



FELLOW WORKERS

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Fellow Workers

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EDITORIAL: ETERNALLY GOD AND PERFECTLY MAN

STEPHEN MCDONALD

In Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis famously wrote:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’

That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.... You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

It’s not unusual for people to think that Jesus was a good person who later became considered to be some kind of ‘god’. But that cannot explain why people in His day wanted to execute Him, not for threatening war with the Romans, but for claiming to be God’s Son (Luke 4:14-30 & John 10:22-39).

ETERNALLY GOD

If you open your Bible app or grab a concordance, you won’t find a verse where Jesus says, ‘I am God.’ But you will find many places where Jesus claims exactly that in different words.

Speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well about the Messiah, Jesus says, ‘I, the one speaking to you – I am he.’ (John 4:26). In English, it doesn’t quite slap us across the face, but Jesus is saying, “I AM”, just like the “I AM” in Exodus 3.

Jesus says it again when His authority is challenged in John 8, “Before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58). He isn’t just saying, ‘I existed before Abraham (so I’m very old),’ but ‘Before Abraham, I AM.’

Again, when Judas leads the mob to arrest Jesus and He asks who they are looking for, when they say, ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ He replies, ‘I am’. John, who was an eyewitness to this, says that ‘they drew back and fell to the ground’ (John 18:5-6).

Each time, Jesus is not just saying, ‘I’m a kind of god’ but, more than that, ‘I AM the I AM’ who appeared to Moses and Abraham.

Jesus is the eternal God sent to rescue us and make us God’s adopted sons (with full inheritance rights, regardless of whether we are men or women). As God says in Galatians 4:4-5, “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”

He isn’t a smaller version of God or a later addition to god-ness. He is eternally and fully God.

PERFECTLY MAN

How amazing that He through whom the world was made would enter into His world (John 1:1-18)!

John testifies: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

In ancient myths, sometimes ‘gods’ were said to come into the world. But they came fully-grown and powerful, only appearing to be human, and only for a short time (and usually to do grossly immoral things). But Jesus ‘became flesh’, being born as a true human being.

There was nothing that makes us human which Jesus lacked. So, He knows what it’s like. As the writer of Hebrews explains:

“15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15-16)

That’s essential: that Jesus, the Son of God, became one of us, but without sin. He can sympathise with us because He knows the limitations of our humanity. And He is able to represent us because He is one of us.

What confidence that should give us that there is now in heaven a perfect God-man, the one who sacrificed Himself to save us also lives and rules with our best interests at heart.

SO WHAT?

This is why the Westminster Confession of Faith calls Jesus “the Mediator”. Not only does He reconnect God and man, but He is fully and perfectly God and man. The Confession puts it like this:

“The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.” (WCF 8.2)

How incredible that Jesus our Mediator hasn’t just breached the gap between God and man as a disinterested party, but voluntarily and fully joined our nature to His divine nature so that He is God and man in a perfect union.

There is so much to enjoy and glorify God for in who Jesus is! Let’s hear the exhortation of the writer of Hebrews:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Fellow workers, how are you spurred on and enabled to persevere because of Jesus the God-man?

INTERVIEW: RUSSELL ST JOHN



RUSSELL ST JOHN, FATHER OF SIX, EX-US NAVY CHAPLAIN, AN EXPERIENCED CHRISTIAN PASTOR FROM ST LOUIS USA, IS COMING TO AUSTRALIA SOON. FELLOW WORKERS CAUGHT UP WITH HIM RECENTLY.

FW: We hear that you're coming to Melbourne soon – tell us the purpose for this visit?

Russell: The Presbyterian Theological College has graciously invited me to speak at its annual Ministry Conference and to lecture in the classroom. I love pastors, so I'm always keen to leap at an opportunity to encourage, challenge, equip, and edify current and future pastors, as well as the saints whom they shepherd.

FW: Is that your passion – training pastors? Why is this so important?

Russell: It really is, and for this reason: As goes the pulpit, so goes the church. The church needs faithful, well-equipped pastors who will teach, reprove, correct, and train in righteousness. It needs men who will honour our Saviour, and who reflect something of his character and his love for the sheep. What can prove a more profitable work

than to raise up and send such men! I count it a real privilege to help to train and to encourage pastors.

FW: Now, let's wind the clock back a while – what's your earliest memory of trusting Jesus, and who were the most important influences moving you in that direction?

Russell: I wasn't raised in a Christian home and it wasn't until my first year of university that I truly understood myself as a sinner and Christ alone as my Saviour. God primarily used my peers, Christian friends in both high school and at university, to draw me to Christ. Their joy, their love one for another, and their sense of purpose seemed infectious, and when I came to know Christ, I finally understood why.

FW: You're an experienced pastor with the Presbyterian Church in America, including 11 years in your present position – what were the key influences that moved you in the direction of pastoral ministry?

Russell: I felt a strong sense of calling to ministry from the moment I was saved. But because I had no Christian upbringing, theological vocabulary, or history with the church, I had no idea what I was experiencing. During my sophomore year at university, a friend of mine mentioned that after graduation he planned to attend seminary. I asked, "What's seminary?" When he answered, "It's a place you go to train to be a pastor," I knew in that moment that God was calling me to serve him in pastoral ministry. I quite literally experienced the "peace that passes understanding." It was nothing short of miraculous.

FW: We note you're on staff at Covenant Seminary, lecturing in Homiletics – what's the best book on preaching from the 19th century? Why?

Russell: I love a little book entitled, *Sacred Rhetoric*, which was published in 1870 by an American Presbyterian named Robert Dabney. *Banner of Truth* recently republished it under the title, *Evangelical Eloquence*. It's a treasure-trove of sound counsel, passionate conviction, and deeply

challenging pulpit instruction. Dabney's teaching is biblically grounded and especially aimed at equipping pastors to make probing, conscience-rending applications of God's Word. It a real gem.

FW: A present-day book?

Russell: I have two answers. For training beginning preachers to preach, I commend Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching*. It inculcates a replicable sermon structure that equips men to "rightly to divide the word of truth" and to preach Christ from all the Scripture. For deepening a current preacher's thinking about and passion for preaching, I commend Chad Van Dixhoorn's *God's Ambassadors*, which chronicles the work of the Westminster Divines to reinvigorate preaching across the British Isles during the seventeenth century. Their ability to join deep theology with practical holiness amazes and inspires me.

A QUICK ANSWER QUIZ:

I. If you had a free pass would you choose:

a. College Football OR Baseball with the Cardinals?

Football! With a 162-game schedule, baseball offers many opportunities to watch a game. But a 12-game football schedule places far more weight on each game, even on each play of each game, and the excitement correspondingly increases.

b. Opera OR Cinema?

Opera. I've never attended an opera before – I'd enjoy experiencing something new.

c. Art Museum OR Botanical Gardens

The gardens. No comparison – God's artwork outstrips man's every time.

d. AFL grand final OR Boxing Day cricket?

AFL. I have no familiarity with either, but football looks action-packed and aggressive.

2. Have you been to the top of the Gateway Arch?

Surprisingly, no. I lived in St. Louis for four years during seminary and have been back for eleven years as a pastor, but I've never ascended the Arch.

3. What king was St Louis named after?

I admit I had to look this up. King Louis IX of France (1214-1270). French fur traders established St. Louis in 1764 and the United States acquired it through the Louisiana Purchase of 1804.

4. According to FORBES, which city is "The world's 4th most liveable city"?

Haha! Now you're bragging . . . It's Melbourne, of course!

FW: Now, an unfair question: seeing as this is your first visit to AUS. Are there cultural differences you're expecting to sense between PCA (St Louis, MO) and PCA (Melb, Vic)?

Russell: Great question! I've noted that we pronounce the same words differently, use different words to describe the same objects, and in general fit George Bernard Shaw's quip: "We are two nations divided by a common language." Other than that, I don't know what I don't know, so I'm eager to learn from my Australian brothers and sisters and to laugh together as I make cultural mistakes and mispronounce words. I hope you'll be gracious with me!

FW: How can we pray for you?

Russell: Please pray that Christ uses me for the good of his Church in my preaching, teaching, writing, and training of pastors. Pray also for my dear wife, Amy, who fears flying, and who will be accompanying me on the long flight to Melbourne. Thank you for praying.



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Seminary.




Rev Dr Eugene Ho
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GracePoint Presbyterian
Church (Sydney) and
Adjunct Lecturer In Preaching
and Communication at Christ
College Sydney



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Ceremony and Installation of the
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7:00pm

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MELBOURNE 3000



**SPEAKER: REV CANON
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STEVE JONES: ZAMBIA TRIP

In May 2025, Rev. Steve Jones (Drouin Presbyterian, VIC), Rev. Andrew Vines (Hurstville Presbyterian, NSW) and his wife Suzy are joining with Australian Presbyterian World Mission (APWM) to travel to Zambia to train and reinvigorate local pastors through the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP).

Over three weeks, they have been invited to run retreat training conferences for the 100 CCAP pastors, and this time the pastors' wives are also coming too. The aim is to encourage them as a couple to endure together in proclaiming the wonderful truths of the gospel to the next generation, despite the significant challenges they face.

Steve, who first ran the retreats in 2023 with Rev. Graham Nicholson, said:

"I can't wait to get back to encourage our Zambian brothers and sisters to keep enduring in this very strategic ministry for Jesus."

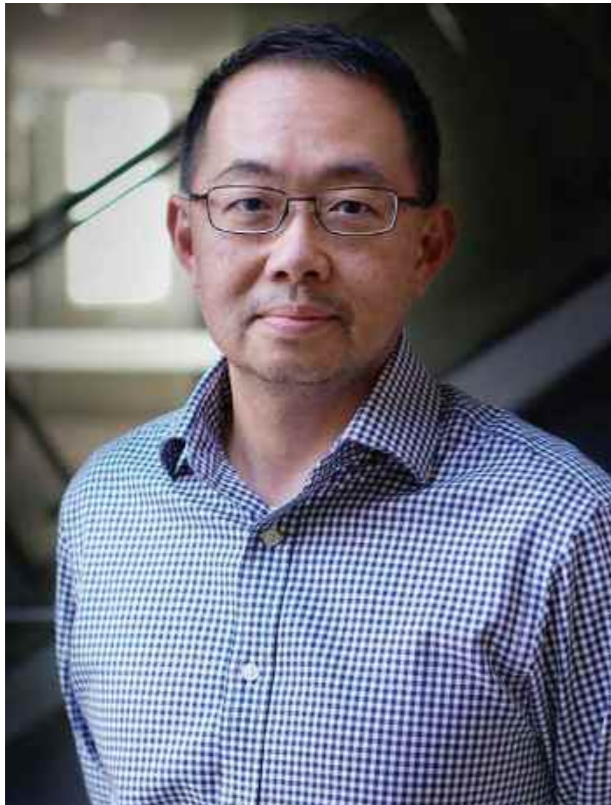
Rev. Sevatt Kabaghe, the General Secretary of CCAP Zambia, wrote after the last retreat:

"It was such a joyful moment having the two colleagues from Presbyterian Church of Australia with passion, love and commitment to the work of the Lord... Everyone was amazed and thankful at the good work our two friends did... We are revived and we hope such times will continue... We have been refreshed, encouraged and many have realised the importance of coming together not only in meetings but in times to reflect on the goodness of the Lord."

Andrew will be teaching through 2 Corinthians and 'Faithful ministry in difficult times'. Steve will be focussing on 'Trusting our great God in ministry' looking at the incredible attributes of our amazing God to encourage endurance, particularly when times are tough. Suzy will be running some discussion and encouragement sessions with the wives, helping them to endure with the significant burdens placed on them too.

Please be in prayer for the team as they prepare to head over to Zambia in May. If you would like to receive their prayer letters over the coming months, or support them financially, please email steve@drouinpresbyterian.org.au

INTERVIEW: EUGENE HOR



EUGENE HOR, AN EXPERIENCED CHRISTIAN PASTOR FROM SYDNEY, NSW, IS COMING TO MELBOURNE SOON. FELLOW WORKERS CAUGHT UP WITH HIM RECENTLY.

FW: We hear that you're coming to Melbourne soon – tell us the purpose for this visit?

Eugene: There are so many good reasons to visit Melbourne from your café culture to your galleries to coming to the Australian Open or Formula 1. We've come to Melbourne at least once a year for the last two years and this time we're hoping to see the new Yayoi Kusama exhibition at the National Gallery.

But a better reason for coming is to encourage and be encouraged by the Lord's people. I'll be in Melbourne to speak at the PTC Ministry Conference looking at the way God grows ministry, embracing weakness and true glory in

ministry, depending on the sufficiency of God's grace in ministry, and looking to the power of God in ministry. I'm hoping that as we open up the Scriptures and spend time together I'll be encouraged as much as I can be encouraging to those who come.

FW: Is that your passion – training pastors? Why is this so important?

Eugene: My passion really is for the local church and the raising of the next generation for gospel ministry, part of which is the training of pastors. When I think of what Paul says about equipping the saints for the work of ministry in the local church, we should also expect that among the saints are our future pastors that we're to equip for ministry. Pastors are not going to be found out there, but within our local churches.

It's not the role of our theological colleges to find pastors for the church. Yes, they do have a part in training pastors for ministry. But it's the role of the church and its elders to ensure that the gospel is entrusted to the next generation, to be identifying and equipping men and women who will do likewise. We want to see the gospel go out to the nations and down to the generations, and that will only happen if we're identifying and equipping men and women for the work of ministry in our local churches.

FW: Now, let's wind the clock back a while – what's your earliest memory of trusting Jesus, and who were the most important influences moving you in that direction?

Eugene: My earliest memory of looking to the Lord Jesus was probably the death of my Sunday School teacher Molly. I was brought up in a Christian family in Malaysia that was more religious than Christian at the time, and going to Sunday School was part of our Sunday practice. I would reluctantly go and I was disruptive in Sunday School. All the other Sunday School teachers and helpers were

always harsh and telling me off. But Molly was different. She was patient and her words were always marked by grace and kindness. I knew there was something different about her because of Jesus.

When I was told that Molly had drowned it was probably the first time I had ever encountered the death of someone I loved, but that also drove me to Jesus not just asking the question of why he would take Molly, but also looking to him for comfort in my grief at the time. I believe that was my first step towards trusting Jesus. Molly's faith and love actually drove me to Jesus.

FW: You're an experienced pastor with the Presbyterian Church of Australia, including 26 years in your present position – what were the key influences that moved you in the direction of pastoral ministry?

Eugene: I would say it was the preaching of the word actually. I was 15 when I was at a school Christian camp and I heard the preacher bring God's word from Colossians 1:15-20 on the Lordship of Christ. 'Unless Jesus is Lord he cannot be your Saviour!' was what I heard preached. I loved the idea that Jesus was Savior and had received him as my Savior, but for the first time I was confronted with the Bible's teaching on his supremacy as Lord over all. I felt a conviction I had never felt before.

I remember my youth group leader Tony Lim telling me that if the Lord was really calling me to serve him in full time ministry I didn't need to rush into things. His advice was to take every opportunity to just give myself to serving the Lord in the local church and if the Lord wanted me to serve him in full time ministry he would pave the way for me as I served him.

By the time I got to university it was my pastor Joe Mock who then gave me new opportunities that

pushed me the next step towards pastoral ministry. He gave me my first opportunity to start leading services and to preach which again allowed me to test the waters and confirm God's call to pastoral ministry. Those were probably the key influences that moved me towards pastoral ministry – the word that convicted me, wise counsel from my leaders, and opportunities to serve.

FW: We note you're on staff at Christ College, lecturing in preaching – what's the best book on preaching from the 20th century? Why?

Eugene: That's a real hard one trying to nail the best book on preaching from the 20th century. But some timeless ones that I'd consider a must read would be Stott's *I Believe in Preaching* that has been updated recently and Lloyd-Jones' *Preaching and Preachers*. Both are obviously dated and written within a particular generational context but worth mining for treasure when it comes to preaching. With Stott, his chapter on bridge-building is timeless in reminding us that as preachers we aren't just called to be students of the Bible, we must also be students of culture and people around us if we're going to bring the word to them.

With Lloyd-Jones, you're challenged to think very carefully about the primacy of preaching and the role of the preacher in God's economy, which if true, means we need to give as much preparation to ourselves as we do in preparing the sermons we preach.

FW: Present-day? Why?

Eugene: This might surprise people and again it's hard to arrive at a best book on preaching presently out. The obvious one would be Bryan Chapell's *Christ Centered Preaching* which has been a must read for Christ College students because of its commitment to helping students preach redemptively. But one that's going to be my go to moving forward is a recently released book on preaching, *Preaching In*

A New Key: Crafting Sermons In Post-Christian Neighborhoods by Mark Glanville. A graduate of the college, Mark hasn't just worked in pastoral ministry here in NSW, but was the associate professor of pastoral theology at Regent College in Vancouver. Mark's book doesn't just have a commitment to expository preaching that is redemptive, but also preaching that recognises that the word preached is first to form communities that reflect the grace of the gospel, the church as God's new community playing its role in God's redemption story in post-Christian society.

FW: How about an unfair question: seeing as this is your first visit to MELB, are there cultural differences you're expecting to sense between PCA (NSW) and PCA (Victoria)?

Eugene: That's a hard one as I'm not really familiar with the Presbyterian landscape in Victoria. What I do know though is our common commitment to the gospel and confessional theology.

I preached Acts 16 recently at our mother church, Chinese Presbyterian Church in Surry Hills (which planted GracePoint Presbyterian 26 years ago). And what's astounding is that at the end of Acts 16 the church that met in Lydia's home would have been made up of people so culturally diverse only the gospel could have brought them together. You have Lydia the wealthy non Jewish woman and her family, you have a slave girl no longer spiritually possessed, and you have the battle hardened jailer and his family, all eating and worshipping together around the gospel that saved them. I believe that's what we share, a love for the gospel that has saved us and a desire to see men and women saved.

FW: How can we pray for you?

Eugene: I'd covet your prayers for me as I prepare the four messages for the upcoming Ministry Conference. I'd also covet your prayers as our family has had a very hard season of ministry. We'd ask that you pray Romans 12:11-12 for us that we would never lose our zeal in serving the Lord, that we would be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer, entrusting all things to the Lord for him to work, and always doing what is good.

MINISTRY MOVES

- The Presbytery of Maroondah licensed Ryan Brightwell to preach the Gospel in a service at Woori Yallock on Friday 31st January 2025.
- Cameron Weir was ordained and inducted as the minister of Colac Presbyterian Church by the Presbytery of South West Victoria on Friday 21st February 2025.

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PTC 50TH JUBILEE SERVICE

On Friday 16th February, staff, students and friends of the Presbyterian Theological College gathered at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Camberwell. The occasion was to mark a jubilee, celebrating 50 years since the college was reorganised as the Presbyterian Theological Hall at Hawthorn in 1974.

Rev. Dr. John Wilson, lecturer in Church History and Practical Theology, gave a historical retrospective highlighting the goodness of God to PTC over the last half century and more.

The Moderator, Rev. Ian Hutton, preached on Seeing the Hand of God from Nehemiah 2:1-20 Incorporated in the jubilee service was the installation of lecturers Rev. Ben Nelson (New Testament), Rev. Dr. Karl Hood (Pastoral Care), Dr. John Lee (Theological Studies) and Rev. Martin Pakula (Hebrew and Old Testament).

The new Principal, Rev. Dr. Jared Hood, will be installed at the Commencement Service and Graduation Ceremony at Scots' Church, Melbourne, on 28th March.



REVIEW: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA EDUCATIONAL SERIES

STEPHEN MCDONALD

*The PCV Church and Nation Committee
YouTube: @presbyterianchurchofvictoria*

The Presbyterian Church of Victoria doesn't have treasures like the Vatican Apostolic Archive, but it does have some hidden gems.

Lurking on the PCV's YouTube account is an excellent series of short and polished videos produced by the Church and Nation Committee and released through 2023 and 2024.

Featuring some familiar faces, the videos are between 2 and 3.5 minutes long. They address how we can know God, the Bible, where we come from, sin, covenant theology, Jesus (His person and work), the Holy Spirit, the Christian life, the church, end times, Presbyterianism, marriage and sexuality, government, and 'the tricky stuff'. And their content is clear and Biblical.

If you've wondered or been asked, 'What do Christians believe about _____?' you'll probably find an answer here. I've used them when people have asked 'How can I trust the Bible', 'What's distinctive about the Presbyterian church?' or 'You don't baptise babies, do you?'

Sometimes it's better to share a short video, rather than emailing an article or sending a long text message.

The production values are excellent, including (occasionally quirky) graphics. (Keep the blobfish away, please!).

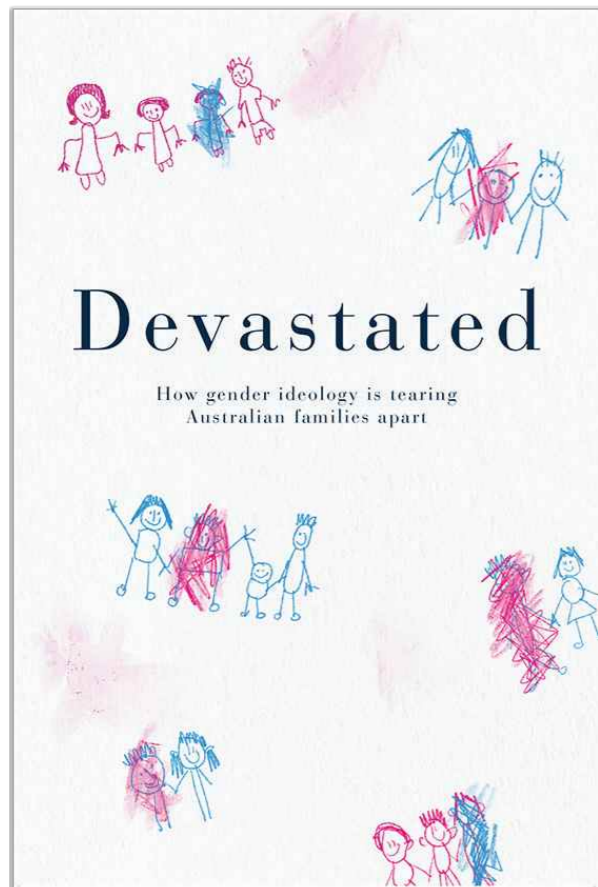
So, we've happily embedded them in the 'what we believe' page on our church website. Maybe you could use them in youth group or Sunday school, membership classes, or Bible studies and growth groups.

This isn't just a series of apologetic or evangelistic presentations. They cover the breadth of Biblical doctrine (without getting bogged down) and show how the Bible has one coherent story about salvation in Jesus.

I really love is how they focus on the big stuff and keep going back to the Bible, while not being ashamed of the emphases of Presbyterianism.

The worst thing about them is the viewer count. Don't let them be overlooked any longer!

Stephen McDonald, Benalla Regional Parish

REVIEW:**DEVASTATED. HOW GENDER IDEOLOGY IS TEARING AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES APART****JENNY MCDONALD**

Devastated. How Gender Ideology is tearing Australian Families apart.
Kirralie Smith (Binary: 2024)

For many today, my story is my truth. But some stories aren't allowed to be told.

That's why *Devastated* is such an important book.

Young people who were told to be their authentic selves are now silenced by a medical industry and the ideological movement behind it. Kirralie Smith gives a voice to ten young people who tell their stories of suffering at the hands of the transgender industry. She explains how they (and many like them) are victims of the legal, medical, and education systems.

The UK Parliament's Cass Review into gender identity services for children and young people immediately stopped radical approaches to gender dysphoria there. But other nations hold unflinchingly to the use of puberty blockers and irreversible surgery.

A recent inquiry by the NSW Government determined to carry on, and attempts to hold a similar review in Victoria have been widely resisted.

As Smith states in the introduction, "Dr Jillian Spencer, a senior psychiatrist at the Queensland Children's Hospital found out the hard way that it is not acceptable to even question the use of experimental, off-label use of medications such as puberty blockers. As a result, Dr Spencer has been accused of transphobia and stood down from her role following a complaint made against her."

What could be the danger of hearing from experts and letting people tell their stories?

Devastated does just that. But it's more than stories. The practitioner's voice is there too. And there's analysis of the cultural and legal situation, and the media's role in the whole thing.

For an introduction to the broader field of gender, try *The Gender Revolution* by Patricia Weerakoon with Robert Smith and Kamal Weerakoon. Readers wanting to read more of the history of the transgender movement should consider Carl Trueman's *Strange New World* or the meatier *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*.

In *Devastated*, Kirralie Smith includes resources for families facing these devastating challenges. We need to be aware and informed, but not only about gender-related curriculum. Sexualised content can be smuggled into language courses and other parts of the school program. Smith's organisation Binary.org.au has more resources to help.

But it isn't not all down to parents. Christians can have a real influence by being aware of how questions of sexuality are being presented in the public square, in the media, through council-sponsored events and at libraries.

The concluding chapter considers the future and what it could look like for our children. Powerful social forces and vested interest groups can seem immovable. But as people of the truth, we should not be afraid to speak for those who are being silenced (Proverbs 31:8-9).

As Smith says on the back cover "The Time for Silence is over."

Jenny McDonald is a member of Grace Presbyterian Church Wodonga.

ESSAY:**MY YEAR IN EVANGELISM****JAKE MARTIN**

I once heard the national director of the Ministry Training Strategy (MTS) Ben Pfahlert call for people to write on their year in evangelism. Even though I find evangelism hard, I have decided to take up Ben's challenge, and rather than submitting another 'My Year in Books' article to TGCA, to instead share my year in evangelism.

MOVING HOUSE

At the start of the year, we moved into a new house in a block of ten units in eastern Melbourne. My family wanted to be intentional about living such good lives among them that it would bring glory to God and his gospel (1 Pet 2:12) so we aimed to be friendly and hospitable. We were able to share that we were Christians early on, trusting this would lead to gospel opportunities in the future. To be honest, we were slow with hospitality, taking three months to have a neighbour over for a playdate. But later this neighbour came to an event at our church and the church's generous hospitality made an impression on them. I now know the names of most of our neighbours and have been thanked many times for doing common maintenance around the unit block. I have not yet clearly shared the gospel with any of our neighbours, but I keep praying for opportunities.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

This year I had the opportunity to share why I am studying theology with a group of my long-term non-Christian friends. One of them asked, "Do you find that it gives you more purpose?" I responded in front of the group that I now have so much more confidence in the Christian faith. I keep praying for this group of friends and prioritise catching up with them. God continues to give me opportunities to share my faith when we do catch up.

I have also formed many new friendships through our two kids. We are still in contact with our parents group and at a birthday party this year I heard the classic comment on the Bible, "It's all a matter of opinion." Being fresh from a textual criticism lecture, I was firing on all four cylinders and did not answer well. Upon reflection, I should have slowed down and explored his exposure to religious texts, as this is what led to his statement. I should have gently shared how the Bible stands out for its strong historical accuracy. My wife suggested we could also work the conversation towards an invite to reading the Bible, as he had shown interest in talking about it. We pray that God may soften his heart by his word and through our witness.

**STREET EVANGELISM**

This year I participated in a theological college mission that focused on street evangelism. This differs from evangelising friends or neighbours because you usually only get one chance to share the gospel with the person you approach. I am hesitant about this method, for it can be disconnected from the local church. Our college mission team went out to Moonee Ponds Shopping Centre, Footscray Station, and Sunshine Library with people from a church in the area. We had a flyer with a local church's Christmas events on one side and 'the Christmas Rescue Story' on the other. We made sure everything else we gave out also had the church's address on it.

With trepidation, I picked my spot and repeated my standard line, "Can I talk to you about the true meaning of Christmas?" Within the first ten minutes, one young man slowed and took a flyer. He looked confused so I asked if he had heard of Jesus. Surprisingly he hadn't. He shared that he had a Buddhist background and that he tried to live as a good person. I distinguished trying to be good and being perfect and he agreed. I shared that God's standard is perfection and no one is perfect. We need someone to save us and be perfect for us so we can get to heaven. I was hesitant to call for a response, though in hindsight I wish I had. Instead, I finished by asking his name and talking about where the church was located and the timing of their events.

This conversation was not the norm: rejection was. God gave me only one other opportunity to share the gospel with someone who had never heard it before. But rejection, my trainer said, "It's good for the soul." And what a privilege to plant gospel seeds.

Jake Martin is a candidate for the ministry at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne

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ESSAY:

SOMETIMES FACE-TO-FACE ISN'T BETTER

MIKEY LYNCH

A general pastoral rule of thumb is that difficult issues can be better resolved face to face, or at least over the phone. Rather than ever-lengthening replies and replies-to-replies, a direct personal mode of communication can be both more irenic and efficient. Irenic, because both parties are reminded of one another's humanity, and when one hears the other's tone of voice and sees their facial expression they are a little less likely to misunderstand their intentions and goodwill. Efficient, because clarifications and context can be provided straight away, avoiding painful and unnecessary sidetracks.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

But face-to-face (or voice-to-voice) isn't always the best way to deal with a difficult matter. For one thing, culture and technology do shape social interactions and expectations. The telephone is a relatively new technology and has since been augmented with text message options, both SMS and instant messaging apps. Giving someone a call isn't more socially or morally upright than sending a telegraph or a letter—or an SMS or voice memo for that matter. Like all technologies, it has its strengths and weaknesses.

Even the ease and frequency with which we can prioritise face-to-face communication depends on economic independence, health, transport, technology and proximity to others.

POSSIBLE ESCALATION

Further, moving a conversation to a more direct and personal mode can, in some contexts, escalate a situation, rather than soothe it. It has the potential to raise anxiety. It might, unwittingly, be perceived as a power move, forcing a more confrontational form of interaction that might even intimidate. The ringing phone adds a need for an urgent decision (to answer the phone or not) and immediate responses during the conversation. A scheduled meeting (or planned phone call) might bring with it nervous anticipation. Travelling to meet someone on their turf can communicate that you are going out of your way for the sake of the relationship. But it might also seem like you are coming to 'sort them out!'

SOMETIMES WRITING IS BETTER

The apostle Paul reasons along these lines in the second of his New Testament letters to them:

I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm. So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad but you whom I have grieved? I wrote as I did, so that when I came I would not be distressed by those who should have made me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you, that you would all share my joy. For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you. (2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4)

Granted, the situation with the Corinthian church was at the extreme end, and Paul had a unique authority over the church as both apostle and church planter, but his decision is still one we can learn from. Choosing to write a letter delayed a visit that may have forced his hand to act in a more interventionist, disciplinary mode. The letter gave the Corinthians time to read, reflect and act on their own initiative and authority (see 1 Cor 5:1-5 and 2 Cor 2:5-11 and further 1 Cor 4:14-21 and 2 Cor 13:1-10),[1] so that Paul's visit could have a different, gentler tone.

Sometimes, a topic is sufficiently weighty or complex that it is worth attempting to discuss it in person or over the phone. At other times it is worth considering whether its weight and complexity mean it's best handled in writing.

Mikey Lynch is the editor of The Gospel Coalition Australia and former Home Missionary in the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania

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CAMP DIARY: PVY SUMMER CAMP 2025

Summer camp 2025 is underway! With a rainy start, check-ins were completed and friends reunited. We were also encouraged by hearing our speaker, Darren Middleton, share his story of meeting Christ. We are excited to see how God uses this week for his glory and our good!

Day 2 was filled with fun, laughter, and plenty of sunshine, with group activities kicking off! In the evening, we had workshops on topics like purity in a porn-saturated world, sharing your testimony, creation care, and a special guest presentation from the Presbyterian Inland Mission about the true essence of mission work. It was a great day for everyone!

Day 3 was a blast! An encouraging morning with a session and studies focused on God's greatness, followed by a sunny afternoon filled with friendly competition. A country v city soccer match caused some controversy, but it was a wonderful afternoon overall!

Day 4, the biggest day! From a huge game of capture the flag to an incredible trivia night, today had it all. The campers also brought their best cartoon themed costumes and enjoyed time with one another over dinner and throughout activities. A wonderful week ended on a high!

The final day included the announcement of the winning activity teams, lots of photos with friends, and one-on-one catch-ups with study leaders. The final session challenged the youth in their thinking and Nick's testimony explained the gospel to the youth clearly. What a wonderful week it has been! God is so gracious to us.

PVY Summer Camp Executive Team 2025





CHRIS BALZER NOW WITH CHRIST

The Rev Christie Balzer, went to be with Christ on Friday the 24th of January after a short battle with cancer. Chris and his late wife Leah, served at the Talua Theological Training Institute in Vanuatu from 2003 to 2004.

Prior to Talua, Chris taught at the Sydney Presbyterian Theological Centre for many years. He was passionately committed to the truth of the gospel and its spread. After the seismic events associated with the 1977 disruption to the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Chris poured his energy into playing his part in the recovery of the Bible within the Presbyterian Church.

Chris once wrote an article about the resurrection of believers and said:

“If we really believed that only those who trust in Christ for their salvation will go to be with him after they die, then we’d be more involved in missionary work abroad. More of us would go ourselves, and more of us would financially support those who do go.

It was for this reason that, in the late 18th century and the first half of the 19th century, thousands of Europeans left the comparative comfort and safety of their homes to preach the gospel in far away places, knowing that many of them would die there and never see their loved ones in Europe again. The men knew that many of their wives would die on the mission field. The women knew that they would bury many of their children there.”

Praise God for Christ’s resurrection!



CHRIS AND LEAH BALZER



MOTOR YAT (CENTRE) TRAINING SOUTH SUDANESE PASTORS

AN INVESTMENT FOR ETERNITY

“My word ... goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Is 55:11)

God’s word never fails. It’s the investment that lasts for eternity. We ask that you consider leaving a gift to APWM National Committee in your will to help us continue to declare God’s word throughout the world. Please note this is for the National Committee, not the APWM Victoria Committee.

You might like to consider giving:

- a. a percentage of your estate to APWM
- b. a specific amount to APWM
- c. a piece of property to APWM

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

“I give to The PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (AUSTRALIA) PROPERTY TRUST for the Australian Presbyterian World Mission National Committee (intended amount), (description of property/item) free of testamentary charges and duties for its general purposes and I declare that the receipt of the Secretary of the Trust shall be sufficient discharge to my Executors.”

Giving to APWM for its general purposes allows APWM to best respond to the needs of the time.

If you need any help with this then please contact us on (02) 8073 7490 or email us at national@apwm.org.au.

Contact
 Australian Presbyterian World Mission
 1 Clarence Street Burwood NSW 2134
national@apwm.org.au
 Phone: (02) 8073 7490
www.apwm.org.au

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YOUR INVESTMENT IN SOULS IN MALAWI

We praise God that, at the time of writing, \$140,000 has been donated for APWM's Malawi (Chichewa) Bible project and 5,500 Bibles have been ordered. Over the last few months, the team from Victoria who will be traveling to Malawi in June, have been undergoing training. [Please note that team members are travelling at their own expense].

Team Leader, the Rev John Wilson from Victoria says: "Over the next two or three mission trips, over 5,500 people from the poorest Malawian villages will be blessed as they read God's Word. For many of these dear Christians, they have never had their own copy of God's Word."

In their family units, small groups and churches, they will be able to read God's Word in their own language and grow in their knowledge of Christ. Thank you for your investment in souls in Malawi. As the members of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, you have raised the standard high, and you've purposed to bless the hearts of over 5,500 of Malawi's poorest with the eternal blessing of the Word of God."

Please note: The Appeal was closed on the 28th of February. Any donation for Bibles for Malawi received after the closing date will be gratefully received and will be used for unforeseen Chichewa Bible distribution needs. Any remaining funds will then be placed in APWM's General Funds to be used for Partner Church causes as decided by the APWM National Committee.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO DISTRIBUTE BIBLES?

What is involved in distributing Bibles in Malawi? Team Leader, the Rev John Wilson explains:

We have a Presbyterian Church of Victoria-based team preparing to go to Malawi from the 24th of June to the 19th of July this year. The team will give three full weeks to distribute Bibles in villages and to train local Christians in the use of their new Bibles. I'm so grateful to God for gathering together 16 talented members (each self-funded) from 9 different Victorian congregations (aged from 20 to 80, 11 men and 5 women). The training and preparation to go is a six-month commitment. When we arrive in Malawi we'll divide into 4 groups and, by visiting 2 villages each week, we might be able to distribute 2,000 Bible packages (leaving another 2,000 in the shed).

I already have one expression of interest to form a second mission team planned for June - July 2026. If the Bibles Appeal continues to flourish, then we'll probably need a third team for 2027. Who will come with me?

I mentioned six-months training and preparation. This means:

- Practicing how to meet and greet one another in Chichewa;
- Learning how to use and teach the COMA method of Bible study;
- Learning how to teach the Bible story overview in small groups;
- Honing what is in our skill-set and giftedness in terms of singing, reading Scripture, children and youth ministry, preaching and women's ministry.

