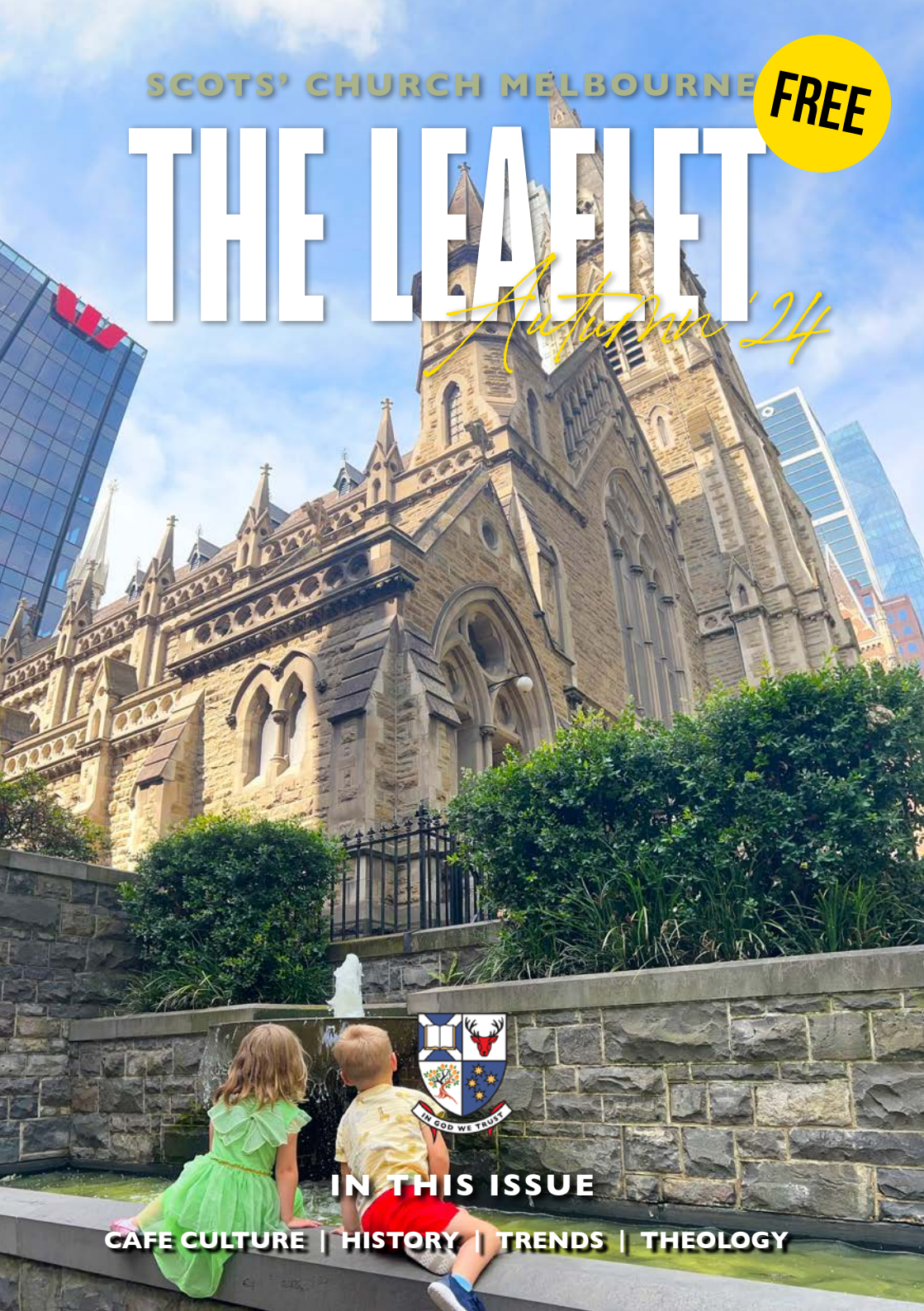


SCOTS' CHURCH MELBOURNE

FREE

THE LEAFLET

Autumn '24



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
Senior Assistant Minister Rev Justin Ang
Next Generations Minister Rev Dr Arthur Keefer
Director International Ministries ICC Dr Sen Sendjaya
Pastor St Stephen's Mr Lindsay Kliendienst

MUSIC MINISTRY:

Director of Music Mr Douglas Lawrence AM
Associate Organist Ms Jennifer Chou

EDITORIAL TEAM, THE LEAFLET:

Rosalie Strother, Phil Campbell, Philip Court,
Justin Ang & Arthur Keefer

Welcome to newsletter of
The Scots' Church Melbourne

THE LEAFLET

Issue No 1097 Autumn 2024

If you're a regular reader of The Leaflet, welcome back – and if this is your first time with us, thanks for picking up a copy! As usual, we hope you'll find it a fresh and enjoyable read, whether you're a regular member at Scots' or just passing through. (We encourage our members to take a copy for a friend.)

As one of Melbourne's oldest churches, we're full of history, and full of life. We love Melbourne – and we hope it shows in the mix of articles you'll find inside. We also love exploring what it means to live out our days as loyal followers of Jesus, loving God “with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength.” (That's a famous quote from Jesus, and one we keep bringing to mind as a summary of what a well-rounded life looks like.)

If you've picked up The Leaflet as a visitor to Scots', you'll enjoy Rosalie Strother's article on our beautiful stained glass windows. Look around. They're stunning – and they carry a message too. You'll also find an introduction to the new members of our ministry team, and articles of interest from our new ministers Justin and Arthur.

If there's any theme in this issue, it's the well-known idea that ‘the simple things in life are often the best.’ The revival of vinyl LP records is one example – lower tech, more tactile, and a great sound, according to Justin. Then there's Rosalie's story on the history of the humble SAO biscuit, one of Australia's all time simple favourites.

There's a movie review, a gallery visit, a thought-experiment on Jesus and politics from Phil Court, and a deeper dive into the human quest for meaning. You'll also find an introduction to our new community-building small groups program at Scots'. Who knows? If you try one, it might be the first step in actually finding the meaning we're all looking for.

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. (Here's a tip – you'll find an image of our new team 'Introduction Cards' inside this issue. Try scanning the QR code in the image for instant email access to our team members!)

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

Rosalie Strother, Phil Campbell, Philip Court, Justin Ang & Arthur Keefer- Editorial Team

Front Cover image: City visitors admiring Scots' Church. Photo by Susie Lynham.

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IN PURSUIT OF THE PERFECT POUR

While everyone has a favourite coffee shop, many are pursuing coffee perfection at home, says Phil Campbell. Here are some practical tips...

Melbourne is coffee and coffee is Melbourne. The connection goes back to the very first settlers, with a coffee shed set up among the river bank dwellings. As the colony developed, so did the scale of the 'coffee palaces' that took pride of place in the burgeoning city. These days, everyone seems to have a favourite cafe - mine is Alimentari, on Brunswick St in Fitzroy. Others love Patricia's, near the Law Courts. And Jester's Garden, in the Westpac foyer right behind Scots' Church pours an excellent brew too, with top rated Code Black beans.

At the same time, more and more people are brewing at home, often with pro-level passion and precision. Equipment is important. Like many top-end baristas, Scots' Church Senior Assistant Minister Justin Ang says it's essential to start with the right grind. In fact, a good quality conical burr grinder is almost as important (and expensive) as the home espresso machine itself. Justin suggests weighing your grind (ideally 19 or 20 grams) as you load the basket, and then weighing the pour (ideally 30 to 40 grams for a 1.5 to 2 times ratio, depending on taste.)

Crema, the rich creamy foam on a good quality espresso shot, is one of the delights of excellent coffee. According to Joshua Walhain from coffee specialists Alternative Brewing, the ideal crema is the "holy grail." Crema contributes to the mouthfeel of the perfect espresso - a velvety texture on the drinker's tongue - and it also helps to give a longer aftertaste.

"A good crema indicates your coffee is fresh, and skilfully made," says Walhain. "And although what exactly the ideal crema should look like is a matter of debate, the fundamentals of what crema is, and the process by which it is formed are universal, and essential to understanding how to produce the ideal crema."

Surprisingly, it turns out the production of crema depends mainly on carbon dioxide, the same fun gas that adds fizz to soft drinks. "Coffee beans are rich in CO₂, most of which is released during roasting, and then during grinding," explains Walhain. "Freshly ground coffee still contains gases, and the crema is a result of these gases reacting to heat and pressure when the espresso is pulled."

Once your beans are ground, the gas quickly dissipates - which is why it's important to use freshly ground beans for a creamy crema. Similarly, freshly *roasted* beans retain more CO₂. (Which reminds me of the old joke, "Barista, my coffee tastes like dirt"... "Well, what do you expect, it was only ground this morning...")

Typically, commercially available beans feature a mix of robusta and arabica beans - robusta contain more CO₂, so will feature more prominently in espresso blends.

Your best bet for a good crema is to select a blend with dark roast arabica beans including some robusta. Ideally, use beans which were roasted between 10-14 days prior to brewing. Beans should be ground immediately before brewing, as the CO₂ trapped in the beans will start to escape as soon as they're ground.

Perfection, however, still remains elusive. The coarseness of the grind, over extraction and under extraction, pressure and temperature generated by your coffee machine, and even atmospheric conditions can all play a part.

In fact, a recent study by researchers at the University of Oregon found that a build up of static electricity during grinding can result in 'clumping' of the grinds, and reduced flavour extraction. Their results found that adding a small amount of water to the coffee beans before grinding can reduce the static charges caused by fracturing and rubbing, "improving flow dynamics... yielding markedly different taste profiles and more concentrated extracts." While the idea sounds good in theory, my concern is that adding a splash of water would potentially create more clumping in my grinder rather than less, and cause a blockage.

If you're like me, the presence or absence of crema shapes our expectations as the coffee is served in a cafe.

"While the lack of crema doesn't always indicate a bad espresso, a good crema almost certainly indicates that your shot was made with the freshly ground coffee, and was pulled by a competent barista," says Walhain. It's true. I recently watched with satisfaction as my favourite Alimentari barista inspected a shot she had poured, then threw it out and started again. In short, while you can sometimes have a good coffee without crema, you'll rarely find a bad coffee brewed with great crema.

Finally, if you prefer your coffee with milk, some quick tips from Australian Barista Champion Craig Simon, who spoke to the LifeHacker website.

First, if you're using a smaller home machine that uses the same heat exchanger to make the coffee and then steam the milk, make sure you drain any water from the steam wand before you insert it in the milk. "If you just turn the steam wand on, at the beginning it will spit a little bit of water, and also there's not much pressure."

"If you want good texture," says Simon, "then you need to get the milk spinning in a whirlpool. If you start with no temperature, it won't spin." Instead of evenly textured milk - a dense foam with tiny bubbles - the result is a bubbly foam on top of over-heated milk. What you want is about half crema and half milk at the top of your coffee. Smooth textured milk with no visible bubbles is the dream."

At Scots' Church we love serving free coffee on Sunday mornings from our Iberital IB7 espresso machine in the foyer. And while we don't always achieve the 'holy grail' of a perfect golden crema and silky smooth milk, our Sunday visitors and regulars alike appreciate the efforts of our volunteer baristas while we keep working on our skills. ■





VINYL REVIVAL

If you're a music lover, Justin Ang suggests that a trip down memory lane with some old-tech Vinyl LPs might be just what you need...

Apple Music. Spotify. YouTube Music. Tidal. They're just some of the music streaming services available today. We're spoiled for choice when it comes to digital streaming. Not to mention the convenience of putting together all your favourite songs into a playlist on your smartphone.

But in the age of digital streaming and instant access to music, there's something nostalgic about the crackle of a needle hitting a vinyl LP. As a 30-something year old, my friends give me weird looks when I tell them I've bought myself a turntable (a Pro-Ject one in case you're wondering. It's white. My wife loves it). "Why would you want to purchase a spinning table?!" as one friend puts it. "Don't you want more convenience and not less?" My dad thinks I'm a little strange to get into vinyl when he's thrown out his own vinyl collection.

Not to mention the cost. "A black hole of money," as someone close to me said, laughing. Certainly, building up a vinyl collection is not cheap. I'm only starting out but I can tell you that I've already spent more on vinyl LPs than a year's subscription to a music streaming service. (Here's what I've purchased: Miles Davis - Kind of Blue, Sonny Clark - Dial "S" for Sonny, Daft Punk - Alive 2007 and Taylor Swift - 1989, Taylor's version, of course. Please don't judge me!)

But there's something truly magical about listening to vinyl. Maybe it's the experience of taking a vinyl out of its slip case, carefully placing it on the turntable

and lowering the tonearm. That's entrancing. The anticipation as you watch the needle move slowly towards the grooves and the first sounds of music coming through the speakers...

I'm not sure whether physical grooves in pressed vinyl actually sound better than digital recordings. But as YouTuber DankPods puts it, "It's not about sound quality, it's about vibe quality." He says that in our world we can be burdened by choice. The moment that we get bored, we switch. Constantly. I agree with him. Changing tracks takes time and effort, which forces me to listen to an album from beginning to end. I'm forced to slow down and experience the music. I'm less tempted to multitask when an album is playing on my turntable.

That's not to say I don't enjoy my music streaming subscription. (It's not like I can travel with my turntable). But as Robert Hassan, Professor of Media and Communication at the University of Melbourne, argues in his book *Analog*, it's "not the actual technology that matters so much as the relationship to it." The feel, the perceived authenticity and the lack of precision of analog technology like vinyl records connects us to the material world. He says,

"Why would you buy a horribly expensive vinyl copy of the Beatles' White Album for \$150 when you can stream it whenever you want, for almost nothing? Yet people do. They do because it fulfills something more than an empty consumer urge. They do it because The White Album or the LAMY fountain pen and the Schaeffer bottle of ink and the optional piston converters and rubber bladders that we buy even when there is no objective need for them any longer are material things that connect us to the material world and ultimately to nature and to the cosmos of which they and we are a part."

It's true. There's no need for me to invest my time and money into a vinyl record collection. And yet, I do. I feel drawn to it because listening to a record on vinyl reminds me that as a human I am grounded in time and space. It's probably why I'm attracted to other analog activities like journaling with a fountain pen and paper, or why I enjoy pour-over coffee.

These activities remind me that I am an embodied creature. Not just a brain on legs. But a whole person. Mind, body and soul, integrated together. I can't upload my consciousness to the internet and multitask. In other words, it makes me realise that I cannot do everything I want in my life because my life is limited.

I don't need to be busier; I don't need to be more frenetic; I don't need to chase after the ever-elusive wind. What I do need to do is to slow down. Eliminate hurry from my life. And focus on what's important. It's what Oliver Burkeman argues for in his book *Four Thousand Weeks*. He argues that 4,000 weeks is the average number of weeks we live. A terribly short amount of time. But when you realise how short life is, he says, we learn to accept there will always be too much to do, and therefore we will learn to "focus on doing a few things that count." I think that's what my vinyl collection reminds me of every time I listen to it. Life is short. Remember the things that are important. ■



A MORNING WITH HEIDE

Where do you take your out-of-town friends when they're visiting Melbourne? Phil and Louise Campbell took their guest for a morning tour of the famous Heide Gallery...

When our Philadelphia-based friend Malcolm joined us for the January 26 long weekend, we weren't quite sure where to take him. The weather wasn't ideal - blustery winds - and it's always hard to know what's going to be open on a Friday public holiday.

We'd heard about The Heide from friends, though being fairly new to Melbourne ourselves, we'd never managed to visit. A quick check online showed they were open for business.

The history and architecture of the Heide complex are fascinating. Art patrons John and Sunday Reed purchased the neglected dairy farm on the Yarra River in Bulleen in 1934 - a location that has served as a meeting point and a creative hub dating back to the Wurundjeri people. Set on 6.5 hectares of parkland with five gallery spaces, the complex features a sculpture park and heritage-listed kitchen gardens. The Reeds intentionally developed the home as a haven for artists and writers, hosting a who's-who of influential figures of the Heidelberg and Modernist movements - Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker, Joy Hester and Mirka Mora among them. Along the way they amassed an outstanding collection of contemporary art. And here's a fun fact - no matter how celebrated their guests were on the world artistic stage, all were allocated jobs to do around the farm.

Artists of the Australian Impressionist School often gathered and painted the landscape, while Nolan famously painted his Ned Kelly series in the weatherboard farmhouse, as the Reeds worked on renovating their home in the French provincial style. Known today as the Heide Cottage, it was a friendly space that seemed to encourage creative experiments and robust debates.

In 1963, the Reeds commissioned David McGlashan of the architecture firm McGlashan and Everist to design and build a new home in the modernist style. Their brief was that the building should have a sense of mystery and weather over time to take on the appearance of 'a ruin in the landscape.' Most importantly, they wanted a 'gallery to be lived in', intending that this building would ultimately be transformed into the public art space it is today. It's now known as Heide Modern, and is connected by a breezeway with the more recent black zinc frontage of the main gallery and cafe complex.

Our guest on the day had mobility issues, and we soon realised that parking in the upper carpark was a mistake - quite a slope to negotiate on the way down. (The lower carpark is a much better option.) Staff in the main gallery were extremely helpful in highlighting ramps and access points that made the rest of our visit easier. We spent most time in the current Lee Miller exhibition, which showcased the work of the renowned American photographer and war correspondent. Miller had a darkly surrealist vision, with a melancholy shaped largely by the events she witnessed first hand. It's telling that many of her shots are counted among the most iconic images of the 20th century.

The "Data for Future Paintings" exhibition by Steven Rendall and Albert Tucker was a little confusing at first. Rendall has used digital technology to create new interpretations of Tucker's paintings from the Heide collection - it took a few minutes for these observers to get properly oriented, though a gallery guide gave some useful tips.

The sculpture park and the gardens feature works by leading Australian artist Inge King, who created monumental works that reflected her interests in astronomy and mythology; and Emily Floyd, who used bright colours and playful shapes to create interactive and educational sculptures for children.

There was only time for a quick dash around the Heide Modern. The Reeds' modernist vision of a home-become-gallery has clearly been well realised; though the 'late-mid-century' aesthetic results in a minimalism that may be considered



quite harsh. The cosy sunken lounge area on the entrance level is one exception, and still seems to be carpeted and upholstered in the original chocolate brown textiles. The real down-side as a gallery, though, is the minimal allocation of artworks in each room.

As a coffee fan, it's worth mentioning the cafe too. Service was brisk, the coffee was reasonably good, and the almond croissants were sadly already sold out by mid morning. In any case, it's worth bearing in mind the advice from Steven Levit's book "Freakonomics" - never expect to find a good restaurant at a tourist attraction. To paraphrase his point, 'People don't come to the Eiffel Tower for the food, so the chef will rarely make much effort.' On that basis, the Heide Cafe was better than necessary, and we enjoyed a pleasant brunch.

If you've never taken the time, we'd certainly recommend a visit. Heide is not only a museum, but also a cultural and green oasis in Melbourne's urban fringe. In keeping with the intentions of John and Sunday Reed, art, architecture and landscape continue to be shared and enjoyed by the wider Melbourne community - and international guests as well. ■

MEET THE NEW LOOK TEAM

INTRODUCTION CARD

Hi.

- PC** PHIL CAMPBELL, Senior Minister
- JA** JUSTIN ANG, Senior Assistant
- AK** ARTHUR KEEFER, Next Generations
- LH** LITHA HESHUSIUS, Pastoral Care

We're the Ministry Team at Scots' Church. If you're new here, we'd love to welcome you in person. Please introduce yourself on this card, and drop it at the foyer desk. Or, scan the QR code and enter your details online. Otherwise, simply email us any time at welcome@scotschurch.com. Find out more about us at scotschurch.com/team.

PC **JA** **AK** **LH**

A world of new opportunities
is opening up at Scots' Church in Melbourne...

Historic Scots' Church Melbourne has long been part of the Melbourne landscape, with leaders traditionally geared towards the needs of our Scottish flavoured heritage. Years have passed, demographics have changed, with more and more younger members from diverse cultural backgrounds. While we still celebrate with 'bagpipes and haggis' on special occasions, many of our members are more inclined to a robust curry or a noodle soup. Or maybe a meat pie with tomato sauce.

When Australian born Rev Phil Campbell became Senior Minister three years ago, he was only the third non-Scot to take the role in the history of the church, though Pastoral Care ministry was already in the capable hands of Indonesian-born Rev Litha Heshusius.



In January they were joined by two newly inducted Assistant Ministers, who reflect the new demographics of the church.

“We’ve never inducted two new ministers at once before,” said delighted elder Bruce Evans after the January service. “It’s terrific.”

Rev Justin Ang, 39, was born and bred in Sydney. Justin studied accounting and law, and worked for Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu before training for Ministry, adding a Masters of Divinity degree to his other qualifications. Justin and his wife Rachel come to us after five years leading Caringbah Presbyterian Church in Sydney’s Sutherland Shire.

Justin’s role as Senior Assistant Minister brings him into contact with both the pastoral needs of a city church like Scots’, and the complex organisational structures of our Trusts and Committees. “I’m excited by the width of my new role,” says Justin. “I love meeting people, I love the way Scots’ is engaging with the city of Melbourne - and I love a good spreadsheet, too.”

Meanwhile, Justin’s wife Rachel has taken on an administrative role in a Medical Technology firm. “In our last church, I loved encouraging other women, and working with kids,” says Rachel. “I’m hoping to do the same at Scots’ - especially with women who are new to Australia, who may be struggling with English.”

Rev Dr Arthur Keefer grew up in the USA, where his dad works in the timber industry. A keen rock musician who also considered military life, Arthur instead chose a life of study and research in the area of theology. His PhD program took him to the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, where he specialised in ancient Israelite wisdom literature. Whether that gave him the upper hand in his next step as a Chaplain and teacher at the acclaimed Eton College is open to question - but Arthur very much enjoyed engaging with the next generation of young Englishmen. He was ordained in the International Presbyterian Church, and is excited by the prospect of ministering to our ‘next generations’ here at Scots’ Church Melbourne - a role where there’s the need for plenty of wisdom!

So what exactly does ‘next generations’ mean? According to Arthur, it’s an elastic definition. “Our Senior Minister Phil tells me it means anyone who’ll still be part

of the Scots' community in 2049," laughs Arthur. "Essentially, though, while I'll be focused on our 5pm ScotsCity congregation for students and young adults, I'll also be engaging with the younger generations in our morning church, including parents, kids and teens."

It's a challenging role, but essential as we work towards being a church that doesn't just live in the past, but actively positions ourselves to welcome future generations.

Arthur is keenly supported by his wife, Emem. The couple met in the UK, where Emem was working towards her specialty in Respiratory Medicine. The fact that her sister lives in Melbourne and her mum and dad are in Townsville made the move back to Australia an attractive proposition. "I love engaging with people, either in my life as a doctor, or at church," says Emem. "I'm enthused about working with Arthur in encouraging and growing our next generation."

There's more exciting news at our Flemington branch church - St Stephen's, in Norwood Street. Mr Lindsay Kliendienst joins us in the joint role of Pastor and Missioner, co-ordinating our Tuesday Foodbank program and leading our Sunday services. With wife Angela, he'll be keen to meet members of the local Flemington community.



"Full of History, Full of Life" is a simple motto that describes our ambition in the Scots' Church network. We love being caught up in the grand traditions of Melbourne's first Presbyterian gathering - but we're just as excited about moving forward as a dynamic and vibrant church family that's embracing life in the 21st Century. As one example, we've worked on the 'AI x Christianity's' Conference with ISCAST, and we'll be opening up other hot topics in our Tuesday night seminar program too. We are striving to be a church that's keeping up with life, technology, and cultural challenges as they unfold, while holding on to a vibrant, defining and surprisingly relevant faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. ■

The image shows the interior of a large Gothic cathedral, likely St. Mark's Church in Eton. The central focus is a massive, ornate organ with multiple tiers and colorful stained glass panels. The organ is flanked by tall, slender columns. In the foreground, rows of dark wooden pews are visible, leading towards the organ. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the architectural details and the organ's structure. The overall atmosphere is one of grandeur and historical significance.

ENRICHING ETON

How do you go about 'enriching' the lives of the A-list young men at Eton College? Arthur Keefer, now on the team at Scots' Church in Melbourne, looks back at his years as an Eton Chaplain, coach, and channel of Christian kindness.

Eton College functions a lot like a battleship. There are a lot of rules, uniforms, and testosterone; it's kept clean and demands a high number of staff; it's expensive and can do a lot of damage; it's quite impressive when in full operation; there's a large learning curve for anyone wanting to work there, and it's fairly isolated for most of the year.

To be a chaplain at Eton is, in one sense, to be any other teacher at the college. I worked with a team of about four chaplains and each of us taught in the Divinity Department, covering subjects like theology, philosophy, and religion. This meant that we marked papers, wrote reports, met with parents, and dealt with the daily joys of classroom management. We prepared boys to apply to university courses in theology and philosophy, especially those aspiring to get a place at Oxford or Cambridge, and roamed the boarding house corridors on a weekly basis to make sure nothing crazy was happening.

Sport forms a kind of backbone for schools like Eton. How else can you tire out 1,300 boys, foster competition, ensure majority enjoyment, and hark back to “the old days”? I coached football (“soccer”) every September to December with a middling group of 13-year-olds, for example. There were also weekly tutor groups, usually two groups of six each. One was made up of younger boys who were assigned to you while the other was made up of older boys who had actually selected you as a tutor and written an application letter to that effect. These groups involved evenings of pizza and movies, or card games, or “we need to talk” sessions.

There were a seemingly endless amount of enrichment activities that one could contribute to as an adult presence. Societies were a huge part of this “co-curricular” element, and one group, the Simeon Society, attracted a number of faithful and faith-interested boys, along with a handful of committed teachers. We hosted a weekly speaker for dinner and a short Bible talk. When compared to other societies that might host the Prime Minister or CEO of Uber and attract hundreds, our gathering was often small – maybe 20-30 would show up, sitting around to listen attentively to a no-name preacher from London – and that always reminded me of what Jesus said about the narrow gate, the loyal remnant, and the scarcity of true Christian faith. Many “old boys” would come back to the Simeon to talk about how it changed their lives forever.

As a chaplain, I had a reduced teaching timetable (1/2-2/3 of a full timetable) in order to accommodate the chaplaincy duties. These included regular weeks on duty in one of two college chapels. Imagine an old but well-kept cathedral-like building of wood and stone that seats about 500 teenage boys and some staff, who would file in at 8:33 for an 8:35 morning service. The service would last about 15 minutes and included two hymns, a Bible reading (read by a boy with whom I rehearsed at 8:15, if he remembered to appear), a four minute talk from me and a brief prayer. Lessons started at 9:00 and so not only were the boys ready to get going by the end of the service, but I often had to be in my classroom and ready to teach by that time. At the opposite end of the day, 9:00 p.m., I sang fortnightly Compline services, which is an ancient monastic office of plainsong and the most peaceful activity that I participated in at Eton.

Perhaps one of the most important realizations that I had there was that chaplaincy “succeeded” in direct proportion to the time and experiences that I shared with the boys. Teaching was the foremost way in, but we also ate lunches together in the boarding house or cafeteria, and I would go to various house outings from time to time. Most memorable was seeing *Top Gun: Maverick* with a house of 50, when in the final few moments of the film - the dramatic reunions - I started to hear sniffles and notice subtle nose wipes in the rows around me. Are these boys crying!? Indeed. Fifteen year olds do cry at the movies.

Other experiences were truly worthy of tears. In my first year I attended the funeral of a boy’s mother. He had been at Eton for a matter of months and carried that loss with him for his entire five-year journey at the school. In my final year, I sat across the room from several more boys whose mother or father had unexpectedly died, speaking with them about loss, about their memories, about life’s lack of fairness, and about hope.

It was not only the boys that I served as a chaplain. Just months before leaving Eton, the father of a dear friend and colleague passed away, and I was asked to take the funeral. I had baptised this man’s grandchildren and was now standing at his graveside. His son-in-law, one of my favourite colleagues, said that his own school chaplain had said that one of the most important things we could do was to “prepare the boys for death.” As much as I’d like to think that they are just starting life, this is the grim reality.

Being a chaplain at Eton is holistic. You can give everything, and the college would take everything. The boys are extremely sociable, highly competitive, remarkably talented, and yet in many ways just teenagers - most of them, too, costing their parents very high fees to attend. But the one thing that they cannot demand in return was the one thing that I tried most to give them, and that was kindness. To be kind, gentle, and understanding was, in that environment, not always normal or expected. It required that “Christ be formed in you,” as Paul writes to the Galatians (Gal 4:19), which was my prayer, struggle, and joy each day. ■

STORIES IN GLASS

If you're visiting Scots' Church, why not let Rosalie Strother take you on a whirlwind tour of our magnificent stained glass windows...

This year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of our beautiful Scots' Church building, a Melbourne icon since our opening in 1874. Designed in the neo-Gothic style of architecture popular in the 19th century, the building was intended to incorporate a range of stained glass windows. The first was installed in 1876, with plain glass windows gradually replaced until as recently as 1963.

The story of stained glass windows in churches can be traced back to the Middle Ages, when they were used as a pictorial way to teach and illustrate Bible narratives to a largely illiterate population. The term 'Poor Man's Bible' referred to stained glass windows, paintings, carvings and mosaics, until the invention of the printing press in the early 15th century meant that the Bible became more accessible to all.

Most of our beautiful windows continue the tradition of depicting stories, events, or people from the Bible. As you come through the main door into the vestibule, you'll notice that you're greeted by four prophets: Moses, Samuel, Elijah and John the Baptist; and four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. If you take a moment to look back, you'll see Jesus, the Good Shepherd, with a sheep in his arms, looking down on all who enter through the doors.

Entering the church, the paired windows along the right aisle highlight scenes from some of the great parables of Jesus. The first pair portray the kingdom of heaven as hidden treasure or a pearl of great price. There's also the story of the prodigal

son, with his welcome home; the parable of the sower; the parable of the talents; and the wonderful story of the injured man cared for by the Good Samaritan after others (though they were outwardly 'religious') had passed by on the other side of the road.



The Last Supper, with Jesus sharing bread and wine with his disciples, is the subject of the large window in the transept opposite the organ, where there's also another of Jesus carrying his cross to Calvary. Move on to the apse, at the front of the church, and spend time reflecting on the exquisitely designed windows illustrating faith, hope and charity (love) through three figures, with Jesus as the focus of the central window.

The stories of Jesus continue on the left aisle, and then there are some Old Testament narratives around Naaman and the servant girl, and Saul and David with his lyre. It's worth a visit to the North Porch at the back of the church (Assembly Hall side), where you will find two beautiful windows; 'I am the Light of the World', and 'The Greatest of these is Love'; the little child in the latter has a crutch and a bandage on his leg.

The earliest window in the church, 'The teachings of Jesus', is the only window in the gallery at the back of the church. It vividly portrays eight stories from the Gospels, including Jesus teaching from a boat, speaking to lawyers, and weeping for Jerusalem; there are also parables of the sower, the lost sheep, and the talents, together with the story of the Pharisee and the publican which appears in another window downstairs. (Interestingly, like the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus is again criticising the form of religion that's prideful and outward, rather than humble and heart-changing.) It is unfortunate that the intricate details of the stories depicted in this magnificent upstairs window can't be viewed closely because of its location. However many of the windows in the church are most accessible and the beauty and detail, seen with a background of light, can be fully appreciated.

The most recent windows were installed in the vestibule in 1963, and depict the crests of the Armed Forces and Red Cross. Together with the window, 'The Gift of the Holy Spirit', and a mosaic of 'The Resurrection of Jesus', they're dedicated to the memory of those who served or were lost in two world wars. Each stained glass window in the church has been endowed as a memorial and although many of the details have been lost through time, the wonderful legacy of these windows remains for us all to appreciate and enjoy.

When you have a few minutes, spend some time viewing the beautiful windows, with the intricate detail drawn from the biblical stories they depict. It is worthwhile to reflect on the message of the windows, and the skills that have produced objects of such beauty to enhance our building. ■



Scots' Church Small Groups Pastor Justin Ang says that finding real community in the city can be tough. That's something our Small Groups program might help...

Inner city apartment living has made me realise the prevalence of loneliness in a city like Melbourne. Rachel and I are less likely to connect to our neighbours. The only time we might interact is in the lift - and that's sometimes awkward. It's hard to have an in-depth conversation between levels 17 and G - unless I press all the buttons! In a previous edition of The Leaflet we ran an article that suggested loneliness amongst Australians has increased, especially with younger Australians. The prevalence of social media means paradoxically we may be more connected, but more alone. Living in Melbourne is exciting but there's a risk we will lose out on community.

Even in a large city church like Scots', there's a potential to feel lost in the crowd. Whether you're part of the church community or not, maybe you struggle connecting to others in meaningful ways. But there's always the promise of authentic relationships that can be found in church community, given time, and a certain level of commitment and perseverance.

That's why we've launched a new Small Groups program at Scots' on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, from 6.30 to 8.30pm. We meet on Level 1 in the Assembly Hall building, next to the church on Collins Street.

The early believers saw the importance of gathering together. We're told in the Acts of the Apostles that "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42) The writer of the letter to the Hebrews encourages us, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

As Director of Small Groups at Scots', it's my pleasure to encourage you to join a small group whether you're part of church on Sundays or not. They're a wonderful way to connect into our community and develop authentic relationships with others. More than that, in the words of Hebrews 10, our small groups are an excellent way to stir one another to love and good works, and to encourage one another. Who doesn't need a bit of encouragement these days?

Each small group will be interacting with a resource from The Bible Project as a way to delve into the message of the Bible together. We're also regularly running a course called Hope Explored, that explains the essentials of the faith for those who are just starting out.

What is The Bible Project?

As our small groups meet each week we'll be interacting with some excellent online resources from The Bible Project, a creative US-based initiative co-founded by a group of biblical scholars and graphic designers. At first, it seems like an odd mix. But if you're a 'visual learner,' it's fantastic. Whole biblical books are expertly summarised in animated video format, which might at first seem simple. And yet the concepts they describe - while simply put - are substantial.

Bible Project co-founder Tim Mackie has a PhD in Semitic Languages and Biblical Studies. He wrote his dissertation on the manuscript history of the book of Ezekiel, with a focus on the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls. "What a total nerd," he says of himself now! Tim was a professor at Western Seminary and served as a teaching pastor for many years, before taking on his current role as writer and creative director.

Jon Collins partners in the writer-director role. He has a BA in Biblical Studies from Multnomah University (where he met Tim). Jon is affectionately known by the team as the Architect of Ideas - a master of making complex ideas simple, who has spent the last decade founding and leading digital media and marketing companies.

Illustrator Robert Perez teamed up with the project during its initial conception and is now Senior Art Director. He describes his job and passion as "to bring an excellence not only to the artwork, but also the storytelling of anything we make."

"From page one to the final word, we believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus," says director Tim Mackie. "This diverse collection of ancient books overflows with wisdom for our modern world. As we let the biblical story speak for itself, we believe the message of Jesus will transform individuals and entire communities."



Mackie argues that many people have misunderstood the Bible as a collection of inspirational quotes or a divine instruction manual dropped from Heaven. “Most of us gravitate toward sections we enjoy while avoiding parts that are confusing or even disturbing,” he says. “But our resources help people experience the Bible in a way that is approachable, engaging, and transformative. We do this by showcasing the literary art of the Scriptures and tracing biblical themes from beginning to end. Rather than taking the stance of a specific tradition or denomination, we create materials to elevate the Bible for all people and draw our eyes to its unified message.”

Our small group format is simple. First, we watch a selected video from the Bible Project. We’re working through the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), featuring one book of the Bible each week. After watching the video, we have a discussion based on the content of the video. Questions guide us through specific bible passages that capture the essence of that book. It’s a great opportunity to delve deeper into the Bible, whether you’re a long term believer, a sceptic, or just starting out. We invite all participants to share their thoughts, questions, and reflections. Third, we encourage the building of genuine friendships (the biblical term is ‘fellowship’!) and there’s a brief time of prayer which you’re welcome to contribute to, or just listen. So whether you’re just exploring the Christian faith, or you’re young in your faith, or you’re a well seasoned Christian, we believe that our small groups at Scots’ will help you grow and find community!

For more information, please visit scotschurch.com/small-groups, or email justin@scotschurch.com ■



THE POLITICS OF JESUS

In our anxious and increasingly divided world, is there one particular party line that Jesus would follow? Read on as Phil Court explores ...

What were the politics of Jesus of Nazareth back in the first century? Was he a right winger or a left winger, an extremist or a moderate, a hawk or a dove? How did he respond to the various competing political factions of his fellow Jews? Is there anything we can discover that might assist us come to terms with the competing political factions in present-day Australia? Let's see if the following hypothetical might shed some light.

HYPOTHETICAL: Imagine that our style of parliamentary elections took place in first century Judea and Galilee. Imagine that each of the significant Jewish political/religious factions of the time fielded candidates. Imagine that Jesus is on the electoral roll and is required to vote. In this imaginary scenario, the question is: Who would Jesus vote for?

A brief sketch of the five most noteworthy Jewish factions might help us enter Jesus's political world.

We'll start with the most obscure of the bunch; **the Essenes**. There's no direct biblical reference to them. That's not surprising. They made a point of flying under the radar. They lived in strict and celibate isolation in the Judean wilderness near the shores of the Dead Sea, waiting for the imminently expected end of time. These days they're known for their extensive library of well-preserved biblical and extra-biblical scrolls discovered in caves near their Qumran monastery.

Some scholars think that John the Baptist grew up with, or at least spent considerable time with the Essenes. That's because Luke's Gospel says of him, "*The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance in Israel.*" [1:80] And there was his minimalist wardrobe and diet. According to Matthew, "*John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.*" [3:4] Jesus insisted on being baptised by John and later said of him, "*There has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.*" [Matt. 11:11] It seems that, by and large, the Essenes did not follow John into anything like public life. Jesus rejected their isolationism, specifically praying to God the Father for his own followers, "*I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.*" [John 17:15]

Now let's go to the top of the tree; **the Sadducees**. This was the faction of the ecclesiastical elite; the party of the priestly class. Their power-base, and their very reason for existence was the Jerusalem temple. Their support was strongest amongst the residents of Jerusalem because it was, in effect, a company town. The temple's streams of pilgrims, choirs of Levites, daily rounds of animal sacrifices, and licensed money-changers made it the economic engine room of the city.

Jesus, and the gospel he proclaimed were existential threats to the Sadducees. He turned over the moneychangers' tables and liberated the animals being sold for slaughter by the priests. He predicted the destruction of the temple and he even made a seemingly impossible claim that he would raise it up within three days. Not surprisingly, the Sadducees had their temple police arrest Jesus, so kick-starting the miscarriage of justice that led to his death on the cross.

The Herodians were the least religious and most materialistic of the major Jewish factions. They supported the rule of Herod the Great's sons – a rule that was subservient to the emperors of Rome. During Jesus's three-year ministry, one of the sons, Herod Antipas, was the puppet ruler of Galilee. Jesus called him "*That fox,*" hardly a term of endearment. [Luke 13:32] Another son, Herod Philip, ruled the Golan Heights with Caesarea Philippi as his capital. A third son, Herod Archelaus, was so incompetent in his short-lived rule of Judea that Emperor Augustus sacked him, putting Judea under direct Roman control. Nonetheless, the Judean Herodians remained willing accomplices of Roman rule, represented during Jesus's ministry by the Roman Prefect, Pontius Pilate.



The people most closely connected to the Herodians were the much-hated tax collectors. When asked whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, Jesus replied, *“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”* [Matthew 22:21]. Game, set and match.

The Zealots wanted nothing less than a fully independent and exclusively Jewish state. If that meant open warfare, ethnic cleansing and mass slaughter, or even their own suicidal annihilation in a holy war, so be it. They grew to prominence much later in the first century, but their influence was already being felt during Jesus’s ministry. For example, John’s Gospel records Jesus’s response to an over-eager crowd in Galilee; *“Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.”* [6:15] His rejection of the Zealots’ methods are clear when he tells Pontius Pilate, *“If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting... but my kingdom is not from the world.”* [John 18:36]

Lastly, let’s consider the largest and most widespread Jewish faction; **the Pharisees**. Their power was decentralised, through the network of local synagogues across Judea, Galilee and wherever the Jewish diaspora settled across the Roman empire. It was precisely this that enabled them to survive and thrive.

The Pharisees score a whopping 98 mentions in the New Testament, including 19 by Jesus. They claimed to be upholding strict adherence to the Law of Moses and the traditions of the elders. Many, maybe most of the scribes and experts in Jewish law were Pharisees. They also seem to be the most persistent and frequent of Jesus’s critics. That explains why the lion’s share of his criticism was directed at them. And yet, in the midst of his adversity, Luke tells us some sympathetic Pharisees warned Jesus of an early plot to kill him [13:31] An influential Pharisee, Nicodemus, visited Jesus by night, not to condemn him, but to try to understand his gospel message. [John 3:1-21]



So, does all this help us decide which of these five factions Jesus would have voted for in our hypothetical election. Probably not. After all, he was critical of all of them and he certainly gave no indication of embracing any of their competing political platforms. Maybe he would have simply drawn a line through all their factions while simultaneously praying for each of the actual candidates; praying for their forgiveness, and praying that they too might turn to God and believe the good news he brought to the world.

Let's do what Jesus so often does, and turn the question on its head. **Can people from across the political spectrum come to trust in Jesus?** On this score, I think the answer is a resounding "Yes!" Consider this:

- The former **Essene**, John the Baptist, declared Jesus to be "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*" [John 1:29]
- After Pentecost, as the fledgling church grew, a great many of the priests deserted the **Sadducees** and "*became obedient to the faith.*" [Acts 6:7]
- The **Herodian** tax collector Matthew became an Apostle and wrote a Gospel. [Matthew 9:9]
- Simon the **Zealot** became one of the 12 Apostles; from a violent extremist to a follower of the Prince of Peace. [Matthew 10:4]
- Saul AKA Paul, the **Pharisee** bounty-hunter of Christians became Christ's Apostle to the Gentiles. [Acts 9 and following]

The take-out is this: Whatever your own particular political inclinations – left, right or centre - you are just as welcome as anyone else to put your trust in Jesus. But be warned; following Jesus will change you and your old attitudes, just as it changed that first generation of his followers. ■



ONE LIFE

Phil Court and Justin Ang consider the courageous life of Nicholas Winton, as retold in the movie One Life...

“When 29-year-old London stockbroker Nicholas Winton visits Czechoslovakia in 1938, just weeks after the Munich Agreement, he encounters families in Prague who had fled the rise of the Nazis in Germany and Austria. They are living in poor living conditions, with little or no shelter or food and in fear of the invasion of the Nazis... Horrified by conditions in the refugee camps, Winton decides to save Jewish children himself. Actively supported by his mother Babette, herself a German-Jewish migrant who has since converted to the Church of England, he overcomes bureaucratic hurdles, collects donations, and looks for foster families for the children brought to England. Many of them are Jews who are at imminent risk of deportation. A race against time begins as it is unclear how long the borders will remain open before the inevitable Nazi invasion.”

That's Wikipedia's summary of the life-and-death drama at the heart of the 2023 British bio-pic, *One Life*. Directed by James Hawes, it stars Anthony Hopkins and Johnny Flynn as the elder and younger versions of Winton, and Helena Bonham Carter as his mother. At the time of writing, it was still showing at the Nova Cinema in Carlton. No doubt it will soon be available on your favourite streaming service.

I won't spoil it by telling you the rest of the plot, except to say that it's a movie guaranteed to lift your spirits and make you thankful for people like Nicholas Winton, his mother, and all those who contributed to saving 669 children from the Nazi Holocaust.

In the BBC show, *That's Life*, Nicholas Winton is reunited with a few of the many hundreds of people he rescued. First, there are touching testimonies of the impact he had on a number of lives. (You can find an excerpt on Youtube.) Then there's the surprise. The host, towards the end of the programme, says, *"We asked as many of these grown-up children as possible to get in touch with us so they'd have the chance to thank Mr Winton personally. Can I ask if there is anyone in the audience tonight who owes their life to Nicholas Winton? If so, could you stand up please?"*

It's worth watching for yourself to see who stands for Nicholas. It's an emotional moment - for him, and for viewers. As Winton reflects on the impact that he's had on countless lives, he says, *"I never thought what I did 70 years ago was going to have such a big impact even today."*

Often in our own lives, we can ask, "What difference will I make?" Sometimes, we won't get to see the outcome of our own small acts of kindness. But sometimes, we might have a much bigger impact than we imagine. Nicholas Winton impacted 669 lives, and he saw just a glimpse of that on *That's Life*. But consider for a moment the impact on the countless lives around the lives he saved - those who were not standing in that studio but were impacted for the better because of one life and what he chose to stand up for. Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, grandchildren and friends... an impact not necessarily seen but undoubtedly felt over generations.

Nicholas Winton's story in the movie *One Life* is an encouragement to make a difference to those around us every time we can. Who knows what good will come out of it! ■



Winton's Prague memorial

THE COLOUR PURPLE



In the ancient world, the production of vivid purple dye was complex and time consuming. Phil Court and Rosalie Strother take us back in time to explore the process...

Before Jesus was nailed naked to a criminal's cross in his very public execution, the Roman soldiers gave him a coronation ceremony, crowning him King of the Jews.

It was a coronation like no other. All the pomp and ceremony was turned into a cruel parody. His sceptre was a reed which they used to hit his head. They saluted him as king and knelt in homage before spitting on him and jamming a crown made of thorns on his head. Someone found an old royal cloak in the palace and brought it out. For a laugh, they draped it around Jesus until they led him off to be crucified.

Curiously, and significantly, that cloak was the only genuine coronation article the soldiers used to humiliate Jesus. The Gospel accounts of Mark and John make a point of telling us its colour... which was purple. In fact, the colour purple has been associated with royalty since ancient times.

Why was one particular colour so special that it was reserved for kings and the social elite? The short answer is, supply and demand. The purple dye was produced in a complex process where mucus was extracted from a sea snail, so rare that it was quite literally worth its weight in gold. It took as many as 250,000 snails to produce just 30 grams of dye. The result was a vivid purple so enduring that it still holds its colour after 3,000 years.

Tel Shikmona is a hill on modern-day Israel's coast near the city of Haifa and not far from the foot of Mount Carmel. There, archaeologists discovered the remains of a Phoenician factory specialising in purple dye. It's estimated to date back to around 1,500 BC.

The dye was created from three species of *murex*, sea snails found in abundance along the rocky coastline of Israel. The production process involved cracking the shells, extracting the mucus, and exposing it to oxygen and sunlight for a precise time. It was possible to vary the resulting dye from red through purple to blue, by having different exposure times. It was an unpleasant process; messy and tedious, with an offensive odour.

Archaeological evidence suggests the Israelites conquered the Phoenicians and took control of the Tel Shikmona factory in the mid-ninth century BC. Around the time of the notorious Israelite King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, the dye factory was destroyed and rebuilt. Evidence reveals that the Phoenicians were still living there, probably under Israelite rule, and carrying out the day-to-day work at the factory as they would have had the necessary skills and knowledge.

Over the succeeding centuries the fortunes of Tel Shikmona changed, but there was intermittent activity as Babylonians, Persians, and the armies of Alexander the Great moved through, followed by its incorporation into the Roman empire. It was finally abandoned around the seventh century AD, as the murex dye began to be replaced by cheaper alternatives and the fortunes of the region were changing. Murex-derived dye had disappeared altogether by the 15th century, with the increasing availability of a range of insect and plant-based dyes.



The Bible's book of Acts mentions a wealthy businesswoman, Lydia, who traded in purple fabrics. The Apostle Paul met her in the Roman city of Philippi in Macedonia. She came from Thyatira in Asia Minor, which was another purple dye-making centre. As she heard Paul preaching about the resurrection of Jesus, she became the first Christian convert in Philippi. Here's the biblical account:

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. (Acts 16:15-16)

After her baptism, she led her whole household to faith, and her home became the meeting place of the first Christian church established in Europe.

As a trader in purple, she would have understood the significance of those mocking soldiers dressing Jesus in a purple gown. They might have seen their actions as parody. But, unbeknown to them, they really were crowning a king – the King of kings and the Lord of any and all who trust him – the king who came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. The colour purple never sat more fittingly on anyone's shoulders. ■

THE MEANING OF LIFE



What's life all about - really? And where do we turn to find a sense of meaning and purpose? Our Next Generations Pastor Rev Dr Arthur Keefer takes us to the ancient book of Ecclesiastes to investigate...

One of the problems with recent talk about the meaning of life is that it's not always clear just what people mean when they use the phrase. "My life has no meaning." "Life is meaningless." "No, that can't be! Life is so full of meaning!" You will have heard someone say these things or said them yourself, and yet you may not have had any explanation about what makes life meaningful, or causes it to be meaningless. For many of us it's intuitive: I just know the feeling. I feel empty, aimless, and dissatisfied; or, I am fulfilled and satisfied.

Interestingly, "the meaning of life" is a turn of phrase that has only been used for about 100 years. Prior to that, it's clear that people thought about meaning, yet did not use the language of "life's meaning."

Psychologists have recently been doing a lot of research into life's meaning and what we mean when we talk about it. The Finnish researcher Frank Martela and American Michael F. Steger collated an entire discipline of work in this area and concluded that there are three conceptions of "the meaning of life": coherence, purpose, and significance.

"Coherence" refers to the human's cognitive comprehension of life, as life "makes sense" because predictable and recognizable patterns are discernible within it. When coherent, life holds epistemological integrity especially with respect to stable patterns of cause and effect. If you work hard enough, you'll get a promotion – that kind of thing.



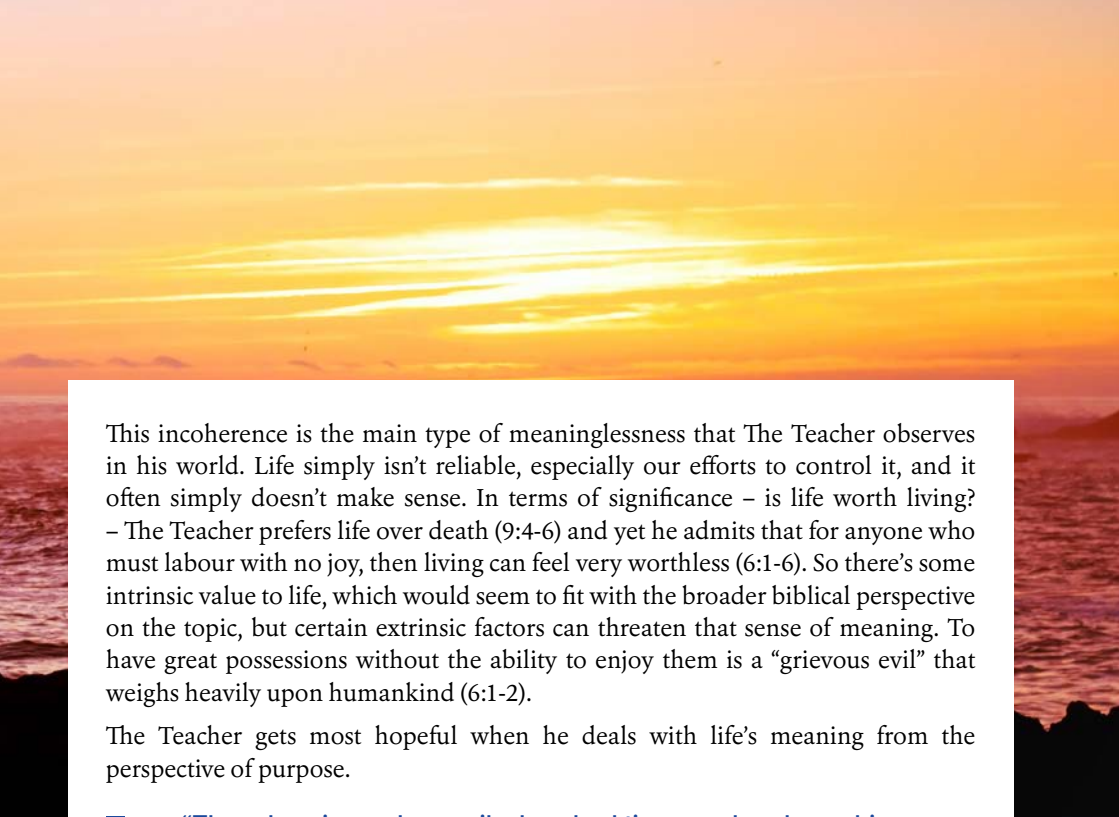
The second type, “purpose,” arises when life has a future, overarching goal. This goal gives direction to life and bears significance for present activities, so that to say “my life has purpose” amounts to saying “my life has meaning.” This is probably the way that professional athletes see life: aiming for gold, the purpose to which all of life’s other activities contribute.

Third is “significance,” which refers to life’s value or worthwhileness, wherein factors past, present or future generate a life that “matters.” In one sense, significance is different from the other two because it can depend upon other things in life creating meaning for us. If I can do my work with enjoyment, then life feels significant and thus meaningful. It’s what people refer to as having extrinsic rather than intrinsic value. And yet “significance” can refer to life having value as such – it just is worth living because ‘life is life.’

One piece of literature that has a lot to say about meaning, without the modern phraseology, is the ancient biblical book of Ecclesiastes. The main figure of the book, who calls himself “The Teacher”, conducts a research experiment into the world, trying to account for all areas of life and his attempts to live well within it. He specifically queries what kind of “gain” people get from their toil: “What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” (Eccl 1:3). This “gain” refers to an extra edge or surplus from one’s efforts in life.

The Teacher investigates “wisdom” itself (1:17) as the key by which people might live well and achieve this extra gain in life, and he notoriously finds himself quite disappointed. In the end, there are ways to pleasure, ways to success, and some sense of satisfaction... sometimes... but none of these things are under our control. On top of that, so much of what he observes in the world doesn’t make much sense – it doesn’t square with how he, and we, think life ought to work. The word he uses to describe this discovery is *hebel*, which is often translated “vanity” or “meaningless.”

In Ecclesiastes 8:14, The Teacher says: “There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.” This is exactly what psychologists are referring to as “coherence.” In this case, life is incoherent and thus meaningless, because life isn’t fair. The wicked are reaping the rewards of righteousness, while the righteous are facing the troubles that only the wicked deserve.



This incoherence is the main type of meaninglessness that The Teacher observes in his world. Life simply isn't reliable, especially our efforts to control it, and it often simply doesn't make sense. In terms of significance – is life worth living? – The Teacher prefers life over death (9:4-6) and yet he admits that for anyone who must labour with no joy, then living can feel very worthless (6:1-6). So there's some intrinsic value to life, which would seem to fit with the broader biblical perspective on the topic, but certain extrinsic factors can threaten that sense of meaning. To have great possessions without the ability to enjoy them is a “grievous evil” that weighs heavily upon humankind (6:1-2).

The Teacher gets most hopeful when he deals with life's meaning from the perspective of purpose.

“Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.” (Eccl 8:12-13)

Life might be incoherent and dissatisfying, but God's plan and long-term solutions are reliable fixtures to hang onto. The Teacher has been called a “determinist” because of his emphasis on God's providence and fixed involvement with human life. There is certainly some truth to that. For The Teacher, God is behind the curtain of life, like the Wizard of Oz, and we humans don't see the entire plan. We have one, tiny segment of a very large painting. By expressing confidence in God's larger activities, Ecclesiastes points to meaning in a world that so often seems meaningless.

Most especially, when life is ‘but a breath’ that's so soon taken away, that bigger picture only becomes clearer in the light of Jesus Christ, centuries after The Teacher pens his words of despair. For him, as an ancient Israelite, it boils down to this: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.” (12:13). All may not look well, and in fact there may be no indication that life is working right or feeling good, but God has his eye on the whole and, in the end, those who fear and trust him can have security - and a real hope that ‘all will be well,’ in the light of the resurrection of Jesus which points to the real hope of ‘life beyond life.’ ■



SIMPLE THINGS

‘Simply Serve with SAO’ was one of the long standing catch-phrases of Australian advertising. If the simple things in life are often the best, surely there’s no simpler snack than this long serving dietary staple. Rosalie Strother investigates...

Along with Tim Tams and lamingtons, SAO biscuits are up there among the most iconic Australian snacks. Still made by Arnott’s after almost 120 years, and now labelled SAO Crackers, they make a great base for a savoury topping like cheese or sliced tomato; they also form the base for a vanilla slice recipe as made by Scots’ Church member Dennis Conradi - a favourite when he brings a batch to our after-service refreshments!

The name of the biscuit, SAO, has its own story with a number of variations. The most enduring of these is that SAO comes from the initials for ‘Salvation Army Officer’, in particular Colonel Arthur Arnott, a son of the founder of Arnott’s Biscuits, William Arnott. A less favoured version is that SAO was taken from the name of a clipper sailing ship, the Sao Paulo, that sailed into Newcastle Harbour. Whatever the origin of the name SAO, it’s certain that Arthur devoted his life to Christian service through his work with the Salvation Army.

Arthur’s father William Arnott, together with his brother David, arrived from Scotland in 1848, and began work as bakers and pastry cooks near Maitland. In 1894 William purchased a factory in Sydney, launching Arnott’s Biscuits with the signature ‘Rosella’ on its packaging, and an iconic Australian industry. Active in the Wesleyan Church, William was a committed Christian, no doubt influencing the young Arthur. One evening in 1893 Arthur dined with a Salvation Army friend and went on with him to an Open Air meeting in Sydney, and it was there that Arthur made a decision to follow Jesus.

Never one to do things by half measure, the following day he went to Salvation Army headquarters in Sydney where he purchased a full uniform and wore it to his place of business as manager of his father's biscuit factory. He declared his newfound faith to his employees and, over time, started Bible studies and prayer meetings with his workers. Over the next few years Arthur continued at the factory, then decided to work only for the Salvation Army, entering training in Victoria in 1898. He eventually rose to become a Colonel, working tirelessly for 33 years in a number of roles.

Back to the biscuit story – the 'SAO Biscuit' trademark was registered in 1904 and the brand was introduced two years later, which is well timed to fit with honouring Arthur in this very special way, as he began to make his mark as a Salvation Army Officer. William Arnott continued his involvement in the Wesleyan Church, generously supporting it and becoming well known for his philanthropy.

Arthur rose to the position of secretary to the Army's dynamic leader, Commandant Herbert Booth, where he was given responsibility for fundraising. His philosophy around this was based on good theological common sense. He was reported to say: "Christ bids us to feed the hungry and clothe the naked; it cannot be done without money. He bids us go to all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; it needs money to do this. Therefore, raising money is an essential part of the work of the kingdom." He had many skills that he used to the glory of God. He had a great love of music, and was one of the leading Salvation Army composers of his day. His concern for the care of children saw him work tirelessly to raise funds for the support of children's homes.

Arthur and his wife lived in Thornbury, Melbourne in their later years, where he remained active in seeking souls for God's kingdom, often going to local dance halls to give a brief message and invitation. He died in 1941, survived by his wife and two daughters. When news of his death was received at the local dance hall, dancers stood for two minutes' silence – a wonderful tribute to the man of such faith.

A final word for SAO biscuits, still going strong after almost 120 years! We're delighted that Dennis Conradi has agreed to share his recipe for vanilla slice, enjoyed by the Scots' Church family on so many occasions. Here it is! ■



SAO Custard Slice

Dennis Conradi

Ingredients:

600ml cream
one packet vanilla instant pudding
one tin condensed milk,
SAO biscuits

Method:

Line the base of a slice tin with the biscuits. Mix together the above ingredients gently.
Place on top of the biscuits and then place biscuits on top of mixture. Ice with lemon icing and leave to set in refrigerator overnight.



COUNTER CULTURE CHARACTER

Loving our enemies opens up possibility of healing, says Michael Jensen. But it's deeply counter cultural...

Watching ABC TV's gripping series *Nemesis*, I was struck by the power of bitterness and resentment. They are emotions we rarely discuss (or even admit to) but can have a decades-long hold over us.

That's why the epithet 'Shakespearean' has been fairly applied to the series. Otherwise noble and gifted leaders with high-minded aspirations become small in their bitterness.

Petty feelings and score-settling degrade a life once dedicated to public service.

It's tragic in the classic sense: the great are reduced by their character flaws. We witness our ex-Prime Ministers ruing what might have been, had the knives not been sharpened and the fatal blows delivered. And although these sour emotions are played out in the grand theatre of federal and international politics, who can deny that these feelings are familiar?

When someone, by fair means or foul, gets in the way of our dreams and aspirations, is it not natural for us to take it in a deeply personal way?

I know it in myself. I'm always tempted to think of myself as the hero in my own life's tale. When I discover that I cannot fulfil what I think is my destiny, simply because someone else prevents me, then I feel cheated.

But where's that feeling supposed to go? If it is not a matter in which I can seek legal redress, then what do I do with it? I can feel (and see in others) how bitterness is parasitic on my happiness and wellbeing. When I imagine the sum of the days of my life, I would hate it said 'he was good at holding a grudge or he spent years nursing bitter feelings'.

Nursing: that's a telling word.

There's something weird about how we can almost cultivate our bitterness as if it is precious to us. We feed it. We can't let it go, because the bitter feelings in some way validate our sense that we've been unjustly treated.

Revenge is the classic temptation here - and clearly more available in politics than in other walks of life. Are we to plot for our enemy to receive the same humiliation we've received? Or do we just pray that fortune, or karma, will do our work for us? Do we imagine the wonderful day when they receive their comeuppance and rejoice when they do?

One of Clive James' most wonderful poems was 'The Book of my Enemy has been Remandered', which runs:

**The book of my enemy has been remaindered
And I am pleased...**

James admits here to the perversity of enjoying another's downfall, catching himself as it were in the act of Schadenfreude - which literally means 'damage joy'.

But in hoping or plotting for this, we are allowing the person who has slighted us to take up valuable real estate in our heads. We will find ourselves, perhaps over years, warped by the maligned presence of our resentment.

As Francis Bacon once wrote: "He who studies revenge, keeps his wounds green."

I do not want my wounds to be green. I want them to heal.

An alternative is Christ's most profound and difficult teaching: love your enemies.

I have to say that this runs counter to everything in my nature. It appears naïve counsel. Or worse, it could be interpreted as "let the bullies win".

It is most certainly not that. The truth needs to be told; human beings should never neglect the demands of justice. To love an enemy truly will mean speaking the truth to them.

But it does mean acting contrary to our resentments and from a different motivation entirely. In loving our enemies, we humanise them and ourselves. And we open up the possibility of healing.

Wouldn't it be great if we could see this in our former political leaders? ■

Rev Dr Michael Jensen is the Rector of St Mark's Anglican Church, at Darling Point in Sydney. Reprinted from Daily Telegraph, 15 February 2024 with the author's permission.

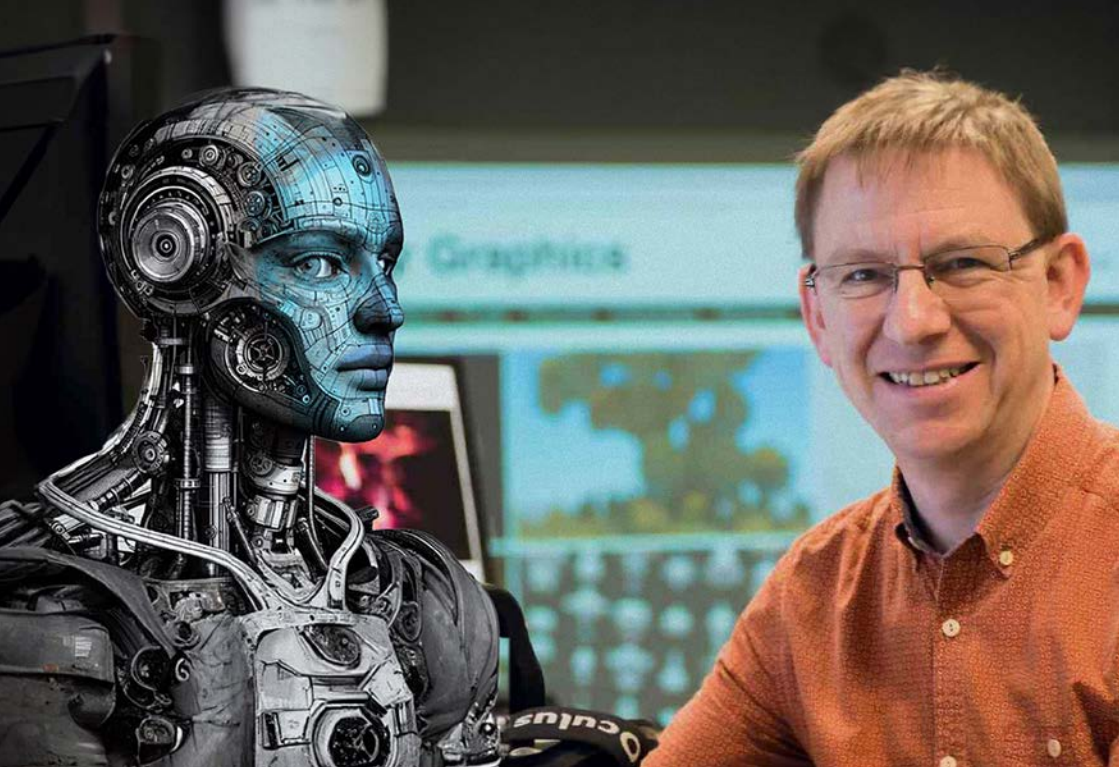


For better or worse, artificial intelligence (AI) is here to stay, so how can the church speak to it? Aziza Green speaks to Professor Neil Dodgson, who has spent 30 years working across mathematics, engineering and computing, on his thoughts on the intersection of faith and AI.

AI has captivated our attention, from digital optimists or idealists trumpeting all the ways that ChatGPT can streamline our workflow to doomsday prophets proclaiming that the end of civilization is near. Dodgson professes a more balanced view of AI, technology in general and the future of humanity.

“I’ve got the experience of spending 30 years in the church and spending 30 years working with computers; I can look at that intersection of technology and faith. There seems to be rather few of us who can do this,” says Dodgson.

Dodgson notes that “AI’s been going on for around 70 years now and it’s never really impacted on Christian faith and ethics until the last year. Suddenly there are these systems that are doing things that we thought only a human being could do.” The public didn’t seem to be fazed back when AI was beating humans at chess and then at the game Go. “We got AI speech recognition working about 15-20 years ago. Now we’ve got things like ChatGPT writing beautiful prose – things society didn’t think computers could do – and that’s raised in the public’s perception,” he says.



About 15 years ago, there was a breakthrough in deep learning. This is a method in AI that teaches computers to process data in ways inspired by the human brain. “When you set this kind of machine up, it doesn’t know anything. Then you throw your input in one end and you know what output it’s supposed to get out the other. You can train systems that work as well as human beings in a specific task – in some cases better than human beings,” says Dodgson.

All the AI research has culminated in the release of ChatGPT in late 2022. ChatGPT can write a decent poem or a piece of prose, but what it doesn’t know is what is true. “It can write the most beautiful nonsense. A colleague had a cohort of students last year where 20 per cent of the essays that were handed in for an assignment were beautifully written but just rubbish,” says Dodgson. The actual information in the essays was nonsense. “We’re learning how to use this tool that can write beautifully because it knows how to string one word after another, but knows nothing about the world,” he says.

One of the great uses of AI is in skin cancer detection. “We have databases of millions of spots that doctors have taken photos of that are either benign or cancerous. AI trained on these databases can look at far more pictures of spots than a human doctor can,” shares Dodgson. This AI has rapidly improved, and in 2023 the latest software reached a 100% detection rate for melanoma. This is a great example of AI used for the betterment of humankind. “The combination of that with a human specialist can be a much more powerful thing,” says Dodgson.



Of course, there are the downsides of AI and technology: loss of jobs, troubling deepfakes, manipulative algorithms and the distortion of perception of beauty standards are just some of the concerns we face.

“These are places where we get into the ethics of this and where we get into ‘what can the church say,’” says Dodgson. “The church has quite a lot to say about the value of a human being. You are valued because you are a human being. The church can be a real champion for human beings,” he says.

Dodgson notes that the Baby Boomer generation started leaving the church, hanging on to the morality but abandoning the foundation of that morality. What we have now, he goes on, is a generation of young people who are asking why they should follow their parents’ and grandparents’ morality, when there’s no foundation for this. “The church then can speak into that saying, ‘we have a really good foundation for our morality,’” says Dodgson

“When you come to the questions of ethics from a point of view that human beings are intrinsically valuable, then you have a basis on which to say these things are good, these things are bad. So that’s where I think that the church can speak,” he says. Dodgson notes that the Vatican has a group looking at the ethics of AI and thinks “they have a lot of kudos in saying ‘we know how to talk about ethics and morality’”

According to Dodgson the church also provides a model for moving forward with wisdom and understanding as a community. “The churches I’ve been in, in the Protestant tradition, have bible study groups. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we will interpret what we’re reading collectively. We move forward as a community,” shares Dodgson. He goes on to say “the church doesn’t just say individual human beings are valuable in and of themselves. It says the community is valuable.”



Dodgson emphasises that “the community is what ensures that nobody goes off the rails, that everybody is looked after, that everything’s okay. We need to underscore the importance of being part of a community, being part of a group of Christian believers that you trust.”

“I’m concerned about if you train an advanced AI, which is a mind in a box, it’s a very different thing to a human being who’s been brought up in community. We could find ourselves with these very intelligent computer systems that we don’t understand, they don’t think in the way human beings do,” says Dodgson.

“The church has a very big history of knee-jerk reactions to anything new.”

After thinking about technology and theology for decades, Dodgson encourages the Church and Christians not to hasten to condemn all new technology as bad.

“The church has a very big history of knee-jerk reactions to anything new,” says Dodgson. He suggests that we might start by thinking about these tools as neutral, which can be used for good or bad. “Let’s talk about the good uses and let’s talk about the ethics of the bad uses,” he says.

Social media, for example, can negatively impact young people, but it also allows people to make and maintain connections with loved ones. Technology enables us to read the Bible on our phones, with multiple translations, to watch sermons online and listen to teaching podcasts to build our faith and enrich our lives. Dodgson asks what it might look like if the church looked at technology and asked, ‘What can we do with this’, rather than simply damning any new innovation. ■

Prof. Neil Dodgson is a speaker at the ISCAST event, AI x Christianity: Gospel Wisdom for an AI World at Scots' - more information at scotschurch.com. He is a professor in the Faculty of Engineering and Dean of Graduate Research at Victoria University of Wellington. Before this, he spent 27 years at the University of Cambridge working across mathematics, engineering and computing, all of which are crucial in the rise of AI.

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WORD SEARCH

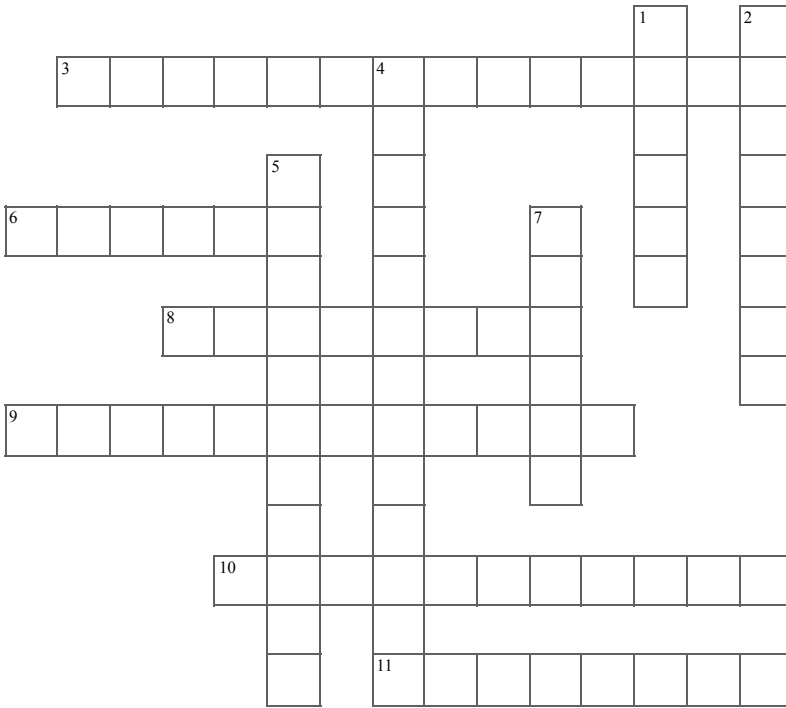
Wise words from Matthew chapters 26 and 27 and more

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.

Answers on page 43.

The words to find

ANOINTED	MESSIAH
BETHANY	PASSOVER
BETRAY	PETER
CENTURION	PILATE
CRUCIFY	PRAYER
DENIAL	SPIRIT
JUDAS	TRUST
KING	



CROSSWORD

Wise words from Matthew 26 and 27 and more

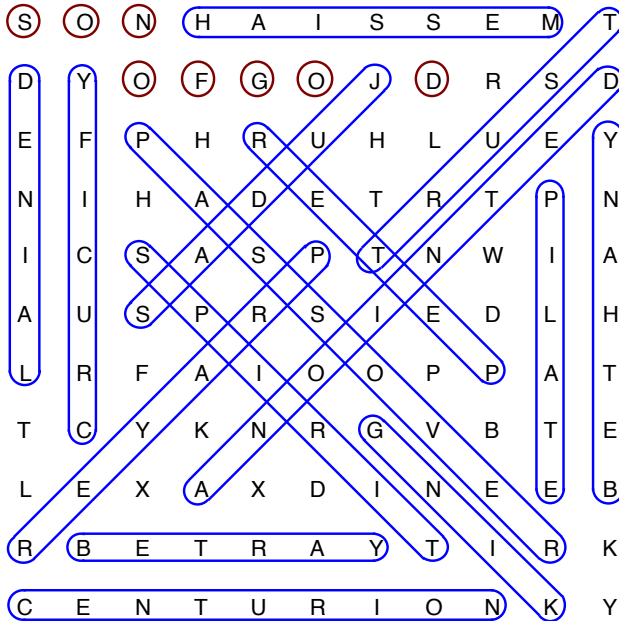
Across

3. Featured in the film 'One Life', Nicholas Winton worked to save _____ . (2 words)
6. When Jesus was in Bethany, a woman anointed him with perfume in preparation for what?
8. What feast were the disciples celebrating with Jesus at the Last Supper?
9. What did Peter do after he denied Jesus three times? (2 words)
10. Why did Judas take 30 pieces of silver from the chief priests? (2 words)
11. After Jesus died, those guarding him said: "Surely he was the _____." (3 words)

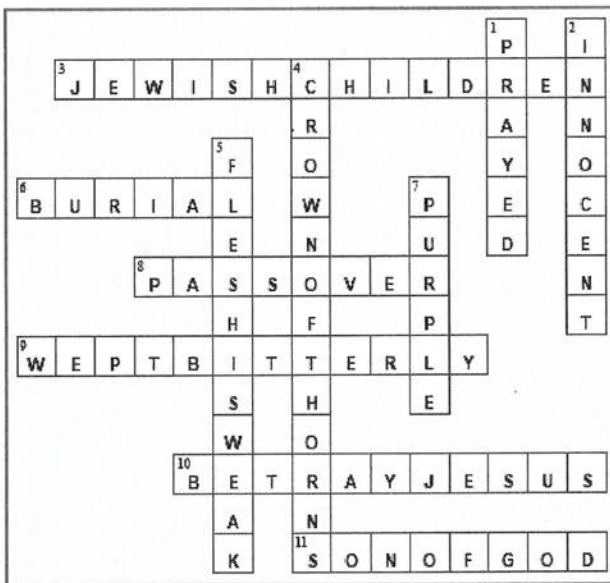
Down

1. What did Jesus do in the Garden of Gethsemane?
2. When Pilate washed his hands, with the crowd calling for Jesus' crucifixion, he said: "I am _____ of this man's blood."
4. Jesus was mocked with a robe and a _____ (3 words).
5. Jesus said of the disciples: "The spirit is willing, but the _____." (3 words)
7. What colour symbolised royalty in the ancient world?

Solution on page 43.



The hidden message: SON OF GOD



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