

*Spring 2020 | Presbyterian Church of Victoria*



# FELLOW WORKERS





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*Fellow Workers*

Quarterly Magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.

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## EDITORIAL

God communicates. Speaking, appearing and orchestrating events throughout Scripture. The central miracle of Christianity is the Incarnation, the Son of God taking on a human nature. Revealing who God is and how God saves. Therefore, as Christians we delight in communicating with one another. There is something precious in sharing some of our denominational life with one another. We hope the restored publication of *Fellow Workers*, even in the midst of a pandemic, goes a small way in deepening our communication with one another. For future editions we continue to invite news articles relating to congregations or committees. We also welcome letters to the editor, about topics raised in the articles or book reviews.

*Luke Isham, Convenor of the State News Committee*



Photo: Valley Presbyterian Church

# CHURCH PLANTING IN A PANDEMIC

**RICHARD WILSON**

On Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March I noticed the email in my inbox with that depressing line “suspend your organisation’s contract to hire our premises”. We have been meeting at the Plenty Valley Christian College for several years but this time the lack of a permanent home was really biting. It was time to clean out the garage and learn what they didn’t teach us at theological college—how to get a church service onto people’s TV sets in their lounge room. That is of course the story repeated across all Australian churches, but the difference for church plants is finding a place to stream from. What a blessing that the NBN makes all of this possible in ways we never could have imagined five years ago.

Valley Presbyterian Church converted the pastor’s garage into a studio full of cameras, tripods, microphones and various tech gear, and added carpet, curtains and sound insulation to deaden the sound. They livestream using YouTube each Sunday morning and also use the ‘sli.do’ app on people’s phones to get live feedback and an effective Q&A after the sermon. The new limit of five people has proved challenging so some components are pre-recorded. They communicate with their people each Thursday with the mid-week wrap and produce preschool and

school-age teaching for kids church each week.

Darebin Presbyterian Church have been pre-recording from a garage and then streaming at their usual Sunday afternoon time of 4pm. However, Darebin have recently entered an arrangement with a local church to use as their recording studio which has given them much more space in which to record.

New Life Presbyterian Church are using Facebook to livestream from the shed at their Officer property. Outreach is especially challenging, however David is planning to run their New Life Course in August to engage with people interested in exploring New Life in Jesus. David is also meeting up with a couple via Zoom to disciple the husband and evangelise the wife.

Reforming Presbyterian Church in Bendigo are rejoicing in their new space at Reforming House and with a brilliant tech team are streaming church services to their congregation each Sunday with Zoom catchup for morning tea afterwards.

Warragul Presbyterian Church are making good use of a borrowed Anglican building just outside of Warragul with Ray Patchett leading the preaching team on



Sundays and streaming with YouTube from their website.

Please pray that the Lord of the harvest would provide secure places to meet and promote the gospel for our church plants while we remember that our true citizenship is above and we will never truly be at home until the Lord returns and takes us to the new creation.

*Richard Wilson is the pastor of Valley Presbyterian Church and the Church Planting Officer.*

“PLEASE PRAY THAT THE LORD OF THE HARVEST WOULD PROVIDE SECURE PLACES TO MEET AND PROMOTE THE GOSPEL FOR OUR CHURCH PLANTS”



*Photo: Valley Presbyterian Church*

## MINISTRY MOVES

**REV DAVID HANN** was inducted into the pastoral charge of Canterbury Presbyterian Church on Friday 10 January 2020.

**REV LUKE ISHAM** was inducted into the pastoral charge of St Kilda & Balaclava Presbyterian Church on Friday 31 January 2020.

**REV BRIAN HARVEY** was inducted into the pastoral Charge of Heathmont Presbyterian Church on Sunday 2 February 2020.

**REV GREG MATTHEWS** was ordained and inducted into the appointment charge of Horsham Presbyterian Church on Friday 15 May 2020.

**REV PETER OWEN** was inducted into the pastoral charge of Point Cook Presbyterian Church on Sunday 31 May 2020.

**REV ROD WATERHOUSE** was inducted into the pastoral charge of Portland Presbyterian Church on Wednesday 1 July 2020.

**MR WAYNE MCARDLE** was inducted to the appointment charge of Gisborne Presbyterian Church on Sunday 5 July 2020.

# CONNECTING THE CONGREGATION IN COVID-19

**MARTIN DE PYLE**

I still remember the night of Sunday March 22, 2020. In the morning our congregation at West Footscray met together to worship. It had gone well, we had visitors; there was the usual joy of being together.

However, conversations were dominated by one subject. A single issue overshadowed all else. It brought uncertainty, apprehension, even a sense of defiance. The shortage of toilet paper hardly got a mention. The issue of concern was how long we would be able to meet together and what would we do if officially forbidden? The common desire was to continue meeting together for as long as we were able, yet at the same time we wanted to be good citizens and love our neighbours. It was shaping up as a wisdom call.

But that night the decision was made for us. I turned on the TV late that evening at the exact time Prime Minister Scott Morrison was announcing the decisions of the National Cabinet. "Effective immediately, public services of worship were not to occur". It hit hard! I remember my first thought was "It doesn't matter what we think we should do; the decision has been made for us."

First thing Monday morning my focus was to have the online church platform confirmed and a service format organised. There were additional technical infrastructure needs and an initial round of publicity that all needed to be attended to before the coming Sunday. One week to make it happen! There were also my non-negotiables: I wanted to stream live, have the ability to include others in the service, and the online service definitely had to be simple to use for the end users.

I had heard about Congregation Connect: the worship service program that PIM use for people living in remote localities. I went to the website for quick answers, but also felt I needed to find out more. No problem. Without a second thought I picked up the phone and spoke firstly with the PIM CEO Andrew Letcher, and then with Dennis Rayson. Clear guidance and support came quickly. In no time I had complete access. The immediate encouragement was the program offered all I wanted, and so much more. I could do all the following: livestream, be seen as I ran the service, invite others to participate, have a Powerpoint running during the service, and play music or video clips. Last, but not least, it was really simple to use.

That first Sunday came and went without a hitch. Attention quickly turned to thinking how we could exploit the lockdown situation for some wider gains to our gospel ministry. One thing that has worked really well is to invite someone different each week to give a five-minute mission update. They log in like everyone else, are welcomed at the beginning of the service and then activate their camera when speaking. We have had a range of speakers from all over Australia, and from as far away as Ecuador. (Diego Herrera working in Loja training Pastors with SIM). Following the service, these weekly mission speakers then move to a break-out room for 'morning tea' and speak some more to those who have stayed for a chat.

Another initiative we have implemented is to invite people from congregations where services have completely stopped. From this we began to have regulars 'at Church' who live interstate. I also sent out a weekly newsletter to everyone who we then





*Photo: Martin de Pyle from West Footscray Presbyterian Church.*

had contact with. It included a devotional thought, prayer points and news updates.

Congregation Connect was then used in even more creative ways. We ran business meetings, held social catch ups, prayer meetings and Bible studies – I even live-streamed two wedding services!

There is no way I would call myself tech savvy. In fact, I don't enjoy anything that is remotely 'nerdy'. But PIM's Congregation Connect is well within my skill sets. It was also simple for the congregation to use, was completely run from my laptop, and was able to be adapted for most aspects of congregational life. For us at West Footscray, it was a life saver and a ministry multiplier. Church buildings darkened during COVID-19, but God's people continued to 'shine their light'.

*Martin de Pyle is the pastor of West Footscray Presbyterian Church. This article first appeared in Edition 2 2020 of PIM's On Track.*

“CHURCH BUILDINGS  
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# THE PCV STATEMENT ON SEX, GENDER AND MARRIAGE

**CHRIS DUKE**

During 2019, the national Church and Nation Committee prepared a statement for the General Assembly of Australia on Sex, Gender and Marriage which was accepted by the Assembly. The PCV Church and Nation Committee presented the same statement to the General Assembly of Victoria, where it was also accepted. This statement has now been presented to all Presbyteries and churches in Victoria.

You might ask, “Why does the PCV need a statement on Sex, Gender and Marriage when we have our primary source ‘The Bible’ and our secondary standard the ‘Westminster Confession of Faith’?” The answer lies in the drastically changed cultural and legal definitions of language.

In the 1984 Sex Discrimination Act, ‘man’ was defined as “a member of the male sex irrespective of age” and ‘woman’ as “a member of the female sex irrespective of age”. ‘Sex’ was clearly understood to be the one of the two biological categories, either male or female.

However, the 2013 Sex Discrimination Amendment Act repealed the definitions of man, woman, and all references to sex as a biological category. It replaced them with ‘gender identity’, “the gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether

by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person’s designated sex at birth”.

Effectively, sex was redefined in law as a personal choice to which all other considerations and rights were made secondary. Biological sex as a standard in law was erased, man no longer meant biological males and woman no longer meant biological females. In fact, even the concept of the male/female binary of sex was undermined by removing the phrases “the opposite sex” and substituting them with “a different sex”.

The removal of sex from the definition of the Marriage Act in December 2017 (from between one man and one woman, to between two people) only confirmed the need to decisively clarify and distinguish our understanding of language, as well as the Bible, in the areas of sex, gender and marriage.

The PCV has not deviated from its already orthodox biblical view of sex, gender or marriage. The statement clearly reiterates and reaffirms our long-held view that biblical marriage is between one man and one woman for life and that gender is determined biologically.

But the fact that these orthodox views are being successfully rejected, redefined and then reframed as discriminatory has serious future implica-



tions. The ministry of the Word, the teaching and preaching of the gospel in our churches, theological colleges and schools and indeed by individual Christians in society, all face increasing challenges in this environment. There is no doubt that holding to our biblical position will draw more confusion and cultural backlash due to the redefinition of

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language and the change in laws. However, as an evangelical and Bible believing church we cannot deviate from the word of God and what it has to say on these topics.

In a recent legal case, a teacher at the Ballarat Christian College tested the schools policy on biblical marriage. This teacher had slipped through the net with unorthodox views and would not sign up to a clearer statement when a constitutional change occurred in light of the changes to the Marriage Act. In the College's original Confession of Faith, orthodoxy was sufficiently implied, but not explicitly stated. In mounting a defence, the College's legal team drew attention to the vulnerability organisations face in law when their statements of belief are not sufficiently clear.

The GAA and the PCV now have a clear statement which should not leave our ministers, our theological students, or our members and employees with any doubt as to our biblical position. After its preamble, the statement begins with creation, then the effects of the fall and sin, our redemption through Christ and our hope for the new creation. Please check out the statement at the following link:

<https://pcv.org.au/resources/statements/>

*Chris Duke is the pastor of the Essendon and Clifton Hill Presbyterian Church and Convenor of the Church and Nation Committee.*



MOPS.ORG.AU



## Want to reach young families?

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) is a ministry for your church that serves mums and creates connections.

To find out more, email [info@mops.org.au](mailto:info@mops.org.au) to get an info pack

#thisismotherhood

# SHOULD WE CELEBRATE THE LORD'S SUPPER ONLINE?

**BEN NELSON**

Streamed services via YouTube, small groups and prayer meetings on Zoom, even a Commission of Assembly with over hundred participants conducted via video-conferencing – our congregations are seeking to harness all sorts of online tools through rolling COVID-19 shutdowns. God's Word still goes out, and God's people still encourage each other.

What about celebrating the Lord's Supper online? Some have suggested that while the pastor conducts the service online, each household could provide their own elements (bread and wine/juice) and so this sacrament of communion could continue, even while we are physically scattered.

It's great to see this love for the Supper, and the desire to encourage God's people through God's own means. However, for a number of reasons we believe that the Supper should be preserved for the physical gathering of God's people.

We need to remember that while our use of the sacraments is always connected to the ministry of the Word, there are, nevertheless, important distinctions between Word-based ministry and our celebration of the Supper. Jesus and the apostles taught the Word to anyone, anywhere, but the Supper is restricted to the assembled gathering of believers. Hearing the Word begins faith in us (Rom 10:17), but the Supper can only confirm and express a faith that is already present in us (I Cor 11:27-29) – it is not an evangelism tool.

Consequently, the Supper is occasional, particular and limited, but the Word is constant and universal.

This actually makes the Supper especially beautiful; like wedding rings for a loving couple, its exclusivity makes it a precious symbol of our union with Christ. But while there could be no Christian ministry at all without the Word, the same cannot be said of the Supper. Faith came by the Word before we came to the Lord's table, and faith continues to be nurtured by that Word even when the Supper is unavailable. So while we should be thoughtfully creative about online options for word-based ministry during this current crisis, this does not necessarily apply to the Supper as well.

In fact, not only did Jesus gather with his disciples in the Upper Room, but Paul particularly emphasises this 'coming together' in I Cor 11:17-34. He mentions it no less than five times in this passage. In verse 34, it's possible he uses 'when you come together' as shorthand for the Supper as a whole. This is not merely circumstantial; Paul connects this gathering with the Supper itself: 'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread (I Cor 10:17).' The one body of believers is gathered around the one bread, which points to the one Christ. It's hard to see how a physically scattered but online 'communion' squares with Paul's emphasis here.

It's important to see that the Supper is not simply the bread, the wine, and the word of institution. It is an entire sacramental action, conducted in the assembly of believers. Jesus broke the bread, blessed it and gave to his disciples, and so also the cup. The disciples then received it from him, at his gracious invitation. Paul painstakingly repeats this



in I Cor 11:23-25. Our own Westminster Confession takes up this emphasis in 29.3:

‘The Lord Jesus hath . . . appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people, to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine . . . and to take and break the bread, to take the cup and . . . give both to the communicants, but to none who are not then present in the congregation.’

Following this logic, it seems that the physical gathering of God’s people is as much a part of the Supper as the elements of bread and wine. We therefore need to be careful that ‘virtual’ solutions designed for the current crisis do not store up for us pastoral problems in the future. For all the many benefits that the digital revolution has brought us, we are also aware that balancing the natural and physical sphere with ‘cyber’ reality can engender many difficulties. Perhaps more than ever before, those who become disciples of Jesus need the un-

yielding physicality of the sacraments. Yet an online communion must ‘de-physicalise’ the assembly of believers and the common giving and receiving of the elements. Jesus gave us such a physical sacrament to confirm our faith for the time when he would be physically absent from us; it would be ironic if such a sign designed to be so physical were in turn to be ‘virtualised.’

This period of restrictions has been difficult for Christians and congregations, though we are thankful for God’s blessings for us in the midst of it all. Let’s pray that the day will soon return when we can gather again and remember our Saviour in the Supper he has given us.

*Ben Nelson, on behalf of the PTC Faculty. A longer version of this paper can be found at <https://ptc.edu.au/blog/online-supper>*

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# THE CATECHISM EXPERIENCE: HELPING A GENERATION TO BECOME FIRM IN THE FAITH

**ANDREW EDMONDS**

Spurgeon said, “I am persuaded that the use of a good Catechism in all our families will be a great safeguard against the increasing errors of the times, and therefore I have compiled this little manual from the Westminster Assembly’s and Baptist Catechisms, for the use of my own church and congregation. Those who use it in their families or classes must labour to explain the sense; but the words should be carefully learned by heart, for they will be understood better as years pass. May the Lord bless my dear friends and their families evermore, is the prayer of their loving Pastor”. The Prince of Preachers clearly saw the use of Catechism as critically important to discipleship in his ministry context, but what about ours? Is this practice archaic and simply outdated, or could it still serve as a safeguard against the errors of our day too?

Presbyterians have a long history of using the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and in Victoria we have a fantastic opportunity to help people young and old not just learn doctrine by heart, but engage doctrinal truth with heart felt meaning, and to do this through a shared relational context. This year Christian Education and Nurture Committee (CENC) and Presbyterian Youth Victoria (PYV) launched the ‘Catechism Experience’ in a new format. This past July participants started to receive the book called *Firm In The Faith* by Dennis Hustedt in the mail and joined an online closed group on the Faithlife platform (faithlife.com). At the time of writing there are over 100 participants signed up to learn in this format. Together, the book and the online group provide a unique Catechism learning community for children, youth and adults. Individuals and families have been sharing insights and posting



creative photos, media, and reflections in response to the truth they are learning over the 12 weeks of the Catechism.

The *Firm In The Faith* book is an instructional resource that guides discussion and aids understanding, serving to reinforce the truth of the Catechism. Participants use it in a way that works best for their situation, and its content can be spread over the days of the week or covered all in one go that week. It's great to hear that families having been using it each evening at the dinner table, helping each other to memorise and understand the truths presented. There are also leader/parent notes at the back of the book that assist those leading the discussion. I think it's appropriate to note that this resource has been endorsed on its back cover by the *Australian Presbyterian* calling it, '*... a splendid piece of work... it is highly recommended*'. The book is in four sections and this year we are using the first section called 'Christian Basics'. Lord willing, the other three sections will be used over the next three years in the same format.

The challenge for the participants is to work through the 12 weeks of the Catechism Experience and learn from the questions and answers by the Melbourne Cup holiday on November 3rd. After the Experience has closed for the year on Cup Day, the efforts of children and youth who engaged in the experience will be assessed and rewarded. I am already greatly encouraged by the sense of sharing that the online interaction fosters between the participants. People don't feel like they are the only ones learning the material, but that they have Catechism Comrades all over the State of Victoria.

The goal for the Catechism Experience is that it would foster spiritual growth in individuals and families, and that generations now and later would benefit by becoming firm in the faith.

*"if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard..." (Colossians 1:23a, ESV)*

*Andrew Edmonds is the Director of Presbyterian Youth Victoria.*



## PROFILE:

### OUTGOING MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VICTORIA: COLIN MORROW

*Moderators of the PCV Assembly are usually ministers, but you, together with your wife Alison are PIM Missionaries. Please tell us about PIM and your role as PIM Missionaries.*

Presbyterian Inland Mission (formerly known as Australian Inland Mission) was formed by the Presbyterian Church of Australia's General Assembly back in 1912, 108 years ago in Melbourne. The Assembly had received a report from a young Presbyterian Minister, Rev John Flynn (yes the man on the \$20 note!) about the need for the gospel to be taken inland. John Flynn was a man of insight and he inspired the church to undertake this great Mission "beyond the furthest fences" to those in need of Spiritual guidance, pastoral care and who also needed to hear the gospel.

Many men have since served as missionaries, rising to undertake Flynn's challenge to take the gospel to the outback. More recently there have been husband and wife mission teams like Alison and myself. We figure people on the land are worth driving for but we don't ride camels like the pioneers did! In our mission roles, Alison and I undertake what's called a patrol ministry. We drive to visit people on farms and stations and even serve in small communities. Our patrol is called the "Mungo Patrol" area. It's named after Lake Mungo, a National Park in the centre of the region.

We love the people we visit. We seek to show them the love of Christ in practical ways yet, also, we share the gospel. Our goal is to make disciples and build up the people we reach so they may be found mature in Christ. The good news we share is the best news ever and, although we are sinners, we are privileged to be trusted by our Holy God to serve Him and the people we go to in this way.

*Tell us about your connection to your Presbyterian ministry in Mildura.*

When we applied to join PIM, the superintendent at that time, Rev Stuart Bonnington, asked if we would like to serve in Mildura in a part-time PIM capacity with me also serving as a part-time Home Missionary at Sunraysia Presbyterian Church. We were wrapped! We actually accepted the roles without ever having travelled to Mildura before!

Since we've been appointed, almost 6.5 years ago now, we have split our time roughly 50/50 between the two roles. For our PIM work we are supported as normal Missionaries by the wider church but for me as a Home Missionary, congregational giving and support from the PCV's Ministry Development Committee sustains the work financially.



*What does the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria actually do?*

I could say with tongue in cheek, “As he is told!” but, in reality, I chair the meetings of the General Assembly of Victoria and its Commissions and also undertake the duties I’m assigned or expected to undertake.

This year I’ve been assigned the role of visiting the charges in the Presbytery of Melbourne West. I also visit the church schools: Scotch College, Presbyterian Ladies’ College, St Andrew’s Christian College and Belgrave Heights Christian School. Additionally, I am expected to visit overseas missionaries and this year, before COVID-19 took hold, I was able to visit missionaries in England and France. We were going to go to Hungary as well but the pandemic was just erupting worldwide so we came back to Australia early. I have also attended various ordinations or inductions of ministers either by being physically present or via Zoom.

However, the bottom line, and the real answer to your question is: The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria seeks to serve in leadership and encourage and build up the people within God’s church within Victoria. It’s a great honour and privilege to serve Him and the church in this capacity and I pray that I have done so to His glory.

*What were some highlights and some difficult things during your moderatorship?*

Frankly, there were many highlights during my year as Moderator but I think the biggest highlight was the night of my induction into the role as my family gathered around and as I was able to issue a call to the wider church by saying “It’s Time to Engage”. It was an opportunity for me to remind the wider church, and our invited guests as well, that it’s time for the church to get out into the community and mix it with the people like never before and share of the hope that is found in Jesus Christ.

In terms of difficulties: I think the pandemic threw a huge spanner into the works! This year was the first time ever that a Commission of the General Assembly was held entirely over the internet. In the end things went really well thanks to the planning undertaken by so many as they worked tirelessly beforehand to make the day work. I can’t thank them and the commissioners who joined in on the day enough. I really believe God was glorified as His church conducted the business He gave them to consider under such challenging circumstances.

*Any advice for those who wish to serve in some formal capacity within the PCV?*

Pray! Pray! And pray some more! Exercise your God given wisdom. Know the rules under which you operate and seek to work as a team as you do all things to the glory of God!



## PROFILE:

### INCOMING YOUTH MINISTRIES DIRECTOR OF PRESBYTERIAN YOUTH VICTORIA (PYV): ANDREW EDMONDS

*You arrived to become PYV Director in the middle of a global pandemic. Can you please tell us a bit about yourself and what your last few months have been like?*

My name is Andrew Edmonds, I'm 41 years old and I grew up in Melbourne, but have been on an overseas adventure serving Jesus in North America through the local church and also introducing young people to Jesus through the mission of Young Life.

I moved back to Australia with my wife Ann and our kids last December and started working as the Youth Ministries Director in January 2020. Like most new roles there is a time of getting settled and learning the ropes and early on I was able to meet people, join a church and start getting acquainted with the PCV. Our kids were settling into a new school and we were patiently waiting for our house to sell in the United States so we could set up a place here in Melbourne. It felt like as a family we just got rolling with some relationships and then out of nowhere the virus started its worldwide assault and Melbourne was not immune.

I remember back in late March when PYV was all charged up and ready to run our regional West Camp (serving the youth of West Victoria), but had to cancel due to the restrictions that were unfolding. It was frustrating at the time because the camp had already been prepared with the only thing still needed was to pour in the people and stir. In a last minute effort to salvage the camp, the convenor and I quickly worked out how to translate many of the planned pieces of the camp program into an online experience. The result was a great camp that made the most of the circumstances we were handed (remember this was March and before everyone's zoom fatigue kicked in). We were so glad that the camp happened and that everyone was willing to adjust their expectations and embrace what God had for us in that moment. It was exciting to be apart of something that we wouldn't normally do, and in so doing we experienced a blessing that we wouldn't normally have.

For me, the time since West Camp has been a roller coaster with the realities and restrictions of isolation lifestyle and culture shock taking its toll on me. Learning a new job whilst also adjusting and dealing with the unexpected grief and shock of re-entry back to Australia has been taxing and I've had times of being overwhelmed. I, like many in the pandemic, feel like everything has been put on pause, but this is untrue as our lives are still playing on and I have actively needed to 'press in to the present' even though it's different. Like the West Camp experience taught me, I need to ask Jesus to help me adjust my expectations for life and embrace what God has for me at this time and in this day. In my better moments I ask the question "What can I do today?"



*What was your previous role?*

My previous role was working for an international ministry called Young Life. If you haven't heard of it let me tell you that it is an amazing ministry that seeks to reach out to teenagers and introduce them to the person of Jesus Christ. The founder, Jim Rayburn, was a Presbyterian minister who reached out to the furthest out kid and every kid in-between. R.C. Sproul once highly complimented Young Life ministry saying, "... I don't know personally of any ministry to young people in the world that's more effective than Young Life at getting next to kids, getting involved in their issues, getting involved in their problems, ministering to kids where they are, and knowing how to get them to respond..." My Young Life area was a small town called Kingsburg in the Central Valley of California, and this was where I was responsible for leading a local operation directing other adults and young people to go where disinterested kids are at, and relationally earn the right to model and share Christ in their lives. Often we were privileged to build friendships with all types of kids in the schools and minister to kids who would never go anywhere near a church.

As leaders we focused on Jesus and we found so many young people yearning for an adult who cares about them and in turn they were interested in what we cared about. It seems too simple but we would pray and show up in their world consistently going to their sports, plays, school community events and then over time these kids would start to open up and trust us because we were expressing care for them. After friendships were developed we enjoyed running fun club events and camps for these kids so they could hear the life of Christ proclaimed and be given an opportunity to get to know about Jesus. I loved being a part of something where many un-churched kids would come to learn and love Jesus.

*What are some challenges and blessings facing the PYV?*

I think the virus is like an earthquake that shakes everything up. In ministry after this quake, for good or for bad we will find some things are displaced, some things broken and some things still intact. Right now it's hard to have clarity on what ministry is going to be like in the future because we are still going through the Covid-19 quake. Even in this shake up there are challenges of economic and government restrictions that change how we minister and do camps. PYV is blessed with existing structures and systems that can adapt for online camping during the pandemic and this becomes a greater blessing because people grow and adjust in ways they otherwise wouldn't have. Another great thing to arise during the pandemic is having the opportunity to highlight and enhance the Catechism Experience for individuals and families through an online platform and the book *Firm In The Faith*. People have initially shown a lot of interest which may have been further increased because of the recent lockdown.

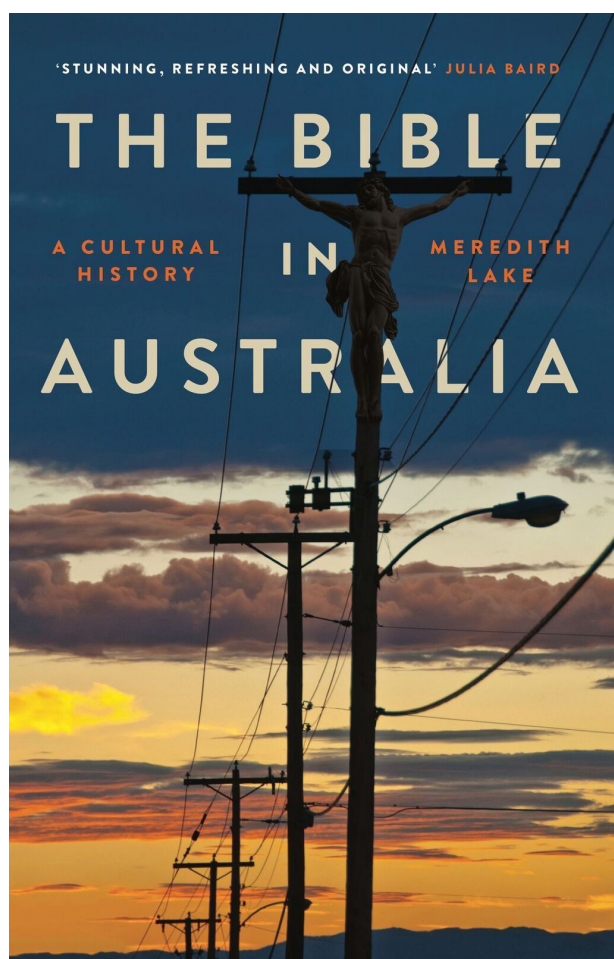
*PYV has a great reputation in the PCV, what are some ways local congregations can support the PYV?*

I think PYV is a resource to come alongside and help the believers and congregations in the PCV with ministry to young people. It's great for PYV to facilitate collaboration among the churches and serve each other in strategic and helpful ways, so where congregations are able, it's fantastic to have their support through leaders, volunteers, resources and making facilities available to help PYV have an impact across the state.

## BOOK REVIEW:

# THE BIBLE IN AUSTRALIA: A CULTURAL HISTORY BY MEREDITH LAKE

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN MCDONALD



*The Bible in Australia: A Cultural History*

Meredith Lake

New South Publishing (2018)

439 pages

ISBN: 9781742235714

The Bible has been part of Australia's history from before the departure of the First Fleet. Evangelicals like John Newton and the Eclectic Society lobbied for the appointment of a Gospel man to be the chaplain to the new colony. So, Rev. Richard Johnson sailed from Portsmouth on 13th May 1787 with a supply of 100 Bibles, 400 New Testaments, 500 Psalters, and other Christian literature, bound for Botany Bay (page 27-28).

Meredith Lake traces the influence of the Bible in Australia, not only in the private devotions and public worship of Christian people, but also outside the church, in politics, education, the arts, and many other spheres. Her focus extends beyond the "theological Bible" of the Evangelicals, to the cultural use of the Bible (even by self-professed sceptics), and the Bible's use as a force for moral improvement (pages 28-32).

I was struck by the many examples of people who embraced the Bible's cultural influence or sought to follow its moral instruction, but without submitting to its revelation of the Saviour. Our hope is not that people will come back to church and return to the clean living of our ancestors (at least, not on that alone). Instead, we should long for all of our fellow Australians not only to embrace the Bible's cultural and moral influence, but also receive



to its supernatural revelation of Jesus Christ, and to receive Him in repentance and faith.

A particularly moving example of this personal conversion is the story of Madi Murungun on Groote Eylandt. As he heard CMI Missionary Len Harris reading aloud from a translation of Mark's Gospel night after night, he was convinced that "the Good Story" about Jesus was true when he knew "Jesus speaks Wubuy" (pages 321-323).

Lake weaves together a wide-ranging selection of stories from the beginnings of Colonial Australia to the modern, secular Australia we know. In doing so, she shows that it is impossible to understand Australia today without the significant cultural influence of the Bible and Christianity. In that task, Lake has done all Australians a great service.

The Bible in Australia isn't attempting to explain the history of the Christian church in Australia, much less the evangelical church. In a way, that's part of what makes this book interesting. Noting the existence of differing canons and Bible translations, Lake's own definition, "the Bible is a fluid thing, ever-changing" is somewhat less than evangelical (pages 3-4). So, evangelicals will not be able to agree with all of her assessments. But we will benefit from her thoughtful description of the influence of the Bible in Australian culture, well beyond the confines of the Bible-believing church. Even where we can't go along with the presuppositions and motivations of all the people we meet in these pages, we will have a better understanding of

this country and the way it has received the Word of God (Luke 8:13 & 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

If what you're really looking for is a history of Evangelical Christianity in Australia, start with *Spirit, Word and World* by Stuart Piggin (Acorn Press: 2012), then consider tackling *The Fountain of Public Prosperity: 1740-1914* (Monash University Publishing: 2018) and *Attending to the National Soul: 1914-2014* (Monash University Publishing: 2019), both by Piggin and Linder.

But if you're prepared for a wider-angle view of the Bible's influence on Australians, Christian and otherwise, *The Bible in Australia* is in a class of its own.

May its analysis motivate us to keep on praying and speaking so that the Bible's message about Jesus changes Australians and Australia.

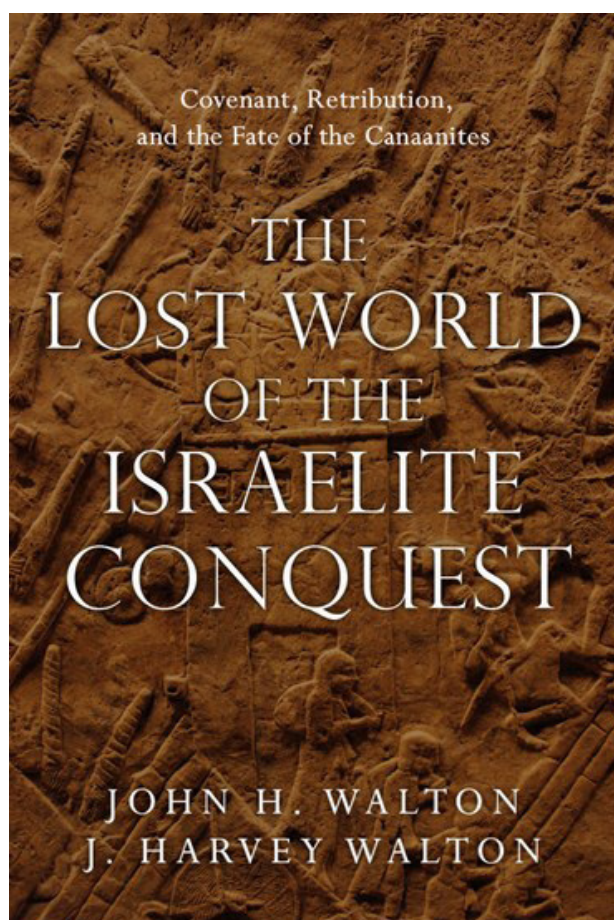
*Stephen McDonald is the pastor of Benalla Regional Parish*

## BOOK REVIEW:

# ‘NAVIGATING A HERMENEUTIC MAZE’

THE LOST WORLD OF THE ISRAELITE CONQUEST BY JOHN WALTON

REVIEWED BY DAVE WOOD



*The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest:  
Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites*  
John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton  
Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2017.  
Paperback: 288 pages.  
ISBN: 978-0830851843

This title presents a discussion of a ‘paradigm-changing’ view of the Canaanite conquests, a view that seeks to dispense with any notion that they were ‘a thing that should never be done’ (p. 11). The authors naturally abbreviate to ‘the Waltons’, the below use of which intends no disparagement of John-Boy.

An ‘average’ reader might complete this title in six to eight hours, but would almost surely lose much of the grist and nuance of the arguments. There are several chapters that present exegetical discussion of Hebrew words and phrases. Knowledge of the language, while not essential, would significantly increase the depth of understanding, as well as provide a platform from which to evaluate the related propositional materials.

The authors’ stated purpose includes a commitment to accessibility, an aspiration that might be generally realised within academic environments.

The primary critical thesis is that modern-day exegetes have imposed cultural and sociological values on a reading of the Canaanite conquest books of the Old Testament, and thus, that the bulk of Christendom has largely missed God’s true intent behind not only that period of history, but of the purpose of the OT itself. Hence, the phrase ‘paradigm-changing’ is justified.

To substantiate those claims the Waltons utilise what appears to be an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of Assyrian, Babylonian, Sumerian and related literature, as is equally evident in John Walton’s Genesis commentary. That superior knowledge is supplemented by a broad and deep grasp of much of the Old Testament.

If you are expecting a treatise that compares the ‘Holy War’ literature (von Rad, Craigie, Evans et al, Raven, etc), you will be disappointed. There is no attempt to engage with the meaningful literature. Instead, 21 propositions are offered. These propositions are grouped into sections but it is difficult to trace out a discernible progression except in a most general way.

As part of the Waltons’ introduction to the first few propositions, and a couple towards the end, a rough-hewn platform is built on the backs of straw men. As an example: ‘... we have to stop imagining that the purpose of the conquest account is to teach us that God’s ideal of goodness involves us going out and killing Canaanites...’ (p. 29). This treatment may tend to alienate some readers.

Another telling statement is: ‘In order to steer criticism away from God, well-meaning interpreters portray Israel as justifying their land grab by claiming covenant rights and a martial God ... offended by the native population...’ (p. 1). This emotive language casts unjustifiable aspersions on a large proportion of commentators who do not hold such a view.

The reader, in order to navigate a network of inter-relatedness between propositions (both forward- and backward-pointing), is required to engage in mental gymnastics. This awkwardness prevents the book from having flow and momentum.

The authors, in their concluding thesis, propose three singular equivalences between herem in the Old Testament, where herem basically means to remove from use, and its corollary in the New.

1. When land was the object, the right to administer the territory was forfeited. NT believers are to forfeit the right to use themselves for their own purposes—they surrender themselves entirely to God, and they are now to be found ‘crucified in Christ’.
2. With identity as the object, when Israel conquered the Canaanites, the Canaanitish identity was entirely removed, and the land became the dwelling place of the Lord. The NT counterpart is found in the loss of distinction between Greek and Jew, slave and free, and that loss is not found in reference to others, but to the individual believer who loses his or her identity in Christ.
3. When herem is used in terms of the Israelite community, it finds meaning in the priestly removal of those denied access to the camp. By NT times this role fell to rulers of the synagogues and the temple; but its ultimate NT application extends to declaring anathema those who would damage the health of the community.

I believe the hermeneutic imposed on herem (and several related Hebrew terms in the OT) does little to progress our understanding of the conquest problem, and that any proposed benefits that push into the NT are elsewhere addressed more thoroughly by the Gospel and apostolic writers.

That said, the book is both a challenging and interesting read, and may provoke further inquiry into the nature and God-intended justification of the conquests under discussion.



## EXIT STUDENT INTERVIEW:

DONG JIN CHOI

ASSISTANT MINISTER AT CANTERBURY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*Where did you grow up?*

I was born and raised in South Korea. When I was 13 years old there was a huge financial crisis in my home country, so my parents decided to migrate to Australia in 1998. I lived in Sydney until I moved to Melbourne in 2016.

*What did you do after school?*

I really loved cars and had a strong desire to become a car designer. So after finishing high school, I went on to study Industrial Design @ UNSW.

*Where did your wife grow up and what is her educational and professional background?*

My in-laws were some of the first Koreans to migrate to Australia. My wife was born and raised in Sydney as a second generation Korean-Australian. She finished her Bachelor of Secondary Education at USYD and worked as an ESL teacher at Lurnea High School in Liverpool, Sydney.

*Where have you lived since?*

My wife and I met and married in Sydney. We lived in South Western Sydney for about six years, until we moved to Melbourne.

*At what stage of your life did you become a Christian, and what led you to study for the ministry?*

My mother is a devoted Christian so I attended church since I was a young child. However, back then I would say that I was a nominal Christian as I attended church only because I was forced by my mother. I genuinely came to faith and repentance when I was about 15 years old. Since then, my goals and values of life began to change and I initially thought that becoming a pastor would be a good way to dedicate my life to God. However, at the same time, I strongly denied my calling as a pastor, as I am a very introverted and shy person and couldn't imagine myself standing in front of people to preach. During my uni life at UNSW, the calling for ministry became stronger, and therefore, decided to study at Christ College after finishing uni.

*What are the most helpful things you've gotten from your theological study and ministry experience so far?*

Personally, I found the NT exegesis classes and the preaching courses extremely helpful for my own spiritual growth. The NT classes led by Prof. Milne really gave me great insight as to how to approach, read and understand the Word of God. The preaching classes were also useful as they gave me the opportunity to learn how to communicate God's Word in a faithful and engaging manner.

*How do you feel about your appointment to Canterbury Presbyterian Church, and how do you plan to approach your role?*

Before my appointment, I was already engaged at the church as a part-time ministry worker. It is my fourth year at Canterbury, and am glad and thankful that I can continue on with my role at Canterbury as an assistant minister. Canterbury is very focused on cross-cultural ministry due to its diverse multicultural cohort of members. We have members largely from Korea and Japan, and one of my primary roles is to assist in the pastoral care of our Korean members at Canterbury.



## EXIT STUDENT INTERVIEW:

MATT DEROON

MINISTER AT BANNOCKBURN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*Where did you grow up?*

I grew up in the green pastures of South West Victoria on a dairy farm near Warrnambool.

*What did you do after school?*

After school I worked on the farm, then moved to Ballarat to study primary education. During that time I met a gorgeous girl and married her. We moved to Geelong and I got a job as a teacher. After a few years, I began ministry work with AFES at Deakin Geelong. Upon finishing the ministry apprenticeship we moved to Box Hill and began study at PTC.

*Where did your wife grow up and what is her educational and professional background?*

My wife grew on a farm outside of Geelong, near Shelford. She studied primary education and works with AFES at Deakin Geelong. She's now enjoying the privilege of raising our four cute kidlets.

*Where have you lived since?*

We got married and lived in Shelford, then moved into Geelong and moved again in Geelong, moved to Box Hill and out again to Geelong and now we're settled in the rural and friendly town of Bannockburn.

*At what stage of your life did you become a Christian, and what led you to study for the ministry?*

I had the blessing of being raised in a gospel-centred home. It was there that I had the joy of learning of the sacrifice of Christ and where my faith grew.

I was not interested in entering ministry for most of my life. The catalyst that I recall moving me towards looking into ministry was a sermon by William Taylor at NTE as he spoke on The Parable of the Talents. It was then that I desired to use everything possible that God had given me for the extension of his Kingdom. This is why I chose to do a ministry apprenticeship with AFES to determine if I was cut out for full-time ministry. Under the excellent training of Dave Martin I then chose a path towards becoming a Presbyterian minister to preach the Word faithfully and encourage





discipleship and evangelism which was helpfully impressed upon me in my AFES apprenticeship.

*What are the most helpful things you've gotten from your theological study and ministry experience so far?*

Reflecting back on my theological studies now that I've begun church ministry, I can see at least two helpful points that I'm grateful for. I'm grateful for the camaraderie of other classmates who have also gone into ministry. Their friendship and support has been a blessing in my first year of ministry and beyond. The second helpful point from my theological studies should be obvious, but I did not see how helpful it was until the end of the four years - my ability to explain and defend the faith. This grew slowly but as I look back I can see how much help it has been.

In my ministry experience so far, what has been most helpful is the support of my wife. Her encouragement and wisdom is a gift from God. The elders who I have the privilege of working with have been a great help and it is an encouragement to be able to do ministry with a church that was already doing discipleship and evangelism. It is a great help and a joy to be a part of a church body that desires and is acting on the Great Commission.

*How do you feel about your appointment to BPC, and how do you plan to approach your role?*

I am grateful to God for allowing me to be appointed at Bannockburn Presbyterian Church. I feel it has been a good start for my first year out to have a mature and godly congregation and the support of a strong and healthy Presbytery, not to mention the support of North Geelong Presbyterian Church and its minister, Darren Middleton.

I intend to approach my role from beginning until the end with dependence on the grace of God. Initially it felt overwhelming to have the responsibility of being the minister of a church, but the reminder that I'm simply an under-shepherd of the great Shepherd is a joy and a relief. Ultimately, God is in charge and these are his children and it is his Kingdom. I desire to work under his charge in a harvest that is plentiful seeking his glory and to do the good works which he has prepared beforehand for me to do.

*Anything else you'd like people to know?*

Despite pastoring in a pandemic, in my first year out, I have had the joy of witnessing the fact that God is still at work even when everything seems shut down and our ministry seems inhibited. When we wonder in despair how God's Kingdom could grow, it's beautiful to see God working—knowing even more than usual, that it is only possible by God. All glory be to God!

## EXIT STUDENT INTERVIEW:

OLI BLYTHE

ASSISTANT MINISTER AT SURREY HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*Where did you grow up?*

For most of up my childhood, I grew up living in the one house and attended the one church and school—in Essendon, Melbourne.

*What did you do after school?*

I studied Industrial Design at RMIT University, which focuses on designing furniture, appliances and other products. While studying, I was heavily involved in Christian Union and led the youth group at my local church at Essendon Presbyterian Church. God used these experiences to help me see the importance of Gospel ministry and placed a burning desire in my heart to devote my life to this. Following the completion of my Industrial Design degree, I completed a Diploma of Education at Melbourne University and worked as a school teacher to gain secular work experience. After working a few years, I did a two-year apprenticeship with the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students to confirm my suitability for ministry.

*Where did your wife grow up and what is her educational and professional background?*

My wife, Casey, grew up in Richmond, Melbourne, and attended a local primary and girls' high school. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Financial Management) and a Bachelor of Business (Economics) degree. Casey is currently working for the Department of Premier and Cabinet as a Senior Policy Adviser.



*Where have you lived since?*

I now live in Burwood. Prior to this, Casey and I moved houses five times over the past six years—from the west, to the east, then out to Geelong, and now back to the east.

*At what stage of your life did you become a Christian, and what led you to study for the ministry?*

I knew and believed the Gospel from an early age. I give thanks to God for the blessing of growing up in a Christian family and for revealing Himself to me.

My time at uni was formative in my Christian walk and it was during this time that I realised I wanted to spend my life in full time paid ministry. I realised that the most important thing I could do with my life is to tell people the good news—that even though we’ve rejected God as king, he loves us so much that he sent his own son to live and die in our place, for our sake.

*What are the most helpful things you’ve gotten from your theological study and ministry experience so far?*

The two years I spent doing a ministry apprenticeship was very helpful for testing the waters to confirm that I was suitable to full time ministry, and that I actually enjoyed doing it.

The training I received as a student minister while studying at Bible college was invaluable for sharpening my skills in preaching, Bible study leading, one-to-one discipling, youth ministry, and many other ministry skills. I’m very grateful to those who invested their time and energy into me.

My time at college was helpful for sharpening my theology and exegesis skills, and for building life-long ministry friendships/partnerships.

*How do you feel about your appointment to Surrey Hills Presbyterian Church, and how do you plan to approach your role?*

I’m very excited and thankful to have exited to Surrey Hills Presbyterian Church. I spent my first two years of college as a student minister there, so have many existing relationships. This has helped me to ease into things well, and to hit the ground running. I’m the Assistant Minister there, and feel very thankful to have an older, more experienced guy above me to help me learn how to do ministry well. We also have a women’s worker, so I’m thankful for her partnership as well.

My approach to my position is centred around the Bible’s teaching on ministry – that ministry is for all believers, not just professional workers (for example, Ephesians 4:11-13). This means that my ministry will be focused on teaching and training my congregation, to ensure that they’re equipped for the work of ministry that God has called them to. Thus, training and discipling will play a big part in my ministry.

*Anything else you’d like people to know?*

Please pray that God would forever remain as our first love.



## PRESS RELEASE

### KIRKBRÆ PRESBYTERIAN HOMES

28 JULY 2020

Kirkbrae Presbyterian Homes deeply regrets that in spite of our best efforts, we have not been able to prevent the intrusion of COVID-19 into our aged care facility at Kilsyth.

Our managers were advised early this morning that the Victorian Health Department has decided to evacuate all residents immediately and transfer them to various hospitals in the region.

We fully endorse the department's resolve to protect all Victorians in the current pandemic and we are doing everything in our power to cooperate with the department in the transfer of our residents.

The welfare of the residents and that of our staff, is of the utmost importance to us.

We appreciate the stress this is placing on the families of our residents and we are working strenuously to keep people fully informed and to provide them with all the support we can.

*Colin Morrow, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.*

## PRESS RELEASE

### THE NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME

10 JUNE 2020

The Presbyterian Church of Victoria (PCV) is pleased to announce that the Church has been declared by the Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, as a participating institution in the National Redress Scheme. The Church anticipates that its participation in the Scheme will assist it to provide a compassionate and appropriate response to victims of child sexual abuse within the Church.

The PCV is deeply distressed and saddened by the suffering of victims of child sexual abuse both in the wider Christian community and in our own Church. The Church acknowledges that failure by the Church and its institutions to keep children safe has led to unnecessary suffering, pain and loss by survivors, their families and their communities.

The PCV has joined the National Redress Scheme to ensure that survivors of child sexual abuse have clear options in coming forward and seeking redress. It is the hope of the Church that its participation in the Scheme will assist survivors of sexual abuse within the Church and its institutions in their journey towards healing and recovery.

*Fiona Bligh, Safe Church Facilitator and Peter Phillips, Acting Clerk*



## VANUATU UPDATE

### The Cookes



Danny and Jen Cooke and their four children serve the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, on the island of Tanna. Not so long ago, Danny and Jen worked with Quiz Worx in their ministry to children in churches and schools. Quiz Worx have produced a great video to tell people how the Cookes are sharing Jesus around the world. (If you'd like to support the Cookes in their ministry on Tanna, contact us by sending an email to [finance@apwm.org.au](mailto:finance@apwm.org.au)). You can watch the video here: [shrtm.nu/TR3g](https://shrtm.nu/TR3g)



Part of Rob & El's ministry preparation has involved being mentored by Ian & Jenni Smith

### The Falls

Rob and El Falls and their three children are preparing to serve at Talua in Vanuatu from early 2021 onwards. El recently gave birth to Asher and Rob has completed his theological degree and has commenced post graduate studies. They are now looking for individuals and churches who will partner with them in prayer and finance so that they can serve at Talua. You can watch a recent interview with them at [shrtm.nu/nOf7](https://shrtm.nu/nOf7)

If you would like to know more then please visit their web page: [www.fallsvanuatu.info](http://www.fallsvanuatu.info)

## INDIGENOUS MINISTRY

Over the last few months there has been a great deal of discussion about Australia's Indigenous community. As followers of Christ, how can we respond? In the early days of their ministry at Mount Druitt, Rick and Kayleen Manton served alongside an Anglican minister, the Rev Neville Naden. Neville now serves with the Bush Church Aid Society and in a recent interview with the Pastor's Heart podcast, he made some extremely helpful comments about Indigenous Christians in Australia. You can view the interview at [shrtm.nu/m1eK](https://shrtm.nu/m1eK)



Anglican minister, the Rev Neville Naden

### Indigenous Ministry Sunday July 12

Commencing on Sunday 12th July, APWM launched an appeal to support its Indigenous ministry and we thank those who have given so generously in support of this vital ministry. If you'd like to know more, you can watch an APWM video about this here [vimeo.com/426153855](https://vimeo.com/426153855)



Bob Quinn

This will be an annual appeal to be held on the second Sunday in July.

**"The harvest is plentiful,  
but the labourers are few;  
therefore pray earnestly to  
the Lord of the harvest to  
send out labourers into his  
harvest."**

**MATTHEW 9:37-38**





## EUROPE NEEDS THE GOSPEL!

When the Reformation took place in 16th century Europe the world was turned upside down. But things are much different today, with only 2.5 per cent of Europeans being evangelical. Europe, the continent that once sent missionaries to the rest of the world, now needs to be re-evangelised!

In many European countries evangelicals are treated with suspicion. In Albania, they are classified as a sect.

The majority of church attenders are ageing and few have a clear understanding of the gospel or a truly Christian worldview.

For many Europeans material prosperity has dulled the apparent need for God. This means that ECM's missionaries reach out to a generation of young people who have been heavily influenced by a mix of anti-Christian secularism, post-modernism, nihilism, individualism and hedonism. The indoctrination of scientism and radical gender fluidity now starts as early as pre-school.



Alex Kowalenko,  
Portugal

What will ministry in Europe look like post-COVID-19? Despite the tremendous pain and suffering the virus has brought, God is still at work. Many who wouldn't normally attend a church have listened to talks and joined in with churches online. With no geographical barriers, Europeans have been able to pray and read the bible with people from all over the world.

Sydney-based Scottish Pastor, David Robertson, comments "Fear affects most Europeans, deeply. Without God, life is desperate and depressing. COVID-19 has amplified this fear of death in Europe. So when Europeans are transformed by the gospel, their joy and boldness stands out."

ECM is involved in around eighty church planting projects in over twenty countries in Europe. These churches emphasise gospel preaching, discipleship, cultural engagement and serving in the community. Many other missionaries are training and discipling national believers to better serve their churches. This includes APWM missionaries, Adi and Jennifer Grocott in Timisoara, Romania, as they provide training for children's ministry leaders, and Alex Kowalenko in Lisbon, Portugal, who teaches at the Portuguese Bible Institute.

European Christian Mission is always looking for mature,



Adi and Jennifer Grocott, Romania

mission-minded Australian Christians who will join European church plants or other ministry contexts (long or short term).

Churches in Australia are typically at least three times larger and much better equipped and Biblically literate than the average evangelical church in Europe. Stuart Coulton, the former Principal of the Sydney Missionary and Bible College, observes "The gospel resources in Australia are so rich, and with that wealth comes a responsibility to the rest of the world."

Jesus' words "To whom much is given, much is required" (Luke 12:48) are a challenge for Australian Christians.

Please visit [ecmaustralia.org](http://ecmaustralia.org) to learn how you could serve the Lord Jesus in Europe.

*Matthew George serves as the National Director for the European Christian Mission. He and his wife Louise and their children belong to the Scots Presbyterian Church in Sydney city.*



### Contact

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