

THE SCOTS' CHURCH

# THE LEAFLET

*Spring '23*



**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](http://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. 1096

Spring has sprung, and the Gertrude St magnolias are out in full force to welcome the sunshine. It's the ideal time to welcome this edition of The Leaflet, the quarterly magazine of The Scots' Church Melbourne.

Whether you're a regular member at Scots' or just passing through, we hope you'll find something enjoyable and thought provoking inside.

We love our city, we love our community, and we love our historic church. You'll see all those loves reflected in these pages. We visit Gelato bars, stand in Melbourne's famous cafe queues, watch popular movies and TV shows, and dip into Biblical history and current issues.

You'll enjoy our profile of The Scots' Church and our Flemington Mission too - a great introduction to who we are and what we're doing as a church that's 'full of history and full of life.' If you're a Melbourne local and you're still working from home, take a moment to read Anna Grummitt's excellent article, as she reminds us to think more deeply about human flourishing in all its dimensions. The same theme arises as new mum Sirisha describes the importance of a church community at life's turning points, as she and husband Joel welcomed Elijah, our magazine cover-kid, earlier this year.

It's a great reminder that 'church' is not just a building - it's 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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Web: [www.scotschurch.com](http://www.scotschurch.com)

Search for **ScotsCast**, our weekly podcast, on Spotify or Apple.

Rosalie Strother, Phil Campbell, Philip Court - Editorial Team

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# UNFORESEEN FLAVOURS

Phil Campbell volunteers to test some of Melbourne's finest gelato flavours...

Directly opposite Parliament House in Spring Street you'll find one of Melbourne's lesser known culinary treasures. It's called 'The Grocer', and it houses a gourmet grocery shop, cheese cellar – and most importantly, one of the city's pre-eminent gelato bars.

The shopfront at 157 Spring St is unpretentious, highlighted at night by a red neon sign in cursive script at the front, and another in green announcing "Gelati" on the window. Operating since 2013, my hunch is that The Grocer survived the pandemic lockdown on the basis of its unique selection of unforeseen flavours.

Founders Con Christopoulos and Joshua Brisbane say their mission is to provide locally and ethically sourced products - and the artisanal hand churned gelato takes pride of place. They've staffed the gelato bar with a team of fellow enthusiasts, who happily explain the techniques behind some of the more unusual flavour bases. The Panetone, for instance, is created by soaking real-life Panetone in the milk

base until the flavour is deeply saturated. (Here's a bonus fact - the difference between Gelato and Ice Cream is that Gelato is made with less cream and more milk. The result is a denser texture, less airy, and more 'flavour-density' too.)

The specialty flavours are on regular rotation, so you never quite know what you'll find when you visit. This week Lychee and Coconut, Panetone, and Yoghurt, Ginger and Blueberry join regular favourites like Salted Caramel, Fiore Di Latte and Pistachio di Bronte; and, of course, Milk Chocolate.

On our recent visit, only one family member chose the Gingery option, two selected

the safer Salted Caramel, and one resorted to the even safer – but delicious – chocolate. "It's a classic for a good reason," said our server. The cones are always deliciously crisp, and the spatula-served gelato portions are generous.

Our taste-tester reports that the Yoghurt, Ginger and Blueberry, delivers all three flavours at full intensity, but with an ingenious balance – ginger hits the palate first, with a strong yoghurt-y edge, and a slightly more subtle berry follow-through.

Melbourne is home to a number of superb Gelateria, like the better known Pidapipo and Piccolina. Typically, the bigger names will display a much broader selection. But in my view at least, what The Grocer lacks in range is more than compensated by the way the flavours 'pop'. It's handy to the theatre district, so next time you're in the city for an evening – or even after a visit to church – why not treat yourself? ■



# FULL OF HISTORY, FULL OF LIFE

Scots' Church Melbourne is something of an institution - but it's a living church too! Read on to discover more about what makes us tick.

As you'll guess from our name, The Scots' Church had its origins in Melbourne's thriving Scottish community. But while there's still a Celtic core, these days Scots' Church embraces the diverse community that makes Melbourne such a special city. Located in the heart of the CBD, these days there's a range of gatherings each Sunday that cater for a wide demographic range.

The traditional service at 11am is well known for both exceptional traditional music (with a fine organist and choir) and expository Biblical Preaching that connects the scriptural text and today's world. A new kids' program means that there's something for all the family. An International English Speaking Service

meets in the hall at 9.30am; and an Indonesian language service runs at 11am. Then at 5pm, a contemporary service – ScotsCity – connects with those who prefer a less formal approach.

The magnificent Scots' church building is also open to visitors each weekday, usually from 10am - 2pm, but check our website for variations to these times.

But let's step back to the beginning. Our history goes all the way back to the earliest foundations of Melbourne. In May 1835, John Batman sailed from Tasmania to explore the Yarra River. He settled the area, which soon started to grow. Within a year, Alexander Thomson – a Doctor – was leading Presbyterian services on the banks of the Yarra River. By December 1837 James Clow, a recently retired Chaplain with the East India Company, launched regular services in a small timber building. That was the beginning of the congregation that grew to become Scots'.

The next step was finding a full time minister. Rev James Forbes soon arrived from Scotland, and the church was granted land on the present site. Our energetic forebears built a school, which doubled as a church on Sundays. Next came a stone church building in January 1841, which seated 500 people. But with the growing Melbourne population and enthusiastic attendance, within 30 years the new church was too small... plus, the spire began leaning at an alarming angle. By January 1869 the gold-rich congregation had agreed to build a new church designed by the prominent architects Reed & Barnes – the Scots' Church you see today. Builder David Mitchell – father of famous Australian soprano Dame Nellie Melba – took only 20 months to complete the project.

Bluestone foundations supported Barrabool Hills Freestone from Geelong as the superstructure, with cream-coloured Kakanui Stone from New Zealand used for the decorative dressings. Although it never quite matched the scale envisaged in the architect's original rendering, the 64 metre spire was for many years the highest point in the city – and this time it was straight and true! But during a storm in 1963, lightning hit the top of the spire which was subsequently lowered by 12 metres. It was restored to full height in 1989. Since then, of course, the church has been dwarfed by the city skyline, and by the adjacent Westpac Building, which occupies Scots' Church land on a long-term lease. Income from this arrangement almost covers the upkeep of our historic building, though there are some upcoming challenges in replacing the original slate roofing.

Inside, Scots' Church has maintained its heritage beauty, though there have been some modifications through the years. The Apse (at the front) was originally dominated by a stone pulpit. In 1928 and then, in progressive stages, the original Tasmanian Blackwood panelling was extended around the nave. In the late 1930s the current vestries were added in a style that perfectly matched the rest of the building.

Our Rieger organ was installed in the latter half of 1999 by a team from Schwarzach in Southern Austria, the home of the famous organ builder, Rieger Orgelbau. Built to specifications of our Music Director Douglas Lawrence, it is composed of two sections – the main organ located in the North Transept and the smaller Gallery organ at the Collins Street end of the Church. It has four manuals and 68 speaking stops, and all divisions can be played from the main console.



The full pipe array is located behind the original cedar case built in 1874, to house the previous organ. The case was restored and moved forward, and set higher than its original position, so exposing its full dimensions, probably for the first time. The case is a fine example of the work of the architect Joseph Reed.

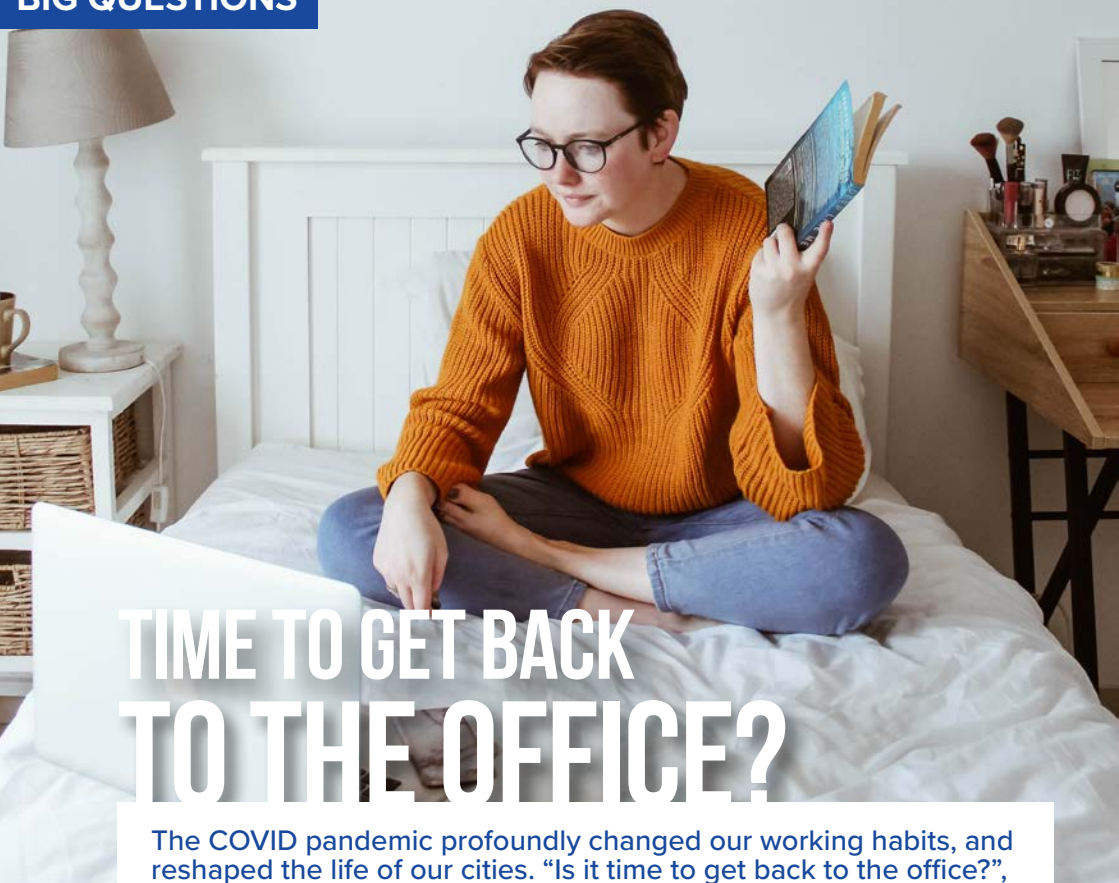
With 2024 fast approaching, our Scots' Church building will soon be celebrating 150 years! But in all of this, we're keenly aware that a church is more than just a building – it's a gathering of God's people, committed and loyal to a Lord, Jesus. We've been the spiritual home for many thousands of Christians since our foundation in 1838, and we're always keen to welcome more.

We hope you'll be surprised and delighted by your visit to Scots' Church, whether mid-week, or for a Sunday Service. If you're considering a visit on a Sunday morning, make time to join us for a free coffee before the service - as you arrive, you'll notice the coffee machine in the foyer. Our welcoming barista will be happy to serve you. (You're welcome to grab one on your way out too, though we encourage everyone to stay a while longer for refreshments on the mezzanine floor of the Westpac Building behind the church. Please ask the welcome desk for directions if you're not sure how to find it.)

To help make your Sunday visit easy, free parking is available in the Wilson's Car Park, 181 Little Collins St. Please bring your car park ticket to the service where it can be validated.

Scots' Presbyterian Church is not just for Scots, and it's not just for Presbyterians! Even if you've never been to church before, we'd love to make you welcome and help you make sense of following Jesus in our 21st century world. ■





# TIME TO GET BACK TO THE OFFICE?

The COVID pandemic profoundly changed our working habits, and reshaped the life of our cities. “Is it time to get back to the office?”, asks Anna Grummitt...

On 10 December 2021, I woke up with a knot in my stomach. With COVID restrictions easing, my husband was about to spend a day in the office for the first time since June – which also meant, for the first time since our baby was born.

‘You’ve got this,’ I tried to convince myself, pushing down intrusive thoughts of everything that could go wrong. In the end, it was fine. My best friend came over, which helped. But when my husband came home in the evening, I felt a palpable sense of relief. A year and a half later, and my husband still rarely goes into the office; his workplace continues to allow employees to work from home.

But now that lockdowns are behind us, should those of us who have been working remotely return to the office full-time? This question has been doing the rounds in the media over the past few months. Recently, Randwick City Council’s controversial new mandate for staff to return to their workplace five days a week from mid-September made the news – as did former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett’s suggestion that public servants who work from home should be paid less than other government employees.

Many stories on this topic follow a similar pattern: Employer orders employees to return to the office, but employees resist, as a majority like working from home (or a hybrid work model). And while employers mostly focus on the benefits of in-person meetings, some are even framing this as a moral issue.

In mid-May, CR Commercial Property Group CEO Nicole Duncan made headlines for describing young people who want to work from home as 'selfish'. And around the same time, Elon Musk labelled working from home as 'morally wrong' because it's a privilege not everyone has.

It's true that not everyone has the option of working remotely – a recent Deakin University study estimated that only 39 per cent of jobs in Australia could be done from home. And sure, some people may work from home for selfish reasons. It doesn't work well in every situation.

But blanket labelling people who work from home as 'selfish' – or even immoral – ignores the experiences of those for whom it's been the exact opposite.

'Many employers claim to value these aspects of human life, and not just their employees' paid work. If they mean it, all these elements need to form part of the discussion on future models of work.'

As my own colleagues will tell you, I'm not the obvious candidate for championing remote work. As an extrovert, I enjoy going into the office and seeing people. (It certainly helps that my commute is an easy 15-minute walk.)

But in September 2021, I became a mum.

And my transition to motherhood was ... bumpy, to say the least. Navigating breastfeeding, sleep deprivation, birth injuries, postpartum hormones, and caring for a tiny human with no instruction manual meant constant feelings of overwhelm and anxiety. (I would later be referred to the wonderful Gidget Foundation Australia for professional support).

While I was going through all of this, having my husband work from home was an absolute lifeline.

In many ways, it would have been 'easier' for him to go to the office. He traded a peaceful train commute with time spent changing nappies and cleaning vomit off the couch. Catch-ups with his colleagues over lunch were swapped for soothing a crying baby (and mum!).

Far from being selfish, working from home opened his eyes to the reality of day-to-day life with a baby, and – when you factor in his long commute – gave him an extra two hours per day to care for and bond with our son. (And according to the Australian Institute of Family Services website, 'children with highly involved fathers experience positive outcomes in socio-emotional, behavioural and cognitive/educational domains.')

Importantly, he did this, all while still kicking goals in his paid job. And for a struggling new mum, his help – and the mere fact of his presence, even when he was busy at work – made all the difference.

There are downsides to remote work, of course. And it's right that as a society we discuss the future of work in a post-pandemic world. But surely we can all agree

that calling people ‘selfish’ and ‘morally wrong’ isn’t going to get us very far.

How might we better frame this conversation?

In his 2022 book *The Life We’re Looking For: Reclaiming Relationship in a Technological World*, author Andy Crouch offers a striking definition of what it means to be human. Drawing on an ancient notion from the Bible, he describes human beings as ‘heart-soul-mind-strength complexes designed for love’.

By this, he means that each of these qualities are fundamental to who we are. We are heart: filled with emotions, desires, and longings. We are soul: we have a sense of transcendence. We are mind: we have the capacity to rationally think our way through the world. We are strength: we have physical bodies, and these bodies matter. And on top of this, we are designed for love – wired to seek out relationships of interdependence and trust.

If that is what we are, then human flourishing looks like investing our time in activities that develop us in all these dimensions – many of which take place outside work hours.

Many employers claim to value these aspects of human life, and not just their employees’ paid work. If they mean it, all these elements need to form part of the discussion on future models of work.

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*Anna Grummitt is Youth & Schools coordinator at the Centre for Public Christianity. This article originally appeared on Eureka St (eurekastreet.com.au) and is reprinted with permission of the author.*



# MISSION MINDED

Jesus famously said, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me.” Whether it’s feeding the hungry or clothing the cold, his words in Matthew chapter 25 have motivated generations of Christians to care for those around them. The work of The Flemington Mission is no exception, says Rosemary Fetters...

Operating from the hall at St Stephen’s Presbyterian Church in Flemington, the Mission has been opening its doors every Tuesday morning for nearly 30 years. Flemington, Kensington, North Melbourne and the surrounding suburbs are very mixed; trendy inner suburban cottages sit side by side with high rise public housing, and all the socio-economic challenges that come with extreme disadvantage and homelessness.

The Presbyterian and Scots’ Church Joint Mission has been operating around the City and inner suburbs of Melbourne for nearly 100 years. For 40 years before

that, it was simply known as the Scots' Church Mission. Back in 1924, we provided beds and washing facilities as well as food and clothing, catering for many tens of thousands of mainly men. During the Great Depression we were feeding 300 people up to five times a week - that's 75,000 visits a year! These days we no longer provide accommodation, but we still supply food and other material goods as we respond to the needs of the prevailing times.

Our Mission friends include those with major psychiatric illnesses, intellectual impairment, alcohol and drug addiction, domestic abuse, and chronic gambling; there are ex-prisoners, homeless, some living with complex chronic medical problems and poor nutrition, others with limited English, and suffering from cultural isolation and loneliness. Many are burdened with multiple problems.

The number of clients grew with the pandemic - especially people on temporary visas who lost their employment. Now, increased financial pressure on households is resulting in more new faces.

We provide generous amounts of healthy food, financial support for medical prescriptions and educational support for those in need, as well as a constant, friendly, supportive presence in the community. For many, their visit to the Norwood Street church is the main social event in the week.



We have a successful partnership with Foodbank, who provide access to a large amount of healthy food at low cost. Each week Mission staff collect nearly 1000kg of fresh vegetables, fruit, dairy, bread, and non perishables and load it into cars for distribution the next day. We have large refrigerators and a commercial freezer for storage. We supplied culturally

appropriate food to people in isolation during the pandemic, and do our best to do the same now.

On Tuesdays, between 10am-1pm, around 100 people arrive to collect their weekly supplies. We also serve a freshly cooked lunch, which is enjoyed by around 20 or 30 who choose to stay. We run a well organised operation to distribute such a large amount of food to so many people in a personalised way and to serve so many lunches. Everyone is attended to individually with an opportunity to chat. Specific needs are catered for, such as children, cultural requirements, soft food, food that doesn't require cooking etc. **A Mission church service twice a month on Tuesdays is increasingly popular.**

In 2022, Orange Sky Laundry joined us on Tuesdays. They provide a free clothes-washing service that can do about 6 large loads of washing and drying a shift and is well utilised. The Footpath Library also comes to share free books with our community.

**The Flemington Mission is a joint outreach service of Scots' Church, Melbourne and the Presbyterian Churches of Victoria. Decisions on day-to-day running**

are made by the Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission Committee which has members appointed from Scots' Church and the wider Victorian Presbyterian Church.

There are at least 15 regular volunteers at the Mission, some of whom are also members of the Committee. Most are from St Stephen's and Scots' churches, joined by a few from other churches. (All Tuesday volunteers are required to have a Working with Children Check and comply with Safe Church requirements.) Our volunteers provide hot food, fresh produce and extra supplies, food transport and time. The Flemington Mission is a happy place to work, and the staff and community enjoy each other's company and the feeling of goodwill that is always present. This goodwill, generated by living our faith and sharing Christ's message of love, spreads far out into the community. It is a great foundation for helping to grow the church.

The Missioner, a part time paid position, is appointed by the Scots' Church Session to oversee and organise the many Mission activities and report to the Mission Committee.

The Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission Inc. is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission. The two main sources of income to the Mission are donations from individuals and churches and income from specifically donated invested funds. Donations of non-perishable food and toiletries are given by various congregations and other people throughout Victoria. We gained some local and state government funding during the pandemic for specific projects to increase the health and wellbeing of our community. The Mission was also a finalist in Vic Health's Building Back Better Award 2021.

Even with a very efficient enterprise, funding is always tight. Help with funding is always needed. Donations, which are tax deductible, are relied on for all costs. Costs include food and provisions, medical prescriptions subsidies, educational needs support, utility bills, maintenance and repairs and the Missioner's stipend. ■

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*Would you like to financially support the work of the mission? Here are our Bank details: BSB 083 004 ACC 51 512 1952 Presbyterian & Scots' Joint Mission Inc.*





# WHAT WAS I MADE FOR?

It's the question asked by this year's blockbuster movie *Barbie* – and it's worth your attention, says Phil Campbell...

**I used to float, now I just fall down,  
I used to know, but I'm not sure now...  
What I was made for...**

As the haunting voice of Billie Eilish glides over the scrolling credits of blockbuster movie *Barbie*, the effect is electric. But what's a song about existential angst doing in a movie about the world's most popular plastic doll?

But – in case you've seen the movie and you're still trying to figure it out – that's exactly the point. In spite of the pink-wash promotional campaign that's tinted every major city in the world (with the exception of a few notable political bans) Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* is not really a movie for eight-year old girls. In fact, I noticed one pre-teen in a pink ballet dress was in tears as we left the theatre.

The fact is, this is a tough movie to decode. "I saw the *Barbie* movie, and I don't know what to think. Is that allowed?," tweeted historian and podcaster Dr John Dickson. I know what he means. "*Barbie* isn't a great film - but that doesn't mean it isn't essential viewing," says Justine Toh from CPX, the Centre for Public Christianity.

"In the end, *Barbie* and *Ken* feel like Adam and Eve, rebooted," says Toh. "They recognise each other as people (ok, dolls) in their own right, and feel the pain of having that dignity denied... they come to "the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real" – which is how Iris Murdoch, (*Barbie*'s creator) rather memorably, defines love."



Indeed, it's only in meeting the creator that any of Barbie's ultimate angst is resolved – a theological theme developed by director Gerwig. “Ken was invented after Barbie, to burnish Barbie's position,” she said in an interview in *Vogue Magazine*. “That kind of creation myth's the opposite of Genesis.” And it's that reversal that plays deep into Gerwig's sub-text.

In a Kubrick-inspired opening, a group of girls playing with baby dolls are overshadowed by a monolithic Barbie, complete with adult curves. Immediately, they smash their boring baby dolls and implicitly, their maternal aspirations. The world has changed. In voiceover, Helen Mirren announces, with knowing irony, that “all problems of feminism and equal rights have now been solved” in the real world.

But as the scene flips to BarbieLand, the plastic life of ditzy ‘stereotypical Barbie’ (Margot Robbie) is rudely interrupted by thoughts of death. Awkwardly, the dark question comes in the middle of a dance party - the music stops, and her fellow-barbies are bewildered.

That marks the start of Barbie's voyage of discovery – a journey that takes her, along with Ken, to the ‘real world’ of LA, and a quest to meet her maker, who lives in the basement of the sinister Mattel Headquarters. This is quirky - Mattel, makers of the movie, are cast as the bad guys. Or maybe not quite. Like John Dickson, I don't know what to think.

Gerwig's movie asks big questions - theological questions - about life, purpose, and identity. The fact that it is packaged in a pink, sugar coated pill might fool some audience members, although obviously even the pre-teen in our audience could sense the aftertaste.

There are questions about gender, feminism and patriarchy too - Beach Ken (Ryan Gosling), emasculated in his role as nothing more than Barbie's accessory, is seduced by the horse-riding patriarchy of real-world LA, and returns to BarbieLand to lead a short-lived rebellion. It's a simple enough story told in bright-coloured tones; but underneath, there's existential crisis in relationships everywhere. When identity is only played out through dominating relationships, nobody wins. Again, in the words of Billie Eilish,

**I'm sad again, don't tell my boyfriend,  
It's not what he's made for.**

It's evident. Beach Ken is only made for “beach.” Even though he's devoted to Barbie, she's not all that interested in him, and he's not equipped for sharing the real-life sadness and emotions that make up a full-orbed relationship. His lack of life purpose is palpable, and tragic. And resorting to a macho stereotype doesn't help. “In BarbieLand, it's all about Barbie. She's everything,” says Justine Toh. “He's just Ken. He's her potential plus one, never the other way round, and often Barbie doesn't really want him there. Which means Ken, weirdly enough, gets what it feels like in this world for a girl.”

That's Gerwig's big metaphor again. BarbieLand has no place for men. And that makes for a convenient parody of real world patriarchy, which is powerfully critiqued by America Ferrera's stinging monologue on the

challenges that come with being a real-life woman: “You have to be a career woman, but also look out for other people. You have to answer for men’s bad behavior which is insane but if you point that out you’re accused of complaining. Because you’re supposed to stay pretty for men but not so pretty you tempt them too much or you threaten other women. Because you’re supposed to be part of the sisterhood but always stand out. You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. It’s too hard, it’s too contradictory, and nobody gives you a medal and says thank you.”

Clearly, though, the reverse is no better. Gerwig doesn’t dish up any simple solutions; in the end, Billie Eilish’s doleful but beautiful lyrics say it all. It’s sad, and it’s lonely. And yet Gerwig’s sympathetic treatment of both sides of the divide hints that somewhere, there’s a better way; a less plastic life that embraces loss, embraces the reality of gender, and embraces the possibility of love; a meaning that somehow comes from connecting with the creator and looking for the meaning we’re made for.

From one point of view, it’s a purpose that resonates with the words of Jesus, who, when asked “What is the greatest commandment,” says there are two - and they’re both about love. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your strength,” he says. “And love your neighbour as yourself.” Maybe that’s a clue for how to negotiate life in the real world.

But let’s give the last word to Billie Eilish, in a song that’s now reached a mind blowing milestone of one billion downloads on Spotify. It’s worth a listen, if only to resonate with the sense of longing that comes from living in a plastic world:

“Think I forgot how to be happy  
Something I’m not, but something I can be  
Something I wait for  
Something I’m made for  
Something I’m made for” ■



# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

New mum Sirisha explains how a church community can help new parents embrace the joys and challenges of parenthood...

It takes a village to raise a child! You might have heard or said this umpteen times. In my case, I found my village... the place where I can feel safe to fail, learn and grow. Being a migrant settled in Australia can be challenging, with no immediate family or support network.

My husband and I embraced parenthood on the 7th of March 2023, having no clue about what to expect. As a new mum, sometimes it seems I can never feel prepared, and every day comes as an experience like no other. We didn't even know that a baby feeds through the day - which is challenging for the schedule of a working mum! There was a lot to learn.

But in the days and weeks following Elijah's birth, the outpouring of love from our church was truly remarkable. We had many visitors in the hospital and phone calls from other members of our Church family asking about our well-being, and offering practical help. Our parents, who are overseas, were worried about how we would manage with a newborn. The arrival of a newborn is a joyous and

transformative event and equally overwhelming. My Engineer husband can solve complex technical problems and build beautiful furniture - but he was clueless when the baby cried in the evenings, and had no idea how to help.

When we spoke to friends about these things during morning tea after our Sunday church service, we were advised only to focus on three main things for a newborn – feed, change and cuddle. This changed our perspective, and helped us to embrace the phase which we were assured will pass quickly... though it felt long enough at that moment. Knowing that the pastoral team was standing by our side, and that our church was praying for the health and well-being of our little one and us, meant the world to us. The love, care, and generosity we have experienced have made the transition into parenthood much smoother and more joyful.

Though there are several support programs welcoming back new mothers into the corporate workplace and making the transition smooth, our Church played a vital role. I work for a Big Four firm, and was prepared to get back quickly to my working routine and multi-task with the new baby, though I was doubtful how it would all come together.

That's where the knowledge and guidance of others helped me gain the confidence to look after the baby and at the same time bounce back to work. Having a Church family around helped me go that extra mile. Perhaps the most heart-warming aspect of our church family's support has been the genuine love and care showered upon the new baby. By caring for him as if he were their own, our congregation offered a sense of security and belongingness.

Sure, there are still the challenges that come with sleepless nights and teething woes, but it's reassuring when people have shared their knowledge and experience with open arms and open hearts. Their whispered words of encouragement have reminded us that we are not alone in this journey. Their unwavering faith and enduring hope have shown us that parenthood is a divine calling, a sacred responsibility that is meant to be cherished and embraced. In our church family, we are not just recipients of advice; we are recipients of an immeasurable gift – the gift of wisdom born from a lifetime of experience. To our cherished Church family, Joel and I extend our deepest gratitude. Your words are not mere advice; they are gems of insight that illuminate our way, creating a bridge between our present, and the wisdom of ages. With each nappy changed, each lullaby sung, and each milestone celebrated, we honour the things you've taught us, knowing that the echo of your guidance will forever resonate in our hearts. May we continue to draw strength from your wisdom, passing it down to the next generation with the same love and care that you have shown us. In your embrace, we find not only a church community but a treasured family, bound by faith. ■

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*Joel, Sirisha and Elijah are part of the church family at Scots' Church Melbourne.*



For more than a decade, Sydney Presbyterian Pastor Luke Tattersall and his wife Debbie have been traveling regularly to Zimbabwe, where their willing service has had a lasting impact. Luke explains further...

Zimbabwe is an amazing country if you love stunning sight-seeing and animal watching. And the locals are among the most optimistic and resilient people on the planet – Zimbabwe has been through a lot in the past 40 years, and the people see better days ahead.

My wife Debbie and I met Zimbabwean Francis Phiri a few days after he arrived in Australia. Still adjusting to the time zone, he went for a morning walk with his son, and saw a sign that said, “Presbyterian Church”. That was the denomination he was involved with in Zimbabwe, so he followed the sign and joined us in church on his first Sunday morning in Sydney.

What Francis noticed about our church was the Bible teaching: like many Presbyterian pastors, I preach sequentially through books of the Bible, rather than unpacking disconnected doctrinal truths expressed in a single verse. Francis found this kind of preaching was revolutionary, because it taught him to read the Bible for himself. And he was excited.

After four years with us in Sydney, Francis returned to Zimbabwe where he established connections for us with the leadership of CCAP (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian.) In 2011 Debbie and I were invited to visit, and ran training for elders in preaching. It started small - 80 elders the first year. It grew over the years to a point where more than 320 elders attend the training sessions each year.

Please don't think this is somehow a failing on the part of the leadership of the CCAP in Zimbabwe. Far from it. In a denomination with 160 congregations and only 20 ordained ministers, they were desperately trying to keep their heads above water. The CCAP leadership were fully supportive of seeing their elders trained for the important role of preaching, and I was happy to help make it happen.

On our first visit, we were taken on a tour of a school run by the CCAP in Nyabira – it's about 30 kilometers outside Harare, in a poor rural area. At the time, there were about 450 children at the school. The Principal, Ms Esnath Gwanda, has a passion to see that every child has access to a good education. With the practical and logistical assistance we've been able to provide, the school has grown to more than 1200 students. With the help of a few Australian friends, we've been able to fund:

- New classrooms
- Computers and teaching resources
- Classroom furniture
- A toilet block with flushing toilets
- Accommodation for the teaching staff to live on-site.

We've also been able to support a High School that has grown out of nothing, based at the CCAP conference centre called Rock Haven in the south of Harare. As the city has grown, this once rural conference centre is seeing the city move toward them. The nearby suburbs of Epworth and Rua are really shanty towns with little or no infrastructure – the need for a High School was an obvious challenge. We've been able to help with funding for classrooms, buying computers and subsidising the cost of "O Level" exams, as there's a fee for every student who sits the exams.

We're convinced that training elders to provide teaching and leadership in Zimbabwe's churches is profoundly strategic - and so is educating the next generation of Zimbabwean kids. Over the last decade or so, we've been excited to see our efforts bearing fruit, and seeing our small team of financial supporters in Australia growing. Zimbabweans aren't looking for handouts. They know that their problems are their own. But they're always deeply appreciative of any help that comes their way.

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*The Scots' Church Melbourne is partnering with Rev Luke and Dr Debbie Tattersall to support the ongoing work in training elders and supporting school students in Zimbabwe. If you'd like to contribute, please email our financial administrator, [murray@scotschurch.com](mailto:murray@scotschurch.com), for details.*



# WORTH THE WAIT

What's with all the queues around Melbourne's restaurants and cafes? Let's take a deeper look...

When you think about it, restaurant queues are like the corporate memory of a city. If the food is good, people come back a second time, and a third. As more and more people discover the venue, news spreads. And queues form. But of course, there's a trade off. If the delay grows too long, you'll ask yourself the question – is it worth it? The longer the queue, the more you can be confident that the tried and tested answer is “yes.” Long queue, long delay – it must be exceptional.

In short, the long lines that form outside popular laneway cafes and restaurants in Melbourne have taken on a symbolic meaning beyond mere waiting. They're a badge of honour – a public display of a cafe's popularity and desirability. Every time I pass Mensho Tokyo in Russell Street, – even at 5pm – there's a queue that snakes right around the corner into Bourke Street. Apparently, the Ramen is world class – but if you want to experience it for yourself, you'll need to wait for more than an hour.

Queue theory, a branch of mathematics and operations research, sheds light on how and why people are willing to queue for extended periods. Several factors influence our willingness to wait in line:

1. **Perceived Value:** The longer the line, the higher the perceived value of the cafe or restaurant's offerings. People associate popularity with quality, assuming that if many are willing to wait, the food experience must be exceptional.
2. **Social Proof:** As social beings, we often seek validation from others. Joining a queue is akin to adopting the behaviour of those who came before us. Seeing others wait patiently encourages us to do the same, even if the wait seems arduous.
3. **Anticipation:** Waiting in line can build anticipation and excitement for the meal or beverage. The psychological effect of anticipation can enhance the overall dining experience, making the wait seem worthwhile.
4. **FOMO (Fear of Missing Out):** The fear of missing out on a unique culinary experience drives people to stand in line, wanting to be a part of the hype and share in the joy of discovering a hidden gem.

There's always a queue at Bakemono, a popular bakery and cafe in Drewery Lane, just off the corner of Lonsdale Street and Swanston Streets. Around 15 others were in line ahead of us at 11am on a Saturday morning; service was fast and efficient, with a delay of around ten minutes. To be honest, the coffee experience – while good – wasn't significantly better than the no-queue alternatives around the corner. And sadly, by 11am the best of the famous pastries were sold out. ("You'd need to be here before 9.30am," said the guy who served us. But at that hour, the queue would be much longer. Worth it? Who knows?)

Perhaps the willingness of Melburnians to queue for cafes and restaurants reflects our deep-seated cultural fascination with the city's culinary experiences. Long lines signal popularity, desirability, and the perceived worthiness of the offerings inside. Queue theory provides valuable insights into why we're willing to wait, encompassing factors like perceived value, social proof, anticipation, and fear-of-missing-out. It's always a trade-off; but as we 'embrace the queue', let's be thankful for our city's long and strong corporate memories as well. ■





# 'ALONE' A MODERN PARABLE

Michael Raiter shares his thoughts on the popular reality series that takes survival to new extremes...

I'm often asked, "are you an introvert or an extrovert?" While I enjoy being around people, I can quickly reach my relational capacity. And when I reach the point of social saturation then I need to get away for some 'alone time'. Like other introverts, it's those alone times that recharge my emotional batteries. By the next day I'm ready for another social refill.

But while I enjoy being alone, the thought of endless days on my own is scary. That's why many people, particularly those who live alone, found the pandemic lockdowns so difficult. But at least there was the phone, Facebook, Zoom, and WhatsApp. We could still talk and meet online with other people. But imagine being completely alone, in a remote location, with no way to communicate and no-one to communicate with. Then add to that no ready-made shelter and no guaranteed supply of food or water, and you've got the scenario of the very successful SBS series simply called 'Alone'.

'Alone' places 10 people in separate wilderness locations (5-10 kms from each other). They're only allowed to carry 10 pieces of survival equipment, from an approved list of 40 items. Then they're left – alone – to make a fire, find food and water, and build a shelter. Regularly, they're forced to endure days of cold, rain, and snow. And they're at risk of wild animals - in the Canadian series, particularly bears. And of course, the one who lasts the longest wins \$500,000. When starvation, poor

health, or the psychological pressure of the extreme isolation becomes unbearable the contestant ‘taps out’, is brought home, and receives nothing.

There have been 10 series of ‘Alone,’ set in the US and Canada, followed by ‘Alone Denmark’ and ‘Alone Norway’. This year SBS screened, ‘Alone Australia’. The 10 contestants were placed in a remote area of Tasmania’s west coast. It was SBS’s most successful series ever.

‘Alone Australia’ ran for 11 episodes. Over the course of the series, as people only have a camera to talk to, they become increasingly open, honest, and vulnerable. By the end, you feel that you know them, perhaps even better than people you meet face-to-face. Some find the isolation immediately unbearable. Ben lasted two days. The winner (no spoiler) lasted for 67 days. The record is 100 days of complete isolation.

Sarah and I find ‘Alone’ compelling viewing. We admire the skill and ingenuity it takes to survive in extreme conditions. We witness their drive to keep going, often in the face of severe physical and emotional trauma (no-one knows how many others are still left). And we compete with each other to work out the eventual winner. For Sarah, tears always accompany the revelation to someone that they are the last contestant standing.

But for me, ‘Alone’ is more than entertainment. It’s made me reflect on what makes us human. Certainly, there are some people who are deemed anti-social. For whatever reason, they’ve decided to shun human interaction and prefer their own company. But ‘Alone’ demonstrates the unnaturalness of this. Participants can, at least, talk regularly through the camera to an invisible audience who will one day see and hear them. And they’re regularly visited by a medical team that checks on their health.

One of the most poignant verses in the Bible is Genesis 2:18. Adam is placed in a beautiful and bountiful garden. He didn’t wake up each day wondering if he would find enough to eat. There was an abundant variety of food. He was in paradise, not the wilderness. Presumably he didn’t have to shelter from extreme weather conditions. Yet, God observed that, “it is not good for the man to be alone”. The problem is not just that the job God had assigned to Adam was too much for one person—that he needed a ‘helper’ to share the load of caring for the garden. The man needed the kind of companionship that can only be provided by someone like him.

We’re social beings, designed for relationships with other people and with God. That’s why loneliness can be so devastating. Of course, being alone isn’t the same as being lonely. Being alone more describes one’s physical state; there’s no-one around. Loneliness is an emotional condition. Perhaps we’ve all had the experience of being lonely in a crowd. What makes the experience of the contestants in this TV series so challenging is that, for most, being alone turns into unbearable loneliness.

Some of the psalms describe the acute torment of loneliness. Psalm 88, more acutely and painfully than any other, depicts the awfulness of a sense of being alone. The writer is “overwhelmed with troubles” (v.3) and he complains to God, “you have

taken from me my closest friends” (v.9). The final words of the psalm are possibly the most despairing in the whole Psalter; “... and darkness is my closest friend” (v.18).

The writer of Psalm 88 feels bereft of any human company. But there’s another psalm that takes desolation to a deeper level. Psalm 22 opens with the words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”. As Jesus hung on the cross, bearing the wrath of God that our deeds deserved, he remembered these words and made them his own. In a way we’ll never understand, he experienced a profound, existential alienation from God. His was a sense of ‘aloneness’ unique to human experience.

I was recently asked to speak on, ‘Would a loving God send people to hell?’ It’s hard to describe hell. How does one describe the indescribable? The Bible can only use graphic metaphors: fire, gnashing of teeth, darkness. If Jesus’ experience on the cross is any indicator, hell is alienation and aloneness from God. So, the popular pictures of hell as the great eternal reunion with old friends, around endless glasses of beer and parties, couldn’t be further from the truth. Of course, that kind of spiritual separation from God is probably another metaphor (after all, if God is omnipresent, he must also be in hell). But the purpose of all these metaphors is simply to say, in Jesus’ words, “better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

The creators of ‘Alone’ don’t throw their contestants into hell. The contestants frequently comment on the breathtaking beauty of their surroundings. A number experience moments, even days, of great joy and serenity. Their well-being is monitored. For some it’s a spiritual experience. For most, though, these are eventually overshadowed by the heartbreak of being alone.

‘Alone’ reminds me I’m essentially a creature made in God’s image. I’m created for relationships. But more than that, it gives insight into a spiritual reality most churches prefer not to voice: the reality and awfulness — the hell of eternal aloneness. Finally, the joy of the victorious contestant on their ‘day of liberation’ (to say nothing of the reward of half a million dollars) reminds me of the day we should all look forward to. This is the day “when God himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3). Never alone again. ■

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*MICHAEL RAITER is the Director of the Centre for Biblical Preaching in Melbourne.*

# THE CHOIR SINGS THE BLUES

The Scots' Church Choir celebrates the enduring legacy of Thomas Dorsey's gospel blues...

Every now and then - but only on very special occasions – Scots' Church Music Director Douglas Lawrence swings the choir in a new direction. Sunday July 23rd was one of those occasions, as the traditional classic repertoire gave way to Thomas Dorsey's African-American gospel styled "Take My Hand, Precious Lord."

You can watch our choir's fabulous performance on the Youtube LiveStream via the QR code below – but take a moment to consider the lyrics.

Precious Lord, take my hand,  
lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn,  
Thru the storm, thru the night, lead me on to the light,  
take my hand precious Lord, lead me home...

Not to be confused with the contemporaneous trombonist and band leader Tommy Dorsey, Thomas A. Dorsey was an African American gospel composer and pianist who was born in 1899 and died in 1993. He's often considered the "Father of Gospel

Music” for his pioneering work in blending blues and jazz elements with traditional gospel music. He wrote over 1,000 gospel songs, including “Take My Hand” and “Peace in the Valley.”

Raised in a faith-oriented family - his dad a Baptist Pastor and his mother an organist – Dorsey was exposed to the sounds of spirituals, hymns, and gospel music from an early age. Music resonated deeply, and he began to develop his musical talents while playing the piano and singing at the local church.

He began his career as a jazz and blues pianist under the name “Georgia Tom” and collaborated with well known artists of the era, such as Ma Rainey and Tampa Red. In 1925, Rainey and her Wild Cats Jazz Band were a raging success, with their fresh “downhome,” or “moanin’ blues” style. According to website pbs.com, “Ma Rainey’s listeners swayed, rocked, moaned and groaned with her. Women swooned who had lost their men. Men groaned who had given their week’s pay to a woman who betrayed her promises.” Georgia Tom was right there with her, his rhythmic piano setting the groove. If you listen to an early recording, you can sense the roots of not just blues and gospel, but Rock and Roll as well. Dorsey was living the ‘good life,’ and on the verge of making it big.

But life took a profound turn when tragedy struck in 1932. His wife, Nettie died during childbirth, and the loss of his child soon after left him devastated. Grief-stricken and seeking solace, he returned to his faith and rediscovered the spiritual music of his childhood. In this dark period, Dorsey found a new purpose – combining the rhythms and melodies of the blues with the sacred lyrics of gospel music.

Drawing from the blues, jazz, and traditional hymns, Dorsey crafted a fresh style of music that fused the secular and sacred elements seamlessly, birthing what we now know as gospel music. He also introduced a fresh and innovative approach to church choir arrangements, bringing in elements of improvisation and syncopation – all reflected in the recent performance by the Scots’ Church choir.

Dorsey’s masterpiece, “Take My Hand, Precious Lord,” became an instant sensation. The song’s themes of comfort, hope, and faith resonated with people across races and denominations, solidifying gospel music as a genre with widespread appeal. His innovative compositions and arrangements attracted younger audiences who were previously disinterested in traditional spiritual music. He co-founded the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses in 1933, creating a platform for gospel musicians and singers to collaborate, perform, and promote this unique style of music.

That’s not to suggest Dorsey’s “gospel music” was universally accepted. In fact, at one point his approach met so much resistance from pastors who considered it “devil’s music,” that he found it easier to play the blues straight, and returned for a time to the nightclub scene. “I’ve been thrown out of some of the best churches in America,” quipped Dorsey.

Thankfully, though, the winds changed. Dorsey’s prolific career saw him writing hundreds of gospel songs and collaborating with several prominent gospel artists, including Mahalia Jackson, creating a rich and diverse repertoire that continues

to inspire musicians to this day. Ultimately, he became music director at Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago, where he served for 50 years.

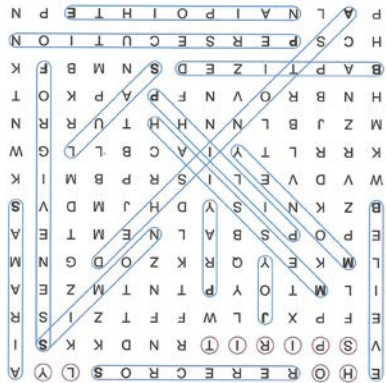
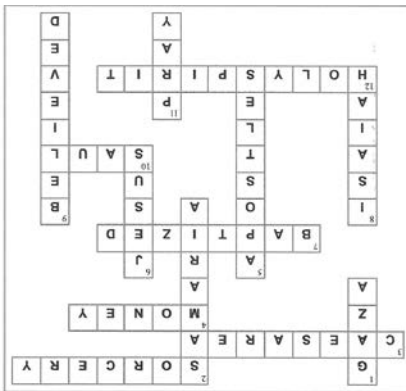
Perhaps his most significant contribution to gospel music was breaking down racial barriers. At a time when the music industry was deeply segregated, he composed songs and organised events that brought people together from diverse backgrounds, uniting them in the love of gospel music. His efforts to bridge the gap between colored and white gospel musicians earned him admiration and respect from all corners of the industry.

As we celebrate the legacy of this trailblazing musician, let us remember the power of music to heal, uplift, and bring people together - as celebrated by the Scots' Church Choir. ■

**LISTEN**



*Hidden Message: HOLY SPIRIT*



A photograph of three people (two women and one man) smiling and holding a large blue banner. The banner has the word "undeceptions." written on it in white and yellow lowercase letters. The man in the center is wearing glasses and a dark jacket. The woman on the left is wearing glasses and a light-colored jacket. The woman on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a dark top. An acoustic guitar is visible in the background behind the man.

undeceptions.

# THE SURPRISING CASE FOR CHRISTIANITY

Jesus is still the best case for Christianity, says Nathan Campbell, as he reviews Melbourne's Undeceptions Conference held at Scots' Church in August...

The Undeceptions Conference, an in-the-flesh conference based on the format of the popular suite of podcasts from the Undeceptions Podcast Network, came to Scots' Church in August.

The network's flagship podcast, Undeceptions, hosted by historian, musician, and theologian Dr John Dickson aims to "explore some aspect of life, faith, history, culture, or ethics that is either much misunderstood or mostly forgotten."

"With the help of people who know what they're talking about, we'll be trying to 'undeceive ourselves', and let the truth 'out'," says Dickson.

The Melbourne conference, pitched at believers and sceptics alike – the podcast's regular demographic – sought to 'undeceive' attendees by making the case that Christianity makes counter-intuitive, experiential, rational, psychological and social sense, with an additional plenary session making the case that the Christian sexual ethic is neither dumb nor mean. Each topic was presented by an expert

in both the related field and Christian theology, with international speakers Dr Rebecca McLaughlin and Dr Rachel Gilson each given two sessions, as well as presenting breakout sessions on the Saturday afternoon.

The speakers brought a compelling collection of data, research from leading educational institutions around the globe, and their own expertise and experience to make a compelling case for Christianity for both believers and skeptics.

The sessions were impressive pieces of oratory delivered without notes and with grace, as speakers dismantled well-worn arguments against Christian belief with counter arguments, while making a positive case for the goodness, truth and beauty of Jesus.

McLaughlin, for example, examined the ‘secularisation thesis’ that suggests religious belief will decline in developing nations as they become more sophisticated, where the overall data actually suggests the world is becoming more religious even factoring in the decline in post-Christian western nations. She encouraged the crowd to rethink diversity, rethink the university, rethink morality and rethink sexuality.” She suggests while we might picture Christianity as “a white westerner forcing their beliefs down other people’s throats,” we might instead imagine a black African Christian preaching the Gospel to a white western person blocking their ears as a snapshot of religion in the modern world. When it comes to the western world trying to build a moral vision without the foundation laid by Christianity, McLaughlin suggested we might think we are playing Jenga, carefully removing pieces to build a taller tower, when, in fact, we have pulled a pin from a grenade.

In her second session, McLaughlin argued that Christianity is good for the body, good for mental health, and good for spiritual health. She cited studies by Harvard University’s Human Flourishing Project’s Dr. Tyler VanderWeele, who wrote a piece for *USA Today* comparing Christianity’s positive benefits to the health and





wellbeing of practitioners with a hypothetical elixir “that research conclusively showed that when consumed just once a week, would reduce mortality by 20% to 30% over a 15-year period.” Dr VanderWeele’s research suggests the measurable benefits are so tangible that a loss of religious participation could be treated as a public health issue.

The conference drew on local Melbourne academic Dr Chris Watkin, who helped us engage with European philosophers and critical theory; and finally, dipped into ancient history in a live podcast episode recorded with Ridley College’s New Testament expert Rev Dr Michael Bird.

With all the evidence presented, the conference painted a compelling case for Christianity that left me confident that had I brought a truth-seeking friend they’d have heard a presentation of Christian truths that did not hide from legitimate criticism of the church’s more negative social impacts; especially in the harm caused to our LGBTIQ+ neighbours. What stood out for me over the multiple presentations was that these speakers brought compelling stories and data together from multiple disciplines to ‘undeceive’ us, but, as they shared their own experiences, none of the platformed speakers were argued into faith in Jesus, instead – as they pushed deeply into the Gospel accounts and the character of God revealed in Jesus they were drawn to, and compelled to trust him; partly as they received unexpected welcome and love from Christians.

Rachel Gilson described the experience of coming to follow Jesus as a gay woman – after reading a copy of C.S. Lewis’ *Mere Christianity* stolen from a friend’s bookshelf – where, once confronted with the reality that she believed not just in ‘a’ God, but the God revealed in the Bible, she was both confronted by the truth of her own shortcomings, and her previous mis-perception that Christians were lame and judgmental. The more convinced she became of the big truths of Christianity, the more convinced she became that “the only way to be safe was to run towards Jesus, not away from him.” She suggested that the plausibility and desirability of the Biblical sexual ethic depends on the trustworthiness of the one creating the ethic.

In a ‘Five Minute Jesus’ – a regular podcast segment – host John Dickson talked about the project’s goal to commend the rational basis of Christianity on the basis of Jesus’ command to “love the Lord with all our mind,” but also to remember that a “fully formed mind won’t just produce a bookish person. Christianity is a religion of the heart; a fully formed mind will produce love.” It was the speakers’ accounts of that love; the love of God revealed in Jesus; that made the most articulate case for Christianity through the conference, and this love is what we are called to reflect in our lives. ■

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*Sessions from the Undeceptions Conference will be available online at [undeceptions.com](https://undeceptions.com), or released as episodes in the Undeceptions Podcast via Spotify or Apple. To enquire about hiring the Scots’ Church facilities for your own conference or event, visit <https://scotschurch.com/venue-hire>.*

# PENTECOST REVISITED

**Pentecost is a key event in the life and history of the church. Phil Court explores some of the unanswered questions surrounding it with the help of a real-life tour guide...**

The Day of Pentecost is widely regarded as marking the birthday of the Christian church – or at the very least, its very public launch.

The Bible's New Testament book, The Acts of the Apostles, gives a vivid account of the key events that happened in Jerusalem that day. Early in the book, the 12 apostles are gathered in one place when they're suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and begin proclaiming the mighty works of God - astonishingly, suddenly speaking in the languages of the city's visiting pilgrims. Some onlookers are impressed, while others hear the commotion and assume they're drunk.

Peter, the apostolic leader, stands with the other 11 apostles, and delivers a powerful sermon to the assembled multitude, many of whom are “cut to the heart” and desperately want to know how best to respond. Peter says this: “Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and

you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Here’s one of the most astonishing – though often overlooked – details. Those who took Peter’s call to heart were baptised, “and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” When you stop to think about it, that’s a huge crowd of people!

Acts Chapter 2 tells us the key facts, but skips over the sort of details that its original audience would have taken for granted, leaving modern readers sometimes scratching their heads. Maybe you might have wondered things like:

- What was the Day of Pentecost and why did God choose it to launch the Jesus movement?
- Where in this crowded little narrow-laned city of Jerusalem could the apostles address a crowd of many thousands?
- How and where were three thousand new followers baptised in one day?

Let me try to shed some light on these three questions.

## THE DAY

Pentekostes is a Greek word for fifty. The Feast of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks, was one of the three major pilgrimages in ancient Judaism. During this festival, Jews from various regions and territories travelled to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and celebrate at the Temple. The festival took place 50 days after Passover –hence the name.

This particular Feast of Pentecost occurred 50 days after the crucifixion of Jesus, which happened at the Feast of the Passover. And as a major annual event, it guaranteed a mass influx of pilgrims from the Jewish diaspora. Jerusalem, with a permanent population estimated at 20,000 was filled to overflowing, with maybe up to 100,000 camped out on the nearby Mount of Olives – a perfect occasion to launch the message of Jesus to the world at large.

## THE VENUE

Even today, the streets of Jerusalem’s old city are far narrower than the laneways of Melbourne. Specially designed skinny rubbish trucks are necessary. So where, in such a confined place could the apostles have addressed anything more than a handful of people? On our last trip to Jerusalem, Deb and I investigated with the help of our tour guide.

Practically speaking, there’s only one place where it could have been possible; the stepped plaza forming the southern forecourt leading into the Temple Mount itself.

The Second Temple, also known as Herod’s Temple, was extended on a grand scale during the reign of King Herod the Great in the first century BC. In fact, work was still going on during the time of Jesus. It served as the central religious and cultural hub of the Jewish people until its destruction by the Romans in 70 AD.

The southern steps, which still exist, were the main entrance to the Temple precinct. While the priests and dignitaries had their exclusive VIP entrances, here were the general admittance gateways, known as the Huldah Gates, used by thousands of



pilgrims during religious festivals. The whole plaza was re-discovered in archaeological digs in the 1960s and '70s, and can be visited today.

It's easy to picture Peter, standing here with his eleven colleagues, and addressing the streams of pilgrims as they stand in line to go through the ritual purification required by Jewish religious law prior to ascending the many steps up the tunnels that will take them up to the temple courts.

## THE MASS BAPTISMS

If you've been to the Melbourne Cricket Ground for a big game, you will have gone through the ritual purification of having a hand-held metal detector waved around you. The ritual purification necessary to enter the Jerusalem Temple was much more invasive. It involved descending steps into a deep bath, known as a mikveh, and after full immersion, climbing out to join the line of worshippers reverently climbing the southern steps.

The mikvehs at the southern steps are a testament to the advanced engineering and architectural skills of the ancient Jews. They were built using stone masonry, which ensured their longevity. The mikvehs were cleverly designed to accommodate a continuous flow of water, allowing for constant replenishment and preventing the water from becoming stagnant, which was essential for ensuring ritual purity.

It was no coincidence that there are 12 mikvehs serving the southern steps, probably symbolising the 12 tribes of Israel. And conveniently, there were 12 apostles on hand that Pentecost day, recruited by Jesus to flag the formation of a 'new' Israel. Where could you baptise 3,000 people in one day? The most plausible answer is right there, with plenty of running water and 12 fit-for-purpose mikvehs. The pilgrims were used to ritual purification – but now being symbolically purified in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins is quite a leap! It's an old practice with a new and vital meaning for a new covenant, won for them by the man who died for them and who rose on the third day to new life.

## POSTSCRIPT

What I've described above is based on what I saw and heard for myself on a tour of Jerusalem some 13 years ago. It's not proven fact. But it does make sense of what we are told in the book of Acts. If you ever get to visit Jerusalem some day, make sure you take a look at the southern steps and see if you agree. ■



# DON'T JUDGE A LIBRARY BY ITS COVER

Monterrey Chandra's favourite place is an unassuming library. Read on to find out why...

When I was approached by editor Rosalie about contributing to the Leaflet on the topic of "favourite places in Melbourne", I gave her an enthusiastic "yes" without thinking ahead. But then I realised, as an introvert who mostly only goes out to work and prefers to stay at home during my time off, I may not have much to write! Sure, I'm fond of places like the Melbourne Tram Museum in Hawthorn, Sovereign Hill in Ballarat, Werribee Open Range Zoo (and the adjacent Victoria Rose Garden), and our very own Scots' Church - but surely, everyone knows about them already.

But then I came to the realisation that there may be other people just like me, and so I've decided to not overthink it. It may not make it on many lists of "Melbourne's best," but the unassuming Kew Library is definitely one of my favourite places to be.

## A MODEST ENTRANCE

Nestled between Alexandra Garden and Petrie Square in Kew, for both visitors and (former) locals like myself, it can be easy to miss the place, as its façade is unassuming. With only one visible automatic book return window, unless you know of the

library, it looks like you're about to step into an ordinary office building. But as you get closer, a reassuring sign indicates that you're looking at a library.

## **BACK TO LITERATURE**

Kew Library holds a special place in my heart. When I was a kid back in Jakarta, Indonesia, I used to be an avid reader. With numerous, easy, access to books from school, bookshops, even street vendors, it was simple to quickly and (more importantly for a school kid with his measly \$1 per week allowance back in the day) cheaply purchase one or two books to bring home to read. But with the advent of technology, video games and computers soon occupied my youth, and I fell out of love with books.

Prior to working for Scots', I felt I was in a rut with my job, and I became quite disillusioned with a lot of things. One weekend, I decided to take a walk around the neighbourhood and came across the Library. I'm not sure why, but I decided "Why not?" and took a turn into the Library. The moment I stepped through its doors, I was greeted by a serene silence, and thousands upon thousands of books, neatly stacked and catalogued. It felt almost alien to me.

As someone who had been staring at a computer screen and programming code for up to 16 hours a day, I hadn't been around this many books for years. I must have looked lost because a friendly assistant approached me and asked if I needed help. I told her it was my first visit to a library – not just this library, but to any library – in years. She introduced me to two friendly staff members who gave me a quick tour of the place, and explained how to navigate around. It was a quick visit but I came out with a membership card and a promise to be back.

And I did go back. Numerous times since then. Now that I have a library card, I might as well use it, I thought. At first I would just sit and absorb the silence. Coming from a stressful day job it was such a breath of fresh air to quietly sit somewhere in a corner, and not have to hear people talk. From there, I found myself slowly picking up a book – admittedly, it was from the kids section as I wanted something light to read while admiring the beautiful stained glass window.

Then it became two books... Ten books... Twenty.

(By the way, I recommend everyone read their kids the "13-Storey Treehouse" series by Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton. They were such a treat! And "Pie in the Sky" by Remy Lai remains one of my favourite children's books of all time!).

Pretty soon I found myself using my library card to borrow piles of books to read in the park nearby, to read at home, even on my way to work, which was unthinkable for me. Slowly, I fell in love with reading again.

## **THE HEARTBEAT OF "KEW" MUNITY**

Beyond the allure of a wide selection of books, it's the vibrant sense of community at Kew Library that is truly interesting. From the introduction to baby songs and rhymes, providing an opportunity for parents and carers to meet with each other, to the quarterly Library Book Sale which I always look forward to, Kew Library hosts numerous events throughout the year to foster connections with the community around it.

In the world filled with the constant hum of technology, the Kew Library has offered me a place of serenity, and allowed me to reconnect with a part of myself that savours the joy of reading. If you're near Kew and you're looking for a literary sanctuary, I wholeheartedly recommend coming here at least once, especially during the library book sale! Trust me; you'll be welcomed by the friendly staff and the unassuming façade. After all, we should never judge a book by its cover. ■

*Monty Chandra is the Technology Officer at The Scots' Church Melbourne. He's responsible for our weekly live stream on Youtube, our audio podcast (Scotscast on Spotify) and our website at [scotschurch.com](http://scotschurch.com)*

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new-look scots'  
church kids program  
sundays from 11am  
senior primary | junior high



# SUFFERING IN SILENCE?

Is Christianity tainted by a history of indifference to slavery? Phil Campbell investigates...

I was recently confronted by the famous image of “Whipped Peter” in my social media feed – a former slave whose scars bore testimony to brutal whippings endured during his servitude on a plantation in Louisiana in 1862. As a result of the flogging, Peter – whose real name was Gordon – was bedridden for two months, in excruciating pain. In March 1863, he fled the plantation, rubbing his body with onions to mask his scent from the blood hounds bred to track and capture runaways, and travelled 40 miles on foot to reach refuge in a Union Army encampment in Baton Rouge.



Military doctors were appalled by the extent of Gordon's scars, and documented the evidence. An army surgeon wrote a letter to his brother, and attached a photograph of Gordon's scarred back, asking his brother to share the image widely in support of the abolitionist movement. The images were soon published in 'Harper's Weekly', and sparked a renewed fervour in the fight against slavery.

"This photograph should be multiplied by the hundred thousand, and scattered over the states," said Theodore Tilton, editor of *The Independent* in New York in 1863. "It tells the story to the eye.. If seeing is believing—and it is in the immense majority of cases—seeing this card would be equivalent to believing things of the slave states which Northern men and women would move heaven and earth to abolish."

In the light of such confronting visual evidence, it's tempting to join the chorus of those criticising the Christian Church for 'turning a blind eye' to the problem of slavery. Certainly, in the American South, some churches advanced quasi-biblical justification for the practice. In one example, they cite the Old Testament story of Noah, whose son Ham shames his drunk father; Noah, enraged, curses his family line to be slaves to the lines of Shem and Japheth, his brothers. And that line – in an argument of pure convenience - becomes the African race.

It's a shameful, and ultimately economically driven, misuse of the Bible. But meanwhile, in both England and the northern states of America, there's a growing movement based on the better understanding of Christian leaders like William Wilberforce and Frederick Douglass, that all men and women are "stamped with the likeness of the eternal God."

It's common, though, to hear the suggestion that the New Testament itself supports the practice of slavery – at the very least, by not condemning it. And it's true that the New Testament nowhere tells Christians to put an end to slavery.

First and foremost, keep in mind that it's anachronistic in the extreme to think first century Christians were in any position to influence social policy in the Roman Empire. Perhaps you might think that the New Testament is tacitly tolerating slavery when it urges slaves to work hard for their masters - but it also urges masters to treat slaves justly and fairly, knowing that 'you also have a Master in heaven.' (Colossians 3:22-4:1) And even more astonishingly, in Paul's brief epistle to his friend Philemon, he urges him to take back his runaway slave Onesimus, who has converted to Christianity, "no longer as a bondservant, but as a beloved brother."

Significantly, too, Christianity has always been based on the motif of a 'servant-King' – Jesus, who lowered himself, slave-like, to wash the feet of his disciples, and faced not just the lashes on his back like Whipped Peter, but crucifixion as well. As the New Testament puts it, he suffered the punishment we deserved, taking the penalty for our sin; the ultimate act of service. Subsequently, apostles like Peter and Paul relished the title of "Slave of Christ" perhaps muting a more robust critique of slavery itself as an institution.

And yet creating a system where slaves become brothers sowed the seeds of radical, though slow, social transformation - not through power, but through influence. According to historian John Dickson, second and third century Christians took

innovative steps to moderate slavery from within. “By AD 115, churches were establishing dedicated funds to pay for the manumission (formal release) of slaves”, says Dickson in his book *Bullies and Saints*. “This ministry grew to become a significant aspect of Christian charity in the first few centuries.”

In the year 380AD, Bishop Gregory of Nyssa preached a powerful sermon against slavery:

**“You condemn man to slavery, when his nature is free and possesses free will, and you legislate in competition with God, overturning his law for the human species... By dividing the human species in two with “slavery” and “ownership” you have caused it to be enslaved to itself, and to be the owner of itself. For what price, tell me? What did you find in existence worth as much as this human nature? What price did you put on rationality? How many coins did you reckon the equivalent the likeness of God?... What folly!”**

The empire, sadly, wasn't listening. And the stain of slavery continued across cultures and civilisations for centuries afterwards. In the words of Rowan Williams, Christianity “lit a long fuse of argument and discovery” that eventually exploded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The real tragedy is that it took so long to ignite. ■



# BRINGING NEW TECH TO OLD TEXTS

The latest AI technology has opened up new ways to analyse ancient manuscripts. Peter Phillips explains ...

Ever since the Dead Sea Scrolls were accidentally discovered over 70 years ago in a cave in the Palestinian territories, they have been a source of fascination.

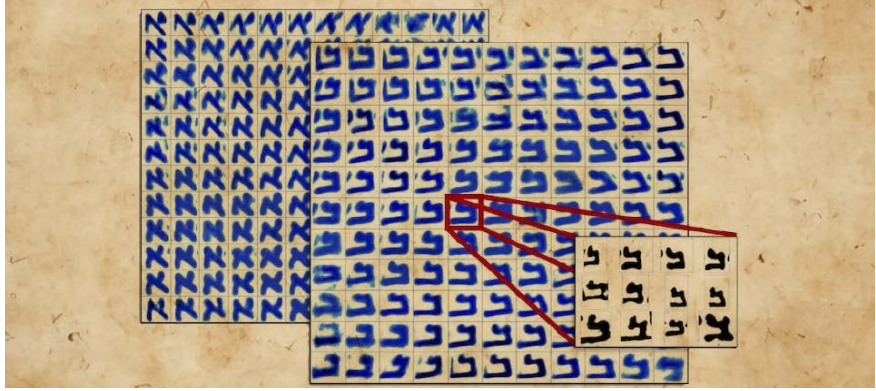
The scrolls are famous for containing the oldest manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible. But exactly who wrote them has been a mystery. Now, thanks to the use of technology, we're getting closer to understanding some of the background to these enigmatic texts.

In a new study, researchers at the University of Groningen's Qumran Institute have put together a robust investigation into the palaeography – the study of ancient handwriting – of one of the scrolls. Through a series of painstaking processes including digitisation, machine reading and statistical analysis, the team argues that two scribes with very similar handwriting probably wrote the two halves of the manuscript.

The scroll in question, 1QIsaa, is a large manuscript and one of seven found near the Dead Sea at Qumran, the Palestinian territories, in 1947. The 2,000-year-old scroll preserves the 66 chapters of the Hebrew Bible's Book of Isaiah and predates other Hebrew manuscripts of Isaiah by over 1,000 years.

## TWO SCRIBES

The authors trained an algorithm to separate the ink from its papyrus background. Then, the algorithm studied every character, looking for small changes that might signal a different writer. This kind of algorithmic technology, shown in the image below, has started to be used in biblical studies, and the wider digital humanities, in just the last few years.



Every use of the same character was analysed for small differences. Maruf A. Dhali, University of Groningen

To some extent, the new paper overturns the argument that the original text was the work of one scribe. At the end of the 27th of 54 columns of text, the researchers found a break in the manuscript – both a gap of three lines and a change in material. A second sheet is stitched onto the first, and at this stage, the authors suggest, the scribe also changed.

This result adds to the general assumption and some previous research suggesting there were perhaps teams of scribes who worked together on the Dead Sea Scrolls, with some working as apprentices to the more senior members. A different scribe is not the only possible explanation, however. The authors note that a change of pen, the sharpening of a nib, a change in writing conditions or in the health of the scribe could contribute to the difference they found. Still, the difference seems pretty clear, and a change of scribe is the most likely conclusion.

## 21ST-CENTURY BIBLE STUDY

Computers are an increasingly important part of 21st-century text analysis. I have seen increasing numbers of papers at conferences on the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament exploring various aspects of the process of transferring texts into digital artefacts (such as the Codex Sinaiticus project), the issues relating to how different projects can make use of each other's data, and the success – or otherwise – of machine-learning processes.

Biblical scholars, including a group of researchers in Switzerland, are using machine learning and stylometry – the study of linguistic style – to determine which new letters were authored by Paul the Apostle, for example.

Others are modelling texts to explore historical themes across the Hebrew Bible. Machine learning is also being used for text mining – where a target text is compared with many other similar texts to find parallel uses of the same words or ideas – to explore variations between different texts. The number of positive results found this way usually far outreaches the number proposed by human commentators.

The sheer number of possibilities currently produced also exceeds the number of research hours available to determine which are useful for ongoing research and which need to be dismissed as chance parallels. At the moment, the machine-learning tools need refinement but they will get there.

While the use of artificial intelligence in the title of the new study might suggest that computers have taken over the role of the scholars in the northern Netherlands, this is certainly not the case. But the shift to the digital realm offers a new opening for the study of sacred texts, particularly the Christian scriptures and the Hebrew Bible. ■

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# BERRY COMPOTE

Another favourite recipe from the archives, unearthed by Rosalie Strother...

This true and tried recipe from the 'limited edition' Scots' Church Recipe Book of 2014 is quick and easy to make. It is a delicious dessert served over ice cream, or with meringues and whipped cream.

1 strip orange rind (optional)	1 tablespoon water
1½ cups apple and blackcurrant juice	250 grams strawberries, quartered
¼ cup caster sugar	150 grams blueberries
3 teaspoons cornflour	150 grams raspberries

Combine rind, juice and sugar in saucepan.  
 Stir over low heat until sugar is dissolved.  
 Stir in blended cornflour and water, stir until mixture boils and thickens.  
 Remove from heat. Add berries.  
 Cool, cover and refrigerate.

E H O R E R E C R O S L Y A  
 V S P I R I T R N D K K S I  
 E F P X J L W F F T Z I S R  
 I L M T O Y P T N T M Z E A  
 L M K E Y Q R K Z O D G N M  
 E P O P S B A L N E M T E A  
 B Z K N I S Y D H J M D V S  
 W V D V E L I S R P B M I K  
 K R R L T Y I A C B L L G W  
 M Z J B L N N H H T U R R N  
 H N B R O V N F P A P K O T  
 B A P T I Z E D S N M B F K  
 H C S P E R S E C U T I O N  
 P A L N A I P O I H T E P N

# WORD SEARCH

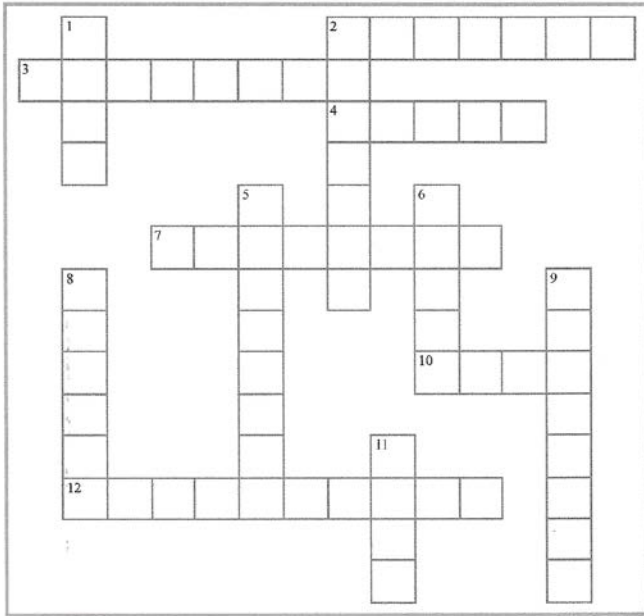
Wise words from Acts chapter 8

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.

Answers on page 27.

## The words to find

ASTONISHED	PERSECUTION
BAPTIZED	PHILIP
BELIEVE	PRAY
ETHIOPIAN	SAMARIA
FORGIVENESS	SAUL
JOY	SIMON
MESSIAH	SORCERER
MONEY	



# CROSSWORD

## Wise words from Acts chapter 8

### Across

2. A man named Simon practiced \_\_\_\_\_ in Samaria.
3. What city did Philip reach?
4. What did Simon offer to be able to lay hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit?
7. Philip \_\_\_\_\_ the eunuch when they came to some water along the road.
10. Who began to destroy the church?
12. Peter and John arrived in Samaria before believers had received the \_\_\_\_\_ (two words).

### Down

1. Where was Philip travelling when he met an Ethiopian eunuch?
2. Where did Philip proclaim the Messiah?
5. Following persecution of the church in Jerusalem all were scattered except the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Philip told the eunuch the good news about whom?
8. What book was the eunuch reading?
9. When Philip preached the gospel, Simon \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Peter asked Simon to repent and \_\_\_\_\_.



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