

Summer 24 | Presbyterian Church of Victoria



FELLOW WORKERS

Following
Jesus in a
Changing
World





FELLOW WORKERS

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Fellow Workers

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EDITORIAL: JESUS IS THE MEDIATOR



STEPHEN MCDONALD

Who is Jesus?

How would you answer that question?

The Saviour? The Lord? The Christ? The eternal Son of God? The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?

They're all excellent (and true) answers.

But, if a friend asked you who Jesus is, would you tell them that Jesus is the Mediator?

WHAT IS A MEDIATOR?

We may be familiar with mediation in the context of conflict resolution. The people involved in a disagreement get together with a mediator who allows them to state their positions and tries to get them to listen to the other side. Then, the mediator seeks to help them reach agreement about a way forward together, or at least an outcome both sides can live with.

But when the Bible uses the word 'mediator', it's not about a conflict between two equal parties who both share some of the blame.

A mediator is the person who stands between the Holy God and unholy us. And it's no negotiation.

WHY A MEDIATOR?

We need a mediator because God is holy and we are not. God is perfectly and entirely good. We are not. And our lack of goodness is not just a fault in us. It is a direct attack upon God's goodness, His very nature.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were with God without a mediator. But that all changed. When Eve listened to the Serpent's suggestion that she could be like God in knowing good and evil, the idea is that she would determine what was good or evil for herself (Genesis 3:5).

We also put ourselves in God's place when we choose what we'll call good or evil. To do that, we have to ignore God's word and God's holy

character. That's why God not only calls our sin 'sin' and 'transgression' (crossing the line), but an offence against Himself (Job 7:21, 10:14, 13:23, 14:17, Isaiah 43:23, 44:22, 59:12, Ezekiel 18:28-31, 37:23, 39:24, Amos 5:12).

As Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple: 'Forgive your people, who have sinned against you, forgive all the offences they have committed against you...' (1 Kings 8:50)

An offence is a personal insult. We don't only sin against our consciences and against the people effected; our sin damages our relationship with God. That is why we need a mediator.

WHO IS THE MEDIATOR?

As we've seen already, our sin is not like the situations where people normally use a mediator. We are the ones at fault.

But this has not caught God by surprise. Although He is the offended party, He has provided the mediator we need.

'For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.' (1 Timothy 2:5-6a).

Jesus has eternally been the Son of God, yet He became fully and perfectly human. So, He can represent both sides perfectly. He has come from the holy presence of God to make human beings holy. He gave Himself to pay the ransom for our offences against God. He is both the mediator and the ransom.

The Westminster Confession of Faith describes Jesus like this:

It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only-begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King; the Head and Saviour of his Church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world; unto whom he did, from all eternity, give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. (WCF 8:1).

Nowhere else will you find a mediator who is up to the task. He is unique, and His saving work is unique. That is why only Jesus can be the mediator between God and us. Jesus is the only way for our offences to be paid for and for us to come to God (John 14:6, Hebrews 9:11-15).

SO WHAT?

Relationships matter. And our non-Christian friends know it.

We know how our own mistakes strain and even ruin relationships. But when Jesus saves us, He restores our relationship with God. When we used to be His enemies, Jesus makes us His friends (John 15:15, Romans 5:10). We need God's forgiveness, but we need more than forgiveness too. We need to be reconciled to God. That's what Jesus our mediator did.

So, do we live like it? Or do we live cringing before God, as if our prayers for mercy and help are an unwelcome interruption? Or do we live like God actually loves us (John 14:21, 23, 16:27)?

And whether our friends are secular or believe in another religion, their consciences alert them to the guilt of their offences against God, not matter how hard they try to suppress that knowledge (Romans 1:19, 2:15).

So, when we are talking to them about Jesus, we can tell them about His wonderful forgiveness, and the certain hope of heaven. But we can also tell them about Jesus the mediator who reconciles us to God, who makes us His beloved children (1 John 3:1-3). Isn't that what our world needs?

Fellow workers, how are our lives different because of the good news that Jesus is our mediator?

Stephen McDonald is Convener of the State News Committee

NICK ATRILL SPEAKS WITH LOUISE GRIFFITHS



When Nick Attrill was appointed as the Presbyterian Youth and Children's Worker (PYCW) at the recent General Assembly of Victoria, a collective sense of relief was felt across the state. For Presbyterian Youth of Victoria leaders, PYV youth and their parents, Nick is already known and appreciated. He has the organisational skills of a military strategist, a dogged perseverance to complete any project he commits to and unswerving integrity. These qualities are all wrapped up in Nick's very deep, personal faith in the life and work of Jesus Christ.

In the coming months, Nick will be working with the Presbyterian Youth and Children's Committee (PYCC) to set the course for youth and children's ministry in the coming years. In the meantime, we thought it would be great for readers of Fellow Workers to get a sense of who Nick Attrill is and what makes him tick.

Nick has only recently returned to Warnambool after a ten-month stint teaching in London. Rather than returning to the safety of an ongoing teaching position in Port Fairy upon his return, Nick surprised his family and friends by accepting the role of the PYCW. It was indeed an answer to prayer for the PCV, as the position had sat vacant for almost three years.

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW ROLE NICK! WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO STEP OUT OF SCHOOL TEACHING AND INTO FULL-TIME, PAID, YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

Nick: I first became a Christian as a 12-year-old and the teaching I received at PYV camps in my teen years were instrumental in my development as a follower of Jesus. PYV has been teaching youth about Jesus for over 30 years and I want to continue this legacy in proclaiming the gospel to youth and children well into the future.

As far as stepping out of teaching, the time was right. I have 3 years of teaching experience under my belt and my time overseas really challenged my thinking about how I could be involved in the advancement of the gospel. European churches are very focused on evangelism. They take hold of the opportunities presented at Christmas, Easter and community events to let people know about Jesus. There is a sense of urgency to their mission. I also observed that the most active, vibrant churches were the ones where the teaching of God's word was central. Churches that are setting aside God's word, for other priorities, were dying.

As the PYCW, it is my hope that we can pass on that passion for the Gospel and evangelism to our youth and children, so that we can continue the PCV's legacy of raising up young people to be a part of our Bible-centred churches throughout the state.

YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AS A 12-YEAR-OLD. HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

My parents aren't Christians, but my grandmother started picking me up and taking me to church every week from when I was 3. I attended the local primary school where a local minister would teach Religious Education (RE) to our class each week. He was a very passionate teacher of God's word and was able to communicate the gospel with incredible clarity. I distinctly remember him telling the class that we had to make a decision, we must actively choose to follow Jesus, to not make a decision was

the same as turning our back on Jesus. I saw the logic in his argument, and, as a 12-year-old, I decided to follow Jesus.

The assistant minister at the time was Toby MacIntosh. I told him about my decision to be a Christian and he encouraged me to really step up and take responsibility for growing in my faith. From then on, I was attending Church twice on a Sunday, walking home in the dark after Church on a Sunday night! That Summer, I attended my first PYV Summer Camp and the gospel was reinforced to me over and over again through the talks and the studies. I just grew in my faith from there.

SO, WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK OF THE BIBLE?

Romans. It demonstrates God's sovereignty, grace and compassion. It is a great book to read to non-Christians and people that are wondering about the faith.

Speaking with Nick, one gets the sense that he is wise beyond his years. When asked about his previous experiences in Christian ministry and leadership, Nick slowly and humbly works his way through what he has been doing since finishing high school. He tells me about becoming the Warnambool Presbyterian Youth Group leader at 19 years of age. Then there were the two years spent running an after-school outreach program for local kids, which sounded incredibly wild! He almost forgets to mention the time he spent as the President of Christian Union at Deakin University. Somehow, Nick has also managed to be the director of the Warrnambool Scripture Union Beach Mission for the past 4 years. One year, Nick led the 8-day beach mission, drove to Phillip Island and then started convening a 5-day PYV Summer Camp the very next day! Despite all these amazing leadership opportunities, Nick's commitment to his local church is evident. He speaks of his Warnambool Presbyterian Church family with incredible fondness, mentioning the incredible privilege it has been to serve on the Board of Management and more recently, as an elder.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO IN YOUR NEW PYCW ROLE?

In my role as Youth & Children's Worker (YCW), my deepest desire is to help local churches see more children and youth growing up with a true, transformative relationship with Jesus—a relationship that shapes every aspect of their lives. I am committed to supporting PYV in continuing to provide excellent camps and events for youth, as well as offering more training and resources for leaders, so that we can equip them to disciple the next generation.

I believe that the strength of our denomination lies in our ability to work together as local churches within presbyteries and as a whole state. It's this sense of unity that will allow us to ensure that every young person across our state has the opportunity to grow and mature in their faith. As they do, I pray that they too will be equipped to go out and make disciples of the Lord Jesus.

I am confident that the PCV is a church that God continues to use to reach His people, and I am both excited and humbled to be a part of this mission. It is a privilege to work alongside churches in sharing and teaching the good news of the gospel to more people throughout our state.

Louise Griffiths is a member of Croydon Presbyterian Church

THE GOSPEL GOES OUT IN CROYDON, ONE BRACELET AT A TIME

For more than 20 years, Croydon Presbyterian has booked a community stand at the Maroondah Festival. The November festival is a melting pot of carnival rides, food trucks, crafty market stalls and close to 100 stalls advertising the service of local community groups.

The formula is simple:

We have a banner advertising our church, and a big sign advertising 'Free Bead Bracelets'.

As people of all ages approach the stand, a member of our church tells them the gospel as they construct the bead bracelet.

The green bead: God made a wonderful world, and He made us. The black bead: we choose to ignore God as the boss, and hopelessly try doing life our own way. As a result, we deserve God's punishment. The red bead: because of God's love for us, He sent His son Jesus to earth. He lived for God as we should have, and He died for our punishment. The white bead: Jesus' resurrection shows that all those who trust in Jesus can be totally forgiven and made clean. The gold bead: God has prepared a wonderful everlasting kingdom where all those who trust in Jesus will live with Him forever.

At the conclusion of the explanation, the bead bracelet is slipped onto their wrist. They are then given a church showbag with a paper explanation of the significance of each bead on the bead bracelet, along with adverts for our church Christmas events, a gospel tract and some lollies.

It's not rocket-science, but each year we are amazed at the opportunities it gives us.

As the years roll on, we become 'part of the furniture' at the festival. Some teenagers now come to our table and tell us: 'We remember the bead story, let US tell it to YOU.'

For others, it means an extended chat afterwards about their situations: 'Will God accept me since I am a divorcee?' etc.

One parent saw the sign: 'Ask us your God questions!' and encouraged his son to come over to the stand and roll out all his tricky questions. This was a great opportunity to listen to the boy's queries and to chat with him and his parents about God.

Some years, the line of people wanting to hear the gospel can extend 6 or 7 people deep. As a result, the gospel can be presented to up to 400 people over the day. This year, visitor numbers were down, with around 200 people visiting our stall, however, this resulted in more opportunities to have meaningful conversations after the bead explanation.



There is also the opportunity to chat with the stall holders around us, building positive connections over the course of the day and allowing them to overhear our gospel conversations.

We hope and pray that our conversations have a lasting impact on the festival goers, that they read our materials, and attend our other events. Above all, we pray that they accept the reality of the black bead, they meet the person of the red bead, they receive the forgiveness of the white bead, and they find themselves in the eternal home of the gold bead.

The church stall does not take much to organise: an evangelism grant application, beads and elastic, colourful signage, showbags stuffed with information on our church and our upcoming events. The most important ingredient is men and women willing and able to lovingly share the gospel with whomever God sends to our stall.

*Cameron Griffiths
Pastor, Croydon Presbyterian Church*

EXCITING GOSPEL ADVANCE ACROSS AUSTRALIA

The Presbyterian Inland Mission is very pleased to announce two new Ministry Team appointments for 2024:

NEW DUNESK

Alvin and Narelle Chai have relocated to New Dunesk, where Alvin has been appointed as the inaugural New Dunesk Ministry Director, seeking to advance PIM's commitment to intentional evangelism and discipleship in remote Australia through and out of New Dunesk.

"It is with pleasure and thanksgiving that I step into the role of Ministry Director for the PIM. Over the past four years pastoring in Mount Magnet, WA, my family and I have witnessed the extraordinary ways the Lord has blessed the ministry. More importantly, it has been a privilege to see many individuals turn to God and grow as faithful followers of Jesus.

This journey has further reaffirmed our conviction in three key ways: the power of the gospel to save, God's grace in preserving His church, and the importance of expanding our missional scope.

At PIM, our vision stands resolute: to see people in remote and sparsely populated areas of Australia become mature disciples of Jesus. This vision is not merely a statement but a heartfelt commitment to bringing the hope and love of Christ to those who might otherwise be overlooked.

In my new capacity and with the help of Narelle and our children, I am excited to build upon the strong foundation laid by my predecessors and serve alongside our dedicated team. As the Lord enables, my responsibilities shall include training in evangelism and discipleship and maintaining a healthy, gospel-centred culture at New Dunesk.

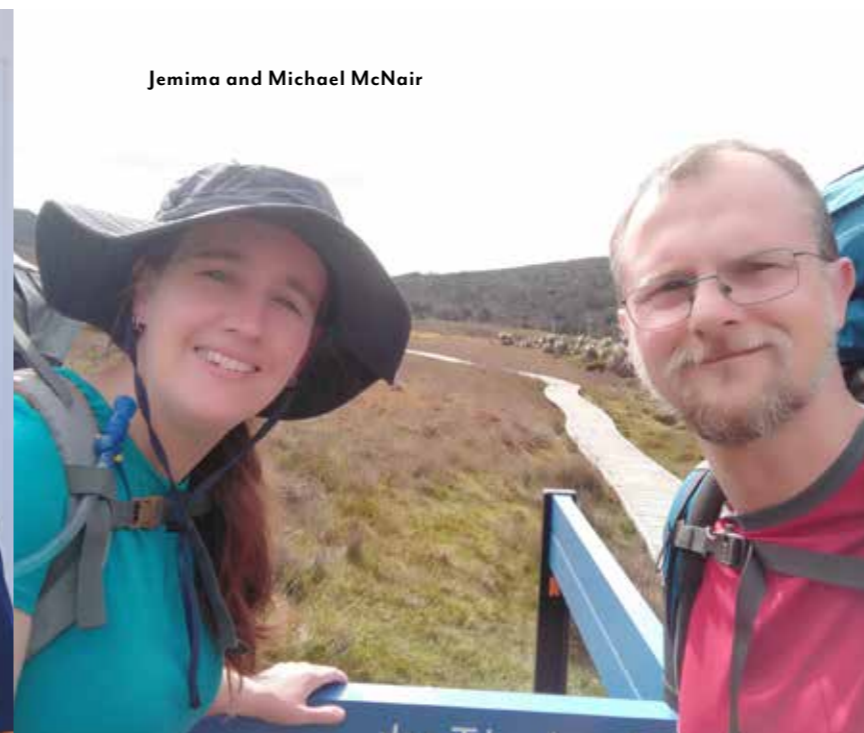
Together, we will continue to reach those in remote areas with the good news of Christ's perfect life, His sacrificial death, His triumphant resurrection, and His glorious ascension.

I invite you to join us in this vital work. Pray for PIM, and be open to the Spirit's leading as you consider how you might support and partner with us. With your contribution, and by God's power, let us confidently shine the light of Christ on every corner of inland Australia - to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

To stay up to date with what's happening at New Dunesk and how you can support Alvin and Narelle, subscribe to the PIM mailing list at pim.org.au, or email Alvin directly at alvinchai@pim.org.au.



Alvin and Narelle Chai



Jemima and Michael McNair



Rev Geoff van Schie of Gospelair and Michael McNair of Mount Magnet Presbyterian Church

MT MAGNET

Michael and Jemima McNair have been appointed to Mt Magnet Presbyterian Church in outback WA. The McNairs will build on the good work done there by Alvin and Narelle Chai, now of New Dunesk.

Michael and Jemima have previously served at Mt Evelyn Presbyterian Church in Melbourne, where Michael was an elder and church treasurer, and Jemima a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus. The McNairs have been praying for many years for the Lord to open the door for Christian service in outback WA. At the 2024 PIM Gospel Nomads launch event at New Dunesk, the gospel needs of remote and very remote Australia were reinforced afresh by speakers David Burke and Dave Hawken. Alvin Chai also brought encouragement and guidance to Michael and Jemima as they pursued ministry with PIM and Gospelair.

This PIM appointment allows Michael to also minister with Gospelair in a 50/50 arrangement. Gospelair was founded by the Rev Geoff van Schie, a well-known minister of the Christian Reformed Churches, and is a significant aerial ministry in outback WA, visiting schools in Mt Magnet, Meekatharra, Cue and the very remote community at Pia Wadjarri. Every second week, five schools are visited by small plane and 11 one-hour classes are held for up to 140 mostly indigenous children.

The gospel synergies of these two ministries opens many more doors in remote mid-west WA, while also reinforcing the wonderful relationship between the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia.

Michael said 'For ten years God has been prompting me in the direction of outback ministry. I love getting along side people and talking about Jesus Christ. Whether old or young, coming from Glasgow (Scotland) and a difficult family background, I know and understand the struggle to maintain wellness and hope. Mt Magnet represents an opportunity to get alongside the residents of the town and the district including the local Badimaya people'.

Generous supporters have stepped forward to stand with Michael and Jemima, but there is always a need for more to join the team in prayer, personal interest, and financial support. Please consider joining Michael and Jemima in this vital gospel work in remote Australia.

MINISTRY MOVES

- Rev. Gary Wentworth was installed at Somerville Presbyterian Church by the Presbytery of Flinders on 19th April.
- The Presbytery of Melbourne West inducted Rev. Adam Humphries as minister of the Darebin Pastoral Charge on 19th May.
- Rev. Matthew Tegart was inducted to the linked charge of Williamstown-Point Cook on 27th July by the Presbytery of Melbourne West.
- On 22nd September, Rev. Luke Brownley lead the final service of Hume Presbyterian Church which gave thanks for its 40 years of gospel witness.
- Rochester Presbyterian Church celebrated its 150th anniversary on Sunday 24th November. The Moderator, Rev Ian Hutton preached.
- A number of celebrations have been held by Scots' Church Melbourne to mark the 150th anniversary of its present building, including an anniversary Sunday Service and the Scots' Church Proms on Sunday 24th November.
- Jan Martin has been appointed by the Women's Ministries Victoria Committee to the role of Women's Ministries Facilitator (Coaching) to assist women leading ministry to women in PCV congregations
- Peter Hastie will conclude his appointment as Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in December 2024 after serving in that role for 12 years.
- In October, the General Assembly of Victoria appointed Jared Hood as the fifth Principal of PTC, commencing in January 2025.
- The General Assembly of Victoria also appointed John (Seung-Joo) Lee as Lecturer in Theological Studies and reappointed Ben Nelson as New Testament Lecturer.



What design needs does your church have?

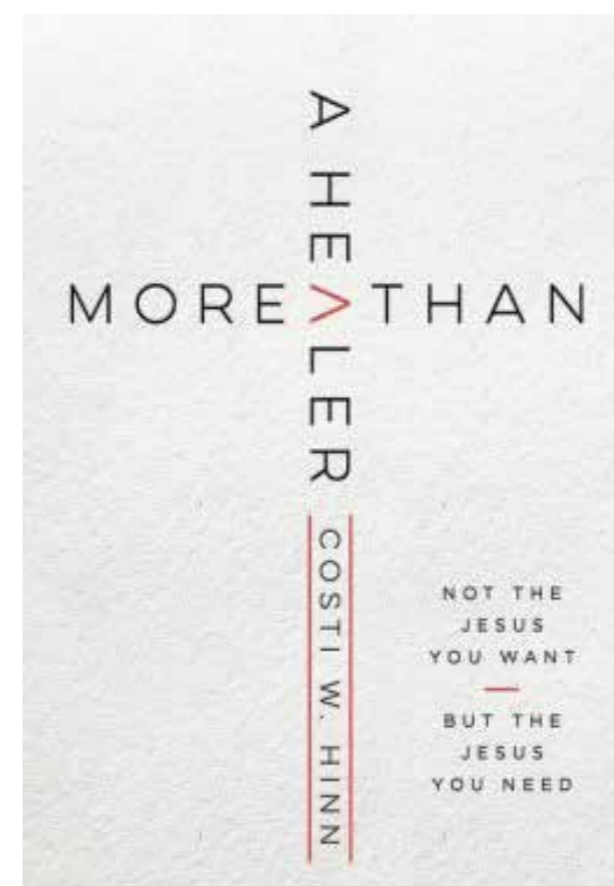
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REVIEW: MORE THAN A HEALER

JENNY MCDONALD



More Than a Healer: Not the Jesus You Want But the Jesus You Need by Costi W.Hinn

HarperCollins Religious (2022)

This is a small, easily read book of 170 pages, but it packs a huge punch. It lays to rest some giants that have disturbed the peace of believers for many years.

Remember Pharaoh's daughter, who takes a baby into the court of Egypt and cares for the very one who will deliver Israel? Now we have the nephew of the empire of the World Healing Centre coming out to lay to rest the destructive teaching of "name it and claim it".

Not only does Costi Hinn have that background, but his 3-month-old son was diagnosed with cancer just as he started to write this book.

His own experience is more than matched by how he handles the Scriptures to show us how Jesus addresses all kinds of suffering. Among testimonials from Joni Eareckson Tada, Nancy Guthrie, Randy Alcorn, Erik Reed and others, Dale Partridge writes:

In a time when many in the church are more interested in miracles than their maker, Costi makes a simple, bold declaration: Christ alone is sufficient. He is sufficient on the hilltop and the hospital. He is sufficient in fullness and in famine. Costi hurls these truths at us chapter after chapter, and it's exactly what the church needs.

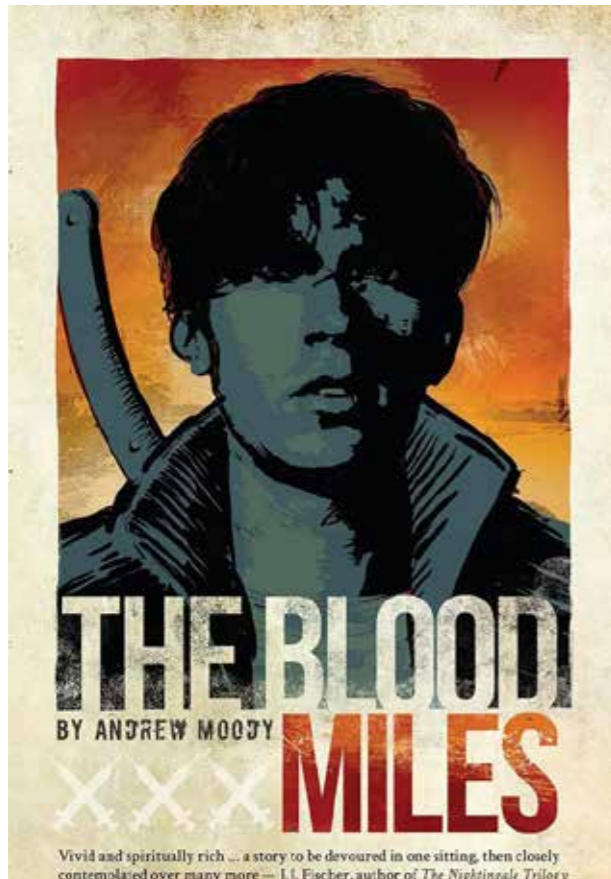
Yes, he affirms that Jesus is Healer, but he is so much more. There is a chapter each on Jesus as Peace, Saviour, Hope, Comfort, Good, Love, Justice, and Sovereign. At the end of each chapter, there are questions for personal or group study.

Costi Hinn's book can help every Christian understand who Jesus is and how he brought true healing to humanity.

Jenny McDonald is a member of Grace Presbyterian Church Wodonga

REVIEW: THE BLOOD MILES

LUKE ISHAM



The Blood Miles by Andrew Moody
Brightmettle (2023)

Blood Miles by Andrew Moody is a theological novel, exploring themes of sin, salvation, good, evil, and also touching on the doctrine of the Incarnation. In other words, *Blood Miles* is a more sophisticated and reliable version of *The Shack*, containing elements of *Pilgrim's Regress*, but set in a *Mad Max* dystopian wasteland. *Pilgrim's Regress* was CS Lewis' first book as a Christian author. It is an allegory about Lewis' journey to faith, where the protagonist encounters various people or situations that represent the philosophical viewpoints of our world. *The Shack* is a Christian novel that was interesting because it popularised discussion about both the trinity and theodicy but flawed because it misrepresented the unity and distinctiveness of the Godhead and did not strike the Biblical balance of showing how God allows but does not approve of evil. Andrew Moody is a graphic designer by day and an academic by night, having completed a PhD in how best to describe the volitional distinctions between the persons of the Trinity. The shorter version of his thesis was published as *In the Light of the Son: Seeing everything through the Father's love for the Son*. This is his first of hopefully many novels.

Christian fiction is often saccharine or moralistic. Good fiction should help us explore ideas we might not normally experience in our ordinary lives. Additionally good fiction has both a plausible secondary world and a plot sustained by rising tension. I think the trick that enables Moody to pull off a readable story is by making it obvious that this is a theological allegory, roughly following the plot-line of *Pilgrim's Progress*. So, this creates a double tension, there is the normal tension of plot; a danger, difficulty or barrier - a partial solution - and then a new problem arising from the solution etc, and then there is also the

tension of wondering what does this particular event or person represent theologically? *Blood Miles* is set in a plausible secondary-world is plausible because we are familiar with the genre of dystopias. The catastrophe of sin has damaged this world and caused its inhabitants to become corrupt. This is the emotive power of this genre, it highlights how without hope this world is doomed.

Stylistically Moody writes vividly, creating an immersive mood. The world of *Blood Miles* is violent and some of the descriptions may shock readers less used to this type of content. The first half of the novel is fast paced and roughly follows the plot of *Pilgrim's Progress* with several nods along the way to *Pilgrim's Regress*. The plot in the second half is more convoluted and the connections to *Pilgrim's Progress* become more difficult to spot. While the conclusion was effective, I was disappointed Moody did not take us to the edge of the "Celestial City" like John Bunyan does in *Pilgrim's Progress* or give us glimpse of "Aslan's country" like Lewis does in *The Last Battle*.

There are some great descriptions of both God and the gospel tucked into the text. For example: "He talked about how the Pantarch had finally sent his own man into the territory; how the Council's men had caught him and killed him - and how Central had brought him back to life and rebuilt his body and put him charge of everything." (106) Like with *Pilgrim's Progress*, Moody's allegory made me more conscious of my own sanctification. And similarly to *Pilgrim's Regress* there are some great philosophical allegories. For example: the warring towns of Ockham and Gia, are both locked into a quixotic struggle to manage the fall-out of "the Tox" without addressing its actual reality. Lastly it was so much fun to see a dystopic setting used in this way, which reminded me a bit of *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. A darkly humorous novel which describes how Christianity might survive a nuclear apocalypse.

Luke Isham is the pastor of St Kilda Presbyterian Church

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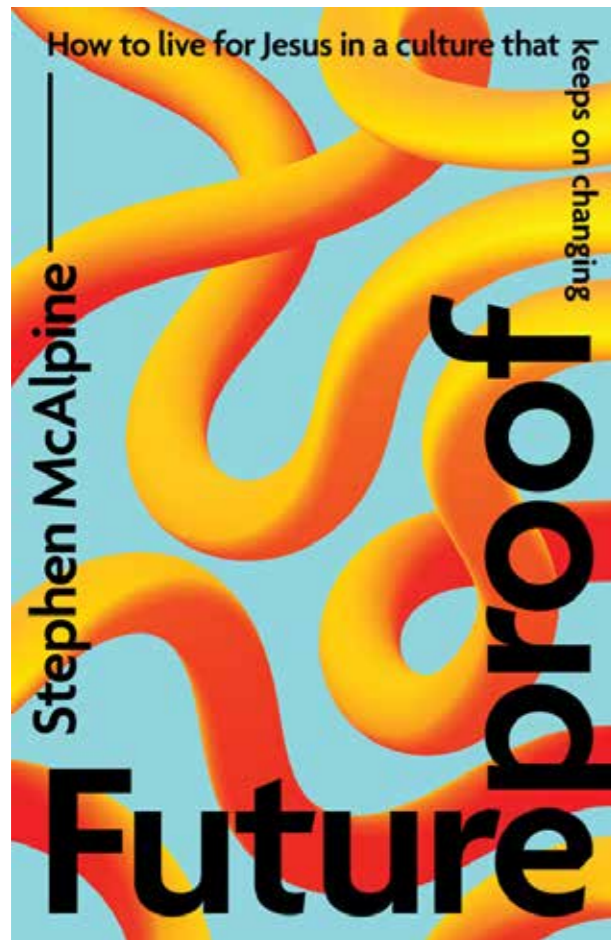
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REVIEW: FUTURE PROOF

BRIAN HARVEY



Future Proof by Stephen McAlpine
ISBN: 9781784989422
The Good Book Company (2024)

If you know the writings of Stephen McAlpine, you will already know how helpful his thoughts are for Christians in Australia. If you don't know his writings, you will do well to read this book and learn from him.

In his previous book "Being the Bad Guys" McAlpine encouraged his readers to be ready for the trials that will come our way as Christians. In "Futureproof" he helps us see how we might be able to do this.

It is important to recognise that McAlpine is confident that the church has a future. Many pundits in our society, and in many parts of the West, seem confident that the church does not have a future. Indeed, some are working to ensure the church doesn't have a future. McAlpine reminds us of the promises of Jesus that the gates of hell will not overcome the church (Matt 16:17-19) and that as we work out our salvation, we do so knowing that God works in us (Phip 2:12-13). But this doesn't mean we just do what we have always done believing we will get different results. Rather, we consider the times in which we live with wisdom.

McAlpine breaks his book into two sections. He describes it in this way; section one - the gospel gives us a better vision for the future than the world can offer; section two - how Christians can respond healthily and robustly to four areas of anxiety that eat up secular culture (polarisation & loneliness, technology, culture wars, and ecology). p82

Here's what stands out for me in reading this book and seeking to apply it to my life as a pastor and husband (I am a father too, but they've grown up and left home now).

The church as a community is essential in our time. McAlpine highlights the loneliness epidemic of our age and asks if churches are ready to

welcome people who come with messed up lives and no church knowledge. It's a good question. The drawn out lockdowns of the Covid years had a devastating impact on many congregations. As Christians, we have such little opportunity to meet together that we should be doing all we can to make sure we grab hold of the times we can. I am confused by those who have decided not to return to church because it is 'inconvenient'. You are robbing yourself.

Christians have a confidence in the future. This confidence is missing in the lives of many, particularly for younger people. He references 2 Peter 3 on this matter. This is interesting because Peter gives us reason to be confident in the future but also warns his readers that life won't be easy - "you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires." Every age needs to be made aware of this.

"A god-free heaven so often turns out to be hell on earth"

The essential value of discipleship. This won't be a surprise to most readers of this book. However, we might need to reconsider how we do discipleship in our time. I did most of my growing up in the Eighties and a good discipleship program then involved meeting up with someone and working through a book together, and that was great. Someone growing up now is facing all kinds of issues which are so different to anything I had to deal with, and the discipleship program (there must be a better word) must also be different.

One thing that does stay the same is spending time with mature Christian people. If you are a young Christian, make sure you turn up to church each Sunday. Time with these saints week by week will help to shape you as a follower of Christ. If you are a mature Christian, make sure you turn up to church each Sunday. You may not fully appreciate

how much you are discipling the young saints in what you do - so be someone worth emulating.

"I'm encouraged to think of my French friend who, growing up, was the only Christian in a high school of 4,000 students. In a deeply secular country, he knew what it was to be in a minority! Yet his small evangelical church experience was deep and rich. And far more compelling than school."

The final chapter might surprise some readers, but McAlpine is connecting with the concerns of many in our society as he writes on ecology. Here he notices the paradox that society doesn't want to hear anything religious from the church, but the religious type zeal on this issue is acceptable. Indeed, it seems to be unacceptable to hold anything less than a religious fervor on this. Pages 145-147 are enlightening.

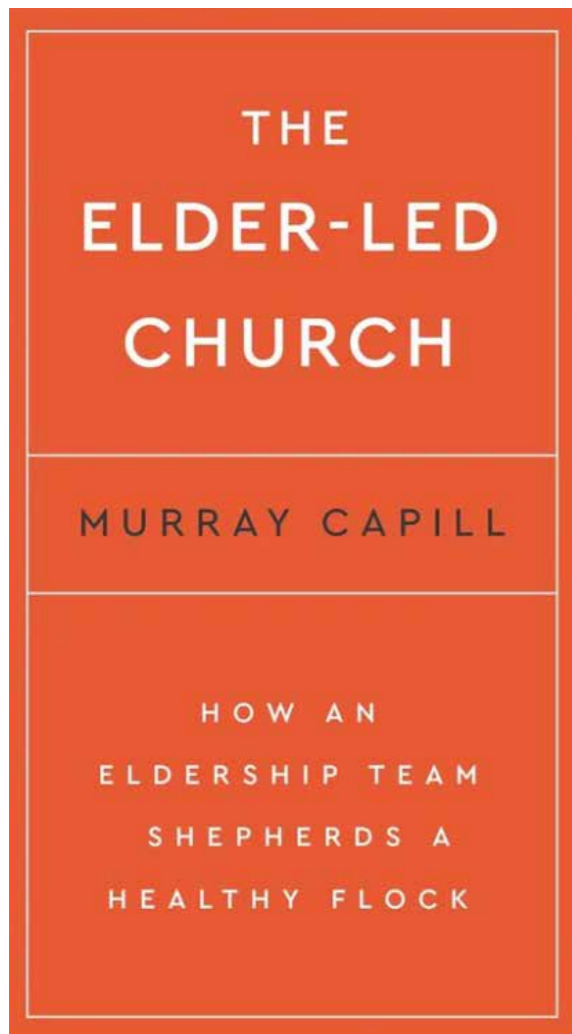
McAlpine has once again offered his readers much to think about as we look into the crystal ball of the future and endeavour to be a godly influence in our society. Fortunately, he doesn't just leave us with thoughts. He also offers some practical suggestions, and not in the way that others might - you won't find 'ten steps to success' here, just practical suggestions.

You can hear Stephen McAlpine discuss this book and other matters in this podcast he hosts with David Ould called Dual Citizens

Brian Harvey is the minister of Heathmont Presbyterian Church. This book review is reprinted from sitwonder.blogspot.com

REVIEW: THE ELDER-LED CHURCH

MARK POWELL



*The Elder-Led Church by Murray Capill
P&R Publishing (2024)*

Every now and again a book is published which proves something of a “game-changer” on a particular topic. The Elder-Led Church by Murray Capill is a prime example of what I am referring to. Douglas Sean O’Donnell writes the following glowing endorsement on the back cover:

An amazing achievement on eldership—a true gift to the church! This Christ-centered, gospel-focused, biblically-grounded, theologically clear, exegetically thorough, well-researched, and immensely practical book should find its home in every church and seminary library and the hands of every man called to lead, oversee, shepherd, protect, and teach God’s church.

I would wholeheartedly agree with that assessment. Capill is the dean of ministry development at the Reformed Theological College in Melbourne, Australia, where he has been for over twenty years. He also previously served as the college’s principal from 2008 to 2019 as well as serving before that as both a teaching elder and ruling elder in various seasons. All of which is to say, Capill brings to the table a wealth of knowledge and experience.

The book itself is divided into four parts: 1) Elders as Leaders 2) Big-Picture Leadership 3) Leading Signature Ministries 4) Leading Well. What is evident throughout is Capill’s faithfulness to Scripture, personal experience of what eldership entails, and most of all, an earnest desire to see the church truly reformed, not just theologically but also spiritually.

PART 1: ELDERS AS LEADERS

In the first section Capill gives an excellent overview of the Biblical material regarding eldership. There are 160 references to ‘elders’ in the Bible—as a teaching elder myself, why didn’t I know this?—with most of those are found in the Old Testament. Capill makes a strong case for the

continuity of this leadership position between the covenants. What’s more, central to his thesis, Capill argues that eldership should be viewed as a body of leaders rather than as a group of individuals because the eldership is to function as a pastoral team. As Capill states:

It is also worth noting that pastor is never used as a title but is used to refer to a task or ministry. We have no biblical precedent for calling someone Pastor Jack. Rather, if Jack is the pastor of a local church, he is one of a team of men called to shepherd the flock of Christ.[1]

Based on Ezekiel 34, Capill also argues that elders in a local church are to perform three main roles:

First, they should be searching for lost sheep, rescuing straying sheep and gathering them into one flock (Ezek. 34:11-13).

Second, they should be finding the sheep good pasture to feed them, giving them rest and binding up their wounds (Ezek. 34:13-16).

Third, the shepherds should arbitrate between the strong and the weak, protecting the vulnerable and ensuring a fair and loving community (Ezek. 34:16-24).

Capill further affirms the fourfold shepherding functions of Timothy Witmer of “knowing, feeding, leading and protecting the sheep”. It was good to see that Capill openly acknowledges the different positions regarding polity which various reformed denominations take. As Capill helpfully explains:

John Calvin and the Westminster Assembly both identified four offices: pastor/minister, doctor / teacher, church governor / elder, and deacon. More commonly, Reformed theology has advocated for three offices: minister, elder, and deacon.

Some Reformed theologians, however, strongly advocate for just two, elder and deacon, with the office of elder further divided into teaching elders (ministers) and ruling elders.

Regardless of what position one takes upon this issue, The Elder-Led Church outlines a model of church government which all Reformed Christians would agree with, namely, “...that the New Testament lays on elders in every church the responsibilities of shepherding and overseeing the flock, and it requires that they be apt to teach.”

The Elder-Led Church has a lot of ‘zinger’ quotes, and I was constantly highlighting sentences, or entire paragraphs. For example:

The senior pastor is called to build a team, not a personal ministry. His effectiveness should be measured by the maturity of his plurality, not his social media following.

I also appreciated Capill’s teaching that the senior pastor is not a CEO and the elders his board. This is what Capill refers to as the “corporate” view of governance, and while it is quite popular in some churches, it fails to acknowledge the key role of shepherding which all of the elders together are to perform. As Capill states:

The Biblical model is really very beautiful. Those with ultimate authority are deeply involved in the lives of those whom they are overseeing. They love and care for them. They know them by name. They aren’t just business directors; they are shepherds.

Finally, Capill also has an excellent section on how to identify and most of all train up new leaders. This is a perennial challenge for churches run by elders. Capill wisely outlines a four-step “pathway for leadership”: 1) Lead a Ministry Activity 2) Lead a Ministry Team 3) Lead a Key Ministry Area 4) Lead a Church. I

was constantly challenged by how practical The Elder-Led Church was. Capill is not content to simply discuss issues theoretically but has thought through what this will look like in practice.

PART 2: BIG-PICTURE LEADERSHIP

In the second section Capill addresses the theological convictions which are important to keep a ministry on track. These are addressed in chapter 5 to 6 and involve leading with theological clarity, leading with Gospel vision, and leading with effective structures.

There is much to learn and take away from here, especially in how one functions within a group of fellow elders. For instance, Capill argues that it's important to distinguish between primary and secondary issues. Not every hill is a hill to die on. What's crucial though, is that all of the elders need to be on the same page.

I also appreciated how Capill acknowledges that simply having right theology is not enough. We also need to be prepared to think through how our Gospel vision in going to be applied in practice. As Capill states:

The eldership team can't presume that if the theology is right, everything else will be right. Nor can the elders assume that their church's ministry practice will automatically grow out of their theology.

Most of all, Capill argues that elders need to have a "gospel agenda". Sadly, this can easily be circumvented by other competing agendas – such as, upholding tradition, keeping people happy, maintaining order, micromanaging church life, running the church business, survival, or even being big and successful. But as Capill rightly says:

One way or another, the elders will talk about all these things. They will interact on tradition, gatekeepers, order, management, business, survival, and growth. But in each of these conversations, we need to come back to our gospel vision. The emphases and priorities of the gospel must be the driving force of church life.

There was also a really helpful section here on leadership structures. This is because, as Craig Hamilton notes, "Numbers matter not because bigger is better or smaller is better but because bigger and smaller are very different." This is a key insight because as churches grow numerically, they need to change how their leadership structures. In this regard, Capill brings some surprising statistical research to the table.

The most common church size (47%) in Australia is a gathering of under 50 people. Hence, most churches are actually quite small and lends itself to the model of the paid pastor functioning as something of a 'chaplain' to the members of the congregation.

The second most common church size (37%) in Australia is a gathering of between 50 and 200 people, with the average weekly attendance being 128 people. Again, the paid pastor become a key figure to the success or decline of the congregation.

There are not that many churches (11%) which have between 200 to 400 people. And the numerical figure of 200 is seen as something of a sociological barrier because of the massive change in leadership structure which is required to manage it. The paid pastor becomes more removed from the congregation and the church's ministries start to become more and more specialised.

Churches between 400 to 1,000 people in Australia are the rarest of all. While Capill doesn't give the exact figure, according to the National Church Life Survey, only 5% of churches in Australia have over 500 people in weekly church services.

Capill is not contending for one particular church size. Instead, he wants to see gospel growth and effective elder leadership in each one. He does seem to support the popular "Five M" model of ministry, as first developed by Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Church*. The five 'M's' shaping the overall structure of the church are as follows: Magnify, Mission, Membership, Maturity, Ministry. Capill outlines the strength of this approach as being:

This approach enables the overall structure to focus on why we do what we do. For example, instead of simply running a children's ministry that is focused on providing a great service for parents and keeping kids happy, it reminds us that within that ministry, the five main purposes of the church should be advanced. The approach also cultivates pathways to growth for each member. Having been reaching by the church's outward mission, they move toward membership, which moves them toward maturity, which moves them toward ministry. Pathway thinking is valuable because it means that we are not running programs as ends in themselves but see everything as a means of helping people grow in Christ.

PART 3: LEADING SIGNATURE MINISTRIES

Section three deals with what does it mean to lead 'signature' ministries. Once again, Capill divides this section into 3 chapters: Leading the Mission, Leading on Sunday and Leading as Shepherds. I particularly appreciated how Capill keeps the evangelistic mission of the church front and centre. Indeed, he uses the analogy that mission is not just a box being carried on the back of the flatbed truck—which can easily bounce off—but is the engine which drives the whole thing. For Capill, mission is rightly central to the purpose of everything the church does. As such, *The Elder-Led Church* is encompassed with Gospel fervency. For example, Capill writes:

The church needs to be saturated not in a narrow, therapeutic gospel about a God who promises to make our life better, but in an expansive "salvation to the ends of the earth" gospel that casts a huge vision of who God is and what he is doing in this world. That large gospel must be pressed on our hearts week by week. We need a renewed picture of God's power, holiness, and glory that demands the allegiance of all people. We need to hear the urgent truth about God's righteousness, justice, and coming judgment. We need to be faced with the realities of heaven and hell as the only two eternal destinies of all people. We need to hear about God's astounding grace in sending his Son to bear the sin and take the punishment of all who trust in him.

We need to be reminded that this world will soon be passing away and that eternity is forever.

Capill argues that evangelistic zeal must permeate everything else we do. It's not about an extra program to which a few talented individuals in the church are committed. Mission is an all-encompassing passion which should mould and motivate everything.

The section on worship has an excellent assessment of the question as to whether Sunday gatherings are also corporate acts of worship. Unfortunately, many evangelicals in Australia over the past 20-30 years have rejected this, but Capill rightly points out that this is reductionistic.

Capill also wants to see the regulative principle of worship govern everything we do. I found his historical summaries and conclusions here really helpful. Capill always avoids extreme positions while maintaining a reformed theological centre. He also has some wise words on how the preacher sets the 'tone' and 'emphasis' of the church and that it is the elder's role to give feedback and ensure that both of these remain right. As Capill states:

Whereas a young preacher needs feedback on individual sermons, it is generally more helpful for a seasoned preacher to receive feedback on his ministry as a whole. The elders can do this by periodically scheduling a preaching review. They may seek input from the congregation and can adopt a structured approach to reviewing the impact of the preaching in church life.

Capill goes on to further explain that this feedback should include: content, craft, connection and communication. In the same way, the elders should be especially mindful of the song selection a church uses because this is often the "second sermon" a congregation hears. Capill also has some wise words to say about service leading, the question of women's involvement in church services, and also the setting and aesthetics of church buildings.

In the chapter on pastoral care Capill helpfully distinguishes between that which he describes as being “little more than palliative care” and the Biblical model which is that which involves discipleship. What’s more, he also has some helpful, practical things to say about the important of food and drink in facilitating fellowship.

That said, Capill’s goal is to equip the congregation to pastorally care for one another. The New Testament epistles point out forty-seven times “what we are or are not to do for one another.” Once again, he outlines a practical ministry pathway for elders to develop this – namely, to Enlist, Equip, Engage and Evaluate,

PART 4: LEADING WELL

In the fourth and final section Capill brings all that he has been saying to the fore, outlining what it means to lead on the ground as well as advice on what to do when leaders meet. This is where the “rubber hits the road”. Many books on eldership can avoid such practicalities but Capill offers much wisdom concerning what leading a church looks like in practice.

Capill rightly acknowledges that different elders will have different personalities, as well as giftings and strengths. This is helpful because not every elder performs the same role. For instance, some are gifted in administration and others more upfront speaking roles.

I especially appreciated his approach to seeing elders’ meetings as places where godly, but robust discussion can take place. Quoting from Lencioni, Capill acknowledges that the reasons why meeting are often boring is because “they lack conflict and drama”. As a result, Capill argues that elders’ meetings need to be characterised by godly but “lively and honest conversation”. What’s more, there needs to be multiple types of meetings with different formats, purposes and times.

CONCLUSION: A GREAT RESOURCE

The Elder-Led Church is a book that is full of practical wisdom and biblical insight. Each chapter contains a number of discussion questions which could easily be used in an elders’ meeting. It is

a book which every elder needs to read, you will be the richer for it personally, and the church in which you serve will be blessed.

[1] Later on in the book Capill observes, “Only in the second and third centuries did a bishop become a single person with higher authority within a church or group of churches. In the New Testament, all the elders are shepherds and all the elder-shepherds are overseers.”

Mark Powell is the minister of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Hobart. This article is reprinted from AP with permission.

REVIEW:

FAITHFUL IN FINANCE – ADVICE FOR CHRISTIAN SENIORS

JEREMY PEET

The topic of money is often avoided by Christians, typically because we either fear disproportionate or incorrect prominence (prosperity gospel) or because we want to avoid any prominence be given to such material and worldly matters. This new booklet by Allan Harman is a very welcome item to help us as we consider how to be good stewards.

It is a very brief booklet that can be read in well under an hour but, nonetheless, is one that is deeply needed for the church today, both for the practical gifts of wisdom that it brings but also because it brings to light a subject that is rarely spoken about. Puritans and others in past times would regularly speak of “Finishing well” and would be more open with conversations around death, around tithing, and contributing to Christian ministry. My experience would suggest conversations on the topic are better and more common amongst various migrant communities from Eastern or African cultures, and it’s possibly a recent taboo subject more for Western peoples. It is helpful to stop and consider our ideas and attitudes to giving and bequeathing when we are so rich in worldly possessions, and I am grateful to Professor Harman for bringing the topic to light and am sure it will be of practical benefit to all who read it.

The book is noted as “A word to Seniors”, with large print conducive to the intended audience. However, I think it is limiting to think of its relevance to just this demographic. All believers can benefit greatly from this booklet. I was encouraged multiple times about the need to give prayerful thought to how much I give and to whom and will be giving more thought to my own family’s needs and the best use of all that I have for Kingdom purposes. Or as Harman says, “The attitude we have in aiding Gospel ministry”.

I was impressed with the very practical nature of the book, with suggestions and advice in many areas like what to think of before preparing a Will, and that was before I came to the chapter headed “Some further Practical Suggestions”! The chapters are short and direct, with few more than a page or two, reflecting the intended meaningful applications. What we read in the chapters is the wisdom and knowledge of a Theologian beautifully combined with the simple practicalities gained from one experienced in pastoral ministry.

Ever wondered about the “Should I Tithe 10%?” Wonder no more!

Does it seem a bit wrong to bequest wealth to our children who are wealthier than we are? Read this book for an answer. “It does not seem a valid use of wealth to simply try to leave as much of it as possible to members of our family”

How much of my giving should I allocate to my local congregation? There are good guidelines to help you answer it.

Prof Harman is clear that specific individual advice is important to get, but the wisdom and application he has provided can be in conflict with the majority advice of our times - whether that’s a S.K.I. holiday (Spend the Kids Inheritance, on your pleasures) or to minimize tax and maximise your worldly assets.

I commend the booklet to readers for a biblically based alternative.

Jeremy Peet, Presbyterian Elder.

Relationship Manager Vic/Tas – Baptist Financial Services

Elder Books (2025).

RYAN BRIGHTWELL SPEAKS TO STEPHEN MCDONALD



PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND, INCLUDING WHERE YOU GREW UP, HOW YOU MET YOUR WIFE, AND WHAT YOU DID BEFORE TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY

I was born in New Zealand, but my family came to Melbourne when I was 4. We returned to Auckland when I was in my teens, and I finished my schooling in New Zealand. After working for a few years in New Zealand, I came back to Australia and met my then to be wife, Brialey, at a PYV camp. After we got married, we both worked on her family farm in the Yarra Valley just east of Melbourne for the past 20 years. We grew raspberries, blackberries, and boysenberries.

AT WHAT STAGE OF YOUR LIFE DID YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN? HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

I have the great privilege of being raised in a Christian home and have always grown up knowing and believing the gospel. My sisters and I were always challenged as children that we couldn't rely on our parent's faith and so from a very young age I have trusted in Christ. It is a great blessing for me to have grown up in a covenant family.

WHY DID YOU START THEOLOGICAL STUDY? (WHAT TRAINING AND OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR LOCAL CONGREGATION PREPARED YOU FOR MINISTRY TRAINING? AND WHO ENCOURAGED YOU TO ENTER INTO FULL-TIME MINISTRY?)

It has been a long-term thought of mine to enter the ministry but for a variety of different reasons the Lord had closed the doors until just a few years ago. Looking back over that period I am grateful that the Lord has brought Brialey and I to this point now. I can see all the various opportunities to learn and grow in many different ways which have helped to prepare me for ministry now. I have had the ability to lead bible studies and preach occasionally at our local church in Woori Yallock over the years that we have been involved there.

WHAT WERE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR PREPARATION FOR FULL-TIME MINISTRY?

It has been an interesting challenge, going to college after not studying for many years. Some of my highlights have been getting to know the other students at the college, especially the other candidates. It has been a blessing to share discussions with them about the subjects and other ministry questions over the time of I have been studying. The wisdom of the lecturers in their different fields has also been a joy. Probably, the thing that I have found most interesting, which maybe I didn't expect was learning the original languages, Greek and Hebrew. Though this had its own particular challenges having not learned languages before it gives a depth of insight into the biblical text that I didn't appreciate before I went to college.

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR YOUR MINISTRY IN YOUR EXIT APPOINTMENT?

The first priority is getting settled into a new community and getting to know all the people who are part of the church in Wangaratta and Myrtleford. I know that it can take time to become enmeshed into a new church and that there is a period of adjustment for both minister and congregation. So, I would like to understand all the strengths and challenges that the church faces.

HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU (AND YOUR FAMILY) AND THE CONGREGATION YOU ARE SERVING?

Apart from the aforementioned point, the biggest prayer is just the adjustment to a new location. John is going into year 10 at school and we would pray that he is able to settle into a new school well and make good friends. We would appreciate prayers with the process of moving and then unpacking and becoming settled in a new home. There will be many different parts of life to get used going into full time ministry and so prayer for settling into that new routine would be great. Pray for the congregation as they adjust to us also, it will be a change for them as well, and we would ask that the Lord would bless us all as we seek to work for his kingdom in Wangaratta and Myrtleford.



BRING BACK DEACONS

There is a curious paragraph in the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) chapter 25. Often we tend to read over this paragraph without thinking about it. Paragraph two says:

The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, and their children; and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ; the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

Now, there is heaps here worth talking about. The universality of the church means that the church is not just in Australia nor was it founded yesterday, so we should be quick to learn from our brothers and sisters around the world and throughout history. The church consists not just of people who confess the faith but also their children. One implication there being that we should think long and hard about the ways in which we are ministering to children and opening to them all the benefits of the covenant of grace. However, the thing that I want to consider is that very next phrase. “The visible Church... is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.” What in the world does this mean?

The WCF is picking up something that is deep in the Reformed Tradition. If we want to see where God’s Kingdom is, we look first to the place where

Jesus is, the church. The church is the place where Christ rules his people. Yes, it is true that Kingdom is larger than the church, but the church is principal expression of God’s Kingdom on earth. Why is this? Because it is the place where God’s Word and God’s Spirit are at work bringing people together into a unified diversity (WCF 25.3).

When we talk about a unified diversity in the church, we tend to think about people from different ethnic backgrounds. This is good and one way in which we can see diversity in our churches that reflects the Kingdom of God. However, there is also generational diversity that should be reflected in our churches if they are to be visible expressions of the kingdom of God. Added to this, one area about which we don’t talk much is socio-economic diversity. The church should be a place where the rich and the poor, tradies and professionals, fast food workers and CEOs can gather and worship side-by-side.

Because the church should be this place where men and women, children and the elderly, rich and poor are being knitted together into a community, Calvin says, in his commentary on Micah 4:1-2, that the church should be the place where people of all stripes especially the poor should find justice. “Except then we endeavour to relieve the necessities of our brethren, and to offer them assistance,

there will not be in us but one part of true conversion.” What’s Calvin’s point? His point is that the church is the place where the needs of God’s people (both physical and spiritual) are met. He writes in his Acts commentary that we care for the needs of the people through fellowship, alms, and “other duties,” and that this is, in fact, one of the “marks whereby the true and natural face of the Church may be judged.” Caring for the needs of people in the congregation is a mark of the church and, thus, is one aspect to the claim in WCF 25 that the visible church is the kingdom of God.

In our churches most would agree that we must care for the spiritual needs of people. In fact, in our churches, we have an entire office which is dedicated to caring the spiritual needs of people: the office of elder. Elders are ordained with the care of souls as their main duty. This is why when we look at the qualifications for elders, we read that they must be “apt to teach” (1 Tim 3:2). Principally, elders are the ones who are teaching. They are to expound the Word and instruct in sound doctrine. Elders, therefore, protect the flock from those who would try to destroy them. This is why a church cannot be a particular church unless it has elders.

However, another aspect of what it means for the church to be a visible manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth, is that it cares not only for spiritual needs but also the physical needs of the people. In fact, this is the pattern from the very start in Acts. In Acts the people are being cared for, both spiritually and physically. However, when the care of the peoples’ physical needs outstretches the ability of the Apostles, the Apostles create a new office, “deacons.” This same pattern is seen with the develop of the office of elder. The Apostles could not continue teaching everyone in every congregation as the church grew in number and spread throughout the world, so they trained up men for the task of continuing the teaching ministry. When the Apostles could no longer handle the duty of caring for the physical needs of God’s people, other officers (deacons) were appointed to serve in this area.

Therefore, the Bible gives us the office of deacon. It is ordinary and perpetual (meaning it is something that continues in the church until Christ returns). When we look at the qualifications for a

deacon as laid out in 1 Timothy 3, we will note that every characteristic of elder is listed except “able to teach.” That isn’t to say that deacons can’t teach or even that they shouldn’t teach. It only highlights the fact that this office is not one of teaching. It is an office of “sympathy and service.” It is to be an office that takes delight in caring for the sick, the friendless, and those who are in distress. Deacons lead the congregation in showing liberality and help to collect the gifts of the church, so that they can be distributed to those in need.

It seems that if we are to be seen as what God has called us to be (the Kingdom of God on earth), then we need to be focused on both the spiritual and the physical, and God has given us two offices which do this. In Australian Presbyterianism we understand that churches need elders (though it might be good to have a conversation about what elders should be doing, I will leave that for other people and another time). However, I wonder if we really see the value of deacons. If our God is the Father to the fatherless and the Protector of the widow, if he is the one who sets the lonely in families, how does he do it? It does it through his church, and the beauty of this is that in Christ’s wisdom he has given his church an entire office to lead us in this call, deacons.

God’s Kingdom is one of justice and righteousness. The church is the visible manifestation of God’s Kingdom on earth. If caring for the needs of people in our church is a mark of the church, then we need those who will lead us in this work. We need elders AND deacons. We need people who will develop in the congregation not just good doctrine and morals but also the grace of liberality. In a world that is fixated on justice, recovering and celebrating the office of deacons in our churches would bear witness to the truth of the gospel. God brings all of us into a “mutual society” (Calvin) which makes his concerns our concerns. God’s kingdom on earth is made visible in the church, as people from every walk of life, gather together to hear the Word preached and to distribute our resources to all, as any have need (Acts 2:45).

Cam Clausing is the lecturer in Applied Theology and Missional Engagement at Christ College in Sydney. This article is reprinted from AP with permission.



SUE CAMDEN: WITH CHRIST

“THE LEGACY OF BILL AND SUE’S MINISTRY IS EASY TO SEE.”

On Thursday 11th July, at the age of 92, Sue Camden went to be with Christ. Sue and her husband, the Rev Bill Camden, were very well known throughout the Church, particularly as APWM missionaries.

Throughout their 39 years of marriage, Bill and Sue shared the vision of seeing the people of Vanuatu come to know Christ, and then be able to read the Word of God in their heart language. Following the completion of Bill’s theological studies, Bill and Sue commenced service in Vanuatu (then known as the New Hebrides) in 1957, where Bill served as a District Missionary for many years. In the 1960’s, Bill embarked on one of the most significant ministries of his life as he led a team in the translation of the Bible into Vanuatu’s national language, Bislama. Bill worked on this translation until its completion in 1994, not long before he went to be with Christ.

Sue continued ministering to many in Australia in her roles as a mother, a grandmother, a great grandmother, a high school teacher, a Bible Study leader and an ESL teacher at Epping Presbyterian Church. She showed love in many ministries including youth group, visiting children at Allowah Hospital, and supporting ministries in high schools and universities. She opened the Bible in her home to many of all ages, cultures and backgrounds including refugees, migrants and overseas visitors. Sue was a prayer warrior, and in her later years when she could no longer talk to people about God, she talked to God about people.

We praise God for raising up Bill and Sue who were committed to spreading the knowledge of God at home and in some of the earth’s most remote places.

In the preface to Bill and Sue’s biography, ‘God Speaks Our Language’ their son-in-law, the Rev Dr Ian Smith writes:

“The legacy of Bill and Sue’s ministry is easy to see. Today, throughout the islands of Vanuatu, each Lord’s Day morning, people hear God’s word read and proclaimed in Bislama. Even today, the Bible is the most significant translation work in the national language. In a very real sense, this has united a linguistically diverse people not only around a common language, but also, for most of the population of Vanuatu, around a common belief.

For Bill and Sue, and many missionaries before them, their expectation was that the Gospel would transform not only individuals, but society. This can be seen today in churches, as well as in schools, hospitals, government, and the very fabric of society. Christianity has not replaced traditional culture, it has redeemed it, and those who would argue otherwise would be wise to appreciate this distinction.”

“Long tingting blong mi, sipos mi mi stap laef, hemia bambae mi stap joen long Kraes, mi stap leftemap nem blong hem, mo sipos mi mi ded, bambae i gud moa.” (Philippians 1:21 from the Niutestamen Long Bislama)

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21 NIV 2011)

SUE CAMDEN WITH MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN’S MISSIONARY UNION ON TANGOA IN 2011.



BILL AND SUE CAMDEN WITH THEIR YOUNG FAMILY

100 BIBLES FOR 100 VILLAGES

Christians in remote villages in the African country of Malawi have a deep need for Bibles. These are people who have little income and cannot afford a Bible.

Can you please help meet their need?

APWM is seeking to raise funds to buy 100 Bibles for each of 100 remote villages in Malawi. That's a total of 10,000 Chichewa-language Bibles!

In mid-2025, we're planning to send a small Australian team to work with our partners from the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, to distribute the Bibles and provide some training in Bible reading.

To watch a video about this project please go to: <https://vimeo.com/994971825>

If you would like to make a donation, you can give:

ONLINE

Go to www.apwm.org.au/finance/ where you can use one of the options.

The easiest option for many is direct deposit.

Account Name: Australian Presbyterian World Mission
BSB: 032 260
Account Number: 151207

Please write 'Malawi Bibles' in the description box. If you'd like a receipt please send an email to finance@apwm.org.au letting us know you've made the donation.

CHEQUE

Send a cheque to:

APWM National
1 Clarence Street, Burwood NSW 2134

Please make your cheque payable to 'APWM'.

Please note that donations are NOT tax-deductible.

If you have any inquiries about this, please contact Kevin Murray: kevinmurray@apwm.org.au



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