

THE SCOTS' CHURCH

THE LEAFLET

Winter 23



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IN THIS ISSUE

CAFE CULTURE | HISTORY | TRENDS | THEOLOGY



The SCOTS' CHURCH, MELBOURNE

LOCATIONS

The Scots' Church, Melbourne,
99 Russell Street (corner Collins Street), Melbourne
Assembly Hall, Werner Brodbeck Hall, Ground Floor,
156 Collins Street, Melbourne
Assembly Hall, Robert White Hall, First Floor,
156 Collins Street, Melbourne
St. Stephen's, Flemington and Kensington,
26 Norwood Street, Flemington.

WORSHIP SUNDAY:

9.30 am International Christian Church (English),
(www.icc-melbourne.org), Werner Brodbeck Hall
11.00 am International Christian Church (Indonesian)
Werner Brodbeck Hall
11.00 am Traditional Service, The Scots' Church
5.00 pm ScotsCity, Werner Brodbeck Hall.
Sunday School – held during Sunday morning services
for the Traditional and International congregations.

MINISTRY TEAM:

Senior Minister Rev Phil Campbell
Minister Pastoral Care Rev Litha Heshusius
Minister, International Christian Church (ICC)
Rev Christian Tirtha
Director International Ministries ICC Dr Sen Sendjaya

MUSIC MINISTRY:

Director of Music Mr Douglas Lawrence AM
Assistant Organist Ms Jennifer Chou.

EDITORIAL TEAM, THE LEAFLET:

Rosalie Strother, Phil Campbell and Phil Court.

Welcome to The Scots' Church Melbourne,
and this edition of our quarterly newsletter

THE LEAFLET

ISSUE NO. 1095

Welcome to the Winter Edition of The Leaflet, the quarterly magazine of The Scots' Church Melbourne. You may be a regular member at Scots' or just passing through mid-week - either way, we hope you'll find something enjoyable and thought provoking inside.

We've got some interesting guest writers in this edition. Mike Raiter, a well-known Christian communicator around Australia, reflects on the way the popular 'Jack Reacher' books speak to our deep desire for justice - maybe it says something about the nature of reality? Arthur Keefer, currently living in England, will be joining the Scots' ministry team next year. An American by birth, his perspective on the recent Coronation of Charles III is worth reading.

Phil Court takes us to Melbourne's 8-hour Day Monument and explains something of our city's history in the process; then reviews the heart-warming book *The Wonder of Little Things*, by Vince Copley with Lea McInerney.

You'll notice a theme emerging in our two articles about loneliness in the digital world. Patrick Parkinson, recently professor of law at the University of Queensland, writes about the loneliness epidemic across the generations; interestingly, he observes that younger 'digitally connected' folks suffer from loneliness as much (or maybe even more) than other generations. Michael North rightly points out, though, that some of the older population can be completely left behind in a world obsessed with social media and communication tools that they just can't access. Something to be aware of with your older friends and neighbours!

In all of this we're reminded of the importance of church as a place of connection. If you're not already part of the Scots' community, we'd be delighted to meet you at any of our Sunday church services. If you want to know more about the Christian faith, or about becoming part of Scots' Church, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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Rosalie Strother, Phil Campbell, Philip Court - Editorial Team

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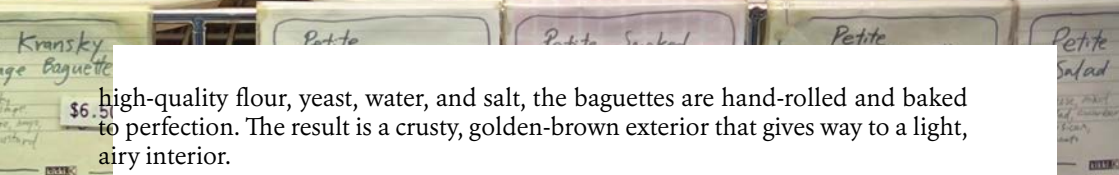


Looking for a quick and easy lunch in the CBD? Phil Campbell recommends one of his favourite spots...

If you're passing through Melbourne's Centre Place around lunchtime, you're likely to spot a long queue of people waiting to grab a bite from the B3 Cafe. When you think about it, a queue functions like a kind of 'corporate memory' - a group recognition that past experience shows that the reward at the end is well worth the time.

I joined the queue of 21 hungry workers at 12.45pm, and within the next two minutes there were 12 more in the line behind me. But the good news is, the queue moves fast, with two service points passing rolls across the counter at an impressive rate. I was munching my baguette just four minutes later, at 12.49pm.

The B3 has been serving up fresh, delicious baguettes since 2011. The French-style rolls are made fresh each day and filled with a range of delicious ingredients. I suspect the secret to B3's success lies in the quality of their baguettes. Made with



high-quality flour, yeast, water, and salt, the baguettes are hand-rolled and baked to perfection. The result is a crusty, golden-brown exterior that gives way to a light, airy interior.

Recent price rises have lifted the Grande size to \$9.50 (regardless of filling), and the Petite to \$7 - but the reality is that a Grande easily feeds two. Just ask your server to cut it in half with separate bags.

My current favourite is smoked salmon with avocado - gourmet quality at an everyday price. The only other question is, "Fresh or toasted?" Your choice, though of course for toasting there's a further delay.

Perhaps you would prefer the ham and cheese, kransky, chicken, or delicious bacon and brie - or for vegetarian options you're spoilt for choice with eggplant schnitzel, brie tomato and basil, falafel, or cheese and salad.

Rumour suggests the existence of the 'B3 special baguette' - packed with ham, salami, cheese, tomato, lettuce, and a tangy mustard dressing. I haven't seen it on display, nor on the menu at www.b3cafe.com.au - but you can always ask.

Overall, the portions at B3 are generous, and the prices are still affordable. You can grab a baguette and a drink for under \$10, making it an excellent option if you're looking for a budget priced office lunch

But it's not just the food that makes B3 popular. The staff are cheerful and efficient, and the atmosphere is always buzzing. While the order window is always crowded, the turnaround is quick, and the staff are always unflustered and cheerful.

The B3 Cafe in Centre Place, Melbourne, is a must-visit for anyone looking for a delicious, affordable lunch. The quality of the baguettes is second to none, and the range of fillings means there is something for everyone. The buzzing atmosphere only adds to the appeal of this humble eatery, making it a favourite among inner city office workers and tourists alike. So next time you're in town, be sure to make a beeline for the B3 Baguette Bar - your taste buds will thank you! One caveat - they don't serve coffee, but it's easy to slip around the corner into Flinders Lane to join the coffee queue at Dukes! ■

B3 Cafe
Centre Place, Melbourne CBD
<https://www.b3cafe.com.au/>



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JACK REACHER

Every two seconds, someone in the world buys a Jack Reacher novel. What's the attraction? Mike Raiter investigates...

Over 70 years ago in an article, *'Who Cares who Killed Roger Ackroyd?'*, Edmund Wilson wrote disdainfully of crime fiction as a "trivial pursuit". "Reading detective stories", he said, "is simply a kind of vice, for silliness and minor harmfulness, somewhere between crossword puzzles and smoking". Trivial or not, the crime or thriller novel remains one of the most popular genres, accounting for one out of every three book sales. Why?

One of today's most popular crime writers is Lee Child. Child has penned 27 novels (he now co-authors them with his brother, Andrew) all starring his hero, Jack Reacher. It's said that, every two seconds somewhere in the world someone buys a Jack Reacher novel. More than 100 million copies have been sold. Reacher has retired from the U.S. Army, where he was a Major in the Military Police. But since retirement he can't settle down and so with just his wallet and his toothbrush he travels around America, either by bus or hitchhiking. Wherever he goes he finds trouble. Somewhere, some very bad guys are making life miserable for innocent people. And Jack Reacher rights the wrongs and gives the bad guys their just desserts. Best-case scenario for the villains is that they end up in hospital

with broken bones. Normally, though, they end up in the morgue, and Jack strides off into the sunset to again return order to our world of moral chaos.

On the front cover of his recent novel *Past Tense* are the words, “We all need Jack Reacher, a righteous avenger for our troubled times.” And the words, ‘righteous avenger’ are in bold print. I was struck by this line. There’s an implicit agreement with the reader that we all desire vengeance, and there is a vengeance which is righteous and, by implication, may transcend the law.

Righteous vengeance is a theme in many crime novels. From Agatha Christie’s classic *Murder on the Orient Express* to Stieg Larsson’s popular Millennium Trilogy (e.g. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*), evildoers pay the ultimate price for their heinous crimes. The significant factor is that those dispensing justice are usually not the legal authorities.

‘Legal justice’ is justice served when the law is executed, irrespective of the perceived morality of the law. ‘Moral justice’ is served when, irrespective of the legality of the action, the punishment meted out is perceived to fit the crime. Heroes like Jack Reacher are typically purveyors of moral justice; Reacher has no legal authority to execute criminals.

Mickey Spillane sold over 200 million copies of his pulp fiction novels starring private investigator, Mike Hammer. Hammer is investigator, judge, and executioner. In his 1951 novel, *The Big Kill*, Hammer explains to a cop, “I want the guy who made somebody decent revert back to filthy crime, and I want him right between my hands so I can squeeze the juice out of him. I’m still a citizen and responsible in some small way for what happens in the city”. In other words, as a citizen of New York, Mike Hammer believes he has a moral obligation to execute the guilty. The cop’s silence implies acquiescence and a recognition of the rightness of moral justice over legal justice.

It’s ironic. We may have voted against capital punishment in our parliaments, but we celebrate it in our books and films. Surely, actor Liam Neeson’s most memorable movie line is from *Taken*, where he warns those who kidnapped his daughter, “I will find you and I *will* kill you”. True to his word the hero, Brian, kills 33 bad guys in the film and returns home untouched by the law. Moral justice has been served. Order is restored. Filmgoers return home satisfied.

So what does the popularity of this genre tell us?

First, we long for justice. Admittedly, talking about God’s judgement seems to have gone out of fashion. It used to be common, but now it seems impolite. But it’s odd, isn’t it? We love the righteous avengers of our storybooks, yet we’re uneasy with biblical references to the true righteous avenger, the Lord Jesus, who we’re told will weigh up every action on the last day. Perhaps, though, this biblical idea is tapping into a deep-seated human desire. We really do want wrong to be punished - and because everything won’t be properly balanced in this world, it’s valid to hope it will be in the next.

In his visionary Book of Revelation, John sees a time when the power of unjust persecutors will be overturned. The souls of the faithful slain are crying out, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” John gives reassurance that the day of the “wrath of him who

sits on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb" is fast approaching. (Revelation 6:9-17). He is the righteous avenger for our troubled times.

Second, we are frequently left unsatisfied by the expressions of 'legal justice' in our society.

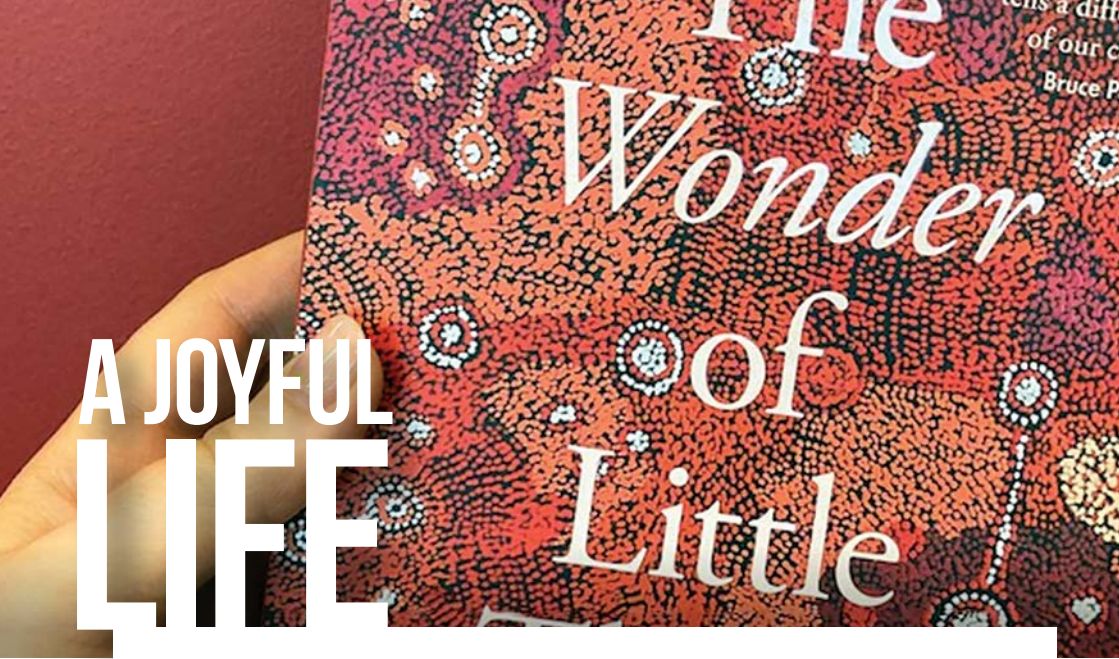
We perceive that 'just desserts' are rarely meted out. Rachel Franks suggests that crime fiction may provide "a cathartic outlet" for our violent desires to see justice done. She writes, "Liam Neeson's *Taken* franchise has done almost a billion dollars in the box office for a reason". We long for justice that is both legal and moral.

Third, deep down we believe, "that those who do such things deserve to die". Capital punishment is labelled today as 'primitive', 'immoral', and 'barbaric'. There may be compelling reasons not to exercise capital punishment. For me, the chief amongst them is that the legal process is too often flawed and the innocent are punished. But it is difficult to affirm that capital punishment is inherently immoral. Our collective passion for Jack Reacher novels tells us something about ourselves - we recognise there is some kind of rightness to retributive justice.

However, the most striking feature about the justice meted out in many crime novels is that there's no grace, no repentance, and no hope of rehabilitation. Jonah warned Nineveh, "*Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown*" (Jonah 3:4). Paul told the Athenians that God has commanded all people to repent, "*For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed*" (Acts 17:31). In both cases the implication is that there's still time to repent, turn to God, embrace his grace, and escape the wrath to come. This is the good news that the New Testament calls 'the gospel' - and it's only possible through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. There's no 'good news' for sinners in the world of crime fiction!

Before we dispense with the traditional Christian view too quickly, perhaps we should consider. If our taste for Jack Reacher and the genre of crime fiction teaches us anything, it's that our world both needs and wants to hear that moral justice is real; that in God's grace it is always tinged with available mercy; and that one day, all will be put right. ■

Michael Raiter is the Director of the Centre for Biblical Preaching in Melbourne.



A JOYFUL LIFE

The beauty of books is that they sometimes let you walk a while in another person's shoes. Phil Court spends a while in the inspiring footsteps of Vince Copley...

The Federal referendum on a constitutionally enshrined indigenous Voice is fast approaching. News stories and opinion pieces about, and sometimes by our First Nations Australians have never been so prolific. As a nation, we're examining our past, confronting our present and charting a course for our future. Regardless of your own voting inclinations on the referendum, it's always good to consider what life is like for people with very different (and yet in other ways very similar) experiences to our own. How else can we begin to meaningfully love our neighbour as ourselves?

As his parting gift to his fellow Australians, Vince Copley has bequeathed us the stories of his life in a book published shortly after his death last year. He told his stories to Lea McInerney, who compiled them and conveyed them to the reader in a way that expresses so much of the depth and nuance of this remarkable, admirable and genuinely humble man. *The Wonder of Little Things*, carries the stamp of authenticity from start to finish.

Try for a moment to put yourself in Vince's shoes. Imagine this:

- You are born in 1936 on an aboriginal mission in South Australia's Yorke Peninsula.
- Your father dies at the age of 30, when you were one. Your mother claims he died of a broken heart.
- Your older brother, Colin, dies from an infection when he's only 12 because the nearby hospital was strictly off-limits to Aborigines.
- In 1946, in order to legally leave the mission to live and work in Adelaide, your mother is finally granted an "Unconditional Exemption" from South

Australia's Aborigines Act, 1934-1939 "by reason of her character and standard of intelligence and development" and now "shall cease to be an aborigine for the purposes of the said Act."

These are but a few glimpses of Vince's childhood. How would that make you feel about your life and the people who control your world?

In her desperate desire to give Vince a better future than her own, his mother persuaded the Anglican-run St Francis House in Adelaide to accept him as a boarder. It was a move that set Vince on a trajectory of perseverance, hope and goodwill; a trajectory he maintained until the last. St Francis House was a home for First Nations boys and it produced an astonishing number of future leaders, including the tireless and path-breaking Charles Perkins. The boys regarded each other as brothers and maintained strong lifelong ties with each other and the Anglican clergyman and his wife who ran the home.

In his middle and later years, Vince met an A-list of influential and powerful people, including Muhammad Ali, several prime ministers and premiers, aboriginal elders from all over Australia and Queen Elizabeth. In fact, he and his wife and sister dined with the Queen and Prince Philip at South Australia's Government House. They were drafted in at short notice when Vince's close friend, the SA Governor, Pastor Sir Doug Nichols was taken ill.

Vince thought long and hard about reconciliation: what it means, why it's important and how it might be encouraged. Here's a sample of his thinking:

People keep saying they want to reconcile. But the reconciliation process has been going on for a fair while now, and there's still not a great deal of things happening between black and white... Do people really believe that things can change and get better? Are you feeling that deep under your skin? Can you put me on one of your local committees where I'll be working with a lot of white people, and will we both have the same idea of what's really needed to work together and do things together? I don't know that that's in most people's minds yet. What do I think might be on their minds instead? That people – Aboriginal and white people and other people – still can't say to each other, "I don't mind living alongside you."

What if I could say to you, "Listen, why don't you come over tomorrow morning and we'll have a cup of tea and we'll just sit and talk. Not about anything in particular, just to get to know each other a bit."

Sadly, we can't take up Vince's generous-hearted offer any more – at least not in person. But reading the stories of his remarkable life is the next best thing. It's his parting blessing to the rest of us. It's a blessing of great benefit. ■



CROWNING GLORY

[What does an American living in Britain make of the coronation of King Charles? Read on for some reflections from Arthur Keefer...](#)

Speculation about the royal family and trite observations about the weather are two favourite British pastimes. As I write on this coronation morning, both are in full force. I'm watching from a living room in Edinburgh, Scotland; and while it's cloudy, damp and cool here, the weather seems even gloomier down in London. The BBC commentator calls it "light drizzle" and "slightly damp" - in other words "a typical spring day in Great Britain." But it looks absolutely soaked to me, and by the time the royal procession makes it back to Buckingham Palace, it's bucketing down. Still, the commentator is relentlessly cheerful doing her best to lift the mood; and thankfully, the mood soon lifts, weather aside.

I'm in good company for a royal viewing: our small group of seven boasts two British passport holders, an historian who has met Princess Anne, and an NHS employee who once met Charles. All of us are Commonwealth subjects of the king, including myself who, though American by background, happens to know several of the ecclesial figures on screen. Even so, we're also all Presbyterians, which means we're not so much at home with the pomp and regalia of the Church of England.

My royal speculation began when I woke early and found myself thinking of King Charles. Did he sleep? Was he nervous? Is he feeling afraid, alone in his rooms - or maybe surrounded by a team intent on preparing him for the big day. These musings would, later that morning, come to dominate my mind in the coming hours - what is the state of the King's heart?

Events soon unfolded. The Diamond Jubilee State Coach, moving at walking speed, is a mere 20 years old. Unlike the older Golden version, it includes suspension and air conditioning and, as our resident historian informs us, was a gift from the Australians. Clearly, the sequence is all about objects and images. What could be more regal than a king surrounded by glittering horses, flags flying large and high on either side, with a grand, gilded "Winged Victory" looming in the background? The camera gives several glimpses inside the coach, where the king and queen look slightly pensive and may simply be tired of smiling, conserving their public energy for the hours ahead. (Although even as events unfold, the smiles are surprisingly rare.) The crowds are excited though, filming with their phones; many camped out overnight for this moment of opportunity. The commentator begins naming members of the procession, and our living room becomes giddy and anxious.

As the Royal party enters Westminster Abbey, sobriety strikes. Among the waiting invitees, many men bow, some women curtsy - I think a couple have gone so low as to put a knee on the ground, - and an older woman in a wheelchair props herself up with a shaky arm while Camilla and Charles pass by. In comparison to the gliding normalcy of priests and altar boys, select civil servants and dignitaries, the King moves with extraordinary grace and power. But as he takes his place in the east end of the Abbey, my question resurfaces: what's happening in the king's own heart? And at this moment, what exactly is he? A recipient, a deserving agent, a divine instrument, a visitor in the house of the King of Kings, or humbled and overwhelmed as he lays a hand up on the Holy Bible to "recognise the authority of the Word of God"? (If he flips it open to Deuteronomy 17:20 in the Old Testament, he might even read the warning to the King of Israel - "make sure his heart is not lifted up above his brothers, and that he does not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left.") Perhaps today's king really is a man appointed "not to be served but to serve," just as he says?

Even such solemnity is not without its humour, of course. During the Gospel reading, we learned that Jesus was a boy from "Natherez," and when our own television speakers went mute for several seconds during the king's vows, everyone in the room went ballistic. (These will later be topped by the unexpected sight of a soldier attempting to play the trombone on horseback.) And yet those chuckles fell quiet as the greatest drama of the day unfolded before us. Two by two, pairs of men walked toward the king carrying four cloth walls that they arranged around him, and we all knew that just as the camera filming Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953 went dark as she was anointed by the Archbishop, so this king was about to undergo his own Act of Consecration. The question was no longer whether he is humbled or receptive or indifferent, but rather, what is this? Is this what the day has been working toward? Stripped down to a simple linen tunic, he indeed looked ... humble.



The silence was broken by commentator Hugh Edwards with an underwhelming announcement: “The king has been anointed.” I preferred my wife’s comment: “This is serious business, man.” But was this consecration supposed to be the most important event of the day? While it was positively “Old Testament,” accompanied by the strains of “Zadok the Priest,” the moment of humility was quickly followed by the piling on of royal regalia, which convinced me that the Consecration was not the highlight. The anointed king was being dressed for the consummate occasion of the day: the crown.

Amidst an intensively Christian service, representatives of world faiths began delivering royal objects, one by one: a Muslim, a Sikh, a Jew, and a Hindu. All of these representatives received a final greeting on the way out, making

for what, I thought, was an honourable yet clearly Christian incorporation of the religions of this king’s kingdom. Yet my viewing companion, the historian, put it very aptly: “If you hate God, you’ll hate this.”

Liturgically, this felt like a Magnum-sized Anglican service. It was saturated with scripture and could be disorienting to citizens of certain nations. As an American who is now a naturalised British citizen, the fact that the king’s first vows were not to the law, the good of the people, or the flourishing of his Empire but to upholding the “Protestant Reformed religion as established by law,” was unlike anything I had witnessed before. What happened to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Perhaps England truly is God’s country!

The drama, the music, and the centrality of the church struck me deeply. For it was no less than a soundtrack of praise and triumph that played throughout the coronation, generating a flurry of conversation and the unquestionable conclusion that to worship God best, us humans need music. From the anticipatory organ tunes, to choirs singing “Vivat” with angelic force, booming baritone soloists, multi-lingual plainsong, gospel singers swaying to “Alleluia . . . For God is King of all the earth,” and the heavy metal of hymnody, “Christ is made the Sure Foundation,” the music did justice not to this earthly king but to the Saviour who was being proclaimed - Jesus Christ. And so perhaps my question – what’s going on with the king’s heart? – is really not a question but a wish, that he would be fully subscribed, taking to heart the commitments and the adoration prescribed for the day.

In short, that he might take the words of his own vows and prayers seriously, and be a King who is intent on serving in humility, rather than being served in grandeur. And so “God Save the King” boomed across the Abbey, as gun salutes were ringing out across the land.

It’s over. The King and Queen enter their second coach, no less than a Cinderella carriage, and the military brigades bang their drums in perfect sync. There’s relief in the room, even levity. Speculation about the royal family resumes and the children start asking about our next meal. For the king is back among his people. Having entered a sacred space for a liminal process of immortal quality, Charles III rides and waves as flesh and blood. I don’t know the state of his heart, but that no longer bothers me, because I now see a man and a people that cannot but have been moved, at least momentarily, toward deeper things, and a greater Lord. ■

Dr Arthur Keefer is a chaplain at Eton College, and will be joining the staff at The Scots’ Church Melbourne in 2024





DICING WITH DEATH

Maybe the danger of addiction to machines that are consuming us to extinction invites us to do some soul searching, suggests Nathan Campbell...

Among other things, the recent New South Wales election was a referendum on Gambling. Even safely South of the border, you might have followed it in the news. Former New South Wales Premier Dominic Perrottet admitted that his “Catholic gut” informed his position on the need for gambling reform, after ClubsNSW CEO Josh Landis suggested the Premier’s support for poker machine limits was motivated by his faith.

In our secular, pluralist democracy, it makes people uneasy when public figures are motivated by private faith. But what if our ability to “soul search” – or to have a “religious gut” – is in fact a good aspect of our humanity that sets us apart from soul-destroying machines, and makes us capable of imposing life-preserving limits?

Like many machine technologies, pokies are getting smarter and more dangerous. Academic Natasha Dow Schüll spent 15 years researching the poker machine industry in Las Vegas, summing up her research in her book *Addiction By Design*. She described the way machines have been programmed to respond to the user since the introduction of a “dynamic play rate” feature in the late 1990s, that adapts the speed of play based on a player’s interactions with the machine.

Dynamic play rates launched alongside computerised menus that allowed players to switch between gaming modes, and order food and drinks, without switching machines; more recent changes have focused on the machines functioning as mini environments that adapt to the gambler, with customisable lighting, imagery, sound and animations to create an “affective grip” on the player, keeping them seated and connected to the machine. As technology has evolved, this grip has tightened.

Schüll quotes a poker machine engineer who described the evolution of these machines this way: “The more you manage to tweak and customise your machines to fit the player the more they play to extinction; it translates into a dramatic increase in revenue.” These are machines built to extract maximum profit, with little regard for the cost as humans “play to extinction”.

Philosophers exploring the idea of intelligent machines have created a thought experiment called “the Paperclip Maximiser.” This hypothetical machine is programmed to turn metal into paperclips, ad infinitum – which means, left to its own devices, it would end up working out how to consume the whole universe and turn everything into one giant pile of paperclips, and one giant pile of waste.

It’s meant to teach us that even innocently scripted machines will end up seeing humanity as either a resource or an obstacle to their purposes, and that some sort of ‘do no harm’ limits – limits that feel intuitive to humans, but not to machines – must be anticipated and built in.

Schüll suggests “addiction by design” is built into the hardware and software we interact with daily; our smart phones, gaming apps, and social media. “Facebook, Twitter and other companies use methods similar to the gambling industry to keep users on their sites,” she told *The Guardian* in 2018.



In her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, Shoshana Zuboff said that we are not “users” of our machines, but “the objects from which raw materials are being extracted,” as we — our behaviour, data, and preferences — are packaged up for profits. Extracting ourselves from these maximising-machines will prove difficult when they’re so firmly embedded in our hands. Here, addiction is a feature, not a bug.

It’s easy to imagine a poker-machine as a profit-maximising robot, built to extract metal coins from a gambler the way a paperclip maximiser might extract an artificial knee. All smart machines need limits — and usually, those building the machine have a vested interest in resisting such limits.

Limits might just be the product of “soul searching” — something machines cannot do, and something that, for all our faults and foibles, those with religious guts are in the habit of doing. Where a machine is programmed to maximise outputs it will only factor in the human cost if a human imposes those limits; a religious gut, at its best, is oriented towards questions of human flourishing that machines can’t naturally ask, and profit-maximising machine programmers often won’t.

Religious institutions have too often operated as their own form of “extinction machine”, and been guilty of soul-destroying machinations that have chewed others up. But at their best, people who believe in a soul to search, who believe that humans are made in the very “image” of God — perhaps such people were made for such a time as this.

The Christian and Jewish scriptures inform the “religious guts” of many Australians, including the church leaders and politicians who campaigned to impose limits on poker machines and their profit-maximising, extinction-producing tendencies.

The Old Testament version of an extinction-machine – a technology geared towards death – was the idol statue; one might imagine these statues as spiritual pokie machines; animated with their own sound and light shows and, from the perspective of Old Testament writers, hard-wired to destroy and to serve empires that sought to extract power and wealth at all costs.

As one example, the prophet Isaiah, motivated by his religious gut, invited his readers to search for a soul in these hollow extinction-machines. He sought to expose the truth behind their operations by pulling back the curtain on their production so a user might find themselves saying “Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?”

In a world of extinction machines wired to addict and destroy us it might be this very soul searching that liberates us from the claws of the machines and their makers. Isaiah’s words continue to inform the religious gut of modern prophets and poets – and even politicians – who speak against the machine.

Religious convictions should not be decisive, but this does not mean we should lose our religious intuitions in the face of the machine. If leaders like former Premier Perrottet are inclined towards soul-searching by their “religious gut,” maybe that’s something we should welcome? It’s exactly that kind of intuition might help keep us all from being turned into paper clips. ■

Nathan Campbell is a Presbyterian pastor in inner-city Brisbane and an Associate of the Centre for Public Christianity. A version of this article was first published on Eureka Street (eurekastreet.com.au)



FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS...

What's the connection between Churches and Bells? Even though Scots' Church gets by without them, Rosalie Strother sets out on a voyage of historic discovery...

It was no surprise that the bells of Westminster Abbey rang out for two minutes just after King Charles III was crowned during the Coronation service in May. The bells also pealed out joyfully after the service, marking the momentous occasion.

Less than eight months earlier church bells had tolled mournfully throughout England as a mark of respect on the death of Queen Elizabeth II. On the 19th September, the day of her funeral, Big Ben tolled once each minute for 96 minutes, symbolizing the 96 years of her life.

We know that bells were used as musical instruments in China as early as 3,500 BC. They are the loudest musical instruments and can be heard from miles away, over land or sea. From the time they originated in ancient China, they were used by various religious traditions in ceremonies - Hindus and Buddhists amongst others. Church bells have been associated with the Christian Church since the early centuries of Christianity; and of course, in Judaism well before.

Bells are first mentioned in the Old Testament in a description of the high priest's robe in Exodus; the bells allowed the people to hear the high priest as he entered and exited the Holy of Holies. Presumably, they also featured in the Psalmist's call to 'make a joyful noise to the Lord' in Psalm 100.

Bells were introduced into the Christian church in around 400 AD, under the leadership of Paulinus of Nola. A Roman poet, writer and senator, Paulinus was converted to Christianity and later became Bishop of Nola in Campania. The inclusion of bells in Christian ceremonies began to spread and grow in popularity because of their ability to gather the faithful to worship services, and also as an alarm in times of danger. Pope Sabinian officially sanctioned their usage in 604 AD and by the early Middle Ages church bells had become common through Europe, reaching England between 650 and 750 AD. They became popular in the time of the Venerable Bede, who introduced bell ringing at funerals. As church architecture developed over the following centuries, and bells in churches became larger and louder, they were incorporated into bell towers and steeples. By the height of the Gothic period churches were built with massive bell towers containing bells decorated with intricate designs.

Originally bells were roughly tuned, and it wasn't until the 17th century that Dutch bellfounders developed the means of tuning bells with any precision. By the 19th century the science of bell tuning had reached its peak. In 1876 St. Paul's Cathedral, London made a decision to install a circle of 12 bells to fit inside the vacant north-west tower. It was the heaviest set of 12 bells in the world at the time; they first rang out on All Saints' Day in 1878.

Bells have sounded at Westminster Abbey from as early as the 11th century, but the set of ten bells we hear today was dedicated at a service in 1971. The largest 'tenor' bell is tolled following the announcement of the death of a member of the Royal family and on the death of a Dean of Westminster.

Traditionally church bells are rung to call worshippers to church services, and to announce times of daily prayer, at 6 am, midday and 6 pm. They are also rung on special occasions including weddings and funerals. Before the days of modern communication church bells were a commonly used means of calling a community together for all purposes, both sacred and secular.

The ringing of a church bell to announce a death was called a 'death knell'. When the bell was rung at a funeral as the procession approached the church, it was known as the funeral toll. Although a more modern innovation is to partially muffle funeral bells, in the United Kingdom bells can only be fully muffled for the death of a monarch. The ringing of bells also symbolises joy, and they are often rung on Christmas Eve to celebrate the birth of Christ. Church bells are also rung simply for their beautiful sound.

People today often wonder why a church building as grand as Scots' Church has no bell. According to former archivist Judith Kilmartin, the tower simply wasn't designed to carry the weight. In past decades, an electronic bell was suggested, but good taste prevailed, and so we remain without. Un-appeal-ing perhaps? But we somehow make do! ■

WORK, REST & PLAY



What's that strange granite column standing on a triangular grass patch opposite the Trades Hall on Victoria Street? And what's the meaning of its golden numbers '888'? Phil Court explains...

On an abnormally hot day in April 1856, building work was proceeding as usual on Melbourne University's Law Quadrangle. Suddenly, when the word was given, the stonemasons downed tools and marched to the new parliament house in Spring Street, joined by other building workers along the way. Their demand was simple: reduce their ten-hour working day to an eight-hour day with no loss of pay. One of their leaders, James Galloway, put their case in these words:

It is neither right nor just that we should cross the trackless region of immensity between us and our fatherland to be rewarded with excessive toil, a bare existence and a premature grave.

Up to this point, negotiations between the stonemasons' union and the builders had been dragging on with no result. So a month earlier, at a public meeting at the Queen's Theatre, the union's leaders announced that enough was enough.

“The time has arrived when the system of eight hours should be introduced into the building trades.” They promised that after the 21 April they would “work eight hours and no longer.”

The strike of 21 April 1856 turned the tide. Eleven days later, The Herald reported that the stonemasons of Melbourne “have succeeded, at least in all the building trades, in enforcing the eight-hour day without effort. The employers have found it necessary and politic to give in, and without struggle; agreeing, we believe, to pay the same amount of wages as formerly for ten hours’ labour.”

The celebrations marking this historic achievement included a grand march from Carlton Gardens to Cremorne Gardens in Richmond, with festivities and fireworks. This became an annual event. Originally known as the 8 Hours Procession, it became a paid public holiday in 1879 and was renamed as Labour Day in 1934 before finally fizzling out in 1951. In 1955 Labour Day became today’s Melbourne Moomba Festival.

The monument we see today commemorates the 8 Hours Movement. Completed in 1903, it originally stood in Spring Street, and was moved to its present location in 1924.

Designed by Percival Ball, it depicts a globe of the earth, surrounded by a ring bearing the words “LABOR RECREATION REST”, beneath which are the numbers 8, 8, 8, signifying the movement’s aim of achieving a work-life balance of eight hours of work, eight hours of free time and eight hours of rest.

Although building workers had achieved the eight-hour-day, it was not until 1916 that laws in Victoria and New South Wales introduced it for all workers. And it took until 1948 for the Commonwealth Arbitration Court to approve a 40-hour, five-day working week for all.

Our need to properly balance our work with down-time and sleep is part and parcel of the human condition. Our bodies are designed to operate on a 24-hour cycle of circadian rhythms, in harmony with the earth’s daily rotation. Properly aligned, they facilitate restorative sleep patterns and positively influence our physical and mental health. The stonemasons of 1856 may not have heard of circadian rhythms, but they knew enough to realise that too much work and not enough time off prevents us from thriving and shortens our lives.

The ancient Israelites had a labour law that insisted on time off, not only for themselves, but for all their servants and hired hands and even for their beasts of burden.

Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. (Deuteronomy 5:13-14)

That’s right: it’s one of the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses. It demonstrated God’s care for his creatures. But sadly, many of today’s workers don’t enjoy even this basic day of rest, let alone an eight-hour working day or a five-day week. For many,

information technology means work increasingly encroaches into what is supposed to be their private time. And many who try to earn a living in the gig-economy are working under the sort of conditions that triggered the stonemasons' strike of 1856. For them, it's back to the future.

Next time you find yourself walking up Russell Street, keep going to the granite pillar with the golden numbers 8, 8, 8, at the Victoria Street intersection. Pause for a moment to consider your own work-life balance, and that of the myriad of workers who provide so very much of what we too often just take for granted. If we are indeed to love our neighbour as ourselves, what can you do to help those who can only dream of having eight hours of work, eight hours of free time and eight hours of sleep? ■

Eight Hours Procession, 17 April 1914





THE LONELINESS OF THE DIGITALLY CONNECTED

Patrick Parkinson explores the paradox of loneliness in a digital age and suggests that old fashioned churches may help...

Here's a paradox. Ours is the most socially connected generation in history. We live in an age when people can communicate by email and instant messaging programs, talk with one another over video, and connect with large numbers of others through social media. We can maintain friendships (in theory at least) not only in our locality, community groups and workplaces, but all over the world. The endless possibilities for social connection have many benefits.

But the paradox is that loneliness is an increasingly serious problem in western societies - and especially amongst the generation that is the most digitally connected. While others, such as divorced or separated men, are also highly vulnerable to loneliness, young people are actually more lonely – as a group – than the very elderly.

THE PROBLEM OF LONELINESS

Loneliness can be measured by the gulf between the degree of social interaction you desire, and the amount you experience. We can be lonely in the midst of a crowd, or we can be alone but not feel lonely. People may be lonely for relatively brief periods of their lives, particularly when moving to a new location for work or study. Such seasons of social isolation are part of life in a geographically mobile society. We can gain resilience from such experiences, as we do from illness and other adversities. However, prolonged loneliness is likely to have profound impacts, not only on mental health, but physical health as well.

THE EXTENT OF LONELINESS

One reason for loneliness across the community is that so many people live alone. The extent of social isolation today is indicated by a recent Australian study involving a national sample of 1,678 adults. Nearly 25 percent of respondents reported that they were rarely or never able to find companionship when they wanted it, while 21 per cent said they rarely or never felt close to other people. Respondents in this survey were also asked specific questions about the amount of contact with others they had had in the last month, and whether they had anyone to talk to about private matters when they needed help. Around 8 per cent had not had contact with relatives in the last month and a similar percentage had not had contact with friends. Nearly half said that they could not look to neighbours as a source of help.

LONELINESS AMONGST YOUNG ADULTS

That people might be lonely if they have lost a partner through death or divorce is only to be expected. What is more surprising is the consistent finding in many countries that young people aged 18–25 are the loneliest age group of all, and that the problem of loneliness in adolescents and young adults is increasing year by year.

A recent British survey of uni students found that a quarter of students said that they don't have any friends at university. More than a third didn't participate in

extracurricular activities. In an Australian study of nearly 1,500 adolescents and young adults, more than a third (37 per cent) of young adults aged 18–25 indicated a problematic level of loneliness.

Alarming, for some reason, the loneliness problem is quickly getting worse. There was a threefold rise in the proportion of 18–34s who said that they had only one close friend, or none at all, between 2011 and 2021. Now 21 per cent of this age group say they have no more than one friend. The Community Life Survey, which is a nationally representative survey of adults aged 16 years and over in England, found a similar pattern of loneliness among younger age groups.

THE LIMITATIONS OF DIGITAL CONNECTION

Few could doubt the enormous benefits of social media in allowing us to keep in touch with so many people around the world who are, or have been, part of our social circle. But it seems evident that digital interconnectedness doesn't really address the problem of loneliness. Indeed, it may have increased it. High use of electronic communication and screens is correlated more generally with decreases in self-esteem, life satisfaction and happiness for young people.

This is for at least four reasons. First, there has been a trade-off between digital connections and actually getting together with friends. Australian data indicate that young women aged 14–24 spend around two hours a day on social media, and young men in the same age group spend more than one hour per day.

Second, social media tends to promote quantity of relationships over quality. Vaughan Roberts observes that there is a difference between friending relationships which are conducted almost exclusively in cyberspace – and friendship. In friending, he notes, more is always better. In friendships, it is quality that matters.

Third, digital communication involves social distance. Friendships develop in at least some of the ways that relationships of love develop. Gary Chapman identified five love languages that are means by which different people give and receive love. These are loving words, kind actions, quality time, thoughtful presents and physical affection. Relationships with children and teenagers likewise benefit from love expressed in these different ways. The love languages can have their application to friendships as well. Few of them are well-enabled by digital communication. Speaking the love languages in friendship will necessarily involve engaging with others in personal, physical interactions.

Fourth, social media can cause young people to feel isolated whether or not they have a lot of engagement with it. Those who are not high social media users may feel cut off from communication with their peer group. Conversely, those highly engaged in social media may observe what their friends are doing without them, and this may increase feelings of social isolation.

CHURCH AS A PLACE OF CONNECTION

The loneliness of so many people, notwithstanding their connectedness in cyberspace, provides both a pastoral challenge in caring for those within our church congregations, and an opportunity for connection for others outside the church community. Those who are single, whether by choice or circumstance, those living alone, those caught up in corporate busyness but with an empty home life - all can find connection within caring church communities.

IT IS NOT GOOD FOR PEOPLE TO BE ALONE

God's answer to loneliness is for the Church to be a caring and cohesive Christian community - a family. At the Last Supper, Jesus famously said to his disciples 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.' (John 13:34-35) In an age of loneliness and alienation, that kind of practical love may well be very powerful in helping people come to a fresh awareness of God's love.

Peter identifies the transformation that Christ brings to community: 'Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God' (1 Peter 2:10). Paul uses the language of biological connection to describe how we should relate to one another in God's family. 'Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.' He then gives church-leader Timothy instructions on the care of widows. (See 1 Timothy 5:1-2.)

FAMILY-CENTRED CHURCHES

While there's no doubt some variation across the churches in the English-speaking world, local church organisations are usually based substantially around nuclear families, evidenced in the smaller groups that local churches have typically sought to provide. But in many churches, it may be a reasonable assumption that as much as half of the adult congregation is not currently married or in an ongoing dating relationship. Furthermore, many people who might be encouraged to come to church may also not be married or in an intimate partnership.

HEALTHY TOGETHERNESS

The question arises then, how to promote healthy togetherness, in a way that helps single, separated and divorced people, and those who are relatively new to an area, to feel included. Developing a culture of hospitality will take a conscious effort, particularly given the very busy lives that so many career-focused people lead.

MINISTRY TO YOUNG ADULTS

There may also be a need to rethink ministry to young adults, given the evidence of loneliness as a serious problem in the 18-30 age group. Groups for young people usually cater for the under-18s, the implicit assumption being that after finishing school, and perhaps spending a few socially active years at university, young adults will embark upon the next stage of their lives - that of family formation. Once such an assumption was probably valid. Young people might expect to enter

into marriages in their early to mid-20s, and might live in the family home until that time; but now there is, for a great many at least, a lonely decade after leaving school, during which they may or may not find a long-term intimate relationship.

A challenge in addressing loneliness in young people is social anxiety. It seems unlikely that the problem of loneliness, particularly among young people, can be addressed without tackling the social limitations of digital communication. We are not present in community if our heads are in our screens.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIP

There have long been extensive resources available to the Christian community teaching about marriage and parenting. There are fewer resources about what it means for Christians to be friends. The rich teaching from Scripture about friendship indicates that true friends are likely to be few in number, but rich in quality; for there are only so many people who can know us well, and with whom we can be vulnerable. Conversely, there are only so many people to whom we can offer such a level of friendship.

Developing such friendships takes time. Jesus, in particular, invested a large amount of time in building relationships with a relatively small number of people.

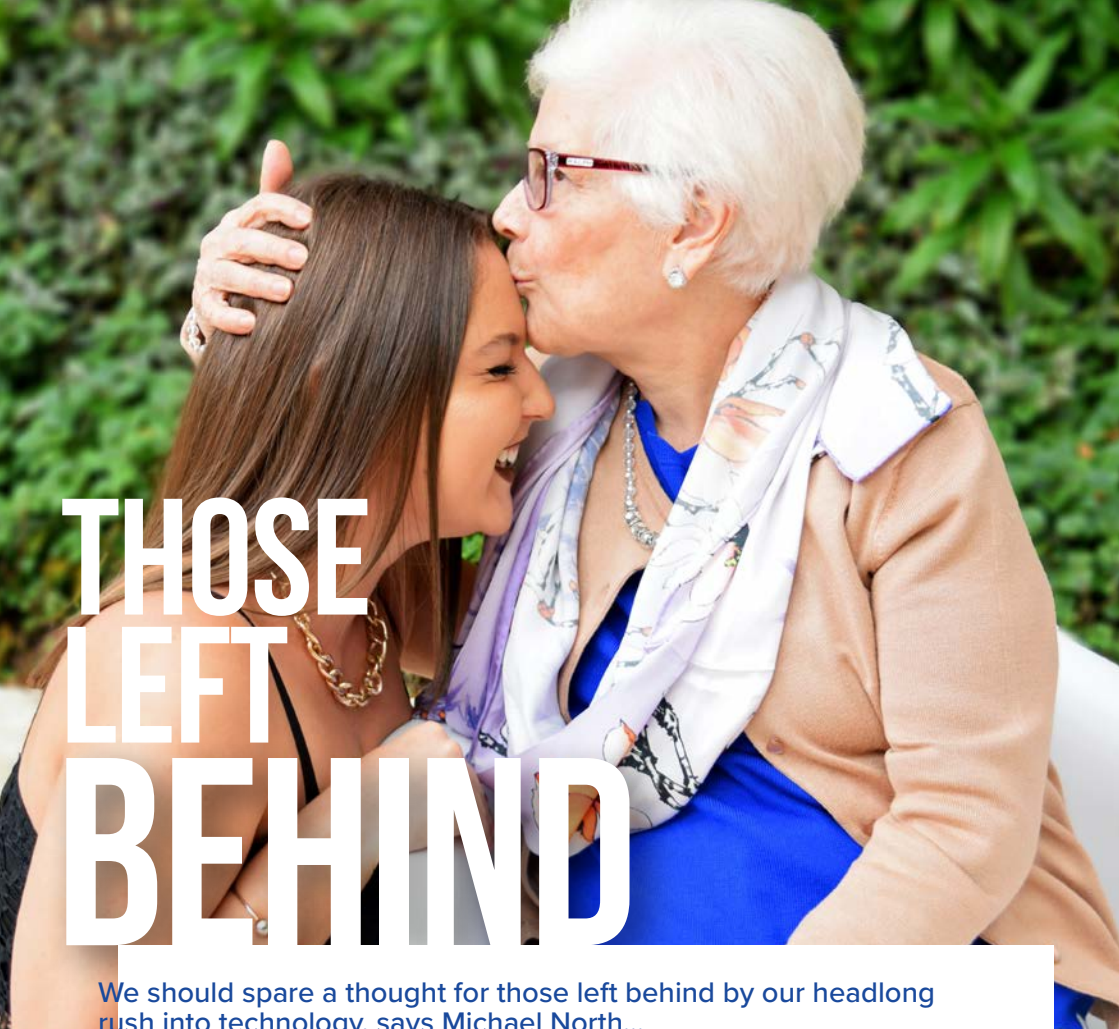
It was after some three years on the road together, sharing experiences, that Jesus spoke of his twelve disciples as his 'friends' in John 15:15. However, even amongst these, there were just a few with whom he was especially close. John was described as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Jesus chose only Peter, James and John to share the mountain top experience of the Transfiguration. Paul too, seems to have had just a small number of people with whom he was particularly close, notably his 'dear friend', Luke, Timothy, whom he regarded as a son, and his 'dear fellow servant', Epaphras. Silas, too, was amongst Paul's closest companions. (If you want to chase any of those references, see John 13:23, Mark 9:2-13, Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:2 and Colossians 1:7)

Friendships may be facilitated and maintained by digital communication, but they're not built by them. As C. S. Lewis observed, friendships develop from doing things together, sharing experiences and having common interests. Yes, that can occur online. For example, young people may form bonds with others through multi-person computer games; but messaging and texting programs are designed for brief exchanges. Deep friendships involve the sharing of hearts and minds.

CONCLUSION

God has made us also with the human need for companionship, friendship and love. If those basic human needs are not met for extended periods of time, we risk severe consequences in terms of both physical and mental health. Churches can and should learn to provide answers to these deeply felt human needs, as with other human needs; but to do so effectively, in an age of alienation and social isolation, it may require some intentional recalibration. ■

Patrick Parkinson is Executive Director of Publica (www.publica.org.au) and is an Emeritus Professor of Law at the University of Queensland.



THOSE LEFT BEHIND

We should spare a thought for those left behind by our headlong rush into technology, says Michael North...

Recent articles in 'The Leaflet' have looked at the technological revolution that has changed the way in which many of us live, and it continues to do so. Wave after wave of innovation has changed almost everything from the way we travel to the way we spend every moment of the day, except possibly when we're asleep. We now read that devices are ready and able to do our thinking for us if we let them. But while the majority of people enjoy living in the world of innovative advancement, wave after wave of access to technology has tossed the technologically inactive on to a deserted beach to be as lifeless as fish out of water.

Still young enough to be exploring life, in the era when the technically savvy were excited about the universal availability of the motor car and television, I talked with a ninety-plus year old lady in a small Bavarian village, in an area where for years the Catholic Church within walking distance held sway as the primary social and religious gathering place. She told me of her loneliness and of her disappointment that her long established social order had collapsed. Life had passed her by and

no longer was she meaningful to anyone, especially as she was one of the last of her generation remaining. The cause of her anguish, she said, was the motor car. She was unable to obtain one, let alone drive one. So while all those who once walked to church drove away from the village to friends or beauty spots, especially on Sundays, she remained alone, often in a near empty church.

Since then, technology has made big inroads into society and continues to do so. That Bavarian conversation, which preceded the internet, mobile phones, Apple devices and tablets, social media, SMSs, Wikipedia and a host of other 'advances' with which we spend much of our time, has remained fresh in my mind, as, with every wave of innovative activity a large number of folk have been left remote and lying helpless.

Most of these folk, but not all, belong, like the lady I spoke to, to the older generation. Some live today as she did, unable to drive when much of the world around them does - to church, to the shops of today (no corner store these days), to friends. Many of these are divorced from mainstream social activity by the inability to understand, use or even know how or what to obtain in order to interact with the rest of the world - apart, maybe, from being able to turn on a TV.

Stroll around any aged care facility or visit retirement villages and talk to the retired and widowed. Sure, age and its diseases may have affected some, but others have lost touch, not only with tech developments, but with the world around them, with family and friends, and with folk just to talk to because many they once knew now communicate mainly through social media and the internet. To do this you need at least a basic understanding of smart phones, and you're out of it if you struggle to get a senior's mobile to function! Not only are our previously close contacts frolicking in a sea of cyber activity, but government departments and businesses give their best attention to those clients who use a www address and a series of hard to remember passwords.

A restricted access to meaningful social interaction not only results in an observable deterioration of cognitive ability, it also results in the shipwreck of normal independence. Frequently residents who need support services, even though they remain mentally competent, are unable to maintain their personal finances for no other reason than they are incapable of communicating with financial institutions or support agencies. They are incapable because they haven't been able to keep up with the appropriate technology. As a result, they have no personal involvement in ensuring they are being serviced correctly by government agencies such as Centrelink, nor can they monitor bank deposits or budget effectively. If they're resident in a care facility it is impossible for many to comprehend whether the complicated formulae to assess their care fees are being correctly applied. If friends or relatives are available to assist, or take over responsibilities, they must have time and be depended upon and trusted. Some can't. The result is that numbers of care recipients have moved from being homeowners into destitution, primarily because of being left behind during the advancement of technology.

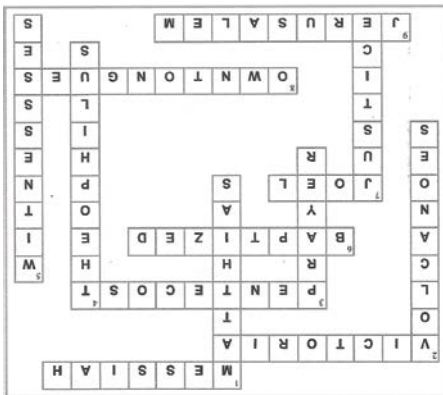
This is not intended to be read as a geriatric grumbling epistle. Rather, it is written as a reminder that Jesus did not make rules about what we should not do as our most important commandments, but what we should do. We should love the Lord our God with all we've got, and our neighbours as ourselves. Technology must not

interfere, or deter us from doing that, and when we see our older nearby neighbours discarded and lonely, maybe we should prioritise them over our clever devices.

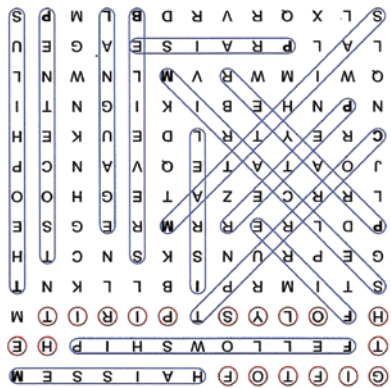
While I'm not suggesting that technology is wicked, perhaps we should be careful to make sure that it doesn't entice us away from the importance of loving one another as we have been commanded to, and as we ourselves have been loved.

That leaves us with an important question - "How can we show meaningful love to those who we can't easily communicate with in contemporary ways?" Perhaps in the same way that would have been appreciated by the Bavarian widow, who yearned for company and fellowship. And that takes time, or rather, it means reallocating time. ■

Michael North is a former administrator of The Scots' Church Melbourne.



Hidden Message: GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT





THE CRUCIFIXION GAP

Forget the Nike 'swash'... Christianity has one of the most recognisable brand identities in history. But why did it take hundreds of years for art to depict Jesus dying on the cross? Robyn Whitaker explains...

The cross, or crucifix, is arguably the central image of Christianity. What's the difference between the two? A cross is just that - an empty cross. It stands as a statement that Jesus is no longer on the cross and thus symbolises his resurrection. A crucifix, on the other hand, includes the body of Jesus, to more vividly remind viewers of his death. Many contemporary Christians, from bishops to ordinary folk, wear some kind of cross or crucifix around their neck and it would be rare to find a church that did not have at least one prominently displayed in the building.

While a symbol of faith, it's not just the pious who wear crosses. Madonna famously wore a crucifix necklace and earrings right through the 1980s and '90s. The recent ubiquity of the cross as a fashion item means it is sold at everything from cheap fashion stores to that jeweller renowned for its little turquoise boxes, where a diamond cross necklace can run in excess of \$10,000.

The 2018 Met Gala's theme, Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and Catholic Imagination, further bestowed religious imagery with fashion icon status by making it central to one of the fashion industry's key events.

Yet the cross was not always the dominant symbol of Christianity that it is now, and would certainly not have been worn as a fashion accessory by early Christians. In fact, it took centuries for Christians to begin to depict the cross in their art.

While some want to credit Emperor Constantine for the use of the cross as becoming more widespread after the 4th century, it is not that simple. Part of the answer lies in the nature of crucifixion itself. While crucifixion included some variety in antiquity, it was typically a form of execution reserved for non-elite, non-citizens in the 1st-century Roman Empire. Slaves, the poor, criminals and political protesters were crucified in their thousands for "crimes" we might today consider minor offences. The types of cross structures might differ, but as a form of execution,

Crucifixion was brutal and violent, designed to publicly shame the victim by displaying them naked on a scaffold, thereby asserting Rome's power over the bodies of the masses.

That Jesus suffered such an undignified death was an embarrassment to some early Christians. The apostle Paul describes Jesus' crucifixion as a "stumbling block" or "scandal" to other Jews. New Testament theology invests it with sacrificial meaning to make sense of how the one claimed as God's Son would suffer in this way. But the shame associated with this kind of death remained.



A now infamous piece of graffiti, dating to the early 3rd century in Rome, arguably mocks Jesus' manner of death. Sketched on a wall in Rome, the Alexamenos graffiti portrays a donkey-headed male figure on a cross under which is written "Alexamenos, worship his god". The suggestion is that the parody was directed at Christians precisely because they worshipped a man who had died by crucifixion.

Felicity Harley-McGowan, an expert on crucifixion and early Christian art, argues Christians began to experiment with making their own specifically Christian images around 200 CE, roughly 100-150 years after they began writing about Jesus.

The slowness to depict Jesus on a cross was not about a general sensibility to the visual arts, although they do seem to have been very selective in what they did portray. Artwork typically depicted biblical stories and used bucolic imagery to show others being rescued from death or to tell the stories of biblical heroes like Daniel or Abraham.

In the fourth century, Christians began to depict other death scenes from the Bible, such as the raising of Jairus' daughter, but still not Jesus' death. Harley-McGowan writes: it is clear that the earliest representations of deaths in early Christian art were pointed in their focus on actions after the event. Such depictions emphasised healing, new life and resurrection from death. This emphasis is one explanation for why Christians were slow to depict Jesus' actual death.

One of the earliest depictions of Jesus can be found in the Maskell Passion Ivories dating to the early fifth century CE, more than 400 years after his death. These ivories formed a casket panel that includes one death scene amid a range of scenes telling the Jesus story. Like much previous Christian art, the emphasis remained on Jesus' victory over death rather than any desire to depict the reality or violence of his crucifixion. One way to show this was to portray Jesus on a cross but with his eyes open, alive and undefeated by the cross; in the Maskell Ivory, Jesus' alertness is contrasted with the clearly dead Judas.

While there is a third century amulet that includes crucifixion imagery (and there may have been other gems and amulets lost to history that associated his resurrection from death in magical terms), depictions of the cross only began to emerge in the fifth century and would remain rare until the sixth.

As churches began to be built, crucifixes appeared on engraved church doors and would remain the more standard image until the Reformation emphasis on the empty cross.

The cross continues to have a complex history, being used as both a symbol of Christian ecclesial power and of white supremacy by groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

There can be beauty, intrigue, magic and terror in these cross traditions. On one hand, it stands as a symbol of Christian belief in Jesus' death and resurrection. On the other, it is a reminder of the violence of the state and capital punishment. Perhaps, 2,000 years later, it is always both – even when diamond-encrusted. ■



OUR BLUESTONE FOUNDATIONS

From molten lava to cobbled laneways, [Stephanie Trigg](#) explains how bluestone shaped Melbourne's identity.

If we think of the bluestone in Melbourne, we may first think of the famous cobbled laneways intersecting the urban grid.

Initially, these laneways were used for the collection of night soil from buckets or privies – and they are still useful routes for collecting rubbish and recycling bins. But laneways are increasingly being reclaimed as lively strips for cafes, bars, restaurants and galleries in the city, or re-made as gardens in the suburbs.

Laneways are an important part of Melbourne's heritage infrastructure, protected by legislation and design guidelines. And they're often defended by enthusiasts whenever a local council threatens to remove the bluestones or re-pave them with asphalt.

The other thing we might think of when it comes to bluestone in Melbourne are landmark buildings such as Pentridge Prison (still known affectionately as the "bluestone college") and the Old Melbourne Gaol in Russell St. Then there is the

more elegant gothic style of St Patrick's Cathedral, or the brutal modernism of the National Gallery of Victoria. Several blocks further down St Kilda Road are the grand Victoria Barracks, festooned with gorgeous crimson Boston Ivy in autumn.

Deep bluestone foundations also underpin some of the city's most famous sandstone buildings: the Victorian Parliament, the Treasury, the Town Hall and the Supreme Court. Scots' Church also rests on bluestone foundations.

These dark grey stones that line and frame our streets and buildings are an important feature of Melbourne's urban identity. Here's how it began. The formations of bluestone are paradoxically both fast and slow, and begin with explosions of fire and rock. In successive periods of volcanic activity to the north and south-west of Melbourne (some from 4.5 million years ago, some as recent as 10,000 years ago), rocks and boulders were thrown up as flaming projectiles or poured out of volcanoes as molten lava.

From these furious beginnings, basalt settles into the heavy dark stones we now associate with stability and endurance. But the consistency of bluestone varies widely, depending on how it was formed. When it cools slowly, it's hard and smooth, with barely a flaw, or at most a delicate thread of tiny bubbles. This is the highest grade stone, used for smooth surfaces such as hearthstones and front-facing walls. But if a flying boulder lands in water, it cools more rapidly, so pockets of gas produce bubbles, even sometimes a honeycomb effect. The quality, colour and consistency of bluestone used in Melbourne also varies according to the quarries from which it's sourced; or whether it comes from Australia or overseas.

Geological time is almost beyond our reckoning, though Indigenous culture and history helps us read these formations on a human scale. A stone axe-head, found deep beneath layers of volcanic ash at Tower Hill, suggests Indigenous people would have witnessed some of the volcanic activity on this site. Important traces of Indigenous knowledge and use of bluestone have also been discovered elsewhere in Victoria. For instance, bluestone was used for an eel trap system carbon-dated to 6,600 years old, developed near Lake Condah in the sacred Budj Bim landscape.

There's also the natural basalt-bluestone ledge across the Yarra river – known as “The Falls” – which separated fresh and salt water. It was used as a meeting place for different tribal groups, but was removed in the 1880s. And there are basalt stones arranged as astronomical markers at Wurdi Youang, near Lara.

Bluestone was the obvious choice for construction when Melbourne was a booming gold-rush city in the 1850s. It was cheap and plentiful, and there was convict labor to cut and haul its heavy weight. But as early as the 1880s, bluestone had become unfashionable, perceived as too dark, sombre and forbidding. Bluestone buildings were increasingly lightened with sandstone or white stucco edges and borders, while granite and sandstone became the stones of choice for grand public buildings. Now, bluestone is prized again for its heritage value. But “heritage” is always a movable category, susceptible to changes in both fashion and feeling about the past. There is something compelling about the way stone helps us think about



time, history and change. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen observes: to lay hand upon stone is to press against time in material form.

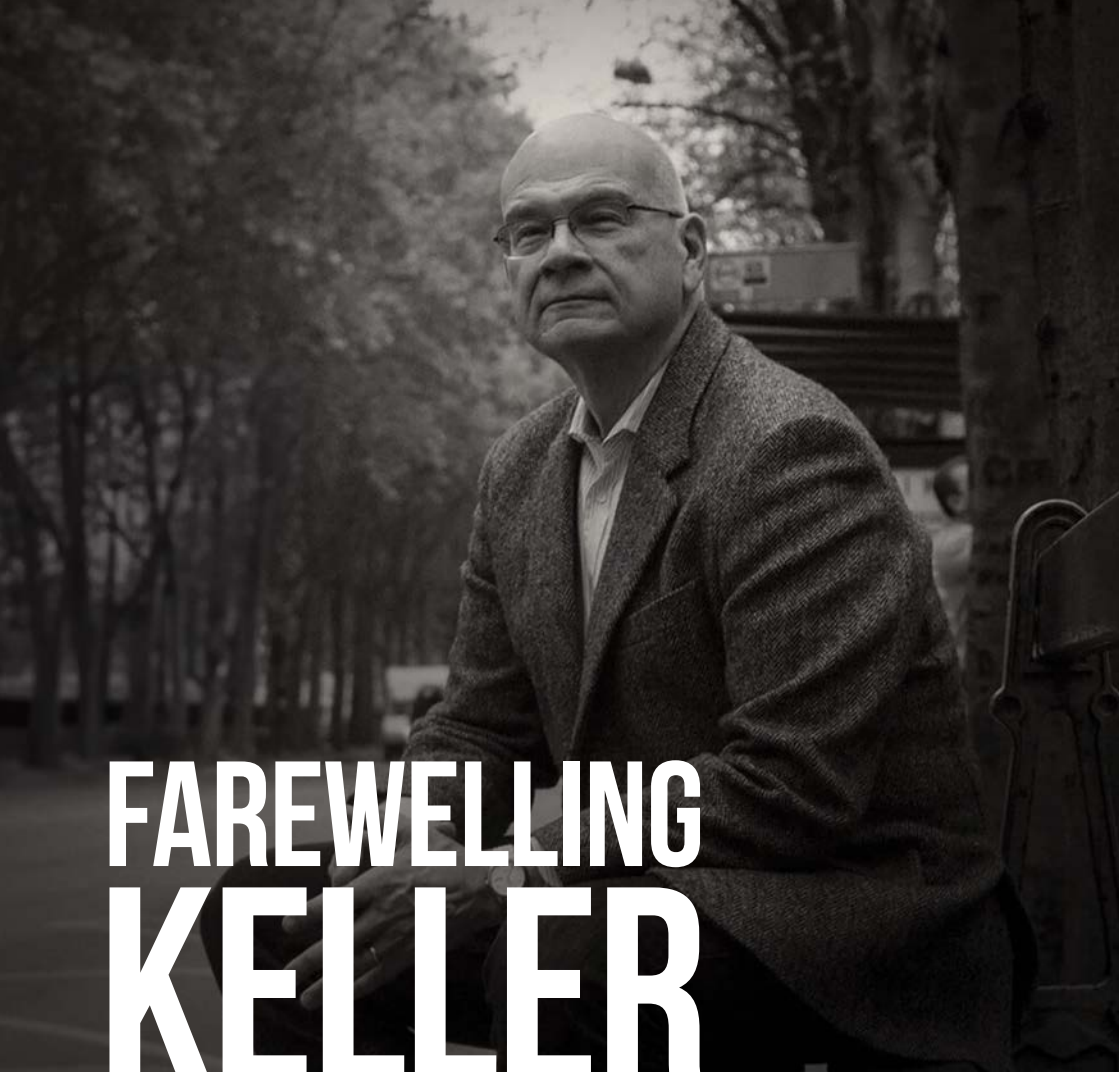
Many Melburnians have powerful stories about the way its characteristic square “pitchers” and long rectangular building blocks are bought and sold, collected and dispersed, recycled or moved from one site to another, from public buildings to suburban gardens and makeshift walls. It’s as if the citizens were playing a mysterious, long-range collective game of Lego.

Some of the most prized stones are those that seem to bear the ancient marks of wheels, or of convict labor, whether in the form of initials and arrows chiselled into the stone, or the more mundane markers of manual work. Gardeners, builders and diggers of cellars struggle with the large “floaters” under old houses and in the gardens in the north and western suburbs, straining to lever them from the black sticky clay of the Merri Creek soil, famously used as the basis of the MCG cricket pitch.

Melbourne’s bluestone history is not just geological and cultural: it is also an emotional one, as we constantly redefine our relationship with this distinctive stone. ■

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FAREWELLING KELLER

You may not have heard of Dr Tim Keller, who passed away in May. But his influence has left the world – and the church – profoundly better than it was. Phil Campbell offers this tribute...

The best eulogies of American pastor and author Tim Keller haven't come from the Christians who once sat in the same room. They have come from those on the margins of faith, or without it, for whom he was able to portray Jesus making sense intellectually and emotionally in an unexpected way.

Keller died in New York on May 19th 2023 after a three-year battle with pancreatic cancer. While his death was entirely expected, and Keller himself faced the end with his typically relaxed ease, his passing somehow left the Christian world unprepared. Who will now put the case for Christ with such an easy and gracious authority? For that was Keller's unique genius.

The majority of Keller's career was spent at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, where he ministered to young, highly educated people working in medicine, finance, and the arts; seekers, atheists and cynics alike. But that cynicism faded as Tim penetrated the hype, and highlighted the deep longings that work, autonomy and moral relativism failed to satisfy.

New York Times columnist David Brooks met Keller through his girlfriend, who was attending Redeemer. She dragged him along; and his observations made fascinating reading in his column. "Outsider and unbeliever though I am, he made me feel like a member of his search party. ... And he made me feel loved—by him and by his God," said Brooks of an early encounter.

Another journalist, atheist Jonathan Ranch, observed, "I can't understand Tim's world. But through him, I got glimpses of a world with humility, love, and grace at its core."

Brooks continued attending the church, and found his own views gradually challenged as he formed a friendship with Keller. "Whenever a particular group of my friends would get together, discussing some personal, social or philosophical issue over Zoom during the past few years, you could see Tim just chilling and enjoying it, lounging back in his chair. The conversation would flow, and finally somebody would ask; "Tim, what do you think?" He'd start slow, with that wry, friendly smile. He'd mention a relevant John Bunyan poem, then an observation Kierkegaard had made or a pattern the historian David Bebbington had noticed. Then he would synthesize it all into the four crucial points that pierced the clouds of confusion and brought you to a new layer of understanding... Tim could draw on a vast array of intellectual resources to argue for the existence of God, to draw piercing psychological insights from the troubling parts of Scripture, or to help people through moments of suffering. His voice was warm, his observations crystal clear."

But this was no "us versus Manhattan culture war," explains Brooks. "Instead, his focus was on our own disordered hearts, wracked by inordinate desires for things that control us, that lead us to feel superior and exclude those without them, that fail to satisfy us even when we get them." That, to Keller, was the essence of what the bible calls 'sin'; our disordered desires, that so long for created things and ignore the Creator himself.

Keller's message was simple. It was always, always, centred on the forgiveness and reconciliation made possible by Jesus. This, ultimately, was the heart of his gospel of grace. "Cheer up! You're a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine and you're more loved than you ever dared hope."

Tim had this uplifting sense, says Brooks, that the hardest part was persuading yourself to believe in something so wonderful. He'd often draw on material from English authors CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien, who argued that our deepest human desires reflected something true about the nature of reality, and the notion that the real restoration on offer through Christ and his resurrection was all about making 'everything bad come un-true.'

My wife Louise and I met Keller in 2004 when we travelled to New York to take part in a small 'visiting pastors' weekend,' keen to find ideas to bring home. Already,

there was growing interest in Redeemer. Tim and the team were generous with their time, showing us around, answering questions, highlighting both the wins and the challenges. Afterwards, I - perhaps ungraciously, but at best unwittingly - wrote in a blog post for the folks back home that the Redeemer Presbyterian 'model' of shaping church life was impressive, but that I feared that the main ingredient in their growth was the unique genius of Keller as their senior pastor. Sadly, that wasn't going to be easily transferable to suburban Australia! A few weeks later I received an email from Tim - he'd read my blog, and had been troubled by the issue. Gifted as he was, the last thing he wanted was to shape a church around himself, rather than the Lord Jesus who he so keenly served. Significantly, he spent the last decade re-shaping the Redeemer ministry, decentralising into four churches around New York City, and nurturing a church planting network around the world.

Keller was a lover of God and of people, says long-time colleague Dale M. Coulter. "He relished the conversation, was unafraid of pushback from skeptics, and courageously launched out into broken spaces that others had abandoned. God bring us more Tim Kellers." ■

Phil Campbell is Senior Minister of The Scots' Church Melbourne. One of Keller's most memorable addresses took place at the headquarters of Google, at the launch of his book "The Reason for God." To listen, search on YouTube for "Keller at Google" or scan the QR code.





IRISH BARMBRACK

Rosalie Strother unearths another favourite recipe from the archives...

This recipe comes from the 'limited edition' Scots' Church Recipe Book published in 2014. The true and tried recipe for Irish Barmbrack or Teabrack is easy to make, and delicious thinly sliced and buttered. It also freezes well.

1 cup raisins roughly chopped
1 cup currants
1 cup sultanas
½ cup brown sugar

1 cup cold black tea
2 cups self-raising flour
1 lightly beaten egg

Soak fruits and sugar in tea overnight.

Add flour and egg and mix thoroughly.

Pour into buttered 20 cm x 10 cm loaf tin and bake in centre of moderate oven for 1½ to 2 hours.

Allow to cool, slice, butter and serve. No wonder all those Irish eyes are smiling! ■



SURPRISED BY JOY

When our new Scots' Church website was launched recently (see scotschurch.com), I took some time to work my way around and explore what it had to offer, and I wasn't disappointed, says Rosalie Strother...

There's a pile of helpful information, but somehow the thing that struck me most on my first visit was the photo gallery featuring our ministry and admin teams. Without exception, these were not just 'camera smiles' - I could only describe it as as 'active joy' radiating from each face. It was a great surprise on a 'church website' where often it seems that the faces must be serious. What an encouragement to meet such approachable people.

This brought to mind the stark contrast with the images in John Brack's iconic painting, 'Collins Street at 5 pm', painted in 1955... famously, it depicts drab office workers heading home at the end of the day, described as 'blank-faced office workers hurrying like sleep-walkers thinking only of the pubs or their homes in the suburbs.' Looking back on his painting years later, Brack was apologetic, because of the condescending attitude he admitted he had adopted to the people in the street. 'I should have known that their lives were just as complex as mine,' said Brack, '... if not more so.' But it's interesting that this painting still captures the public imagination, having been voted the most popular work in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria in 2011.

What a contrast to our joyful looking team at Scots' – still part of Collins Street in 2023! It's interesting that the the words "joy," "rejoice," or "joyful" appear a total of 430 times in the English Standard Version of the Bible, compared with "happy" or "happiness," which appears only ten times. Surprised? So was I! So what's the difference between 'joy' and 'happiness'?

A recent article on the benefits of joy by 'positive psychologists' Jolanta Burke and Padraic Dunne provides some insight. They describe joy as 'an emotion experienced by many but understood by few.' It's usually mistaken for happiness, yet they argue that joy is unique in its impact on both our mind and body. Unlike a mere fleeting emotion, joy triggers a host of significant physiological and psychological changes that can improve our physical and mental health. It often refers to a broad sense of being satisfied with life, that appears after experiencing a sense of awe or wonder. Many of us might better associate it with feeling "blessed". While joy arises naturally, it seems happiness must be pursued.

Even the way we express joy is different from our other emotions. Burke and Dunne claim that the smile joy produces is different from the way we smile when we're simply happy. Joy creates what's known as a Duchenne smile – an involuntary, genuine smile that reaches our eyes. This smile-type is associated with benefits like improvements in physical health, better recovery after illness, and stronger bonds with others.

'Joy is both a trait and a state,' say the authors, 'so that while some of us only experience it as a result of a joyful situation, others have a capacity for it – meaning they're able to experience joy regardless of whether they've encountered something joyful.'

Even so, there are easy things all of us can do to help boost our experience of joy. Burke and Dunne suggest that the very act of sharing a meal or a coffee can spark joy; independent research confirms that sharing meals with others enhances what's known as psychological flourishing, the highest level of well-being. This is often seen in the ministry of Jesus, who shared meals with all kinds of people – in their homes, on hillsides, by the sea. Sometimes it was a few close disciples, sometimes thousands of people - most notably, he was accused of eating and drinking with 'tax collectors and sinners' who seemed to very much enjoy his company! And who can forget his premiere miracle - turning water into wine at a joyful wedding feast. More significantly, he promised his followers 'living water' - a source of satisfaction and joy that transcends their circumstances.

There's some final advice from Burke and Dunne, who say that 'while joy is wonderful to experience, it isn't the only emotion we'll encounter in our lives. It's important to try and embrace all the emotions we experience – be that sadness, anger, happiness or joy.' But for a quick look at joy – just take a minute to check out scotchurch.com/team! ■

G I F T O F H A I S S E
 T F E L L O W S H I P H
 H F O L Y S T P I R I T
 S T I M R P I B L L K N
 G E P R U N S K S N C T
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WORD SEARCH

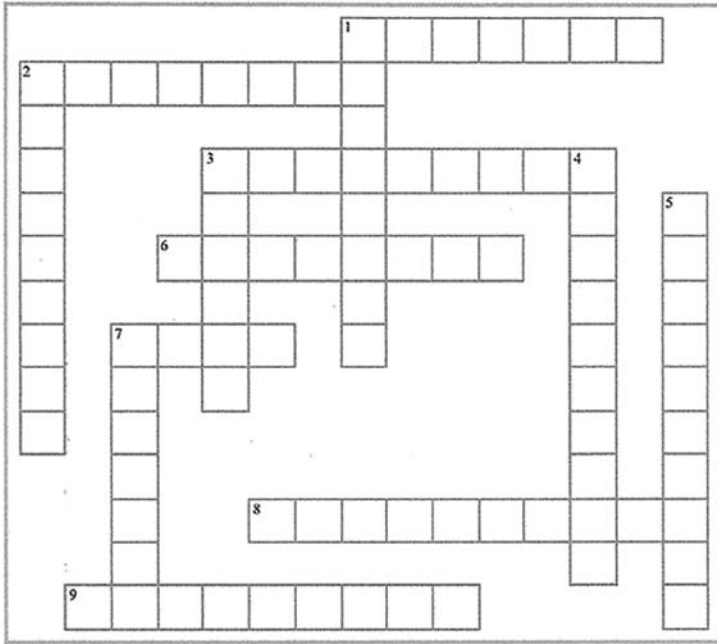
Wise words from Acts 1 and 2, and more...

Find the words in the grid. When you are done, the unused letters in the grid will spell out a hidden message. Pick them out from left to right, top line to bottom line. Words can go horizontally, vertically and diagonally in all eight directions.

(Solution on page 29.)

The words to find

BELIEVERS	MESSIAH
CORRUPT	MIRACLES
FELLOWSHIP	PENTECOST
FIRE	PETER
ISRAEL	PRAISE
LANGUAGE	PRAYER
MATTHIAS	THEOPHILUS



CROSSWORD

Wise words from Acts 1 and 2, and more...

Across

1. God has made Jesus both Lord and _____.
2. The Eight Hour Day monument can be found in _____ Street.
3. On what day did the Holy Spirit come down?
6. Peter called on the people to repent and be _____ in the name of Jesus.
7. Peter addressed the crowd, quoting the Old Testament prophet _____.
8. Those present heard the word of God declared in their _____.
9. There were God-fearing Jews gathered from every nation in which city?

Down

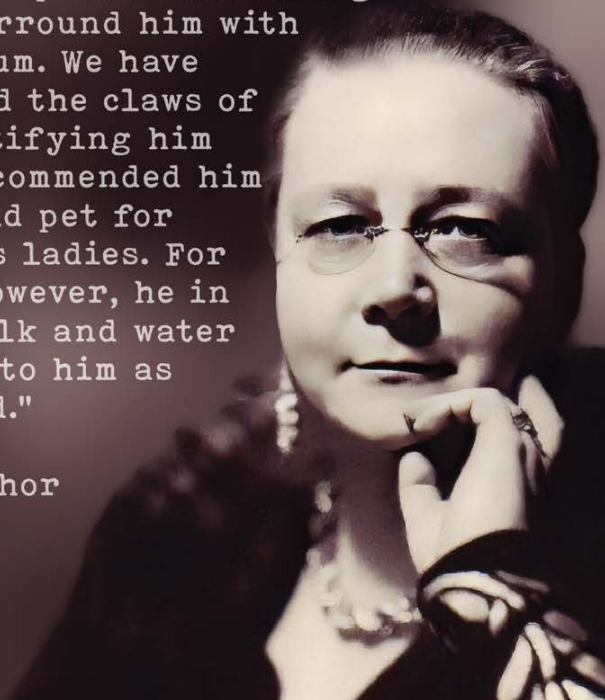
1. Who was the apostle chosen to replace Judas?
2. Bluestone rock has its origins in _____.
3. The believers devoted themselves to _____.
4. To whom was the Book of Acts written?
5. Peter said that they were all _____ to God raising Jesus to life.
7. The popularity of crime novels tells us that we long for _____.

(Solution on page 29)

NOTABLE QUOTABLE

"Official Christianity of late years has been having what is known as bad press. We are constantly assured that churches are empty because preachers insist too much upon doctrine - dull dogma as people call it. The fact is the precise opposite. It is the neglect of dogma that makes the dullness. The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that has ever staggered the imagination of man, and the dogma is the drama. This is the dogma we find so dull - this terrifying drama of which God is the victim and the hero. If this is dull, then what in heaven's name is worthy to be called exciting? The people who hanged Christ, never, to do them justice, accused him of being a bore. On the contrary, they thought him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left to later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and to surround him with an atmosphere of tedium. We have very efficiently pared the claws of the lion of Judah certifying him meek and mild, and recommended him as a suitable household pet for pale curates and pious ladies. For those who knew him, however, he in no way suggested a milk and water person. They objected to him as a dangerous firebrand."

Dorothy L. Sayers, Author
(1893-1957)





scotschurch.com