

The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

ENGAGE

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Palm Beach Bible Garden

By Stuart Spring





Great Cross, photo by Liz Jakimow Cover image: Bible Garden, photo by Liz Jakimow

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Editorial

Peter Sherlock

Executive Director (Acting), ACC&C

It is my privilege to introduce the final issue of *Engage* for 2025 in my capacity as Executive Director (acting) of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. I hope you enjoy reading and reflecting on the contents as much as we have in preparing it for you.

I recall first visiting the Centre in 2009 for an ecumenical roundtable in the Chapel led by Dr Ray Williamson OAM, then the Director of Centre for Ecumenical Studies. It struck me then as an intriguing and unusual place, a rolling hill of grass and trees perched on the edge of the National Triangle in the heart of the nation's capital. After a day's conversation about the future of ecumenical dialogue, I was left pondering what the future of this place might be, as a site where Christians might engage with the culture and politics of the society in which we live.

Back then I could not have predicted what lay in store for me, a newly minted academic dean working at the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne. First was a 12-year term as Foundation Vice-Chancellor of the University of Divinity in Melbourne building a new university and driving collaboration in theological education and innovation in religious research.

Beginning in January this year, I have had the extraordinary privilege of working with Stan Grant in the Yindyamarra Nguluway unit at Charles Sturt University to develop new ways of delivering justice for Australia's First Peoples and to promote civil conversation and social cohesion through the Wiradjuri ethos of *yindyamarra* (respect, going slowly, being willing to listen). Then, since August this year, I have had the added responsibility of leading the Centre as it renews its vision and purpose for the next season.

It is timely to engage in this renewal. Exactly 100 years ago this month, in December 1925, the site then known as Rottenberry Hill was leased to the Anglican Church by the Australian Capital Territory authority for the purpose of building a national cathedral. The site was dedicated to this purpose by the Anglican bishops of Australia on 8 May 1927, a day before Old Parliament House was opened. Much has changed since then – the site now has two parts, St Mark's National Theological Centre and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, while the link between Christianity and national government has changed beyond recognition. So as we approach what will be a centenary of sorts in May 2027, we should be pondering what might the future of this place, this ministry be?

As I have met the Board, staff, researchers and stakeholders associated with the Centre, and as I have got to know the terrain of Canberra, two things have struck me about the possibilities that lie before us.

First is the passion inspired in people by the land on which the Centre stands, Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country, on a hill overlooking the lake created by later arrivals. This is a powerful as well as a beautiful place – you only have to sit in the circle around the fireplace on top of the hill to sense the deep passage of time and the call to contemplate more deeply the fundamental questions of life: Who is God? What is God's call on our lives? Who are we meant to be in and for this time and place? It is no surprise that the pilgrims organising the proposed "Canberra Camino" have selected the Great Cross at the Centre as their destination.

Second is the wealth of opportunities for interdisciplinary research and public engagement that could truly make an impact on both Christianity and Australian culture, on spiritualities of all shapes and sizes. My colleague Jonathan Cole has described this creatively as "theology plus." This means creating a dialogue between theology—with its imperative to think in the largest possible dimensions of cosmos and eternity—and other disciplines that connect to specific needs in the here-and-now.

For me this "theology plus" approach necessitates first and foremost attending to the faith and spirituality of First Nations peoples who are expert at integrating ancient wisdom with the constant change of the postmodern world, in the harsh conditions of this still colonial environment. There is so much we could learn, not only about survival in the face of economic uncertainty, the climate emergency, and geopolitical instability, but about human flourishing and attending to things that truly matter: God, neighbour, the common good.

I look forward to engaging with you in the months ahead.



Peter Sherlock and Stan Grant at the grounds of the ACC&C, photo by David Beach



Australia's immigration debate: Where next? roundtable

Jonathan Cole

Director, Centre for Religion, Ethics and Society

What does it mean to be Australian? This was the core question posed at the ACC&C's roundtable, "Australia's Immigration Debate: Where Next?," hosted by Stan Grant. In the spirit of Yindyamarra, a panel of academics that included first and second generation Australians, held a public discussion that aimed to honestly and respectfully address the tensions and anxieties that exist around the issues of immigration and multiculturalism in Australia. These questions transcend the dry and impersonal technocratic language of visa categories, net migration flows, push and pull factors, employment, housing and gross domestic product. They speak to the deepest sense of human identity and belonging—namely, culture.

The panellists were in agreement that growing anxieties about immigration and multiculturalism were founded on felt perceptions and in some cases legitimate concerns about the loss of cultural heritage and identity, as well as pressures on housing, infrastructure and the environment from a high population growth fuelled by immigration. The anxieties particularly around identity and culture need to be taken seriously, not dismissed blithely as racism or ignorance, even if informed to some degree by misinformation. There is a dangerous naivete to the "liberal elite consensus" view that the question of what it means to be Australian can be answered by a global cosmopolitical "nowhere" identity when the cultural identity of most Australians is tied to a very local "somewhere." It was suggested that this dangerous naivete on the part of liberal elites has simply pushed people into the arms of right-wing populist nationalists, like Nigel Farage in the UK. Panellists also suggested that many Australians are concerned about just how big a population might be sustainable in the country, particularly in light of the challenges created by climate change. Yet, there appears to be a bi-partisan view in Canberra that a big Australia is self-evidently a better Australia, and, as a consequence, an unwillingness to either consult the Australian people about what sized Australia they would like to live in or to even open a debate about the question.

The conversation ranged across a diverse set of issues related to immigration, from economic drivers and the benefits of skilled migration to the rise of Christian nationalism in the US. Asked to provide a theological perspective, Dr Amy Erickson from St Mark's National Theological Centre explained that in the Christian perspective we are all migrants "on our way home," in which case there is nothing anomalous about migration in the material world. This fact should inform the Christian view of immigration. In that vein, she argued that Christian nationalism

is an error that confuses faith with race. The Bible, in contrast, teaches that submission to Christ transcends race and culture, and in fact can unite people in spite of their differences.

Prof Daniel Ghezelbash from UNSW noted that Australia had come a long way since the notorious White Australia policy, which began to be dismantled in the 1960s, but pointed out that the end of the White Australia policy and its replacement by a policy of multiculturalism were fruits born of bi-partisan political leadership. Today, bi-partisan agreement on immigration and multiculturalism seems to have broken down. He feared the issues of immigration and multiculturalism had been politicised and that the perceptions and anxieties were being fed, to some extent, by unscrupulous political rhetoric.

There is a dangerous naivete in believing Australia's identity can be answered by a global 'nowhere' when most Australians are rooted in a very local 'somewhere.'

In the end, the panel did not answer the central question of what it means to be Australian—an impossible task in one hour. However, it made an important contribution merely by asking the question and being willing to address it honestly and respectfully in conversation with each other and the audience.

"Australia's Immigration Debate: Where next?" was held by the ACC&C in conjunction with Charles Sturt University, Rehman Sheriff Group, Salaam Institute and Migration Institute of Australia. The panellists included: Farhan Rehman, Principal Lawyer, Rehman Sheriff Group; Alex Kaufman, Playfair Lawyer and ACT/NSW Branch, Migration Institute of Australia; Clive Hamilton, Professor of Public Ethics, Charles Sturt University, Amy Erickson, St Mark's National Theological Centre; and Daniel Ghezelbash, Director of the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, UNSW.

A video of the event is available on our [YouTube Channel](#).



Clive Hamilton (CSU), Daniel Ghezelbash (Kaldor Centre, UNSW), Stan Grant (CSU), Farhan Rehman (Rehman Sheriff Group), Amy Erickson (St Mark's, CSU) Alex Kaufman (Playfair, MIA). Photo by Sarah Stitt.



149 Maltese immigrants land in Sydney from the SS Partizanka on 13 December 1948

Palm Beach Bible Garden

Stuart Spring

President, Friends of the Palm Beach Bible Garden

In 1960, Gerald Hercules Robinson and his sister, Deaconess Beatrice Robinson, lived on a sizeable block of land, sited high on the hill at the southern end of Palm Beach, which is as far north as one can go in Sydney. The block is designated as 6 Mitchell Road, Palm Beach.

The view looking to the north, along the Beach and onto the Barrenjoey Headland and the Central Coast beyond, is breathtaking in all seasons.

Having previously visited the famous Bible Garden in Wales, Gerald Robinson determined that this was the ideal site for a re-creation of that iconic Bible Garden with upward of 140 herbs, plants and trees that are referenced in the Holy Bible.

Gerald Robinson was also a strong supporter and benefactor of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, and was inspired by the Bible Garden located there, which he visited.

He and Deaconess Robinson thus set out to plant almost all of the plants and trees that are to be found in the Bible. They tended and cared for their creation for many years, until the 1990s.

There is a pond, teeming with fish amongst reeds and iris. Birds sit in the carob tree, eyeing off the fish below.

Their younger family, who were bequeathed the estate, continued the family tradition but became aware that it would be challenging to ensure the existence of the Bible Garden through the family alone.

After much soul-searching, it was determined that the community should be brought to the task in a way that would give the garden every chance of reaching its own brand of eternity.

The solution was to establish a group and invest permanently in community ownership of the land through the local government body, which at that time was the Pittwater Council, now the Northern Beaches Council.

Thus in 2006, the Friends of the Palm Beach Bible Garden was established, under the leadership of Dr Stuart Taylor and Mrs Jill Taylor.

Through the sale of a block of land that was part of the original holding, funds were provided to rebuild the garden. It was re-established with a range of biblically identified trees, shrubs and plants that would thrive in the coastal environment, provide beauty and colour and fit well within the subtropical environment that is Palm Beach.

The new restored garden was officially re-opened in September 2012 by Dame Marie Bashir AC, Governor of NSW, a local resident and friend to both the Garden and many local gardeners.

A new access was provided by way of a grand staircase, which brings visitors onto luxurious lawns and garden beds, filled with biblical specimens, all identified for the visitor, along with their biblical significance.

Still standing from the original garden are a stone pine that now stands over 60 feet tall, a carob tree, a willow, a grapevine and a lemon tree.

There is a pond, teeming with fish amongst reeds and iris. Birds sit in the carob tree, eyeing off the fish below.

The stonewalls have all been reestablished, providing three levels. These are furnished with tasteful teak benches.

Today's Friends of the Palm Beach Bible Garden includes representatives from the local community of the Northern Beaches, principally of Palm Beach itself, together with a nominee of the current responsible local government body, the Northern Beaches Council. The Robinson family are always consulted and involved in major decisions, plans and expenditure.

A principal source of support comes from weddings and other events, for which a payment is received. These funds, held by Council, are used for major capital works, such as new walls, stepping stones, railings, watering systems and re-turfing.

The Palm Beach Bible Garden is held in trust in perpetuity.

The Bible Gardens attract approximately 10,000 visitors each year from around the world. With Gerald Robinson's words and biblical references still on prominent display, everyone who comes to the Garden, whether of a faith or otherwise, cannot escape the Glory of God and his vision for us.

If you would like to visit the Garden and receive a tour, please contact me at stuspring1@gmail.com.



Palm Beach Bible Garden, photos by Stuart Spring



A new Psalter

Liz Jakimow

Communications Officer, ACC&C

When his children were younger, Matthew Anstey noticed they looked puzzled by some of the language used in the Psalms at church. For instance, what did “bulwark” mean? He began noting places where the translation could be improved—a list that kept growing longer, especially when considering recent Psalms scholarship. This started him thinking that perhaps a new Psalter was in order.

The official text for the Anglican Church of Australia is *A Prayer Book for Australia* (APBA), which adopted the Cambridge Liturgical Psalter (1977). The translation in this Psalter was done by a committee of eight Hebrew scholars and then edited for liturgical purposes by Professor David Frost.

Anstey was inspired by a different approach to translation of the Bible undertaken in the Netherlands. The Dutch translation assigned sections to a single translator, whose translation was then reviewed by a Dutch language expert. Perhaps a similar technique could be taken with an Australian translation of the Psalms?

Such an idea was pitched to the Liturgy Commission. Then in 2017, it was commended by the General Synod, but Matthew didn't commence until 2022, when the hard work of completing the translation began—a work that will take many years.

In developing the Anstey Psalter, musicality has been a high priority. Anstey notes that current translations of the Psalms used in Anglican churches can be hard to sing, which often means they are hard to say. He wanted to ensure they kept an aesthetically pleasing rhythm and prosody, while still being comprehensible to English speakers and accurate to the text.

Anstey says, “Accuracy is a high priority. It trumps everything. That will never be compromised.”

To assist him in achieving that level of accuracy, Anstey, who has a PhD in Biblical Hebrew linguistics, has taken into account the latest scholarship. He notes that translations of the Bible in the 1970s often favoured alternative readings (such as the Septuagint), where there was uncertainty about the original Hebrew. He says that “many of those conundrums have now been solved” and these days scholars almost always follow the Hebrew text.

One addition to the Anstey Psalter is that the Psalms come accompanied by musical scores. To assist him in this, he enlisted the help of Richard Black, a composer and singer with a keen interest in liturgical chants. The chants chosen for Anstey's translations of the Psalms include a variety

of styles, to suit different liturgical needs and purposes, including Anglican Chants, Gregorian Chants and more contemporary chants.

Anstey hopes to find a publisher for the Psalter in the second-half of next year, with a projected completion date of 2030. Once published, churches will be able to buy it for their own liturgical use. Anstey hopes that it may also be included in apps such as epray Daily (an app published by Broughton Publishing that provides daily prayer resources from *A Prayer Book for Australia*), so that individuals can use it in their private devotions.

After so many years of tireless work and effort, will Anstey be looking forward to a well-earned break once it's completed? Not at all. He is hoping then to work with the liturgical commissions of other English-speaking countries, to provide localised versions. He would also like to publish a guide for preaching the psalms and other such resources.

It seems the work of biblical translation is never done.

You can see samples of Anstey's translations, view the accompanying musical scores, and read more about Matthew Anstey and the Anstey Psalter at www.ansteypsalter.com.



About Matthew Anstey

The Revd Assoc Prof Matthew Anstey is a life-long Anglican whose schooling was in Sydney and whose adult years were largely spent in Canberra and now Adelaide, punctuated by four years overseas completing a Masters in Christian Studies at Regent College, Vancouver, and a PhD (*cum laude*) in Biblical Hebrew linguistics at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

He was ordained a priest in 2009 and moved to Adelaide the following year to serve as Principal of St Barnabas Theological College (2010–2017). Since September 2022 he has been parish priest at St Theodore's, Toorak Gardens, where, alongside Liz and their three adult children, he enjoys deep involvement in the local community, including refereeing with Football South Australia.

An expert in Biblical Hebrew linguistics, he teaches and supervises at several Australian universities. He regularly preaches and teaches nationwide and is an advocate for an inclusive, comprehensive, open-hearted Anglicanism.

Music Resources

Psalm 87

Response

Richard Black, Feb 2025

As we dance, let us sing: 'Our whole life springs from you.'

Simplified Anglican Chant

Richard Black, Feb 2025

Unison:

Accompaniment:

Classic Anglican Chant

Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810–1876)

Contemporary Anglican Chant

Richard Black, Feb 2025

Words: Copyright © Matthew P. Anstey. All rights reserved. Music: Copyright © Richard Black
These psalms are being trialled and we invite you to submit feedback online at www.ansteypsalter.com



Understanding each other as a path to inclusive nationhood

Jen Mason

Australian National University

Dominic O'Sullivan

Charles Sturt University

Imagine if everyone understood Australia's pre-colonial stories? Would this give us a foundation for genuine and lasting reconciliation? What would Australian identity look like in 20 years? What would it look like if Australians routinely understood what the oldest living culture in the world really means, and if they understood how and why it tends to be better valued and respected overseas than at home? What if people knew that 26 January only became a national public holiday in 1994—would they be less defensive and exclusively nationalistic about the date?

These are the questions we ask in our Australian Research Council project, *Change The Date? Australia Day, Reconciliation and the Politics of Division*, as we examine new ways of telling First Peoples' truths and making sure they are understood and respected when people talk about what it means to be Australian. What it means, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson put it, to say that "whiteness" is not the "definitive marker" of Australian citizenship.

With colleagues Dean Lusher, Robert Ackland and Tanya Jakimow, we will try to make sense of confusing, often inaccurate, and sometimes overtly prejudiced media presentation of a national story that excludes First Peoples. For example, during the 2023 Voice referendum campaign, the slogan "if you don't know, vote no" glorified ignorance, and told people that we didn't need to understand each other. We could continue to exclude people.

Debates about a fair and reasonable date for Australia's national day start annually toward the end of the year and continue until 26 January. They are often emotionally charged and grounded in little to no understanding of why British colonisation began in the first place. Little to no understanding of colonialism's founding principle that some people's self-interest should override other people's rights to land, language and decision-making rights over how they and their families will live their lives. Little to no understanding, also, of the concept of race as a 19th Century development to justify placing some people above others on a scale of human worth.

We will explore whether improved public knowledge might influence these discussions and perhaps, also, raise the quality of debate about what it means to say that self-determination is a universal human right, a right that belongs to First Peoples as much as to everyone else.

What, for example, would it mean for public conversation if people knew that NAIDOC Week was inspired by the Day of Mourning on 26 January 1938? In 1938, the First Peoples' silent march on the anniversary of the First Fleet's arrival, was a powerful act of resistance. It was a march against the dispossession of Country, culture and livelihood that had been colonialism's essential logic for 150 years.

It was a grassroots movement. Over time it underwent name and date changes before NAIDOC week became an inclusive event celebrated each year. Today, it is established as the country's largest cultural festival.

The Day of Mourning drew attention to the same systemic oppression that exists today. It called for genuine citizenship and equality to guide a new political relationship between First Peoples and the state. Treaties, for example, are proposed to allow political relationships to shift beyond polarising dialogues and open space to develop shared visions of what it means to be Australian. A shared vision would be symbolically expressed through a more inclusive national day which is the ideal that ultimately inspired this project.

We intend to build on Mortimer-Royle and colleagues' 2024 case study examining predictors of public attitudes towards 26 January as the most appropriate day to celebrate Australia's national day. Their study tested whether intervention narratives changed attitudes. They found that these narratives increased knowledge but that there was still resistance to change and evidence of deep-seated and ultimately exclusive beliefs about Australian nationhood.

Debates about a fair and reasonable date for Australia's national day start annually toward the end of the year and continue until 26 January. They are often emotionally charged and grounded in little to no understanding of why British colonisation began in the first place.

We speculate that these beliefs are reinforced when policy measures like *Closing the Gap*, are rationalised by deficit assumptions of Indigenous failure and deficiency. Our alternative approach involves both scholarly publications and public educational resources like audio visual vignettes, videos, podcasts and opinion pieces. The intention is to make these as widely available as possible including to new citizens to inform their contributions to discussions about what it means to be Australian.

Nationhood is a politically devised construct, but whether it is a useful construct depends on how well it reflects people's real experiences. It also depends on how well it allows people to speak their own truths to one another as the basis for working

out what they hold in common and for respecting what they hold differently. This means that everyone must contribute to the symbols and celebrations that are constructed to describe Australian nationhood. It is, by contrast, a false nationhood when the loudest in the community are free to say that being Australian means nothing more than "looking and thinking like me."

There might be inclusive alternatives to changing the date, but our principal purpose is still to ask what difference would it make and, from deliberative democratic theory, we add to arguments that public discussions work better when they are structured to prioritise reasoning, informed and respectful dialogue.



First Nations Indigenous Australian protest, "Day of Mourning", 1938



A theological and allied health reflection on the mental health workforce crisis

Monica Short

Adjunct scholar with ACC&C

Are you inspired by the work of mental health staff and volunteers, yet concerned about their wellbeing? You are not alone with this concern. The Australian Government's 10-year National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022-2023 has identified critical shortages in the mental health workforce. The authors of the Strategy cite the University of Queensland's 2020 research findings, which indicate that currently there is an approximate 32% shortfall in this workforce, possibly increasing to 42% by 2030.

The pressure on this welfare sector and its workforce, especially in rural areas, is profound. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2020-2022, 38.8% of young people (16 - 24-year-olds) in Australia had experienced a mental disorder at some time in their lives. The National Rural Health Alliance highlighted that a particular concern exists for young people in rural Australia because the rates of self-harm and suicide increase with remoteness (National Rural Health Alliance, 2021). However, many young people in the bush are unable to access the services and support they need during a crisis, let alone preventative ones. Workers are working hard to fill the gaps.

So what exactly is the problem? Dual issues are causing the crisis in the mental health sector: increasing demand for services and a loss of workforce due to such things as burnout. Could an integrated theology and allied health approach help shed light on how to address this problem? I believe yes.

Addressing the nationwide issues the mental health sector faces

It is time to address the mental health workforce issues and consider: What strategies for promoting recruitment, retention and wellbeing have frontline mental health staff in NGOs in rural and regional NSW experienced as being successful? Thanks to funding from NSW Health through The Peregrine Centre as part of the Rural Mental Health Partnership Grant and CSU Tri-faculty funding, a group of us from CSU have been helping answer this question; the team comprises Dr Emma Rush (philosopher), Dr Ella Dixon (sociologist), Dr Nicola Ivory (psychologist), Sarah Ansell (CEO CSU of the Foundation Trust), Michelle Bonner (Social Worker), Jemma Hemsted (Mental Health Worker), Glenn Cotter (Mental Health Peer Support Worker) and me, Dr Monica Short (Social Worker). We are working in partnership with inspiring non-government

organisations engaging mental health workers: 54 Reasons; Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT; roundsquared; and StandBy Support After Suicide.

Our research found that effective recruitment, retention and wellbeing strategies focused on:

- being active and visible in the community
- building a supportive workplace culture
- building trust
- finding the right person
- managing risk
- supporting individual growth and team cohesion.

These foci informed the nine strategies summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Strategies for recruitment, retention and wellbeing of staff



School chaplains, directly or indirectly, are part of the youth mental health workforce. These chaplains, with their incarnational and pastoral theologies, bring unique, critical theological thinking to our AI-dense world, which can enhance contemporary mental health services.

For details about the strategies, please read the report by visiting <https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/publications/industry-partners-summary-of-research-impact-and-resources-report>. The report shares autobiographical-autoethnographic materials; lists of successful attitudinal, social, policy and organisational strategies; illustrative case studies and fact sheets that can promote the wellbeing of existing staff while growing the workforce.

Well, how high do we have to fly to support this sector?

Our research found that effective recruitment, retention and wellbeing strategies are being implemented in the mental health sector in a fragmented manner. What is needed is the consistent implementation of effective strategies throughout the mental health sector. One way to help achieve this is for funding bodies to include a compulsory line item for staff wellbeing in their EOI funding templates. It would help reverse the trend of erasing staff wellbeing funding in many grant bids, making proposals or bids for contracts appear financially competitive. This is because eradicating funding for staff wellbeing risks further undermining a satisfied workforce.

So what does the workforce research mean for Christian faith-based welfare organisations?

Ensuring straightforward policies, funding mechanisms and spaces for acts of Christian kindness that support the wellbeing and professional development of NGO mental health workers and volunteers would benefit the sector. There are no shortcuts to creating a satisfied workforce. For example, AI has advantages useful for the workplace; however, the myth that AI will soon fix all staffing and volunteering shortages is not a real solution. The stories of entry-level training roles being replaced by AI are short-sighted strategies for employment and volunteering, with long-term negative consequences for the mental health sector. In contrast, applying the Christian love and kindness ethic within the mental health workplace is an effective strategy for building a satisfied workforce.

Christians can live our theology in an AI-dense world. The first person to coin the term “the welfare state,” Archbishop William Temple, in his book, *Christianity and Social Order*, highlights the need for critical thinking about welfare within societal contexts. That is, there is a need for welfare services with a Christian heart and sympathy that have an educational influence on social and economic systems, ensuring justice for workers,

volunteers and people receiving services. Such actions fulfil the purpose of God, which is manifested through Jesus’ coming into this world and suffering to bring us together to love God and to love each other (Matthew 22:37-39).

Imagine the benefit for entry-level professionals and volunteers if annual planning meetings included key priorities and strategies of proactively loving God and entry-level staff (the neighbour) over a 12-month planning period. Imagine the long-term potential impact on people receiving services and their communities if they experienced a work community that is proactively sharing the ethics of love and kindness that Jesus embodies.

Living Christian theology in community is not a new concept. In his book, *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer explains that Christianity, and therefore our welfare services with Christian structures, need to embrace community and resist the idea of some being the greatest (Luke 9:46), which creates discord. Christian communities use language, gifts and resources to build each other up and to encourage each other to provide an excellent service for God’s glory. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22) are inspiring organisational values and vision.

Now, I am aware that some think theology is irrelevant in the workplace. Perhaps this idea may have emerged out of the 19th century, Comte’s proposition in works like *A General View of Positivism* that society would move from theological thinking (that is, religious ideas and God’s will be done) and metaphysical thinking (that is, society seen in natural terms) to positivist only thinking (that is, scientific techniques decide the social world). In reality, Comte’s argument that other knowledge bases would supersede the utility of theology in the workplace never happened. The presence in the 21st century of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and Christian faith-based welfare organisations demonstrates the limitation of Comte’s and similar propositions. Christian faith-based welfare organisations need to be careful that remnants of Comte’s proposition are not informing Christian faith-based policy and practice.

Instead, from a sociological perspective, Christian welfare services need to operate in a multicultural and religiously diverse community, and the staff (professionals and volunteers) need the skills to thrive in such an environment. How do we do this? Well, philosopher McLean argues for a

virtuous ethical basis for caring. This can be found in the Bible (for example, Luke 10:25-27). McLean reminds us that in the workplace, Christianity provides moral guidance, such as the need to respect each other, see value in our colleagues and love them.

So what is next? Where is the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (the Centre) up to with youth mental health research?

School chaplains, directly or indirectly, are part of the youth mental health workforce. These chaplains, with their incarnational and pastoral theologies, bring unique, critical theological thinking to our AI-dense world, which can enhance contemporary mental health services.

Furthermore, school chaplains, as frontline workers striving to bless people experiencing mental health challenges, serve as a useful case study about the mental health sector. For instance, Harries, Cant, and Butorac report in “An Outcome Evaluation of School Chaplaincy” that mental health issues

were the second-most common pastoral issue addressed by chaplains in public schools. With this in mind, the Centre has initiated a multidisciplinary research inquiry that promotes a Christian virtuous ethical basis for caring for young people. Co-researchers Revd Dr Alexander Abecina (chaplain), Rev’d Natalie Arendse (chaplain), Ms Kathryn Hindle (social worker), Revd Chris Lewis (chaplain) and Dr Monica Short (social worker) have recently submitted an ethics application for a co-operative inquiry into the role of school chaplaincy during a mental health crisis. We look forward to sharing our research findings with you.

Meanwhile, please stay tuned, support us, and pray for this ACC&C research project, particularly that it will be successful and produce findings that build on the great work school chaplains are currently doing. For more information about this project or the work of the Centre, please contact Dr Monica Short at mshort@csu.edu.au.



Bible Garden at the ACC&C, photo by Liz Jakimow



Bible Garden at the ACC&C, photo by Liz Jakimow

Visiting fellowship at the Mathias Corvinus Collegium in Hungary

Jonathan Cole

Director, Centre for Religion, Ethics and Society

I recently returned from a month-long visiting fellowship at the Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC) in Budapest, Hungary. MCC is both a teaching and research institute that aims to develop the skills and talents of young Hungarians for the purpose of fostering a flourishing Hungarian nation. I joined MCC's vibrant, diverse and extremely interesting cohort of visiting fellows from America, Ireland, France, Poland, Romania, Argentina, Peru and Iran, most working in the field of political philosophy. Each fellow is attached to an academic unit and I was attached to the Applied History and International Relations unit. MCC has 30 regional offices across Hungary and the many Hungarian speaking communities in neighbouring countries, and runs a busy program of lectures, seminars and conferences in all locations.

I was first sent to the small, but charming, resort town of Révfülöp, on Lake Balaton in Central Western Hungary, where I gave a lecture on the psychology of religious extremism to a group of psychology students from different parts of Hungary who had gathered there for a two-day program of lectures and socialising. I was next sent to the town of Győr, in North Western Hungary, to host a seminar on research skills followed by a lecture on great power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific. I also gave a lecture in Budapest on the evolution of the ideology of jihadism and had the good fortune to attend a fascinating conference at Modul University in Vienna on EU expansion, with panels that included the Vice-President of Montenegro and the Serbian Minister for EU Integration. It was fascinating to be part of this discussion as an Australian, particularly to learn of the quite valid complaints from Balkan countries that have diligently been jumping through the hoops of EU membership set by Brussels, only to find that Brussels keeps moving the goal posts and seems to have now gone cold on the idea of Balkan expansion. The new push in Brussels to fast-track Ukraine's EU integration is particularly galling. Panel members from North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia warned that public support for EU integration in the Balkans is beginning to wane. The prospect of Ukraine joining the EU strikes me as a fantasy, but apparently is taken seriously in Brussels. I went to Europe with a strong sense that the EU is a project in deep trouble. I returned even more convinced that this is the case.

By far the most interesting experience of my visit was being sent to the city of Cluj, known in Hungarian as Kolozsvár, in Transylvania, Romania, where I reprised my lecture on great-power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific. The students were all from the Hungarian minority in Cluj-Napoca and it was interesting to speak to them about life and identity as a historic linguistic

minority living in Romania. There are one million Hungarians in Romania and they find themselves in a very complex situation, belonging to a nation in a neighbouring state, persecuted during communist times and now engaged in a project of uneasy integration. The sense of common national identity of Hungarian-speakers not only in Romania, but also amongst Hungarian-speaking minorities in Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine, is very strong. It was rather surprising to learn that there really still are nations in some parts of the world. Hungary is both a state and a nation, and the nation extends beyond the borders of the state. This led me to the insight that Australia, by way of contrast, is a state, but not a nation. The citizens of the state of Australia can and do belong to many different nations, containing many complex mixed national identities, e.g., Turkish-Australian, Chinese-Australian. I noticed that the concept of Hungarian-Romanian was alien to the "Hungarians who live in Romania." The language they used to describe themselves was a "linguistic minority."

The young Hungarians I met in Romania whose parents were persecuted for their linguistic divergence, were all pro-integration, but very worried about rising nationalism in the country, as the Hungarian minority is the main, and traditional, target of Romanian nationalists. The Hungarians of Transylvania are also a religious minority—Catholics and Protestants in an Eastern Orthodox-majority country. There is a magnificent gothic Hungarian Catholic Cathedral in the centre of the city, with a huge monument to the Hungarian king Mathias Corvinus, after whom MCC is named, and who was born in Cluj, then Kolozsvár. One cannot help but notice that the Orthodox churches surrounding it are effectively imposing skyscrapers, towering over the cathedral. This is a very unusual Orthodox architectural style and its ostensible message is not lost on the city's Hungarian-speakers (10% of the population). I found the complexities and challenges of identity, minority status, cultural difference and integration I encountered in Transylvania very salient for me as an Australian, as my homeland, like many other Western countries, grapples with rising tensions around immigration and multiculturalism.

MCC only accepts the top two percent of Hungarian high school graduates, so the students all had excellent English and were exceptionally bright, informed and curious about the world around them, making it a pleasure to teach them. That in combination with the travel opportunities and the interesting Hungarian and visiting academics I was able to meet and spend time with made for a very intellectually enriching experience, for which I am grateful.

The students were all from the Hungarian minority in Cluj and it was interesting to speak to them about life and identity as a historic linguistic minority living in Romania. There are one million Hungarians in Romania and they find themselves in a very complex situation, belonging to a nation in a neighbouring state, persecuted during communist times and now engaged in a project of uneasy integration.



Matthias Church with statue to Matthias Corvinus in the foreground, photo by Jonathan Cole

2025 Research Publications

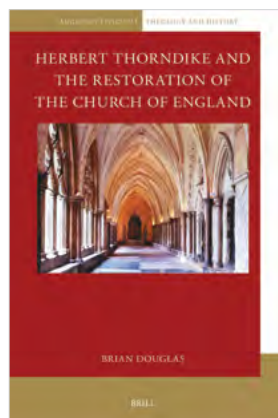
Books

Brian Douglas

[Herbert Thorndike and the restoration of the Church of England](#)

[Douglas, B.](#), 2025, Leiden, The Netherlands: [Brill](#). 284 p. (Anglican/Episcopal Theology and History; vol. 14)

This book features Herbert Thorndike's significant reflection on eucharistic theology, based on ancient realist models recast for the present. It argues that Thorndike's theological methodology was useful in its own time, but also has currency for Anglican and ecumenical theology discourse, particularly in relation to ecclesiology, eucharistic theology and liturgical theology and practice.



Peter Sherlock

[The monuments of Westminster Abbey: Power and memory in early modern Britain](#)

[Sherlock, P.](#), 2025, [Routledge](#). 238 p.

This book explains how Westminster Abbey was transformed from a monastery with royal tombs into one of the most popular sites of commemoration in early modern Europe. It shows the extraordinary impact of the Reformation and the civil wars on the monuments at the Abbey, and how tourism grew to make visiting the monuments one of the most popular amusements in London.

Book chapter (peer-reviewed)

Monica Short

[Celebrating Differences and Generating Togetherness in Social Work Skill-Based Intensives](#)

[Short, M., Mackey, T. & Atherton, E.](#), 29 Jan 2025, (Accepted/In press) *Reimagining Social Work Education in Our Turbulent World*. Baikady, R. (ed.). [Routledge](#)

The research presented in this chapter addresses the overarching question: From the perspective of the person studying social work, how can face-to-face skills-based intensives be designed to celebrate differences and maximise inclusion and accessibility?

Articles

Jonathan Cole

[“Politics and the pulpit are terms that have little agreement”: Edmund Burke’s critique of the political theologian](#)

[Cole, J.](#), 2025, In: [Political Theology](#). 26, 4, p. 348-363 16 p.

Burke was likely the first person to use the term “political theologian” in English, as a term of opprobrium against dissenting preacher Richard Price. This article seeks to explicate the meaning of the term “political theologians” in Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and why Burke regarded the conjunction of politics and theology negatively.

Scott Cowdell

[Trinity beyond revelation, salvation and relationality: On the ‘severe and novel trinitarian doctrine’ of Katherine Sonderegger](#)

[Cowdell, S.](#), May 2025, In: [Journal of Anglican Studies](#). 23, 1, p. 219-226 8 p.

Katherine Sonderegger’s metaphysically engaged scriptural mysticism challenges the Trinitarian revival with its human-focused attention to soteriology and epistemological foundationalism. This article looks at whether Sonderegger has escaped, or merely displaced, these core concerns of modern theology, and whether true knowledge of God and theosis can be had apart from salvation history – a challenge posed by the work of René Girard.

Brian Douglas

[Truth in incarnation and eucharistic repetition: Proportion between things and mind](#)

[Douglas, B.](#), Jul 2025, In: [Religions](#). 16, 7, p. 1-11 11 p., 819.

This article argues that truth can be disclosed and found in incarnation and eucharistic repetition in a proportion between things and mind. Truth as a Christian concept is explored in the Gospel of John, and more specifically in the interaction between Jesus and Pilate, where Pilate at Jesus' trial asks the question: "What is truth?"

Peter Hooton

[Australia's bipolar approach to nuclear disarmament](#)

[Hooton, P.](#), 2025, In: [Australian Journal of International Affairs](#). 79, 2, p. 306-312 7 p.

Research output: Contribution to journal › Article › peer-review

Australia is a strong supporter of global nuclear (and conventional) arms control and non-proliferation measures and has contributed significantly to their development; but it sees the world, strategically, through the eyes of a nuclear weapon state, effectively locking it into what is essentially a nuclear weapon state's view of the future that pays lip-service to nuclear disarmament as a distant ideal. This paper argues that Australian membership of the TPNW would be consistent with its generally positive disarmament record and compatible with its alliance commitments.

Monica Short

[In the thick of it: A candid look at the lived experience of online PhDs with publications or creative works](#)

Prevett, A., [Gersbach, K.](#), [Clatworthy, D.](#), [Dkhar, D.](#), White, T., [Short, M.](#) & [Rush, E.](#), Jul 2025, In: [Australian Educational Researcher](#). 52, 3, p. 2705-2729 25 p.

Drawing on the insights of five online PhD students and their two supervisors in an Australian online program, this article presents perspectives contemporaneous with the online doctoral journey and addresses the research question: What are the strengths and challenges in undertaking a PhD with publication or creative works, and how do these differ according to personal backgrounds and academic disciplines?



Bible Garden at the ACC&C, photo by Liz Jakimow



A Canberra Camino

Paul Oslington

Honorary Research Professor, CRES, ACC&C

Pilgrimage seems to have captured the imagination of Australians who never go near a church or describe themselves as religious. Films such as Martin Sheen's *The Way* (2010) and the Australian Bill Bennett's *The Way, My Way* (2024) have attracted large audiences. The Australian songwriter Dan Mullins' *Somewhere Along the Way* arising from his pilgrimage experience has been in the top 40 and the video version downloaded 110,000 views. His pilgrimage podcast has over 1.5 million downloads. Large numbers of Australians are traveling to Europe to walk the ancient routes in Spain, Portugal and France, including the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. Of the 499,239 who walked the Camino de Santiago in 2024, there were 7,661 Australians. Over half were under 45 with the gender-split slightly in favour of women. Many lives have been changed.

Australians tend to see pilgrimage as something one has to go overseas to experience—at the Camino de Santiago, or Lourdes, Gallipoli or on the Kokoda track. Not only does this misapprehension carry significant financial and ecological burdens, making it inaccessible for many Australians, it prevents us from encountering God in this way in the land we inhabit. One of the lessons our Indigenous brothers and sisters can teach us is that the Holy Spirit has been active in this land for many thousands of years and that Australians should not have to go overseas to connect with God in this way.

My friend Cameron West and I are developing an Australian Camino under the auspices of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. We very much appreciate the support of the acting Executive Director, Professor Peter Sherlock, and permission to use the beautiful mural image of the Holy Spirit by the Indigenous artist Hector Jandanay that the Centre commissioned many years ago. St James Anglican Church in Sydney, taking up the pilgrim calling of its patron saint, is an enthusiastic supporter of this developing pilgrimage route.

After many days of route planning and reflection, Cameron and I walked the Goulburn to Canberra route for the first time with friends at the end of September 2025. We began with a blessing ceremony at St Saviour's Anglican Cathedral in Goulburn, then walked from Spring Valley Catholic Church to Collector, then along Marked Tree Road from Collector to Gundaroo, then from Sutton along Majura Lane then along Mount Majura ridge to Mount Ainslie and into Canberra where we were met at the Centre. Along the way we were interviewed by *The Canberra Times*, and later by ABC radio Canberra.

We want this to be an authentically Australian pilgrimage—instead of ancient cathedrals and the bones of European saints, we have the even more ancient and beautiful Australian landscape.

We want to walk with full consciousness that we share the land with Indigenous peoples who have cared for it for thousands of years. A dream is to partner with local Indigenous communities to make the first night stop out of Goulburn a camp where pilgrims, whether Australians or from overseas, will hear from Indigenous people themselves of their own experience of the land on which the pilgrims walk. It may be a naive hope, but perhaps the camp might contribute to overcoming ignorance and polarisation in wake of the recent failed referendum about an Indigenous voice to our national parliament in Canberra.

Much remains to be done in developing the route, which both Cameron and I are doing in our spare time amidst heavy other commitments. Funding for waymarking, guidebooks, publicity and basic facilities is possible from local tourism boards, philanthropic foundations and crowdfunding. Perhaps we can cover some of the costs by charging pilgrims a nominal fee for their pilgrimage passport, stamps and map, which would go into a trust account.



Photo by Cameron West



Photo by Cameron West



Paul Oslington and Cameron West by the Mural Wall. The Mural Wall of the Holy Spirit in our Land is a mosaic representation of the painting by the late Hector Jandany, renowned Elder, Lawman and painter of the Gija people (East Kimberley). The Holy Spirit is depicted in the form of the white owl of the Gija people. The Mural Wall is located on the grounds of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.



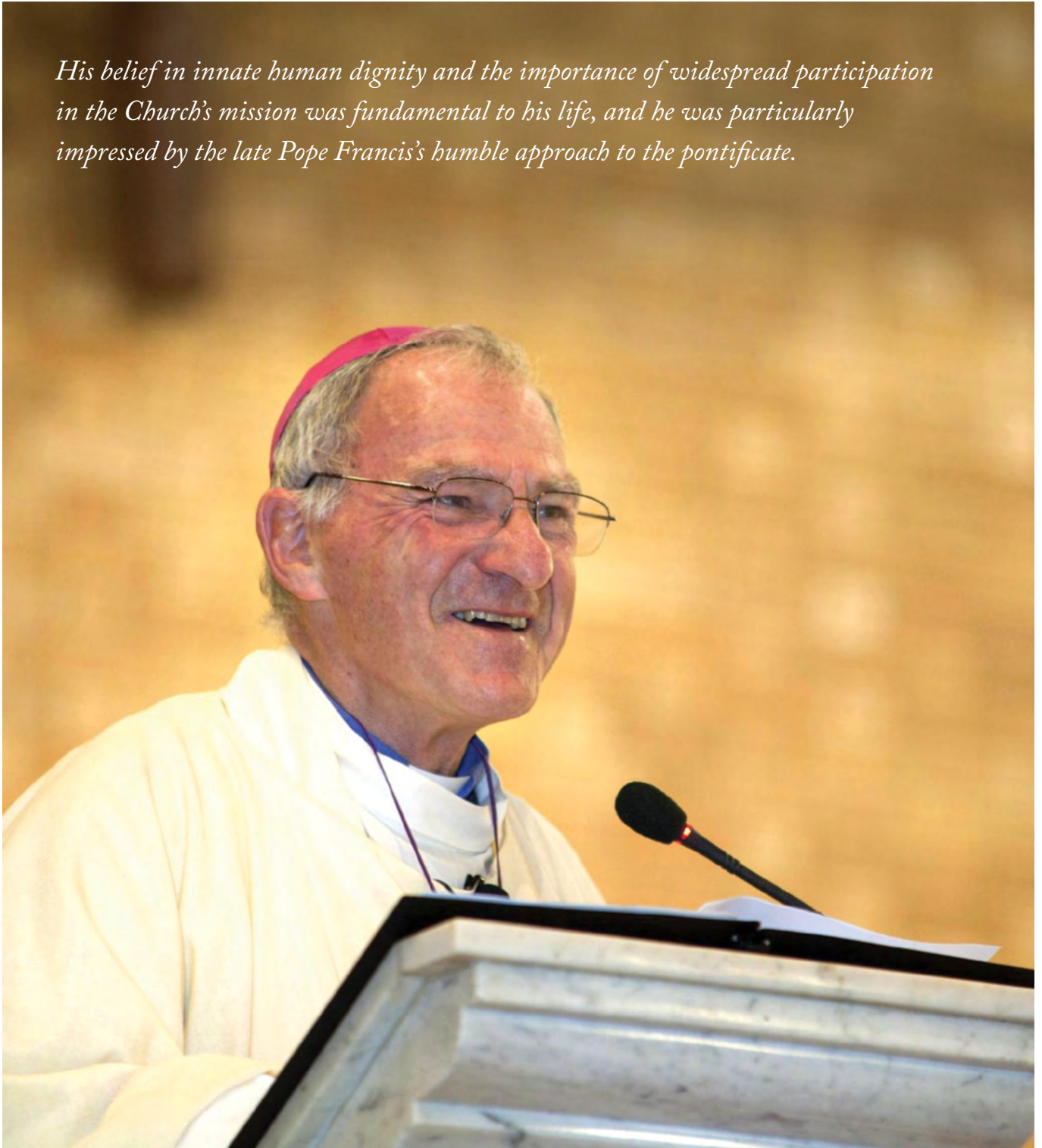
Canberra Camino route

One of the lessons our Indigenous brothers and sisters can teach us is that the Holy Spirit has been active in this land for many thousands of years and that Australians should not have to go overseas to connect with God in this way.

The Most Revd Patrick Percival Power (1942 – 2025)

On 15 September, Bishop Pat Power, died, aged 83. Not only was Bishop Pat a well-loved figure amongst Canberrans, particularly the Catholic community, but he played a role in the establishment of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. Genevieve Jacobs, Bishop George Browning and Clive Rodgers share their reflections on the man, his legacy and his contribution to the ACC&C.

His belief in innate human dignity and the importance of widespread participation in the Church's mission was fundamental to his life, and he was particularly impressed by the late Pope Francis's humble approach to the pontificate.





Genevieve Jacobs

ACC&C Board Member

(This article was originally published in *Region*.)

Catholic auxiliary Bishop Pat Power, beloved for his compassion, humility and deep love for his community, died on 15 September at the age of 83 after a long illness.

A local to his bootstraps, his focus was always on elevating human dignity and combating human suffering through love and practical action.

He had been a priest for 60 years, working consistently with people struggling at the margins, from refugees to Indigenous Australians and those living in poverty in the national capital.

Of his time working with the Causeway community, he told the archdiocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Voice*, "Most of them wouldn't have gone to Mass, but they had a great heart for each other. That's what being a Christian and a Catholic is all about—looking out for one another."

Bishop Power offered strong and consistent support to those he believed had been marginalised by the actions of our own and other governments, including the East Timorese and Palestinian people.

In 2000, Bishop Power chaired a major ACT Government enquiry into poverty in Canberra and also worked consistently on dialogue across Christian and interfaith communities.

In 2012, he retired early from his role as an auxiliary bishop, deeply troubled by clerical sex abuse, which he called "a terrible stain on the church."

He said the Vatican's habit of secrecy provided conditions for abuse to thrive, creating the gravest crisis faced by the Church since the 16th-century Reformation.

Criticising the Church's tendency towards "tinkering around the edges," Bishop Power called for the Catholic hierarchy to address the authoritarian nature of the Church, the participation of women, clergy celibacy and teaching on sexuality. The leadership must hear the voices of the faithful, he said.

He believed – and said publicly – much of the promise held out by the reforming Vatican II Council of the 1960s had been lost beneath attempts to reclaim hierarchical authority.

His belief in innate human dignity and the importance of widespread participation in the Church's mission was fundamental to his life, and he was particularly impressed by the late Pope Francis's humble approach to the pontificate.

Bishop Power's willingness to make his criticism of church leadership public was a rarity, matched as it was by a deep and faithful commitment to service. It was a courageous approach to leadership that did not always appeal to the institution's

upper echelons but won him deep admiration from many in the pews and clergy who agreed with him.

His advocacy wasn't limited to church matters, however. He also had time for the profound matters of state, including the South Sydney Rabbitohs' return to the NRL competition.

Patrick Percival Power, always known simply as Father Pat, was born in Cooma but raised in Queanbeyan. He always identified himself as a son of "Struggle Town," where some of his happiest years were spent as the parish priest, including welcoming Mother Teresa to a packed St Raphael's in 1981.

He was educated at St Christopher's School, St Edmund's College in Canberra and Chevalier College Bowral before training for the priesthood at St Columba's College in Springwood and St Patrick's College in Manly.

He was ordained in Queanbeyan on 17 July 1965 and said of his call to the priesthood that he had never regretted a day. Priesthood for him was a "two-way street," where he learned from his congregations, including time spent in Braidwood, Canberra and Goulburn.

In 1972, he went to Rome to study for his doctorate in canon law, returning to roles in Canberra as the archbishop's secretary and director of the marriage tribunal, bringing with him great compassion for human relationships and their struggles.

In 1986, he was consecrated bishop by Archbishop Francis Carroll in St Christopher's Cathedral, Canberra, becoming the fifth Auxiliary Bishop of Canberra–Goulburn and the first to be born in the archdiocese.

During his time as bishop, he travelled across the archdiocese to churches like my own, St Brigid's at Quandialla, a long way from the centres of power in Canberra.

His life of service to the community was recognised in 2009, when he was named Canberra's Citizen of the Year.

In a statement, Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn Christopher Prowse said Bishop Power died at Southern Cross Campbell Residential Care in Canberra.

"Bishop Pat, a quintessential Canberran, was a priest for 60 years and a bishop for 39 years. He was loved and revered as an outspoken supporter of the poor and marginalised," he wrote.

Bishop Pat will be missed by many whose lives he touched with his generous spirit, his warmth and his deep love for his fellow human beings, whoever they were and wherever they came from.



Bishop George Browning

Former Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn

On the cross, Jesus, the eternal Word of God, took the brokenness of the created order, including you and me, to himself for its and our healing and redemption. Every time Bishop Pat celebrated mass all that brokenness was present.

What is, sadly, almost unique, Bishop Pat also celebrated mass in the manner of his life. He took the brokenness of so many into himself for their healing and redemption. The list is all encompassing: Australia's first nations people, refugees, the homeless, the broken within his brothers of the priesthood, the creation itself, the voiceless and the victims of white aggression and colonisation. More recently he spoke fearlessly for Palestinians.

He was an ecumenist because he also took to himself the brokenness of the Church. There are two iconic pictures of him that I will never forget. One was at the entrance to the chapel of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture following a service marking the commencement of a new parliamentary year. He confronted then Prime Minister John Howard about his taking Australia, without justification and reason, into the Iraq war. It was an intense exchange which enjoyed wide media carriage. It probably cost the Centre the opportunity of ever hosting the parliamentary service again, but speaking truth to power is never without cost.

The other is a photo on the front page of *The Canberra Times* one Easter which pictures Pat and me sitting in front of Lake Burley Griffin with a loaf of bread and a bottle of wine between us. I cannot remember the caption, but it might well have read: "There is only one loaf and only one cup from which to drink."

Pat had no direct role in the establishment of the ACC&C, but he was a champion of the vision from the outset. The official role was courageously taken by Archbishop Francis Carroll, without whose leadership the commencement of the Centre would certainly have faltered.

It is important to say that Archbishop Francis (Father Frank) had the courage and generosity of spirit to provide the space for Pat to be the priest and bishop he was. Such courage and humility, sadly, is too infrequently present. It is such courage and humility which enables the Church to be what it is called to be, the Body of Christ.

I adored and admired both men. An anecdote might illustrate their difference and complementarity. A vehicle accident took both to hospital, Father Frank to Queanbeyan and Pat to Woden. I visited them both on the same day. First, Father Frank in Queanbeyan. He had a small, darkened room at the end of a corridor. His chaplain was there when I arrived, asking if he could arrange a TV so he might watch the footy etc. He was told this would not be necessary. His missal and other reading material was clearly enough. I count Father Frank as one of the godliest and most Christlike of men I have been privileged to know. He was a great blessing to me. We met often at his home or mine.

I then went to see Pat in Woden. The TV was on, he was sitting up cheerfully in bed regaling the room full of people, as was his wont. I was enthusiastically welcomed and introduced. He then quickly said "we are about to celebrate mass, you will of course stay, and I would like you to read the gospel."

Pat and I were born in the same year and had been in episcopal orders for roughly the same time (I slightly longer). Being a bishop inevitably means a measure of loneliness and inability to share confidantialities etc. Pat was perhaps the closest confidant I had in my 15 years in the Diocese. I will forever be profoundly grateful

Rest in Peace, dear friend. I pray, for the sake of the Church and the world, we will see your like again.

What is, sadly, almost unique, Bishop Pat also celebrated mass in the manner of his life. He took the brokenness of so many into himself for their healing and redemption. The list is all encompassing: Australia's first nations people, refugees, the homeless, the broken within his brothers of the priesthood, the creation itself, the voiceless and the victims of white aggression and colonisation.



Clive Rodger

Former ACC&C Board Member

Although the Deed of Agreement between the Anglican Diocese of Cameron Goulburn and Charles Sturt University was signed in June 1998, there were five years of intensive preparation that laid the foundation for the vision, mission and proposed operation of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. Father Pat was a pivotal figure in that development.

There were many developments that made the Centre possible. These included: the leases on the land needing consolidation and enlargement; an architectural competition led by Ridley Smith and Mal Prior for the design of the Centre's buildings including the Great Space; clarifying the purpose, vision and mission of the Centre and deciding on its governance structure. Oversight of these activities was done by a committee headed by Ian Nicol AM who was responsible for drafting the Deed. Father Pat (his preferred title) was a member of that committee, along with leaders from the major churches in Canberra.

Father Pat was an enthusiastic supporter of the Centre—always clear and forthright, yet humble and not self-opinionated. He contributed from a deeply felt ecumenical heart, a profound understanding of Australian identity and an ability to envision in the National Capital how Christianity could be represented to the nation as a meaningful and important part of our lives. Father Pat respected others' views and listened with an open heart, never forgetting those that society tended to leave out or had oppressed. Father Pat was a social reformer at the grassroots level. He strove for social justice, fairness and privileging of the poor. In so many ways Bishop Pat Power embodied what the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture stands for.

Thank you, Father Pat, for being part of the establishment committee for the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.

Father Pat was an enthusiastic supporter of the Centre—always clear and forthright, yet humble and not self-opinionated. He contributed from a deeply felt ecumenical heart, a profound understanding of Australian identity and an ability to envision in the National Capital how Christianity could be represented to the nation as a meaningful and important part of our lives.



Bishop Pat Power at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture on St Patrick's Day (second from left), along with: harpist Madeleine Johnson; Rev David Campbell of Presbyterian Church of St Andrews; Bishop Stephen Pickard, former Executive Director ACC&C; Rev Alistair Christie of Uniting Church in Australia; Major Eileen Holley of Salvation Army and Karen Brown, Coordinator of Christian Education in Schools.

World Humanitarian Day at ACC&C

Liz Jakimow

Communications Officer, ACC&C

On World Humanitarian Day, a moving service was held on the grounds of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture to honour the dedication, courage, and sacrifice of humanitarian aid workers. Wreaths were laid at the base of the Monument for Humanitarian Aid Workers, which stands just outside the Bible Gardens overlooking Lake Burley Griffin.

The event was organised by Caritas Australia, in partnership with Micah Australia and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), drawing together faith leaders, government representatives and humanitarian organisations. Their presence paid tribute to the fearless commitment and courage shown by humanitarian aid workers in places of conflict.

Among those who spoke or attended were: The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, Minister for Small Business, International Development and Multicultural Affairs; Matthew Maury, CEO of ACFID; Samir

Bennegadi of Islamic Relief Australia; His Eminence Mykola Cardinal Bychok, Bishop for Ukrainian Catholics in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania; Associate Professor Matthew Zagor of the Jewish Council of Australia; and Kirsten Sayers, CEO of Caritas Australia.

Speakers acknowledged the risks faced by humanitarian workers and the cost of their service—especially in places of conflict, displacement, and disaster. The gathering honoured those who have died and stood in solidarity with those still serving.

The service was not only meaningful in itself, but a reminder that the grounds of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture continue to offer space for people of all faiths or none. It is a place to share, reflect and stand together in moments of significance.



Photos provided by the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)



Change of leadership at the Canberra Interfaith Forum

Dean Sahu Khan

President of the Canberra Interfaith Forum

In 1991, a group of us met at the Brahma Kumari Centre in Wisdom Street, Curtin, to discuss how we could make an impact amongst people of different faiths. This team comprised of a Christian lady Elma Armstrong, a Jewish representative Dr Anita Shoot, Robyn Horton representing Brama Kumari and myself as representative for the Islamic faith.

Outside this group, there were people who had a very pessimistic approach about the purpose and what we were trying to achieve. However, we four had a vision and a determination to succeed.

With that determination, we eventually formed and had Canberra Interfaith Forum (CIF) registered. After registration, it was a requirement to hold elections for office bearers. One such position, amongst others, was for a President (Chair). I felt honoured to be unanimously voted in as the first President of the Canberra Interfaith Forum.

When we started, there were only a few faith representatives. Gradually, that number has grown. Today we have 12 different faiths represented on the CIF – a vision come true. As the president I always insisted that people show respect towards each other and their respective faiths. There was, under my Presidentship, no compromise on that.

In addition, I held a very strong view that if anyone was joining or planning to join the CIF with the ultimate motive to convert others to their faith, then they were in the wrong place.

As time progressed, my affection, attachment and commitment grew. So much so I treated the CIF as my “adopted child.” I have been the President continuously for years. As there was a unanimous decision to keep me in that position, I felt I was accepted as their leader. I knew my stepping down from the position and not seeking re-election would come as a surprise to all. Therefore, I did not give any such indication of my decision prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) as I did not want to be talked into remaining in the role. At the AGM I made it abundantly clear that “I was not jumping a sinking ship.” The Canberra Interfaith Forum was and is at its peak.

At the AGM I also spoke and noted that a good leader is one who finds a successor in his lifetime. I was there to look after the interest of the CIF. It was not about me. It was about the CIF.

I informed the members present that I would be there should I be needed. Also, I noted that no individual is indispensable. Continuing to have the interest of CIF in my heart, I nominated a very capable person, Amardeep Singh, as the new president.

Amardeep Singh has been a member of the executive board of the Canberra Interfaith Forum since 2012-2013. During his time there, he has organised various interfaith dialogues and public events such as the Day of Tolerance. Amardeep is also a solutions consultant, community advocate, human rights activist and passionate nature lover.

Unfortunately, today so many atrocities are carried out under the banner of religion. That is a result of ignorance about each other's faith. The purpose of the CIF is to educate people about different faiths. By doing so, we hope to contribute to peace in the world, which comes about through knowledge and understanding rather than ignorance.

In concluding, I want to thank CIF for what it taught and gave me. I thank each and everyone for their continuing support throughout the years. I also wish Amardeep Singh all the best as he takes on the role. I know he will provide good leadership for the CIF going forward, as it goes from strength to strength.



Dean Sahu Khan at the Multifaith Commonwealth Day Celebration at the ACC&C. Photo by Liz Jakimow.



Spiritus Short film Prize Awards

Sarah Stitt

Corporate Services and Events Officer

November is short film festival time and the Centre hosted the *Spiritus* Short Film Prize Awards at Dendy Cinemas Canberra. Since forming the partnership with the Canberra Short Film Festival in 2021, the *Spiritus* Short Film Prize Awards has become a highlight of the ACC&C event calendar.

This year there were a record number of submissions with the judges choosing nine finalists:

Autopsia – Philipp Kowalski

Broken Homes – Eleanor Evans and Giovanni Aguilar

He Was a Good Man – Alison Stanton-Cook

Not Alone – Momo Cao

Finding Hope – Matt Carson-Drever

Listen – Holly Winter and Riley Sapsford

Ranch Motel – Damian McLindon

What If I Told You the World Revolves Around Dung Beetles –
Nou de Souza

Bird Drone – Radheya Jang Jegatheva

All finalists are considered winners, especially when the films are viewed on the big screen. Watching films in a large format is a completely different experience to watching them on personal devices, as avid filmgoers will attest.

The Awards evening generated a feeling of excitement. It was a gala event, with one person dressed in black tie. The audience arrived, films were viewed and all present enthusiastically engaged in the drum roll as the awards were announced. Following the presentation, everyone was invited to gather for a reception. Filmmakers were congratulated and had the opportunity to meet with judges, sponsors and Centre representatives, along with members of the Canberra community and organisers of the Canberra Short Film Festival.

The 2025 winning films focused on caring for the vulnerable, grief, breakdown of family relations and the confusion of being a teenager—imagine being asked, “What if I told you the world revolves around dung beetles?” Who would have thought? Filmmaker Nou de Souza, winner of the 18 and Under award, shared that his film started out as a school project and morphed into much more, “a way to find self-expression and communication through art.” Alison Stanton-Cook expressed gratitude that one of the judges picked up on the connection to the emotion conveyed in her film, *He Was A Good Man*,

which was awarded the Commended award, along with her filmmaking folding into her work as an intimacy coordinator.

Damian McLindon, winner of the Open award with *The Ranch Motel*, shared that the award money will go some way toward assisting with expanding the film. He expressed pleasure that the judges grasped the film’s intention with Genevieve Jacobs writing, “...The film illustrated humanity, hope and compassion but also, in the motel’s imminent closure, a recognition there are no easy solutions for long term homelessness, often accompanied by very complex co-morbidities.”

Eleanor Evans and Giovanni Aguilar, a filmmaking couple who work in animation creating visual content for songs, received a Highly Commended award for *Broken Homes*. Genevieve also noted it “was an innovative and effective piece of simple filmmaking, illustrating the song beautifully while addressing a difficult issue for parents and children.”

If there was a people’s choice, it would have been *Bird Drone* by Radheya Jang Jegatheva, a clever beautifully-crafted animation about a one-eyed seagull who befriends a drone. The film depicted commentary on difference through humour and emotion.

The *Spiritus* award recipients all expressed their appreciation that their films were being seen by a wider audience, but even more that the stories and the subjects conveyed through the medium of short film can make an impact.

Entries for the *Spiritus* Short Film Prize awards open in January 2026. Place November in your diary to attend the 2026 *Spiritus* Short Film Prize Awards event. We hope to see you there.



Clive and Lynlea Rodger, Sarah Stitt, Peter Sherlock, photo by Ben Coultas-Roberts



Ben Coultas-Roberts, Sarah Stitt, Peter Sherlock, photo by Clive Rodger



Eleanor Evans and Giovanni Aguilar, photo by Clive Rodger



HE Maximo Gowland, Argentine Ambassador (Spiritus judge), Giovanni Aguilar and Eleanor Evans (Highly Commended winners), Elizabeth Quinn (CSFF), David Smith MP and his wife Liesl Centenera, Miriam Pickard (Spiritus judge), photo by Clive Rodger

Andrew Morrissey (21.5.62 - 2.5.24)

Lisa Morrissey

Widow of Andrew Morrissey

Andrew was born and raised in Canberra, where he spent his entire life. A skilled tradesman, he worked in the building industry for many years before specialising in tiling in the 1990s. Always drawn to a challenge, he took great pride in working on intricate and detailed projects.

In 1998, Andrew was offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work at the Australian War Memorial, restoring the mosaic in the Hall of Memory. This extraordinary project involved travelling to Venice to source the original glass and then spending the next two years meticulously repairing the mural. The restoration was overseen by International Conservation Services and led to further prestigious projects, including the restoration of St Andrew's Cathedral and other significant heritage works across Australia. It was during this time that he also had the honour of meeting Sir William Deane.

When Sir William later approached Andrew about the Mural Wall of the Holy Spirit in Our Land, he instinctively understood how to bring the vision to life. Using a kiln, clay, an extruder, and hand-made cutting tools, Andrew crafted thousands upon thousands of individual tiles for the installation.

When Sir William later approached Andrew about the Mural Wall of the Holy Spirit in Our Land, he instinctively understood how to bring the vision to life.



Mural Wall, created by the mosaic artist Andrew Morrissey. Photo by Liz Jakimow

He was again deeply honoured to be asked to work on The Humanitarian Monument in the Centre's Bible Garden—an artwork dedicated to all deceased Australians and members of Australian aid organisations who served in international humanitarian efforts. As a deeply personal touch, Andrew incorporated a photograph of his and my hands into the design—something our family will always hold dear.



Photos supplied by the author

KYRIE ELEISON

Destruction, beauty and hope in the brand new
body of work by Michael Galovic



Initially inspired by the September 11 event, these artworks transcend one single event and refer to all destruction done by man to his fellow humans.

The imagery of graphic ruination is juxtaposed and intertwined with the solemn beauty of medieval art of icons and frescoes.

Through depictions of the Crucifixion, Deposition from the Cross, Lamentation, the artist reminds us of the death of The Son of Man while paying tribute to the timeless beauty of the sacred art.

The innate propensity of mankind for harm and devastation may seem hopeless for the future of our kind. The title of this most unusual series of artworks with its last piece gives us an answer.

Michael Galovic is an iconographer and artist. You can find out more about him and see some of his beautiful works at michaelgalovic.com

12 – 20
MARCH

10.30–3.30 12–20 March (artist-in-situ),
23 March – 16 April, by appointment on weekdays

The Chapel, Australian Centre for Christianity and
Culture, 15 Blackall Street, Barton ACT

See our website for further details – acc-c.org.au



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE
WISDOM FOR THE COMMON GOOD



Charles Sturt
University

Upcoming Events

HG Brennan Economics and Theology Lecture

Michael Brennan
29 January 2026



Multifaith Commonwealth Day Service

9 March 2026



Kyrie Eleison

Exhibition by Michael Galovic
12-20 March 2026



Ecumenical Way of the Cross

3 April 2026



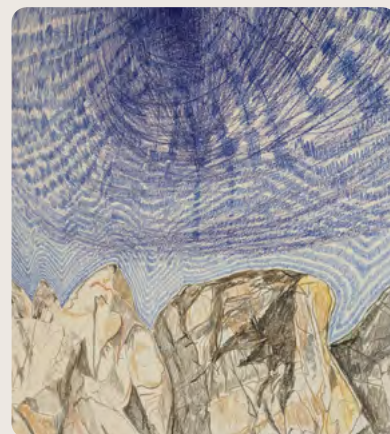
ANZAC Eve Peace Vigil

24 April 2026



Beyond - Art exhibition

27 April to 16 May



The Centre is unique in Australia. It began in 1998 as an ecumenical venture for engagement with Australian culture and the issues of the day. It was established through a partnership between Charles Sturt University and the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. It is situated at the eastern edge of the Parliamentary Triangle in Canberra on a 99-year lease to the University which currently provides the major source of its funding.



Charles Sturt
University

www.acc-c.org.au

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The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture brings the ancient wisdom of Christian theology and spirituality into dialogue with the contemporary world through research, engagement and creativity.

We welcome your prayerful and practical support:

For more information, visit about.csu.edu.au/community/accc/get-involved

Prayer for the Centre

God, powerful and gentle,
You love this southern land
And all its peoples, old and new.
As the cross shines in the heavens
So may Christ bring light to our nation,
As the waves encircle our shores
So may your mercy enfold us.

May the God who formed our southern land
Be for us a rock and strength.
May the God who rules our southern seas
Keep us safe from every storm.
May the God who made the southern skies turn
Our darkness into light.

As Canberra is a meeting place
Central to the Government of Australia,
So may this Centre be a true meeting place
Where all God's people may gather in a spirit of prayer,
A spirit of unity of minds and hearts; and
Where we may share in the very Communion of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Archbishop Francis Carroll

