gather around The Abbey and the beautiful Gippsland Lakes. While many thought I was crazy, I loved being able to hop into the cold water every morning before going to breakfast! A great way to be awake and energised for the day.

It was my first clergy conference in this Diocese, so it was good to have time to get to know other ministry leaders over the four days. It was a packed program punctuated with morning and evening prayer and compline. On Tuesday night some of us enjoyed prayer around the fire outside, singing some old songs and enjoying the clear night sky.

Dr Louise Gosbell (Research Manager at the Australian University of Theology), led us in excellent talks around inclusion and welcome for people with a disability. She spoke from 1 Corinthians 12, reminding us that every member of the church is valuable and gifted by God, and all have contributions to make. Everyone in the body is loved and needed. We were challenged to consider how we can encourage those who may be different from us to use their God-given gifts in serving the Kingdom. We were also challenged to consider our church buildings and service formats to ensure that we are indeed welcoming and inclusive for all people.

Dr Chris Laming and Dr Debra Manning (social workers) and Dr Cath Connelly (Abbey Director) led us in professional development, with training in being Active Bystanders. How do we move from merely observing unacceptable behaviour, bullying or abuse of any kind, to safely taking action to prevent, limit and address such behaviour? These were quite challenging sessions, but I hope and pray they are beneficial as we return to our parishes to foster safe church communities.

The Rev'd Sandy Jones, who has years of experience in leadership training, vision and strategic planning

consultations, helped us look at the Diocesan Vision which was initially cast to 2024, and is ready for a refresh, refine and recast.

We were very well fed at The Abbey, enjoying scrumptious morning and afternoon teas on top of cooked breakfasts, lunch and dinner! We also enjoyed Wednesday night dinner at the Paynesville Pub. It was a good time of collegiality, and I look forward to returning to The Abbey next year!

The Rev'd Ruth Hanlon is the Rector of the Parish Bass/Phillip Island.





2025 Leongatha Daffodil and Floral Show

■ Marion Dewar

The 2025 Leongatha Daffodil and Floral Show, organised by the Leongatha Horticultural Society, will be the 67th event in the Show's history.

St Peter's Anglican Church has been part of the Leongatha Daffodil Festival every year since its inception. The show, held at the Leongatha Memorial Hall, is

open to the public on Thursday 28 August (1:30–5pm), Friday 29 August (9am–5pm), and Saturday 30 August (9am–4pm). Admission is five dollars.

The church event, organised and sponsored by St Peter's Ladies' Guild, is open Thursday 12–5pm, Friday 9am–5pm, and Saturday 9am–4pm (the Church is open daily). Entry is free, as is tea and coffee, a gift from the Church.

St Peter's Opportunity Shop, next door, is open from 10am–4pm Wednesday to Friday and on Saturday morning.

For the Daffodil Festival, there are usually three events: Flowers in Praise, flower arrangements from local churches, a special display this year, Treasures for You from the opportunity shop (all items on display will be available for immediate purchase), and light refreshments, which are served in the church.

This year, there will also be a special Prayer Corner. Sometimes there is an associated event in the church hall, which is part of the church complex. We welcome and encourage everyone to come along and enjoy this event.

Marion Dewar is a Diocesan Lay Reader from the Parish of Leongatha.

Mid-Winter service: A celebration of light, faith and hospitality

■ Dean Spalding

The Parish of Trafalgar marked the rare convergence of the Winter Solstice (21 June) and the Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June) with a special Mid-Winter service. Falling on a 'Fifth Sunday', the timing offered a unique opportunity to reflect on themes of darkness and light, incarnation and mission. The whole Parish of Trafalgar, along with 11 Uniting Church brothers and sisters, enjoyed this event.

The Winter Solstice, with its deep stillness and promise of returning light, speaks powerfully to a spiritually embodied faith. In the Southern Hemisphere, it echoes the Northern experience of Christmas – when Christians celebrate the incarnation of God in Christ, coming to dwell among us in the darkest time of year.

Saints Peter and Paul, though often at odds, are honoured together for their shared mission to carry the message of Jesus far beyond their homeland. Tradition holds they both journeyed to Rome, where they were martyred under Emperor Nero. As pilgrims, they also experienced the hardships of winter; cold, danger, and – at times – hospitality and love from strangers.

The service also celebrated the ongoing incarnation of the Spirit through local creativity, featuring original poetry, music, and photography from community members. The Eucharist was shared with warm spiced wine and hot bread, symbolising warmth, presence, and divine hospitality.

In recognising the challenges winter brings, the service also supported

Baw Baw Food Relief, extending love beyond the church walls, raising \$278.75. The hope was that all who attended felt called to carry God's warmth into the world, and learn, even in darkness, how to embody generosity, presence, and hope.

The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding is the Rector of the Parish of Trafalgar.



Rural faith, global heart

Gathering in Fiji for the IRCA OCEANIA Conference

■ Graeme Liersch

First of all, what is IRCA?

The acronym stands for the International Rural Churches Association, an ecumenical association that cares for rural ministry worldwide.

So much of today's church conferences are held in cities for predominately city or urban churches, hence the birth of IRCA in the early 1990s to cater for rural ministry. You can visit their website for a more detailed history: <https://irca.online/>

I've had the privilege of being part of this association since 2018 when I attended the international conference in New Zealand.

This year, after the hiatus of the COVID years, we managed to organise an Oceanic regional conference in the village of Namoli, Lautoka, Fiji. Our host was the Methodist Church of Fiji and there were 50 representatives from right across the Pacific region that included New Zealand, Australia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG and Fiji.

Representatives from the countries came from a variety of church backgrounds that included Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Uniting Church of Australia, and the Salvation Army.

The Australian Anglicans were represented by myself, Fr Giles Motisi (also representing PNG), and Uncle Jack Harradine from Point Pearce in South Australia.

So, what do a group of strangers from rural ministries and a variety of church backgrounds talk about over a four-day period?

Well, we talk about the things that matter the most to our communities, and unsurprisingly those issues included the

Seasonal Worker schemes that Australia and New Zealand run, drugs and drug cartels, self-determination, climate change, migration and modern-day slavery, plus the safety and well-being of women and children.

Now this wasn't just a talk fest; for each topic we were tasked with two main questions to address:

1. *Where is Jesus in this?*
2. *What do the scriptures have to say about it?*

The aim was to encourage all by sharing our stories, what matters, and how God is helping us through the different issues.

In amongst these topics there were several keynote speakers, one of whom was Uncle Jack Harradine, a Christian Australia's First Peoples brother and evangelist from South Australia who shared his experience of mission stories as an Australia's First Person.

What interested IRCA in Jack's story was that unlike the Māori of NZ and the Pacific Island people who had control over their destiny, the aboriginals had no control or self-determination. The big question was: where did God fit into all this?

Uncle Jack was eloquently able to unpack his story and leave us all with hope for the future. To watch Jack's address go to: <https://bit.ly/4lR9tah>.

Some of the highlights for me were:

- a. Living with a local family in the village. Sleeping arrangements meant sleeping on the floor for many, but the fellowship with the host family was warm and encouraging. They are beautiful people.

- b. Hearing some of the encouraging stories such as Fr Giles's story (see page 7) of hope that came to the fore amongst the chronic drug issue in PNG.

- c. Making new friends.

What have I brought back from this conference?

I've brought back a better understanding of the issues that concern the Pacific Island people. Things like:

- a. Rising sea levels – it is devastating for some island nations such as Kiribati.
- b. Modern Day slavery – it has become a real issue where in some cases employers in the Seasonal Worker schemes threaten their workers with expulsion from the country if they don't work for next to nothing. Fortunately, it is not the case for most, but there are some who make the scheme unattractive for those who are struggling for employment in their home country.
- c. Drugs issues in the islands may not be as bad as in Australia, but they are growing with early signs of ICE now being found in some island nations.

Finally, I was encouraged to see God at work in these island nations. Their faith and honesty are something for us to aspire to.

Are you interested in going to the IRCA International conference in Romania in 2026? If so, check out their website or have a chat with me.

The Rev'd Graeme Liersch is the Rector of the Parish of Wonthaggi/Inverloch.



A wonderful story of hope

The team that found more than just victory on the field

■ Giles Motisi

I recently shared this story at the IRCA Conference (International Rural Churches Association) in Fiji.

During the Christmas period of 2023, a group of local leaders of the community just on the other side of the Modawa Institute organised a soccer tournament. Their reason was to get the young people engaged in sport so that the festive season would be free from alcohol and drugs as these were major social issues. One of the organisers was Peter Sogu who we knew as a family friend. We both had a long discussion regarding sponsors. He then asked whether my sons were interested in joining his team.

When I got home, I spoke to my elder son to ask if he could get his company to sponsor the games, which he did, and whether he and his younger brothers were interested in playing in their uncle's team. He gave it some thought and came back requesting whether it was okay instead to have a college team of their own in the competition. Most of the students were away on holiday so I said to him, 'if only you could come up with a team'. He checked everyone at the college and found out they were short of four players.

I asked Daffield Lasibori, a student leader, to see if he could assist my son and get a team together and he offered to get the four players from his village. A day later he asked me to go and pick up the players that travelled from the village in town. When I arrived, I was shocked to see nearly 20 young people

waiting. I turned to Daffield and said, 'didn't we say four players?' and he replied, 'I know Father.'

Clearly, we had brought a problem to the college. These young people come from a community known for excessive use of alcohol and drugs. They are known for alcohol related fights, hold ups, and even murders. I said to Daffield, 'we have to be careful because these boys have the potential to create problems, and you and I could be removed for bringing them here.'

He spoke to them at dinner, and they assured him that nothing would happen. For two weeks they lived on the campus. We provided them with food, and they went every day to the soccer field. After the games the college community invited them to Christmas dinner as guests, and we thanked them for their support with the college team and for spending Christmas with us.

One of them made a speech in which he thanked the community for the love and support they received during the time they spent there and said it was the best Christmas they ever had. For these kids all they knew was rejection, being hated by their community and even their own family, and that drove them to do the things they did. What they found during those two weeks was love and acceptance, a life they were missing.

It was an emotional occasion as we said goodbye and I dropped them off in town. We later learned that when they got home they spent a few days

collecting food, with some of them going fishing and having a big dinner in their community. During that dinner they told their community members what they experienced and that they were challenged during their two weeks at the college, that there is a better life and that they needed to change. They said sorry to their families and their community and assured them that that dinner marked the beginning of their new life.

Since then we have not heard of any drug and alcohol-related activities from the village where these young kids came from. People found traveling there safe now.

A lot of people, including the families of these young people, said they now worship and some of them attended church especially on Sunday, and the environment made a deep impression on these young people. This is true because we have heard stories of people who would come to the college and sense a presence, and some good feeling on the site. We even had all sorts of cars just driving in and driving out again for the same reason, that they just wanted to be there.

These young people must have been touched by the presence of God and that led them to such a drastic change.

A wonderful story of hope.

Fr Giles Motisi is the Priest-in-Charge of the Parish of Moe/Newborough.



■ **Bec Hayman**

I'm often challenged by how Jesus drove the money changers and merchants out of the Temple. These people had set themselves up in the part of the Temple which was supposed to be a welcoming space for outsiders. Instead of a house of prayer for all nations, traders had turned it into a den of thieves. Instead of facilitating worship for those to whom this was all new, they were selling religious paraphernalia to the religious community. All of this has made me think about our 'outer courts' differently.

The Cooperating Church in Churchill comes with an amount of land that was once suitable for a thriving congregation with lots of children. Now we look across our vast lawns and wonder how we'll ever muster the strength and resources to mow it. We wonder who'll pick up after the eucalypts with their untidy habits. And come Autumn, who can possibly keep on top of the oak leaves, so they don't impact negatively on the neighbours.

But the thing is: we get neighbours visiting. Adults walk their dogs; children climb trees; teenagers smoke behind the shed and everyone uses it as a short cut to walk home from the bus stop.

In other words, the nations have come to the outer courts of our temple. They have come. We haven't offered them a cacophony of merchants and the bleating of frightened animals, but neither have we offered them a sacred space. Instead, we have provided a spiritual desert. There's nowhere to sit.

Nothing much to do. Next to nothing to reflect on. No words of comfort or hope. So, they come, and they go, none the wiser.

We are trying to change the narrative from cursing the land to honouring the space and making it a welcome place for anyone to come by. Thus far our efforts have cost us nothing. If things get broken or stolen, at least they haven't perished from just sitting in the shed. So, a tub of ball games is now under the car port with a note: 'These are for anyone to use. Enjoy.' Also under the carport, we've put a Foosball soccer table. We had a seat destined for the rubbish, to which we've given a new life under the aforementioned oak. It's called the 'Slow Down Seat' and has this little reflection written on it: 'Say thanks for the good; Let go of the bad; Ask for help with the hard'. We plan to yarn bomb the trunk of the oak and fashion it into a prayer tree. One evening we gathered the branches the eucalypts had helpfully dropped and had an old-fashioned singalong around the campfire.

The ideas are flowing. Maybe, once the neighbourhood kids know they are welcome, they'll feel comfortable coming for a sausage sizzle and some outdoor games after school. Maybe, once they feel comfortable coming for games outside, they'll come inside for board games. Maybe, once they feel comfortable being inside the church, they might ask those awesome questions young people these days ask: What do you do in here? Is this where God lives? What will happen if I pray? And maybe then the outer court of our temple will have succeeded in breaking down the barriers between us and our neighbours just as I think it was originally intended to do.

The Rev'd Bec Hayman is the Anglican Priest at the Cooperating Churches of Churchill/Boolarra/Yinnar.

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St Paul's Year 10 students who attended the special breakfast event

To celebrate the inaugural VCE cohort at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School's Traralgon Campus, the 2026 VCE Foundation students and their families were invited to a special breakfast event.

Guests were warmly welcomed by the school's Chaplain Glen Treble, Deputy Principal Gordon Oldham and current Year 10 Traralgon Secondary School Captains, Chloe Ellen and Layla Graham.

A highlight of the morning was the return of Class of 2020 alumnus, Jesse Buhagiar, who attended St Paul's Traralgon Campus from three-year-old kinder to Year 10, completing VCE at the Warragul Campus, and is now studying a Bachelor of Biomedical Engineering at Monash University.

Despite having a final university exam that afternoon, Jesse returned to share

heartfelt advice with the upcoming VCE students, emphasising the importance of good study habits, avoiding distractions, and, above all, supporting each other through the final years of schooling.

Reflecting on his own VCE experience at the Warragul Campus, he encouraged the cohort to embrace the opportunity of completing their senior years locally in Traralgon. He said:

I loved my time at Warragul. However, if you asked every single student from my Traralgon Year 10 class, I can almost guarantee that every single person would say you're living the dream to have VCE here.

He noted the value of time saved from commuting – time that could now be invested in study, work, sport or volunteering.

A few weeks prior to the event, students attended a dedicated VCE assembly led by the Traralgon Secondary School's Academic Leadership team. The session outlined what to expect from the two-year journey ahead, including a comprehensive array of VCE subject offerings that meet university entrance requirements (subject to student interest and selections) and the exciting new facilities in the pipeline: the transformation of the old library building into a new Year 7 Centre by 2026, and the building of a new purpose-built VCE Centre and Specialist Hub ready by 2027.

Strengthening families and communities walking together in Gippsland

■ Wendy Mawoyo

As Anglicare Victoria's Community Development Coordinator for Parish Partnerships in Gippsland, I've seen firsthand how much stronger we are when we work together. Whether in rural townships or coastal communities, the heart of what I see across this region is a deep desire to care for one another, and that's something Anglicare Victoria is committed to supporting.

On a recent visit to the Corner Inlet parish, I caught up with Fran Grimes. We both had the opportunity to connect with the local school and begin a conversation about parenting support. Parenting is a challenge for so many families right now: juggling work, wellbeing, and the demands of raising children in a changing world. That's why programs like Parent Zone are so important. These sessions offer parents a safe space to share experiences, access strategies, and feel less alone. Exploring how we might bring this to the Foster community was exciting.

I especially loved the collaboration: minister, school team and the Neighbourhood House. We had one common goal in mind, thriving communities. This is only one example of how Parish/Agency partnerships can make a real difference.

At Anglicare Victoria, we believe our role is not only to offer professional services but to walk alongside communities. From family violence support to financial counselling and parenting education, we're here to complement the work of local parishes – together offering practical hope to those who need it most.

Let me share a little about a life changing program in the Gippsland community:

Program Highlight: Gippsland Community Legal Service (GCLS)

GCLS offers free legal advice and support for people across Gippsland, including help with family violence intervention orders, powers of attorney, wills and



Wendy and Fran Grimes

estates, and disaster-related issues. Based at 190 Commercial Road, Morwell, with outreach in Bairnsdale and Wonthaggi, this service is a vital resource for individuals and families facing legal stress.

If your parish would like more details or to make a confidential referral, please get in touch with me: wendy.mawoyo@anglicarevic.org.au

Together we can build stronger, more compassionate communities – one connection at a time.



Upskilling journey inspires Gippsland Grammar's youngest learners

Gippsland Grammar Early Learning Centre students Penny Wager and Axel Hullah during PMP with passionate educator Maddison Cuttriss

In the heart of Gippsland Grammar's Early Learning Centre, a familiar face brings fresh energy and expertise to the classroom. Maddison Cuttriss, an adored co-educator, has upskilled and stepped into a new role as a qualified early childhood teacher, leading the three-year-old Reception group at Bairnsdale Campus.

Her journey is one of dedication and growth. Like all co-educators at the ELC, she began her career holding a Diploma of Children's Services. But her passion for early childhood education inspired her to take the next step. Late last year, she proudly completed her Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood, officially becoming a university-trained teacher.

'It's been a rewarding journey,' Maddy shared. 'I've always loved working with young children, and now being able to lead a classroom and shape their early learning experiences is incredibly fulfilling.'

The impact of Maddy's upskilling is really felt. Her colleagues praise her warmth, creativity, and deep understanding of early childhood development. Parents too, have noticed the positive energy she brings to the classroom, according to Head of Bairnsdale Campus Virginia Evans.

'Maddy has a natural connection with the children,' Mrs Evans said. 'She makes them feel safe, seen and excited to learn and it's lovely to see.'

As Gippsland Grammar continues to invest in high-quality early education, Maddy's story stands as a shining example of what's possible when passion

meets opportunity. 'Her journey is not just a personal achievement but a gift to the entire school community', Mrs Evans said.

Growing up in Lakes Entrance, Maddy reflected on positive memories of her own early years.

'That's what drew me to teaching in the first place, I wanted to help create those same joyful, safe experiences for other children,' she said.

After finishing high school, Maddy moved to Melbourne to pursue her Diploma of Children's Services and began working in a childcare centre in the eastern suburbs. Over the next five years, she worked with children from birth to five years old.

In 2022, Maddy joined Gippsland Grammar as a co-educator and fell in love with the Early Learning Centre's warm, community-focused atmosphere, continually learning from its passionate educators, who quickly became her confidants and valued mentors.

'Their dedication to high-quality education and care really inspired me,' she said. 'It made me want to do more.'

Within a year, she enrolled in a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education through Deakin University's employment-based pathway. This allowed her to study online while completing her placements at the ELC, supported every step of the way by the staff, children and families she had come to know so well.

Maddy brings her passion for hands-on, nature-based learning into the classroom. One of her favourite activities is gardening with the children.

'We've been growing carrots, beetroot, snow peas and lettuce,' she says with a smile. 'The children love checking on the plants and learning how to protect them from pests.'

This term, Maddy introduced a composting system with help from Andrea Kleehammer at Gippsland Lakes Complete Health. The children have embraced the project, learning how composting benefits both their garden and the environment.

'It's been so much fun,' Maddy says. 'We're learning together, and it's empowering the children to think about sustainability and their role in creating a greener future.'

Outside the classroom, Maddy has discovered another way to care for the world around her and recently became a licensed wildlife foster carer, thanks to a connection with a school parent. Now, she's trained to rescue and care for orphaned and injured wildlife, adding another layer of compassion to her already remarkable story.

Looking ahead, Maddy is excited to continue growing in her role and benefit the children of East Gippsland.

'I'm really looking forward to deepening my relationships with the children and families here,' she said. 'It's such a privilege to be part of their early learning journey.'

With her roots and her heart firmly planted in Gippsland Grammar, Maddison Cuttriss is helping shape the future – one tiny gardener and one curious question at a time.



Learning in the heart of the city

Gippsland Grammar's Year 9 experience

Gippsland Grammar students exploring the city during the two-week Melbourne Experience

Gippsland Grammar's specialist Year 9 Program continues to deliver life-changing learning experiences, with this year's Melbourne Experience highlighting how regional students can thrive when immersed in the heart of the city.

Held annually during Term 2, the Melbourne Experience sees the entire Year 9 cohort relocate to the city and attend school at the 'City Cite' classroom on Flinders Street. Students commute independently via public transport and either stay with family and friends or at school-arranged accommodation with Gippsland Grammar staff.

Head of Year 9 Cass Booth said the program has been at the forefront of the school's forward-thinking education offering for more than 25 years and believes the kind of experiential learning it offers is particularly powerful during this stage of adolescent development.

'Year 9 is a pivotal stage in a student's development socially, emotionally, and intellectually,' Ms Booth said. 'It's a time when young people begin to question the world around them, seek independence, and form a deeper understanding of their place in society. And the City Cite program is designed precisely with this in mind.'

For Year 9 student Jack Taylor, the contrast between life at home at Bushy Park to living in the CBD was stark, but he finished his fortnight in the city with a newfound confidence and independence.

'I've never really been a city person, however catching trams and getting a feel for Melbourne was a great experience,' Jack said. 'I would recommend it. Not only did I learn more about the city and culture, but I also gained experience in navigating my way around the city, shopping for groceries and cooking for myself.'

Jack's mum Jodie Taylor said the rewards of Jack stepping outside of his comfort zone were numerous.

'It was just amazing for us to see how well he was doing,' Mrs Taylor said. 'Jack does a lot of navigating in the bush and he was able to translate those skills to navigating around the city too. He caught his first Uber, caught a tram, went out for Korean BBQ, went shopping for his own food and even got his uniform organised each night so it was ready for the next day. It made me realise Jack is ready for more independence at home as well. It was a big decision for us to send Jack to Gippsland Grammar but it's been an incredible journey. It's the best decision we've made.'

Ms Booth said stories like Jack's echoed across the cohort.

'Academically, the students develop research, communication, and analytical skills through their inquiry projects,' she said. 'Socially, they learn to collaborate, listen, and lead. Emotionally, they gain confidence, empathy, and a broader perspective on the world.'

Acting Principal Bo Power, who joined the students in Melbourne for the final two days this year, said the Melbourne Experience is an essential part of a carefully designed program that addresses the complex needs of adolescents.

'Year 9 is a time when change is occurring; their views of themselves, family and their community are adjusting,' Mr Power said. 'Programs that address those changes effectively create better engagement opportunities and avoid the decline in education outcomes that are often associated with this time in the students' lives.'

The independent school's Year 9 Program was established in the late 1990s and is renowned for its deliberate and holistic design that offers students four diverse camp experiences throughout the year: the Melbourne Experience, a Darn (snow) Camp in the Alpine National Park, a four-day 40km bushwalk to the remote Lake Tali Karng on the Wellington Plains, and elective camp options that include activities such as rafting and mountain biking.

But for many students, the Melbourne Experience is a highlight that marks a turning point in their growth.

'They return not only with new knowledge,' Ms Booth said, 'but with a stronger sense of self, a greater appreciation for others, and a readiness to take on new challenges.'



Student Jack Taylor broadened his horizons through the school's Melbourne Experience



ACTinG offers creative workshops in three locations

How is the future looking, and what is a Christian response? Where is real hope for humanity and all creation in these confronting times of climate

change, mass species extinctions and pollution, as well as global economic and political instability?

What is the root cause of the sustainability crisis, and how can churches respond?

How can I make a difference?

What spiritual practices, new understandings and imaginative approaches can help us to act in hope?

Abbey Director, Dr Cath Connelly, and ACTinG Chair, Jan Down will explore these questions through a creative and interactive workshop in three locations around Gippsland:

Warragul Anglican Church
Tuesday 16 September, 1–4pm

St Nicholas Lakes Entrance
Thursday 16 October, 1–4pm

St Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Sale
Saturday 8 November 1–4pm

Bring your questions and your imagination and expect to be surprised by hope! We'd love to know you are coming, especially so we can cater for afternoon tea, so please RSVP to acting@gippslandanglicans.org.au.



Embracing the 2025 Season of Creation

■ **Krista Mountford**

Each year from 1 September 1 to 4 October, Christians across the world come together for the Season of Creation – a special time to pray and take action for our shared home, the Earth. This season begins with the World Day of Prayer for Creation and concludes on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, known as the patron saint of ecology.

The theme for 2025, *Peace with Creation*, is inspired by a passage from Isaiah (32:14–18). It reminds us that true peace isn't just about avoiding conflict; it grows from healthy, right relationships – between God, people, and the natural world. Unfortunately, those relationships are under strain today because of environmental damage, climate change, overconsumption, and systems that exploit both people and the planet.

The Season of Creation invites us all, churches and individuals alike, to pause, reflect, and renew our commitment to caring for God's creation. This year's symbol, the Garden of Peace, depicts a dove flying from a dry, lifeless landscape to a vibrant, green one. It's a powerful call to become peacemakers who help heal and restore what has been harmed.

This season is both spiritual and practical. It's a time for prayer and worship, but also for education, advocacy, and real, hands-on action. It calls us to listen to the cries of the Earth and those who are most vulnerable, to plant and protect life, and to work toward climate justice.

If you want to learn more about how to join in the 2025 Season of Creation, visit: <https://seasonofcreation.org/>.

Krista Mountford is the Editor of *TGA* and Diocesan Development Officer.



Exceptional service to AV honoured

In July, Vicki Levey – Gippsland Regional Director, Anglicare Victoria (right) – and Michelle Tarranto – Assistant Director, Community Services & Support Services (left) – visited Beth Delzoppo, OAM, at her home in Neerim South and shared a lovely afternoon tea.

The purpose of the visit was to acknowledge and thank Beth for her service as a member of the Council for Anglicare Victoria for over 30 years, and to present Beth with a personally signed certificate of appreciation from Paul MacDonald (CEO, Anglicare Victoria) and a gift of an indoor potted plant.

Beth's dedication to this work has also been expressed at the local level through her equally long-standing commitment to Parish Partnerships – not least as a member of the Parish Partnerships Steering Committee, which oversees the awarding of parish grants as one way of connecting the life of our faith communities with the mission of Anglicare Victoria.

Vicki brought homemade scones for the occasion, and Beth sent her and Michelle home with some of the famous Delzoppo jam! Congratulations Beth, and thank you for these decades of unstinting service!

The Abbey August

■ Cath Connelly

Three things come to mind when I think about the best ways to spend a Saturday in late winter. The first is to curl up in front of an open fire and spend the day reading a book and playing the harp. The second is to spend part of the day, fully rugged up, walking along a wild, ocean beach in full exposure of all the wind and waves can throw at me. And the third way? Feasting! Gathering with good friends, excellent food, wine flowing freely, warm surrounds and beautiful harp music. Yes, this sounds like The Abbey Feast. Saturday 30 August. I'll be there and I encourage you buy a ticket for our annual fundraiser and join me at this thoroughly enjoyable event.

On another topic, I am keen to introduce you to our newly renovated retreat rooms. Gone are the old bunk beds and the need to bring your own linen. At The Abbey we now offer comfortable, warm, fully furnished rooms that are specifically designed with the individual retreatant in mind. With access to the Illawarra kitchen for your self-catering, these gorgeous rooms are a very affordable price. You know how beautiful it is here, and with these rooms we are hoping that you take the opportunity to stay for restoration and recreation. Yes, you still have to use the Amenities Block as the bathroom ...

To come to the Feast or to book a cabin for your retreat, phone us on (03) 5156 6580.



WINTER FEAST 2025

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Save the date



For further information, please contact Anna at the Abbey: (03) 5156 6580, info@theabbey.org.au

AUGUST

- 8-10 Circle Dance Retreat.
Facilitator: Robyn Sussems
- 14 *Hush Quiet Day* – Embracing the Word in the 21st Century
Facilitator: Dennis Webster
- 14 Celtic Music session
- 17 Harp Concert – Ben Creighton Griffiths
- 28-30 2025 Leongatha Daffodil and Floral Show (see page 5)
- 30 Abbey Feast

SEPTEMBER

- 11 Celtic Music session
- 18 *Hush Quiet Day* – Journey from the Centre
Facilitator: Cath Connelly

OCTOBER

- 4 Blessing of the Pets
- 9 *Hush Quiet Day* – Triangle of Rhetoric: Ethos, Pathos and Logos.
Facilitator: Kevin Broughton
- 9 Celtic Music session
- 10-12 Women's Storytelling weekend retreat
Facilitator: Lee Palumbo
- 24-25 Diocesan retreat – Rev'd Kate Campbell
- 26-31 Meditation and Mindfulness in the Christian Tradition.
Facilitator: Roland Ashby

THE ABBEY WINTER FEAST 2025

That special time of the year in the diocesan calendar is fast approaching! The annual Abbey Winter Feast will be held on Saturday 30 August with the fun and feast beginning at 12 noon.

Since its inception in 2013 the Winter Feast has become a significant event on our diocesan calendar, providing an opportunity for Anglicans to come together to socialize and financially assist the growing ministry of The Abbey.

The charge for this event is \$60pp and our well-established practice of unleashing the culinary talents of Anglicans in our midst has been maintained with the Traralgon parish preparing a sumptuous three course meal with matching wines. Dr Cath Connelly, The Abbey Director is a renowned harpist and during a break in proceedings will play for those present.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could encourage others from your parish to join you on this important occasion!

This is our major fundraising event for the year, and all proceeds will be committed to the work of The Abbey in its service to the Diocese and outreach to the wider community.

For further information and bookings please contact Anna at The Abbey on 5156 6580 or info@theabbey.org.au.



A new congregation is born

■ Marion Dewar

The Indian Orthodox Congregation of St Thomas, South Gippsland, was inaugurated on Friday evening 13 June at St Peter's Anglican Church, Leongatha.

Pinto Mathew, a nurse at Gippsland Southern Health Service, in conversation with Leongatha's Dr Hugh Chisholm about the lack of church services for members of the Indian Orthodox Church in the area, was encouraged to make a request for a venue to the Anglican church. The request was granted, and preparations made to familiarise Pinto with the church and ensure a parish member was on hand for the evening.

The Vicar, Reverend Father Sujin Varghese Mappila, and several senior laymen came from Clayton to lead the first service on 16 May. This was repeated at the second service in June. The congregation members, who number from 25 to 45, come from Leongatha and surrounding towns and as far away as Traralgon.

The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, also known as the Indian Orthodox Church, was founded in Kerala, South India, by the apostle Thomas, about 52CE. The Church has over 3.5 million members worldwide. St Mary's Indian Orthodox Cathedral, Melbourne, is situated in Coburg with the congregation forming in 1980. St Gregorios's Indian Orthodox Church is situated in Clayton with the congregation forming in 2010.

For readers unfamiliar with church services in this tradition I will offer some information as I was privileged to attend the service in June. A little over two hours in duration, the service began with Evening Prayer; prayers for the sick, those who had requested prayer and prayers for the congregation; followed by Holy Communion (Holy Qurbana). Incense was used at various points. The service was sung and intoned in Malayalam throughout, with the only English being the Bible reading.

St Thomas Malankara Indian Orthodox congregation

At the conclusion of this service, three events took place. Father Mappila was farewelled, as his three-year term is over and he will return to Kerala. Marion Dewar (Parish Council member) welcomed the congregation on behalf of the Anglican Parish of Leongatha. Father Mappila read the Kalpana (license or letter) formally initiating the congregation, to great applause. It was reported on St Gregorios's Facebook page:

By the Blessings of H.G. Dr Yuhanon Mar Diascoros, Asst Metropolitan, Diocese of Asia Pacific, a new congregation has been established in the South Gippsland Region of Victoria, Australia. The Congregation has been named St Thomas Malankara Indian Orthodox Congregation, South Gippsland, Australia.

Marion Dewar is a Diocesan Lay Reader from the Parish of Leongatha.

Called to love: UNHCR Global Report 2024

■ Krista Mountford

I was recently sent the UNHCR Global Report 2024 (by the UN Refugee Agency) and felt it important to share key highlights and how we can respond as Christians in Gippsland.

The report reveals a record 129.9 million people around the world are now forcibly displaced – a staggering figure that includes refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, and stateless persons. Conflict, persecution, and the effects of climate change continue to force millions from their homes, while the resources to support them are shrinking.

As Anglicans in Gippsland – many of us living in relative safety and stability – this global crisis calls us not to look away, but to respond in faith and action. We can help by deepening our awareness and understanding of the plight of displaced people.

Locally, we can also connect with and support refugee communities across Gippsland. Many have come through Australia's humanitarian visa program, often after experiencing trauma, separation, and long periods in refugee camps or transitional housing. These families are

building their lives in Gippsland – learning English, sending their children to school, and contributing to local communities – yet they continue to face challenges around employment, housing, and social connection.

There are a number of organisations and programs in Gippsland already working to support refugees and newly arrived migrants. *Gippsland Multicultural Services (GMS)* in Morwell provides settlement support, youth mentoring, and cultural programs. *Latrobe Community Health Service* offers refugee health services and family support. Local initiatives like the *Multicultural Groups* at the Warragul and Morwell Community Centres, the *AMES Australia* services offered at TAFE Gippsland in Morwell, and other groups like *AMEP* (Adult- Migrant English Program) also play crucial roles.

Parishes might consider connecting with these groups to offer venue space, friendship, English conversation practice, or pastoral care.

Reports like this are not just statistics – they are a challenge to live out our faith in practical and compassionate ways.

I encourage readers to take time to explore the full report, available at www.unhcr.org, and reflect prayerfully on what it means for us, here in Gippsland, to walk alongside the displaced in love and solidarity.



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Hadestown

■ Dean Spalding

It might seem a little bit of a stretch to 'review' an already finished Melbourne performance for The Gippsland Anglican – but this was a musical based on 'stretches' and long treks! In my case, a birthday treat for my youngest daughter saw three family members journey to Her Majesty's Theatre to catch a Saturday afternoon performance of *Hadestown* and it merits 'review' for several positive reasons.

The musical draws upon an ancient Greek tragedy – the tale of Orpheus (Noah Mullins) and his deep love for Eurydice. Eurydice was usually played by Abigail Adriano, but on the day of our attendance, an extraordinary 'understudy' performance by Afua Adjei which received a standing ovation and lent a raw Australian lilt to that character's voicing. Together with Christine Anu's interpretation of Hermes it made the performance feel very much 'at home' and 'earthed'.

In short, the tale in this performance translated *very well*. I'm mindful that shortly after the war, Melbourne was the third largest Greek population outside Athens and Thessaloniki. But there are many other happy reasons that this re-working of ancient Greek myth works so well.

In the tale, the 'earth' is under threat. The other two 'gods' in the small character list are Hades (Adrian Tamburini) and Persephone (again, usually played by Elenoa Rokobaro, but at our attendance by Sarah Murr). You will undoubtedly recall the myth of those two gods! Persephone was the daughter of Demeter (goddess of Earth's bounty), but Persephone is lured to the Underworld by Hades and condemned to stay there, threatening the world above with an endless winter caused by Demeter's grief until a

compromise is reached whereby Hades agrees to an annual six months' release giving, in the myth, an explanation of the balance of the seasons. This is where *Hadestown* excels in its reworking of a classic. Picking up on the Romanisation of Hades as 'Pluto' – the 'Rich One', *Hadestown* reimagines Hades' own grief for Persephone as distorting into a monumental industrialisation of the underworld with furnaces, electricity grids, blinding lights and the burning of the 'fossils of the dead' achieved through the exploitative mining of the Underworld and the dehumanisation of an enslaved workforce.

One of the greatest redemptive potentials within arts and entertainment is their winsome ability to provoke thought and action – to educate, in the literal sense of 'draw out'. In the best tradition of musical entertainment – think about how *Showboat* challenged racism and the miscegenation laws in the USA in the late 1920s – *Hadestown* provokes thought about contemporary issues: climate justice, migration, refugees and the ethical function of borders. The last song of the first half is called 'Why We Build the Wall'.

If you're a supporter of ACTinG or likeminded, you may care to listen to the soundtrack of *Hadestown* which is freely available on smart devices – ask any young person! The story is easy to pick up as the lyrics carry the narrative in opera style. The musical abounds with beautiful melodies – most with a vibrant 'New Orleans' jazz feel, except for the songs of Orpheus which are 'folk' ballads.

Pitted against a world that cruelly oscillates between being too hot and too cold, Orpheus determines to set the world right by singing it back into balance.

The musical itself carries the same noble objective. At one joyous moment in the musical the cast raise their cups to toast, 'To the world we dream about, and the one we live in now', and Orpheus reflects, 'And if no one takes too much, there will always be enough.'

The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding is the Rector of the Parish of Trafalgar.



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In the flesh: The sacred gift of being present in a digital age

'Are you a robot?'

The new normal isn't very normal

■ Daniel Lowe

The other day I was once again asked by a computer to prove I'm not a robot. You know the ones, 'Click all the boxes with traffic lights' or 'Type these wobbly letters that definitely don't look like any known alphabet.' It struck me, as I dutifully clicked my way through blurry intersections, that this is a uniquely digital-age dilemma. No one has ever stopped me in the hallway at school and said, 'Before we proceed, could you please prove you're not a robot?'

But then I started to wonder: What if it's not such a silly question? What if, after hours spent emailing, messaging, uploading, scrolling, and reacting, the real problem is that I do feel a bit like a robot? How much of my life now happens through screens instead of in rooms with actual people? And what does that do, over time, to our sense of what it means to be human?

During lockdowns, we lamented the loss of in-person connection. Not all of it was bad. Many rediscovered hobbies (some are still making sourdough), and we all became overnight Zoom experts – unless you were under 21, in which case, Discord was the platform of choice.

But it wasn't all smooth sailing. Every teacher remembers the sea of black squares and muted microphones. Students refused to turn cameras on. Friends in other industries said the same of staff meetings. Online, we tolerate behaviours we'd never accept in person. While some habits, like working from home, have endured, many have simply meant more time spent interacting online.

The brave new world

Now, just a few years later, we're being invited to continue further down the digital road into a future shaped by AI companions, disembodied interactions, and digital avatars. New rules of engagement have been developed (have you ever tried calling a young person without first warning them via a text?), and the previously lamented loss of in-person interaction and embodied presence has become, for some at least, a celebration of a new

way of being. At the more extreme end, transhumanists talk of uploading the mind into digital form. Others believe we should remain organic but rewire our biology through genetic engineering. The body, in these views, is just an inconvenient vessel to be altered or left behind.

Before we pat ourselves on the back for being cutting-edge, it's worth remembering that this isn't the first time we've wrestled with what it means to be human. The technology may be new, but the temptation to downplay the body is not. And Christian theology has long offered a different vision.

When we've been here before: The body-dismissing heresies

This discomfort with bodies isn't a new invention. The philosophical approach known as dualism has had considerable influence on both ancient and modern thinking. Dualism is, in simple terms, the belief that reality is ultimately made up of two opposing forces or principles, usually seen as spirit vs matter, or soul vs body. These two parts are thought to be fundamentally different in nature, and many dualistic worldviews treat the spiritual as good and eternal, and the physical as flawed, temporary, or even evil.

This line of thought influenced religious attitudes, encouraging contempt for the body and the physical world. Some even saw the body as a trap for the soul, a burden to be escaped through self-denial.

The early church had to respond to several heresies that downplayed or even despised the physical world. Ideas not unlike today's tech-utopian dreams of uploading our consciousness to the cloud. Consider these three heresies:

Gnosticism: Emerging in the 1st–2nd centuries, Gnosticism taught that the spiritual world was good, and the physical world was evil or corrupt. Salvation, according to the Gnostics, came through secret spiritual knowledge. The church challenged this with the bold insistence that God became flesh and that resurrection was physical.



Docetism: A specific strand of Gnostic thought that claimed Jesus only 'seemed' to have a body. His suffering and death weren't real, just appearances. This was rejected by early Christian leaders like Ignatius of Antioch, who stressed that Jesus 'truly suffered.' If Christ's body wasn't real, then neither was redemption.

Manichaeism: Founded by the prophet Mani in the 3rd century, this dualistic religion also saw the body as a prison for the soul. Augustine dabbled in Manichaeism before converting to Christianity, later rejecting it as a distortion of truth. The church affirmed instead that creation, including our bodies, is 'very good' (Genesis 1).

Elevate spirit over body, mind over flesh, and you lose something essential, not just about humanity, but about God's way of engaging with us.

The Christian view: Embodiment as sacred, not optional

Christianity stands firmly against this kind of dualist thinking. From the opening pages of Genesis, the Bible affirms that the physical world is good. In fact, very good. Bodies are not accidents or prisons; they are part of God's good design. God created humans with both body and soul, not as two warring parts, but as an integrated whole.

The Incarnation of Jesus is the most radical rejection of dualism. God didn't just speak from afar or send abstract truths. He became flesh and entered our world in a real, physical body. Jesus ate, touched, wept, bled, died. And then he rose again. And that resurrection wasn't just spiritual. Jesus rose in a physical body and promised that we, too, will be raised in restored, resurrected bodies.

Eternal life in Christian hope is not about floating off into a spiritual realm but about renewed physical life in a renewed creation.

In short, Christian theology insists that our bodies matter. We are not souls trapped in flesh. We are embodied beings, made in God's image, called to live fully in this world, even as we look forward to its renewal.

The danger of disembodiment: What we lose when we disconnect

There are positive aspects to the availability of online communication. I appreciate being able to speak with my sister and her family who live in the UK. And during COVID, when our Bible Study group switched to meeting online, a former member of the group who had moved to northern Victoria was able to rejoin our group and still joins on Zoom most Friday nights. But there's no substitute for being physically present, sharing a meal, offering a hug, or simply sitting in quiet company. These moments go deeper than pixels ever can.

There are also unique dangers in online interactions. Students who refused to turn on cameras during lockdown are a small example. In a disembodied world, accountability is easier to dodge. Behind screens, we ghost people. We type things we'd never say aloud: sometimes cruel, sometimes cowardly, always detached. The excessive abuse and vitriol on social media is well documented. Online scams bombard our inboxes. Incidents like the Victorian

Government's so-called 'Robodebt scheme' highlight the dangers of allowing algorithms to make decisions without sufficient human involvement.

Honouring the body: Even when it's hard

Let's be honest: bodies are difficult. We don't always feel at home in them. Whether through illness, disability, body image struggles, gender identity, or aging, we carry real wounds in the flesh. It's easy to see why being liberated from our bodies might appeal. Being with other people can be hard, too. Human interaction is fraught, and online communication, offering a layer of distance and protection, is seductive.

In the Netflix series *Man on the Inside*, set in a retirement village, Didi, the community manager of the home, observes, 'For most of the seniors, the threat to their well-being isn't an accident or health, it's loneliness.' Embodiment includes vulnerability. But it also includes presence. We need each other in all our brokenness, physically present in flawed bodies that remain sacred, loved, and known by God.

Faithfully present in the flesh

So, where does this leave us? First, let's be clear: online tools and communication have a place. They can be useful, efficient, and even life-giving. But we must remain mindful of the power and importance of being physically present together. A message isn't the same as a conversation. A comment isn't the same as company. There's something

irreplaceable about being in the same room with another person.

Second, part of our response to any future that wants to leave the body behind or reengineer it beyond recognition must be to remember this: our bodies, though imperfect, are fearfully and wonderfully made. They are part of God's good creation. And the Christian hope is not to escape them, but to see them redeemed.

Third, we need to hold space for the complexity of embodiment. We wrestle with sexuality, gender, disability, body image, aging, and illness. These are real struggles, and they deserve compassion. But even in our wrestling, we do so in bodies that are still sacred, still loved, still known by God.

In a world chasing efficiency, speed, and artificial perfection, simply showing up in person – flawed, tired, hopeful – is a radical, Christlike act.

So, we keep showing up, remaining human in the best and fullest sense of the word.

And the next time a screen asks you to prove you're not a robot, take it as a strangely sacred moment. A reminder that you are, in fact, wonderfully human. You are not code. You are not synthetic. You are made in God's image. And when God saw the first embodied humans, he looked at them and said, 'Very good.'

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

<https://thelowedown.blog/>



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Attending to the National Soul: Evangelical Christians in Australian History 1914–2014

Evangelical Christians in Australian History 1740–1914

Stuart Piggin and Robert D. Linder

Paperback

Monash University Publishing, 2019

Hardback

Monash University Publishing, 2020

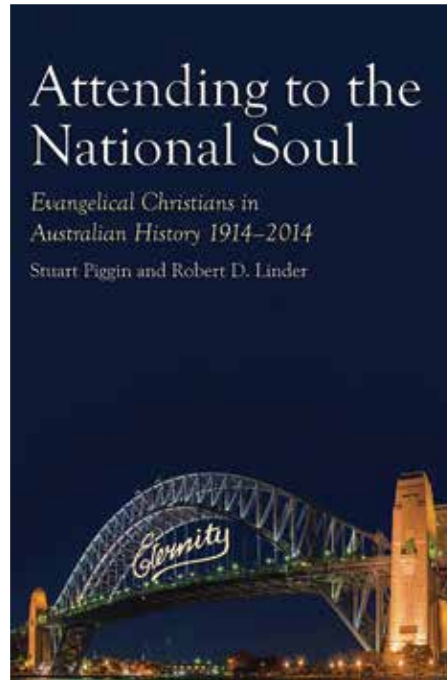
■ **Richard Prideaux**

Piggin and Linder have created a substantial and remarkably detailed analysis of the role of Evangelical Christians in Australia. This is a work of substantial scholarship with both volumes consuming almost 650 pages each.

The first volume, 1740–1914 is entitled *The Fountain of Public Prosperity*, a term provided by Henry William Haygarth. The opening prologue highlights the immediate traumatic impact of white Australians on an Aboriginal community that had not the slightest hint that a vicious and overriding community of Anglo-Saxons were about to descend on the indigenous natives of Australia. The deep sadness of this part of the story is that the violent and traumatic impact of European settlers remains a huge issue to this very day from 1740 onwards, and as I write in July 2025 the tragic death of two aboriginals in Northern Territory custody demonstrates that unity and understanding are as far away from mutual understanding as they have ever been.

Volume 1 takes the story from 1740 to 1870 and includes the shift from Private to Public Christianity with varying degrees of success depending on the faith of the English masters, with the Reverend Samuel Marsden's strengths and weakness developed in significant detail. This is followed by chapters on the major missions to the Pacific islands, the impact of free settlers, the getting out of gaol and having a go, along with the powerful establishment, denominational initiatives, nation building, the development of new colonies, and very substantial Christian growth and leadership.

From 1871 to 1914 came the rise of Christian feminism, social righteousness, bitter challenges to Christian faith, substantial church growth and cross cultural missions, the golden days of evangelistic church missions, revival and holiness campaigns, the strength and impact of what could be called a working man's paradise, the rise of modernism, and



defence of the truth in the 1890s to 1914, alongside major missions and revivals both cross-cultural at home and abroad. Australia became a Christian country in a Christian empire, but then came 1914 and World War 1.

Volume 2 entitled *Attending to the National Soul: Evangelical Christians in Australian History, 1914–2014* makes an equally substantial impact on Christian life and ministry. I found this amazing section even more powerful because a large part of the story was that of my own Christian faith and that of my parents at war and at home. Faith came under fire in Australia very early in its history with the Great War of 1914–18 both creating an unbeatable Australian military legend but also taking out the cream of young Australian men and women. This trauma was quickly followed by the task of mending the broken at the same time as the trauma of the Great Depression.

Theological warfare created its own fights during the wars and vast efforts were put into winning souls and shaping the Australian soul.

Australians were far more reluctant to be combatants in the terror of World War 2 and it was a time of extreme challenge and horror which also saw Christian ministries flourishing amongst the fighting alongside the horror and sadness of prisoners of war. Post World War 2, as Australia began to blossom, Christian faith also flourished with crusaders for souls being as busy as crusaders for peace and prosperity. Reformed evangelicalism flourished but there were also strong secular challenges to Christian faith from the 1960s onwards.

Christian leaders and scholars of all sorts brought defence, evangelism, welfare and spirituality to the fore and of course there were tensions and initiatives within both the evangelical movement and other churches. Crusaders like Billy Graham made a huge impact in Australian life but many challenges remained. The impact of substantial European and worldwide immigration brought with it members of many faiths and Christian denominations.

This is a story which will excite and encourage readers. It is not for faint hearts but reading these two major works by the same authors has given me both a sense of the importance of faithful Christian folks over the years and a sense of the importance of 'attending to the national soul' as the final chapter describes our task today.

I warmly recommend these two amazing books in one, which will make a great addition to the shelf of be every committed Christian. Five stars.

Richard Prideaux is a Diocesan Lay Reader in the Parish of Bass/Phillip Island.



Wednesday Weekly Bible Study

If you would like to meet with others in Gippsland to read and discuss the Bible, you are welcome to join The Rev'd Bec Hayman's Zoom Bible study group on Wednesday evenings from 8:15pm–9:00pm.

Bec Hayman is the Anglican priest in the cooperating Parish of Churchill/Boolarra/Yinnar.

For more information or to receive the Zoom link contact Bec by telephone 0467 023 363 or email becca_mike@yahoo.com

Jeremiah's reply to Forest July 2025

Dear Forest,

You ask about the relationship between the families of creation in our time. Some have highlighted the interconnectedness of all beings from the humble fungi growing in the forest to the mammals which include us. The die-off of bees, which in our time, pollinate plants, causes consternation amongst those who grow food or collect honey but not enough in the general population. Others are closing their minds to such dangers and unfortunately, they hold the sway of public opinion at the moment.

In Australia we have the oldest continuous culture in the world. Our indigenous peoples have lived here for over 65,000 years (my time) and survived smaller climate changes during that time. They learnt to tread lightly on their home and whilst they made some changes to enhance food supply (mainly with fire) the continent and its creatures were very well managed by them. In the 240 years since white people came here the continent has suffered; we don't manage our soil, water or air properly and are starting to see the results of our mismanagement. Sadly, this is being repeated all over the planet.

Early peoples understood that harm caused to their environment came back to hurt them later and we can see some of that concern codified in early religious writings. However, as humanity became more and more greedy the old texts were mistranslated to support their exploitative viewpoint. I should be gracious and assume that this was unintentional, but history is littered with examples of victors rewriting 'the facts' after the event.

In the Christian tradition, prophets and mystics have sought to reawaken the relationships between creature-kind but were largely ignored by the established Church who preferred 'dominion' over 'care'. More recently those of the Christian faith are joining other faiths to highlight our collective foolishness, perhaps being pushed by those who say they have no faith but care for the environment. Need I say, I believe that we should have been leading the pack, not running to catch up!

I still cry for you but am buoyed by the knowledge that the indigenous people in Australia are gracious and may have helped you survive. I weep rivers over the rest of the world.

Jeremiah



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EVENTS

For events at The Abbey, see page 13

AUGUST

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 2 and 16 | Lay Reader Seminars (Drouin and Sale) |
| 23 | Seminar on Luke's Gospel, St Paul's Sale 2-4pm |
| 21-24 | East African Revival Centenary Conference, Gahini, Rwanda |
| 28-30 | Leongatha Daffodil and Floral Show
See page 5 for more information |
| 30 | Abbey Winter Feast, from 12noon |

SEPTEMBER 1 – OCTOBER 4

Season of Creation

OCTOBER

- | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|
| 6-9 | Clergy Retreat, Pallotti College |
|-----|----------------------------------|

Winter

A poem by Eleanor Harrington of Yarragon

Wintertime is drawing near,
A dark and gloomy time of year.
The night is dark, the clouds are too,
Thunder and lightning arrive on cue.

Frost and hail, rain and snow.
Far too cold to find somewhere to go.
Depression can be round the corner,
As you seek more light or somewhere warmer.

Yet God provides such scenery and relief.
Snowflake designs beyond belief.
Icicles hanging from naked trees,
Some attached to housing eaves.

Skiing, tobogganing, ice-skating too,
Activities that can be just for you.
A cosy fire, a book to read, music to hear,
These things to do, may take a year.

Look around in and out, finding the clues,
That God has provided, in winter for you.
Enjoy the seasons as they come around
Look for the blessings that can be found.



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