

ENGAGE

December 2019 Issue 2

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Attendees of the 8th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality.

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Image: Triptych: Annunciation / Nativity / Crucifixion, oil on canvas, 82cm x 203cm by Oscar Towa. Donated by David and Alison Sloper to the ACC&C and on display at George Browning House., Canberra.

Quietly Radical? The Centre at 21



It's hard to believe the Centre celebrates 21 years since it was established in 1998. The vision for the engagement of Christian faith with public life within a secular university still burns bright. It constitutes a remarkable and unique collaboration at the intersection of the academy, church and public space. Over the past two decades the Centre has been well served by some

wonderful people and generous donors. The university's motto 'For the Public Good' resonates with the Centre's tag line 'Wisdom for the Common Good'. This focus is given concrete expression through the programs and activities of the Four Pillars: peace through new religious engagements; wisdom for civil society; institutional resilience and ethical leadership; and creativity through

richly diverse society is rising like the tide. The Centre seeks to serve this new thing. And it does so from the riches of the past and in company with all those who long for a new day when God shall be all in all. It is such a hope that fills our hearts and minds at this season of Advent as we celebrate the Christian mysteries of the coming of God symbolised by a stable. From this place of weakness was born a not so quiet radical movement; if the gospels are anything to go on!

As we come to the end of 2019 I wish to record my thanks to the wonderful staff, volunteers, members of the Board, donors and supporters of the Centre.

May the love of God known in Jesus Christ be a blessing for you this Christmas tide.

Grace and Peace

Stephen

Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard

Executive Director

Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

Merry Christmas

We've had some good feedback since our launch of *Engage* in August and word is spreading about the events and conversations happening at the Centre. We were very glad to give out copies of our first issue to attendees of the 8th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality.

The conference was a huge success and there were 170 people from seven countries in attendance. You can watch some of the addresses from the conference on our Youtube account. See the story on page 4-5 for more details.

We have partnered with many organisations over the last few months to host events which you can read about in full.

Warmly,

Katherine Waite

Editor



"The spiritual hunger for meaning, purpose and hope springs eternal. We are living in a time of great transitions; a fresh and vibrant post secular, pluralist and richly diverse society is rising like the tide."

the arts, sciences and culture. The red thread connecting these is reconciliation: with First Peoples of the country; faith and the moral and ethical imperatives that sustain our public life; dialogue and learning between the religions for social well-being. Indeed the list could go on.

At 21 the Centre has matured and grown in reach and influence with thousands of people participating in its life: pilgrims, seekers, the curious, the young, old, fellow travellers in search of something new and refreshing. The work of the Centre is a small example of what we believe is needful at this time in our country. There is a deep and abiding spiritual longing that refuses to be satisfied by the materialism and consumerism that knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. The spiritual hunger for meaning, purpose and hope springs eternal. We are living in a time of great transitions; a fresh and vibrant post secular, pluralist and



"The fact...that the Inquiry's Terms of Reference mention neither the victims of human slavery nor the Act's role in preventing the enslavement of people is disturbing."

Left to right: Carolyn Kitto (Be Slavery Free), The Hon Shayne Mallard MLC (chair of the Standing Committee on Social Issues, undertaking the Inquiry), James Dunlop (Oxfam). Photograph supplied.

All we want for Christmas is... a NSW Modern Slavery Act?

By Katherine Waite, ACC&C

The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) has urged the NSW Government to proceed with the NSW Modern Slavery Act (MSA).

The NSW Modern Slavery Act (MSA) had passed the lower and upper house of the NSW Parliament in June 2018, and received royal assent, but the NSW Government recently deferred the bill indefinitely and sent it to an inquiry.

The ACC&C made a submission to the parliament inquiry as well as signed a joint submission organised by Be Slavery Free (formerly known as STOP THE TRAFFIK).

"The ACC&C strongly supports the Modern Slavery Act 2018. However, the NSW Government's failure so far to enact the legislation, and its decision instead to send the Act to the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues for review, raises concerns about the Government's commitment to the Act's implementation," the ACC&C submission read.

"The fact, furthermore, that the Inquiry's Terms of Reference mention neither the victims of human slavery nor the Act's role in preventing the enslavement of people is

disturbing. It suggests that the Committee's focus is not fundamentally on the intent of the Act, which is 'to combat modern slavery' and 'to provide assistance and support for victims of modern slavery.'"

The 2018 Modern Slavery Act had been seen as the strongest in the world with its appointment of an anti-slavery commissioner, the obligation for companies with a turnover of \$50m or more to publicly report modern slavery statements as well as introduce new NSW offences of slavery, servitude and child forced labour, and child forced marriage.

The ACC&C had also joined 40 other signatories in the Be Slavery Free submission which made nine recommendations including "a clear timeline for the implementation be disclosed by the Government as soon as possible, enabling the Act to come into effect on 1 January 2020."

Submissions to the committee closed on 4 October, and a one day hearing was held on 4 November in Sydney to hear evidence from organisations who had made a submission.

The committee is due to report back on 14

February 2020.

In its submission to the inquiry, the NSW government argued that the law was not properly drafted and since the commonwealth's Modern Slavery Act came into force on 1 January 2019, the NSW government told the inquiry that, given similar federal legislation, "the question arises as to whether the NSW act is, in whole or in part, still necessary".

8th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality a success

By Katherine Waite, ACC&C

More than 170 people attended the 8th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality held 27 – 30 October in Canberra.

The event was hosted by the Colloquium for Ageing Perspectives and Spirituality (CAPS) at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C), Charles Sturt University. The Centre for Public and Contextual Theology (PaCT) was an official partner of the Conference.

This year's conference was themed 'Changing Cultures of Ageing and Spirituality' and had delegates from seven countries. There were pre-conference workshops held on Sunday at the Chapel at the ACC&C before the conference began at Old Parliament House on Monday. There were keynote addresses on dementia, spirituality, the Royal Commission into Aged Care and New Aged Care Quality Standards for Australia as well as 23 concurrent papers and eight workshop sessions.



Professor Emeritus Mary Marshall and Professor Emeritus Faith Gibson from HammondCare gave a workshop on enabling people with dementia to continue to participate in the life and worship of the church. Photograph by Sarah Stitt.



Glenda Cloughley, Johanna McBride and Meg Rigby from A Chorus of Women sing at the Welcome Reception on Sunday night. Photograph by Katherine Waite.



Ngunnawal elder Tina Brown did the welcome to country and a smoking ceremony at the welcome reception. Photograph by Sarah Stitt.



The ACT's Minister for Seniors and Veterans Gordon Ramsay MLA welcomed attendees. Photograph by Sarah Stitt.



Dr Alan Niven gave the dinner address on Monday 28 October. He spoke on "What ritual teaches us about life, humour and ageing: Or should that be the other way around?"



Plenary speakers L to R: Australian political journalist Paul Bongiorno AM, Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard, Ilsa Hampton from Meaningful Ageing Australia and Director of St Mark's National Theological Centre Rev Dr Andrew Cameron. Photograph by Sarah Stitt.



Rev Andrew Nixon and Lorrie Beattie at HammondCare's stall. Photograph by Sarah Stitt.

Industry organisations, HammondCare, Bethanie, Catholic Healthcare and Anglicare, sponsored keynote presenters.

PaCT sponsored the interfaith panel discussion moderated by ABC Soul Search presenter Dr Meredith Lake on Wednesday 30 October 2019 where Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish representatives discussed spirituality and ageing from their faith perspectives.

Keynote presenters Rev Professor Elizabeth MacKinlay and Professor Kalyani Mehta along with Mahjabeen Ahmad were interviewed by Dr Lake for the ABC Soul Search program. The program went to air on 17 November 2019 and the interview can be listened to online 'God in the golden years'.



Professor Kalyani Mehta, Mahjabeen Ahmad and Dr Meredith Lake. Photograph by Sarah Stitt.



Daphne Johnston from the USA in front of her poster presentation. Photograph by Sarah Stitt.



Chorus of Women perform at the Welcome Reception on Sunday 27 October 2019 in the Chapel at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. Photograph by Katherine Waite.



Major Janee Sawyer from New Zealand and Captain Erica Cossington from Western Australia. Photograph by Sarah Stitt.



Professor John Swinton gave a keynote address on Monday 28 October titled "Re-imagining Personhood: Dementia, Culture and Citizenship". Photograph by Sarah Stitt.



CAPS Director receives book award

By Katherine Waite, ACC&C

Congratulations to the Wicking Chair of Ageing and Practical Theology and Director of the Colloquium for Ageing Perspectives and Spirituality (CAPS) at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Professor Bruce Stevens, who was recently awarded for his book, *The Storied Self: A Narrative Approach to the Spiritual Care of the Aged*.

Professor Stevens received the Australasian Journal of Ageing (AJA) Book Award 2019 at the 52nd Australian Association of Gerontology National Conference in Sydney on 7 November 2019.

To be eligible for the award the book had to be: related to the topic of ageing; published between 2017 and 2019; written in English; edited or authored by a resident of the Asia/Pacific Region; relevant to the Australasian region and readable and original.

The Australasian Journal of Ageing Associate Editor (Book Reviews) Professor Yvonne Wells said 'the judging panel believed the book filled a gap as there is not enough attention to working with older people's spirituality and hoped that giving the prize to this book would raise awareness of the importance of spirituality to the experience of ageing.'

One book award reviewer said Professor Stevens' book had 'potential to transform

practice, broaden thinking, and deepen care relationships...The overall tone is empowering and encouraging, highlighting the potential for the vital importance of spiritual growth in ageing and the final stages of life.'

Another reviewer said it was 'a necessary, inspiring and beautifully written book...The book offers a unique insight.'

Professor Stevens concluded his role as Wicking Chair and CAPS Director this month. He moves back to private practice and will be based at the Centre for two days a week to do research.

The Order of Australia Association (ACT Branch) 2019 Multi-Faith Observance

By Mike Crane, Chairman of the ACT Branch of the Association

On Sunday 18 August, the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture hosted the Order of Australia Association's 2019 Multi-Faith Observance. The Association aims to foster a love of and pride in Australian citizenship, and the Observance is one of its principal community outreach activities in the Canberra region. The Observance celebrates the diversity of the Australian community and recognises that no one faith can be the source of all wisdom or truth. Although it is sponsored by the Order of Australia Association, the Observance is open to all Canberrans.

In 2019, the theme of the Observance was Together in Friendship. The centerpiece of the very simple service was a series of readings and reflections given by members of the various faiths represented, including moderator Right Reverend Professor Stephen Pickard (Christian tradition), Rabbi Shmueli Feldman (Jewish), Dr Natalie Mobini (Baha'i Faith), Dr Muhammed Aksu (Muslim), Venerable Tenpa Bejanke Duim (Buddhist) and Prakash Mehta (Hindu). Pianist Dr Lorraine Macknight led the assembly in a selection of poignant songs and hymns. Following the Observance, the speakers joined the audience for afternoon tea and fellowship.

The Observance is always uplifting and demonstrates that there is more uniting Australians than there is setting them apart. The Association looks forward to this inspiring experience again in 2020 and welcomes all members of the Canberra faith community to join us.



Dr Natalie Mobini, Venerable Tenpa Bejanke Duim, Dr Muhammed Aksu, Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard, Prakash Mehta and Rabbi Shmueli Feldman. Photograph supplied.

Altruists Without Borders: The Concept of Service in Contemporary Society - Interfaith Panel and Book launch

By Muhammed Aksu, Bluestar Intercultural Centre

On 29 August, the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and Bluestar Intercultural Centre hosted Professor of the History of Christianity Jon Pahl from the United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia for a panel and book launch for his book, *Fethullah Gulen: A Life of Hizmet*.

Professor Pahl's book explores the life of controversial Muslim scholar Fethullah Gulen and his role in inspiring one of the largest Muslim movements in the world. The panel consisted of Professor Pahl, and local interfaith personalities Harry Oppermann and Shan Gunawardena representing the three Abrahamic faiths. Each looked at the idea of altruism in their faith traditions and how the story of Fethullah Gulen reflected these ideas and challenges.

It was a great exploration of what faith traditions need to do to remain relevant today and how serving humanity is conditional on all believers.



Professor of the History of Christianity Jon Pahl from the United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia discusses his book *Fethullah Gulen: A Life of Hizmet*. Photo supplied.

World Humanitarian Day

By Cigi Surrao, United Nations Information Centre Canberra

The sound of bagpipes echoed in the Chapel at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) on 19 August 2019 as guests gathered to commemorate humanitarian workers killed and injured in the line of duty, while honouring those who continue to work tirelessly to provide life-saving support to people most in need.

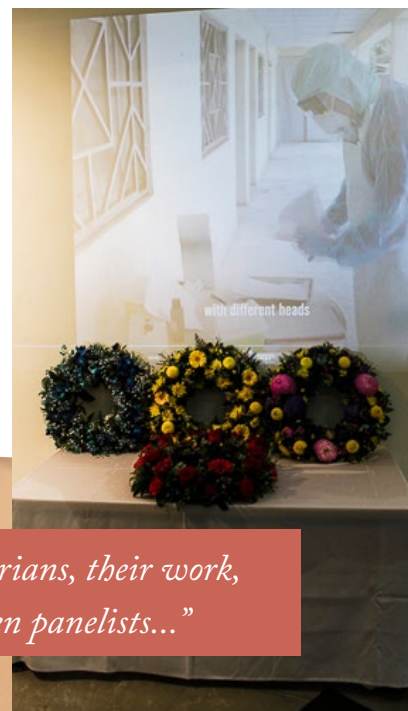
The event commenced with the UN Secretary General's message read by Louise Aubin, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative and Acting Director of United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), followed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) message delivered by the Head of ICRC Leonard Blazeby. The representative from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Clare Walsh acknowledged the work of millions of women humanitarians who have and still are changing lives across the globe.

Keeping in line with the theme of the day – to salute women humanitarians, their work, experiences and stories – the event was adorned by three powerful women panelist: Sradda Thapa from International Organisation for Migration, Bina D'Costa from the Australian National University and Caelin Briggs from World Vision Australia. Each woman worked in different humanitarian sectors in various countries and shared their experiences, challenges,

motivation and expertise. Moderator Louise Aubin, who is a very experienced humanitarian field operator, facilitated a thoughtful and interesting question and answer session.

A moving tribute was given by Monica Salvitti from UN World Food Programme for her colleague and friend, Jennifer Anne Downes, an Australian humanitarian worker who suddenly and tragically passed away in Suva, Fiji in July 2019. Wreaths were laid before the image of the Humanitarian Memorial for Jennifer in the presence of her family who were attending the event. Jenna's own words, "It's never a 50 percent effort; you have to live and breathe it, you have to believe in it", continues to resonate.

The event was organised by UNIC in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration, UNHCR, ICRC, Australian Council for International Development and the ACC&C.



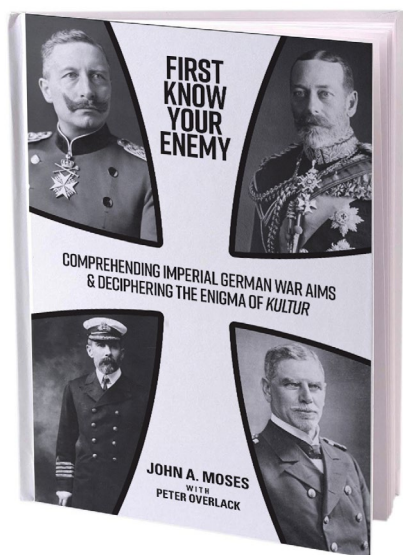
"Keeping in line with the theme of the day – to salute women humanitarians, their work, experiences and stories – the event was adorned by three powerful women panelists..."



Photo L to R: Caelin Briggs, Senior Policy Advisor, World Vision Australia; Bina D'Costa, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Australian National University; Sradda Thapa, Project Developer, IOM Australia Country Office with Coordinating Functions for NZ, PNG, and Pacific; and Louise Aubin, UNHCR Representative and Acting Director of UNIC Canberra. Photograph supplied.

Book Launch: *First Know Your Enemy*

By Ingrid Moses



The Chambers Pavilion was once again a most congenial venue for the book launch on 12 November of John A Moses' and Peter Overlack's *First Know Your Enemy: Comprehending Imperial German War Aims & Deciphering the Enigma of Kultur* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2019).

The book was launched by Dr Michael Gladwin, Senior Lecturer in History, St Marks National Theological Centre and School of Theology at Charles Sturt University, in an elegant and erudite address.

Dr Gladwin provided national and international context for the book, commenting,

"The value of John's study both of German, and of key aspects of its history writing and historical self-understanding, has meant that he has been a major translator of German scholarship for the Australian context – for over 50 years."

"The value of John's study both of German, and of key aspects of its history writing and historical self-understanding, has meant that he has been a major translator of German scholarship for the Australian context—for over 50 years. Nowhere has this been more influential than in Australian

political, intellectual, and religious history; and, more specifically, in relation to the history of the Great War and its legacies," he said.

"Tonight's book is yet another important contribution to that life's work. It is my privilege, as a fellow historian, to offer some remarks on the book, and its place in a larger historical and national conversation.

"It's that deeper question of 'why' the war broke out, that is the focus of the book we are launching tonight. It's a question that is no less controversial today than in the 1960s—the decade when a young John Moses entered this important, and deeply contested, historical conversation. But the conversation is more than an academic one; it's also an important and ongoing national conversation—for a post-war Germany and Europe, as well as for Australia. This is especially the case when some Australian historians still insist that the Great War was not our war; that it was essentially futile; and that

Australians should not have been there in the first place. Such historians tend to downplay or forget, however, the fact that Australians were a crucial component of the British Empire at that time; they also neglect the cultural, intellectual and political substructures of foreign policy.

"The second part of the book complements the first, presenting the pioneering research of Peter Overlack, a former

student of John's, on the operational plans of the German Navy in the Pacific. These chapters throw new light on the tangible strategic threat to Commonwealth security during the Great War. Knowledge of this episode is 'essential for comprehending the acute danger in which the Antipodean

Dominions found themselves in 1914' (p. 297). In turn, it is essential for understanding why Australia subsequently went to war."

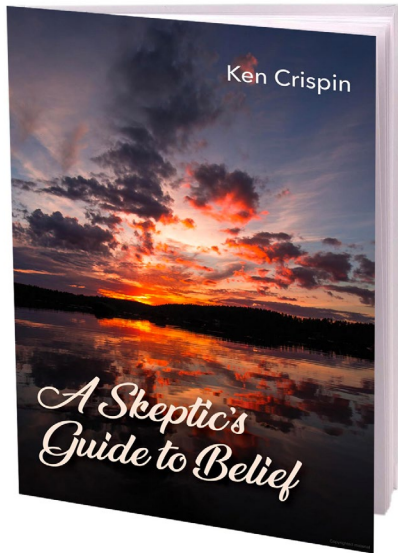
Dr Moses, in response, reflected on his time as a postgraduate student in Germany and the great intellectual impact eminent historians of the time had on him.

Conversation continued over wine and food and the e-mail responses paid tribute to the speakers: "Thank you so much for inviting us last night and providing so well for our needs of drink, food and intellectual stimulation. It was great to see John's book being launched and to hear Michael endorse it so well. Your reflections, John, on your time in Germany and the need to understand the culture were very insightful." Other guests commented on the introduction and both presentations revealing valuable details that gave further context to the book and its authors.

Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard provided the introduction.



John A. Moses at his book launch. Photograph supplied.



The Hon Dr Ken Crispin QC. Photograph by Hazel Francis.



Rev Professor Emeritus James Haire AC. Photograph by Hazel Francis.



The book launch was held in the Chambers Pavilion. Photography by Hazel Francis.



Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard, The Hon Dr Ken Crispin QC and Rev Professor Emeritus James Haire AC at the book launch. Photograph by Hazel Francis.

Book Launch: *A Skeptic's Guide to Belief*

By Katherine Waite, ACC&C

Congratulations to The Hon Dr Ken Crispin QC whose book *A Skeptic's Guide to Belief* was launched at the Chambers Pavilion on 4 September 2019.

Dr Crispin is a distinguished Australian lawyer and former Supreme Court judge. He is a board member of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C).

Dr Crispin said the book asks questions humanity has always asked.

"Is there a god? Was the universe designed and created? Are we purely physical beings? Do we really have free will? Do spiritual experiences actually occur? Is death the end?"

He said the book is written for skeptics which is not an euphemism for atheism or entrenched rejection of religious beliefs.

"It is an insistence upon approaching contested issues by objective consideration

of the available evidence and the competing arguments," he said.

"The evidence is drawn from recent findings and theories in a diversity of scientific fields, including cosmology, theoretical physics, neurobiology, medicine and psychology," he said.

A Skeptic's Guide to Belief was launched by the Reverend Professor Emeritus James Haire AC, the former Executive Director of the ACC&C, who said Ken Crispin's achievement was groundbreaking.

He said the monograph provided a useful discourse on skepticism which looked carefully at the presuppositions and emotions of those who are on both sides.

"The book thus takes on both religious fundamentalism and the fundamentalisms of atheism," he said.

"It takes up the important principle from

Brian Garvey that: 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence' (page 50). It is also contemporary, in that it deals with the recent discourse initiated by Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, on these issues," he said.

"But be careful as you read the book. Its touch is light, and its language and presentation are most engaging and felicitous, and at times very funny indeed," he said.

The book has been published by Wipf & Stock and is available in paperback, hard-cover or electronic versions.

International Scholars visit the ACC&C



Scholars listen to Professor William Schweiker. Photograph by Katherine Waite.



Professor Adrian Pabst at a scholars' forum. Photograph by Katherine Waite.



Professor William Schweiker. Photograph by Katherine Waite.

Professor Adrian Pabst on Politics

By Katherine Waite, ACC&C

Professor Adrian Pabst presented a seminar at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) on 9 September 2019.

He gave an address to scholars on liberalism and populism, the demons of liberal democracy and the politics of the common good.

Professor Pabst was in Australia as part of a tour to promote his recently published book, *Story of Our Country: Labor's vision for Australia* which was launched by the Hon Mark Butler MP at Parliament House on the same day.

Professor Pabst is Professor in Politics and Head of School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent.

He was appointed the Sir Peter Lawler Visiting Fellow at the PM Glynn Institute at the Australian Catholic University to research and write the book.

Professor William Schweiker on Human Dignity

By Katherine Waite, ACC&C

A theological ethics professor recently visited the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture to give a seminar on human dignity.

Professor William Schweiker is the Edward L. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor of Theological Ethics at The Divinity School and the College, University of Chicago.

He visited the ACC&C on 25 September 2019 to give a paper to scholars titled "Human Dignity: issues and challenges."

Professor Schweiker and Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard have been working together in an interdisciplinary project on character formation, moral education and values in western pluralistic societies through Heidelberg, Emory and Charles Sturt Universities.

David Hunter Memorial Lecture: Highlighting Indigenous Languages

By Jeanette Mathews, ANTaR ACT

The 2019 David Hunter Memorial Lecture held on 17 October with a focus on "Highlighting Indigenous Languages" was a wonderful success. The theme was inspired by the UN International Year of Indigenous Languages, aiming to raise awareness of the consequences of the endangerment of Indigenous languages across the world, and establishing links between language, development, peace, and reconciliation. This theme provided an opportunity to hear from experts and practitioners in our own indigenous languages.

The keynote speaker at the lecture was Professor Jakelin Troy, Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research at the University of Sydney.

Professor Troy is from the Ngarigu people of the Snowy Mountains region and her research focus is documenting, describing, and reviving indigenous languages. Her talk ranged across historical and recent experience of Australian indigenous languages including the influence on Australian English.

Caroline Hughes provided a local perspective, describing her involvement in the Ngunnawal Language Revival project sponsored by Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). The group is working not only to revitalise the Ngunnawal language but also to develop a language program to be introduced in the ACT primary school curriculum.

The third speaker was Rev'd Dr John Harris who was able to introduce part of the Bible Society Bible translation collection housed in St Mark's National Memorial Library. Dr Harris spoke movingly about efforts by missionaries including his own father and himself in translating the Bible into Australia's indigenous languages. He highlighted the role that Bible translation has played in preserving these languages.

The yarning and sharing of linguistic gems, verbal, written and printed were eye opening. We thank Auntie Agnes for her generous Welcome to Country and Stephen Pickard and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture for their welcome and ongoing support in hosting this event.



Ngunnawal elder Auntie Agnes welcomes everyone to Country. Photograph by John Clark.

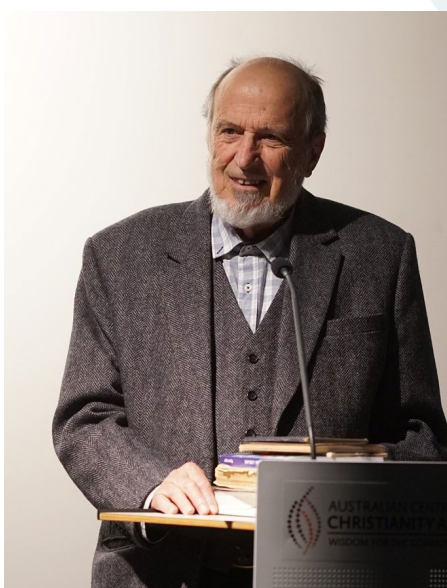


Jakelin Troy, Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research at the University of Sydney. Photograph by John Clark.

"The group is working not only to revitalise the Ngunnawal language but also to develop a language program to be introduced in the ACT primary school curriculum."



Caroline Hughes spoke about her involvement in the Ngunnawal Language Revival. Photograph by John Clark.



Rev'd Dr John Harris from the Bible Society. Photograph by John Clark.



Attendees gather at the Great Space at the ACC&C. Photograph courtesy of Thea Ormerod.

Inaugural conference of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change

By Thea Ormerod, President, ARRCC

Just as the impact of climate change is being more acutely felt across Australia, people from diverse faith traditions considered their role in the climate crisis at the inaugural national conference of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC).

The conference theme was "Faith in Action: a religious response to the climate emergency" and was held 8 – 10 November 2019. The event was largely made possible by the generous sponsorship of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C).

Early in the conference, Professor Lesley Hughes of the Climate Council presented the science behind describing the current situation as an "emergency". From the extensive data collected, the climate is changing at a rate 170 times faster than it has for the last 7,000 years. Rainfall patterns are changing. We face a most uncertain future.

Professor Hughes also highlighted the fact that Australian emissions have been rising since the carbon pricing legislation was scrapped by the Abbott Government. The current Coalition Government is dismissive of the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1.5 Degree report, paving the way for new coal and gas mining regardless of IPCC warnings that this is incompatible with a safe climate.

Dr Miriam Pepper and Associate Professor

Mehmet Ozalp spoke about how Christian and Muslim communities respectively are taking inspiring initiatives, but that much more could be done at a local level.

Dr James Whelan, who leads The Change Agency, encouraged the gathering to make the most of the opportunities and strengths available to faith communities.

Ways forward ranged from making climate-conserving lifestyle changes to supporting the School Climate Strikers, putting more signs out the front of places of worship and divestment from fossil fuels. Working groups were formed to tackle some new directions, such as messaging for people in rural and regional Australia, and supporting youth leadership in faith-based schools.

The gathering was fortified by two School Climate Strikers, Aoibhinn Crimmins and Tess Carlton. Ms Crimmins, who was awarded ACT Young Environmentalist of the Year 2019, told the gathering about acting on the climate crisis, "We must jump on that opportunity like our lives depend on it because they truly do and use it as a chance to start from scratch and create a world that we want to live in, together."

The feedback from the conference was overwhelmingly positive. Aoibhinn Crimmins commented that "I honestly have never met such an invigorated group of adults before!"

ARRCC expressed their appreciation by presenting a gift to the ACC&C, a

magnificent artwork by Ngunnawal man, Damien Murringadi Freeman. It depicts the creator spirit of the Ngunnawal people, Budjabulya, living in Lake Ngungara (renamed Lake George) which was a place where many Ngunnawal ceremonies took place.



School students Tess Carlton (left) and Aoibhinn Crimmins (right) attend the conference. Photograph courtesy of Thea Ormerod.



Attendees inside the Chapel at the ACC&C. Photograph courtesy of Thea Ormerod.

Ringling the Bell for the Climate Strike

To coincide with the Global Climate Strike on 20 September 2019, the large bell at the ACC&C tolled at 12pm.



Stephen Pickard watches ACC&C events' officer Lauren Bartley ring the bell. Photograph by Jane Foulcher.

Christians for an Ethical Society Forums

By Katherine Waite, ACC&C

Christians for an Ethical Society (CES) recently held two forums at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C), which explored the impact of information technology and social media, and democracy. These forums continue the CES theme for 2019: 'Whither Democracy'.

A joint forum with the Catholic Social Justice Commission, 'The Impact of Information Technology and Social Media' was held on 16 October 2019 at the Chapel and was based on the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement 2019-20. Differing perspectives were highlighted by the speakers for the night including ACC&C Board Member and political journalist Paul Bongiorno, religious education teacher Beth Doherty, Youth Coordinator Huw Warmenhoven and ACC&C scholar Toni Hassan.

The 20 November 2019 forum was held in partnership with the Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy (CAPaD) where four CAPaD members shared what the group is doing and learning, and ideas on democratic renewal in the ACT. The forum, 'Getting the democracy we want: government with the people' highlighted CAPaD's work in attempting to create genuine citizen participation in decision making and understanding the role of ACT Members of the Legislative Assembly. It included a Q & A session and also explored what accountability might look alongside community level agenda setting.

CES and the ACC&C have had a close working relationship since the establishment of CES in 2008.



Left to right: Harry Oppermann, Mary Beattie, Matt Plaistowe, Ida Walker, Sadia Niyakan-Safy, Natalie Mobini, Tegan Gough Donnelly, Stephen Pickard, Nika Sinai. Photograph supplied.

Inclusive Narrative Project

Natalie Mobini, The Australian Baha'i Community

The Australian Baha'i Community organised a roundtable discussion at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) on 21 November 2019 on social cohesion, focused around the question of what binds Australian society together.

Participants from diverse backgrounds, including ACC&C Executive Director Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard, contributed to a rich discussion that traversed the progress made in recent decades to promote social cohesion, what influences and shapes our identity, the values and norms that strengthen inclusion, and what we want Australia to look like for future generations. Participants shared their experiences of growing up in Australia, or of arriving here later in life.

Key points arising from the discussion were the legacy of colonisation and dispossession of Indigenous people, the vital role of education, the importance of language, the value of working at the level of the neighbourhood, and the paradox that the more we focus on one aspect of our identity, the more we can, even inadvertently, exclude those who fall outside that circle.

The roundtable was one of many being held across Australia as part of the Creating an Inclusive Narrative project. Initiated by the Australian Baha'i community, the project invites everyone to be part of a national conversation to create an inclusive narrative of our nation: a "bigger story of us" that will "speak to us all ... speak to who we have been, and allow for who we may become".

Further roundtables will be held in Canberra on a monthly basis from February 2020.



left to right: Harry Oppermann, Mary Beattie, Matt Plaistowe. Picture supplied.



Small group conversations at the Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn meeting. Photograph supplied.

Building Blocks of the Future Church

By Rod Page, Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn

Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn hosted its 8th public forum in the Chapel of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture on Thursday evening 28 November 2019, to foster the discussion of Parish Pastoral Councils: *"Building Blocks of the Future Church"*. This forum followed a recent gathering of 40 parish council representatives and others drawn from parishes across the Archdiocese.

After Chair John Warhurst's acknowledgement of the meeting on Ngunnawal country, in a much loved custom, Concerned Catholics 'awoke from our slumber' and heartily raised the Chapel's roof with an opening prayer/hymn CITY OF GOD (1981, Daniel L Schutte).

John introduced Francis Sullivan who set the scene for (a) exchanges by three panellists, and (b) small group conversations to take place in 16 table discussion clusters. Francis, formerly CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth, Justice and Healing Council, spoke on "Pastoral Councils: New Wine New Wine Skins". He emphasised the risk in attempting to cling to an outmoded and increasingly

dysfunctional institution at the expense of the authenticity we have acquired through our baptism. He pointed to Pope Francis who consistently reminds all the baptised to be a community enthused with a passion of faith that is engaged, non-judgemental and welcoming for all.

The forum's facilitator, Phil Billington, introduced panellists Mary Dorrian (Queanbeyan parish), Judy Netting (Kippax parish), and Mgr John Woods (Transfiguration parish, north Woden) who further moved along the "Building Blocks of the Future Church" theme by sharing their experiences of parish and pastoral councils. Many of us drew the conclusion that those parishes have viable parish pastoral councils (PPC) (perhaps correlating with an absence of clerical separatism) as opposed to numerous other parishes where PPCs have become effectively defunct or are non-existent.

The crowd of about 140 people had assembled in 16 table discussion groups (pictured) and these became the central energy source for conversation about parish/diocesan attitudes and practices

which favour healing and reform—and parish/diocesan attitudes and practices which hinder healing and reform. Not far removed from this table chat was an awareness of the impending 2020/21 Plenary Council of the Catholic Church of Australia. Lay people are currently being invited to discern and share their experiences and aspirations. For many the Plenary Council exercise elicits a mixture of enthusiasm and skepticism, e.g., 'can we start again please'..... 'can we go back to Vatican II please'.....etc. Not unexpectedly, table contributions reflected diverse inputs and will no doubt be evident in Phil Billington's compilation to which we look forward.

This was a spirited and Spirit-led conversation for the 140 participants of a Christian community enthused with the passion of Faith. More please!

Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn is grateful to the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and its Executive Director, Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard.



Delegates gather in front of Parliament House, Canberra. Photograph supplied.

Voices for Justice

Beck Wilesmith, Micah Australia

This year's Voices for Justice was beyond what we could have imagined. With 15 Pacific Leaders joining us to add their voice, it was a prophetic moment in the halls of Parliament House. Here's our wrap up of four historic days.

During one of the busiest times of the year, about 200 Christians gathered in Canberra to raise their voice for the world's poor.

Over four days, they listened to the voices of church leaders from across the Pacific, were inspired and trained to speak out for justice, and then they put this training into action by going into Parliament and meeting with Members and Senators. There were 88 meetings with MPs and Senators with 78 electorates represented. The policy platform was built around one key principle: Ensuring the Government's new aid policy.

The policy (which was only just announced prior to us arriving in Canberra!) prioritises the needs of the region's most poor, vulnerable and oppressed.

The five recommendations we took to Parliament were:

1. Ensure the new aid policy empowers local communities in the Pacific to lead their own inclusive and sustainable development.
2. Ensure the new aid policy recognises the needs of the most vulnerable members of our Pacific family, particularly women and children.

3. Work with the Australian Church and Christian development agencies to leverage and amplify the strength of the Pacific Church as a key partner for human development.
4. Recognise the impact of climate change in the Pacific including the increasing risk and impact of natural disasters.
5. Ensure the Pacific Step Up is not at the cost of 'stepping down' elsewhere in the world.

On Saturday and Sunday, we gathered at the Chapel at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture to be trained and equipped.

These two days are always a highlight of the event—a wonderful coming together of the body of Christ as we heard stories, shared experiences, prayed and worshipped together, met our lobby groups and of course practised for our meetings!

This year we were privileged to hear from Aboriginal Christian Leaders, Pacific Church leaders and disability advocates as well as previous members of Parliament.

After two days of training it was time to hit Parliament House.

On Monday morning, our Pacific leaders were front and centre at the 'Friends of the Pacific' event - a launch of a new bipartisan Parliamentary group co-chaired by Dave Sharma MP and Pat Conroy MP.

This was a significant event with over 40 MPs and Senators in attendance and the Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Opposition leader Anthony Albanese giving addresses. The Friendship group will help to keep momentum going around Australian MPs connections with the Pacific.

A portion of the group also met briefly with the Prime Minister in his office and were received warmly as they thanked the Australian government for its support and shared about the importance of 'people-to-people' connections between Australia and the Pacific.

We received incredibly positive feedback from all sides of politics about our policy platform.



Pacific Choir sing at the Chapel at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. Photograph supplied.

Scholars' News

Dr Bill Anscombe

Bill has 20 years' experience in community and institutional corrections at both field and senior levels within the NSW Department of Corrective Services. He joined Charles Sturt University as a Lecturer in Social Work in 1993 and retired in 2014 after four years as the Course Director for Social Work and Human Service programs. He has also served (on leave without pay from the University) as Director of Child and Family Services for



Western NSW and was in a joint appointment for 5 years between CSU and the (then) NSW Department of Community Services.

His PhD studies were in *Consilience in Social Work: Reflections on Thinking, Doing and Being* and he has co-authored two recent books *Empowering Social Workers* (Springer 2017) and *Reflective Social Work Practice* (Cambridge 2015) and a forthcoming book on Virtuous Practice in Social Work arising out of an Australian Research Council Grant on *Virtuous Practitioners: Empowering Social Workers*.

Dr Carlos A. Raimundo

Carlos graduated in medicine and surgery in Argentina, after which he studied psychiatry, philosophy, theology and psychodrama and a master's in management in Australia. He was an active member of the *Latin American Fraternity of Theology* and involved in Liberation Theology during the military dictatorship in Argentina. His interest in spirituality, behavioural transformation and personal growth moved him to study the Torah



at a Reformed Synagogue. From Orthodox Judaism, and Ignatian Spirituality, he has incorporated traditions into his life and professional practice. He moved to Australia in 1986. Carlos is a researcher on neuroscience on the effect of 3D Visualisation and Simulation method related to insight and Emotional and Social Intelligence. He's the author of *Relationship Capital* (Prentice-Hall 2002).

Carlos is a therapist, coach and trainer on leadership, culture and personal growth for the corporate sector and for religious orders, nationally and internationally. He lives on the NSW Central Coast with his wife Rosemary.

Links to Scholar's articles

Centre scholar Toni Hassan has had 5 opinion pieces and articles published recently.

She wrote about how smartphones can dictate our lives in an ABC opinion piece published 17 August 2019 titled "The smartphone has become a metronome. This is how we change the beat".

In her piece, "A public health issue: Alan Jones needs to be taken off air", published in *The Canberra Times* on 28 August 2019, she wrote about Alan Jones' comments about Jacinda Ardern.

In her piece, "Time to reclaim the lifeblood of human society", published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 23 September 2019, she wrote about the importance of face-to-face conversation.

Toni wrote about climate health in *The Canberra Times* on 27 November 2019: "Climate health is a mainstream issue. Let's treat it like one".

She also had an opinion piece published on *Eureka Street* on 29 November 2019 about the Prime Minister's Christianity. Her article was called "Wrestling Morrison's brand of Christianity".

Upcoming Events

Change the Heart Prayer and Lament Service

6:00 – 8:00pm, 23 January 2020, Chapel, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

Aunty Jean Phillips is once again inviting people to gather together at Prayer Services across the country in the lead up to January 26th. The #ChangeTheHeart Prayer Services will be guided by the theme "Truth Telling: the truth will set us free". Our prayer is that through truth telling we can continue to #ChangeTheHeart of Australia as we seek Jesus and Justice.

Christians for an Ethical Society Forum

7:30pm – 9:30pm, 19 February 2020, Chapel, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

The Hon Dr Ken Crispin QC will speak on the theme 'Values and Voices in the Public Sphere' which is the CES theme for 2020. Dr Crispin is a distinguished Australian lawyer and former Supreme Court judge. He is currently the Commissioner for Standards for the Australian Capital Territory and a member of the board of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. His other books include *The Quest for Justice* (2010).

Hire the Centre

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

The Centre's facilities include the Chapel which can seat up to 200 people or the Chambers Pavilion which can seat 23-25 people around tables or 50 in a theatre set up. 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



Sarah Stitt

Lauren Bartley

Save the Date

ANSD Quiet Day with Frances Mackay

22 February 2020, Chambers Pavilion, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

The Australian Network for Spiritual Direction (ANSD) will host a Quiet Day on 22 February 2019 with Frances Mackay.

Commonwealth Day Service

9 March 2020, Chapel, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

The Patron of the ACC&C, the Governor-General David Hurley, and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley, will attend.

Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn Forum

2 April 2020, Chapel, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

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

5 – 7 November 2020, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

Since the earliest years of Christian history, women and men have responded to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a radical way by intentionally committing themselves to distinctive forms of common life under a shared rule, often shaped by some form of the Evangelical Counsels (poverty, chastity, obedience). Historical expressions of intentional community life have taken many different forms over the centuries: monastic, mendicant, apostolic, ecumenical, charismatic, single-sex / mixed, celibate / married, temporary / life-long ... Religious communities are also to be found across all the churches: Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Evangelical, Pentecostal.

The "Ancient Futures" conference will bring together ecumenical representatives from a wide range of traditional, new and emerging communities across Australia, in order to:

- Reflect on the distinctive role played by religious communities during the first two centuries of Christianity in Australia
- Assess the history of new communities in Australia over the past 50 years: founding charisms, missions, relationships with church hierarchies, sustainability over time
- Consider how God may be calling 21st century Australians to various forms of religious life, and what ecclesial conditions (e.g. vision-casting, theology, resourcing, oversight, ecumenical collaboration) are now required to enable what the Holy Spirit is doing.

The Grasslands, a fragment of our natural landscape

By Sarah Sharp and Margaret Ning, Friends of Grasslands members

The area covered in grasses above Bowen Drive may be a mystery to some of you. Why is it there, what is it? Why does it sometimes get quite dense, is never mown, but is occasionally burnt? So, what is going on?

This native grassland is actually an example of a critically endangered ecosystem, that has been largely cleared and modified by agricultural practices, urban development and infrastructure in south-eastern Australia. Remaining grasslands have suffered invasion by introduced plants and animals and have lost many species that once were common. In fact, such grasslands don't just contain grasses, but many other herbaceous species as well, and provide habitat for lizards, insects and, in the past, small mammals such as bettongs, quolls and birds such as the Plains Wanderer.

The Grassland is one of the most diverse remaining sites in this region, and is only one of two that still exists in what was an extensive grassland landscape

across central Canberra. I am a retired plant ecologist and have a long history of working with St Marks and ACC&C colleagues to manage the grassland. Since 1994 colleagues in the ACT Government and I have been monitoring the grassland. Since 2017 I have been working with CSU on a more intensive monitoring project to help guide management of the site. Of particular interest, is to monitor changes occurring in native species composition and abundance as a result of burning, which over the past 15 years or so has been occurring about every five years. Burning provides opportunities for plants that would otherwise be crowded out by the dominant Kangaroo Grass, to flower and set seed, and ideally regenerate, and reflects what is considered to be the practices adopted by indigenous people to encourage the establishment of green feed for hunted animals and for proliferation of plant foods such as the Yam Daisy *Microseris lanceolata*.

This year, the results were disappointing,

reflecting the dry conditions. Even so, there were many species that were evident, albeit looking very dried out, including Creamy Candles *Stackhousia monogyna*, Scaly Buttons *Leptorhynchus squamatus*, Cut-leaved Goodenia *Goodenia pinnatifida*, Common Billy Buttons *Craspedia variabilis*, and Common Everlasting *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*. The small population of the threatened plant Button Wrinklewort *Rutidosia leptorhynchoides* was looking spectacular, flowering and easy to count – and the population appears to be increasing. However, there remain weeds in the site, of concern is a fairly widespread population of St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*, and woody weeds. These include garden escapees and some *Pinus radiata*.

Luckily such grasslands are used to dry conditions, and hopefully will continue to exist for many years.



The Grassland in November 2017, before the burn in 2018. Photograph supplied.



The Grassland 18 months after the burn, 20/11/19. Photograph supplied.

Summer in the Bible Garden

By Justin Aquilina, Bible Gardener

I was delighted to witness the first stirrings of spring in the garden this year as it awakened the beautiful and rare Montana Tulips. By mid-September all the flowers of the field had blossomed in a dappled array of colour amidst the grasses. This year, spring was marked significantly for me as we also welcomed in our beautiful dark-haired daughter, Elora Grace. Little Ellie arrived earth side on 14 September, on that first weekend of Floriade, just as spring had really started to take hold of the garden. Life was really flourishing everywhere in colourful bloom. Next, the blossoms of the fruit trees came out and began attracting the bees and the pollinators with their delightful aromas. The exquisite garlic and onion plants began to form their flowers in preparation for their regenerating cycle as they spread their seeds on the late spring winds.

Now, in the early throws of a hot and dry summer, everything in the Bible Garden is building towards the peak of mid-summer. Lushness abounds; from the grapevines spreading lavishly over the gazebo like an intoxicating Mediterranean feast to the heavily laden apricot tree, weighed down with a sudden abundance of fruit. And finally, but most alluring of all, the mulberry tree invites you in to the centre of the garden with her decadent foliage, offering a moment of shade from the harsh sun. Let her seduce you into the garden to listen and take in the sound of the leaves rustling in the wind. Perhaps come and sit for a while by the olive trees and the grape vines and send a prayer for rain for our blazing forests this Christmas.

As the calendar year comes to an end, I have been reflecting on the regular work (weeding, pruning and planting) needed at the Bible Garden and ask if you might consider helping. I'd like to have a working bee at the end of summer.

If you're interested, email acc-c@csu.edu.au your availability.



The apricot tree is full of fruit in mid December. Photograph by Katherine Waite.

Thank you

By Katherine Waite, ACC&C

Friends, board members, associates and staff of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) gathered for an end of year community event on 3 December at the Chambers Pavilion for Executive Director Stephen Pickard to celebrate and thank all for their contributions at the Centre in 2019.

About 50 people feasted on middle eastern food supplied by John Saad. Sally Bathgate, who is the co-author of the beautiful book *Tea and Thread: portraits of middle eastern women far from home*, was present to share about the publication.

The book is a collection of stories, recipes, and traditional handicraft projects from 17 diverse women from the Middle East. The stories and photographs included offer glimpses into these women's memories of life before war, war-time difficulties, and the uncertainties of being a refugee.

Mrs Bathgate said the idea to write the book came about when she was living in Jordan with her family.

About two boxes of books were sold at the event and all proceeds will go to further the work of projects supporting refugees in the Middle East.



Co-author of *Tea and thread: portraits of middle eastern women far from home*, Sally Bathgate spoke about the book. Photograph by Katherine Waite.

Governor-General Christmas Celebration

By Katherine Waite, ACC&C

Two staff members from the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) were guests at a Christmas celebration hosted by Their Excellencies the Governor-General David Hurley and Mrs Hurley on 11 December at Government House.

Centre Manager Hazel Francis and Communications Officer Katherine Waite attended on behalf of the Executive Director Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard who was travelling overseas for church work.

The Governor-General is the patron of the ACC&C and Mrs Francis said it was an honour to be invited and share about the work of the Centre.



Katherine Waite and Hazel Francis inside Government House.

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.



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