



ENGAGE



Jesus Laughing & Loving

What a success! Nearly 300 attended the *Jesus Laughing and Loving* exhibition, held from 12 November to 5 December. Here are some of the visitors' favourites.



The Drought Breaker by Geoffrey D. Todd, Australia



Jesus at a Well by Batjargal Tseintsogzoi, Mongolia



Emmaus by Emmanuel Garibay, Philippines

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“Yet, what indeed, may we hope for? A better life? A happier life? Less stress? More power? Greater freedom? What we hope for depends on who we are and our context.”

What may we hope for?



At the end of the eighteenth century the famous German philosopher Immanuel Kant, bequeathed to us three questions: What can we know? What must we do? What may we hope for?

To the first, what can we know? We are acutely aware that the search for knowledge is never ending. There are many dead ends and some

remarkable discoveries. This question has provided the engine for the intellectual and scientific advances of the modern world. Finding a vaccine is a major challenge in COVID-19 times. But the great philosopher was sceptical about the limits of knowledge. There were hard facts and tangible realities and with these, an abundance of knowledge. On the other hand, there are the intangible things of life; the realm of values and deeper spiritual impulses. Here knowledge faded into speculation. For the most part Kant concluded that we live in the realm of probabilities not certainties. As the scriptures say; we walk by faith and not by sight.

To the second question, what must we do, Kant postulated that at the very core of our being we discover a moral 'ought'; that which I am called to do. He saw this internal moral imperative as the great gift to humanity; to be ignored at our peril. Acting for climate justice is one such moral claim. Future generations will suffer greatly because of our moral failure in this regard and marvel at our ingenuity to construct ways to avoid the moral imperative.

With the third question, what may we hope for, we face the most haunting of Kant's questions. We invest in knowledge and discover our ignorance. We listen to the voice of conscience and act according to our moral vision, but it often fails us. Yet, what indeed, may we hope for? A better life? A happier life? Less stress? More power? Greater freedom? What we hope for depends on who we are and our context. The wealthy, the unemployed, those who live in war zones, indigenous Australians, refugees, secure homeowners, the young on their search for identity and purpose, the old trying to find the meaning of a life lived. Different people, different contexts, different hopes. Hope is like that rare and precious metal, reminiscent of the Gospel story of the pearl of great price that is sought beyond anything else.

These three questions belong to the human journey and are forever close at hand. Kant's questions can easily overwhelm people in times of transition and anxiety. This is the case, especially if we have responsibilities for the well-being of institutions in the public life of the nation and its people. They are critical questions for the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. We are convinced that seeking knowledge, finding the will to act for the common good, and living hopefully all rely on a culture of listening, mutual learning and collaborative action. That is why such matters have to be approached in the company of others. This is the only genuine breeding ground for hope.

For followers of Jesus the season of Advent leading up to Christmas is a time to remember the foundation for genuine hope in the God of justice and truth. Beyond naïve optimism or the despair that often envelops us Advent reminds us that in our troubles and perplexities, we know 'that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us' Romans 5:3-5.

May the God of hope be with you this Advent tide.

Stephen

Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard

Executive Director

Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture



View across grassland to lake, photo by Sarah Stitt

The year that may have made us!

by Sarah Stitt

Events and Corporate Service Officer



Following our common challenges through 2020 the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture has been blessed three times over these past few months.

The first, like most of the ACT, is with substantial rain, drenching and replenishing our landscape. The regeneration has brought colour to the grounds, especially to the Grassland. It has been

some years since regulars to the Centre have experienced the myriad of native grasses and flowers - button wrinklewort, yam daisies, rare and vulnerable orchids and daisies. The trees have almost recovered from the shredding they received in the January hailstorm. The walk into the Bible Garden has revealed the most magnificent show of climbing roses, *rosa moschata* – single petal with yellow stamen centres exuding the most glorious scent. The pomegranates are flowering, apple trees are fruiting, along with the expectation of a bumper olive crop – we will see.

The second blessing is the wonderful reception the *Jesus Laughing and Loving* exhibition received, with many visitors returning with friends to share an uplifting meditative experience. The opening was the Centre's first major occasion since mid-March with around fifty guests attending. Guest speaker, Roger Beale AM, artist and ACC&C board member, shared with the audience some interesting

insights, about which you will be able to read in this issue. We are especially grateful to the volunteers who supported the front-of-house helping to keep the exhibition open continuously for 24 days. This could not have been achieved without them. The Centre will keep the exhibition hanging until late January 2021, with viewing being available upon request.

Our third blessing has been the *Spiritus Short Film Prize* award night. The whole evening was a huge success. A short list of six films from the 19 submissions were viewed with three receiving awards – commended, highly commended and the winner, a link to which will be placed on our website. The four judges were unanimous in their decisions. To make the evening even more enjoyable A Chorus of Women sang *The Tree of Life* with music composed by Judy Clingan AM bringing words and melody together by Hildegard of Bingen “*Spiritus Sanctus vivificans vita Movens omnia*”, translated “Holy Spirit, life giver, you move all things, all things, living” and an Afro-American song “You’ve got a right, I’ve got a right, we all got a right to the tree of life” and Esperamus – meaning hope. The ACC&C are extremely grateful to our *Spiritus Short Film Prize* generous sponsors, Lynlea and Clive Rodger.

All in all we feel that these blessings have brought us out of the fog of the months behind us into a gentle optimism for the new year ahead. We hope that all of our readers, your families and friends, will have a joyous Christmas and festive season, and we look forward to seeing you here with us in 2021.

A loving, laughing Jesus: The Second Adam

by Roger Beale AO

Board Member ACC&C



Roger Beale speaking at the opening of the exhibition, photo by John Clark

This is an extraordinary exhibition of art devoted to images of Jesus – but not the images of Christ we are used to seeing.

All of us have a picture of Jesus in our mind's eye. It is an image framed by two millennia of Christian art.

At first, Christ was pictured as a beardless young man – a philosopher – in the Greco-Roman tradition. Then we had those soaring mosaics of a bearded Jesus as Christ Pantocrator – the almighty, all-powerful God.

In the medieval world of plague, war and famine, the suffering Christ took centre stage. Christ scourged, Christ falling, Christ covered in the boils of the black death, the crucified Christ – in short a man of sorrows acquainted with our grief.

By the Renaissance, Christ the Judge – elevating or casting down for want of works or faith – was an important artistic theme. But images of Christ as a friend and companion were virtually non-existent. Human solace often had to be sought through the intervention of Mary.

The mould was cracked by that most sinful of painters Caravaggio – most significantly the hand of Jesus summoning Matthew, in his great trilogy in the Cantarelli Chapel, is a mirror image of the hand of Michelangelo's Adam from the Sistine Chapel.



The hand of Michelangelo's Adam from the Sistine Chapel, photo supplied



The hand of Jesus summoning Matthew, from the trilogy in the Cantarelli Chapel, Caravaggio, photo supplied

Here is a very human Christ as the Second Adam from whom the human race takes a new beginning (II Corinthians 5:17).

This whole show is devoted to that image – that felt truth – of Christ as the fully human Second Adam. And surely Adam laughed and loved in Eden before the Fall just as Christ must have laughed and loved to inspire such profound devotion in his followers?

Here we have Christ as man, as woman and from many, many races painted in many artistic traditions. Some of these paintings are highly skilful while others are naïve. But they all share a huge passion and warmth. A truly human Christ, a truly Divine Christ, yes a Christ who fully knows our sorrows, but also one who shares our love and laughter.

For me at least this exhibition brings a wonderful message that Jesus's story, rightly understood, discloses the divine in all of humanity.

In this time, as in other moments of crisis, it is so important that we embrace that divinity, that opportunity for deep, encompassing love and innocent laughter that the Second Adam secures for all of us. Enjoy this show and feel that love swelling.

Girls can do anything, Spiritus Short Film Prize

by Genevieve Jacobs

Board Member ACC&C

It's been a challenging year as much of the world has faced lockdowns, anxiety and existential uncertainty about the future. So how would this be reflected in the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture's (ACC&C) *Spiritus Short Film Prize*?

Undoubtedly, people are seeking solace and respite from their COVID-induced anxieties but in the midst of the pandemic other concerns continue, unabated. Human life in all its rich and sometimes messy complexity asks us hard questions at every turn about justice, mercy and our responsibilities towards others.

There were 19 entries in this year's film prize and it's notable that the quality of entries continues to rise sharply, year on year. A number of this year's submissions would have graced any film prize in Australia, and we also received entries from the UK, the US and further afield including Israel and Dominica.

Vigorous (but essentially harmonious) conversation took place between myself and fellow judges Dr Fr Richard Leonard SJ, Andrew Pike OAM and CSU's Dr James Maraita.

In essence, what we looked for was something good at every level and in every way. The winning films needed to contribute to human wisdom and flourishing and we were clear that they should not descend into the morass of moralising. We were looking for story-telling, not sermons.

As we considered some fine submissions, we also looked for stories that would flourish in the light shone by the film prize, and film makers who would do the same. The films should also represent one of the central tasks of the ACC&C, to vibrantly engage with the wider world's spiritual concerns and quests.

The winner of this year's *Spiritus Short Film Prize* was [Girls Can Do Anything](#), directed by Kerreen Ely-Harper. The documentary brings together the modern-day battle for girls to play AFL with the women's consciousness raising movement of the 1970's. The film can be viewed until end of January 2021.

Joyous and thoughtful, the film is a passionate exploration of gender justice and the legacy of past battles for equal opportunity. It reminds us that we always stand on the shoulders of those who go before us.

Barry Mitchel's film [Legacy](#) was highly commended. A parable of climate change, it reminded us that it's still within our power to stem the ecological crisis and nurture our planet for future generations.

The jury also commended [New Brother](#) by Holly Winter, an ambitious drama that reflects wider social tension between insiders and outsiders through the prism of a suburban family.

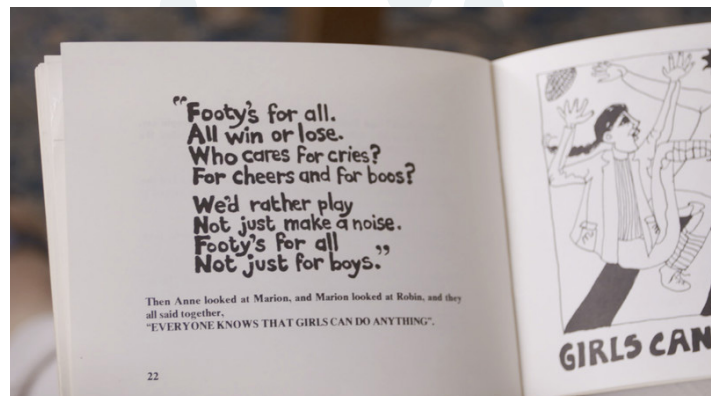
It was a pleasure and a privilege to judge this year's *Spiritus prize*. The future looks bright for the nation's film makers.




Sponsor Lynlea Rodger introducing the prize, photo by Lauren Bartley



Sponsor Clive Rodger announcing the winner, photo by Lauren Bartley



The poster from winning entry *Girls Can do Anything* by Kerreen Ely-Harper



The pandemic has spawned levels of anxiety about family and friends at home and abroad, so emails, telephone calls and intermittent Zoom gatherings have increased. But overall, for Robyn and me, the shrill virus directive has been “Sit at your desk and write!”

Cadwallader and COVID

by Alan Cadwallader

Research Professor of Theology, PaCT, CSU

It is said that Clint Eastwood hasn't noticed anything different in his own life as the virus hit and drove lockdowns. He's a social isolate anyway; life has gone on pretty much as before. So it has been for my partner, the novelist Robyn Cadwallader, and for myself. Her studio is at one end of the house and my study is in a granny flat. With both of us committed to our writing, her historical fiction, my historical faction, our time through the COVID-19 retreat has been substantially unremarkable. Books have been a little harder to get hold of, but both universities and book depots (oh, and also coffee supplies) have elevated their dispatching capacity, making the socially-distanced deliveries at our front gate the highlight of communal interaction for the day.

So, the concentration has been writing. The paperback edition of *The Politics of the Revised Version* was released, enabling a correction of a few glitches that had remained in the hardback. So there was a re-visiting of an old friend that had waited a number of years to be revealed — always a curious feeling to read through one's own work after a period of time, seeing the insights that only come from immersion in a topic as well as the sometimes odd turns of phrase and expressions that stamp one's style (oh for a “purple patch!”).

But the main work has been, again, Colossae. There has been the refinement of two very long essays for Volume 12 of the *New Documents Illustrating (the History of) Early Christianity* (The Lycus Valley). Then a journal article on the brief encounter of the (in) famous Gertrude Bell with Colossae, evidenced in a previously unpublished photograph she took of a “bomos”, that is an altar-shaped epitaph. The photograph, once enhanced with computer technology, finally enabled the solution of three different readings of the inscription made by Georg Weber, Georges Cousin and the famous William Mitchell Ramsay, all who had taken transcription notes during a short stop on the Ottoman Railway line in the 1890s.

The heavy concentration has been on a new book on Colossae that tries to drill deeply into the surviving evidence and explore ways in which that evidence might inform the New Testament letters to the Colossians and Philemon, in their composition, their reception and their participation in the religious competition evident in the city in the first century AD. The project has enabled the reconstruction of a series of inscriptions, the assessment of new coins, the unlocking of city foundation stories and the exploration of Colossae's intricate and sometimes conflictual relationships in the Lycus Valley in south-west Asia Minor, all of which embroiled the early Christ-followers in the region.

The pandemic has spawned levels of anxiety about family and friends at home and abroad, so emails, telephone calls and intermittent Zoom gatherings have increased. But overall, for Robyn and me, the shrill virus directive has been “Sit at your desk and write!”



Alan Cadwallader, photo supplied

Same work, different offices

by Dr Virginia Miller

Research Fellow, PaCT, CSU

International travel for research purposes has been an important part of my life at PaCT; and it has also been, at times, an enjoyable perk. For instance, in 2017 before settling in at the Domus Internationalis in Rome (to work on my book about child sexual abuse and the Catholic Church) I spent a few days working in the ballroom of the St Regis Hotel. Indeed, my working days were officially finished with the famous champagne sabering ritual! By contrast, and in keeping with travel restrictions, my work continues in my study at home in Canberra. More often than not, it finishes with the less sensational ritual of pouring a glass of beer or making a pot of tea.

Notwithstanding the lack of international travel and the stimulation provided by colleagues in Oxford and elsewhere, I have still made progress in my two principal areas of research – biblical studies and church-focused policy work.

Regarding my work in biblical studies, I am happy to announce that my monograph “A King and a Fool? The Succession Narrative as a Satire” (Brill Biblical Interpretation Series) is now available as an Open Access document.

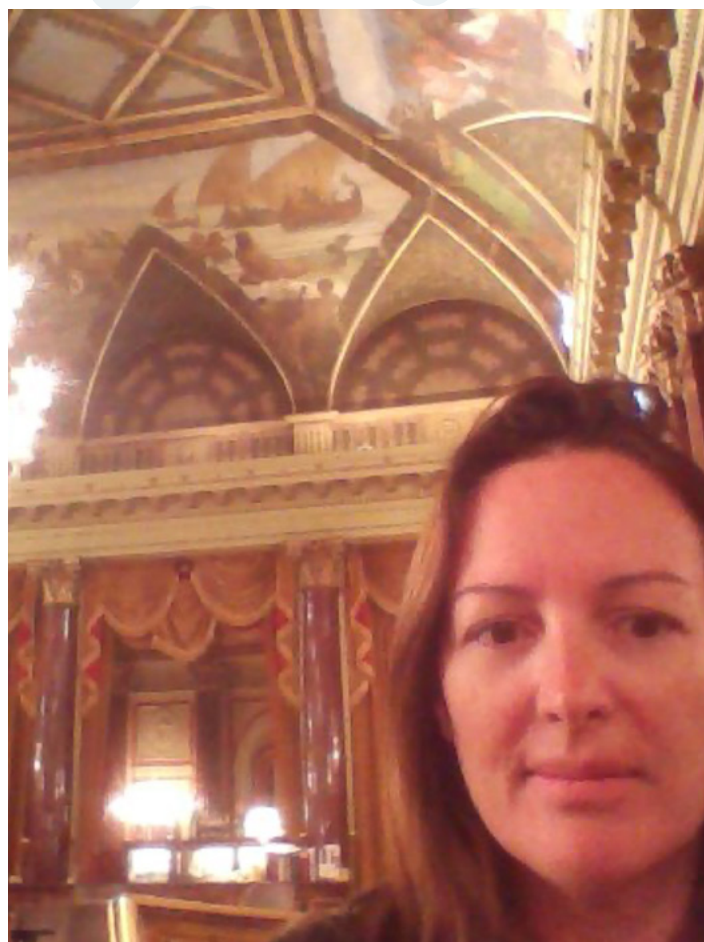
I am also currently working on a bi-lingual (English and German) co-edited volume on irony in the Bible. My co-editors are, Caroline Sharp (Yale University) and Tobias Häner (University of Vienna). Related to this project, I gave the only English-language presentation at the online conference, “Wahrhaftig, mit euch stirbt die Weisheit” (Job 12:2), in July. My invited paper, “Post Exilic Writing in the Bible: Irony, Satire and the Book of Job”, presented at a conference in Slovenia in 2018, was recently published in the edited volume, *Transcending Boundaries: Migrations, Dislocations and Literary Transformations*, (Tübingen, Stauffenburg Verlag, 2020).



Virginia at home, photo supplied

Regarding my policy focused work, my updated manuscript on child sexual abuse and the Catholic Church is now complete. The manuscript has been updated with sections on Cardinal George Pell, ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and the Independent Commission into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA (current UK inquiry)). This year I have spoken (via phone/Zoom) with key figures from the Catholic Church and Church of England who are in charge of the Church response to the IICSA. Moreover, I have received positive feedback on the draft manuscript from many leading figures in the Church.

Furthermore, this year I co-authored the following policy focused works; “Elder Sexual Abuse and Sexual Freedom in Faith-based Residential Care Facilities: Ethical Dilemmas”; “Euthanasia and Aged-Care in Faith-based Organisations: The Right not to Kill?”; “Child Sexual Abuse, Integrity Systems and the Anglican Church: Truth Justice and Love”; and “Sexual Abuse in Residential Homes: Issues of Concern” also available via Open Access, please follow the link here:



Ballroom of the St Regis Hotel, photo supplied



The Chorus performing at the Spiritus Short Film Prize, photo by Lauren Bartley

Five years of singing up wisdom for the common good

by Sarah Stitt

Member of A Chorus of Women and Events and Corporate Services Officer, ACC&C

Since November 2015 A Chorus of Women (Chorus) have called the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C), home, especially the Chapel where singing into this space is sublime.

The Chorus began as what the women believe to have been the first ever flashmob. On 18 March 2003 in orchestrated dribs and drabs 150 women gathered in the foyer of our Australian Parliament House. Their mission was to sing a lament for the people of Iraq. That day, *Lament*, keened through the halls of our parliament and into the television that night, when Fran Kelly announced that a chorus of women were in parliament house today singing a lament while the Prime Minister announced that he would take Australian troops back into the Middle East. The women's lament sang into the public arena the voiced concerns and feelings of 75% of all Australians who did not want Australia to take this stance.

Through their original lyrics and music A Chorus of Women have continued to sing up the voice of the people on the big issues of our time. Since March 2003 they have sung and presented huge works on the environment, peace and social justice. Many of these works have been recorded and are on their website:

www.chorusofwomen.org

The Chorus women have had to adjust their way of being during 2020. Drawing together many of their amazing group skills on the eve of Anzac Day they hosted the 11th Anzac Eve Peace Vigil from their living rooms via Zoom.

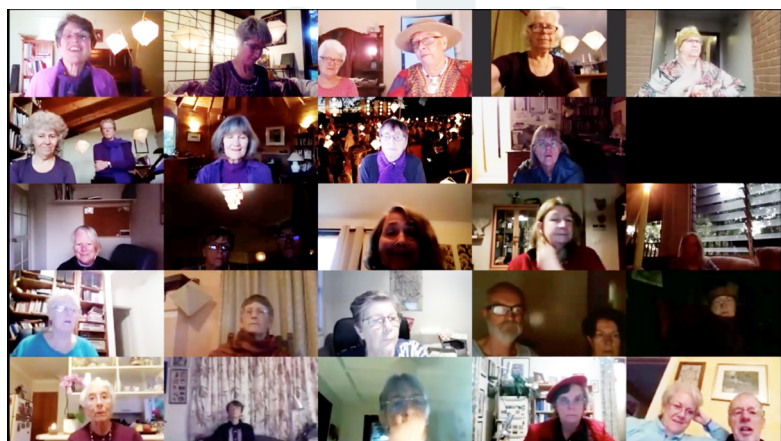
Initially this felt daunting but in their inimitable way the event was wonderful. Curating photos and film footage from previous Vigils, inviting Janette Philips, 'Nin', Chorus's Elder to Welcome all to Country, along with Chorus elder, Annie Didcott, to tell her story of

what it is like to be born into war, and Judith Kelly, a dear stolen generation Chorus friend, who joined in from Western Australia, to read her moving poem *Let there be Peace*. This all together made for a memorable and moving vigil.

Starting cautiously in July the women began to gather in person again. Initially they chose to sing outside onsite in the beautiful grounds of the ACC&C. They also ventured to other outdoor venues around Canberra, and then, suddenly, they were able to rehearse again in the Chapel.

They are home!

Chorus very much shares the ACC&C's vision – wisdom for the common good – and is pleased to be able to contribute when they can to events at the Centre. At the end of November, Chorus felt honoured to contribute, *The Tree of Life* by Judy Clingan AM, to the *Spiritus Short Film Prize* night.



Anzac Eve Peace Vigil Zoom attendees, photo supplied



First women's gathering 20 January 2020, photo by Danny Pratt

Out of the storm — the founding of a new women's initiative for uniting action on climate change

by Dr Janet Salisbury



Women's Climate Congress Founder and Member of A Chorus of Women, ACT

Women arrived, slowly then more quickly.

Many arrived close to the start time. Hiatus.

Unable to move from the table.

Preoccupied with the trashed and shredded trees. Overwhelmed.

Car parks full of cars, all scarred by hail.

A late start. Polite listening. Sensing gradual grounding.

Deeper listening.

Then A Chorus of Women sang 'Dear Earth'.¹

Participants were transcended to that place, far from where they were minutes before.

Now connected to the ground, to the Chorus women and to each other, they were ready.

Dr Jenny Robinson, January 2020

Jenny's reflection describes the women who arrived at The Chapel of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture on 20 January 2020, amidst a scene of shredded trees and smashed cars caused by the massive hailstorm that day. After the devastating bushfires and weeks of choking smoke, the women had been called by Janet Salisbury and A Chorus of Women to consider Janet's discussion paper about how women could lead an initiative to overcome policy roadblocks and transition our economy and lifestyles to a sustainable, regenerative future before we are overwhelmed by climate change.²

Thirty-five women accepted the call but organisers thought that few would make it to the Chapel that night. But 32 arrived, hoping that women's voices and leadership, collaborating beyond partisan positions, could show the way to address climate change and focus on nurturing life on Earth for future generations.

Janet's paper grew out of her involvement with A Chorus of Women — who have been creatively giving voice to citizen concerns and leading a culture of conversation in Canberra for the past 17 years. It was also inspired by Julia Grace Wales, a 33-year-old Canadian-born English literature scholar who wrote a far-sighted plan to end WW1 through independent mediation by the neutral nations. The plan was adopted at the International Congress of Women (The Hague, April 1915) by 1500 women from warring and neutral countries who came together in response to the unprecedented suffering and loss of young lives in WW1.³

A couple of weeks later a second meeting with a further 35 women was hosted and the Women's Climate Congress (Congress) was born. It has since grown into an organisation with members from all walks of life and political views, based in every state and territory, working to build common ground for action to restore climate balance.

Due to COVID-19, the Congress joined everyone else in the 'Zoom-sphere' with meetings, webinars, meetings with MPs and others all held online. This helped network with women and parliamentarians around the country from the comfort of our own homes!

And as restrictions eased in Canberra, some of us have ventured back to the Chapel for some face-to-face gatherings exploring how integrating the arts into our practice can increase engagement and open hearts.

Further information about the Congress, the principles, vision and values of the organisation, advocacy work so far, our arts program and how to get involved are all on the Women's Climate Congress website.

1. ['Dear Earth' by Johanna McBride](#) – recording from the meeting on 20 January 2020.
2. [Independent mediation for uniting action on climate change](#). Janet Salisbury, 2019.
3. This story is told here: [Lifting the 'curious spell of war', A singing seminar recalling women's peace making 1914–19](#). A Chorus of Women, 2019.

The ineffable experience of translation

by Dr Jonathan Cole

Assistant Director, PaCT, CSU

This most unusual of years has afforded scholars like me the rare luxury of clear time and space to actually engage in scholarship. Aside from the staple diet of monographs, journals and editing that has proceeded apace throughout 2020, this annus horribilis provided me with an opportunity to bring to fruition a three-years-old project that risked dragging on indefinitely. In 2017, I embarked on what would prove to be a very arduous, but nonetheless extremely rewarding, enterprise of translating a major work of one of Greece's most prominent public intellectuals, the theologian and philosopher Christos Yannaras. The work in question is Yannaras' 1999 book *The Effable and the Ineffable: The Linguistic Boundaries of Metaphysical Realism*.

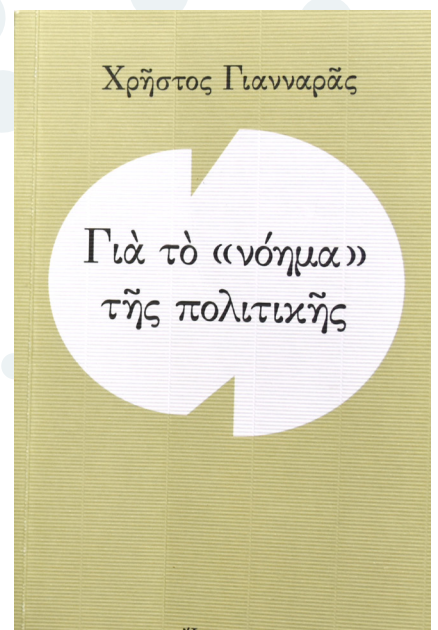
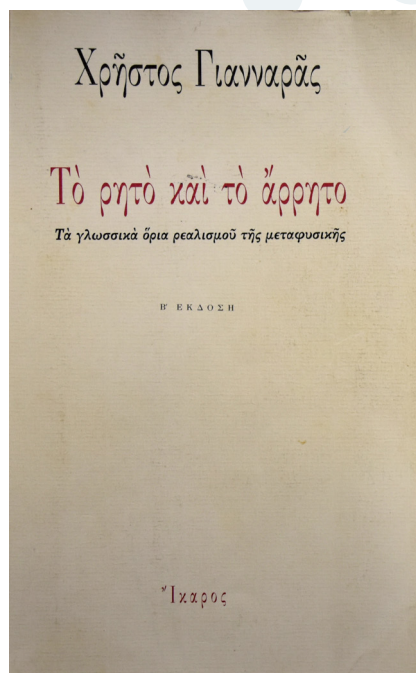
Working primarily with the linguistic philosophy of German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein and French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's conception of the subject, the book explores the potentiality and limitation of theological language and its implications for the way we conceive ontology. As he indicated in the preface to the second edition (1999), Yannaras sought "criteria by which to distinguish reality from illusion in our experience of relationships (shared and communally attained knowledge) given the way that experience is enmeshed with language."

In collaboration with an able editor, Fr Andreas Andreopoulos at Winchester University, with the generous financial support of former Yannaras student Dimitris Panagopoulos in London, and with the constant encouragement and support of Yannaras himself, who patiently responded to my incessant requests for clarification regarding the text, I'm delighted to say that the translation is currently in the publication pipeline at Winchester University Press and is scheduled for release in early 2021.

Inspired by the additional research time acquired as a consequence of Covid, and not content with the finalisation of my translation of *The Effable and the Ineffable*, I set about translating a second Yannaras book—this one much shorter—called *On the "Meaning" of Politics*. This little book, published last year by Yannaras at the tender age of 84, examines the pervasive influence of Western religion on the Greek conception of politics (polis-life) as the communal struggle for truth. The manuscript is currently in review and I hope to submit it to a publisher before the end of the year.

Δέν εἶναι αὐτονόητο (οὔτε εὐκολο)
νὰ ξεχωρίζουμε τήν ἐμπειρία τοῦ
πραγματικοῦ ἀπό ψυχολογικά
ὑποκατάστατα τῆς πραγματικῆς
ἐμπειρίας.

From *The Effable and the Ineffable* by Christos Yannaras



Books in translation, photos by Sarah Stitt

Climate of Hope

By Peter Walker

PaCT Scholar, CSU

and Dr Jonathan Cole

Assistant Director, PaCT, CSU

Back in January, before shutdowns, masks and social distancing entered our consciousness, the Centre for Public and Contextual Theology at Charles Sturt University (CSU) hosted a two-day consultation on the theological implications of the Anthropocene. This, the third and final consultation of a project that began in 2017, was poignantly held against the backdrop of that summer's devastating bushfires across an almost incomprehensibly large swathe of NSW and Victoria. The project sought to bring together Australian theologians, ethicists and philosophers to engage the challenging work of CSU scholar Professor Clive Hamilton, who holds the Vice-Chancellor's Chair of Public Ethics. The project was blessed by the attendance and participation in all three consultations by Anthropocene scholar Lisa Sideris, Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University.

Since January, we have been working with a number of the scholars who gave papers at the consultations to produce an edited volume to showcase and share the insightful work to have emerged. The volume is framed around Hamilton's seminal book *Defiant Earth: The Fate of Humans in the Anthropocene*. The volume, proposed titled *Climate of Hope: Theology and Ethics in the Anthropocene*, to be published in 2021, opens with Hamilton's own provocative contribution in which he highlights the momentous ontological implications of the Anthropocene, namely

the injection of human will as a force of nature capable of altering the geological history of the planet. Hamilton questions the capacity of religious traditions, such as Christianity, to effectively respond and adapt to this new ontological reality of the Anthropocene, with all of its terrifying climatic effects for humans. It is this challenge that the theologians and ethicists who participated in the consultations endeavour to meet in this volume.

Each chapter either engages *Defiant Earth* directly or uses it as spur to explore the capacity of Christian theological resources to make sense of the epochal shift from the Holocene to the Anthropocene—a shift from 10,000 years of serene climatic conditions that allowed human civilisation to flourish, to one far more precarious and hostile for human beings. The parts of the Christian theological tradition brought to bear on the problematic realities of the Anthropocene in the chapters that populate the volume range from eschatology and apocalypse to creation and sin, from theological figures like Dietrich Bonhoeffer to both testaments of the Bible. The volume closes with a final chapter from Hamilton, in which he responds directly to some of the critical engagements with *Defiant Earth* and shares some wider observations about the role and challenges for theology as we collectively seek to navigate our collective destiny in the Anthropocene.



Peter Walker, photo supplied



Dr Jonathan Cole, photo supplied

The Bishop of Tasmania that never was WHO IS THIS VERNON CORNISH?

Christine Ledger

G&C, \$15.00

Reviewed by Toni Hassan

Author and Artist and Adjunct Research Fellow, ACC&C

As the pandemic took hold, 2020 became a year for leaders to show they cared about more than themselves.

Whether church or in society, serving is an expression of morality.

Biographer Dr Christine Ledger paints Reverend Vernon Cornish, who died aged just 50 in 1982, as a leader and communicator (often heard on the ABC) who served honestly and humbly. And he could laugh at himself.

Cornish was an aspiring actor who joined The Queensland Times as a cadet before following his father into the Anglican priesthood in 1958.

He seemed destined to tell stories and to tell the truth. In one sermon he called the nuclear bombing of Japan an expression of human sin.

After Toowoomba, Cornish moved to Perth with his family of three boys and wife Dell, a self-described "family feminist" who was actively involved in youth ministry as a theology graduate.

As Dean of the Anglican cathedral, he rebuilt a congregation mired in conflict and financial crisis.

Derek Nimmo, the British actor famous for his television parodies of English clergy visited Perth in 1976 and spoke at the press club.

Cornish was asked to deliver an impromptu vote of thanks. It was hilarious and proved so astounding, Nimmo exclaimed, "Who is this Cornish?"

Ledger, who knew the Cornish family and spent seven years researching and writing the text, uses Nimmo's words (including the question mark) as the modest title of a book that doesn't assume anything.

Toward the end of 1981 Cornish turned 50 and was chosen to be the Bishop of Tasmania. He had told Dell he had a premonition he would die young.

Within days of arriving in Hobart he died of a brain hemorrhage on Australia Day 1982. He had been due to be commissioned in nine days' time.

Although naturally theatrical, he had given precise instructions for his funeral: that it have Holy Communion and be low-key.

Anyone engaged in the messiness and gentle diplomacy of resource-limited church life will register the everyday complexities in this humane and well-illustrated biography. There are the stresses of rectory family life and the challenges and little triumphs of Kingdom building.

Ledger should be proud of a faithful account of a diligent disciple.

For a copy of the book contact the publishers at:

geoff@geoffandchris.com



Webinar Series and links to published articles

Bluestar/ACC&C sponsored webinars on racism and law and racism and politics; the latter facilitated by Paul Bongiorno, Board Member, ACC&C.

Racism & Politics

Bluestar Intercultural Centre and the ACC&C held its most recent webinar from the Conversations on Racism series in November. This episode, 'Racism & Politics', was facilitated by ACC&C Board member and journalist Paul Bongiorno. Joining him were Senator Mehreen Faruqi, Senator Patrick Dodson, and Trent Zimmerman MP. They discussed whether politics and politicians contribute to racism in our society and how powerful are the words and actions of our elected officials in conveying messages about people from different backgrounds. This episode is available to view on Bluestar's Youtube channel.

RACISM & POLITICS
DO POLITICS AND POLITICIANS CONTRIBUTE TO RACISM IN OUR SOCIETY? HOW POWERFUL ARE THE WORDS AND ACTIONS OF POLITICIANS IN CONVEYING MESSAGES ABOUT PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS? JOIN US FOR A DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS FROM THE 3 LARGEST POLITICAL PARTIES IN AUSTRALIA

Senator Mehreen Faruqi
Greens

Trent Zimmerman MP
Liberal Party

Senator Patrick Dodson
Labor Party

Paul Bongiorno
ABC / Sat Paper / New Daily

THURSDAY 26TH NOVEMBER 19:00 - 20:00
Register on Eventbrite [Here](#)

BLUESTAR

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE
WISDOM FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Families in the Digital Age

Congratulations to Toni Hassan for her book *Families in the Digital Age* (Hybrid Publishing), which has been highly commended in the non-fiction category of the 2020 ACT Writers Annual Awards .

Her article 'Pulp Fictions: Human Relations and Racism Today', has been published this month in Eremos 150.



Upcoming Events

Christmas Closure Notice

The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture will be closed from close of business 23 December 2020 until 9am 11 January 2021.

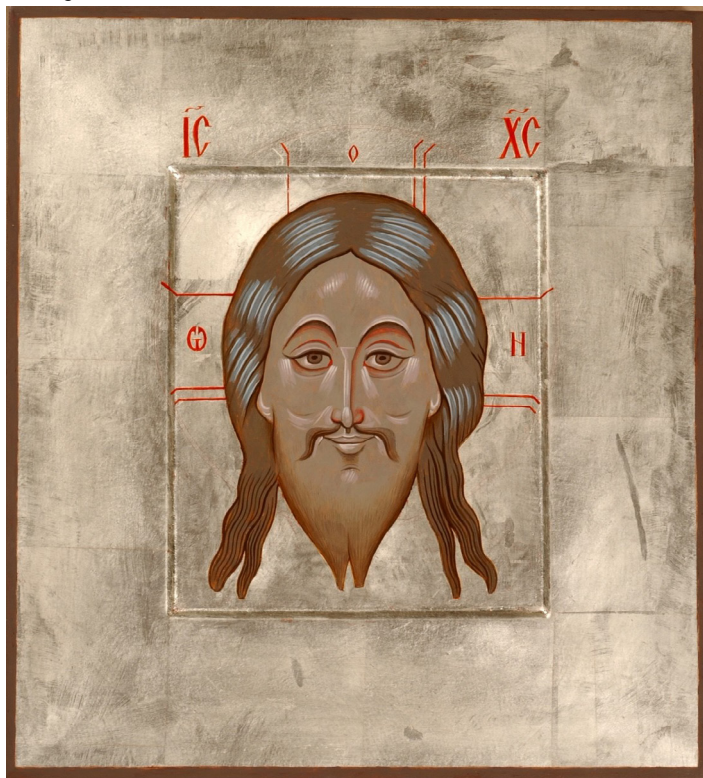
25 January 2021

Common Grace Prayer Vigil for Australia Day. Contact Common Grace via their website for more information. www.commongrace.org.au

12 – 21 March 2021

Exhibition Icons & Contemporary Religious Art – Michael Galovic

Michael Galovic graduated from Belgrade Academy of Arts in 1974 and moved to Australia in 1999. His work includes traditional icons, contemporary religious and non-religious art and is displayed throughout Australia and the world.



The smiling Jesus by Michael Galovic

14 March 2021

St Patrick's Day Service

Friends of Ireland and the ACC&C will hold their annual ecumenical St Patrick's Day service in the Chapel on the 14 March 2021. Time to be announced. All welcome.

2 April 2021

Ecumenical Way of the Cross, 11am Chapel and grounds of the ACC&C

Save the Date: Monday 19 April 2021

Spiritual growth for frail elderly people: institutional and community challenges from 2020 and beyond.

Full day seminar for health professionals, carers and those supporting older people.

Main Speakers: Professor Elizabeth Mackinlay and Professor Ann Harrington of the Colloquium for Ageing Perspective and Spirituality (CAPS)

Topics include:

- Findings of Practical and Contextual Theology (PaCT) project – Finding meaning in the lived experience of frailty
- Inform care practices of frail older people in aged care and the community
- Institutional and community challenges and implication of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Current and changing perspectives for spiritual and pastoral care in rapidly changing cultures.

To be held at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Canberra, ACT More details to follow in the new year.

1 – 9 May

Canberra International Music Festival



The Canberra International Music festival will be holding some of its events in the ACC&C Chapel from 1 to 9 May. The 2021 festival will focus on the music of Vienna. For more information, see the online festival brochure.



I am passionate about women being recognised in Australian religious history and for their roles and contributions to be acknowledged – and documented.

Women “writing with their lives” the history of the Baptist Church in Australia

by **Rebecca Hilton**

CSU PhD Student, ACC&C

I am in the middle of a PhD on the history of Australian Baptist women from 1882 to 1945. In the first year of my study I “worked” in the student room in George Browning House (GBH) at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) from Monday to Friday. Unfortunately, COVID put a stop to that, and I have spent most of 2020 studying at home. I currently come into GBH to study at least two days a week because, quite frankly, I can’t keep away. I love being on the ACC&C premises: talking to the other students and scholars; walking the Pilgrim Path; meditating in the Labyrinth; visiting St Mark’s Library; and I’ve started weeding around the outside of the grasslands once a week (because it is an area that needs to be maintained for future generations).

I am passionate about women being recognised in Australian religious history and for their roles and contributions to be acknowledged – and documented. I am looking at the Baptist denomination because I am Baptist, but also because I came to know of a Baptist woman who was “forgotten” and I wanted to examine why! Of course, upon further investigation I’ve discovered many forgotten women including: Adelaide Bamford, Gwenyth Crofts, Alice Skeels, Edith Wilcox and many others. Although women were essential in the establishment and maintenance of the Australian Baptist denomination, they are regularly omitted or glossed over in various histories that have been written. There are many reasons this has occurred, but possibly the main reasons are, firstly that historians have focussed on key individuals, generally Baptist ministers, who spoke at a lot of Baptist events, or wrote a lot about their activities; and secondly records by and about women are not examined and, sadly, often not retained. Women’s work was sidelined, or seen as ancillary to the “real” work of the denomination. Yet, they have always been “writing with their lives.” I’ve spent many hours in archives and libraries, uncovering work by women: from catering and flower arranging to ministry roles, particularly foreign mission work. Australian Baptist women were a formidable group who deserve to have their history told. The ACC&C is a great place to be undertaking this work.



Rebecca Hilton, photo by Sarah Stitt

Film analysis, aided by the categories of Fourth Cinema and Intercultural Cinema, revealed themes such as the importance of place as a marker of identity for Indigenous peoples, the devastating effects of colonial violence, and race relations in Northern Australia in the present.

An exploration in Australian film and theology

by Rev. Dr Katherine Rainger

Senior Chaplain, Radford College and former CSU PhD student, ACC&C

My recent completed PhD was titled: *Overhearing Ten Canoes, The Tracker and Charlie's Country: Theology in dialogue with the collaborative films of Rolf de Heer and David Gulpilil*.

Australian films and filmmakers have received limited attention in film and theology research. In response to this situation, my thesis focused on significant films made by filmmakers Rolf de Heer and David Gulpilil: *The Tracker* (2002), *Ten Canoes* (2006) and *Charlie's Country* (2013).

De Heer and Gulpilil's films can be classified as both Fourth Cinema and Intercultural Cinema. Barry Barclay's seminal work defines Fourth Cinema as films that foreground the perspectives, stories and cultural norms of First Nations Peoples living in settler states. The Intercultural component is evident in the diverse backgrounds of non-Indigenous director Rolf de Heer and Indigenous lead actor and co-writer David Gulpilil. The films' content includes Indigenous storytelling which is made accessible for a non-Indigenous audience.

Film analysis, aided by the categories of Fourth Cinema and Intercultural Cinema, revealed themes such as the importance of place as a marker of identity for Indigenous peoples, the devastating effects of colonial violence, and race relations in Northern Australia in the present. These themes guided the theological dialogue which then took place.

The primary interlocutor was theologian Willie James Jennings. Jennings' work highlights Christianity's role in Indigenous dispossession, the legacy of supersessionism in colonial ways of seeing, and the disconnection of people from place which led to a particular kind of racial imagination.

Jennings also argues that Christianity contains the propensity for "joining" which is based upon connection, belonging and reciprocity. This form of joining was diminished as Europeans forcibly entered into the lands of others, reshaping the land and assimilating Indigenous peoples into the image of Europeans. According to Jennings, recovery of the significance of place is an important step for creating communion between peoples that is just and equitable.

Several Indigenous theologians including Brooke Prentis, Denise Champion and Terry LeBlanc were also included in the dialogue in order to further examine the themes emerging from the films from a theological perspective. Aunty Rev. Dr Denise Champion is an Adnyamathanha woman. *The Tracker* was filmed on her Country leading to some rich dialogue particularly in terms of connection with place and lament for the disconnection which has occurred due to colonisation.

When read and viewed together, Jennings, de Heer and Gulpilil, and the Indigenous theologians with whom I engaged, provided compelling insights into diagnosing the legacy of Christianity's role in colonialism and providing new ways of imagining relationality between peoples, and between people and the rest of creation.

This thesis was largely written at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. I'm grateful for the companionship and critical conversations along the way as well as the supervision provided by Rev. Dr Jane Foulcher and Rev. Dr Ockert Meyer.



Katherine Rainger and David Gulpilil, photo supplied

The Songlines carry and hold these stories and teachings, in the earth ~ in the trees and the other parts of this amazing continent.

Links and reckonings

by Felicity McCallum

CSU PhD student, ACC&C

The last few months have been particularly rich and exciting along the track of my doctoral research!

First, was a breakthrough to do with my chapter work where the very extensive records from the early 1800s by missionary Lancelot Edward Threlkeld, painstakingly collated by Neil Gunson, became more surmountable. Hooray! This was due to the shift of focus toward the wider actions of Threlkeld in the region as part of my new chapter's questions. The indexing had been an obstacle within my research steps earlier on, however, I shored up a version of my own index on the second volume after what seemed ages studying them. There was a field visit to Uluru about a month ago now, where Arrente Elder, Uncle Chris Tomlin, invited me to spend time on country learning about the stories and lore that the central Australian Aboriginal people have been storing up for those of us on the east coast since the invasion in 1788. This trip revealed incredibly important insights for research and for some of our communities.

The Songlines carry and hold these stories and teachings, in the earth ~ in the trees and the other parts of this amazing continent.

One of the interesting findings when sitting amongst the Elders in yarnning about this was to do with the grandmothers in our mob. That day I was to learn that my brothers, myself and same-generation cousins are actually Awabakal Elders. I felt deeply fulfilled to recognise this. And to learn it at Uluru was highly unexpected, not to mention, pretty poetic! It made more explicit the role that I have instinctually inhabited in the Awabakal mob.

Culturally and historically, this gave me wisdom. It illuminated that when we live authentically there are gifts and reckonings that spontaneously usher forward and that never stop enriching or deepening us. So, for those who are Indigenous Australians, no matter the quagmire oppression, dispossession or casual ignorance of our basic human rights, the magnetism of our inherent dignity and enduring cultural structures have kept calling us, to know and to claim. Historical and theological enquiry that authentically brings hidden politicised truths forward participates in this wisdom, at a national level. Living indigeneity without sometimes having the words or explicit teachings/teachers, due to our language and kin being ripped away, has been hard but we have tenaciously prevailed. It simply is not and has not been possible to 'breed out' the Aboriginal person in Australia. 'Always was, Always will be ~'

The final point of exciting new developments and connections this past few months was the lovely invitation from the ABC Radio National program team to talk with stolen generation survivor and author, Pattie Lees, with James Carleton about connection to country and this research here:

Very grateful to Professor Stephen Pickard, my supervisor, for his guidance in my research program.



Uncle Chris around on-country learning about medicine in the native bushes, the special nature of some of the rocks, photo by Felicity McCallum



Felicity's first view of Uluru, photo by Felicity McCallum

The meaning of 'home' in an ageing society

by Sally Mordike

CSU PhD student, ACC&C

Take a moment or two, and think about what 'home' means for you. How do you feel? What images spring to mind? Is there anyone in the picture? Is there a place where you feel most at home, or is your spiritual home? What makes home 'home' for you?

Chances are, the meanings you hold around home are quite personal, yet also have some universal qualities. Earlier this year, during lockdown, I completed my Masters dissertation, looking into the meaning of home for older people living in residential care. (There was a certain synchronicity about being required to work from home whilst exploring the meaning of home!)

If we all have our own thoughts, opinions and feelings about home, who decides what is home-like in residential care? In order to inform ways to create, maintain, or facilitate a meaningful sense of home in residential aged care, I sought the essence of home through asking residents themselves. Results were interesting, with commonalities as well as differences: 'home' meant the place they grew up, with their parents and siblings; 'home' was where they felt they belonged and were known, deeply, for who they were; 'home' was what they made themselves; and, crucially, 'home' was where they felt valued, respected and loved.

Take a moment or two, and think about what 'home' means for you. How do you feel? What images spring to mind? Is there anyone in the picture? Is there a place where you feel most at home, or is your spiritual home? What makes home 'home' for you?

In essence, the meaning of home for the older people in the study, all of whom lived in residential aged care, was connection, through meaningful relationships and connection to place. Some of these connections were in the past, providing a source of happiness in remembrance, although simultaneously holding a deep sense of loss for some. For all participants, residential aged care was not 'home', even though they recognised it would be their last residence on earth. However, residential aged care could be 'homely', and homeliness was created and maintained through meaningful connections with family, personal carers, and other residents.

Exploring meaning is a fundamental part of spiritual care. This study found that the meaning of home is a spiritual concept, and sometimes feels indescribable simply because it is so meaningful to each of us, connecting to something deep inside ourselves.

Take a moment. What does 'home' mean for you?

With thanks to Rev Prof Elizabeth MacKinlay AM Director, Colloquium for Ageing, Perspectives and Spirituality (CAPS) at ACC&C, and Catholic Healthcare Ltd, for their support during the study.

Sally Mordike recently completed the Master of Ageing and Pastoral Care course through Charles Sturt University, run by St Mark's National Theological Centre. She is passionate about the provision of compassionate and meaningful spiritual care for older people. Sally is about to begin doctoral studies at CSU in the area of aged care and spiritual life. Sally can be contacted at smordike@csu.edu.au



Sally Mordike, photo supplied

The beautiful grounds of the ACC&C, with its sweeping views of the Lake, also support the synergy of solitude and communion, with participants free to wander through the trees or sit to gaze, draw or write in quiet reflection.



The Australian Network for Spiritual Direction provides spacious, expansive opportunities to deepen contemplative solitude and communion. Photo by Annie Patterson.

Silence and solidarity quietly meet after lockdown

by Annie Patterson

Convener of ANSD Canberra and Region

When we re-emerged from lockdown to host a Quiet Day at the end of August this year at the ACC&C, as Spring itself was irrepressibly budding, the sheer gift of gathering in person with others was quietly and powerfully palpable.

Admittedly, our presenters Jane and John Foulcher drew participants out of hibernation like bees to the honey pot with the alluring theme of "The Poetics of Contemplation". Equally compelling and moving, was the simple joy of actually being with others, in a COVID-safe way of course, to listen and reflect together in companionable silence and solidarity.

For several years now, the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) has supported the Quiet Days organised by the Canberra Region of the Australian Network for Spiritual Direction (ANSD). The Quiet Days are open to anyone interested in the contemplative journey and are offered quarterly, in February, May, August and November. Each Quiet Day is designed to illuminate a particular theme with a qualified presenter, combining input sessions with several, spacious periods for personal reflection. Recent themes have explored finding hope in a time of crisis, honouring the body in contemplative life, and living in presence with a unitive consciousness.

After these Quiet Days, many people comment that the quiet presence of others creates a supportive sense of community that fosters a deep experience of personal solitude. Those engaged in ministry or other intense relational occupations find the nourishing input and nurturing silence, free from the expectation of social interaction, a welcome balm of refreshment. Conversation, of course, is shared gently before and after each day, and over time, this too builds a precious sense of community.

The beautiful grounds of the ACC&C, with its sweeping views of the Lake, also support the synergy of solitude and communion, with participants free to wander through the trees or sit to gaze, draw or write in quiet reflection. For those who may have experienced the church as negative or wounding, the ACC&C offers a contemporary, spiritual sanctuary.

ANSD is an ecumenical network supporting the ministry of spiritual direction in Australia, and more broadly, seeks to engage the spiritual hopes and challenges of our times from a contemplative and inclusive stance. For more information about ANSD please visit our website <https://ansd.org.au>

Our next Quiet Day will be in February 2021 and advertised on the ACC&C website in due course. If you would like to be on the mailing list for future ANSD Quiet Days or Spiritual Practice Days, please email ansdact@gmail.com



New leadership for Christians for an Ethical Society

by Clive Rodger

Board Member, ACC&C

Christians for an Ethical Society (CES.org.au) is looking forward to an exciting year in 2021. At the AGM held on 29 September a new team was elected. Rt Rev'd Dr George Browning retired as Chair early this year and Dr David Hunter took over. Bishop George has been chair for many years and made a huge and greatly valued contribution. David very ably stepped into George's big shoes.

However, because of David's presidency of the International Orthopterists' Society he does not have availability to continue. The Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard and Clive Rodger were elected joint Chairs, Professor Ingrid Moses AO Deputy Chair with Professor John Warhust AO continuing as President.

Stephen is Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Director of Public and Contextual Theological Research Centre (PaCT) and as an Anglican Diocesan bishop heads its social justice work. Stephen has had an illustrious career as a theologian, previously heading St Mark's National Theological Centre. He has many published articles and books.

Clive is a long-term resident of Canberra. He has headed several business consultancies, is on the board of a number of public companies and commercial enterprises and heads the CLYNROD Foundation. He is also Chair of Canberra's Conflict Resolution Service. Besides qualifications in economics, business, arts, social policy and conflict resolution, Clive completed post graduate theological studies in Christian ethics at Princeton.

2021 will continue the theme of "Values and Voices in the Public Sphere". COVID-19 meant much of our program for 2020 was put on hold. Watch this space for more news.



Clive Rodger, photo supplied

Hire the Centre

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

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



The Chapel



The Chambers Pavilion



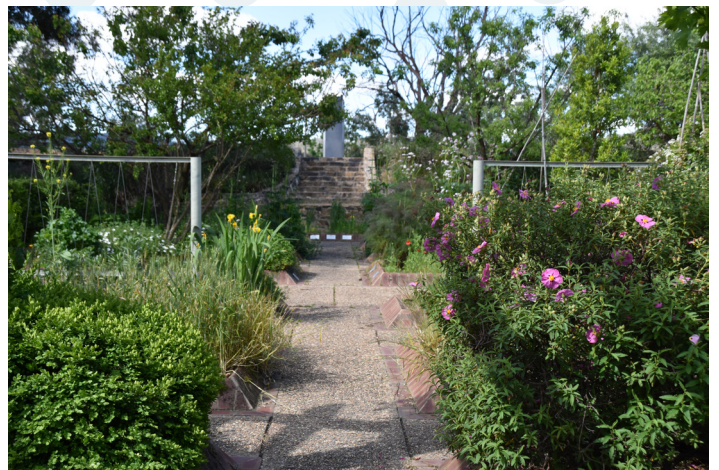
Iris and lupins in bloom, photo by Sarah Stitt

Farewell to Bible Gardener, Justin Aquilina

We are sad to announce that our Bible Gardener Justin Aquilina has stepped down from his contract due to an exciting opportunity to move to northern New South Wales with his family. Justin took on the Bible Garden contract in 2019 and the garden has flourished under his care. The ACC&C and the Bible Garden Trust would like to thank Justin for his hard work and enthusiasm and wish him and his family all the best with their next venture.



Justin at work, photo by Katherine Waite



The Bible garden looking green and beautiful, thanks to Justin's hard work, photo by Sarah Stitt



Triptych (Nativity) by Benita Everett, Warmun, WA. On loan to the Centre from Lynlea and Clive Rodger.

*'Thank you to the staff, volunteers, friends and supporters, and Board members of the ACC&C.
May this season be one of blessing and peace to you all'*

Stephen Pickard, Executive Director

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



**Charles Sturt
University**

www.acc-c.org.au

<https://www.facebook.com/acccfourpillars/>