The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

ENGAGE

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Easter Blessings from the ACC&C

Resurrection (triptych detail), natural ochre and pigment on canvas, by Benita Everett

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CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE
WISDOM FOR THE COMMON GOOD

"In truth the journey of the Centre has only just begun. The Centre has a unique and critical role in cultivating hope and trust in challenging times for the people of this ancient country now called Australia"

A Good Deed

On 2 June 1998 Charles Sturt University agreed to collaborate with the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn by Deed of Agreement. The purpose of this collaboration was to establish the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture on the current 7 hectare site on the edge of the Parliamentary Triangle in the National Capital.

Purpose and Mission

The Deed stated that the purpose of the Centre was to:

- 'encourage the study of the history, diversity of expression and cultural impact of Christianity in Australian Society'
- 'be a focus for the development of contemporary Christian liturgical theory and practice'
- 'promote theological research in the Australian context'. This included both classic disciplines of academic theology and also analysis of the public significance of religious symbols and ideas in politics, economics, art, literature, music and dance.
- 'have an inclusive national character'
- 'fostering of inter-faith dialogue and the offering of hospitality to all major religious groups and denominational traditions that are part of Australian society'.

Importantly one of the major themes was stated in the following terms: 'atonement and reconciliation with the indigenous peoples of Australia, the exploration of their spiritual life and history and a constructive engagement with issues related to injustices perpetrated against them'.

Rationale

The commitment of the University to the collaboration 'arises from the inclusion of theology within its academic profile. In the establishment of the Centre, the University is furthering its mission to promote research and teaching. The University also regards its part in the establishment of the Centre as part of its contribution to the life of the Australian community and the expression of Australian culture'.

The commitment of the Diocese to the collaboration was regarded as 'furthering the Christian mission of proclamation, dialogue, teaching, hospitality, study, worship and pastoral care'. With the encouragement of the National Council of Churches of Australia the Centre was to be 'a place of ecumenical dialogue, religious expression and a site for the study and understanding of Australian Christian life.

The Centre, 'will be ecumenical, non-discriminatory and will engage in dialogue with, and offer hospitality to, other religious traditions within the Australian community'.

The Deed also stated that next door neighbours, 'St Mark's National Theological Centre along with the School of Theology, established in collaboration between the University and the Diocese, will be encouraged by the Board to participate in the mission of the Centre through the provision of teaching, research, library facilities and liturgical life'.

A Deed and Vision in Progress

The foregoing identifies some of the key elements in the founding vision of the Centre. 1998 seems a long time ago and in the ensuing two decades much has been achieved through the work and witness of the Centre: programs to reflect the above purpose and mission; development of the site to reflect indigenous and Biblical themes; buildings for celebration, addresses and worship music and art exhibitions; hospitality, education and administration; recognition and preservation of the native grasslands of the Centre and St Marks. In recent years over 4000 people visit the Centre annually from all ages and backgrounds, faiths, cultures and concerns. In truth the journey of the Centre has only just begun. The Centre has a unique and critical role in cultivating hope and trust in challenging times for the people of this ancient country now called Australia.

Feeding the Soul of Australia

The Centre is unique in Australia and the collaboration with a generous secular university is unmatched internationally. A former Vice Chancellor of the University referred to the Centre as a place to feed the soul. Importantly the Centre takes its place within the National Capital as a symbol of the importance of Christian faith and life in the recent history of this country. And at the same time, it cherishes the sacred trust of the First Peoples of this country and is committed to the ongoing work of reconciliation so clearly articulated in the original Deed. The Centre owes its existence to the vision, energy and perseverance of many people in the church, academy and public space. In particular we need to recognize the vision of a number of key people without whom it would never have been possible: the Governor General at the time, Sir William Deane AC, indigenous leader Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC, Bishop Dr George Browning of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, Vice Chancellor of the university in 1998 Professor Cliff Blake AO and the then Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor Ross Chambers AM.

An Easter Deed

As this edition of Engage reaches you we are fast approaching the season of Easter. We are reminded that all good deeds are costly but also have an upside of joy. This has certainly been the case with the Deed that has guided the ACC&C over two decades. The costs and joys of this journey are framed by an even greater story of costly giving of a life and a joyful rising to a new life which is intended as a gift for all.

May the remarkable good deed of God celebrated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus inspire and grace our hearts and minds this Easter tide.

Peace

Stephen

Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard

Executive Director

Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

Wisdom for the common good and the global pandemic

by Rt. Rev'd Dr Sarah McNeil

ACC&C Board member

Early in 2020 the ACC&C Board faced a stark but simple question: what can we offer in this time of uncertainty, anxiety and fear? What should we be doing and how should we be doing it?

Our vision is to be a profoundly inclusive meeting place, the 'go to place' for the interface between Christianity, Australian society, culture and indigenous people. This vision presupposes meeting. In previous years this has happened quite literally: on the site we have hosted conferences, held seminars, staged art exhibitions, run the Spiritus short film prize, and organised workshops and lectures from eminent scholars and practitioners, both international and Australian.

How could we do this when face-to-face events were on indefinite hold and new social questions are facing humanity? Many of our scheduled events were affected by the Covid-19 restrictions and cancelled, postponed or significantly modified.

The Board has continued to meet, albeit via Zoom, throughout the pandemic and has grappled with these questions. The diversity of membership has stood us in good stead as Board members have brought perspectives from senior clergy of several denominations, from politics, journalism, the law, government and academia to the discussion.

It was clear to the Board that the underlying vision and mission of the ACC&C have not changed: our vision of wisdom for the common good is as important as ever and should continue to be expressed through the four pillars of

- encounter and dialogue between Christians and with those of other faiths and no faith
- pursuit of creativity in the arts and sciences
- promotion of institutional resilience and ethical leadership and
- fostering of wisdom in civil society.

The key question then has been how best to deliver this in radically changed circumstances and the Board is immensely grateful to the Centre staff and scholars for the creative ways they have found to continue to offer seminars and other events, both on-line, and as restrictions have eased, face-to-face.

The program for the first few months of 2021 is typical of what has been achieved and highlights the ways in which the Centre is pursuing its mission: a CES Forum on politics, disinformation, social media and truth; Ambassador for the Environment, Jamie Isbister, speaking on 'Climate Action: Australia and the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow 2021'; and an exhibition by well-known artist and iconographer Michael Galovic. In addition, the Centre will host a Quiet Day for the Australian Network of Spiritual Direction and a three day gathering of indigenous leaders.

The pandemic has presented us with both challenge and opportunity. As we continue to grapple with the hard questions it presents, we pray for wisdom, compassion and resilience.

The Creation painting, genesis, mosaic, iconography. Photo supplied from HD wallpaperflare

Thinking ahead in the eternal now, with Easter faith

Bishop Philip Huggins

Centre for Ecumenical Studies, ACC&C and President of the National Council of Churches of Australia (NCCA)

When I first saw this painting, I thought of the symmetry between the Creation, the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection. The symmetry is in the love of God for us all. God creates from nothing this universe of beauty and splendour; comes amongst us as vulnerable as baby Jesus in a manger; lives, dies and rises to show us the Way, the Truth and the Life.

It is all a matter of love. In return, we are invited to be loving of God and of one another. This is our Easter faith. At a local level, individuals and faith communities express it in many different ways maintaining a life together of worship, pastoral care and community engagement. What else can we do to ensure we are in the right Spirit, the Holy Spirit, for current circumstances in the eternal now?

Can I make one suggestion? It comes with a story which gives context for why I think this is utterly crucial. These past days I have been in meetings both in our Federal Parliament and with our Multifaith Advisory Group to the Victorian State Government. Amidst matters like support for Myanmar's democratic future; the provision of vaccines to the vulnerable health workers of our region and climate change policy there has also been such deep concern about gender violence and about racism. How do we become a society without such cruelty - without racism and misogyny? What is the role of faithful disciples of the risen Jesus in our local communities?

Simple as it may sound, it starts with the universal wisdom of attending to what we think about and what we let influence our thinking. This is because our thinking shapes our words and our other actions. The pattern of our thinking, over time, shapes our character and our destiny - individually and corporately. We become what we think. It is estimated that we have some 50,000 thoughts per day! Imagine the change in atmosphere if we only thought and spoke that which is beautiful, kind and true!

Imagine the difference if we practiced 'silence is golden' and did not speak the thought that is on our lips but is actually only divisive gossip or some form of 'us' versus 'them' unkindness? The silence of Jesus before accusers at the trial in Holy Week is so poignant. Likewise, poignant is the story of the woman whom Jesus helps find freedom and a new beginning in John 8:1-11. As that person stands silent and vulnerable, Jesus challenges those full of righteous hostility to re- consider their own condition of being. Silence and then only words of grace...

Finding ways to create new beginnings is Easter faith in action. Redemptive narratives warm our hearts. Reciprocal negativity is so familiar. Imagine the difference if we saw folk we know as if afresh in a new meeting, without preconceptions, especially folk with whom we have had a negative history? That is, seeing folk afresh in a spirit of giving and forgiving rather than trapping them and ourselves in some negative stereotyping, based on the past.

Whilst this negative stereotyping is seen as 'normal' in much of public life, it is utterly unedifying and takes us nowhere new. However, to make a 'new normal' and choose to think only that which is speakable in grace, does take sustained discipline! Hence the place of the Jesus Prayer and other spiritual practice so as to enhance our self - awareness and help us make good, Godly choices. The fact is that we are currently poisoning ourselves and causing much suffering by thoughts and actions that do not respect these essential realities. This will only change when we all clean our minds with the same discipline that we clean our bodies, our homes and our streets.

I cannot overstate how important this matter is to health. For local communities of Easter faith, when there is this healthiness of relationship, then people seeking healing, grace and peace can find a spiritual home.

Looking back on my many years of Church leadership, much of it has had to be about trying to stop people making their lives even more unhappy together. This is because people have become alienated by not being careful about what they think and say to one another. Our Churches, which are meant to embody the Easter faith, are much weaker than they could be and should be when people are not careful about the effect of what they think and say to one another. The sorrow this causes our beloved Saviour is itself unspeakable.

Our national and international context is so in need of hopeful beings in agape love with God and one another. There is such a need for patient listening to facilitate healing and reconciliation. One other meeting I had this past week was with a fine young man who teaches music to troubled teenagers in a special school for kids who are from families of abuse, violence and neglect. Music helps them to find a new, a unifying and an uplifting language. Making music together gives them hope and helps them, in education, to shape a positive way forward. If we are to also help such young lives, damaged by the thoughts and actions of elders, then our own life together must be 'the change we seek'.

I have learned to try and be more careful myself with matters of thoughts, words and actions. Accordingly, humbly, I offer this heartfelt reflection in Easter faith. As St. Anthony of Egypt would say: "Each day we begin again". With prayers in the grace and peace of the Risen Jesus, the One who was before all time and "in whom all things hold together" (Colossians 1.17).

Shaping a Theology

by Dr Peter Hooton

Research Secretariat, ACC&C

Peter Hooton, photo supplied

I came to theology after a career in the public service, in the course of which I spent many years in countries with religious mixes, and public attitudes to religion, very different to Australia's. I have, I think, always been of a broadly religious disposition but—importantly, I daresay, because I did not grow up in a religious household—have never persuaded myself to turn this into a special attachment to a particular creed or denomination. If I were doing theology of religions, I would be a pluralist. I am confident that none of the major religious traditions has a monopoly on the knowledge that comes to human beings through faith; that they have much to learn from one another; and that they can do this without compromising the core beliefs that constitute their specific identities. There is more than one way to God—although it may perhaps be more true to say, with Karl Barth (and without his Christian exclusivism), that there is, in reality, only God's way to us.

I think I can say now—although I could not have said this when I began—that my approach to theology is shaped by two questions (one theological/hermeneutical; the other essentially ethical). What does it mean to speak of God; and what does it mean to follow Christ? There are, of course, various answers to these questions, and other ways of approaching theology. In my case, though, I am guided, with respect to the first question, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's emphasis on God's suffering; and, with respect to the second, by Christ's exhortation to love our enemies.

In Jesus Christ, says Bonhoeffer in the Letters and Papers from Prison, God consents "to be pushed out of the world and onto the cross." Now, all faith and hope are vested in a God who is "weak and powerless in the world," and who "in precisely this way, and only so, is at our side and helps us." Only the suffering God can help because only the suffering God can bring God's creatures into demonstrably compassionate relation with the divine life.

The exhortation to "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:43–48) includes, I think, the idea that we should make a special effort to embrace those who are "not like us." There is surely no more powerful way of encapsulating Christ's admonition to make love life's guide than in this seemingly impossible phrase, which underscores the need for Christians to witness tirelessly to humanity's shared and finally indivisible longing for justice, understanding, and kindness.

I am currently responsible for the Research Secretariat which undertakes work in public theology at the ACC&C. My focus this year is on the relationship between Christianity, democracy, and political society in contemporary Australia.

Community of St Anselm, photo supplied by Rachael Lopez

Ancient Futures: The Renewal of Religious Life in the Australian Church

by Rev'd Dr Tim Watson

Rector of Holy Cross Anglican Church, Hackett, and Adjunct Research Fellow, ACC&C

In November 2021 the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture is welcoming more than 100 members of traditional, modern and emerging Religious Communities to a three-day ecumenical conference entitled "Ancient Futures: The Renewal of Religious Life in the Australian Church". This first of two articles for Engage explores what exactly is meant by "Religious Life": do "Religious Communities" have a technical definition, what do they have in common, and what is their distinctive place within the life of God's church?

Prayer

Religious Communities have always emerged from the experience of personal prayer. Pioneers such as Antony of Egypt, the "father of Western Monasticism", and Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, began as solitary figures seeking to hear the voice of God, and wrestling with their demons in the desert in the footsteps of Christ. The Communities that formed around these founders grew from men and women who sought to emulate them: to pray as they prayed, and share their common life. Today's Communities still take the personal spiritual autobiographies of their founders – for example, Teresa of Avila's "Interior Castle", or Loren Cunningham's "Is It Really You Lord?" – as their template. Another contemporary example is the "24/7 Prayer" movement which has birthed a Religious Community, the Order of the Mustard Seed, drawing on the prayer practices of the 18th century Moravian Brethren. This grounding in specific ways of praying, with reference to the personal spiritual experience of specific individuals, underpins all Religious Communities and gives to each its distinctive character.

Poverty, chastity, obedience

Following Christ in Community is an intentional step with radical implications. For many Religious Communities, the commitment to common life requires a formal life vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, traditionally referred to as the "Evangelical Counsels". (Though history reminds us that Communities have sometimes become rich, unhealthily autonomous, and not always models of chastity.) For all Religious Communities, whether traditional or emerging, membership requires a commitment to a binding rule – which is the root meaning of "religio" – and specific stipulations in respect of economic and family circumstances, authority and discernment. This can take many different forms: many modern Communities don't require a life commitment, for example, and members can be married or single. But it's fascinating to note that the desire to "take life vows" is widespread among members of emerging Communities – almost as if the call to follow Christ in Community carries, as part of its DNA, an instinct to make an unconditional covenantal gift of self within a particular form of life.

Structures

Emerging "bottom-up" from prayer and personal spiritual experience, and expressed in autonomous structures which emerge organically from their distinctive forms of life, Religious Communities have always had a complex relationship with the "top-down" hierarchies of denominations structured around dioceses, parishes, and formal divisions between "lay" and "ordained". Often Communities, for example the Franciscan movement of the 13th century, emerge to challenge church structures which need fresh energy and spiritual renewal. Sometimes hierarchies resist this: in the 18th century John Wesley's Anglican Methodist Societies were mistrusted and marginalised, with the result that Methodism became a separate denomination. Sometimes they embrace it: in contemporary Wellington, New Zealand, Justin Duckworth spent two decades leading a non-denominational New Monastic Community, Urban Vision, before swiftly becoming first an Anglican, then a priest, then Bishop.

At the end of the second millennium, marked by the "end of Christendom", many Religious Communities have either chosen to remain independent of denominational structures, such as Taizé or Northumbria, or have emerged from a non-denominational church context where traditional hierarchies seem increasingly irrelevant, such as Youth With A Mission. At the same time, emerging Communities often experience a "deficit of catholicity" and seek relationships with brothers or sisters in traditional Communities (and sometimes even with bishops!) to provide the experience, wisdom and oversight they lack.

Religious Communities have been a vital element within the Church since its earliest centuries, and their flourishing will be indispensable to its future. Archbishop Justin Welby recently described them as "the canary in the coal mine" of the contemporary Church, and called for "a wild burst of fresh and Spirit-fuelled imagination" about Religious Community life in the 21st century. As Community members from a wide variety of contexts prepare to gather together at the ACC&C in October 2021, let's pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten and inspire us, as together we seek God's wisdom for the renewal of God's Church in Australia.

Spiritual growth for frail elderly people: institutional and community challenges

by Professor Elizabeth MacKinlay AM

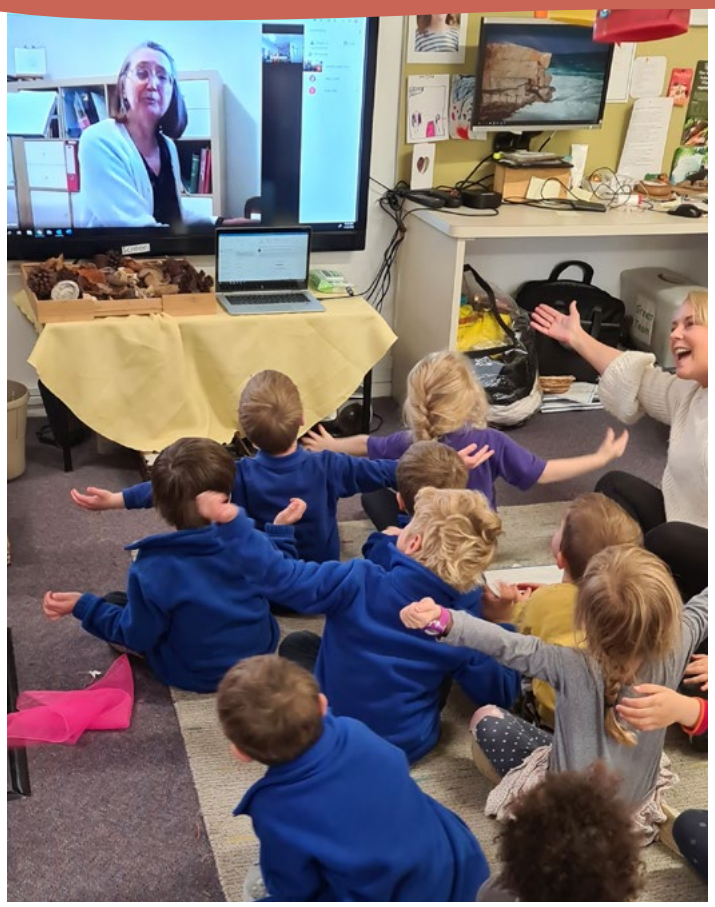
Director of the Colloquium for Ageing Perspectives and Spirituality (CAPS), ACC&C

In the twenty-first century, frailty awaits many of us, if we live long enough. Frailty is generally defined as including physical and psychological factors, to occur more with increasing age and importantly, it is now seen as a dynamic state that can fluctuate and may be potentially reversible (Hoogendijk et al 2019, Dent et al 2019, both articles published in the Lancet). Frailty has been identified as a forthcoming global health problem, largely due to the costs of care for frail older people. Most research has been into physical aspects of frailty, but what if a factor in the onset of frailty might be loss of meaning and hence, lack of nourishment for the soul? Frailty may often be seen as a precursor to the process of dying and as such can be a confronting life and death challenge; one that we cannot fully comprehend until or unless we are experiencing it ourselves. It is only through listening to the narratives of those making these final life journeys that we can learn, first what the experience is like, find commonalities and differences in the experience and only then begin to learn how we may more effectively walk beside those who are making this crucial final life journey. A study of the lived experience of frailty (MacKinlay & Mordike 2020) was conducted with the assumption that the final life career, that is, the last stage of life, is just as important as all the stages of life that have gone before it.

Our study engaged with frail older people, most living in residential care but some of the frail participants were still living in the community. Listening to their stories through in-depth interviews was a vital part of this study. Patterns emerged from their long-life experiences, vulnerability, resilience, hopes, fears, loss. But at the heart of the matter for numbers of these 25 participants was a personal sense of inner strength which enabled them to respond to any situation in their lives in hope and life-giving ways. Those who connected with this inner strength faced the future with hope, while those who lacked this inner strength feared what might lie ahead.

Our findings showed that spiritual growth was still possible, even in the face of frailty, if meaning could be found. Being able to move beyond self-centredness to other centredness, which Frankl (1984) called 'self-forgetting' is the process of self-transcendence and this comes by grace. New life, and hope even in the midst of frailty, may be possible where meaning is found and the final life career may be enhanced beyond all expectations.

Frailty and the spiritual dimension will be the theme of a seminar to be held in April at the ACC&C. See Events for more details.



Zoom with children, photo supplied by Susan West

Desperate times: Zooming in on the benefits of arms-length social music making

by Dr Susan West

Adjunct Research Fellow, ACC&C

Roughly twelve months ago, I was starting a four-week working visit to New Zealand, the first of four I was to undertake in 2020. Suffice to say I returned much more quickly than I expected and was distinguished by being one of the first international returnees to undertake mandatory quarantine, thankfully at home.

Ironically, my work in the Music Engagement Program (MEP) involves an almost exact combination of those things most important to avoid in these COVID days: social-altruistic personal sharing of singing with groups of all descriptions, including children, the elderly and those with disabilities. My work had already disappeared before I even stepped off the plane. What to do?

While web-based musical interaction is the antithesis of the MEP approach, the phrase 'any port in a storm' was most apt. My colleague, Dr Georgia Pike (ANU College of Medicine) and I, starting Zooming it with various collaborators like Rev. Andrea de Vaal Horciu from Embracing Ministries with whom we run the Anglicare Music Engagement Program for adults living with disabilities.

I would not describe an internet-based approach as remotely comparable to the personal interactions involved in MEP-style music making. At the same time, it was unquestionably better than nothing, and specific benefits did emerge.

For example, the problem of latency, or sound delay, means that the singing facilitator cannot listen to all participants, particularly if they are joining from different locations. We found, however, that this distancing effect was beneficial for some teachers and carers who were not confident in their music making. The 'expert' couldn't hear them when leading the singing, creating a similar situation to singing in the shower.

I was astounded to finally visit a group of Year 2 students and their teachers, who I had never met or worked with live, after 4 months of Zoom singing. The confidence and quality of the singing was excellent: it seemed as if the very lack of perceived local expertise had prompted children and teachers to assume more responsibility for the outcome.

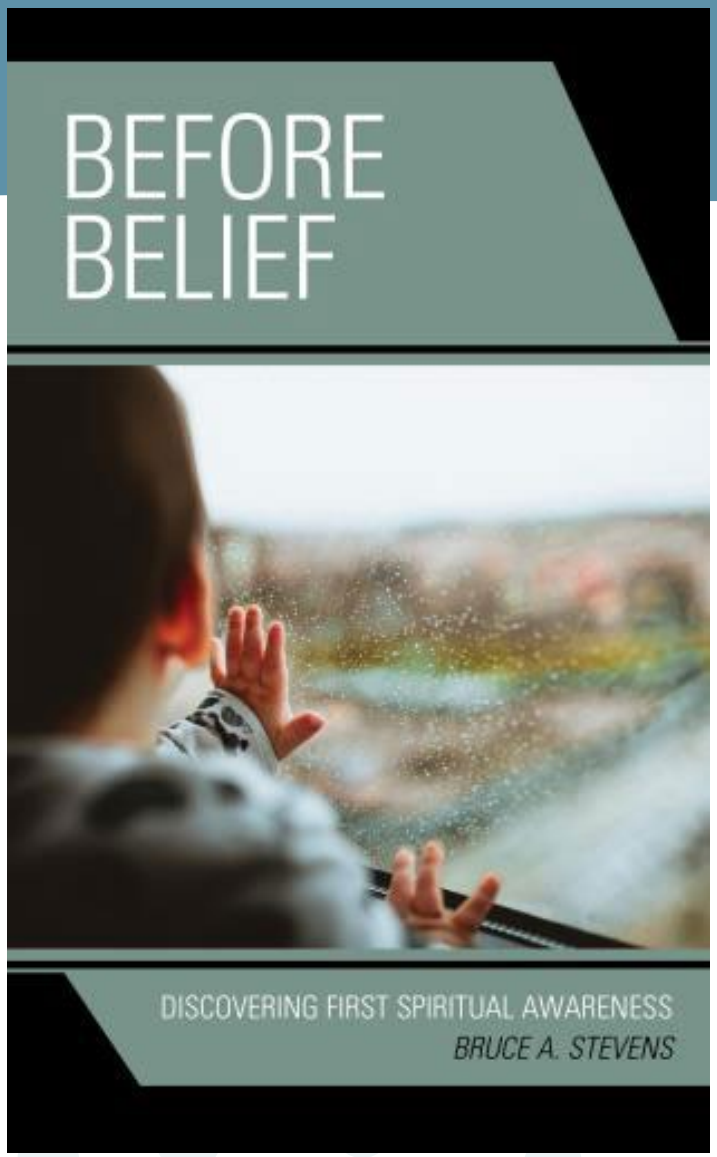
In some locations, participants freely admitted that not having perceived 'experts' hearing them sing was a freeing experience. At the same time, there was a sense in which individuals needed to engage more strongly since the usual leaders were not physically present. Either way, the MEP focus on empowering users to become facilitators was enhanced.

Another linked benefit related to the social sharing explicit in the MEP approach. Just as we, the facilitators, worked hard to overcome the distance by the way we sang 'with' the participants, the participants did the same in return. What we couldn't hear, we could see, in the way they reached back to us through the technology to show us their engagement.

I am so glad to be back with some of my singing groups and even planning a visit to a care facility. At the same time, the MEP is planning to continue Web-based musical interactions which opens up possibilities not only with our Australian singing friends but also our International ones, who are still personally so far away.

Susan West at the Children's Week Awards. Photo Supplied.

"Perhaps there is a 6th sense for spiritual things, medieval theologians thought so and this idea inspired the wonderful The Lady and the Unicorn tapestries at Musee de Cluny."



Before Belief: Discovering First Spiritual Awareness

by Professor Bruce A Stevens

Adjunct Research Professor, PaCT

Some books, arguably, come out at the wrong time. Before Belief published by Lexington Press, USA, came out February 2020, just as COVID-19 became a global pandemic. And almost no one noticed.

As the author I was naturally frustrated. I knew that the book was the culmination of my five years of research as Wicking Professor of Ageing and Practical Theology at CSU. I thought it was my most important work. What was the big deal – especially to me? In *Before Belief* I asked some important questions: Do infants have spiritual awareness? Is there a sense of mystery and transcendence? If they can learn about God what is the mechanism? If there are answers to such questions we can see that this will be fundamental to spiritual development. Important? Yes!

The question of how a young child learns has been thoroughly researched in developmental psychology. I knew that from my other profession: clinical psychology. There are thousands of research papers on implicit learning. Often we learn without words. An example would be learning to ride a bike. Or before any capacity for language, say that it is safe or unsafe to be cared for by a parent. It is easy to see how learning in this area has profound implications for how we develop into unique adults. However, no one had applied this model to spiritual development.

Perhaps James Fowler, with his stages of faith model, came closest. But he started to outline spiritual growth at about age 3 well after the acquisition of language. To go back earlier means we have to take seriously the five senses: sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste. Perhaps there is a 6th sense for spiritual things, medieval theologians thought so and this idea inspired the wonderful *The Lady and the Unicorn* tapestries at Musee de Cluny. I also looked at the implications for ministry in such areas as spiritual direction, counselling, Christian Education, ecumenical studies, preaching and worship.

The first sales figures confirmed my worst fears. So I tried a facebook campaign. $6000 badly spent. For those directed to my website earlyspirituality.com the 'discussion' ranged from the fundamentalist extreme of 'spare the rod, spoil the child' to any discussion of children and spirituality was 'child abuse'. People shouted at each other in CAPITAL LETTERS. My final act has been to purchase 50 copies of *Before Belief* and send free copies to theological libraries throughout the world. Maybe another interested person will come across it on the shelves?

Upcoming Events

Good Friday

2 April

The Centre will host the Good Friday Ecumenical Way of the Cross liturgy on Friday 2 April at 11am. The liturgy will begin in the chapel and will progress outside around the grounds of the Centre to the Pilgrim Poles, with the final act taking place at the Great Cross.

All welcome. Enquiries: acc-c@csu.edu.au

CAPS Seminar – Spiritual Growth for Frail Elderly People: Institutional and Community Challenges from 2020 and Beyond

19 April, 8.45am - 4.30pm

A seminar for older people facing frailty, and for those interested in being with, caring and supporting older people.

Speakers: Professor Elizabeth MacKinlay AM, Professor Ann Harrington, Ilsa Hampton and Sally Mordike.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION

Heritage Festival: Reimagine

6 – 26 April

There are a number of events which would interest many. One of which is the Anzac Eve Peace Vigil on the eve of Anzac Day, 5.30pm Saturday 24 April beginning from the top of Mt Ainslie. A Chorus of Women has been a part of the event since its inception in 2011. This year will mark its 10th anniversary.

CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE PROGRAM

Canberra International Music Festival (CIMF)

1 – 9 May

The ACC&C is proud to be partnering with CIMF to host the following performances in our Chapel.

Concert 4, Harim

Saturday 1 May at 2pm & 4pm

Program: Traditional Sufi music, Brian Howard *Sentinel*

Artists: Baran Yildiz and Ensemble Offspring featuring Noriko Shimada on contraforte.

Concert 6, Seven and Three

Sunday 2 May, 11am & 1pm

Program: L. van Beethoven *Trio for clarinet, cello and piano op 38*; Franz Berwald Septet.

Artists: Soloists from the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra.

Concert 11, All of them, and one of us

Tuesday 4 May, 11am & 12.30pm

Program: W. Barton Remembrance; Kate Moore *Whoever You Are Come Forth*.

Artists: William Barton (didgeridoo/voice), Veronique Serret (violin), Blair Harris (cello)

Breakfast #3, Beethoven for Breakfast

Wednesday 5 May, 8.30am

Program: L. van Beethoven: *Sonata no 4 op 102 nr1 in C major for cello and piano.*

Artists: Blair Harris (cello), Sonya Lifschitz (piano).

Concert 20, Far and Near

Sunday 9 May, 12pm & 3pm

Program: A wild canopy of styles and manners from ten Australian and one American composer Composers: Nico Muhly, Christopher Sainsbury, Sally Whitwell, Jessica Wells, Lyle Chan, Jaret Choolun, Olivia Swift, Callum Kennedy, Alys Rayner, Blake Petersen.

Artists: The Australian Voices with Luminescence Chamber Choir directed by Gordon Hamilton.

CLICK HERE TO BOOK TICKETS ON THE CIMF WEBSITE

Change the Heart Prayer Service

by Rev'd Dr Katherine Rainger

Senior Chaplain, Radford College, Canberra ACT

For several years Aunty Jean Phillips has been calling Christians to pray for justice, truth-telling, and healing at the #ChangetheHeart prayer services in the lead up to 26 January. This year Aunty Jean, with the support of Common Grace, made a #ChangetheHeart service video. The service was broadcast on ACCTV on the evening of 25 January. The theme was 'tuning in together'. People throughout Australia watched at home and in COVID safe gatherings.

The service was led by Aboriginal Christian leaders from across Australia. Common Grace CEO Brooke Prentis and Aunty Jean gave poignant messages about justice, lament, reconciliation, and hope. Common Grace's Aboriginal Spokesperson Bianca Manning, Australian Idol contestant Royston Sagigi-Baira and Pastor Helen Wright led powerful singing of old and new Gospel songs. The service included a sobering visual display of the injustices still faced by First Nations people and a call to respond by tuning in to these injustices, praying and acting for change.

A small gathering was held at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture to watch the service. It was very moving to watch the service together and to respond to the calls to kneel and stand in solidarity. Local musician Uncle Johnny Huckle featured in the video and also sang live for those gathered in person at the conclusion of the broadcast.

Common Grace has made the service available on their website. Even though it was specifically made for 26 January the content and the call to prayer that it contains are relevant every day of the year. It would be great if churches and other groups hosted viewings so that people could engage and discuss what it means to 'Change the Heart' both individually and collectively so that justice can flow and healing can occur.

CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE SERVICE

Uncle Johnny Huckle performing live at Change the Heart Service 25 January 2021, photo by Katherine Rainger.

Environment Report: Australia still not in the serious climate club but embracing green energy

by Toni Hassan

Journalist and Visual Artist, Adjunct Research Fellow, ACC&C

There is no longer much doubt about the impact of climate change - we are feeling it. That's why many of us are at a loss to know why the Australian government has not yet embraced a target of net zero emissions by 2050, as have dozens of other developed economies.

And it's why we were keen to hear from Australia's Ambassador for the Environment, Jamie Isbister, at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture on Thursday 18 February.

Isbister will represent the Australian Government at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow 2021 in November.

Six years ago, at the 2015 Paris Climate Change Conference, governments adopted emissions targets (which were insufficient to hold global warming to 2 degrees C) and agreed to come back five years later to assess progress and toughen the targets up.

COVID postponed that conference. The one that was meant to be held in Glasgow in 2020 will now be held in 2021, which has an upside. Joe Biden has become US president and has brought the US back into the process and will take part in the talks.

Biden will also host his own summit on 22 April, Earth Day, to which Australia's prime minister Scott Morrison has been invited. Biden is expected to use it to announce strengthened US commitments.

To hear Isbister talk (which is in large measure to hear the Australian government talk) Australia is doing a lot to reach net zero by 2050 without adopting it as a target.

Among the developments in the government's technology investment roadmap discussion paper are solar and wind plants that would make hydrogen which would be exported to countries including Japan as easily-transportable "green ammonia" for use in power plants.

Another project, SunCable, will use solar, wind and batteries in the Northern Territory to export electricity 4500 kilometres by cable to Singapore, where it will supply up to 20% of the nation's needs.

Steel manufacture accounts for 8% of global emissions, and can be made green using hydrogen and the sun and wind (and iron ore) with which Australia is blessed.

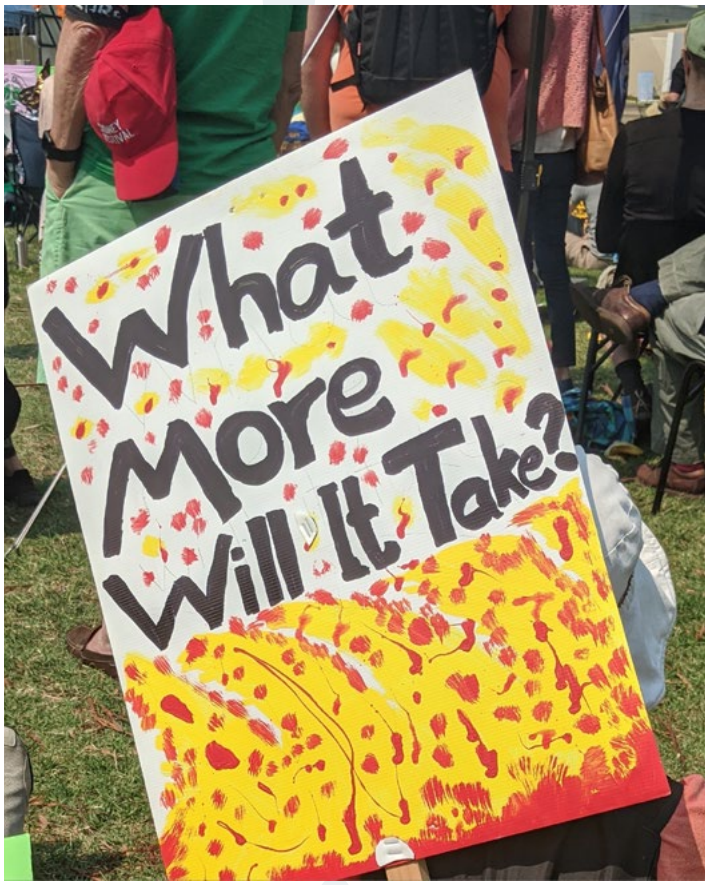
Right now, solar-manufactured green hydrogen costs more than A$3 per tonne. Isbister said by the time the cost falls to $2 per tonne (which is likely over the next decade) green hydrogen will be in a position to replace petrol and natural gas for those uses that can't be easily electrified.

Concrete and aeroplane fuel will be harder to turn green, and account for large chunks of global emissions.

Soil carbon – drawing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in the land – will be essential to get to net zero. Whereas other technologies can produce zero emissions, soil carbon can produce negative emissions – sucking back in Australia's remaining emissions to get us to zero or less.

Isbister spoke optimistically; emphatic that the energy shift is rapid, thanks in large measure to the private sector, here and abroad.

What he didn't give (because he couldn't) was a view on whether a carbon price would help get the job done sooner and more smoothly, and the inside scoop on the Australian commitment he will take to Glasgow in November. We wish him well.



School Strike 4 Climate, photo supplied by Toni Hassan.

This event was jointly hosted by the ACC&C and the National Council of Churches of Australia (NCCA), organised by Bishop Philip Huggins, Centre for Ecumenical Studies, ACC&C and President, NCCA.

Christians for an Ethical Society (CES) Forum, 2021 Theme: Values and Voices in the Public Sphere

Disinformation, Freedom of Communication and Social Media

Report by David Hunter, CES Board member

Speaker Seumas Miller

Over 50 people came to the first CES forum for 2021, which consisted of presentations by Professor Seumas Miller, a response by Toni Hassan of ACC&C, and a lively questions and discussion session afterwards. For those who were unable to attend in person, the forum will be accessible on the CES website (ces.org.au).

Professor Miller began by outlining how disinformation is being spread widely in our community especially through social media: whether it is US election fraud, climate change denial, COVID as a hoax, or the trial by media of Pell. Disinformation that incites violence is clearly illegal, but false and misleading statements can be spread under the guise of freedom of speech, and do so much more rapidly than in the past through social media.

Misleading statements undermine moral norms: responsible citizens rely on evidence and society relies on social disapproval plus laws to foster unity and promote the common good. Freedom of the press is a basic right, but the press cannot say whatever it wants: there are limits on promoting racism, hate speech and division within society. While these limits on the press are far from perfect, the limits on social media are much less with the result that the spread of misinformation is widespread and is so rapid that counterarguments are rarely heard. There have been demagogues in the past, but now they can use social media to motivate huge numbers of people so quickly that authorities trying to maintain the peace are overwhelmed.

What can be done?

The press has limitations on what it can do and say, and similar limitations need to be put on social media. The press has systems of review: investigative journalists that search the facts and editors that check the content. Social media does not do this except in extreme cases. Currently you can post false information anonymously with impunity—but people have a right to know who you are and what credentials, if any, you have for saying what you say. Professor Miller proposed a system balancing privacy with accountability, requiring those posting information to register with a neutral third party, with registration tied to simple identification as we already do for a driver's licence. Such a system would enable egregious posters to be made accountable, and eliminate fake accounts such as robot postings.

Toni Hassan, an ACC&C Adjunct Research Fellow and Walkley Award-winning journalist, responded in pointing out the tension between free speech and social cohesion. Facebook has recently been used to disrupt social cohesion in the USA and in Myanmar by fostering radical activism that is difficult for authorities to control. Big technology controls social media and makes money from it, taking advertising dollars from existing media, weakening them and their ability to give a balanced view of news and current events.

Audience question topics included mention of the Australian Associated Press aims for fact-checking in comparison with social media being used to resurrect false ideas from the past; the need to foster education in skills in investigating the facts to assist with discerning truth; and the concern that many postings demonstrate a lack of respect for difference whether in politics or in belief systems.

Speaker Seumas Miller, photo supplied.

St Patrick's Day Service officials, photo supplied

Friends of Ireland St Patrick's Day Service

by Dr Lauren Bartley

Events and Corporate Services Officer, ACC&C

The ecumenical/ interfaith service for the feast of St Patrick was held at the ACC&C Chapel on Saturday 13 March by the Friends of Ireland and the ACC&C.

The St Patrick's Day address was given by Regina Neary, a mental health nurse and advocate for the improvement of mental health services. Regina has been active in this field since the early 90s and has extensive experience in adult mental health, as well as implementing positive mental health policies in the workplace.

Music was performed by the Canberra Irish Music Community and Irish language songs and prayers were provided by the Canberra Irish Language Association.

About Saint Patrick

St Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland and is credited with bringing Christianity to the country. He lived in the 5th Century AD and was born in an unknown location in Roman Britain. At the age of 16, he was captured by pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland, where he was held for six years. During this time in captivity he found solace in prayer and became a devout Christian. He was inspired to escape after hearing a voice, which told him it was time to go home. Some years after returning to Britain, he has a vision which instructed him to preach the Christian faith in Ireland. He is often depicted in art holding a shamrock due to the famous story that he used a shamrock to illustrate the Holy Trinity to the people of Ireland.

Hire the Centre

Are you interested in hiring the Centre's facilities for your next event?

The Centre's facilities include an indoor chapel which (in according with social distancing guidelines)can seat up to 60 people or the Chambers Pavilion which can seat up 17 people. We welcome inquiries from groups that run events that are consistent with the vision of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. Contact the Events' Team (Sarah Stitt and Lauren Bartley) for more information on **acc-c@csu.edu.au**

My place and home' the Lanyon. Photo by Aden Cotterill.

The Dialectics of Place and Ministry Practice

by Aden Cotterill

CSU Master of Theology student; Youth Worker, Lanyon High School; Youth Pastor, Lanyon Valley Anglican Church.

Towards the end of 2020 I completed a Master of Arts (Theology) at St Mark's National Theological Centre. This year I set out to complete a Master of Theology (Research). I am grateful to The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture for providing a desk space as I undertake my research.

The Master of Theology includes coursework upfront, proceeds to a 10,000-word guided-research paper, and concludes with a 25,000-word dissertation. I am on the verge of submitting the 10,000-word essay—tentatively titled Should I Stay or Should I Go? The Dialectics of Place and Ministry Practice—which I have written at the ACC&C this summer.

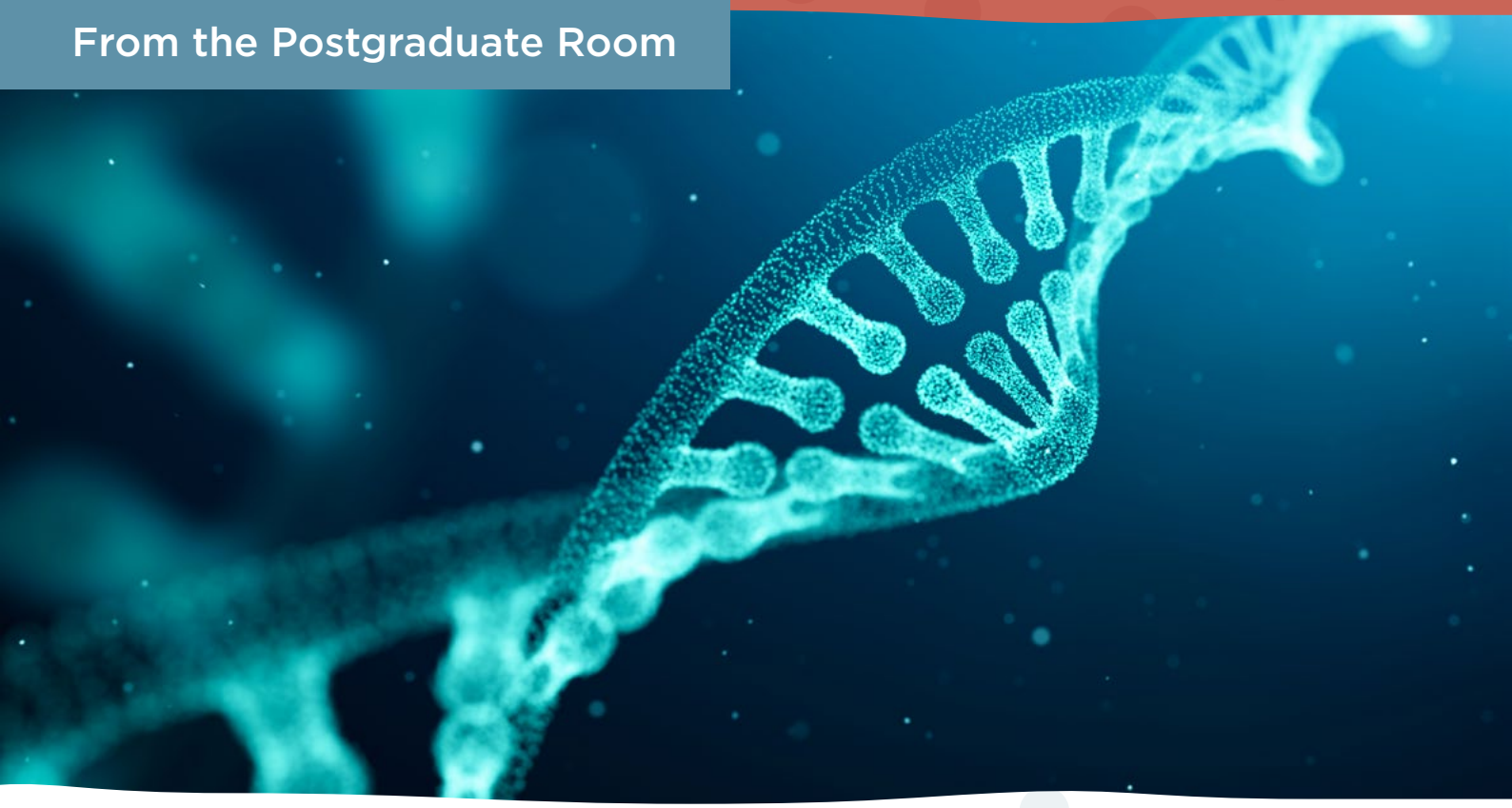
This research interest emerges from two intuitions that pull in seemingly different directions. Firstly, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and love my neighbour I should commit to one place—my local neighbourhood—for life and "aspire to live quietly" (1 Thessalonians 4:11 NRSV). Secondly, that to serve the Lord Jesus Christ I ought to leave home, to be formed as a person through living elsewhere. My research, somewhat indulgently, devotes serious theological attention to this dilemma: should I stay or should I go?

I eventually realised this quandary was partly about place, a subject of increasing theological attention. My research enters this theological discourse through the work of Oliver O'Donovan on place in The Ways of Judgment and "The Loss of a Sense of Place" in Bonds of Imperfection. This leads me to examine how the church, particularly its leaders, might respond to increasing place-denial. Here I engage with a range of scholars—John Inge, Stanley Hauerwas, Wendell Berry, Rowan Williams—that argue that those in pastoral ministry ought to commit to place and locality, a politics of inhabitation.

The next section of my essay argues that this emphasis on inhabitation, though important, risks overemphasis, neglecting the dialectics of place. The dialectics of place—that both staying and leaving, travel and settlement, pilgrimage and inhabitation attest to the bi-polar character of place—is a prominent theme in place scholarship; but it does not feature prominently in the ministry literature on place.

My research aims to correct this disjunction. I argue pilgrimage is a fruitful practice to integrate into pastoral ministry: it can account for the dialectics of place in ministry without betraying a politics of inhabitation. I argue for two models: pilgrimage before placement and throughout placement. For the former I cite the Lucas-Tooth Scholarship—an example from my own place, the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn—as a replicable model of sojourning before settlement. For the latter I argue the sabbatical might be recast as a pilgrimage concluded by homecoming.

I am thankful for places like St Mark's and the ACC&C that support my continuing academic pilgrimage. For those curious to see more research that has emerged on this sojourn, you can find my essay "The Christology of Jon Sobrino" in the **Emerging Scholars in Australian Theology** or my piece **"When it comes to conspiracy theories, is Christianity part of the problem or part of the solution?"** at ABC Religion & Ethics.



Jesus, humanity and genetic enhancement

by David Adams

CSU PhD student, currently researching theology and the ethics of human genetic enhancement and is based at St Mark's National Theological Centre.

Last September, while the world was largely captivated by COVID-19, an international commission published a study defining a clinical pathway for heritably altering human DNA. Its aim wasn't to decide whether this should be done but if the science was at a stage where it could be done, safely and clinically. It recommended it wasn't, yet. This assessment while unsurprising was somewhat overdue. Two years earlier, Dr He Jiankui shocked the international community when he announced that he had edited two human embryos which were later born. He intended to help Chinese people with HIV by having their genes modified, preventing the possibility of infection. However, he was widely condemned for being reckless and breaching many basic ethical standards around safety, autonomy and justification for the intervention, particularly given that the alterations were heritable. Was this the first case of genetic enhancement or intergenerational genetic violence?

These events raise important questions of whether we should as a society allow the use of this technology. The nature of its power and ability to alter our body and identity raise deeper questions about heartfelt beliefs that go beyond commonly shared principles, revealing who we think we are and what our place and destiny is within the cosmos. Subsequently, researchers with a diverse range of worldviews and backgrounds have taken an interest in the discussion and argue for radically different views about the human condition and our future flourishing.

One such divergence is seen in the contrast between transhumanism and a Christian understanding of human nature. One transhumanist encapsulates the difference by writing, "The bible said that God made man in his own image ... The transhumanists say that humanity will make itself into God." In contrast, Irenaeus of Lyon, an early Christian theologian, writes that Jesus is the perfected image of God who "showed forth the image truly" and who desires for us to "be made after the image and likeness of God." Each view expresses a desire for God likeness, however, they articulate radically different pictures of what it entails and how it comes about. One finds humanity's perfect reformation, true resemblance, and its future destiny in the enfleshed word of God. The other pursues perfection through human ingenuity and technical feats of power. Both pictures continue to generate further questions for research regarding their implications for a shared vision for humanity, one that seeks to stand up to scrutiny from all the complex facets and ethical dilemmas that this technology presents.

Professor Satendra Nandan

Professor Satendra Nandan is an Adjunct Research Professor at the ACC&C. These links to three articles which he has written since the last Engage issue and published in the Fiji Sun are all on topics which interest the ACC&C, and we felt would engage our readers.

Recent articles:

'AUSTRALIA DAY: THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY'

'QUEST AND QUESTIONS IN CORONAVIRUS'

'ONE WORLD, ONE POEM, MANY VOICES, ONE VISION'

I've got Hunter Valley coal in my blood, but Joel Fitzgibbon doesn't speak for me or the valley I know

by Felicity McCallum

CSU PhD student

First published *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 16 2021

Joel Fitzgibbon has been creating political mayhem by selling a false impression of the Hunter region. His high-profile focus on coal would lead you to believe the Hunter is populated by black-faced, hard hat-wearing underground miners straight out of the 19th century. With this imagery, he seems to be holding the Labor Party's climate change policy hostage, while ignoring the real interests and concerns of his constituency. There have to be better ways forward.

I am an Awabakal woman, a descendant of Mahrahkah, one of few known Indigenous ancestors of the region.

Like many non-Indigenous members of the Hunter community, I also have ties from Early Contact in the region that were formed due to the coal mining enterprises on our Awabakal country. My Scottish great-grandfather migrated from Glasgow to work as a coal miner when Cessnock was only a settlement, not even a town, in 1900. Members of my family have been employed in the coal mining industry in the Hunter for generations.

Families who have traditionally been part of the coal-mining industry in the Hunter have been and remain a closely-knit group. We helped each other out with food during strikes or wept beside each other in church services after another father, husband or son was tragically killed down a mine.

That is how the communities of the Hunter used to be. But we still live by the same attitudes of rugged realism in face of difficulty. We never perceive ourselves as entitled in that reckless, self-absorbed way that erodes trust and community spirit, but are humbled by the earth in which we live and work.

Our forefathers made sacrifices by going down a pit for another back-breaking shift only so that the next generations could flourish. Now in 2021, those same values and sensibilities point to the need to close the coal mines, to help create a liveable Hunter for the next generations.

Most Australians know the paralysis in the climate debate in our country is an indulgence we cannot afford. We are dangerously poised in the current climate emergency. The claims being made by Fitzgibbon in pursuit of his own short-term political agenda do nothing constructive. They knee-cap efforts by the Labor Party to form a cohesive voice as a functional opposition in our crucial national climate debate.

People in the Hunter are no different from people in other parts of the world who want immediate and drastic action to protect our Earth. Anyone unfamiliar with the Hunter could be forgiven for thinking that jobs in coal mining were all that mattered to our region. If you listened only to the distorted characterisations, you would think that a Hunter Valley without coal mines and coal dust would cause us all up here to collapse in despair.

This is bogus. Though Fitzgibbon only acknowledges it in passing, the fact is that the transition in employment out of primary industries has been afoot in our region for decades.

In the Hunter (excluding Newcastle), employment in the mining industries is low and shrinking. Jobs in tourism and hospitality outnumber jobs in mining, as do jobs in retail and construction. Population sizes in Hunter towns are booming while employment in the coal industry is declining. The Hunter Research Foundation showed that coal mining jobs in the Upper Hunter in 2018 had fallen by 2,000 since 2012, and stood at 11,500. On the other hand, according to a parliamentary study, jobs in health and social assistance now stand at 17,100.

The facts are that the performance of coal mining as an employment bastion in our region has been declining for a long time. The need for skills transfer by traditional workers in the coal mining industry to other sectors is a regular talking point among locals.

Gorgeous, gilded icons shine a light on cross-cultural beliefs in Canberra exhibition

by Genevieve Jacobs AM

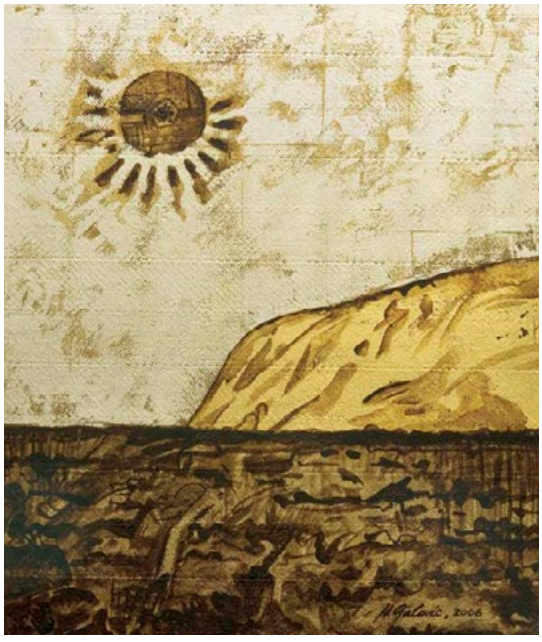
Journalist, Writer and ACC&C Board member

First published in RiotACT 17 March 2021, exhibition finished 21 March 2021

Michael Galovic's work draws on ancient traditions. Left to Right: Detail from Dodekaorton, The Prophet Jonah, and the Fall of Icarus by Michael Galovic.

The gilding draws your gaze from across the room: Adam and Eve are in the garden of Eden at midnight, and St Lucy and St Augustine shine out from the walls of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Barton.

And so does Uluru.



Uluru at dusk, as depicted by Michael Galovic. Image: Michael Galovic.

Michael Galovic is Australia's most accomplished artist in the eastern icon tradition. The Serbian-born painter reaches deep into the traditions of the 14th century Russian Novgorod school, as well as Renaissance and mediaeval work from Florence and Siena, using gilding and incised gesso to create luminous sacred images in a process known as icon 'writing'.

So why do the images in this beautiful exhibition include Uluru?

Michael smiles. It's become something of an obsession for him – a challenge to place the sacred rock of this ancient continent in the same context as the rocks and mountains of sacred scripture.

"I became a little obsessed with boulders, rocky landscapes and monasteries in difficult and inaccessible places," he says. "They're represented as sentinels of celestial power – in the gospels we hear about moving mountains."

Michael has been working on the image of Uluru for the past 20 years, imposing on himself just one rule: to never repeat the image. Every representation of Uluru must stand on its own, while sitting within the icon painting tradition.

"I believe different civilisations, past and present, have points of connection, and I had in mind the sacred and profound significance Uluru has for local people when I began this work," he says.

So the rock shimmers against a patterned gold background or stands on the traditional red background, a symbol of the divine, of martyrdom and resurrection. When the first Uluru icon was completed, the artist says, "I smiled. I was taken aback by the power of the painting."

Galovic acknowledges his artwork has been shaped by decades of living in Australia. He arrived in the early 1990s, after being steeped in the rich traditions of the Orthodox churches after a rigorous education at the Belgrade Academy of Applied Arts. His mother had been an art restorer, and his stepfather a restorer and portrait painter who worked on frescoes and paintings with rabbit skin glue and gilding tools.

Initially, icons were little known in Australia and people didn't understand they could be hung at home as a devotional focus and point of meditation. Pope John Paul II changed that thinking with his emphasis on traditional devotional forms and enquiries began flooding in from schools and churches.

Michael is a four times finalist in the Blake Prize for religious art, and his work has been exhibited internationally. He has produced more than 100 commissions for religious institutions around Australia and, gradually, he says, the country has seeped beneath his skin.

"I could not have done this work if I'd stayed in Europe," he says. "Australia has rubbed off on me and changed the way I work. Bit by bit, I became part of the tapestry."

The exhibition at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture illustrates Michael's transition towards a contemporary vision. Centre manager Hazel Francis says it's an apt destination for the beautiful works because the Centre's focus is on dialogue within the Christian faith and interfaith movements.

"We're so excited to have these beautiful works here," she says.

Michael says: "I've always been fascinated by the Renaissance, the Gothic. For my own pleasure I try to replicate medieval pieces, or Bartolomeo Montagna's works from the 15th century.

"When you dedicate your life to this kind of obsession – and I say that with a smile – it's not hard work."

So why do the images in this beautiful exhibition include Uluru? Michael smiles. It's become something of an obsession for him – a challenge to place the sacred rock of this ancient continent in the same context as the rocks and mountains of sacred scripture.

Anastasis or Descent into Hell, 1996, by Michael Galovic

Cocoa pods awaiting processing. Photo supplied.

Lent and Social Justice: Chocolate's great but tainted by child labour. Here's what you can do about it.

by Toni Hassan

Journalist and Visual Artist, Adjunct Research Fellow, ACC&C

First published on the Holy Cross Anglican Church Blog, March 2021.

Lent is a good time to consider how we celebrate Easter. In our religious and our secular lives, it's increasingly mediated by chocolate eggs, not only on Easter Sunday but in the days before!

What do we know about the production of retail chocolate? Where does it come from? And how does it stack up against social justice Christian principles?

We know that the countries producing cocoa, much poorer than ours, are certainly not the ones consuming it. Australia is a growing market among traditional high-income countries.

What might come as a greater surprise is that hazardous child labour is widespread and growing.

A recent report from the University of Chicago, commissioned by the US Department of Labor, finds that there are more children, as young as five, working in the sector than there were in 2008-09.

In Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa, where two thirds of the world's cocoa is produced, an estimated 1.5 million children and teens under the age of 17 produce cocoa in dangerous conditions.

Minors use sharp tools such as machetes, carry heavy loads, burn fields and use other herbicides without protective gear.

Under pressure to produce ever-bigger yields, producers are using increasing amounts of toxic agrochemicals to control weeds and spreading into new areas cleared by deforestation.

The 300-page report details shocking injuries including wounds and cuts, back pain, fatigue, broken bones and burns.

Children told researchers they would prefer working in almost any other related industry because it would not be as exhausting and dangerous.

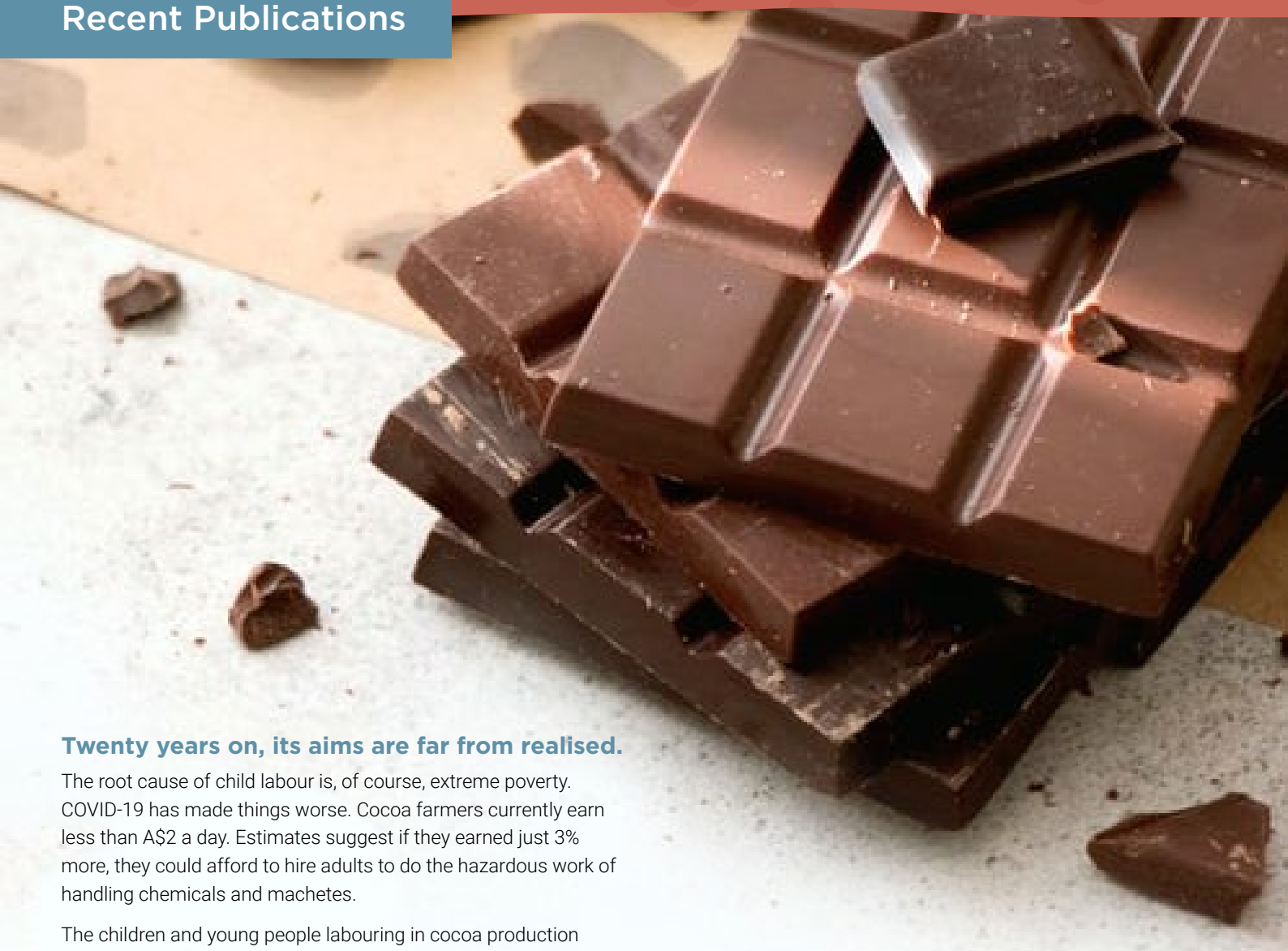
As Christians we should be unnerved. We are taught not just to respect other people but also support them to flourish, whatever their condition or stage of development.

The least we can do is try to prevent harm.

And, there are plenty of references in the Bible extolling honourable and enjoyable work rather than exploitative "toilsome labour under the sun".

Back in 2001, big brands Mondelez, Nestle, Mars, Ferrero, Hershey and Lindt and the US multinational Cargill that collects much of the cocoa signed the ground-breaking Harkin Engel Protocol and the Framework of Action to Support Implementation of the protocol with cocoa industry representatives and the governments of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, undertaking to eliminate child labour and certified employment practices.

Because the companies insisted they could self-regulate the protocol became a non-binding, although legal, agreement.



Twenty years on, its aims are far from realised.

The root cause of child labour is, of course, extreme poverty. COVID-19 has made things worse. Cocoa farmers currently earn less than A$2 a day. Estimates suggest if they earned just 3% more, they could afford to hire adults to do the hazardous work of handling chemicals and machetes.

The children and young people labouring in cocoa production would rather be going to school, playing soccer and dreaming of being doctors. Their parents would too.

The sector's two-decade-old child labour monitoring and remediation systems are not responsive enough. Regulation with penalties would make child labour reforms mandatory.

Big Chocolate finally appears open to a binding agreement as the 20-year protocol reaches its expiry date this year - 2021 - a year the United Nations has coincidentally declared the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.

In response to survey questions prepared by charities, many of them Christian, 75% of companies in the industry backed mandatory due diligence which could include sanctions.

It's a good time for Christians and all people of faith to get informed, pray and put prayers into action to help end child labour in the chocolate sector (and elsewhere). Actions you can take today include:

- Being prepared to pay more for chocolate that you know is ethically produced.
- Using your purchasing power to buy 100% certified chocolate.
- Researching your favourite chocolate brand to find their child labour policies.
- Writing to those brands who can and must do more including agreeing to a new binding protocol.
- Signing a campaign to end child labour, and
- Making a donation to an non-government organisation working against child labour.

The Christian mission includes taking action to improve the lives of the most vulnerable. Children forced into involuntary work in the chocolate sector are certainly among them.

When we work to empower people - all image-bearers of the creator God - so they are treated well, social justice becomes part of evangelism.

It's an idea well-articulated by influential theologian John Stott: "The gospel lacks visibility if we merely preach it, and lacks credibility if we who preach it are only interested in souls and have no concern about the welfare of people's bodies, situations, and communities."

Toni Hassan is a volunteer board director with Be Slavery Free.

Sharing Tradition

by Sarah Stitt

Events and Corporate Services Officer, ACC&C

For decades, together with friends, I have been baking hot cross buns on Good Friday. I first learnt to bake these delicious buns when I studied Home Economics in high school. My first Easter following my new found baking skill I baked hot cross and Chelsea buns for my family. When I came to Canberra to study and lived in a group house I baked buns for my friends, always on Good Friday. At 21 some good friends gave me a fabulous recipe book as a gift, and from there I have used this recipe ever since. This year will mark four decades.

To quote from this book[1], "Traditional folklore has it that hot cross buns, those familiar shiny round buns with their dark currants sticking out here and there, are descended from pagan days when the vernal equinox was celebrated. If properly made on the actual day – Good Friday – they are supposed to protect the whole family from fires, rats, accidents and shipwrecks. A cheap form of insurance."

To ensure our readers have this opportunity to enjoy delicious hot cross buns this Easter, remember only on Good Friday, here is the recipe. Enjoy!!

The fruits of labour. Photo supplied.

Hot Cross Buns

Ingredients:

450g strong white flour (bakers flour)

1 tsp mixed spice

25g fresh yeast or 15g dried yeast

250ml milk (75ml to be added to yeast)

50g castor sugar (1 tsp to be added to yeast)

50g butter

1 egg (beaten)

100g currants

50g mixed peel

¼ tsp salt

Method:

- Preheat the oven to 200 C.
- Warm a large bowl.
- In saucepan place milk, and warm.
- Add 75mls warmed milk into bowl with yeast, and one teaspoon of sugar.
- Cream yeast and leave in warm spot to froth up.
- Add butter and remaining sugar to the warming milk. Do not allow the milk to get too hot, but butter to melt, and sugar to break down.
- Place flour and spice into the bowl and make a well in the centre.
- Pour yeast mix into the well.
- Add the warmed milk, butter and sugar, and beaten egg.
- Add currants, mixed peel and salt. Mix to sticky mass.
- Allow to rest for 5 mins, when it will become easier to handle.
- Place onto floured board and knead with lightly floured hands.
- When dough is smooth and puffy put it back into the bowl, cover with a damp cloth and then a sheet of plastic, and stand in a warm place leaving until dough doubles in size.
- Once dough has doubled, tip onto floured board and knock down. Cut into approx. 16 pieces, knead and shape into small balls, place on baking paper lined baking tray, and cover lightly with a cloth. Leave in a warm place to prove for 15 – 20 minutes. When they are swollen and puffy pipe on the crosses.*
- Place buns in pre-heated oven and bake 15 minutes.
- Remove, glaze**, and place back in oven for 5 minutes to give them a lovely, shiny, sticky finish.
- Devour

Crosses*

Mix a smooth paste of flour and water, and either with a plastic bag which has a small hole cut into the corner, or a piping bag, pipe crosses across rows of buns, one way and then the other. This is done once dough has risen twice and ready to go into the oven.

Glaze**

Equal amounts milk and castor sugar, cooked until sugar dissolves.

Enjoy, and happy Easter.

1. Conran, Caroline, *Traditional Cooking*, 1978, André Deutsch Limited