



FELLOW WORKERS

Autumn 2017 • Presbyterian Church of Victoria



ON BEAUTY

Moana

Star Wars

Joy & Spontaneity



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Fellow Workers

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FROM THE EDITOR

Chiara Bilyj

What comes to mind what you think of “beauty”? If you have young daughters, like I do, perhaps you can’t escape the image of the fairytale Belle gliding around a ballroom with her hairy (but well-dressed) Beast. Beauty sometimes seems to be a goal that people endlessly chase. How much will you spend to make your home beautiful? How much effort will you put into moisturising, hair-straightening or body-sculpting?

This edition of Fellow Workers spends some time exploring Christian perspectives on beauty. Laura Haines reflects on the beauty of the gospel and suggests that we should be free to express our emotional response to the grace of God in church and not to hide “our wonder at God’s nature and being”. (‘Worshippers need to embrace more joy and spontaneity’)

Meanwhile, Rev Stephen McDonald warns us against “dressing up moralism and legalism in beautiful clothes” as he reviews *Toward a Theology of Beauty* by John Navone. (‘Salvation in more beautiful clothes?’)

You may find another kind of beauty as you read of the gospel being proclaimed to children by churches and youth leaders - the beauty of the body of Christ, working together for his glory. (‘Clayton: sharing the gospel in the Park’ and ‘Darwin Presbyterian Church celebrates 10 years’).

Have you considered God’s purpose in creating beauty? On clear nights, when we camp far enough away from the city, I find the night sky to be breathtaking. I have to just stop and admire. Inevitably, I think of Psalm 8, verses 3 and 4, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place... what is man that you are mindful of him?” I conclude that God created beauty to inspire awe in us. We are confronted with a masterpiece of astounding skill, and we cannot help but praise the artist.

Chiara Bilyj attends Heathmont Presbyterian Church and is the editor of *Fellow Workers*

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WORSHIPPERS NEED TO EMBRACE MORE

joy & spontaneity

Laura Haines

The gospel is a beautiful message. It has beauty in its simplicity, in its universality, and ultimately in its overwhelming message of love from the Creator of all things.

But how do reformed, evangelical Christians respond to the beauty of the gospel? Often in stiff, unmoving song. Or in dry, plodding exegesis. Rarely in a way which mirrors the beauty of the message we profess to love.

Now, don't misunderstand me. Solid, clear Bible teaching is far better than emotional messages without Biblical content. Worship through music can be expressed in many ways, be it with traditional or contemporary hymns, with clapping or no clapping. It matters very little (although I know that some believe it does).

I fear, however, we may be too rigid in the way we do these things. Instead of allowing ourselves to be more spontaneous in our response to the gospel, we sometimes cling to unspoken rules of "how things ought to be done".

For instance, with church music we are rightly concerned that it should be gospel-focussed and not degenerate into mere entertainment. We fear too much outward expression in musical worship because we are wary of emotional manipulation. Unfortunately, this can lead to any outward expression of feeling in church, such as swaying, dancing, crying, etc., being frowned upon.

Similarly, we may feel uneasy about too much expression in preaching because we are wary of any accidental addition to Scripture resulting from the

preacher taking too much creative licence. This too can lead to an emotionless response to the gospel, or, more worryingly, pronouncements of heresy when someone dares to use imagination in illustrating Biblical concepts and ideas when preaching.

I am not trying to cast aspersions here, because I know I can be just as guilty of over-correcting and judging harshly in these areas as anyone else. But I have become increasingly conscious that being over-cautious in our style of worship can sometimes actually be inhibiting and unhelpful.

I don't claim to be an expert in theological aesthetics. What I have written so far in the article is based on my personal observations of church and ministry. So it's a good thing this is an opinion piece!

Let me outline here, though, a couple of my thoughts on the scope of personal expression in response to the beauty of the gospel:

1) It is okay to have an emotional response to the gospel.

Often in my experience of worship – not only in the Presbyterian church I joined after moving to Hobart, but also in an Anglican church to which I belonged when growing up – I have detected a strong, although unspoken, sentiment that deems overt displays of emotion in Sunday worship as awkward, strange, and even inappropriate.

Of course, not all churches and denominations are like that. However, I want to put forward the idea that, in the more conservative traditions of church, we can miss out on some parts of the expression of our thankfulness for salvation, and of our wonder at God's nature and being, not to mention other great things taught to us from his Word.

It doesn't mean we have to start weeping in church, or start dancing and clapping when we sing; but it does mean that we should be freer to express our response to the gospel. We can also be more generous to those in our congregations who do respond to the gospel in an emotional way. In fact, we might even come to see this response to the beauty of the gospel, as a thing of beauty in itself.

2) It is okay to use imaginative illustrations in preaching.

what we perceive with our minds becomes real in our hearts

During the last few years of my learning how to preach (to women and children – don't worry!), this aspect of preaching has been encouraged. Jesus used parables to convey vivid pictures of the truths he was teaching to people all the time.

Take the famous parable of the sower, in which he depicts four kinds of soil on which the sower's seeds land. Jesus uses these images to show how the good news of the kingdom can take root and flourish in the fertile soil of some people's hearts, but can fall on dry ground for others who aren't receptive to it.

Vivid illustrations are essential to bring a gospel passage to life and to illuminate it further for listeners. But, obviously, they must never become so imaginative that they depart from the meaning of the text. Illustrations must be sound theologically and not something additional to what the Bible is saying. We should always be discerning and testing to ensure we are being taught by God's Word.

Conservative Christians need not be afraid of greater creativity in preaching, but should welcome it. It can help engage our affections in response to the gospel, so that what we perceive with our minds becomes real in our hearts and thereby transforms our behaviours.

I wonder if perhaps in today's post-modern world, where feelings and subjective experience often trump rational thinking, rediscovering beauty in theology and worship may become more prominent in our experience of Christian community.

From what I see of "Gen Z" students coming through university, they operate highly on personal experience, so they need not only the intellectual approach to Bible teaching, but also the affective experience of the gospel being real and making a difference in one's life.

This cultural shift that emphasises experience could be a reminder that we need greater scope for freedom of expression in response to the beauty of the gospel.

Laura Haines attends Crossroads Presbyterian Church, Hobart, works in campus ministry with The University Fellowship of Christians at the University of Tasmania and is the author of the blog 'Following Phoebe'.



ON TRACK

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN INLAND MISSION

ISSUE 1 2017

PROCLAIMING THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
BY WORD AND DEED

BACK ON TRACK IN TASMANIA

Tucked away, off the beaten track, and away from the main cities and towns, live people who are isolated from all sorts of things including schools, banks and health care. But most significantly, many of these people are isolated from the Gospel. The places where they live often have no active Bible-teaching church, and few Christians to bear witness to the love of Jesus.

In most places where PIM works, isolation is caused by the vast distances between homes and towns. Some of the people we visit live more than a hundred miles from their neighbours. Some of them live on properties that have a driveway seventy kilometres long. But in other places, isolation can be real even though the distances are much smaller. In parts of Tasmania, for example, there are remote areas where people live with a real sense of isolation. They may not be more than an hour from a town, but nevertheless the isolation is real and it cuts them off from the Gospel.

In the not-too-distant past, PIM has had active work in the Midlands area of

Tasmania, halfway between Launceston and Hobart. This area is scattered with farms and small towns, often without much Christian witness. PIM has sought to fill in some of those gaps, and help connect people with Jesus. After a season of vacancy in the area, the Lord has graciously provided the personnel so that PIM can once again bring the Gospel into that area.

Kim Jaeger, along with Kathryn and their daughter Sarah have joined the PIM Team. Native Tasmanians, the Jaegers are returning home after spending a couple of years in Queensland where Kim has been studying at the Queensland Theological College and working in ministry at a Presbyterian Church in the Brisbane area. The family will be based in Hobart and Kim will spend time ministering in the Midlands area and in the NW part of Tasmania. Kim's role will involve visiting people on the many properties in these areas, and seeking to build relationships, share the gospel and help make disciples for Jesus amongst people with little current



Kim, Kathryn and Sarah

access to the Church. Kim will also undertake some preaching duties. In many of the places Kim ventures into, he will likely be one of the few believers to actively witness there, he may even be the only one.

Many PIM patrol areas are larger than the whole of Tasmania. However, Kim will still be spending a lot of time on the road as he seeks to get to all sorts of out-of-the-way locations. Your prayers for safety will be most welcome.

During the first few months of 2017, Kim will be visiting a range of churches to share about the ministry and seek prayer and financial support for the work. By involving a wider range of people and congregations in helping to fund this ministry, PIM is seeking to make this work sustainable well into the future. If you are able to partner with us in this journey by making a one-off or regular contribution, please contact Mike Timmins in the PIM office to make those arrangements. If you would like to learn more of the work and prayer for the Jaegers please contact them directly so you can keep up to date with what is happening.



The Midlands area of Tasmania

MOVING EASTWARD

After four years ministering in the remote parts of outback South Australia, David and Gae McDonald are relocating to Narrabri in NSW. This move helps base the McDonalds closer to family members in Northern NSW and allows PIM to once again resume Patrol Ministry in NW New South Wales.

During their time in South Australia, David and Gae shared the Gospel with a variety of people, in all sorts of places. They conducted Easter outreaches from the Historic Smith of Dunesk Mission building in Beltana and ensured that the love of Jesus was demonstrated in that part of our nation. During their time they had the privilege of seeing some folk come to Christ, and have encouraged isolated believers to persevere and grow in their faith.

During their time in South Australia, the McDonalds sowed many Gospel seeds. Of course, the fruit of some of these will likely not be seen this side of eternity.



Teaching little ones about the love of Jesus

Your prayers for the lost in these remote places are greatly appreciated. Please also pray that the Lord will raise up gospel workers to minister in this area in the future.

In early 2017, the McDonalds will begin the work of building new relationships

with people on properties and communities west of Narrabri as they seek to show the love of Jesus and share the Gospel with those who are far from God. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will be at work in the area, softening hearts and creating opportunities for deep conversations about Jesus to occur.



Building relationships with station workers over coffee

KEEPING THE MINISTRY ON THE ROAD

Like all mission activities that seek to take the Gospel to hard-to-get-to places, the work of PIM is expensive. The PIM Team burns a lot of diesel each year, chews up tyres and rattles the life out of vehicles on some of Australia's worst roads. All this costs a lot of money.

Is it worth it? Absolutely! The places where PIM Teams minister often have very little Gospel witness, sometimes none at all. In some locations, if it were not for the PIM Team, there would be no opportunity for people to experience the love of Jesus, to hear the Word

preached or be able to sit and study the Bible with someone, perhaps for the first time.

In 2017, we are excited to be able to resume work in Tasmania and North West NSW. But of course, these ministries cost money. One of the ways that we seek to make our work sustainable is by asking new PIM Teams to help raise some of the finances needed to keep them on the road. Accordingly, we are seeking to build a team to financially support the ministry of Kim Jaeger in Tasmania. Would you

be part of the team to help fund Gospel ministry to isolated Tasmanians? The two main ways you could help are to make a one-off donation towards the cost of purchasing a vehicle for this new patrol, or committing to regular ongoing financial support.

If you would like to participate in the ministry of PIM in Tasmania through helping supply funding, please use the response form on the back page of *On Track*, visit the PIM website, or give Mike Timmins in the office a call on 03 9005 8256.

NEWS AND UPDATES

- The PIM Team are working on developing a strategy to use technology-based tools to better connect with people living in remote areas. We would value your prayers as we explore things such as webcasting, and podcasts and evangelism apps, and building useful tools to help people access helpful and sound theological resources. Stay tuned for more information as the Digital Discipleship Initiative takes shape during 2017.
- The Presbyterian Churches in Townsville joined together in

November to celebrate the ministry of Roger and Margaret Crane over the past seven years and to pray for them as they retire from PIM and embark on a new stage of life.



- The PIM office still has copies of *Views Beyond the Furthest Fence*, the attractively presented coffee table book that tells the story of PIM and AIM. To order your copy, please contact Mike Timmins in the PIM office.



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WANDERING AROUND WITH ANDREW LETCHER



Andrew Letcher

One of the many privileges of my role is to visit a variety of churches and share about the ministry of PIM. Sometimes those churches are in cities or suburbs, and sometimes they are in country towns.

Sometimes the country churches I get to visit have no minister, in some cases they have been vacant for many years. Often there seems to be little prospect of that changing anytime soon. In my own home church, we experienced a vacancy when our long serving minister moved on. But our vacancy was measured in weeks. In country areas, the vacancies are often measured in years. Indeed, in some places the vacancies go on for so long they appear to become permanent.

If you are a young family struggling with the high costs of mortgage repayments in the suburbs, why not consider a move to a country town where you can live more simply and cheaply, and roll up your sleeves and get involved in a local church trying to reach its community? If you are a minister looking for a new challenge, why not consider leaving the suburbs or the seaside for a season, to preach the gospel and build up God's people in a congregation that has been vacant for far too long?

The bush is full of real people, who need a real Saviour, and it is both our privilege and our responsibility to share the Good News with them.

RESPONSE FORM

Name _____ Phone () _____ email _____

Address _____ State _____ Postcode _____

Donation – PIM general funds		Donation – PIM NW NSW/David and Gae McDonald	
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Donation – Tasmania/ Kim and Kathryn Jaeger		Total	

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Partnership



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN WORLD MISSION

www.apwm.org.au • 81 Shaftesbury Road, Burwood NSW 2134 • (02) 8073 7490 • national@apwm.org.au

2017 #1

The Australian Presbyterian World Mission exists to glorify God by facilitating the spread of the gospel to people overseas and Aborigines within Australia.

Rev Dr Thang Bwee Expresses His Gratitude

Many will know that in September the Rev Dr Thang Bwee of Myanmar came to Australia to attend the General Assembly of Australia and to speak in a number of churches on the eastern coast of Australia.

While he was here it was discovered that he had a serious heart problem and subsequently had open heart surgery in Sydney. He has asked that we include this letter in our newsletter:

"Greetings to everyone from Myanmar in His holy and precious name.

I am now at home again in Myanmar with a new repaired heart. I arrived home on the 28th December and I'm now preparing to begin my normal ministry.

I would like to express my thanks to Australian Presbyterian World Mission and the Presbyterian Church of Australia for your wonderful partnership in the ministries of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar and the Reformed Bible Institute and thanks indeed for your love and care during the battle for my life. Without your kindly concern and care, it wouldn't have been possible to solve my health problems. Rather I would still be wandering without clear idea of what, when and how to do about my health.



REV DR THANG BWEE

But now God is restoring my strength with new repaired heart and I am confident to move on to my normal ministries.

I am very thankful for Franco Salaun (from the Revesby congregation) for the gifts that God has given to him for His glory. I have clearly noticed that he is such a wonderful man in caring for others. I was greatly blessed by his excellent love and care for both my spiritual and physical needs.

I also give thanks and appreciation to Peter and Lyn Barnes as well as to Kevin and Julie Murray for their hospitality and pastoral care which comforted me and caused me to confidently go through the most critical condition that I ever have experienced with my health.

I greatly appreciate and give thanks to Sheryl Sarkoezy from APWM for her lovely fellowship, constant encouragement and caring labours to meet all my needs. Thanks Sheryl for all the best.

Thanks also to the members of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and those outside the Presbyterian Church for your prayers, love and contributions to meet the needs of my heart surgery.

My grateful prayer for everyone of you is that our God may bless you richly continually and use you for His glory and Kingdom.

With thanks and appreciation,

Thang Bwee
Evangelical Reformed Church Myanmar

Workpartners 2017



Workpartners recently completed its latest project: refurbishing a student dormitory at the Talua Theological Institute. Planning is now underway for Workpartners Vanuatu for 2017 at Talua. We anticipate there will be teams in (a) late June or early July (b) November.

If you are interested in taking part in Workpartners in 2017, then please email Sheryl Sarkoezy at APWM national@apwm.org.au to be placed on a list of people interested in hearing more about Workpartners.



REACHOUT

It's a 'one-stop' opportunity to think through where God might be leading you to serve. For further details please see reachoutmissions.com.au

ReachOut 2017

For NSW people, ReachOut 2017 will be held on the weekend Saturday 9 – Sunday 10 September 2017 at the Katoomba Christian Convention Centre, Katoomba NSW.

ReachOut is a terrific missions conference that features:

- Good Bible teaching
- An opportunity to fellowship with Christians who are interested in cross cultural mission or exploring serving.
- Opportunities to informally speak with representatives of most of the mission agencies.

“ AFTER THIS I LOOKED AND THERE BEFORE ME WAS A GREAT MULTITUDE THAT NO ONE COULD COUNT, FROM EVERY NATION, TRIBE, PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE, STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE AND IN FRONT OF THE LAMB. (REVELATION 7:9) ”

Updates

Martin Eagle

On October 28 the APWM National Committee made the difficult decision to not renew the terms of appointment for Martin Eagle, who has been serving Christ as a Partner Church missionary with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar. Martin's terms of appointment expire at the end of May 2017.

APWM considers that a missionary who serves in a teaching context must have sufficient language skills to enable them to clearly communicate the timeless truth of the gospel.

Over the last few years APWM has been working closely with Martin to help him be as effective as possible as he serves Christ in Myanmar. During that time, however, Martin has faced a number of challenges in trying to gain sufficient fluency in the Burmese language. We have also had many conversations with the Rev Dr Thang Bwee, the leader of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar, regarding ways that Martin can be assisted in improving his Burmese language fluency. It is now clear that Martin's Burmese language skills will not be sufficient to enable him to freely teach and preach in Burmese.

This decision is particularly hard for Martin who has given so much of himself as he has been serving the Lord Jesus Christ in Myanmar. We thank him for his willingness to follow the call of the Lord Jesus, and for being willing to leave behind family and friends and the relative comfort of Australia to serve in a foreign context.

Thank you for the support that you have each given to Martin — through prayer, encouragement and financial gifts. Please join us in praying for Martin that he would know God's peace and direction in his life as he seeks God's leading in the next few months.

Noel & Catharine Carpenter

Noel and Catharine Carpenter from St John's Hobart, have served with Wycliffe Australia since 2004. They have served in northern Australia and Papua New Guinea. Noel has primarily worked as a pilot. In addition to raising their three children, Catharine has worked as a literacy specialist with a focus on adult training.



MARTIN EAGLE

Noel is now serving part-time as Wycliffe Australia's Tasmania State Representative.



NOEL & CATHARINE CARPENTER

Fiona Lockett

Fiona Lockett, from Crossroads Hobart, together with her husband Pablo and son Ruben, will be returning to Australia at the end of May 2017. She will continue to serve as a missionary with SIM until the end of November 2017.



FIONA LOCKETT, WITH PABLO AND RUBEN

Nathan & Tomoko Stewart

It was with joy that Nathan and Tomoko Stewart were commissioned on the 23rd October at Browns Plains Presbyterian Church in Brisbane for service in Japan.

Their current support level is around 90%. If you would like to join their support team please contact APWM as soon as possible.

They will be helping the Osaka Presbyterian Church, and other nearby Presbyterian churches, engage with their local community through English conversation clubs. As foreigners and English speakers they will be a drawcard and so will help the church in building bridges with the community.



NATHAN & TOMOKO STEWART COMMISSIONING

John & Kara Dekker: 2017

John and Kara Dekker are expecting their third child in March 2017. They are currently in Geelong, Victoria and their plans for 2017 are:

- Stay in Australia until May. Apart from preparing for the birth, the focus of this time will be on John finishing off his PhD thesis.



DEKKER FAMILY

- Return to Talua for June, July, and August, and introduce their new baby to the Talua community.

- In late August return to Australia again, with a focus on deputation. In November, they will travel to the United States, finish the year with a holiday there and return to Talua in January 2018.

Thank you for the ongoing support of the many individuals and churches who are part of this ministry.

Nathan & Kathy Griffith

Nathan & Kathy Griffith, from Epping NSW, have been serving with European Christian Mission. They have made the difficult decision to not continue ministry in Portugal and have returned to Australia.



GRIFFITH FAMILY

New Missionaries

Ross Maxwell, Warburton Presbyterian Church (Vic) with Pioneers in Ethiopia.

Andrew Adams, Canterbury Presbyterian Church (Vic) with Pioneers in Japan.

B, Donvale Presbyterian Church (Vic) with SIM in Asia

A & K from Randwick (NSW) with Power to Change in West Asia.

Japan: A Growing Team

In late November 2016, Kevin Murray travelled to Japan to attend the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Japan, meet with our missionaries and talk to some leaders.



It is widely acknowledged that Japan is a very difficult mission field. Over many years, the Japanese people have been largely resistant to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet it is very encouraging to see what God is currently doing. For example, at Christ College in Sydney, there are a number of couples who are preparing to go and serve in Japan. In Melbourne there are people like Andrew Adams from Canterbury Presbyterian Church in Victoria. These are just the ones that we know about! Who knows what God may be doing in thrusting out these cross-cultural workers, and others, to serve in Japan?

The Presbyterian Church of Australia's General Assembly met in September 2016. One of the highlights of our Assembly was



THE REV KIYOSHI ENDO LOOKS ON WITH DELIGHT AS THE REV JOHN WILSON SIGNS OUR PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN JAPAN AT OUR SEPTEMBER 2016 GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

the signing of a Partner Church agreement with the Presbyterian Church in Japan.

At the November 2016 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Japan that Partner Church agreement was ratified.

When the agreement was presented to the Japanese Assembly, it was very encouraging to hear members of the assembly ask questions regarding the theology and character of our church in Australia. Asking such questions is one of the marks of a



CHIBA CITY

theologically mature church. I was able to assure them that we believe the Bible is the Word of God and that we adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The Presbyterian Church in Japan continues to face challenges. The church has approximately 75 pastors and one third of them are in the final ten years of their



THE ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN JAPAN DISCUSSES THE PARTNER CHURCH RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA.

ministry. The average age of a pastor is 65. There are approximately 2,500 worshippers in these churches on any given Sunday.



JOHN & ROSE EVANS

John & Rose Evans continue to be involved in the Chiba City Church. John leads a team of eleven people which includes Adam and Helene Ramsay. It is hoped that the team will soon include a few interns.

The team plans to commence Sunday services in 2018. Why wait till then? The core team needs to be assembled, put down its roots in the community, get to know people, and establish a congregational culture that features

evangelism and discipleship. A few Japanese families have already expressed an interest in joining the church plant.

John and Rose will be in Australia from early April until late July to be involved in some training programs and a number of events.

Adam & Helene Ramsay with their three children have been in Japan for approximately 17 months. They are currently in the language learning phase and are settling in well.



ADAM & HELENE RAMSAY

In the city of Osaka, the members of the Osaka Presbyterian Church are keenly awaiting the arrival of Nathan & Tomoko Stewart so that together, they can reach out to many people in that city.

APWM on Facebook

If you use Facebook, you can keep up to date with much of the latest APWM news by going to www.facebook.com/AustralianPresbyterianWorldMission



For news you can also go to the APWM web site www.apwm.org.au

APWM Prayer News

APWM produces a bi-monthly prayer newsletter known as 'Email Update'. You can receive this as a pdf by email or as a weekly update. If you'd like to join in praying for our APWM missionaries please contact Sheryl Sarkoezy at national@apwm.org.au or phone (02) 8073 7490.

PRAYER AND FINANCE Response Form

Please send to: **APWM**
81 Shaftesbury Rd, Burwood NSW 2134
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I would like to support the following:

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Please indicate an amount

- ☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100
☐ other \$ _____

Please indicate how regular your payment will be:

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- 1** Cheque (*made out to 'Australian Presbyterian World Mission'*)
2 Credit card ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

Name on card: _____
Expires: ____/____
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Note: we are unable to accept AMEX

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Your account name(s): _____
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Note: Credit card and direct debit payments will be processed on or about the 20th day of the month. Please indicate which month payments should commence.

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Account number: 151207

Please write your name and the surname of the missionary you are supporting in the description box.

Please also email finance@apwm.org.au telling us that you have made a deposit and provide the name of the missionary that you are supporting.

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The APWM National Committee



APWM COMMITTEE CONVENER, ALEX SHAW

Who are the members of the APWM National Committee?

Alex Shaw (Convener), Kevin Murray (National Director), Alex Ralston (Treasurer), Brett Graham, Sheryl Sarkoezy, Bob Quinn, Peter Burke, Kim Dale, Keith Stewart, Robert McKean, Darrell Thatcher, Douglas Bennett, Noel Johnston, and William Morrow (Minute Secretary).

Including APWM in your Will

If you would like to include APWM in your will, then you may like to use these words as a guide:

"I give to the Presbyterian Church Property Trust for the National Committee of the Australian Presbyterian World Mission [here insert a description of the bequest together with the amount of money or description of property or other gift] free of testamentary charges and duties for [here insert 'its general purpose' or the specific purpose you desire] and I declare that the receipt of the Secretary of the Trust shall be sufficient to discharge to my Executors."

Please provide this wording to your Solicitor when seeking advice and assistance in drawing up your will.

How Does APWM Operate?

APWM's procedures and policies are set out in its policy document "Partnership in Mission 2016". You can download a copy from the APWM website at www.apwm.org.au and go to the 'Resources' section at the top of the page.



Three Categories of APWM Missionaries

APWM has three categories of missionaries:

Partner Church someone who serves with a recognised overseas Partner Church or in indigenous ministry within Australia.

Partner Agency someone who serves with an APWM-approved mission agency with whom APWM has a formally recognised Partner relationship e.g. SIM, Pioneers, Wycliffe.

Associate someone who serves in a ministry context or country where no Partner Church or Partner Agency is necessarily involved.

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DARWIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

ON THE LAST WEEKEND OF January, we celebrated ten years since the recommencement of the Presbyterian Congregation in Darwin.

We rejoiced in God's faithfulness and the encouragements that continue to come through God's people throughout the country. On our first Sunday of meeting in January 2007 there were thousands of Presbyterians throughout the country praying for this work. The greatest concentration of these was in Victoria and the PCV also provided substantial funding for the manse purchase and a loan at a tiny interest rate. The Melton Presbyterian Church deserves special mention as they funded the venture for the first six months of its life.

Being the world's most remote Presbyterian Church, we greatly value the partnership that so many have expressed. This partnership was stated by the Moderator General, John Wilson, when he brought greetings to the



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anniversary dinner and again at the thanksgiving worship service.

While it is officially ten years since the re-establishment of Darwin Presbyterian Church (DPC), in reality, we are never much more than three years old. Over the years, more than 420 people have been a part of the fellowship, but now they are mostly scattered around the country.

In recent years, the congregation has become increasingly multi-cultural. We usually have twelve to fourteen nations of birth represented on any Sunday morning. We love being part of a church which has a special glimpse of the "every tribe, language, people and nation" view of heaven given to us in Revelation 5.

Few from DPC have biological family in Darwin. This emphasises the family nature of the church. People come and find that they are not strangers, but that we are brothers and sisters who had not met before.

By the grace of God, we have been blessed to see people come to know the Lord Jesus for the first time. We have seen some who have drifted away from the Lord return to Him.

Please continue to pray for us, so that this genuine gospel mission will become increasingly effective in bringing glory to the Lord Jesus.

Rev Rob Duncanson is the Minister at Darwin Presbyterian Church.

SORRENTO & RYE CHRISTMAS FAMILY DAY

WE WERE INSPIRED LAST year by Rev Dean Carroll's *Christmas Family Event* at Heathmont (published in *Fellow Workers*, Autumn 2016) which featured a nativity-themed photo booth as a way of engaging their local community. So last December we organised our own Christmas Family Day at Rye Church, and another at Sorrento Church. The parish was very supportive, with many of them pitching in to help out. 'Power to Change' (formerly known as Student Life Ministry at Melbourne and Monash Universities), helped us out at Rye while their Mission Team was at Rye reaching out to "schoolies".

Children enjoyed *The First Christmas* movie projected on the wall at Sorrento Church. We had a small afternoon tea, followed by dress-ups with the help of Nola, Martha & Soyoung. We sang carols, and the children made christmas bookmarks, and included the words: "Jesus is born". We had a total of twenty-six people attend at Sorrento, including primary school children, pre-schoolers and parents.

We praised God for the "Power to Change" team who came to minister to the "schoolies".

Rev. Keong Hui Lim is the Minister of Sorrento and Rye Presbyterian Churches.



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PRESBYTERY OF BENALLA DOUBLE ORDINATION

EVEN BETTER THAN A NEW Year's Eve party is a double ordination! Saturday, 31 December 2016, saw two young colleagues who had trained together at the Presbyterian Theological College ordained and inducted into the ministry of Word and Sacraments.

Stephen McDonald was ordained in the morning. His exit appointment was to the Benalla Regional Parish under the guidance of the Interim Moderator, Rev Kevin Maxwell. The morning service was led by the Moderator of the Benalla Presbytery, Rev Kyung Ee. The Moderator General, Rev John Wilson, brought the greetings of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and his own personal best wishes. Kevin then preached from 1 Thessalonians 1 & 2, emphasising the charge of the gospel, Stephen's role as ministry and the way the gospel transforms lives. A luncheon was provided and most then travelled further up the highway to the next ordination.

Brett Cummins was ordained that afternoon. His exit appointment was to the Wangaratta Regional Parish, also under the guidance of Interim Moderator, Rev Kevin Maxwell. The Rev Dr Douglas Milne preached from Colossians 4:17. Douglas exhorted the congregation to support their pastor. An afternoon tea

was then provided. So – as 2016 came to an end and 2017 was only hours away – two parishes commenced another chapter in their endeavours to continue declaring the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Rev Neil Harvey is a member of the Presbytery of Benalla.

STRONG SURVEY RESULTS FOR PRESBYTERIAN TEENAGERS

A RECENT SURVEY HAS found that Victorian Presbyterian teenagers are strongly influenced by their family's faith and over half participate in Presbyterian Youth Victoria (PYV) camps.

In July and August 2016, The Christian Research Association, a non denominational Australian organisation which gather statistics about church life, invited the PYV to take part in a wide-ranging survey. The scope of the survey included looking at the attitudes of young people towards church, Jesus and the Bible. It also sought to measure their wider church connections, involvement and participation in PYV camps and local youth ministries.

Overall most young people indicated strong to moderate relationships with others and in general were satisfied with their lives, their relationship with God, and their friends. The vast majority said they would continue to be involved in the church in the future and that their faith had helped them through challenging times in life. Importantly, the survey indicated that their faith helped them to know right from wrong and encouraged them to look out for the needs of others before their own rights and interests.

Young people indicated that their mother (100%) and father (86%) had an influence on their decision to follow Jesus. Ministers were also very important in many cases (64%), as were grandparents and youth leaders. Friends had been influential for substantial percentage (27%). I want to encourage all ministers to recognise the important influence you have with youth in your congregations. Keep up the good work. Almost all surveyed felt that the church was accepting and supportive of the youth, and many had good relationships with older people in the church. Youth can mix well with older members of the church. Please give opportunity for this to happen.

I was encouraged to read that over half had been to a PYV camp in the last two years and indicated that they enjoyed catching up with friends, and learning more about faith and the Bible. We would encourage all youth to attend these camps and enjoy the experience. PYV thanks the Christian Education and Nurture Committee for supporting this survey.

Rev Brian Harvey is the Youth Ministries Director of Presbyterian Youth Victoria.



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PYV SUMMER CAMP

GOD IS STILL IN THE RESCUE BUSINESS

THIS SUMMER CAMP SAW 130 CAMPERs along with a terrific team of leaders led by Kirsten Bryant gathered at Rawson Village in Gippsland. We were greatly blessed by a sermon series from Exodus from Rev Jared Keath (Frankston Presbyterian Church). The focus of his sermons was on how God was active in rescuing his people from Egypt in the past and is active in rescuing people today. Jared also showed us how Exodus foreshadowed Jesus.

The campers were divided into smaller groups to reflect on what they had heard in the sermons.

We prayed that God would move hearts, and we believe that God has answered that prayer. One girl has come to faith in Jesus. Please pray for her as she returns to a family that don't share her faith. May God support her in remarkable ways.

Rev Toby McIntosh, supported by Nathan Barbieri, were also at the camp leading the YouthMETRO training. It was wonderful to see these trainees out amongst the other campers sharing their faith.

Rev Brian Harvey is the Youth Ministries Director for Presbyterian Youth Victoria.

CLAYTON

SHARING THE GOSPEL IN THE PARK

THE ANNUAL SUMMER Gospel ROCK (Reaching Out to Clayton Kids) Mission was presented at Namatjira Park, Clayton, for a week during January. The ROCK Team consisted of sixty-seven keen members, mainly teenagers from Clayton Presbyterian Church.

We're grateful to the Kingston Council for making beautiful park grounds available to us and also thankful to the Clayton North Primary School for providing the venue for the evening gospel outreach to teenagers.

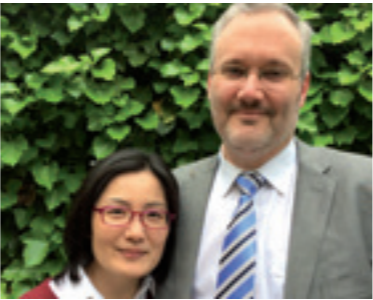
Team members presented the gospel of Jesus in prayer, praise, songs, stories, skits and drama. The children, teenagers and adults who attended enjoyed the delightful Mexican flavour of the presentations, including one song which was joyously sung by the gathering in Spanish. The average daily attendance of children at the park was eighty-nine.

The final gathering of the summer mission was a gospel service on Sunday evening at the church, when about ninety-five children and 140 adults and teenagers attended. Jesus the Saviour was delightfully presented in song and word by the team, who then finished with a gospel challenge.

The ROCK committee is planning a similar mission at Easter 2017, God willing, so please pray for its success.

Dr Des Gaffney is part of the Clayton Presbyterian Church and ROCK Committee Member.

EXIT STUDENT PROFILES



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GREG MATTHEWS

From Hunter Valley to Scots Church

I GREW UP IN A CHRISTIAN family in the Hunter Valley, and looking back I can see how God was at work leading me to salvation. The questions my mum asked ("What makes you think you can get into heaven?"), the sermons I heard and the experiences along the way gradually led me to trust in God's grace and Christ himself, and to commit myself to living as God would have me live.

After boarding school in Armidale, I studied Information Technology at the University of Technology in Sydney, where I met my wife Haesook, who had come from Korea to Sydney to learn English. I then worked as a business and IT consultant for many years, working mostly with banks and insurance companies. Hassock and I have two children, Ben (19) and Amy (18).

Coming to faith was a long process, but my call to ministry was much more abrupt. I suddenly found myself facing sleepless nights. Through prayer, the Lord called me away from my old work and then into ministry. Within a few weeks, I had quit my work and begun study. I've particularly loved studying church history, seeing the long historical testimony of Christianity and the historical reliability of Jesus.

I've also been challenged through more intense study of the Bible.

My student placement was at Scots Church and I'm looking forward to continuing to work with the team of ministers here. As in all things, I put my trust in Christ as my help, knowing that the Lord works all things for the good of those who love him.

Greg Matthews has been appointed to Scots' Presbyterian Church Melbourne.



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CAMERON GRIFFITHS

Anglican youth pastor becomes a Presbyterian preacher

I SPENT MOST OF MY CHILDHOOD in Sydney's leafy Hills District. I spent my afternoons drawing with the neighbours, catching lizards and cicadas and catching tadpoles.

I became a Christian when I was about eighteen while I studying Fine Arts at the University of NSW. I became involved in the Christian group on campus and it changed my outlook on the world and the great need for gospel ministry. After teaching for a couple of years I did a ministry traineeship with this ministry group (the Fellowship for Evangelism in the Visual Arts). I then went to study at Sydney Missionary and Bible College.

After I married Louise we spent eight years in Sydney working amongst Anglican churches. In 2014 we moved down to Melbourne so that I could work as a Youth Pastor at Donvale Pres-

byterian Church and later study at the Presbyterian Theological College (PTC) and 'retrain' as a Presbyterian minister. My theological study has helped me turn my hunches and opinions about the Bible into more grounded and thoughtful positions. It has also helped me to better approach and study the Bible. Specifically, PTC gave me a better understanding of the Presbyterian church and reformed thinking.

I can't express how excited and grateful I am to be given the opportunity to work with the Croydon Hills congregation and join with them in their gospel ministry to their neighbourhood. I look forward to getting to know them and seeing how I can best serve them, teaching them the Word, and training them up to serve His kingdom.

Cameron Griffiths has been appointed to Croydon Hills Presbyterian Church.

MINISTRY MOVES

Ballarat Presbytery

Mr Ian Smith (home missionary) retired from the Kaniva-Nhill Parish, 12 February 2017.

Benalla Presbytery

Rev **Stephen McDonald** was ordained to Benalla Regional Parish, 31 December 2016. Rev Brett Cummins was ordained to the Wangaratta Regional Parish, 31 December 2016.

East Melbourne Presbytery

Rev **Stephen Kim** resigned as Minister of Korean North Balwyn effective from 30 November 2016.

Flinders Presbytery

Mr Joel Mestry (exit student) was appointed to Dandenong

Presbyterian Church, January 2017.

Geelong Presbytery

Elder **Mr Colin Baker** went to be with Lord on 30 December, 2016, having served as an elder for the Moorabool Parish for fifty years.

Gippsland Presbytery

Rev **Heath Easton** was inducted to the Drouin parish, 5 February 2017.

Maroondah Presbytery

Rev **Chuoel Yat** resigned from Warburton Parish, December 2016.

Rev **Matt James** was appointed as Chaplain at the Kirkbrae Retirement Village, 11 December 2016.

Mr Cameron Griffiths (exit student) was appointed to Croydon Hills Presbyterian Church, 11 December 2016.

Mr David Martin was appointed as a church planter for Officer starting in 2018.

North Melbourne Presbytery

Mr Steven Kilner was appointed as Resident Supply to Kangaroo Ground December 2016.

Mr Andy Buchan (exit student) was appointed as Assistant to the Minister at Eltham, January 2017.

Mr Paul Hyunh (ministry candidate) was appointed as Assistant to the Minister at Reservoir, January 2017.

North-West Presbytery

Rev **Bill Lutton** was appointed to Kerang- Pyramid Hill Parish for three months from 1 April 2017.

West Melbourne Presbytery

Mr Greg Matthews (exit student) was appointed as Assistant to the Minister to Scots Church Melbourne, January 2017.

AUDREY ASSAD'S ALBUM **INHERITANCE**

Reviewed by Nick Gross

As a child, American Christian singer-songwriter Audrey Assad learnt to sing four-part harmonies without musical accompaniment in a Plymouth Brethren community.

Her fourth studio album, *Inheritance*, is her tribute to this tradition, and an attempt to build something new from it. Assad is part of an emerging group of artists introducing a new generation to the theological richness and emotional maturity of old hymns through new melodies and arrangements.

Inheritance is not the kind of music I would normally seek out. For this reason, I asked an Assad-fan- friend of mine, Tom, for advice. He listed a few things about Assad: she is a charismatic Catholic-convert mystic who emphasises God's holiness, unfathomableness and grace, and who has produced a wide range of work, including a side-project in atmospheric electropop.

Inheritance shares the same wistful thread of Assad's other material. This comes from slow tempos, reverb, dark synths and martial drums. While her arrangements are very layered, Assad's vocals stay simple and unadorned. The songs often begin with just her voice and little accompanying instrumentation, communicating a fragile, confessional honesty.

Album opener "Ubi Caritas" captures the solemnity of the Gregorian chant while raising the spookiness a few notches with a new lilting melody, dark violins and battle-drums. This track give you a sense of the album's tone: quiet contemplation tinged with both sadness and hope – a reflection of how Assad creates her music as a soundtrack to prayer. But I think it also squares with my friend Tom's observations about her preoccupation with the mystical otherness of God.

Beauty is very evident here, both in the source material and Assad's voice and arrangements. The hymns are balanced with two original compositions by Assad and a Canadian collaborator Matt Maher.

"Even unto Death" is her response to a recent martyrdom in the Middle-East. Her father was a Syrian refugee, so this region is close to her heart.

Another particularly memorable composition of hers, "New Every Morning", is built around the contrast between the beginning of sin and the mercies that God shows us every day.

But there's plenty of respite from *Inheritance*'s emotional weight. "How Can I Keep from Singing?" has a relaxed, sunny feel. The simplicity of "It is Well with My Soul", sung in choral harmony, is another standout, and the closest reflection of Assad's musical heritage, "Oh the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus", allows plenty of scope for the melody and harmonies to shine.

In contrast, "Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet" is the most processed. Vocals submerge in a brooding mix, with snatches of rattling strings and tom-toms

At points like these I wonder if the cinematic colour of *Inheritance* overshadows the lyrics.

Assad has purposely avoided faithful or "pretty" renditions. She says: "I had to make something both bright and dark-coloured honestly with my own doubts and weaknesses, so that the Lord who inspired these songs could be even more visible in it."

It seems odd to change a song's arrangement to the point that it almost runs counter to the intent of the original, such as when a sombre shade is cast over lines written as praise and celebration.

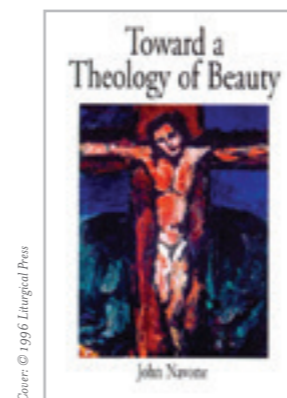
There is surely a risk that more culturally engaged Christians may gravitate towards the darker, more introspective realities of faith and forget to give equal weight to joy and assurance.

These things aside, *Inheritance* is both meaningful and affecting. Through the lens of some of our richest hymns, it gives an honest sense of a believer's heart holding tightly to God's grace and promises in times of trouble and doubt. It's worth a listen, and it'll help you remember some of those wise old lines.

Nick Gross is a graphic designer, who worships at Crossroads Presbyterian Church, Hobart.

SALVATION IN MORE BEAUTIFUL CLOTHES?

Reviewed by Stephen McDonald



John Navone, *Toward a Theology of Beauty*

(Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996). ISBN: 9780814622728. Paperback: 104 pages.

Could knowing the creation enable us to commune with God? That's how John Navone answers the age-old question: 'Why is there beauty in the world?'

In *Toward a Theology of Beauty*, he starts from a theistic viewpoint, though one with eccentric elements. He refers to God as if He were the personification of various attributes, such as love, happiness and beauty.

As one would expect from a professor of theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Navone's sources of authority are distinctively Roman Catholic. He regularly refers to what "The Christian community of faith recognises" in reference to the authority of the Catholic Church and its traditions.

From this starting point, he casts the story of redemption in terms of beauty. He accounts for the Fall as the world losing its beautiful conformity to God by turning away from Him in self will. As a result, the image of God in mankind has been deformed.

The solution to this deformity is a transformation or transfiguring of the image of God in us as we are inspired and motivated by "Beauty Itself". Navone writes of "the saving power of Beauty to communicate the fullness of life". Therefore, observing and appreciating beauty is a way to know

God. "We can have communion with Happiness Itself in knowing and loving and delighting in all things." This sounds dangerously like pantheism, the belief that "god" is in everything.

In Romans 1:19-20, Paul unveils how the creation declares the existence and power of God. However, he also announces the foolishness of a wisdom which "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things" (Romans 1:22-23). Appreciating the creation is no substitute for knowing the Creator.

In Navone's way of thinking, moral perfection is equated with beauty; sin becomes deformity; salvation becomes the motivation to become beautiful; and atonement is irrelevant. These departures from orthodox Christian terminology obscure the essentially covenantal and judicial nature of the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.

appreciating the creation is no substitute for knowing the Creator

Agreeing with Navone would leave us with no solution to sin other than being inspired to become more beautiful, or more like God. Basically, he dresses up moralism and legalism in beautiful clothes. No amount of contemplation of nature or art can provide saving knowledge of God (2 Timothy 3:15-16, Galatians 1:8-9, and Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6).

Navone is often difficult to read, and incomprehensible in places. A more accessible and reliable exploration of the place of beauty in Christian life and thought would be the American Calvinist theologian R.C. Sproul's video series, *Recovering the Beauty of the Arts*.

Rev. Stephen McDonald is minister of the Benalla Regional Parish, north-east Victoria.

SEEKING THE INTERSECTION OF THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE

Reviewed by Suzannah Rowntree



James F. McGrath,
Religion and
Science Fiction
(Eugene, Oregon:
Cascade Books, 2016).
ISBN: 9781498204514.
Paperback: 124 pages.

What, if anything, do faith and science have to say to each other? The question goes back at least as far as the medieval struggle to harmonise Aristotelian natural philosophy with the teaching of Scripture, but *Theology and Science Fiction* by James F. McGrath seeks to explore the question in the arena of storytelling.

Dr McGrath, a professor of New Testament language and literature at Butler University, Indianapolis, argues that “to treat theology and science fiction as having nothing to say to one another is to suggest that either science or religion has nothing useful to contribute to humanity’s future”.

beyond a simplistic approach which looks for obvious Christ figures

So far so good, and to those who believe that God is sovereign not only of our religious beliefs but also of scientific progress and fictional speculation, McGrath’s understanding of science fiction as a way for believers to explore theological ramifications of scientific progress comes as a breath of fresh air.

McGrath is at his best when demonstrating the myriad ways in which science fiction might help us get to grips with theological questions, beyond a simplistic approach which looks for obvious Christ figures or death-and-resurrection motifs. However, despite this declared thesis, it is not the book’s main focus, and the argument is overwhelmed throughout by the author’s problematic understanding of theology as a discipline.

“Some,” McGrath declares in his third chapter, “mistakenly believe that theology offers timeless and unchanging truths.” Throughout the book, his main concern is to refute any idea of theology as an approach to absolute truth. Even the most conservative Christian with a cursory knowledge of church history knows that what a given person or institution believes will inevitably change and develop over the course of his or its lifetime. But for most believers, the point of this journey is to arrive at the truth: Christ himself encouraged us to seek, and we will find.

McGrath, however, insists that absolute truth cannot be found and should not be sought. Theology is an evolutionary, dialectic process meant not to discover truth but to foster broad-mindedness. In any relation of science fiction to theology, “the ideal ... is for theology and sci-fi to engage in conversation as equal partners, working towards integration”.

McGrath’s aim, even in the most dire and pertinent questions of ethics and personhood, is not “pat answers”, but “raising questions”. But while anyone can agree that some ethical dilemmas are not easily answered, a principled Christian facing end-of-life decisions or an ectopic pregnancy cannot afford to spend indefinite time in genteel questioning. An answer, pat or not, is required.

“Theological science fiction challenges the overconfidence of some sci-fi and some theology that scientism or religious dogma has all the answers, or at least the ultimate and most important ones,” McGrath concludes. It might seem strange to make such a claim without taking time to consider the dogmatism of Christian sci-fi authors such as C.S. Lewis, Madeleine L’Engle, or Walter M. Miller, Jr – but in the end, although it contains some insights that may be valuable to those who have never thoughtfully consumed science fiction media, this book is not foundationally about science fiction at all. Like many previous attempts to resolve the tension between faith and science, it is really about epistemology.

Suzannah Rowntree is a novelist, book reviewer and blogger in rural Victoria, Australia.

MOVIE REVIEWS

ROGUE ONE MORE POWERFUL THAN THE DEATH STAR

Reviewed by Jesse Walz

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story, set between episodes three and four of the franchise, tells the story of the Rebellion’s discovery of the Death Star, and the daring attempt to steal the plans.

“We have hope! Rebellions are built on hope!” It was a tense moment as the Rebel leaders met. Should they risk it all, or simply give it all up as lost? Once the existence of the Death Star was revealed, the Rebellion had only a few paths to choose from. Do they surrender, flee or fight?

Spirits were low in that meeting, even as Jyn Erso made this stirring statement. The power of the Empire seemed too great and the odds of their retrieving the plans were miniscule. Yet Jyn had hope, and she inspired hope in others.

There are three “hopes” on display in *Rogue One*. The first is the hope of the Rebellion. The hope they display is what most people typically think of as wishful thinking, a deep desire for a better future. They have no real confidence. They have a desperate plan, a commitment to continue on until their last breath and a willingness to give up everything for this cause they believe to be just. Their hope is wishful thinking; there could be no confidence for them; only an attempt to do the right thing at great personal cost.

**not because they know
the details of this life, nor
because they can control
everything that happens**

The second is the hope of the evil Galactic Empire. Its personnel place their hope in themselves and their power. In their arrogance they protect



their information with force and technology. They cannot fathom how any of it could be stolen.

It is the third hope that can best be compared with true, Christian hope. It is the hope of the audience. Once the plot unfolds and the problem becomes clear, the audience knows what will happen. Not a guess, as in some movies where the plotline is predictable; nor with the detailed knowledge of someone who’s already seen the film. Instead, the audience has the confident knowledge that the Rebellion will succeed because they know the story of the following films. They know the plot of *Star Wars IV: A New Hope*. They’ve seen the outcome, even if they can’t quite guess the detail.

Just like the audience of *Rogue One*, Christians can have a confident hope for the future. Not because they know the details of this life, nor because they can control everything that happens around them. Christians can have hope because they know the end of the story. Christ is risen and ascended, guaranteeing that his work on the cross was successful, and that he will come again, in the same manner as he departed, this time in order to rule, finally, unopposed.

We know the end of the story. So we can have hope, even in the midst of upset, trial and calamity, in the struggle against our relentless adversary. Christ is risen. Christ, our hope.

Jesse Walz is a fourth-year student at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne, and on placement at Surrey Hills Presbyterian Church.



© 2016 Disney

MOANA THE POWER OF MYTH IN A FRIGHTENING WORLD

Reviewed by Nathan Campbell

Disney seems to be in the process of reinventing the princess. No longer are its heroines prepared simply to be damsels in distress on the path to find Prince Charming (or his equivalent). Now in the post-Frozen world (or perhaps post-Brave world) the Disney princess is independent, adventurous and heroic. Which, as a father with two young daughters in a world that sometimes appears monstrous, I can only say is an improvement.

The title character in Disney's latest princess outing, Moana, heads off on a world-saving adventure away from the safety of her village and into the wild blue Pacific Ocean, made even wilder by her encounters with a pantheon of islander gods. The world is falling apart because the Pacific Island demi-god Maui stole the "heartstone" of the goddess Te Fiti. Without this stone she is a monster who no longer sustains the life of her islander people.

Moana is a visual masterpiece. From start to finish it is a captivating piece of story-telling, with the Pacific island setting rendered in 3D computer animation in such a way as to add enchantment to an already "magical" mythical story. The musical

score is exceptional. It features a couple of the sorts of anthems that are the staple of successful Disney movies – those songs that captivate your five-year-old daughter and keep her dressing up as a princess for up to two years.

The movie is self-consciously "mythic". It opens with the words, "In the beginning", as Moana Waialiki's grandmother teaches the village toddlers their creation story.

Myth gets a bad rap in Christian circles at times. Its technical meaning is not a "fictional fairytale of no value", but rather "a story that organises your view of life in the world". To be human, as J.R.R Tolkien put it in his landmark essay, On Fairy Stories, is to be capable of "myth-making", to be able to bring worlds to life from our imaginations through words.

The myths we create, however, are a melting pot of truth and idolatry. Our God-given imaginations allow us to live in creative ways that reflect who He is, and to make beautiful things such as animated movies. But when our imaginations aren't fixated on who God is, we conceive idols and new myths to live by – apart, that is, from the true "myth", the Gospel.

when our imaginations aren't fixated on who God is, we conceive idols and new myths to live by – apart, that is, from the true "myth", the Gospel.

Moana is a triumph of human creativity, but also shows where our creativity can misfire because of sin. Moana's mythic power doesn't lie so much in the pagan origins of the Maui story, but in the more modern myth about what real human flourishing looks like.

The story's young heroine, Moana, discovers that flourishing isn't found by remaining safely in her home village where children are assured "there are no monsters" and "this is paradise". Rather, it is to be found by seeking the answer to the question, "Who are you meant to be?" For Moana, the answer to this is found in the "calling inside of her" that comes from her heart – a call to adventure.

There is much to appreciate in Moana, including, I think, the challenge for Christian parents not to shelter our children in a safe harbour away from monsters, but to be prepared to make them dangerous to the world by teaching them who they really are, and shaping them to follow the "call to adventure" that we receive from our Lord Jesus.

But there is another aspect of this film we should be wary of, because at the heart of Moana's mythic story is the idea that it is our responsibility to be the hero. The Christian "myth" says otherwise. It declares that Jesus is the hero who fixes the world.

Moana teaches that our telos – our calling – comes from within. The Christian myth teaches us that our calling comes from without – that is, from the God who made us with the purpose of our representing and ruling in His world by reflecting His image. Moreover, the Lord calls us to go into the world to make disciples.

While watching Moana in all its beauty, we should remember we already have our own myth, as C.S. Lewis puts it. And it is a good one, because it is true, and truly reorganises and repairs our world.

Lewis said in an essay in his book, God in the Dock: "The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens – at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences."

Rev. Nathan Campbell is a minister with Creek Road (South Bank) Presbyterian Church and author of the blog 'St. Eutychus'.

POETRY

COMMON ERA

I know him not
three times St Peter said
before the rooster crowed.
New calendars take Peter's part.
With BCE we mark a birth
but hide the One who honoured
Mary's womb, who owns the day.
By year, by date, betrayed,
we know him not.

Steve Isham is a Christian poet and children's book author based in Tasmania.