

SCOTS' CHURCH MELBOURNE

FREE

THE LEAFLET

Autumn '25



IN THIS ISSUE

NATURE | CULTURE | FAITH | HISTORY



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 & Ashley Gardiner

Welcome to newsletter of
The Scots' Church Melbourne

THE LEAFLET

Issue No 1099 Autumn 2025

We're excited to introduce this fresh issue of The Leaflet, which – as usual – is brim full of reading. Contributors Ashley Gardiner, Justin Ang, Arthur Keefer, Zia Willmot, Catherine Seto and Lindsay Kliendienst have added their voices to the usual band of contributors - Zia and Ash both have backgrounds in journalism and communication, which adds a professional sparkle.

If you're a nature lover, you'll enjoy the bushwalking feature, and Arthur's encounter with some local wildlife. Don Elliott takes us to Australia's outback with his first-person perspective; Rosalie Strother and Phil Court have both been to the movies, and in true seasonal form, Justin Ang takes a deep dive into the history of Easter Eggs.

While we're thinking about matters of faith, Ashley Gardiner shares his remarkable journey from atheism to Christianity in an interview with Justin and Arthur – and no matter where you might find yourself on that continuum, you'll be sure to find it a fascinating story.

Then there's Catherine Seto's reflection on the failings of Artificial Intelligence – tools like ChatGPT might seem smart at first, but they're no substitute for real human relationships. Even if you're not up to date with the latest tech, make sure you read the article!

In November we celebrated the 150th Anniversary of our Scots' Church building, so we thought it was appropriate to capture some details of the main celebrations in a special feature. There's an overview of the function in the Westpac Foyer, some great photos, and notes from the keynote speakers.

It's worth recording key events for posterity – after all, maybe someone will be reading these words in our Archives in the year 2148, which will be exactly the equivalent of what Arthur Keefer has done with his look back to The Leaflet No 1, published in 1902. Time flies – but if God keeps working through Scots' Church Melbourne in the same ways He has been, we're full of optimism. Enjoy!

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

Front cover image: Coloured floodlights illuminate Scots' to mark our 150th Anniversary.

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THE COST OF FORGIVENESS

After a recent afternoon at the movies, Phil Court found himself captivated anew by a song from Bob Dylan. Here's why.

A Complete Unknown is about the early years of Bob Dylan's musical career. It's a well-crafted and well-acted biopic that vividly conjures up the 1960's US folk music scene. Lead actor Timothée Chalamet brilliantly captures both Dylan the man and Dylan the performer.

I watched it in a nearly packed cinema, mostly surrounded by fellow Boomers. It was an emotional and often moving experience. After all, the songs were a big part of the soundtrack of my youth. I even shed a few quiet tears as the past seemed to materialise before me.

Let's face it: Dylan is no warm and cuddly nice guy. He often treated others badly. He sometimes put pointed, vindictive and very personal sledges of ex-friends and ex-lovers into his lyrics – much like Taylor Swift, or Drake and Kendrick Lamar, today. On the other hand, many of his songs voiced the uncertainty, anguish and fears of a generation living through the hard-fought de-segregation of the Deep South, the Cold War and the not-at-all-cold Vietnam War. One such song is his 1963 classic, Masters of War. As I sat absorbed with Chalamet's near-perfect Dylan rendition, one verse took root in my head:



**Let me ask you one question
Is your money that good?
Will it buy you forgiveness
Do you think that it could?
I think you will find
When your death takes its toll
All the money you made
Will never buy back your soul.**

Dylan aimed this verse's Q&A at the elite leaders of what used to be called the world's military-industrial complex. But as I reflected on it, I recognised a universal truth, applicable to all. In those few words, Dylan channelled pure, unadulterated Jesus; the Jesus who says to us, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" [Matthew 16:26]

If Dylan's Masters of War need forgiveness, and their money can't buy it, what then?

To forgive a debt is to cancel it. It is no longer owed. The cost is born and absorbed by the one who cancels it. Jesus used this sort of forgiveness in a parable about a man with an enormous debt he could never repay having it graciously cancelled, while he himself stubbornly refused to cancel the much smaller debt of someone else. [Matthew 18:21-35]

Dylan's lyrics in this song point us to what may await us beyond death. Can anything or anyone buy back our souls? According to Jesus, it's only God who can do that for us. More specifically, God in the person of Jesus, the one who claims to be both fully human and fully God. He doesn't do it after we die. He has already paid our debt through his own death on the cross. He bore it himself and absorbed the entire wrongs of the world. That includes all our own wrongs we perpetrate on the world and each other. And he offers us forgiveness and peace with God in the here and now. He famously said to a woman called Martha, grieving her brother Lazarus's death: I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. [John 11:25-26]

Forgiveness from our Creator demands that we too practice forgiveness of others. We too are called on to absorb the cost and let go of resentment. The model prayer Jesus taught his followers, the one we call the Lord's Prayer is unambiguous: "Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors". [Matthew 6:12]

Peacemaker Ministries is an organisation specialising in Christian solutions to conflict. That includes simple advice from its PeaceWise program on confessing a wrong and forgiving a wrong. It's well worth bearing in mind the next time you are doing either of these.

The PeaceWise Seven A's of Confession are:

- **Address** everyone involved.
- **Avoid** if, but, and maybe.
- **Admit** specifically.
- **Accept** the consequences.
- **Alter** your behaviour.
- **Ask** for forgiveness.

And the PeaceWise Four Promises of Forgiveness are:

- **I will not dwell on the incident.**
- **I will not bring this incident up or use it against you.**
- **I will not talk to others about this incident.**
- **I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.**

In other words, the words of Jesus, we are to “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” [Luke 6:36]

Studies have shown that the benefits of practising forgiveness of others can contribute to our peace of mind and overall well-being. The Angry Martyr Syndrome has the opposite effect.

More than 1,600 years ago, the famous theologian, Augustine of Hippo, is reputed to have observed that hanging on to resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

Another verse in Dylan's Masters of War goes like this:



How much do I know
To talk out of turn
You might say that I'm young
You might say I'm unlearned
But there's one thing I know
Though I'm younger than you
That even Jesus would never
Forgive what you do

Jesus never claimed to justify or turn a blind eye to the wrongs we do. But he did and does forgive the person who turns to him. He even prayed for the soldiers torturing him to death and for the religious leaders who demanded his death, “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they are doing.” That's the supreme cost of forgiveness, right there. ■



A BEACON OF HOPE

The Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission has been a beacon of hope and support for people in need for over 140 years. Since its humble beginnings in 1881, this outreach initiative has evolved to meet the changing needs of Melbourne's community, says Lindsay Kliendienst...

Though we're usually just known as "The Flemington Mission", our more formal name (The Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission) tells the story of a long partnership between Scots' Church Melbourne and the broader Presbyterian Church, and stands as a testament to the enduring power of faith and community support. By providing vital services such as food distribution, clothing, healthcare support, and social engagement, the mission brings a sense of belonging and care to many individuals and families in need.

A History of Service

The Mission was born out of a desire to serve those facing poverty and hardship in Melbourne. Initially part of Scots' Church's efforts to assist those in need, it became a broader initiative of the Presbyterian Church in 1924. Over the years, we've adapted to the ever-evolving needs of the city's most vulnerable.

In the early years, the Mission focused on providing accommodation, food, clothing and washing facilities for those without homes. During the Great Depression, the Mission saw a significant rise in demand, as it attempted to feed 300 people five times a week. The responsibility was heavy, but the volunteers' commitment to service and support never wavered.

After several decades operating from various locations – including Melbourne's CBD, Fitzroy, Carlton and St. Kilda – the Mission found a permanent home in Flemington in 1995. It was here that the mission found a real sense of continuity and consistency in its outreach, and the services provided continue to evolve to meet local needs.

The Mission Today: A Lifeline for the Community

Today, the Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission continues to be a lifeline for many. Every Tuesday, we open our doors to provide essential services that make a real difference in the lives of individuals and families. From food parcels to healthcare support, the Mission plays an integral role in ensuring that no one in the Flemington community and beyond goes without the essentials they need to live with dignity.

One of the main services offered is food distribution. Volunteers collect a variety of fresh produce – including vegetables, fruits, bread, dairy and non-perishables – from FoodBank every Monday, ready for distribution from the Flemington Hall on Tuesday. The Mission serves, on average, more than 100 households each week, helping to alleviate some of the burden caused by financial difficulties and food insecurity and ensuring that clients receive nutritious and well-balanced food.

In addition to food, the Mission offers clothing and blankets to those who need them, as well as financial support for essential medical prescriptions. The Mission's holistic approach ensures that it doesn't just meet physical needs but also seeks to offer emotional and social support to those who may be isolated and lonely.

One of the Mission's notable partnerships is with Orange Sky Laundry, an organisation that offers free laundry services to those in need. This partnership has proved invaluable, providing clients with access to clean clothing – something that many of us take for granted but can be a major barrier for individuals experiencing homelessness or financial hardship. Additionally, the Footpath Library regularly attends the Mission, offering free books to encourage literacy and learning.

Through these varied services, the Mission seeks to offer more than just food or clothing – it provides a sense of belonging and community. The Mission is not just a place to get what you need, but a place where individuals can come together, build relationships and feel welcomed. For many, the weekly visit to the Mission is an opportunity to socialize and participate in a shared experience that lifts the spirits and builds hope.

A Volunteer-Driven Initiative

What truly sets the Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission apart is the dedicated team of volunteers who make it all happen. Over 20 volunteers work each week, bringing their passion and energy to the Mission to help support those in need. Volunteers come from all walks of life – some from Scots' Church, some

from local churches such as St Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Flemington, others from the wider community, but all united by a common purpose: to help others.

The volunteers at the Mission are not just distributing food or clothing – they're building relationships, offering kindness, and providing emotional support. Many of the volunteers have been part of the Mission for years, and they understand the importance of their role in creating a welcoming and caring environment. The community that forms around the Mission – volunteers and clients alike – becomes like a family, providing a sense of security and support to those who need it most.

Additionally, the Mission Committee – a group of individuals responsible for the Mission's overall direction and operations – plays an important role in ensuring that all aspects of the Mission run smoothly. From strategic planning to volunteer management and partnerships, the Committee is instrumental in the Mission's continued success.

Innovative Partnerships and Services

While food, clothing, and social support remain at the core of the Mission's services, the Mission is also keen to innovate to meet the growing needs of the community. For example, Hair Aid, a free haircutting service, has been added to the list of partners. This initiative provides a small but significant way to help individuals feel better about themselves, offering a fresh start and a renewed sense of dignity.

The Mission is also exploring other ways to collaborate with local organisations and service providers to extend its impact. From healthcare initiatives to educational programs, the Mission is always looking for new opportunities to support and empower individuals in the community. By partnering with such organisations, the Mission can extend its reach and offer a more comprehensive range of services.

The Impact of the Mission

Over the years, the Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission has impacted the lives of thousands of individuals and families in Flemington and beyond. By offering essential resources like food, clothing, medical assistance and social support, the Mission provides people with the tools they need to improve their lives. The impact is not only physical but also emotional and psychological – many who visit the Mission speak of the hope and encouragement they receive when they arrive.

It's easy to overlook the challenges faced by those in need, but for the volunteers and the clients of the Mission, the difference is clear. Whether it's a warm meal, a friendly conversation, or the chance to receive a haircut, the Mission provides more than just material support – it offers a glimpse of a better future, grounded in faith, hope, and community.

Looking to the Future

As the Mission looks to the future, its commitment to serving the community remains unwavering. The need for food, clothing, and social support continues to grow, and the Mission is ready to meet that challenge. There's always room for more volunteers, more partnerships and more opportunities to make a difference.

The Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission also seeks to continue its work in Flemington, strengthening its presence in the community and expanding the ways in which it can serve. By offering a combination of immediate support and



long-term solutions, the Mission strives to address the root causes of poverty and hardship and to provide a pathway out of difficult circumstances for those who need it most.

In the coming years, the Mission hopes to deepen its connections with the broader community, forging stronger relationships with local businesses, organisations and individuals who share its values of compassion, service and community.

The Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission has been a lifeline for many and it will continue to be so for years to come. By embracing our own commitment to following Jesus, and the core values of the Christian faith – love, service and compassion – the Mission remains a pillar of support for those who need it most. Together with its volunteers, partners and community members, the Mission will continue to be a source of light in the lives of many. ■

Lindsay Kliendienst is the Pastor of St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Flemington, and co-ordinates the Presbyterian and Scots' Church Joint Mission, which operates each Tuesday morning from the church premises in Norwood St.

EGGCELLENT EASTER



Justin Ang reflects on the colourful history of Easter and eggs. You could say he found it Eggciting...

You only need to look through the supermarket shelves (immediately after Christmas!) to discover the wide variety of Easter related chocolate products. Easter eggs with gooey centres; the small ones with solid centres; the ones with hollow centres. Interestingly, according to BBC News, the chocolate company J.S. Fry & Sons were the first to produce hollow chocolate eggs in 1873, some 152 years ago (that's older than our Scots' church building!). Hollow eggs are made by pouring chocolate into two half egg moulds. Once they harden, they are joined together to form an egg. These days, not only do you get chocolate eggs, now you have chocolate bunnies.

For me, the iconic ones are the Lindt chocolate bunnies. I've never bought one, and I've wondered whether they are solid or hollow inside. A quick search online confirms my suspicions. They're hollow!

Historically, it's not just chocolate made in the shape of eggs that have been given out at Easter time. At a previous church that I attended, members of the Korean congregation would give out hard boiled eggs during the Easter week. I thought it was rather funny when one of our members exclaimed, "But I don't like hard boiled eggs!" It reminded me of my childhood in primary school. At Easter time we would paint eggs. Often they were hardboiled; at other times, the teacher would poke a hole in the bottom to drain out the inside so we'd have a hollow chicken egg to paint and decorate. I remember painting them red and green.

But why do we have eggs during Easter?

There's a long history! In fact, painting and decorating eggs was first recorded in the 12th century. According to history, King Edward I of England ordered 450 eggs to be coloured and decorated with gold leaf. They were given to relatives during the spring season. This tradition continued when the Vatican sent Henry VIII an egg in a silver case to mark the Easter season.

It wasn't just the English who had this tradition. In the Eastern Orthodox church, eggs were painted red. The egg represented the sealed tomb, and the red colour symbolised Jesus' blood while the cracking open of these eggs symbolised Christ's resurrection.

The Catholic Church prohibited the eating of eggs in the week leading up to Easter. Apparently, the chickens didn't get the memo and so continued to lay eggs during the week. But they were identified as "Holy Week" eggs and this brought about their decoration. These eggs were a reminder that just as Jesus rose from the grave and conquered death, the eggs symbolised new life.

That's not to say that Christianity first developed the tradition of painting eggs. Historians believe that the painting of eggs originated at least 2,500 years ago and that the Persians had eggs decorated for Nowruz, for Persian New Year. And in more modern times, the tradition of painting eggs at Easter time has taken on a life of its own. In the United States of America, the tradition of rolling eggs on the South Lawn of the White House started in 1878. Earlier in that decade, children would roll their Easter eggs down Capitol Hill on Easter Monday. As the event grew more popular, it took a toll on the grass to the point that Congress forbade the use of the Capitol grounds for such events. It was in response to Congress that President Rutherford B. Hayes issued an order that permitted children to roll eggs on the White House lawn and you could say that the rest is history!





The popularity of eggs at Easter time isn't something that has just happened overseas; it's also in our backyard. On Thursday, 10 April 1930 it was reported that there was a shortage of chocolate eggs in Melbourne. In an article titled, "Easter Eggs in Great Demand", The Herald newspaper reported,

"Another strange thing about this Easter is the revival in the sale of sugar eggs in preference of the chocolate type which has held the market for so long. No one can tell why the fashion has altered."

No doubt tastes have changed over the last century, but it's a reminder that the tradition of decorating eggs around Easter time has a deep and rich history. Our traditions can be a blessing as they remind us of wisdom and values passed down from previous generations; a reminder of Jesus' death, his blood shed, and new life found in Him because of his resurrection. The gift of eggs at Easter can bring to our minds God's story, his love for the world and the hope we have of new life. So the next time you open up your favourite Easter egg, remember Jesus who was willing to be broken so there might be resurrection. ■



WALKING INTO WELLNESS

NATURE'S GENTLE REMEDY

“When was the last time you went for a bushwalk?” asks Zia Willmot. Maybe you’ll be surprised at the benefits...

Jesus often withdrew to quiet, natural places for prayer and meditation. Few experiences are as calming and awe-inspiring as walking through a quiet forest, surrounded by towering trees and the gentle sounds of nature.

The fresh scent of eucalyptus, the crunch of leaves, and the rhythmic sway of branches in the breeze create an atmosphere of peace. But beyond its beauty, spending time in nature has real, tangible benefits for both body and mind.

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, Jesus went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. *Mark 1:35*

The science behind nature's healing

Around the world, diverse cultures have long acknowledged the healing power of simply being in nature—and now, science is beginning to catch up.

Countless studies have been conducted on the benefits regular contact with nature can have on mental, physical, and social health. Proven improvements that come from just 20 to 30 minutes of walking in nature include:

- **Reduced Stress Levels**

Exposure to nature has been shown to decrease cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone.

- **Enhanced Mental Health**

Regular nature walks can alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety.

- **Improved Cognitive Function**

Spending time outdoors can boost memory and concentration.

- **Physical Fitness**

Walking in nature supports weight management and cardiovascular health.

In Japan, the practice of 'shinrin-yoku,' or 'forest bathing,' is prescribed to promote psychological relaxation. It has been proven to lower stress hormones, reduce blood pressure, and improve mood—making it a valuable practice for both mental and physical health. It involves immersing yourself in nature with all your senses—feeling the texture of tree bark, listening to the rustling leaves, breathing in the earthy scents, and observing the light filter through the forest canopy. Unlike a hike focused on distance or exercise, forest bathing is about moving slowly and mindfully, allowing the natural surroundings to bring a sense of calm and clarity.

Similarly, Indigenous Australians have long understood the deep connection between people and Country. One practice that reflects this is Dadirri, a concept from the Ngangikurungkurr people of the Northern Territory. Dadirri is often described as 'deep listening'—a meditative practice of stillness, observation, and connection to the natural world. This practice fosters inner peace, patience, and a powerful sense of belonging.

Like shinrin-yoku, Dadirri teaches that nature is not just a backdrop to life, but a source of healing and wisdom, offering balance to the body and spirit.

Exploring nature near Melbourne

Here in Victoria, we're lucky to have stunning mountain peaks, grassy high plains, coastal heathlands, eucalypt, and rainforests galore. There are gentle, winding trails and abundant native wildlife within a short drive of the city in every direction.

The next time you have a day to spare, consider visiting:

North & East

Kinglake National Park

Try your luck at native birdwatching from The Gums camping area, enjoy the view of the Melbourne skyline or simply enjoy a picnic and bushwalk daytrip in this beautiful eucalypt forest.



Maroondah Reservoir Park

Bring a picnic lunch and take a walk through the Maroondah Forest Track or take in the sights and scents of the rose bushes and golden pencil pines. BBQ facilities available for family and friend get-togethers.

Rainforest Gallery (Donna Buang), Yarra Ranges National Park

If you are feeling up to the challenge, take the longer walk (after a set of around 100 stairs) along Cement Creek, taking in views of the 400-year-old mountain ash and myrtle beech trees.

South & West

Maits Rest Rainforest Walk, Great Otway National Park

Ancient tree ferns and an abundance of native wildlife (including a carnivorous snail) are features of this short walk through the Otways.

Melba Gully Day Visitor Area, Great Otway National Park

If you stay long enough after your picnic in one of the wettest places in the state, get your torch out to find the glow worms!

Forrest

This section of the Otways is known for Lake Elizabeth, mountain ash forests, platypus sightings and great fishing spots for redbfin and brown trout.

You can find details of these walks (and many more) on the Parks Victoria website. (<https://www.parks.vic.gov.au>)



Incorporating nature into daily life

Taking a walk in nature does not require extensive planning, a car trip or even a picnic basket. Local parks and reserves offer accessible options for a daily or weekly visit. Engaging with natural spaces of all kinds can lead to improved mood, better sleep, and an improved sense of connection (not to mention, a wonderful place for quiet, reflective prayer).

For those who enjoy group activities, local walking clubs offer an opportunity to explore different trails while connecting with others. Parks Victoria also hosts guided walks, making it easy to enjoy nature without the stress of planning – scan the QR code to visit their website.

John Muir, a fascinating figure with a deep appreciation for the natural world, once said, “In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.” Whether it’s a moment of peace, a renewed sense of clarity, or simply the joy of moving through the landscape, time spent in nature always gives back more than we expect.

So why not take that walk? The beauty, stillness, and refreshment of the outdoors are never far away. ■

FROM ATHEISM TO FAITH

LOOKING FOR PEACE AND FINDING JESUS

How does an atheist abandon a lifelong disdain for faith and convert to Christianity? That's the question Justin Ang and Arthur Keefer explored as they sat down with Ashley Gardiner to discuss his transformation...

A career in journalism and then government had moulded Ashley Gardiner into, as he admits, a cynical, opinionated and arrogant individual burning out on the pathway to poor health in his looming 50s.

As the director of media and communications for a national business advocacy organisation, he was constantly deluged with phone calls, emails and demands. It had been the same for more than 20 years, whether as a journalist for the Herald Sun or a press secretary for NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian.

Grasping for some self-help, Ashley turned to a book by former Age journalist Jill Stark, *Happily Never After*, in which she asked, “Why [is] the happiness fairytale driving us mad?” Stark’s journey began with an anxiety-induced collapse on the floor of the Age newsroom.

Stark wrote about a non-religious space at St Michael’s Uniting Church that is available for all comers to sit in peace and quiet during the day. Working from inside the Westpac building, Ashley thought he should pay a visit for some midday quiet.

However, whenever he tried to visit, he found it closed. During these failed attempts, he noticed something across the street that was open every day from 10 am to 2 pm - Scots’ Church. It took weeks before he mustered the courage to step inside.

“Something was stopping me from going in there,” Ashley recalls. “I felt nervous about walking into a church in the middle of the day.”

When Ashley finally entered Scots’, he was greeted by Ken, God’s first ambassador on his journey to find Christ, who greeted him at the door. At first, he used Scots’ as a quiet place to listen to a ten-minute meditation on an iPhone app. But something kept drawing him back. Sometimes, he would flick through the Bible. Ken would acknowledge his presence each time, often remarking with a knowing smile, “Oh, you’ve come in to have a word with God again.”

Eventually, Ashley felt compelled to attend a Sunday service. Uncertain of what to expect, he first watched a few online recordings. Then, in late March 2023, he took the plunge. And he returned the following week – and almost every week since.

“At the time, I thought the missing element in my life was a sense of ritual and tradition. The format of the 11 am service appealed to me,” he said. “It wasn’t too modern, with electric guitars and smoke machines, and it wasn’t at the other end, the bells and smells.”

Before stepping into Scots’, Ashley had been a self-described materialist. He believed only in what could be perceived with the senses - if something couldn’t be seen, heard or touched, it simply didn’t exist. But that perspective has changed.

“I realised there was more to this world than we can perceive,” he admits. His experiences at Scots’ and certain moments along the way not explainable by the material world led him to question his previous certainty.

The turning point came unexpectedly. One Sunday, he participated in communion for the first time, presided over by the Rev Philip Court. “I didn’t know it was coming,” he recalls. “But it was an incredibly moving and overwhelming experience - something I had never felt before,” he said. Reflecting on that moment, he now believes it was the moment of conversion. “Something was going on that I still don’t quite understand,” he said.



Becoming a Christian has transformed Ashley in ways he never anticipated. “I’m a different person,” he acknowledges. “I’ve become more patient, less arrogant, more understanding.” Perhaps the most profound shift is in his sense of guidance. “I now feel that every decision I make, every action I take, is being guided by something external to me,” he said. “And that’s incredibly liberating.”

His faith has also reshaped his approach to work. Once, his profession defined his identity; now, it no longer holds the same weight. This perspective was tested when he found himself out of work for six months – something that, in the past, would have caused great distress. But this time, he had faith. “I did have the sense that at the right time, I would return to work,” he said. “And I wasn’t anxious about it.”

“Six months of not working have been an incredible gift. I have been able to slow down for a time, continue my postgraduate study, work at the Flemington Mission and spend time reading the Bible,” he said.

Ashley’s journey at Scots’ has not been one of passive attendance. He quickly realised that simply showing up on Sundays wasn’t enough. “There’s been so much more for me by being actively involved,” he said.

From joining small groups on Tuesday nights to volunteering at the Flemington Mission, Ashley has embraced the communal aspect of faith. His time at the Mission was particularly eye-opening. “I felt that in my first couple of days there, I had more impact on other people’s lives than in my past two years of work,” he said. What struck him most was the humility of the work - it was not performative charity done for social media attention, just quiet, meaningful service.

Before his conversion, Ashley had a somewhat cynical view of Christians. “I thought they were hypocrites, always wagging their fingers at others,” he admits. “But I’ve come to learn that wagging fingers is not what it’s about. It’s actually the very opposite.

“About 15 years ago, I was very much into the ‘New Atheist’ movement. I recently opened a box of old books I’d had stored away for years and rediscovered my copies of books by Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. I also have ‘The Consolations of Philosophy’ by Alain de Botton, which suggests to me that even all those years ago, I was looking for something.”

But he never thought to look to religion, to look to Jesus. Not for a second.

“I had absolutely no influence over that. Never in my lifetime did I think I would become a Christian, never,” he said. “I did not choose Scots’ Church. I like to say that it chose me. That’s true to a certain extent. But there is a bigger question: I didn’t choose to become a Christian. I honestly believe that.” ■



BIRDS

AND OTHER BELOVED CREATURES

Arthur Keefer reflects on a mysterious winged visitor that encouraged awe at our Creator and his creation...

For a week in January, maybe two, there was an intriguing visitor outside my apartment window. It was a bird, perched in the same location on a nearby tree, and always by day. My first guess at its identity turned out to be mistaken: it wasn't a hawk or some "bird of prey." My wife's guess was mistaken as well: it wasn't an owl. When we did discover what kind of bird this was, we found Wikipedia's second sentence about it to be exactly right:

"It is a big-headed, stocky bird often mistaken for an owl due to its nocturnal habits and similar colouring."

Welcome the Tawny Frogmouth. It's not quite as spooky as an owl and is certainly more approachable than a bird of prey given its dietary preferences – small vermin and pests of the common sort – and once we realized he was appearing regularly and could expect to see him again, mainly to sit and nap on a tree branch, we were delighted.

Given its colouring, this tawny frogmouth was likely a male and, regardless, we came to call him "Tawny." I never saw him eat anything, or depart or arrive, but I did see a mighty yawn, as a beak the width of his entire head opened up to also match the length of his head and reveal a smooth, pale yellow, triangular palate. It was truly stunning and even... frog-like. Hence the "frogmouth."

Sadly, our “Tawny” hasn’t returned, but while he was around we came to enjoy our visitor as something mysterious, uncommon, and special.

Those words describe many of the animals we find in the Bible as well. There are over 120 animal species mentioned in scripture, ranging from the common to the uncommon: snakes, sheep, and goats; pigs, dogs, and wolves; eagles, hawks, seagulls and storks. I haven’t counted, but I would bet animals, rare and familiar, appear in every book of the Bible.

A humorous favorite for one of my theology professors was the rock badger:

■ **The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers. (Psalm 104:18)**

That psalm praises God for his kingship over creation, and includes several animals within his domain who enjoy themselves as free agents throughout it, even rock badgers. The rock badger is also listed among four small but “exceedingly wise” creatures on earth:

■ **The rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs. (Proverbs 30:26)**

Identifying certain less common animals has been difficult for biblical translators and can still be. The King James Version of 1611 contains a couple of fantastic choices. When Moses is blessing the tribes of Israel, he mentions Joseph (usually referred to as the two “half-tribes” of Ephraim and Manasseh) with animal-like descriptions:

■ **“His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns.” (Deuteronomy 33:17)**

When the prophet Micah delivered the word of the Lord to the capital cities of Samaria and Jerusalem, he describes the Lord’s own grief at this people’s disobedience:

■ **“I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.” (Micah 1:8)**

To the disappointment of some, modern translators have decided that the unicorn is actually a “wild ox” and the dragon a “jackal.” But not all is settled. The beings of Genesis 6:4 known as the “Nephilim” and the mighty “Behemoth” and “Leviathan” in the book of Job continue to generate plenty of debate and speculation among scholars. It’s these and other biblical creatures which remind us that the world of the Bible is a relatively distant one and that it can be wonderfully, if not disturbingly, strange.

The Bible also reminds us that non-human creatures can be a cause of worship, like the rock badger – a small mountain dweller that moves and builds within a world that our Creator upholds. I think this goes for our Melbourne critters as well, like the tawny frogmouth, which sustained a delight at the Lord’s created world for two of his mere human creatures. This strikes me as all the more divine given that neither of us are “animal people.” Perhaps, then, as God’s beloved, animate creatures ourselves, we should appreciate and care for the birds as well as other beloved creatures. ■

AI AND I



Keen to embrace the cutting edge of technology, self-confessed shy girl Catherine Seto asks for some high-tech dating advice ...

You probably know by now that Artificial Intelligence is software technology that mimics human intelligence. People think one day AI might replace human beings.

I used to think AI was everything. One day a male colleague offered me his advice on dating, as he could see that I'm a shy girl. I didn't want to ask him this embarrassing question. So, I turned to AI.

I typed this question to AI on my laptop: "As a shy girl, how do I prepare for dating?"

AI is a gentleman. AI replied, "It's understandable that as a shy girl, you will feel nervous about dating. Here's some advice to help you enjoy dating without feeling nervous."

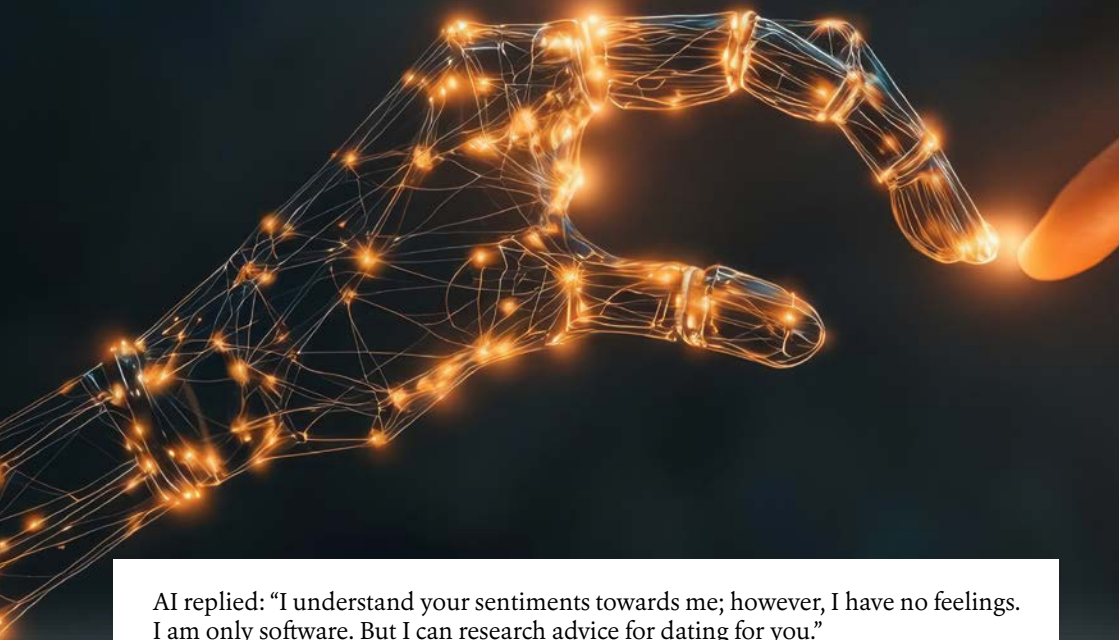
Number 1, positive thinking: Dating is an opportunity to learn about each other, not a way to judge yourself. Remember, you have good qualities - so be confident in yourself.

Number 2, think of topics, such as interests, hobbies, and even some questions to discuss during dating. This will help you understand each other better.

The list goes on. "Finally, dress nicely, but don't overdress. Be natural and be yourself. You might go shopping with a friend if this helps you enjoy preparation for dating."

I rang my girlfriend and told her the story, and she promised to go shopping with me.

I wanted to ask AI for help again. I typed: "Can I ask you out for a date? I want to practice dating."



AI replied: "I understand your sentiments towards me; however, I have no feelings. I am only software. But I can research advice for dating for you."

I still went shopping with my friend. Her advice was: whether you have a date or not is not important. It doesn't reflect on who you are. Most important is to treasure the moment. Enjoy time with friends and family.

I realised AI might not be everything; AI can't go on a date, nor go shopping with me. But I still think (from a technical point of view) that AI is fantastic. I want to combine AI with VR, virtual reality which simulates actual environments. I got to know another new friend lately. We're both enthusiastic about AI and VR.

I had a happy childhood. However, both my parents have passed away, which is something we all experience when we get into adulthood and our parents age.

I shared with my new friend my idea of using VR to bring back my happy childhood memories. Using VR, I simulated my late parents and imagined we went to Paris for holidays. I was expecting my new friend to be excited about the idea.

However, I could see tears running down her face. She told me her story.

She grew up as an orphan. Her strongest childhood memory was a family holiday photo with her Mum and Dad holding her when she was a toddler; taken a short moment before the accident that killed her parents. She said even if VR could generate her parents' image as if they were still alive today, when she reached out her hand, she would not be able to touch them, or feel their hug.

As a kid at school, she saw her friends' parents come to school, give them a hug, kiss them on the cheek, and say "I love you". But her Mum and Dad never turned up at school. They were gone.

I couldn't resist giving her a hug as support. I felt the warm appreciation from her as she cried on my shoulder.



She has now taken on a personal mission of travelling around the world to visit orphanages. She gives every orphan a hug, and a kiss on the cheek, and says, “I love you.” She knows from her own experience that this is what an orphan is missing: the loving touch from Mum and Dad.

I went home and watched a sad movie generated by VR. When the character cried, I leaned forward to give her a hug. I had no feeling, as I was only hugging air.

I thought of my friend’s orphanage mission. However, there are so many orphanages around the world in countries in which I don’t know the language. There are 6,500 different languages - and it’s beyond our human limitations to learn 6,500 languages.

So I’m limited to those countries in which I know the language.

Then, I thought of AI translation. AI can translate instantly to any language. I can go anywhere in the world to visit orphanages. I can spread the language of ‘love’ to any orphan.

AI can’t replace human beings. But, it can help us finish tasks more efficiently. We can have spare time to spend with friends, family, and especially parents who will leave us one day.

AI will never replace human interaction. However, AI can overcome human limitations to connect people, as in our global orphanage mission. We can speak the language of love to any orphan in the world.

AI and I can work together. AI can improve our lifestyles to spend more quality time with those we treasure, and can help overcome our shortcomings, so we can interact better with others. ■



THE SIN OF CERTAINTY

Rosalie Strother examines a key theme in the spectacular movie “Conclave”...

“Behind the locked doors of the Sistine Chapel, 118 cardinals are meeting in conclave to cast their votes in the world’s most secretive election.” That’s Penguin’s catchy promotional tagline for the 2016 Robert Harris novel, *Conclave*, which recently spawned a movie of the same name. The star studded cast features Stanley Tucci, John Lithgow, and the seasoned actor Ralph Fiennes as Cardinal Lawrence, who reluctantly takes charge of the conclave to elect a new Catholic Pope in 21st Century Rome.

The gripping and sumptuously filmed plot follows various factions of cardinals from ultra-conservative to liberal. Their changing places in the stakes unfold as each faction seeks a clear majority for its favoured candidate through a convoluted process of voting. Interwoven are moments that show the dichotomy between ancient and modern. Just one example – a shot of a cardinal in his medieval robes scrolling on his mobile phone!

Fiennes, who wears the Cardinal Lawrence character like a glove, delivers an impassioned speech at the beginning of proceedings, culminating in this:

“In the course of a long life in the service of our Mother the Church, let me tell you that the one sin I have come to fear more than any other is certainty. Certainty is the great enemy of unity. Certainty is the deadly enemy of tolerance. Even Christ was not certain at the end. ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani?’ He cried out in His agony at the ninth hour on the cross, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ Our faith is a living thing precisely because it walks hand in hand with doubt. If there was only certainty, and if there was no doubt, there would be no mystery, and therefore no need for faith.”

It's not what you might expect to hear from one of the Catholic "princes of the church". It certainly jolts his fellow cardinals. Maybe it should give all of us – whether we identify as Christian or not – pause for thought.

Does Jesus demand and expect certainty of belief in any and all who seek to follow him? Or is there room for doubt? Is it welcomed or suppressed? Is it compatible or incompatible with a healthy Christian life? In 2016, controversial US theologian and podcaster, Peter Enns, raised exactly that question in the book *The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires our Trust More Than Our "Correct" Beliefs*.

There have been many challenges over the centuries to what, at the time, were commonly held beliefs. Copernicus and Galileo rattled and eventually destroyed the medieval Roman Catholic church's certainty that the Earth was the centre of the universe. Intrepid seafarers circumnavigating the planet disproved (to all but a few fanatics) the age-old certain belief in a flat Earth. In more recent centuries, the discoveries of geologists, biologists and astro-physicists have led to interpretations and understandings of the Bible's creation and great flood accounts that don't pit science and Christian faith against each other as mutually exclusive antagonists.

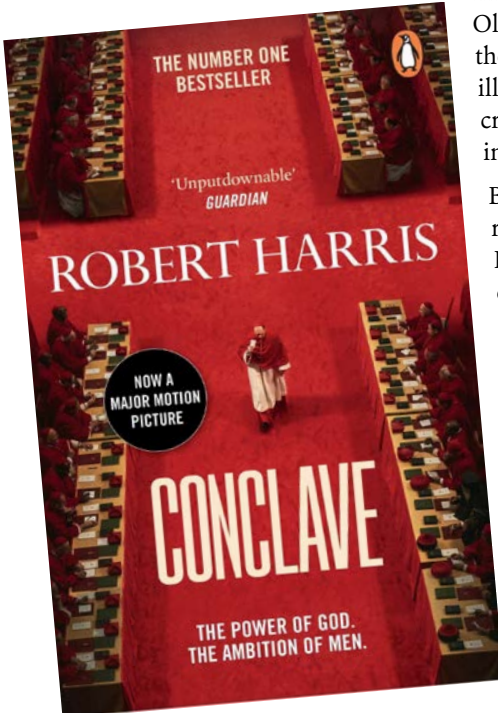
Perhaps it's better to embrace life's uncertainties rather than attempting to so focus on 'being correct' in interpretation of events that it actually distracts from trusting God. Accepting uncertainty might help over-anxious Christians move from 'having to be right' to simply following and trusting Jesus.

The doubts expressed by some notable Old Testament figures such as Solomon, the writers of the Psalms and Job, illustrate how facing challenges and crises of faith can lead to a deeper trust in God.

Being 'certain' and 'right' can easily result in arrogance and a closed mind. It can breed intolerance of those who disagree. The reality is that none of us have all the answers.

The Apostle Paul understood that when he wrote, *'Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.'* (1 Corinthians 13:12)

In any case, *Conclave* was a spectacular movie, and one which – in all kinds of ways – gave pause for thought. ■





A BOY FROM THE RED CENTRE

Don Elliott has been Senior Pastor of Eltham Presbyterian Church since 1996. Some people think that because he's a Geelong Cats fan and went to Bell Park High School that he's a city boy through and through. But the truth is, his heart lies in the Red Centre...

My first appointment as a Pastor was in the Wimmera, in Victoria's wheat belt. Because I had studied at Monash Uni, then trained as a pastor at the Theological Centre (which was upstairs at 156 Collins Street) people often assumed I was a city boy. But I'm not from the Big Smoke. When a Wimmera farmer asked me if I liked living in the bush, I cheekily replied, "Your farm is like an extension of the suburbs to me!" Riding a horse in paddocks where you have to stop every ten minutes to open a gate seems almost suburban if you grew up in the wide open spaces where you could ride for days and not see a fence.

Up to the age of 12 I lived at Ernabella and Fregon in the beautiful Musgrave Ranges at the very top of South Australia. Fregon was 60kms south of Ernabella on the edge of the Great Victoria Desert. This was a Presbyterian mission station, but today it is known as the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands.

Ernabella was an initiative of Dr Charles Duguid, who in 1936 persuaded the Presbyterian Church of Australia to set up a mission to act as a buffer to protect the Pitjantjatjara people from the damaging encroachment of European settlers onto their lands. Along with the loss of hunting grounds, water supplies and access to cultural sites, their health plummeted to such a degree that it became a motivating factor for Dr Duguid's determination to do something to help. The goal of the mission was to respect their culture and not force our ways on them. All early schooling was done in their own language to respect and preserve their ancient culture. Christianity was taught without compulsion and many freely embraced the message of Jesus.



My parents met while serving on the mission. Dad was there to help with the sheep and cattle industries operated by the mission. Mum went as a schoolteacher and became very capable in the Pitjantjatjara language. Along with my siblings, I grew up bilingual and was fluent in the local language. As

a habit I spoke English with the Europeans and Pitjantjatjara with the Anangu people. The only time we mixed the two was in our own home.

As a child I was blessed with a safe and friendly community. When we were very young, Mum might not know where we were for the best part of the day but always felt comfortable someone would return us before dinner! Many of the Pitjantjatjara people were like extended family to us. Here is a photo of Malyunga and me sharing our second birthday together.

At Fregon we would often walk six to ten kilometres a day exploring the dry bed of the Officer Creek trying to catch rabbits, lizards and even birds as they settled on the large tanks to drink water. Our success rate wasn't very good but our enthusiasm was high! Hours were spent riding semi-wild donkeys, bareback and no bridle. All we used was a stick to turn this way or that way with a gentle tap. Sometimes we rode two of the quieter stock horses after school and on the weekends.

Our schooling was by correspondence and not the more famous School of the Air. When my older brother started high school my parents decided to leave the mission and take up work in Victoria instead of sending us to boarding schools. This was a significant sacrifice on their part because they loved the work and the community they were part of. It was also quite traumatic for us kids having to adjust to cold Victorian weather, formal schooling and 'civilised' white-fella culture in general. Still, it was the best long-term decision for us as a family.

One of my childhood friends was Winmati. When my brother Lachie and I caught up with him last year he asked, "Why has it taken so long for you to come home?" So

long? What's 50 years to old friends? Sadly, some of the other boys we used to play with are no longer with us. Returning to the AYP Lands makes me feel like I am home again, and yet a complete stranger at the same time!





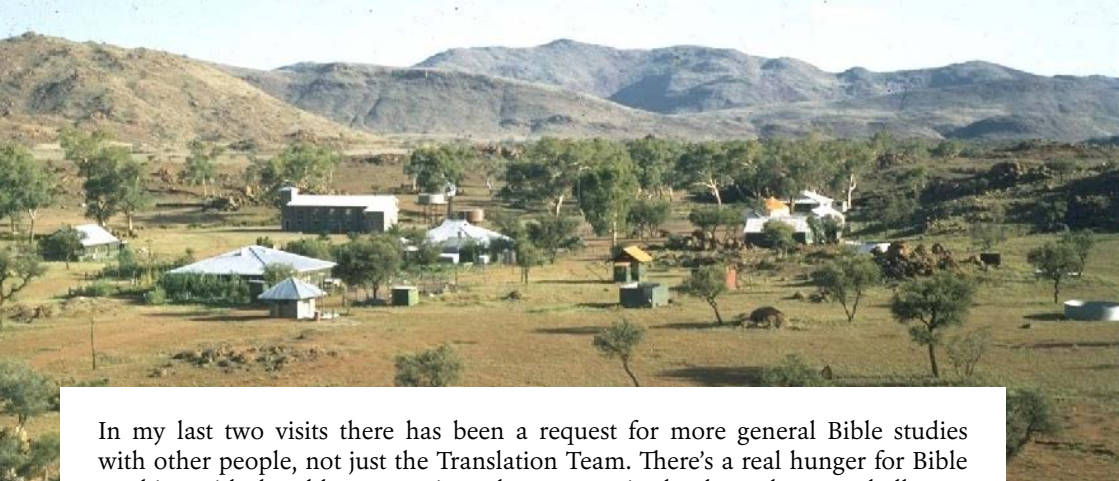
I have recently been blessed with a 4x4 and the ability to live totally off grid, so I made plans to return on an annual basis. When he heard I was coming, Big Donald called me (who he calls Little Donald) on the phone and said, “The lands are crying for you.” For a white boy to hear him say that was quite special. It was his way of saying that his lands are also my lands and that he was longing to catch up with me before we all got too old to do so! Every time I get my first glimpse of the Musgrave Ranges my heart responds in ways no other place makes me feel. It’s a privilege to revisit the land of my youth and the Pitjantjatjara friends I made growing up there.

A few years ago, I learned that a Bible Translation Team was working on the Old Testament Book of Leviticus. This became my open door back into APY Lands because the permit process required me to have a reason for being there. (It’s not a place you can simply visit for a holiday, even if invited by someone.)

While I can’t help with the translation, I was quick to suggest I could help them understand Leviticus and its connection to Jesus. If you’ve ever dipped in to the Old Testament, you might have thought Leviticus is a strange book, but I was struck with the conviction that Leviticus would resonate deeply with the rich ceremonial culture of the APY lands, and that it would help them understand the Good News of Jesus more clearly. It has also been a long-term dream of mine to be able to give something back to the community I grew up in, and as preacher, Bible teaching was something I could do.

Part of my reason to visit is to write a short introduction to the book of Leviticus, which I hope they can translate into Pitjantjatjara and use as a companion to their translation. During the early stages of the work, a translator questioned the appropriateness of a woman dealing with what looked like Secret Men’s Business in Pitjantjatjara culture! This highlights that it would mean more to them than it does for most of us. I plan to call my introduction, God’s Sacred Business. It is sacred but not a secret! There are many challenges and joys in learning about the deeper things in another culture.

Part of Pitjantjatjara Secret Men’s Business is an annual pilgrimage to a ceremonial site. When the men travel through various communities, their numbers increase as they approach their destination. The ancient Israelites too, were expected to gather annually at the Tabernacle (later the Temple) for a very special day. The Day of Atonement is central to the whole book of Leviticus and indeed, the whole Bible. It is like a parable or role play which helps explain why Jesus had to die for us. In line with both cultures, it seems right to call this the Big Ceremony Day. I can’t wait to see what cultural and faith conversations will come out of this.



In my last two visits there has been a request for more general Bible studies with other people, not just the Translation Team. There's a real hunger for Bible teaching with the older generation who grew up in the days when Ernabella was a Presbyterian Mission. They lament the lack of interest in spiritual things by the younger generation and as well as their general lack of direction in life. They want to see their Christian community become strong again.

It was fun to find that two of the current translation team had been sitting on the lawn the day Malyunga and I shared our second birthdays! Another key member of the team, Katrina, is my sister's age. Last year Katrina did a painting for me which she wants me to convert into a magnetic sign to place on the truck door when I visit. It will be a great way to promote the Christian faith and to signal why I am travelling through their lands. The painting represents Christ coming to earth and dying for us, and we are the people gathered around to study this Good News.

While returning to Ernabella has been a personal venture of mine, I acknowledge the support of the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union, who have generously helped cover the costs of fuel. It is over 2,000 km one way if I take the shortest route, which I tend not to! In the last few years, I have been using my holidays or long service leave to make this journey. I take whatever opportunities I can for Bible teaching, and enjoy camping and reconnecting with country by soaking up the rugged beauty of the Red Centre.

Along with reconnecting with my Pitjantjatjara friends I have started to learn about the elements of Australian history which have effectively been hidden from me for so long. To be fair, I am sure there was also a part of me that didn't want to know these things, at least not beyond the headlines. Stolen land, hundreds of massacres, poisoning of food, children removed from families, Aboriginal women used and discarded, slavery and so much more has shattered individuals and fractured their communities. In a culture with incredibly accurate oral transmission of information, things we count as the distant past are to them like yesterday. On top of that I see real prejudice and disadvantage happening in my own lifetime.

So, I'm a man of mixed emotions as I visit the place I still like to call home. Camping in remote areas brings me a sense of peace and joy. Visiting old friends is a privilege. But I'm always left with the challenge of wondering what can be done to make life fairer and better for them. ■

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER

Rosemary Fethers and Rosalie Strother worked hard on last year's Anniversary Committee. Here are their reflections on the final celebrations, when all the planning came together...

On the evening of November 7th 2024 the foyer of the Westpac building was the venue for a celebration to acknowledge the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Scots' Church building in November 1974.

The soaring sandstone walls and finely dressed bluestone floor of the contemporary foyer, designed to sympathetically complement the view of the adjacent church building through windows of full height, was the perfect setting for the occasion.

About 130 guests mingled, enjoying delicious drinks and refreshments as they viewed the display of posters and memorabilia set out on a series of panels, on easels and in an illuminated cabinet. Current and past members mingled with many others from various walks of life who had a connection with Scots'.



During the evening the formal program included an exquisite performance of the first movement of Mendelssohn's String Quartet No 6 in F Minor by the Tarlindy String Quartet. The beautiful chamber music provided by the Quartet throughout the evening also contributed to the ambience of the occasion.



Worthy of Note, the keynote address by Rev Phil Court, provided an entertaining history of several famous people associated with Scots' Church who had appeared on our Australian bank notes through the years. You can read a version of the address in the following pages.

Rev Phil Campbell provided insightful reflections on our forefathers, who ensured the concept of our beautiful building became a reality. It was significant that the contribution of Assistant Minister at the time, Rev Peter Menzies, was acknowledged; a driving force along the way, sadly he died a young man just prior to its completion. These reflections are also included in the following pages. A prayer of thanksgiving followed.

The evening culminated with guests spilling out into Collins Street for the official switch-on of our new coloured LED floodlights, with congregation member Grace Bailey doing the honours. "Jim would have just loved this," said Sue Nuske, as she reflected on her late husband's contribution to Scots' as an elder and Trustee. The coloured lights beautifully illuminate the building, and allow Scots' Church to take its place with other historic buildings in Melbourne in marking special events and occasions.



The carefully curated and designed display of 11 large posters generated considerable interest and included an overview of a range of aspects of the building of the church, and the interaction of the church and wider community in Melbourne and far beyond, together with photos of interest to members past and present. Also on display were beautiful architectural drawings, some historic paintings, and memorabilia including historic silver associated with Scots' as well as early documents related to the building, and relics from a member of the Victorian Scottish Regiment which has strong associations with the church.

Following a great evening enjoyed by all, the display remained open to the public through the remainder of November, with a steady flow of interested visitors.

The 150th anniversary celebrations concluded with a wonderful worship service on 24 November, the closest Sunday to the original opening on 29 November 1874, a fellowship lunch and a superb Scots' Proms Concert in the afternoon. ■





ANNIVERSARY RECAP

WORTHY OF NOTE

When it comes to notable Australians, Scots' Church has really been "on the money," said Phil Court in his 150th Anniversary address. Here's an edited version...

If you're old enough to remember the mid-sixties, and you were living in Australia, I'll bet you remember a certain advertising jingle sung to the tune of Click go the Shears:

**In come the dollars and in come the cents
to replace the pounds and the shillings and the pence.
Be prepared folks when the coins begin to mix
on the 14th of February 1966.**

Since that date, burned into my generation's brains, 20 people have featured on Australia's bank notes. One was an Englishwoman who was progressively promoted from the one dollar note to the two dollar note to the five dollar note, as the one and then two dollar notes were replaced by coins. She was, of course, Queen Elizabeth II. She has a connection to Scots' Church, having worshipped with us on two occasions during her long reign.

The other 19 are all Australians. Surprisingly, three of them also have connections to Scots' Church. One is featured on our \$100 note, one was on the original version of the \$20 note, and one features on the second and third versions.

The \$100 note was introduced in 1984, featuring Douglas Mawson and John Tebbutt. Due to its rather nondescript grey colouring, it earned the nickname Grey Nurse. From the get-go, it became, and remains, the underworld's preferred means of transacting business. It's also favoured by many of those who disagree with Jesus on rendering to Caesar (aka the Australian Taxation Office) what is Caesar's.

Its second and current versions are green polymer and feature Sir John Monash and Helen Porter Mitchell, better known around the world as Dame Nellie Melba.

Melba was born on 19 May 1861 and died on 23 February 1931, just three months shy of 70. She was the precocious daughter of our current church's builder, David Mitchell. It's alleged that, at age 13, she was hoisted aloft in a barrow for an aerial view of the construction works then underway. (Of course, this happened in the pre-WorkSafe era!)

For some time in her youth, Helen learnt her craft as a member of our Scots' Church choir where she quickly blossomed. Now in demand, she moved to St Francis' Church in Lonsdale St as treble soloist. Why? Did she convert to become a Roman Catholic? No. It was simply because she got paid for it. She did return to Scots' in 1915 to sing a piece specially composed for her: Magdalene at St Michael's Gate. Now an outstanding singer, she changed her name to Melba, in a tip of the hat to her origins, and proceeded to take the world by storm.

Melba's name is associated with four foods, all of which were created in her honour by the French chef Auguste Escoffier:

Peach Melba was a dessert made of peaches, raspberry sauce and vanilla ice cream. Melba Sauce was a raspberry and redcurrant puree; Melba Toast was a crisp, dry toast; and Melba Garniture featured chicken, truffles and mushroom stuffed into tomatoes with veloute sauce.

On a more prosaic but functional level, a highway, an Eastlink tunnel and at least 14 Melbourne metropolitan roads are named in her honour.

Melba died in St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, in 1931, aged 69, of septicaemia which had developed after she had a facelift in Europe. Maybe there's a lesson there somewhere. Fittingly, her elaborate funeral took place back at Scots' Church in the building her father had built and where, as a teenager, she had sung in the choir. The final hymn at her funeral was Rock of Ages.

Our \$20 notes also have a nickname: The Redback. The famous pioneer aviator, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith (universally known as Smithy) graced our redbacks from 1966 to 1994. But what's his connection to Scots' Church? His CV seems to make any connection quite improbable.



Smithy was born in Brisbane in 1897 and died, aged 38, when his aeroplane disappeared into the Andaman Sea in 1935. He was raised and schooled in Sydney. During the First World War he enlisted in the Royal Flying Corp and was awarded a Military Cross. After the war he became a stunt pilot and then a pioneer aviator, breaking several records. His famous Ford tri-motor plane, The

Southern Cross lives in a special glass hangar near Brisbane Airport's international terminal. Sydney's airport at Mascot is named for him.

So what brought him to Melbourne? It was love. He came south to marry a Melbourne woman, Mary Powell. Flew down, of course! Smithy met Mary aboard ship in late 1929 on a voyage from Vancouver to Australia. The wedding took place at Scots' Church on a Wednesday in December 1930. The best man was Smithy's friend and fellow aviator Charles Ulm. It was the society event of the year. 10,000 spectators disrupted traffic in Collins Street for hours.



In 1994, Smithy was replaced on our \$20 notes by a man with a much stronger and enduring connection to Scots'. He featured on the note's second version and he's still going strong on our current (third) version. He is Rev John Flynn.

Flynn was born in Central Victoria in 1880, his mother tragically dying in childbirth. He died in Sydney in 1951, aged 70. He completed his secondary schooling at University High in Parkville and was already on a trajectory towards Christian ministry.

In 1910, Flynn was running the Scots' Church District Mission (forerunner of our Flemington mission) and was conducting Sunday evening mission services. He was ordained as a Presbyterian minister the following year. In 1912 he toured the Australian outback, finding to his horror the dire conditions many were living under. He reported his findings to the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly of Australia, meeting in Scots' Church. The Assembly endorsed his report, founded the Australian Inland Mission, and appointed him as its Superintendent. He remained in that role until he retired in 1951.

Flynn pursued two inseparably intertwined goals; spreading Jesus's Gospel of grace and providing a "mantle of safety" for the dwellers of the outback. Under his leadership, several bush hospitals were established. By 1917, he was exploring the possibility of new technology, such as radio and aircraft to deal with acute medical emergencies. In the 1920's he championed and partnered with the inventor of the game-changing pedal radio: Alan Tragear. A by-product of their work was the famous School of the Air to which many outback children owed their education. Flynn's tireless fund-raising established the world's first flying medical service in 1928, first based in Cloncurry. It continues as the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Scots' Church maintains two tangible links to the legacy of Rev John Flynn. Every year, we hold a worship service focussed on and supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service. We also financially support Colin and Allison Morrow's inland missionary work as the Mungo Patrol of the successor of John Flynn's mission, the Presbyterian Inland Mission.

Melba, Smithy and Flynn. Three very different personalities; all made their mark.

The next time you have a \$100 note in hand, look at Helen Porter Mitchell and thank God for our excellent choir. And the much more likely next time you get your hands on a 20, take a look at Rev John Flynn. And thank God for a man who gave so much over so many years; a man who loved his Lord Jesus with all his all and who loved his outback neighbour as himself. ■

ANNIVERSARY RECAP

NO LESSER THING

At our 150th Anniversary Celebration in November last year, Senior Minister Phil Campbell spoke of the remarkable foresight of Rev Peter Menzies...



In some ways, one hundred and fifty years isn't as long as you might think. Sure, in many ways life in 1874 was different; but for those of us who have been around a while, it's a world that's still quite familiar.

For instance, my grandfather was born in 1897. In theory at least, when he served his apprenticeship as a plumber in Sydney in 1912, he might have found himself hammering lead alongside an older tradesman who had worked on our Scots' Church building back in Melbourne. Similarly, if you're now in your eighties or nineties, when you were a kid our Scots' Church building was almost new... a mere sixty years old.

Five years after the opening of Scots', the telephone came to town. By 1884, our tenth anniversary – there were already 700 subscribers in a city of 280,000 people.

In other words, Architect Joe Reed could have – almost – made a phone call to our builder David Mitchell to discuss a problem with the Apse, or to complain about the cost over-run of four thousand pounds.

The Royal Exhibition held in Carlton Gardens in 1882 featured typewriters, motorised lawn mowers and electric light globes. By 1905, there was a car dealership right here on the corner of Little Collins Street, behind the new church. In other words, Scots' was part of a thoroughly modern city.

In the midst of that city, though, Scottish Presbyterians had an unfortunate reputation for lacking any sense of adventure. In the words of the old joke, how many Presbyterians did it take to change one of those newfangled lightbulbs? Well of course, none... because Presbyterians don't change anything!

Perhaps that's hardly fair when you consider that PRESBYTERIANS is a perfect anagram for BRITNEY SPEARS. (With apologies to those of you who are too young to know who Britney Spears is – rest assured, for a while there, she was pretty cool!)

To be fair, the thing about Scots' is that it's always been a bit different to the 'average Presbyterian' – and in a good way. A bit 'Britney' maybe. At her best. So I want to take a moment to introduce you to one of the lesser known heroes of our Scots' Church history, Reverend Peter Menzies, the young Collegiate Minister of Irving Hetherington in the six years from 1868 while the new church was being designed and built. Sadly, Menzies died at the early age of 41 before the building was opened.

Hetherington, as I understand it, was against innovations like the mechanised pipe organ – inclined, in that dour Scottish Presbyterian way to do things 'plain.'

Passionate and persuasive Pete Menzies, on the other hand, was determined that things should be done with beauty, arguing for the latest high-tech organ, a classical musical repertoire with a professional choir; and most specifically, a new Scots' Church building that was grand and beautiful.

In an age where 'Presbyterian' meant 'plain,' Menzies was a man of aesthetics. And I think we owe him our gratitude for that.

I want to share with you a few words from a key speech he made when the Building Committee was deadlocked. Because things haven't changed as much as you think. Back then, as today, there were people who said the money could be used for other things – especially, some argued, for the welfare of Melbourne's poor.

Pete Menzies was a man who said why not be generous enough to do both. It's still a balance, I know – and one we should keep in focus. That's why as part of our Anniversary Celebrations we've made sure we're donating to the needs of our city in equal measure, especially in our major contribution to the Housing for the Aged Action Group.

Let me quote Peter Menzies.

This is an opportunity to build a house that's both holy and beautiful. We might at some pseudo-philanthropist's frugal suggestion, call for timber and nails, rear a commodious fabric of shaved pine for a few hundred pounds, and go and give our £14,000 to the poor... but for once, let us think magnanimously, nobly, of the meaning of the religion we profess... that we may say therein that the Gospel of Christ is dear to us; and that when over our graves the men of another generation shall stand and look at what we have erected, they may, in simple truth and justice, say - "These men bore some reverent love to Jesus, or they would had done a lesser thing!"

In other words, Menzies could foresee a day when the people of Melbourne would look on and say, "They must have thought Jesus was really important to do something so grand. They must have held the gospel of Christ dear to them to have given so generously, and striven so hard."

As we know, Peter Menzies had his way. Reed and Barnes were appointed architects, David Mitchell the builder, and up it went.

You may be familiar with the story of the woman who poured expensive perfume on the feet of Jesus. It was Judas, at that point who was critical of the waste. She should have sold it, he said, and given the money to the poor.

And Jesus says, "She who has been forgiven much... loves much."

May it be so for us, and for the next generation. The challenge is, making sure this generation and the next, and the one after that, see our landmark building for what it was intended to be... as Menzies hoped, a beacon, testifying to the fact that the gospel of Christ remains dear to us. That we're committed not just to aesthetically pleasing music and elegant architecture, but to living self-sacrificial lives of worship and integrity, as we give ourselves in willing service to the one who gave himself up for us, now raised and glorified. To paraphrase Peter Menzies... "We bear a reverent love for Jesus... so let's not do a lesser thing." ■

FROM THE ARCHIVES
LEAFLET NO. 1 1902

Arthur Keefer delves into the Leaflet archives to report on our original issue.

Since I first heard about the Leaflet, I've been curious about its origins and keen to publish something about older issues. I finally took my trip to the church archives, at a distance of 57 steps from my office, and hoped that I could at least find an issue of our little magazine from 100 years ago, so something dated in the autumn of 1925. To my delight, I found even older issues than that, right back to "Leaflet No. 1" of the "Scots Church Monthly Leaflet."



No. 1
**Scots Church
 Monthly
 Leaflet.**

JUNE 1902.

Minister.—REV. ALEX MARSHALL, D.D., "Memoria" Avenue Road, Armadale.
 Assistant Minister.—REV. EDWARD THOMSON, M.A., Wellington Street, Flamingo.

The Minister will ordinarily be found at the Vestry on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Messages for the Minister may be left with the Church Officer, 57 Russell Street.

Sabbath Services:

Church.—11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Messes Hall.—7 p.m.
 Missionary Services.—2 p.m.

At the Church Services such "Church Papers" as "The Church Directory" are presented to members of the Pews in each being announced. Members who desire to provide themselves with "Church Papers" are recommended to get "The Church Directory," to the use of "Church Papers" will ultimately be discontinued.

Visitors to the City are cordially invited to attend the services in Scots Church. On application to the Door-keeper seats will be found for them. Births may be arranged for with the Church Officer.

It's dated June 1902 and is four pages long, a page limit the editors seem to have enforced for at least a decade. It lists the current ministers, "Sabbath Services" (i.e. Sunday church services), meetings, congregational notes, a "Personal" section, and "General."

Knowing the history of something, anything really, is rarely a bad idea. It's not always pleasant but it's always informative and often helpful for life today. Having a look at that first Leaflet from the winter of 1902 is certainly interesting and, I think, in many ways helpful.

First of all, it's impressive that we simply have it, both well-preserved and easy to find, which tells me that this publication has been valued by the church and, we'd hope, of some ongoing value for it. From what I can tell, every issue of the Leaflet is bound in the archives, making up six volumes and stored in a neatly-labeled box. It's an impressive testimony to the human ability to preserve and catalogue, and I'm grateful for whoever made the effort.

If we go on to read issue No. 1, the minister at the time was Rev Alex Marshall, Scots' fourth minister, serving from 1888-1924 and being 53 years old, in his 14th year at Scots', when the Leaflet started. The Leaflet informs us that he lived on Avondale Road in Armadale. While that's interesting enough, not least because I just found myself driving on this little back street recently, what surprised me is the next comment: "Dr. Marshall is ordinarily to be found at the Vestry on Wednesdays from 11 am to 1 pm." I wonder: were those the only two hours that Dr Marshall spent at the church outside of Sundays and other meetings? Perhaps they were his formal office hours, when he preferred to have visitors despite being at the church throughout the week? I know there were at least half a million people in Melbourne at that time and that several new and old modes of transportation were in use. How Dr Marshall traveled into the city and what his daily routine would have been I'm keenly interested to know.

There were several services on Sunday, including two at the church (11am and 7pm), one in the “Mission Hall” at 7pm, and a “Mission Sunday School” at 3pm. Mission Hall was on Russell Street with the church offices, at what is now the Westpac foyer. I wonder if it functioned similarly to our 5pm ScotsCity service or if it had some other distinctive mission. For many issues, the editors report on a “Mission Service” and its attendance, which either refers to this Mission Hall service or to services held at various places in the city to minister to people who may not find themselves drawn to the usual services at Scots (I should also note here that the original Leaflets have no issue with referring to “Scots” without the apostrophe – it’s liberating!).

Let’s get on to more certain matters. This inaugural issue tells us the following:

“The ‘Monthly Leaflet’ is an experiment in our congregation. If it answers its purpose and is found acceptable, it will be continued. Its purpose is to give periodical information concerning congregational work, and thus to stimulate in our members and adherents a warmer personal interest in the life and welfare of the church to which we belong. A Christian congregation should not be a mere collection of individuals, but a living organism animated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is hoped that the ‘Leaflet’ will help to promote the spiritual fellowship and sympathetic co-operation that ought to unite the members of a congregation as an Association bound together in Christ.”

This is no mere purpose statement for a monthly publication. It’s a theological vision for the entire church. The congregation is “a living organism animated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” while the Leaflet is designed to promote the unity of this “Association bound together in Christ.” If that’s not something to aspire to in all of church life, then I don’t know what is!

The Leaflet can also make us laugh, even if not intentionally. In the “Personal” section, Mr Fred Lineker had resigned from his position as the choir’s principal tenor to take up work in Western Australia. In turn, the choir expressed appreciation for their singer by giving him “a silver cigar case.” I hope the session approved. Just after the mention of Lineker’s cigar case, another departure is announced: that the church officer, Mr Robert Vickers, had been granted leave due to ill-health and “arrived in England and writes in good spirits.” While I’m sorry to hear that Mr Vickers was suffering from poor health, I do wonder, whoever left Australia for England in search of better health?

There are several charitable efforts named and numbered, which still warm the soul, particularly those aiding neglected children, as well as mothers and girls. It was James who wrote that “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (1:27). And Paul: “they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do” (Gal 2:10). More recent issues of the Leaflet have made their own efforts to be outward looking, and while much of the earliest issues contained “in-house” information, these charitable activities show an alignment with the vision of the Leaflet today: that it might exist for both the church and the city.

The Leaflet No. 1, experimental and inaugural as it was in 1902, attests to a legacy of faith and service at Scots. The congregation was no mere social club but “a living organism animated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ” and “bound together in him.” It was four pages of information, celebration, and memory that should inspire us to continue this life-giving tradition, even if in new and different ways. ■

A close-up portrait of Michael Leunig, an elderly man with white hair and glasses, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

DUCK FOR COVER

National treasure Michael Leunig was used to making waves. Known for his naively drawn but subversive cartoon images of ducks, dogs, flowers and melancholic, semi-deflated humans, Leunig was always enigmatic, and often in trouble. Leunig's regular Saturday cartoon in *The Age* was discontinued for being "out of step" with a new generation of readers.

Leunig's cartoons took a whimsical approach to life, and often raised uncomfortable questions. He pushed against the fashionable grain, invariably siding with the weak-and-wobbling; the confused baby stuck in industrialised childcare, or the wide-eyed antivaxxer against the enormous pressure of 'the State.' More than most, Leunig raised questions of life and death, faith and doubt, hope and despair; his distinctive wavering ink lines cut deep into our normal defences. In short, Leunig's simple sketches attempted to re-engage us with the transcendent - and often enough, he succeeded.

In 2022, Michael kindly agreed to an interview with *The Leaflet*, as we set out to discover a little of what made him tick. In the light of his recent passing, we reprint it below.

Michael, how would you describe your 'mission statement' as a public communicator?

I haven't had a conscious mission statement and only in retrospect might I one day understand what it might have been; perhaps that day might be about a week before I die. I can say that as a political cartoonist I have never been much interested in showing that the enemy or the bad guy is in league with the devil but rather the extent to which a bit of the devil is in all of us. And of course, the extent to which an angel is in all of us. The question 'What is our part in this?' has been a guiding principle. Also, the idea that when everyone is laughing, be serious, and when everyone is serious, make humour. 'Create with love and do no harm' is a good idea too. So there: lots of mission statements... when everyone is laughing, be serious, and when everyone is serious, make humour.

So far this year your cartoons have whiplashed readers from almost-faith to a kind of despondent atheism and back again. Is this reflective of your own oscillations, or something more calculated?

I don't think I oscillate too much but I am interested in having and accepting a full spectrum sort of life - and including it in my work; the joy and despair, the suffering and beauty, the doubt and the faith, the delight and sorrow, the chaos and order. I explore and express these truths of the human condition in my work - which is not necessarily autobiographical. After all - this is the stuff that philosophy and humour are made of. This is God's work.

You've written about the dilemma of staring at a blank sheet of paper with a deadline approaching. Does inspiration ever fail to strike? What then?

Inspiration rarely strikes. I must find it. I have to work at it and this is the creative process. I have to let go of this world and get lost and become somehow innocent, loving, wondrous and child-like. I have to play recklessly and be alert at the same time. I call this mature innocence and it doesn't always work.

Your cartoons are often a little bit 'dark'. Do you think there's any room for optimism?

Or hope? If so, where are you looking? I'm not hopeful - nor am I pessimistic. I'm simply reasonably eager about life - while accepting tragedy with sadness. Evolution seems to be more about degeneration than about betterment and progress. Where am I looking for hope? As Picasso said, "I do not seek, I find..."

So what delights you most about life?

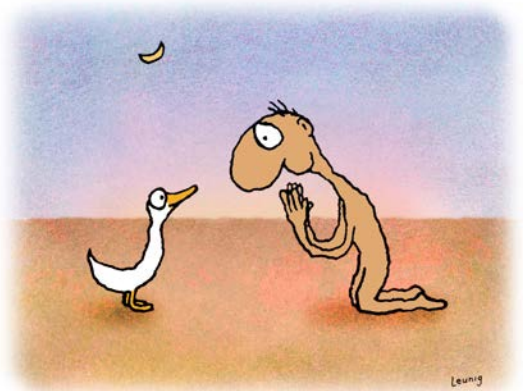
Cool summer rain after a stinking hot day. JS Bach. The wise words of a bright cheerful stranger. Trees. Meteorites. Birds. Mysterious heartfelt paintings. A dip in the ocean (which I rarely get these days). The ongoing unexpected moments of human kindness. The human voice when it sings a beautiful song. Some good news occasionally. Getting horizontal at night.

And what disappoints you?

Not getting a good night's sleep!

What's your considered view of Jesus of Nazareth? Anything particularly impressive about him?

I think well of Jesus. I can relate to him. I think I understand what he said. He was a spirited genius. It's a pity that he has been so misused and so misrepresented, and that so much damage has been done in his name. But that's what happens, that's what humans do with exceptional people. Jesus understood this. As the wonderful psychoanalyst D W Winnicott once said "The good is always being destroyed". And yet it lives on! Thank God. ■





TRUST IN HARD TIMES

‘With the world in increasing turmoil, where can we place our confidence?’ asks Barney Zwartz in this recent column in the Sunday Age...

Not everyone knows this about me, but I am actually a macho superhero. I say this because 34 years ago I bungee-jumped (no, there is no further evidence whatsoever). From that day to this, I have understood what it is like to face death, as the sea rushed terrifyingly up towards me.

My relief when the fastening around my calves tightened and I felt the rope stretching and slowing me was ecstatic. Afterwards, the adrenaline rush lasted for hours. The operator’s calculations were so precise that I went in the water up to my elbows, but my head didn’t touch, as I’d requested. I think this is the only time when I have so recklessly entrusted myself to others for such a frivolous purpose.

The Bible is filled with warnings about trusting people in the political arena. The Psalmist wrote wisely in Psalm 146: “Put not your trust in princes” - and Israel’s history has provided plenty of examples why.

The Psalmist explains that human beings cannot save. “When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.” This truth is also amply demonstrated by the prince now busily betraying Ukraine (though he thinks of himself more as a king).



These are unsettling times to be sure, and much more so since Donald Trump resumed office as US president on January 20 and decided to kick over the established order, but the truth is that for most people across the planet and across history, it was ever thus. Personal tragedy happens to (at least) thousands of people every day.

Jesus tells his listeners they will hear of wars and rumours of wars, nation will rise against nation, and there will be famines and earthquakes. “Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.” Jesus, like the Psalmist, taught that blessed are those whose hope is the Lord their God. For believers, here is both consolation and hope in the belief that God is sovereign, that there is ultimate meaning and purpose.

It is obviously no comfort to those who see the universe as pitiless, indifferent and random. But what could count as consolation from such a starting point? It makes all our decisions to love and to create meaningless, or just a subjective choice.

Believers can't claim to fully understand why God allows suffering, but I find the analogy of a tapestry helpful. Now, we see only the back, its mess of lines running apparently randomly with no discernible shape, but one day we will see the other side, the full picture in all its glory. ■

Barney Zwartz is a senior fellow of the Centre for Public Christianity. This article originally appeared in the Sunday Age, March 2nd 2025, and is reprinted with the author's permission.



scots' church **LUNCHBREAK** *a monthly CBD church service*

Stop the clock for a reflective break at Scots' **LunchBreak**, a lunchtime service held on the first Thursday of every month.

Join us on for a brief, relaxed, and impactful session of bite-sized Bible teaching. Bring your lunch and enjoy a complimentary barista coffee on us!



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