

The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

ENGAGE

April 2024 Issue 15

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue
AC CBE DSG

James Haire





Great cross, photo by Liz Jakimow

Cover image: International Humanitarian Aid Monument, photo by Liz Jakimow

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AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE
WISDOM FOR THE COMMON GOOD



Pilgrim Poles, photo by Liz Jakimow



Editorial

It is all too easy, perhaps even tempting, to descend into despair at a time in which the world is wracked by so much division and conflict, particularly in an information environment that makes it all but impossible to escape confronting images of destruction, loss and ruin. A palpable sense of helplessness is only natural in a context in which our visceral awareness of the scale of human suffering is matched by a profound sense of impotence to remove, or even alleviate it.

This sense of impotence was on my mind as I prepared my opening remarks for the multifaith Commonwealth Day Celebration held at the ACC&C Chapel on 11 March, at which I served as MC. The theme of the celebration was fittingly “prayers for peace,” and featured, in addition to a wonderful display of diverse cultural and musical performances, readings on the topic of peace from the scriptures of eight faiths: Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Jain, Sikh, Baha’i and Christian. As I noted to an overflowing Chapel, the celebration presented an opportunity for people representing the breadth and depth of the cultural and religious diversity of the Commonwealth family to embody and express their collective desire to live in a more peaceful, harmonious, resilient and reconciled world.

It is true that gatherings of this nature may not ultimately and directly change the world. But they are meaningful and important expressions for those who participate, and without such public statements and demonstrations of solidarity, lament and concern for our common human family, all we can

expect in the long run is indifference. It is vital that we do not succumb to indifference in the face of global suffering, but rather demonstrate our active and enduring commitment to peace. This is one role proudly played by the ACC&C, honouring its founding ethos to be a locus of interfaith dialogue and hospitality to people of all faiths and none. The ACC&C has an important part to play in the perpetual struggle against indifference, by serving as a meeting place and vehicle for public expressions of human solidarity. This fact was illustrated poignantly on 3 April, when Foreign Minister, Senator the Hon. Penny Wong laid flowers at the ACC&C’s Humanitarian Aid Monument to honour the memory of Australian aid worker Lalzawmi “Zomi” Frankcom, tragically killed in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza.

The present issue of *Engage* also marks an occasion to honour the memory and celebrate the contribution of two significant figures who were formative influences in the creation of the ACC&C. These are Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue and Archbishop Francis Carroll. Both were instrumental in shaping the Centre’s vision and purpose. It is fitting, then, that we pay tribute to their lives and legacies in an issue that reaffirms the Centre’s longstanding commitment to peace, justice and reconciliation in all its forms and contexts.

Dr Jonathan Cole

Interim Executive Director, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

The ACC&C has an important part to play in the perpetual struggle against indifference, by serving as a meeting place and vehicle for public expressions of human solidarity.



Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG

Reverend Emeritus Professor James Haire AC
Former Executive Director, ACC&C

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG was an outstanding Australian, indeed one of the most prominent drivers for indigenous self-consciousness, for the search for true dignity and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and for the striving for genuine national reconciliation, all against great odds and often engrained settler self-satisfaction and intransigence.

The ACC&C was deeply honoured and blessed by her willingness to play a very significant part in the development of the vision for the Centre in its early years, as one of the three original visionaries of the ACC&C, along with Sir William Deane and Bishop George Browning, with both of whom she had very close friendships.

In this role as a visionary, and subsequently as a member of the Council of Eminent Australians, in which I also had the privilege to serve, she made sure that dignity and justice for First Nations people and true reconciliation in Australian

society were, and continued to be, central foci of the Centre's work. During the years that I served as Executive Director (2003 to 2013), she stressed these important foci, and did so in very practical ways. She never ceased to be determined and passionate in her striving for true justice and reconciliation for Australia's First Peoples, but in this endeavour she was always gracious and never bitter, despite her own enormous suffering under a variety of forms of systemic and other serious discrimination.

Her achievements were quite remarkable considering the overwhelming disadvantage from which she came. She was born at De Rose Hill station, a remote cattle station in the northern part of South Australia (now termed the APY Lands), to Yunamba, an indigenous mother of the Yankunytjatjara clan, and Tom O'Donoghue, her father, an Irish stockman and pastoral leaseholder. Her date of birth was not even registered at the time, and was later created when she was taken, at the



Trees planted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue by the Meeting Place, photo by Liz Jakimow

age of two, to live with the missionaries in the Colebrook Home at Quorn near the Flinders Ranges and later at Eden Hills in Adelaide. She herself preferred the words “removed generations” rather than the term “stolen generations” for her situation. Although she had happy experiences at Quorn and Eden Hills, she deeply regretted that the missionaries did not think to at the very least inform her mother of where and how she and her brother were, or to send photographs of them to her.

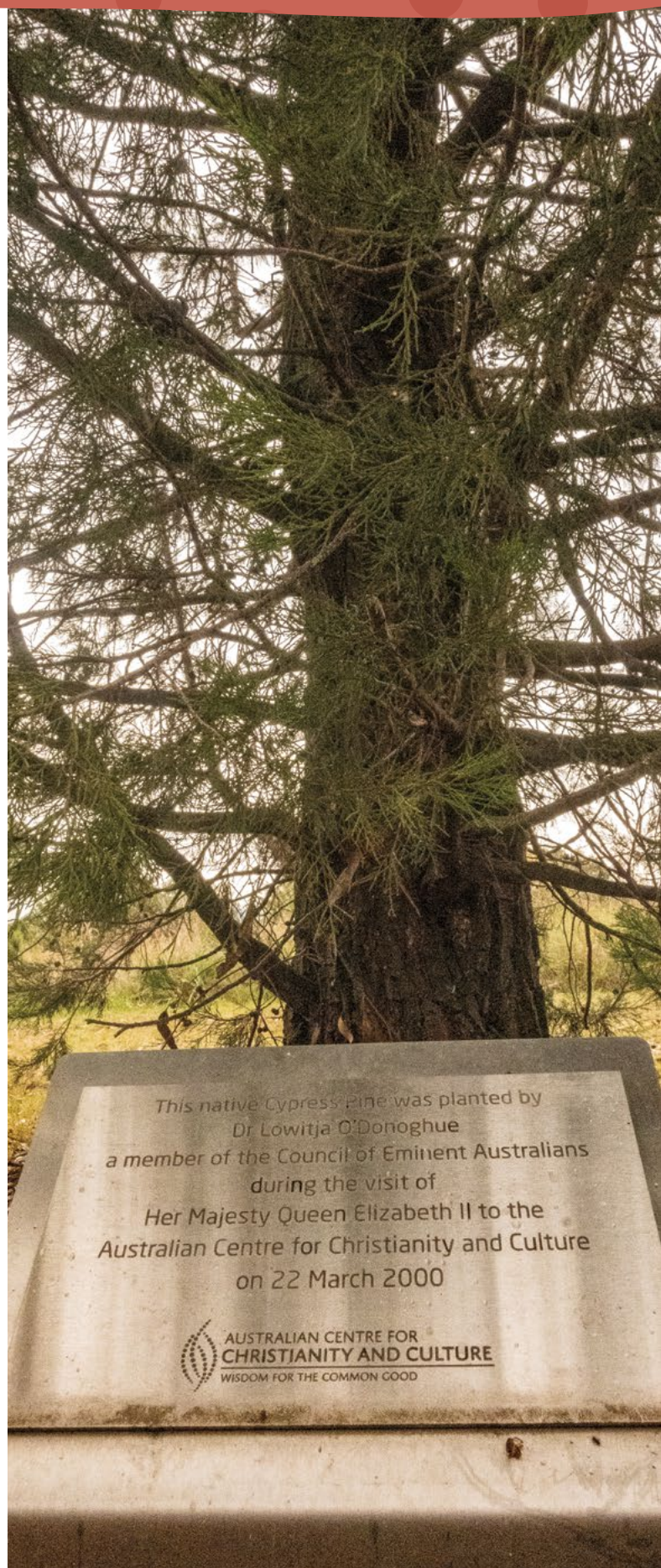
After a period of domestic service in Victor Harbor, she fought for and achieved being taken into nursing education at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, after appealing to the State Premier for such an opportunity. She then served for a year with Baptist Overseas Mission in Assam in India, before returning to South Australia.

From then onwards she made enormous contributions to the long march towards indigenous self-determination and justice, and national reconciliation, in the various roles that she held over many years. She became Chairperson of the Aboriginal Development Commission. She was then appointed Chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). She played a significant part with Prime Minister Paul Keating in the development of the ground-breaking *Native Title Act 1993*. She was the first Australian indigenous person to address the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

She later became heavily involved in the formation of the ACC&C. Along with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II she planted one of the two trees at the Place of Meeting, where the physical construction of the ACC&C began. She frequently visited the Centre when she was in Canberra, and gave us, including myself, most helpful and practical advice and encouragement on how to advance the indigenous and other foci of the ACC&C.

She was a devout Christian in the Baptist tradition, and her deep faith shone through in everything that she did. My impression always was that her influence, both in the First Nations communities and wider, both nationally and internationally, was very much greater than simply the influence related to the many distinguished positions which she held over many years, and the many honours that she received.

It was a great honour to have had the privilege of walking with her in the work of the ACC&C, for which she was such an inspiration.



Tree planted by Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, photo by Liz Jakimow



Archbishop Francis Caroll

Genevieve Jacobs

Board Member, ACC&C

Former Canberra Goulburn Catholic Archbishop Francis Carroll, one of the founders of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, has died at the age of 93.

He had served the church across southern NSW and the ACT for almost 70 years.

Known to many across the Riverina and Canberra Goulburn archdiocese simply as Father Frank, he is being recalled as a gentle and generous leader of his faith and a truly good man.

Father Frank was at ease with people of all backgrounds and as much at home in tiny country churches and local parishes as grand cathedrals.

He was also an innovator and as a leader was acutely aware of the need to adapt to changing – and challenging – social conditions while holding fast to the church's eternal truths.

Born in 1930 in Ganmain, he was the second of seven children of Patrick and Rose Carroll. He attended the local primary school before completing his secondary education with the De La Salle Brothers in Marrickville.

He studied for the priesthood at St Columba's Seminary, Springwood, and St Patrick's Seminary, Manly. He was ordained a priest at Ganmain by Bishop Francis Henschke, Bishop of Wagga Wagga, in 1954.

His rise through the ranks was swift. He became the first Director of Catholic Education in the Wagga Wagga Diocese. At 37, he was ordained as coadjutor bishop for Bishop Henschke, later assuming the role of Bishop of Wagga Wagga.

Speaking at his golden jubilee celebrations, Archbishop Carroll said he'd been thoroughly surprised to be appointed a bishop "way back in 1967." His ordination took place at the old Plaza Theatre in Baylis Street, Wagga, enabling 1,800 people to attend.

He was the youngest bishop to be ordained in Australia since the Second Vatican Council.

"I think the main sentiment would be one of gratitude, first of all to God who called me and has sustained me over these years, and then gratitude to the many, many people," he said of his time in leadership.

"My family, of course, have always been very supportive."

In 1983, he became Archbishop of the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese, a vast area stretching from Lake Cargelligo in the west to the far south coast.

He was the first Australian bishop to call a diocesan synod following the Second Vatican Council and called another in 2000.

As a student of canon law in Rome at the time of the Vatican Council, he was profoundly influenced by the call to empower the lay community, which he said formed his pastoral approach for the rest of his life.

Archbishop Carroll believed that, in trying times, Catholics were called to become contemplative about their faith, seeking strength but keeping the church's doors open wide.

Known to many across the Riverina and Canberra Goulburn archdioceses simply as Father Frank, he is being recalled as a gentle and generous leader of his faith and a truly good man.

Among the highlights of his own ministry were the delivery of the Vatican Council recommendations, reform of Catholic education and Kairos Prison Ministry.

In 1998, he joined other Christian faith leaders in establishing the ACC&C, wholeheartedly supporting

its ecumenical agenda. He was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2001, an honour introduced during the Centenary of Federation year.

Archbishop Carroll responded with empathy and indignation to the scourge of sexual abuse within the church and the plight of victims.

He believed the failure to deal with the issue significantly undermined the good work of many clergy and lay people.

Father Frank loved ordinary parish and family life, conversation, and connection. He nurtured a lifelong passion for sport, particularly AFL, and described himself as always a Ganmain boy at heart.

A series of pastoral letters written during Archbishop Carroll's time in Wagga and Canberra continue to be treasured today for their enduring influence, wisdom and insight.

The Canberra Goulburn archdiocesan newspaper, the *Catholic Voice*, received many tributes to Archbishop Carroll and his personal qualities of compassion and humility.

"The warmth of his smile, the kindness in his eyes, the compassion he showed to others and their needs, and the strength of the deep love of Jesus he humbly demonstrated throughout his life testify now to the most saintly entry of Father Francis into Heaven with Almighty God. Praise you and thank you, God, for his life," wrote Carolyn Prichard.

After his retirement, Archbishop Carroll remained active as a supply priest. His final years were spent at the Loreto Home of Compassion in Wagga as his health began to fail.

Quoting from St Mother Teresa of Kolkata at the celebrations for his jubilee, he said "God has not called us to be successful, but he has called us to be faithful."

His was a life that exemplified faith, grace and the dignity of humanity in every aspect.



Archbishop Francis Carroll at the unveiling of the Humanitarian Aid Monument

The official prayer of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, written by Archbishop Francis Carroll

**God, powerful and gentle,
you love this southern land
and all its people, old and new.**

**As the Cross shines in our heavens
so may Christ bring light to our nation,
as the waves encircle our shores
so may your mercy enfold us all.**

**May the God who formed our southern land
be for us a rock of strength.**

**May the God who rules our southern seas
keep us safe in 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
reconciliation, a spirit of dialogue, 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**



Senator Penny Wong at the International Humanitarian Aid Monument

Liz Jakimow

Communications Officer, ACC&C

On 3 April, Foreign Minister, Senator the Hon. Penny Wong visited the International Humanitarian Aid Monument at the ACC&C to lay flowers in memory of Australian aid worker, Lalzawmi “Zomi” Frankcom, who was killed in an Israeli air strike in Gaza, along with six of her colleagues. Minister Wong was joined by Marc Purcell, CEO of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), as well as staff from ACFID and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Zomi Frankcom was working with World Central Kitchen (WCK) delivering food aid to those in need. Her humanitarian work previously had taken her to Pakistan and Bangladesh to help communities affected by flooding, to Romania to help Ukrainian

refugees and to Haiti. Her family described Zomi as “a kind, selfless and outstanding human being that has travelled the world helping others in her time of need. She will leave behind a legacy of compassion, bravery and love for all those in her orbit.”

A statement released by the Office of Senator Penny Wong said that the tributes for Zomi told the story of someone “dedicated to the service of others.” Senator Wong said “Her tireless work to improve the life of others should never have cost Ms Frankcom her own.” The government has expressed its deepest sympathy to her family and loved ones, adding that it mourns the death of all civilians caused in this conflict and that the death of any aid worker is “outrageous and unacceptable.”



Penny Wong at the International Humanitarian Aid Monument, photo by Alexandra Peek

The International Humanitarian Aid Monument was erected in the Bible Garden in 2013 to recognise Australian volunteers for overseas aid organisations, particularly those who have lost their lives. An inscription on the monument reads "In honour and memory of all deceased Australians and members of Australian aid organisations who served in international humanitarian aid work."

The late Francis Carroll, Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, who was present for the unveiling of the monument, said that "The giving of humanitarian aid is an expression of one of the finest instincts and noblest aspirations of humanity."

The International Humanitarian Aid Monument sits by a path at the edge of the Bible Garden, overlooking Lake Burley Griffin. It is a beautiful place to walk or sit and admire the view. Many people can often be seen walking along this path throughout the day.

For those who pass by it often, the monument might sometimes become merely part of the scenery, just as reports of war casualties can be heard so often that it becomes hard to fully feel their impact. The death of an Australian aid worker, and the flowers laid in tribute to her, are a reminder of what this monument represents.

The handwritten note included with the flowers laid by Senator Wong at the base of the International Humanitarian Aid Monument said, "For Zomi, your commitment to humanity will not be forgotten. Vale. Penny Wong."

So many have died providing humanitarian aid to others. Just in Gaza alone, approximately 200 humanitarians have died since October 2023, including the six other workers from WCK who were killed in the same air-strike as Zomi Frankcom. In remembering Zomi, we also remember all those who have died providing humanitarian aid assistance in various places around the world.

The International Humanitarian Aid Monument is a reminder that none of these people should be forgotten. It is also a reminder of the true cost of war and the importance of peace.



Marc Purcell, CEO of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs, photo by Alexandra Peek



Handwritten note by Penny Wong, photo by Alexandra Peek



Laying flowers at the base of the monument, photo by Alexandra Peek

Burning of St Mark's Native Grassland, ACC&C

Sarah Stitt

Corporate Services and Events Officer

St Mark's Native Grassland, situated across the sites of St Mark's National Theological Centre and the ACC&C, is two hectares of protected remnant native temperate grassland. To assist in managing the grassland, cultural burns or low intensity ecology burns are periodically required to reduce smothering biomass, enabling native plants to thrive and seeds to germinate, as well as reducing fire hazardous material.

On 13 April, Rural Fire Service volunteers, assisted by MBS FM, St Mark's and ACC&C staff, and with advice from Dr Sarah Sharp from Friends of Grassland ACT, the ACT Department of Environment, and Jim Barriesheff from CoreEnviro Solutions, performed a low intensity, mosaic burn, reducing the biomass but not disturbing the lower stems and root systems of plants, soil and invertebrates, and leaving patches of habitat for the insects and fauna.







War and peace

Dr Peter Hooton

Adjunct research scholar, ACC&C

The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer devoted much ecumenical energy in the first half of the 1930s to the avoidance of war in Europe. Nowhere is this more obvious, or more vividly expressed, than in his famous call for peace at an ecumenical gathering of Christian Churches in Fanø, Denmark, in the summer of 1934.

Why [he asks] do we fear the fury of the world powers? Why don't we take the power from them and give it back to Christ? ... The hour is late. The world is choked with weapons, and dreadful is the distrust which looks out of all men's eyes. The trumpets of war may blow tomorrow. For what are we waiting? Do we want to become involved in this guilt as never before? [DBWE 13: 309]

Parallels are now being drawn between events in Europe and East Asia in the 1930s and the situation in those same parts of the world today. It is certainly possible that Russia's invasion of Ukraine will lead eventually to open war with NATO, and that China's determination to reincorporate Taiwan may at some stage bring US/China tensions to a head. Meanwhile, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict already has global ramifications, and critically important conventional and nuclear arms control agreements are in a state of collapse.

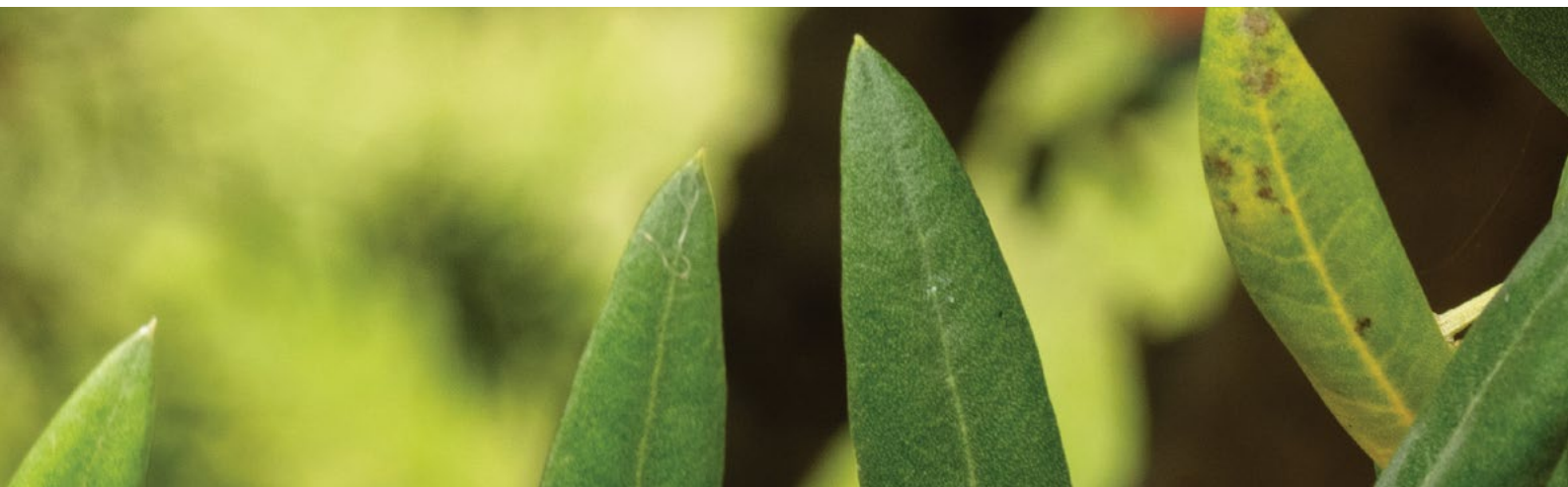
But war is big business. It has always made some people extremely rich. Today, the world's most self-confidently Christian power—the United States—is also the most heavily armed. There are, uniquely, more guns in America than there are people. The United States is also by far the world's biggest arms exporter. China, Russia, and Israel also make the top ten, with European countries occupying the remaining six places.

There is a huge amount of corporate and personal wealth tied up in the arms business, most of it in the once-Christian West. Some of the world's most influential people have absolutely no interest in promoting peace.

Christians are enjoined in the Sermon on the Mount to love their enemies and to offer no resistance to the aggressor. These are hard sayings most often observed in the breach. Jesus seems here to expect too much even of his closest disciples. Christians find it easier on the whole to relate to the saving Christ than they do to the reforming Jesus. But when we see the staunchly Christian former vice-president of the United States, Mike Pence, during a January visit to Israel, writing (presumably words of encouragement) on an artillery shell bound for Lebanon, we have still to ask what remains of Christianity in an action that not only ignores Christ but actually seems to mock him.

It is hardly surprising that many non-Christians think Christians either ignorant or hypocritical. Gandhi is reported once to have observed: "The whole world knows that Jesus is a pacifist, except for the Christians." In matters of war and peace, there is certainly a vast gap in understanding between Christ and those who claim to follow him. We have tried to bridge this gap from time to time with codes of chivalry, with laws and conventions and occasional acts of generosity and restraint, only to be overwhelmed again and again by new and greater waves of brutality.

Countries have a right to defend themselves against external attack—and, equally, a duty to respond no more than proportionately to those attacks. They are otherwise obliged



Olive tree, photo by Liz Jakimow

by law to settle their international disputes peacefully and to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of other states (UN Charter Art. 2). But peace, it would seem, is not easily defined, not least because every party to a dispute seems generally to want the kind of peace that only its idea of victory can deliver. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that there are more than 100 armed conflicts now being fought in various parts of the world, involving upwards of 60 states and 100 non-state actors. We may reasonably be critical of the United Nations' failure to live up to the provisions of its Charter, but this was always going to be hard for an organisation made up exclusively of sovereign states. As grim as it is, however, the global situation would almost certainly be worse without it.

In the end though, Bonhoeffer tells us, peace cannot be guaranteed by treaties or alliances, or by any putative balance of arms or of terror. We may place our faith in some illusory promise of enduring safety and stability, but peace can never in fact be made safe. It can only be risked. Peace must not be confused with security because the guarantees that security requires are built on mistrust and mistrust is one of the principal architects of war.

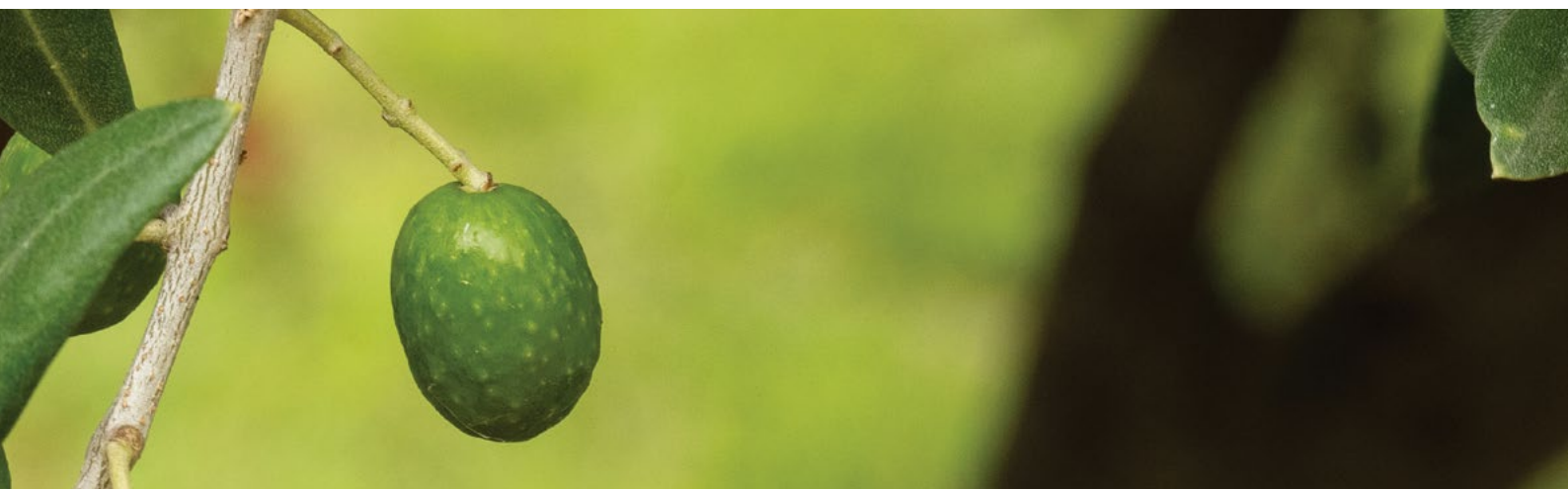
Who then "will call us to peace so that the world will... have to hear?"

"The individual Christian cannot do it. When all around are silent, he can indeed raise his voice and bear witness, but the powers of this world stride over him without a word. The individual church, too, can witness and suffer... but it also is suffocated by the power of hate. Only the one great Ecumenical Council of the Holy Church of Christ over all the world can speak out so that the world ... will have to hear, so that the peoples will rejoice because the Church of Christ in the name of Christ has taken the weapons from the hands of their sons, forbidden war, and proclaimed the peace of Christ against the raging world." [DBWE 13: 309]

Bonhoeffer did not expect this to happen, but I can see why he thought it worth saying. We have at least to hope for some change in the human condition. Security will always be fragile, and peace will always be fraught, but we can at least genuinely desire it as an alternative to sliding endlessly into soul-destroying wars that bear within them already the bitter seeds of their successors.

Christians are enjoined in the Sermon on the Mount to love their enemies and to offer no resistance to the aggressor. These are hard sayings most often observed in the breach.

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Peace as communal flourishing?

Dr Douglas Hynd

Adjunct Scholar, ACC&C

The term “peace” in English doesn’t serve us all that well. It doesn’t do much more than reference the absence of violence. The contrast with the Hebrew “shalom” is striking. “Shalom”, while it references peace, also brings into view related themes of prosperity, community welfare and communal flourishing. Thinking and acting for peace within the frame of reference suggested by shalom would bring into view a much wider range of possible responses beyond the goal of ending violence.

In suggesting that we broaden our attention beyond the struggle to reduce violence, I do not want to downplay the importance and indeed the urgency of reducing violence in our common life. The need, for example, to prevent the deaths of women from domestic violence and to ensure that the deaths of indigenous people in police custody and prison are halted, to cite a couple of examples close to home, is unarguable. Beyond that there is the urgent need for Australia to take up its international responsibilities in partnership with other nations in responding to the destruction and the human toll of war in Ukraine, Gaza, the West Bank, Yemen, Myanmar, the Congo, Sudan, and Somalia, to name just the most visible locations of military violence and terrorism.

A wider view of peace, and the tasks of peacemaking, is relevant whether we are responding at the national or international level. My recent visit to Timor-Leste gave me the opportunity to reflect with friends there on their struggle for independence and the complexities of moving beyond the trauma of violence to building new a nation. That discussion highlighted the importance of approaching peacemaking from the perspective of shalom. Their experience of the transition from the destruction that accompanied the end of the Indonesian occupation to building flourishing communities has something to say to us here in Australia. The path from the experience of 25 years of occupation to a peace characterised by the quest for community welfare and human flourishing following independence was not straightforward. Xanana Gusmao, reflecting on this transition, recently observed that the struggle for independence was easy, you focused solely on the struggle with only one goal. Building a nation in which human flourishing was possible was much more complex.

Xanana Gusmao, reflecting on this transition, recently observed that the struggle for independence was easy, you focused solely on the struggle with only one goal. Building a nation in which human flourishing was possible was much more complex.

The experience of Timor-Leste, I think, has something to teach us in Australia as we revisit the question of how we too might seek shalom following the defeat of the Voice referendum. I have two brief stories of initiatives there that I think are relevant to our situation.

Following the achievement of independence, a critical national initiative was the establishment of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation. The Commission had a triple mandate. Reception involved assisting in the return of Timorese displaced into Indonesian West Timor and their reintegration into their communities. This was envisaged as a process leading to people embracing each other and coming back to living under one roof, after years of division and violence. Truth seeking involved rendering a full accounting of human rights violations between 1974 and 1999, not only by Indonesia as the occupying power, but also the resistance. This was undertaken through the collection of over 7,000 statements by those involved and by those affected. That was a substantial process of listening in a population at the time of around a million people.

Reconciliation involved a community reconciliation process, designed to reintegrate low-level offenders into their community through acknowledgment of the violations by the offenders and a formal culturally appropriate acceptance of the offenders by those affected and by the community. These processes taken together contributed to underpinning what has developed as a relatively open and democratic society in which power has now changed hands peacefully after several elections with a focus on building a shared future.

I now turn to an initiative by a remote community in Timor-Leste that comprises several villages in the mountains in the east of the country, a community that I have visited on several occasions over the past 15 years. The area experienced severe fighting and Indonesian bombing of resistance forces particularly during the early years of the invasion. Following independence, the community had long discussions about what they were going to do to build their community and contribute to the new nation. They focused on education as a key priority. In the two decades since then, in partnership with overseas friends and the government, they have built a



Caption

Photo by Douglas Hynd

presecondary school and a senior secondary school run by the community in an area in which access to these levels of education was previously very limited and difficult to access. Beyond access to education the schools have provided a source of local employment and enabled teachers to remain in the community. A one hundred percent success rate at the national exams has led to a steady flow of students proceeding to tertiary education. I had the privilege of meeting alumni from the community schools and was moved at their commitment to building both their community and their nation.

In taking the steps toward peace as community flourishing the Timor-Leste initiatives point to the importance of a process of truth telling at both the local and regional level. The Uluru Statement highlighted the necessity of truth telling accompanied by careful listening by the non-indigenous populations as an essential step toward conciliation with the indigenous nations of this continent. After the referendum the leadership of the indigenous communities across Australia have begun speaking about truth telling as the next step forward towards conciliation between the invaders and those who have benefitted from that invasion and the original inhabitants. Truth telling has to do with both invasion and contemporary violence in Australia. Getting to the truth of deaths in police custody for example, has proved a grinding battle for indigenous families and their communities.

The second lesson from Timor-Leste is the importance of communities driving the identification and implementation of priorities in that they encourage flourishing and improving well-being. This again supports the call in Australia recently by the Productivity Commission, no less, for governments to listen to communities about priorities instead of ploughing ahead with standardised programs. Careful and respectful listening is the starting point for responses that enable community flourishing, rather than laying the basis for ongoing violence.



Photo by Douglas Hynd



“Christ is our peace” (Eph 2.14): peace-making from an Easter perspective

Rev Dr Tim Watson

Director of Youth Engagement, ACC&C

Karl Rahner famously said that the only Christians in the third millennium will be those who have “experienced something.” At a time when churches are shrinking and traditional Christian language is increasingly inaccessible, how can we share the Easter story in ways that resonate with the lived experience of our contemporaries? What then might it mean for us to proclaim Christ as “our peace,” and what implications might this have for our self-understanding as Christians?

Within the biblical narrative of God’s saving work in history, “peace” is always understood as part of a holistic vision of human flourishing, never a theoretical concept such as “the absence of hostilities.” The semantic field of the Hebrew word *shalom* is extraordinarily broad, covering personal salutation (“Shalom, favoured lady!”, Luke 1.28); individual well-being; inter-personal reconciliation; domestic harmony; international diplomatic alliances (“there was *shalom* between Hiram and Solomon”, 1 Kings 5.26); the organisation of time according to God’s creation ordinances (“*shabbat shalom*”); and the economic system of the ideal multicultural polis, *res publica* or commonweal (“seek the *shalom* of the city”, Jeremiah 29.7).

Within this biblical narrative, the death and resurrection of Christ are the central events through which, by breaking the human cycle of retributive violence and showing forth God’s reconciling love for all people, Jesus the Prince of Peace makes possible God’s promise of “*shalom on earth*” (Luke 2.14). At the same time, the Easter promise of peace only becomes real in people’s lives through a post-Paschal process of personal and corporate transformation mediated by the ongoing work of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which the Scriptures present in three stages.

In the first stage, the risen Christ brings peace to individuals through a series of highly personal acts of reconciliation with tangible therapeutic outcomes. For Mary Magdalene, grief and co-dependency become healthy differentiation and joy (John 20); for Peter, pride and shame become repentance and forgiveness (John 21). In both cases, personal transformation and psychological maturity enable a new leadership role within the community: “go and announce”, “feed my sheep.”

In the second stage, the personal becomes corporate. Christ comes to his disciples behind the locked doors of the upper room, gives them his peace, and mandates them to be peace-makers in their turn (John 20). This leads to a period of 40 days during which the disciples gather as a formational “learning

community”, developing corporate practices to embody and make transmissible their personal experience of transformation and reconciliation (Luke 24, John 20, Acts 1).

In the third stage, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit finally equips the disciples to share their testimony with the world, as a community of trained practitioners shaped by distinctive practices of peace-making (cf. Acts 2.41-47) sent out from Jerusalem (city of “*shalom*”) to share the good news of God’s reconciling love to the end of the earth.

Read in this light, the Easter story sets the bar very high for those of us who call ourselves Christians and provides a rigorous standard against which the actual conduct of the Christian Church over 2,000 years must be assessed. Do we experience our churches as places of *shalom*? Are they “learning communities” of grace and reconciliation, human flourishing, therapeutic transformation and psychological health, in which individuals are deeply formed and equipped through intentional practices to be mature leaders in the demanding work of peace-making? Do our institutions celebrate and implement the Gospel principles of peace-making embodied in traditions such as Catholic social teaching and Mennonite conflict transformation? How would it affect our credibility and authenticity if we were to allow ourselves to be deeply transformed in this way by the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit? And how might this affect our capacity to share the Easter promise of peace in a world which is more than ever in need of hope, healing and reconciliation?

Within this biblical narrative, the death and resurrection of Christ are the central events through which, by breaking the human cycle of retributive violence and showing forth God’s reconciling love for all people, Jesus the Prince of Peace makes possible God’s promise of “shalom on earth” (Luke 2.14).



Bible garden, photo by Liz Jakimow



Photo by Andrew Dakin



Prayers for Peace, 2024 Commonwealth Day Celebration

Sarah Stitt

Events and Corporate Services Officer, ACC&C

For 20 years Commonwealth Day has been celebrated in Canberra by the diaspora of Commonwealth member countries. The Centre has partnered with the Commonwealth Day Celebration organising committee to host the Commonwealth Day Celebration for many of these years. It is a memorable event. The 56 member states' flags are presented with the Bishop's House bell being rung 56 times to herald the beginning of the Celebration. This year's celebration began with singing from Pacific Island choirs, Fijian Lali drums, a Chinese Dragon Dance and a Welcome to Country by Ngunnawal Elder, Uncle Warren Daley, supported by didgeridoo player Bevan Smith. With the cacophony of cultures one feels totally transported to other places. The colour and sounds brought to the space are transformative.

Many people are unaware that the second Monday in March is Commonwealth Day. For the ACT, the second weekend in March is a long weekend celebrating Canberra Day. It is on the

Monday of this holiday weekend that the Commonwealth Day Celebration is held. This year, Their Excellencies the Governor-General and his wife, Mrs Linda Hurley, along with many high commissioners, were present at the celebration. The theme of the celebration was Prayers for Peace.

This year we heard from King Charles III that it has been 75 years since the Commonwealth of Nations was created, following the formal dismantling of the British Empire and the recognition that all countries are equal and free. The Commonwealth continues to grow with 56 countries being member states – 15 are Commonwealth realms with King Charles III being their monarch, 36 are republics and the other five have different monarchs.

Months before the event many meetings are hosted in preparation. Right up to the day, surprises can occur. On the morning of the Celebration the committee was notified by the



Photo by Andrew Dakin



Photo by Andrew Dakin



Photo by Andrew Dakin

Samoan representative that, due to the dignitaries present and in light of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting being hosted by Samoa in May, that their "item will be (a) young woman performing the Tauluga, showcasing the traditional woman tattoo called 'malu' in traditional attire, representing most prestigious performance fitting for the occasion", with the Samoan women's choir supporting the dance. It was stunning.

This year the occasion was heralded as the best to date. The strong feeling through peace expressed in the interfaith community's prayers and through the cultural performances created a coherent and thoughtful celebration.

A light lunch was shared with all present, following the Celebration. The Governor-General and his wife participated in meeting with community members, high commissioners and performers. Mrs Hurley sang along with the Canberra Ukelele Group to "You are my Sunshine." It was a lovely rendition and

especially fitting as the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley look forward to the end of their term at Government House.

During the days that followed we have heard how appreciative the Commonwealth community is of this colourful, inclusive, respectful and spiritual occasion. Thanks should be given to the committee and their tireless work in bringing this event together, especially Dr Hugh Craft OAM and Kantilal Jinna OAM, both of whom have been on the committee for 20 years. Hugh Craft moved a vote of thanks to Their Excellencies the Governor-General David Hurley and Mrs Linda Hurley for their very strong support. Their interest was genuine and generous. We all wish them every success in their future endeavours. Dr Craft also thanked leaders of the multifaith and cultural communities and the Centre for their partnership in helping to make the occasion a great success.



“Prayers for peace” and lamenting women – a reflection

Dr Janet Salisbury

A Chorus of Women and Founder, Women’s Climate Congress

On 11 March, the ACC&C hosted the annual Commonwealth Day Celebration in the Chapel. The official international theme was “One Resilient Common Future”, but the Commonwealth Day Celebration Committee included the theme of “Prayers for Peace” – a moving and apt recognition of the great need for peace prayers at a time when so many global sisters and brothers are suffering the consequences of wars not of their own making. In the words of the song “Lament”, a video recording of which A Chorus of Women presented at the Commonwealth Day event:

*Weep for our sisters in danger
Weep for our brothers and children
Sound the cries of grief and despair
Sound the lament for the dead.*
[Words by Glenda Cloughley, 2003]

The prayers and readings from across different religions expressed deep wisdom at the core of all faith traditions. Those of faith and no faith alike experienced a spiritual connection to the Earth, nature, to each other, and the ongoing cycles of life. We all share these wisdom stories, these “prayers for peace”, so why is making peace so hard? We know all about how to make war, it seems, and put huge political effort into building up defences even when there is no imminent threat. What do we know of making peace?

The American social reformer, suffragist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Jane Addams (1860-1935), said in her address at the 1915 International Congress of Women (the only peace conference of WWI), “Peace is not merely the absence of war. Peace is the nurture of human life.”

What is preventing the global human family from truly nurturing life? In our families, most of us love and care for one another unconditionally, even when we have different views. We nurture each new generation and ourselves physically through the preparing and sharing of food, clothing and shelter, and spiritually through stories, poetry, art and music, we look after our homes so that they are beautiful and safe places to live.

But in our public politics these healthy, caring connections get sidetracked. At the national and international scales, we do not look after each other or our planet home. Our cultural and spiritual lives are diminished by economic considerations, power struggles and polarising democratic systems that set one side against another in short-term election cycles. Nurture

of human, and indeed all life on planet Earth, is given secondary status and priority. We do not have a “Department of Peace” to build the conditions for peace, or a “Peace Memorial” to celebrate peacemakers.

Speaking about her impulse to write the words for “Lament” for women to sing in Parliament House in March 2003 when Australia joined the war on Iraq, Glenda Cloughley said in a radio interview: “The grief I felt for Iraqi people was deeper than my anger about the collapse of peaceful processes; stronger than my boredom during adversarial speeches at peace rallies. Sorrow doesn’t oppose anything. It’s a form of love. Often, it’s more original and potent than rage. In many myths about the eternal cycle of the seasons and generations the song of grief brings life out of death.”

Lamenting has long been considered women’s business – another mode of expressing their concerns and opinions about the world around them in a predominantly male public political scene. In rituals and songs of mourning, women are empowered to address publicly issues of social importance.

In the global body politic, women’s voices are needed more than ever – not as a nice-to-have add-on with glacially slow timeframes to any real equality, but as an urgent and immediate priority. This is not because they are better than men but because they are half of the population and can bring a long overdue rebalance to the currently stuck systems and paradigms. Then, as Glenda Cloughley wrote in the new 2023 verse for “Lament”: “Lament will turn to renewal.”



20th Anniversary of A Chorus of Women singing Lament at Parliament House, photo supplied by Australian Parliament House.



“...Sorrow doesn’t oppose anything. It’s a form of love. Often, it’s more original and potent than rage.

In many myths about the eternal cycle of the seasons and generations the song of grief brings life out of death.”



Medusa Oniomania by Anatoly Golobokov



Eco v Ego: the footprint of our consumerism

Anatoly Golobokov

I am delighted to debut my new project “Eco v Ego: the footprint of our consumerism” at the ACC&C this May.

I invite you to step into a fascinating world of mixed and digital media multi-layered installations, where you can witness the complex dynamics between our never-ending modern consumption and the serious impact it has on the wellbeing of our planet.

“Eco v Ego” is here to expose issues of modern society like overconsumption, depletion of natural resources, excess production, fast fashion, global warming, ever-increasing waste and never-ending greed.

Each piece in this exhibition represents my belief in the power of art to provoke thought and inspire change. I created these installations and three-dimensional collages to demonstrate the ongoing clash between our individual egotistical desires and the ecological responsibility we all owe to our one and only home.

As you wander through the exhibition, I want you to witness the consequences of our collective consumerist obsessions. I want you to observe the visual narrative of our ego-driven choices and their environmental repercussions. I want you to watch the stories of how our consumerism culture is destroying us, our ethics and our planet.

At the heart of “Eco v Ego” stands Medusa, a human-like jellyfish character. I have crafted her to deliver important environmental messages and embody the deadly attraction and danger of our consumerist desires.

Just like the jellyfish (a primitive creature without a central nervous system, with no brain, eyes or heart that lets currents take it in any and every direction from place to place), Medusa drifts aimlessly, symbolising thoughtless and unresponsive actions of contemporary society as we fall victim to the temptations of consumerism. Medusa is a captivating character and an enchanting symbol, but her beauty can be fatal. Beneath it lies a warning to us, a reminder of the dangerous path we are on. Those who look at her can fall into the abyss of chasing their endless consumerist desires, always wanting more and drowning under the weight of unethical production, pollution and their own overconsumption.

But amidst the darkness there is always hope. “Eco v Ego” installations and collages are a representation of sustainable practices and utilise the art of Upcycling. Unlike traditional recycling (which often involves breaking down materials to create new ones), upcycling focuses on creatively repurposing old items, that might otherwise be considered waste.

Through the art of upcycling, I give a second life to otherwise discarded objects. I transform them into works of art that challenge our perceptions of waste and value. Each installation demonstrates the potential for renewal and regeneration, it encourages to reduce waste and highlights the beauty of objects that are often discarded and overlooked once their primary purpose has been fulfilled.

Whether you are an art lover, a curious observer or a concerned citizen, there is something at my exhibition for everyone. So, mark your calendars and prepare to embark on the journey towards eco-awareness and a more sustainable future.

I envision “Eco v Ego” to serve as a mirror reflecting our collective impact on the environment. I invite you to join me in this self-reflection and discovery, to challenge ourselves and consider the consequences of our consumer footprint. Let’s reflect on how our individual choices can be adjusted and improved in the pursuit of a harmonious and ethical co-existence of eco-awareness and occasional personal indulgences. Together I want us to start a meaningful dialogue about the world we live in and the world we are going to leave behind. We want it to be our legacy and not the beginning of our downfall.

The exhibition opens Wednesday, 8 May and will open daily, 10.30am - 3pm, 9 to 18 May.



Medusa Fashionista by Anatoly Golobokov



Report on second HG Brennan Workshop on Economics and Theology, Canberra 8-10 February 2024

Professor Paul Oslington

Adjunct Research Professor, CRES

The Centre for Religion Ethics and Society (CRES) hosted the second HG Brennan Workshop on Economics and Theology 8-10 February 2024 at the ACC&C in Canberra. Something of the long history of these gatherings of economists and theologians in Canberra was told in the [Engage article](#) on the 2023 workshop. Our theme this year was "Faith Work and Economics." Financial support from the ACC&C and The Different Collective made the workshop possible and is greatly appreciated.

The workshop began with an evening public lecture, "Economics and Theology: Promise and Difficulties of the Dialogue", by our international guest Professor Juergen von Hagen. He is a distinguished monetary economist and policy advisor who has for many years been Dean of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Bonn, Germany's largest and highest ranked economics department. Alongside this, Juergen is an active pastor in the Free Evangelical Church and a leader of interdisciplinary research on economics and theology. His lecture was well attended, including by academic economists, theologians and members of the public interested in the issues. The text of his lecture is available on the CRES website [here](#).

Twenty invited participants then spent the next two days discussing relationships among faith, work and economics. We opened with an overview of the history and current status of the field by CRES Adjunct Professor Paul Oslington. Most of our time was spent discussing the three commissioned papers by Christopher White on the faith and work movement, Juergen von Hagen on the economic effects of faith and work activities, and Jonathan Cornford on economics and eschatology. Part of our agenda was to bridge the gap between the focus of the faith and work movement on individual and organisational ethics and economists' focus on the larger system. New insights about the way individual and organisational dilemmas are embedded in and shaped by the larger system emerged from connecting these previously separated conversations. These insights will be the basis of future publications by the participants, in addition to the commissioned papers. They will also inform future practical initiatives in the Faith and Work Movement.

On the first evening, CRES Research Fellow Dr Brendan Long launched a book arising out of the Study of the Economic Impact of Religion on Society (SEIROS) project on the economic impact of religion in Australia, research that was presented by Brendan and discussed at last year's workshop. We hope this work will develop into a larger externally funded project. Following the launch, we enjoyed dinner together at a nearby restaurant, and some fine red wines generously donated by the late HG Brennan's wife, Margaret Brennan.

The final session of the workshop discussed plans for collaborative projects and competitive research grant applications on "Usury and Contemporary Financial Regulation" and "Faith-based Social Services in Australia."

We are encouraged that economics and theology has been recognised as one of the five CRES research foci and look forward to further developing this work.

The next HG Brennan workshop in February 2025 is likely to be focused on usury.

Workshop co-chairs

Professor Paul Oslington, Alphacrucis University College, Sydney and Centre for Religion Ethics and Society, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Charles Sturt University, Canberra.

Emeritus Professor Ian Harper, Former Dean, Melbourne Business School, The University of Melbourne.

Dr Jonathan Cole, Director, Centre for Religion Ethics and Society, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Charles Sturt University, Canberra.



HG Brennan Workshop on Economics and Theology, photo by Lauren Bartley



Book review: *Practicing Peace: Theology, Contemplation, and Action* by Michael J Wood

Liz Jakimow

Communications Officer, ACC&C

Often we think about peace on a global scale. Peace brings visions of the end of war, when countries will not fight each other, when civilians will not die in military attacks, when children do not live in war-torn countries and when the ravages of war are healed. Peace then becomes the responsibility of others – countries, national leaders, UN peacekeeping missions. Not us. All we can do is pray.

In *Practicing Peace: Theology, Contemplation, and Action*, Michael J Wood shows us that peace is indeed our responsibility. Peace, according to Wood, is not an absence of conflict but “the way in which we navigate conflict nonviolently”, recognising and honouring the dignity of others. In opposition to peace is violence, which refers to any thought or action that moves away from peaceful, loving relationship.

It would be difficult to read this book without recognising many areas where we fall far too short of the ideal. Wood shows us how our thoughts and actions often do violence to ourselves or violence to others. We may choose violence (and turn away from peace) when we seek to control people or manipulate them. We may also seek violence in our thoughts towards others or in our desire for recognition, power or importance. Seeking to suppress disagreements and strong emotions can fester and emerge in violence of a different kind.

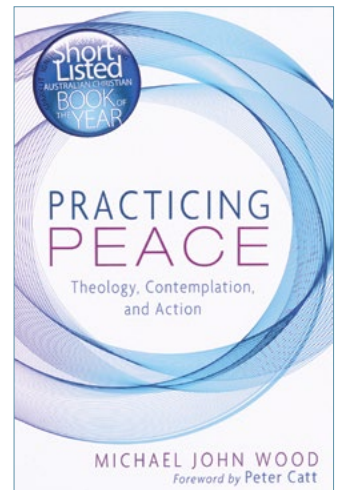
Wood describes it as a “dance between power and love”, where we respond to the needs of others, without compromising our own needs. This dance is never easy. Sometimes we preference the needs of others, causing festering emotions to grow and causing violence to ourselves. At other times we may voice our own needs or emotions, and be met with anger, defensiveness, dismissal or avoidance. We might seek to pursue peace, but end up increasing violence instead.

While this may sound discouraging, there is still hope. Wood likens it to two pieces of music playing at the same time. One is the music of our human tendency towards violence and one is the music of God’s cruciform love and peace. Both pieces of music will always be playing. However, through Christ’s death and resurrection, where he responded to our violence with nonviolence, we are brought into God’s peace and nonviolence too. We may hear the music of violence, but we can choose the music of peace.

Practicing Peace also contains a number of reflection questions at the end of each chapter. These questions help us see where we have chosen violence over peace, but they also provide ways in which we can choose to live more nonviolently in future.

I usually never read reflection questions at the end of chapters. Not only did I read these ones, but I thought about them deeply, and returned to them again in my mind after the book was put down.

I wish I could say that anyone who reads this book will automatically choose peace in every situation and never choose violence again. We all know that is not true. As humans, the music of violence will continue to play. After reading *Practicing Peace*, I was completely inspired and determined to choose peace in every situation. Less than a week later, I found myself again responding to a situation with violence rather than peace. It is all too easy to do. So I stopped and asked myself one of the questions Wood poses: “How can God work through this situation?” I am not sure I have an answer to that. Yet I am confident that, even though the music of violence seems to be quite loud at the moment, the music of peace is also there. I just need to choose to listen to it.



Peace, according to Wood, is not an absence of conflict but “the way in which we navigate conflict nonviolently”, recognising and honouring the dignity of others.



Spiritus

SHORT FILM PRIZE

Know anyone interested in film-making?

Why not tell them about the *Spiritus* Short Film Prize?

The *Spiritus* Short Film Prize is sponsored by the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and is part of the Canberra Short Film Festival.

A total prize pool of \$6,000 will be awarded over a number of categories.

To be eligible, a film must have been produced since 1 January 2023 and be no longer than 10 minutes.

Films will be judged on:

- high artistic quality
- wisdom for the common good
- human and planetary flourishing
- universal impact and inventive expression.

For more information about the *Spiritus* Short Film Prize, please go to: <https://about.csu.edu.au/community/accc/spiritus/home>

To enter a film by 31 August 2024, please go to the Canberra Short Film Festival website at <https://filmfreeway.com/CanbShrtFilmFest> and look under



Upcoming Events

CES Forum:
Dr Jonathan Cole
The AI revolution
 7pm, The Chambers Pavilion

23
 APR



C1 Alive (free event)
Canberra International Music Festival
 11am, The Chapel

1
 MAY



Eco v Ego: The footprint of our consumerism
Anatoly Golobokov Exhibition
 Opening night. 6pm, The Chapel

8
 MAY



Eco v Ego: The footprint of our consumerism
Anatoly Golobokov Exhibition
 Open daily 10.30am-3pm

9-18
 MAY



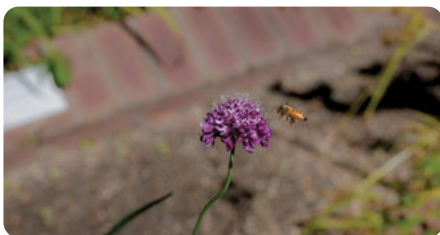
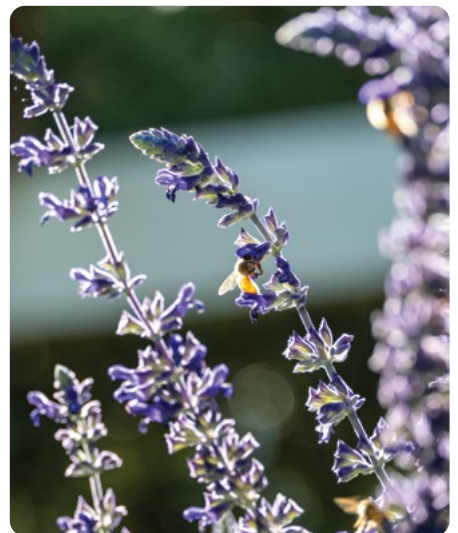
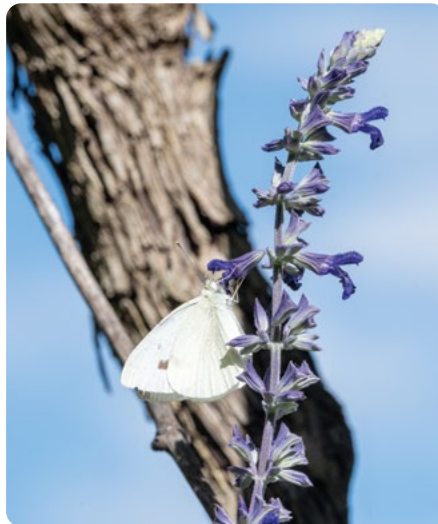
What's been happening recently



On 27 March, the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP) held two information forums on community refugee sponsorship in the ACT. Pictured is Blaise Itabelo, National Manager – Community Partnerships and Engagement. Photo by Liz Jakimow



On 14 February, Liz Jakimow spoke at the opening night of her exhibition 'A journey with grief: exploring loss through photography and poetry', photo by Ian Gray



Photos by Liz Jakimow

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
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CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

Wisdom for the common good



Hire the Centre's facilities for your next event

The Centre's facilities include The Chapel, which can host up to 200 people seated, and The Chambers Pavilion which can seat 50 people. There is free onsite parking for event attendees. We welcome inquiries from groups that run events that are consistent with the vision of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.



THE CHAPEL



THE CHAMBERS PAVILION

Email acc-c@csu.edu.au or call 02 6272 6201 for bookings and information.

