

Winter 25 / Presbyterian Church of Victoria



FELLOW WORKERS

**PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL
TO THE WHOLE WORLD
BEFORE THE END**



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Fellow Workers

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EDITORIAL: IS THE GOSPEL SPREADING?

STEPHEN MCDONALD

Is the Gospel succeeding in our day in places like ours?

The Christian church has been announcing the good news for nearly 2,000 years. But are the better days behind us—or still ahead? Is the gospel still spreading?

At first glance, you might think the answer is no. Declines in church membership and attendance make the headlines. But there's another story being told.

The Australian Census shows that from 2006 to 2011, nearly 120,000 Australians aged 55 and up moved from no religion to Christianity. From 2016 to 2021, that jumped to almost 195,000.

And what about young Australians? Over 85,000 young people moved towards Christianity in the most recent data.

It's a local echo of something happening globally. The UK Bible Society's Quiet Revival report says:

"Both within and outside the Church, young adults are more spiritually engaged than any other living generation, with Bible reading and belief in God on the rise."

Church attendance in the UK is up 56% since 2018. One in five men aged 18–24 goes to church monthly. And about one-third of people who don't currently attend church say they would—if invited.

So yes—the gospel is bearing fruit, even here, even now.

That's what Paul told the Colossians:

"The gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world" (Colossians 1:6).

And that's not just in Paul's day, or in some other culture. It's what the gospel always does—then and there, here and now.

As Tony Payne puts it in *The Thing Is*:

"The spread of the gospel was like that: growing, spreading and making its way in the world, not by military takeover or with political fanfare, but by the simple spreading of a vivid message that bore fruit in people's lives; that completely changed their lives."

SINNERS TRANSFERRED

But, what does it look like when the gospel bears fruit?

It looks like lives radically changed. In Colossians 1:13 Paul says God "has rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves."

The domain of darkness was our natural home. As Paul says later in verse 21, we were alienated and hostile to God. Maybe politely hostile. Maybe openly rebellious. But spiritually dead.

And yet—through Jesus' blood on the cross—God rescues us. Transfers us. New kingdom. New loyalty. New home.

Why does He do this?

Because everything—everything—is for Jesus. "All things have been created through him and for him." (Colossians 1:16)

As Tony Payne puts it: "God's highest purpose is to crown his Son Jesus as the Lord and Ruler of all... to enthrone Jesus as the crucified and risen Saviour King."

That's God's mission—to glorify His Son by rescuing people and bringing them under His rule. And He does it "through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:19–22).

SAINTS TRANSFORMED

But that's not the end. Sometimes we think of missions as if it is: God is saving people. And that's amazing! But it isn't the end. Why does God save us?

So that the gospel would bear fruit (v6) to the glory of Jesus. Remember: Everything is for Him (v16).

That's why Paul prays that the believers in

Colossae would "live a life worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:10).

That's not about being good enough to become Christians. It's about living lives that match our new identity in Christ:

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20).

As Paul writes in Colossians 1, God's plan is for the gospel to grow fruit in us, not just give us place among His people on earth and a ticket to heaven in the end. He tells us what that gospel fruit must look like:

It means changing what we know (v9a), learning to be wise (v9b), denying ourselves to please God instead (v10), growing in strength and endurance and patience (v11), being joyful and giving thanks (v12a), all growing out of the gospel: God's saving grace qualifies us (v12b)

That's a total change of mind and a completely difference approach to life. Are you being transformed into someone who lives like you belong to Him?

Friends, this is God's mission. It always has been.

We can be confident, like Paul was, that God's gospel is bearing fruit and growing.

Fellow workers, let's pray that God would use our words to rescue others from darkness. And let's live out the transformation He's working in us—denying ourselves, and living for Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Stephen McDonald is Convener of the State News Committee



INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS SIRIWEERA

WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME SIGNIFICANT ENCOURAGEMENTS AND CHALLENGES YOU'VE ENCOUNTERED AS MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER?

I am very thankful to God for the opportunity to serve as the MDO of the PCV. It has been a tremendous honour and privilege, and to be able to help serve in that capacity. I am deeply thankful to the Assembly for giving me that humbling experience to serve the Lord in that way in that church that we love so much.

I'll complete seven years in this role as MDO and it's given me incredible opportunities to serve, especially to visit churches across the state.

In terms of encouragements, it's been wonderful to see some of our congregations move from being appointment parishes to sanctioned charges. We've seen that through some of the training that has been done on church revitalisation and sharing your faith. It has been encouraging to see congregations take some of those aspects and implement them in their local churches.

I have encountered a great desire in the life of our people to reach out with the Gospel. They want to see their communities meet Christ. We need to keep looking for ways to connect with the local community.

In terms of the challenges, there are many challenges obviously that we are facing. We need to keep in mind also the cultural context in which we are ministering today in this country. Gone are the days when people just walked into church and it was the epicentre of the local community.

Another challenge is the decreasing numbers attending some of our congregations. This can be discouraging, which is a major challenge.

Further, there's the need to have new elders come on board, especially where they are in short supply. We always need godly, gracious, local leadership.

ARE THERE ANY PRIORITIES OR CHALLENGES YOU THINK THE PCV NEEDS TO GRASP?

The revitalisation of local churches is essential.

This is a work of God. But we use the gifts that He has given us. And we pray for revitalisation. If we don't see our churches revitalised, there is a flow on effect on the wider church. Where will missionaries and candidates for the ministry come from? Healthy churches.

And church plants require healthy churches to plant them.

I'm a realist, but also an optimist. We need to see what is going on and understand the struggles. But I believe that our strength is not in committees or in the church. I believe in the words of Jesus who said, "I will build my church." We need to hold on to those great promises for his church. If we don't have that outlook, we might as well pack up. But we know that our Saviour is more concerned for the church than we are.

We need to be praying for our congregations that we will grow deeper in our love for Christ. The Ephesian church in Revelation lost its first love. If my love for Christ increases by his grace and through the enduring work of his Holy Spirit, so will my enthusiasm. And mission mindedness will increase as well. So we need to bring our congregations to love Christ more deeply.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS WILL YOU BE DOING AS DIRECTOR OF AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN WORLD MISSION?

The fundamental work is supporting missionary families overseas. Giving them support and encouragement.

In addition, I'll be connecting with mission organisations in Australia who partner with APWM and maintaining relationships with partner churches overseas, especially in South East Asia and the Pacific. I'll be flying to East Timor within a week of taking up the role, then to Vanuatu.

Another important opportunity is to visit churches to speak about APWM. That's about encouraging people to think about global missions including going as missionaries themselves. Missions is exciting work and presents great opportunities to see God at work.

RECENT DIRECTORS OF APWM HAVE BEEN BASED IN SYDNEY. HOW DO YOU HOPE YOUR APPOINTMENT MIGHT ENCOURAGE THE PCV TO ENGAGE WITH MISSIONS?

I hope to encourage people to be aware of the need for global missions.

It's easy to focus on our patch. That's very important. But we need to pray for God to broaden that perspective. That creates awareness of God's great work outside the borders of our local church.

So, pray for our mission partners overseas, invite missionaries on furlough to speak about their work, use the APWM prayer letter, and pray for our missionaries in congregational prayers. And give to global missions.

After all, our God is a missionary God.

HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU AND THE WORK OF APWM AS YOU TAKE UP THIS NEW ROLE?

Give thanks for Kevin Murray and his help as I transfer into this role.

Please pray for strength and wisdom for Rose and myself.

Pray that God will use Rose and myself for the good of his church and the glory of his name. That is what drives us.

Pray for protection in travel.

Ask for continuing encouragements as God does his work through His people.

PMWU COUNTRY RALLY 2025 - BENALLA

Benalla PWMU hosted our annual Country Rally this year and it was a delightful occasion for the 64 people who attended. We experienced the friendly and warm country hospitality and a ministry feast from our three guest speakers.

The day began with morning tea supplied by the ladies from Benalla followed by the morning program with Psalm 33:1-4 read by the branch president, Lyn Boyd. Lyn has been involved with PWMU for 76 years! This was followed by a devotion given by Stephen McDonald (minister at Benalla PC) based on Colossians 1:3-14. We have been transferred into the kingdom of God and are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus.

The offering was taken up during the second hymn, with a total of \$1,948.10 donated. This will be shared between the three guest speakers.

Teresa P shared the story of herself and Rob, how they met, the experience in 2018 that forced them to return to Australia and the path into diaspora ministry (diaspora = dispersed people of the world). Their ministry involves connecting with the Central Asian people in their neighbourhood including sharing meals together, a food distribution ministry, tutoring, a homework club and an online ministry which is providing more opportunities to share the gospel.

Yousif & Vivian followed with their story, focusing on their journey over the last two years. The recording ministry in East Africa has been progressing, but the Trauma Healing ministry training they received during this time has opened up important and much needed opportunities to share the healing power of God. They are currently in Australia to finish off some projects and to reassess the next step for their work. They will be doing deputation most likely in July and August.

Lunch was then served, providing an opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new ones. After lunch we heard from Samuel & Dhruti. They had to return from the field late last year due to security concerns. In the two years they were there, Samuel had trained a number of men to be pastors, and he is aiming to continue the work online. He hopes to be able to return occasionally to visit, but even that is risky.

Please keep all these workers in your prayers. They want to continue these ministries in whatever way possible and are seeking God's guidance for their futures.

PWMU would like to extend thanks to Benalla PWMU and Benalla PC for hosting the event. They are a small branch but did a great job!

Alison Stanley
PWMU Secretary



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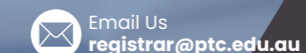
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WAR, ACTUAL WAR IS BACK. ARE WE READY?

BY STEPHEN MCALPINE

WAR: IT'S INTERESTED IN US

Never mind the “culture wars”, are we as Christian leaders preparing our people for actual war? Are we as Christians preparing our hearts and lives for what may eventuate? This is no scare tactic. We need to be interested in war because it would seem that once again, real war is interested in us. The culture war was once seen as the bogeyman for us, but war, actual war in real time, appears to be on its way back.

If and when real war kicks in again for us in the West, we may find ourselves wistfully longing for those days when we could mess around with the peripherals. Of course in saying that, many of you will declare “But these culture wars are central, and they’re bitter. And they’re important to win!”

And we say and feel all of that precisely because real war has been peripheral. But no longer.

We’ve been figuring out how to help many a Christian navigate the pronouns and shibboleths of the woke era. But what about helping them figure out how to suffer the loss of their loved ones, or the subjugation of a neighbouring country by a hostile player?

And even when there was war, it was in places we could not pronounce. We would pray for them in church but that was that. But let's face facts: we are most likely going to see a far wider, and more intrusive global conflict coming our way sooner rather than later.

Why do I say it? Well a lot of the signs are there. Huge pressure points that have built up for the past 80 year since the end of WWII. These pressurepoints are tectonic plates that will need some sort of relief and realignment. And war will likely do that.

Wars spread when empires grow and seek to expand, whether in terms of territory or ideology. And empires have grown again in the eight decades since the end of the last war. The fall of the Soviet East was a chimera. Talk of “one-world-order” is long forgotten as we fracture into increasingly bellicose alignments.

Yet we’ve spent so much time in Christian leadership, training and online conversations talking about the “culture wars” that somehow we’ve forgotten that actual war has never gone away in the world, and that the current unrests within countries and between countries is ramping up.

Ironically the culture war within our Western nations has made us uniquely unfit to either be ready for a war in terms of our national preparedness, realise our own minds that this could possibly happen. We are divided internally on the very nature of right and wrong, what constitutes good politics, what it means to be a human, and whose rights trump whose. We are flaccid and unprepared for true conflict.

We are certainly not united – and probably won't be, if war should come. As I said, I suspect that

sometime in the near future we are going to look back at the “good old days” of the culture wars and sigh wistfully.

REAL WAR IS COMING

Yet all the signs are there that real war is coming. Even this week, Australia's Defence Minister, Richard Marles, declared that Australia will inevitably be drawn into a US-China conflict. That's that nice party, the ALP, remember. Not those nasty Liberals and their bellicosity.

Not that China is a threat in terms of invasion of Australia I might add, but as a land mass the size we are, and with the Pacific Ocean on the east being of the strategic importance it is, there's little chance Australia would not be involved. There is simply too much at stake. I know you don't want to think that, what with cost of living and house prices being your main concerns, but it should be keeping you up at night just as much.

Over the last few decades, whenever pastors or Bible teachers were quoting these words of Jesus:

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. (Matthew 24:6)

Much of our interest was on this end that was to come. Not so much on the wars and rumours of them. Over the past five decades especially, the evangelical machine has leaned into end-times/last days ideas (whether the hastening of them, the speculation about them, or indeed the reframing of

them within a progressive framework).

But what about those wars eh? Clearly we hear of more wars because we are online 24-7. I still remember the first Gulf War in which we were glued to our TVs. The first war to be played out in real time for us. But we were still at the mercy of the networks and what they wished to show.

Now? We have instant access to war online, streamed and presented in myriad ways from on-the-ground by people who are experiencing it as they film it. And this has all sorts of psychological consequences.

A missionary couple whose furlough to Australia from the Democratic Republic of Congo occurred just prior to the recent violence there, told us of how they were video-WhatsApping their church members back in DRC who were hiding in the jungle with their children, in fear of their lives as Christians around them were slaughtered. Modern technology meets brutality.

Part of our conceit of course was that we were much too modern for war. Just like the moderns in the early part of the 20th century before the chanel house that was WWI. And in term of history, we believed – along with Francis Fukuyama, that we were at the end of it. The desire for global supply chains and liberal democracy was the goal. And everyone wanted those products.

Except the mullahs of course. Except for the

mullahs and anyone else who would not be sated by a quiet life filled with white goods and trips to Bali or Ibiza.

War is coming. And most Christians – like most of their secular neighbours and friends – are not ready for it. Just as those at the start of the 20th century were not ready for it. Their lack of preparedness was as much mental as logistical.

Many assumed when the Great War began that it would be over in weeks, a few months at most. Well, four years and ten million death later, an exhausted West declared that this would be the war to end all wars. Yet it was only a precursor to what was coming.

So are our churches preparing our people for war? We ought to be. We ought to be in the same way that we should be preparing people for death. I know, I know, we ought to be preparing them for life too. But it's a secular conceit of the healthy West that we do not face death every day and so we become complacent about it in a way that others in places (such as the DRC) are not.

Yet even when we had a taste of a few deaths that we thought ought not to happen through a pandemic that was far less devastating to actual life than we feared, and more devastating to our way of life, we were unable to cope.

Is our teaching, or our preaching, or our conversation among our people laced with a sobriety about what it might mean to have the “good life” taken away not merely by a car accident or a financial crisis (these things affecting individuals far more than whole countries), but also by a large scale, long lasting war?

It's clear to me that the general population has approximately zero appetite for war. And that aligns with us as Christians. I mean, who wants war? But in terms of the ability to navigate war and the rumour (or idea) of war? Then Christians should be well ahead of the curve because of Jesus' very words.

But note Jesus' very words. The wars and rumours of wars won't usher in the end. We have spent an inordinate amount of time and energy in

evangelicalism in the West trying to predict which war is the war that will herald the return of Jesus. For too long every oil crisis or nuclear threat was viewed as the final domino, or the last grains of sand in the hour-glass.

Yet Jesus says no such thing. He just says that we will have to live through that and not be alarmed.

If you are in ministry leadership and you want to prepare people for war, in terms of spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, then you need to take Jesus' words seriously. And perhaps you need to read around the issue and find some sort of handbook to help.

CS LEWIS: THE PROBLEM OF WAR

At least check out the works of CS Lewis. Remember, he wrote *The Problem of Pain* in 1939! He was familiar with pain and had seen a lot of it. Lewis wrote through war and wrote about war. And he experienced war first hand along with his brother, as soldiers in the trenches of WWI. He was no ivory-towered academic all of his life. Who else do you know in a humanities faculty in a modern university who has fought in a war?

Think about that, one of the most influential literary minds of the 21st century, who wrote myriad words about so many theological and pastoral matters, fought in the trenches and the mud and the blood. When he wrote the war scenes in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, I wonder if he had flashbacks to the cries and screams of actual dying humans.

Here are just two things he said about war:

Never, in peace or war, commit your virtue or your happiness to the future. Happy work is best done by the man who takes his long-term plans somewhat lightly and works from moment to moment 'as to the Lord.' It is only our daily bread that we are encouraged to ask for. The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received.

And:

War creates no absolutely new situation: it simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it. Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice.

There's something about Lewis that constantly remains timely. Read him on war. Google his sermons and speeches and buy his works.

But pay particular attention to this last quote. War – just as culture wars and pandemics are – are apocalyptic. They reveal things that may otherwise lie undisturbed, or under-examined. If war does anything to us in our world of white goods and Bali, surely it pushes our gaze over the precipice that we have long wished to ignore, and shown us the dreadful realities of life, death, suffering and eternity.

And that means if our sermons have not already been addressing these deep pastoral issues (they are after all, as Lewis says, NOT absolutely new situations), then we are behind the eight ball. We can't take out of the bank what we have not put in. Unless we as God's people have a resilience about us that is drawn from this reality of the human situation always on the brink, then we will scrambling around unsure what to do when the brink becomes too close for comfort.

CHRISTIANS AND WAR

Yet there is comfort. What does Jesus go on to say in Matthew 24?:

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Jesus doesn't gild the lily! This message is to every generation. We don't get a hall pass from all of this stuff simply because we are well-educated Westerners. But the end will come. Not the end of our hopes, but the beginning of the new creation in which the one who makes wars to cease will make all wars to cease forever. But until then, wars and rumours of wars. But do not be alarmed.

And in a sense, that's what CS Lewis would have said too. In a sermon preached at the outset of WWII, he said this to young students embarking on their studies:

If men had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure the search would never have begun. We are mistaken when we compare war with "normal life". Life has never been normal. Even those periods which we think most tranquil, like the nineteenth century, turn out, on closer inspection, to be full of cries, alarms, difficulties, emergencies.

The Christian is most readily fitted for this perspective on life, because most of all, we have a perspective on death! Lewis goes on:

What does war do to death? It certainly does not make it more frequent: 100 per cent of us die and the percentage cannot be increased. It puts several deaths earlier. But I hardly suppose that is what we fear. Certainly when the moment comes it will make little difference how many years we have behind us. As far as I can find out, what we call natural death is usually preceded by suffering: and a battlefield is one of the very few places where one has a reasonable prospect of dying with no pain at all. Does it decrease our chance of dying at peace with God? I cannot believe it. If active service does not persuade a man to prepare for death what conceivable concatenation of circumstances would? Yet war does do something to death. It forces us to remember it.

And for a society that has both forgotten death in terms of being focussed on “the good life”, yet one which strangely remains in love with death (end of life and start of life being prime examples), the memento mori triggered by a war may fill our church – and our culture – with the sobriety that is so desperately lacking in so much of our focus and efforts.

*Stephen McAlpine is a speaker and the author of *Future Proof* and *Being the Bad Guys*, which won the 2021 SparkLick Australian Christian Book of the Year Award. He blogs at stephenmc Alpine.com where this article was first published*

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THE LIMITS OF THE BIG IDEA IN PREACHING

BY MIKEY LYNCH

A simple recipe for a sermon is to identify the big idea in the passage and then communicate that in the sermon. But like all simple recipes, this approach has its flaws that maturing preachers and listeners alike should know about.

The form and substance of a faithful expository sermon, it is widely agreed, should be the ‘big idea’ of the biblical text being preached. This approach was advocated for by Haddon Robinson’s excellent book *Biblical Preaching* (originally published in 1980) and can be found in John Stott’s *Between Two Worlds* (originally published in 1982). In Australia, this way of describing expository sermons was popularised by excellent preaching training resources by David Cook and John Chapman and has found its way into the training material for AFES’s National Training Event. This approach can be expanded in various ways, such as clarifying the various components that make up the big idea (its ‘supporting ideas’ or ‘complements’) and describing the ‘big question’ that the big idea answers.

BENEFITS OF THE BIG IDEA APPROACH

A great outcome of the big idea approach is that it forces the preacher to pay careful attention to the text of Scripture, to strive to understand what it is

saying and how it is saying it. To be forced to find the big idea and supporting ideas in the biblical text is to break the habit of using the text as initial inspiration for good and biblical ideas that you have thought, or read and heard elsewhere. There are many true and edifying things that could be said in a sermon: but are they what this particular passage is saying? Further, looking for the big idea guards against a sermon that makes too much of a key word or minor concern in the passage of Scripture being studied. Looking to identify and expound the big idea of the text encourages exegetical discipline and faithfulness.

Another benefit of the big idea approach is that it encourages clarity and so serves the congregation. If a preacher composes their sermon with a clearly articulated topic and then structures the sermon around the various elements of that topic, as found in the Bible passage, then their sermon will be easy to listen to. It will also be easy to remember.

The first draft of the sermon will also be easy to edit, by simply applying the question of ‘does this contribute to the big idea?’. As John Chapman summarises a sermon according to this model, it is a matter of: “state the point ... show me in the Bible

... explain it ... illustrate the point ... apply it.” [1]

For these reasons, and others I have not spelled out here, I am supportive of the big idea approach. I use it myself and it is my go-to approach when training new preachers. When you think about it, the value of an organising theme is really just common sense. A sermon, speech, article or essay should be about something. We shouldn’t be surprised to find variations of this advice everywhere throughout history. But there are limitations to it. John Chapman recognises this when he says of his training that it produces “better-than-average results, and faster”. [2] That is to say, this method also has the potential to produce sermons that are not as good as they could be.

HOW BIBLICAL TEXTS WORK

In an attempt to faithfully grasp and express the meaning of God’s word, an a priori commitment to finding the big idea might distort what the word is saying, how it’s working. Do biblical writers always write with a singular theme, or are tangential and auxiliary points sometimes an important feature? Do all biblical genres equally lend themselves to this kind of distillation? Sometimes narratives, poetry, prose and even ancient legal documents can operate in more complex ways, like a patchwork, allowing for echoes and contrasts, tensions and ambiguities. You can summarise the apostle Paul’s central argument in Romans, but a summary does not really do the letter justice. How much is lost by reducing Isaiah chapter 40 to a tight sentence? How adequate could any attempt at a big idea for Ecclesiastes chapter 8 be? [3]

This is always the risk with methodologies: The technique can take over, and something that is more subtle and complex can become mechanical and simplistic. There is a version of this same approach in fiction writing advice as well. One recent iteration is *Save the Cat! Write a Novel: The Last Book On Novel Writing You’ll Ever Need* by Blake Snyder. He argues that every scene in a narrative serves a specific storytelling function. Some stories really do work with that kind of meticulous and single-minded purpose. But the pleasure of other stories is their more circuitous form and their interest in details for their own

sake: The trees matter as much as the forest, the journey as much as the destination, the parts do not merely exist to form the whole.

Biblical texts are further complicated by the multiplicity of authors and audiences at play. At the most spiritual level: there is both a divine and a human author, both the immediate occasion for writing and the place the text has within the entire canon of Scripture. But more than this, the authors themselves seem to be often aware of multiple audiences: such as the legacy of potential future readers, or—like Jeremiah or Ezekiel’s prophecies against the nations—deliberately addressing one audience in the hearing of another audience. Such complexities mean Scripture is brimming with meaning, not easily reducible.

ABSTRACTION AND SIMPLIFICATION

Those who are deeply committed to and practiced at the big idea approach to preaching (or the ‘save the cat’ approach to storytelling) can be quite good at finding a way to make it work. This is often by abstraction or some other kind of simplification. If you gain enough altitude the landscape below starts to look more basic. But there are cases where such abstraction seems a little like a trick: what has to be abstracted away by this process to make the passage fit a single big idea? Is the Bible passage itself still speaking loud and clear from this distance? [4] There is even a risk that the big idea approach might imply that the Bible text is cluttered and chaotic and needs the sermon to bring it form, order and clarity. [5]

Abraham Kuruvilla provides a balancing emphasis to the big idea methodology in his extremely stimulating article from 2018:

The interpreter must, therefore, pay close attention to the text, privileging it, not just to discover some kernel hidden in it, but to experience the thrust and force of the text *qua text*, in toto and as a whole—the text irreducible into any other form. [6]

While it seems like common sense that a sermon should be about something, there is a subtle rigidity built into this way of framing it. Should a sermon be about something (singular)? Could a sermon not be about several related things,

just as a biblical passage or book might be about several related things? When a Bible passage deals with history, it is possible that certain elements are included primarily for no other reason than because they actually happened. It is not necessarily the case that every single detail without exception is recorded because it serves the big idea of the historian. Rather than cohering in a central organising idea of which supporting ideas are logical components, it could be that a sermon involves various ideas, impressions and implications orbiting around a theme; or a string of ideas (or events) connected in a flow that is not neatly logical. You could possibly stretch to describe all of these different kinds of cohesion to fit the terms big idea and supporting ideas, but this would be potentially forced, artificial.

The big idea remains a very useful approach. And very well suited for some passages and some sermons. As a starting point, especially for beginning preachers, I think it should keep pride of place. But inflexible commitment to the big idea methodology has the potential to force an artificial ceiling on the quality of our preaching in various ways, including its handling of Scripture itself. As preachers develop their skills and attempt a range of biblical texts, there is good reason to explore different ways of communicating God's word to his people.

Mikey Lynch is the Editorial Director of TGC Australia and also serves as Campus Director of the University Fellowship of Christians, UTAS, Hobart. Mikey was a founder of The Vision 100 Network (TAS) Tasmanian church planting network and is a board member of Reach Australia. He is also the chairman of New Front Door: the Church IT Guild

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[1] Setting Hearts on Fire: A Guide to Giving Evangelistic Talks (St Matthias Press: 1999). Chapter 7.

[2] Setting Hearts on Fire, 161.

[3] Not to mention, the big idea approach presupposes that you have discovered the correct discreet division of the text to begin with. In fact, it presupposes that the text has discrete divisions at all!

[4] Christ-centred biblical-theological preaching adds an additional process whereby an Old Testament text can potentially be simplified and abstracted almost out of existence.

[5] One manifestation of a big idea mindset can be seen in attempts to find thematic connections between multiple biblical stories set side by side. At times such efforts can be plausible and illuminating, noting, for example, the way the Gospels are structured. But they can be strained, or at least need to be admitted as speculative. One possibility is that the biblical authors, like authors in every age, simply wanted to include certain content and needed to put it somewhere.

[6] Abraham Kuruvilla, 'Time to kill the big idea? A fresh look at preaching'. JETS 61.4 (2018): 825-46), 831.



AN EXCITING OPPORTUNITY WITH PIM

The Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee is seeking to appoint a National Director to provide operational leadership for PIM through the implementation of its Strategic Plan.

Applications are sought from Christian leaders with a heart for making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and the organisational leadership skills and energy to get things done. An affinity for people living in remote and rural parts of Australia is a must, as is the willingness to travel widely in support of the PIM team.

The National Director of the Presbyterian Inland Mission (PIM) is the operational leader of PIM, responsible to the PIM Committee for the daily operations of PIM and the implementation of the PIM Committee's approved Strategic Plan. The role of National Director is a rewarding and influential role that seeks to shape and enable the Presbyterian Church of Australia's efforts to advance the Gospel in remote and sparsely populated areas of our continent, often in places where there is little other Christian witness.

Ideal applicants will have demonstrated organisational leadership and management experience, skills in public speaking and a strong relational focus. Experience as a Minister or Elder in a PCA congregation will be highly regarded. The successful appointee must meet the Biblical qualifications described in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 & Titus 1:6-9 and will need to reside within driving distance of PIM's home 'New Dunesk' in Ardlethan NSW.

For more information, please contact PIM Committee Secretary Andrew Letcher on 0493 386 255 or secretary@pim.org.au

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BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY IN THE PCV

BY NICK ATRILL

On May 12th, 2025, over 90 people gathered online from over 40 different churches to participate in the first ever 'Building Strong Foundations – Children's Ministry in the PCV' webinar. The webinar sought to support and equip Sunday School teachers across the state, as they faithfully teach God's Word to children, week in week out.

Nick Attrill, the Presbyterian Youth and Children's Worker for the PCV organised the event on behalf of the Presbyterian Youth & Children's Committee (PYCC) and invited Louise Griffiths to co-present the evening. Nick and Louise are both primary school trained teachers with a love for supporting children with additional needs.

In preparing for the evening, Nick asked participants to suggest topics they would like addressed in the Webinar, as well as ideas for future training events. Based on the responses, the areas of greatest perceived need in Children's ministry were the need for strategies in how to engage children in Bible-based lessons and how to support children who have additional needs, such as autism (ASD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

With these areas of need in mind, Nick and Louise took the participants through a sample Sunday School lesson plan with suggestions on how to vary the presentation of the Bible story and related activities using digital media, props, use of Lego and even the 'old school' felt boards with Bible characters.

The presenters were able to provide some basic guidelines on how to support neurodiverse children in the Sunday School lesson.

For children with Autism, the importance of routine, clear communication and an understanding of how overwhelming Sunday school can be, was emphasised.

For children with ADHD, opportunity for movement and play were discussed.

Feedback from the evening was overwhelmingly positive. One of the highlights of the webinar was the opportunity for participants to meet other Sunday School teachers from across the PCV. It was wonderful for people to meet and briefly share the highs and lows of Sunday School ministry.

The other highlight was watching a video of Louise modelling how she typically shares a Bible story to her Sunday School children.

Presbyterian Youth and Children's worker, Nick Attrill, was greatly encouraged by the event. 'Seeing so many people from such a breadth of churches register for the event, several weeks in advance, demonstrated the great need for more training and equipping for volunteers in children's ministry.' Nick on behalf of the PYCC hopes to provide more online training events for people in ministry to youth and/or children into the future.

In preparing for the event, Louise was hoping that Sunday School teachers across the state would get the opportunity to meet other teachers who are in similar situations. 'The role of a Sunday School teacher can feel quite lonely. You imagine other churches with huge Sunday Schools, overflowing with enthusiastic yet well behaved children. The reality is, there are many Sunday Schools in the PCV with just a handful of children attending.'



I really want Sunday School teachers to feel encouraged to persevere despite the challenges, of which there can be many!'

The next Building Strong Foundations event will be a two-part webinar held on Monday the 21st and 28th July. Louise will be presenting on the topic of supporting neurodiverse children and youth in the PCV. Louise is an experienced lecturer on this topic and enjoys the opportunity to explore the needs of children with ASD and ADHD from a Biblical perspective. She sees the many wonderful gifts that neurodiverse children and adults can bring to the church. 'People with autism often have an incredible eye for detail and can bring a high level of skill and knowledge to their areas of interest, which can be used to serve the church. The creativity and energy that people with ADHD can bring to the church is a wonderful asset. Their zest for life and out-of-the-box thinking can be a wonderful blessing to the church community. We want to make sure that we love and care for our children with ASD or ADHD in such a way that they come into a relationship with our living God

and desire to serve him wholeheartedly within our churches and beyond, into all spheres of life.'

Nick is eager to hear from children and youth leaders from across the state to ensure that training events are meeting the needs of our people.

To stay up to date with upcoming training opportunities:

- Subscribe to our email list at www.pyv.org.au
- Like and follow PYV on Facebook and Instagram

If you have feedback or ideas, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Nick directly at nick@pycc.pcv.org.au

COLIN BUCHANAN LIVE AT TRACKS OUTBACK CONCERT 2025

The Presbyterian Inland Mission is thrilled to announce Colin Buchanan as the headline artist for the 2025 Tracks Outback Concert at New Dunesk. Set to take place from the 3-6th October, Tracks is a celebration of country and gospel music, bringing together artists from all over Australia to also highlight PIM's gospel work across the country.

Colin Buchanan is a celebrated Christian singer/songwriter who boasts an impressive array of accolades including ARIA, APRA, and ten Golden Guitar awards. The number of Christian songs he has written for children are almost too many to count and all good Christian bookshops are typically full of his CD's.

Also on the lineup for 2025 is Steve Messer's Strange Country. Steve Messer's Strange Country cooks the musical flavours of country, blues and gospel into an original uptown-downhome, pre-post-modern, rhythm'n'bluegrass stew. For over thirty years Strange Country has performed across Victoria and interstate, at concerts, festivals and live radio broadcasts, in venues big and small, including many years appearing at the Tamworth Country Music Festival.

Rounding out the weekend's lineup is Zoe Tyne, who will perform a new EP alongside her new bass guitar player. Zoe's voice, often compared to Judith Durham's, will resonate beautifully against the picturesque backdrop of bushland and crops, promising an unforgettable musical experience.

Tracks is held at PIM's 600-acre rural property New Dunesk near Ardlethan in New South Wales. Over the weekend, attendees are invited to camp onsite and enjoy a range of family-friendly activities alongside the Saturday concert, including 4WD guided tours of New Dunesk, self-guided bushwalks, an informal campfire Open Mic on Saturday evening and an onsite church service on Sunday morning.

There will also be ample opportunity to meet many of PIM's ministry teams to hear about the work they are doing across Australia.

This is an event not to be missed. Camp out under the stars, take in the stunning outback scenery of New Dunesk and enjoy live music from a fantastic lineup of Australian country singers.

Tickets are on sale now.

Don't miss out on early bird pricing, available until 31st July.

- Early bird: \$60
- Full price: \$80
- Children under 18 attend for FREE.

Free camping onsite for the full weekend is included in the ticket price. Day passes also available.

For further information and to register, visit pim.org.au/event/tracks or email events@pim.org.au.



Tracks Outback Concert

3-6 October 2025

New Dunesk, Ardlethan NSW

Tickets on sale now
pim.org.au/event/tracks

Featuring

Colin Buchanan

Steve Messer's Strange Country

Zoe Tyne



INSTALLATION OF JARED HOOD AS PRINCIPAL OF PTC

PTC Commencement and Graduation Ceremony 2025 with the installation of the new Principal Rev Dr Jared Hood

PTC's Commencement and Graduation Ceremony 2025 at Scot's Church Melbourne was a momentous occasion filled with thanksgiving and joyful anticipation. As students crossed the threshold from study to ministry, we also witnessed the installation of our new Principal, marking the beginning of a new chapter in the life of our college community.

Family, friends, faculty and PTC community gathered to send out the graduates, equipped with the knowledge of God through reformed evangelical teaching. Their journeys through study have prepared our students to preach, teach, and minister the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each graduate's story testified to God's grace, perseverance, and the transformative power of theological education.

The guest speaker Rev Canon Dr Mark Thompson from Moore College shared a heartfelt address from 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, calling the community to renew its commitment to gospel-centred teaching, discipleship, and faithful witness in an ever-changing world.

We were thankful to have our new Theology lecturer, Dr Seung-Joo (John) Lee with us for his first Commencement service as a Faculty member. The Principal reported to those gathered that we are moving towards appointing two more Faculty members this year.

This whole evening was a powerful reminder of the College's enduring mission to provide quality biblical and theological education, trusting that the Lord will use it to grant His church new pastors, teachers, biblical counsellors, missionaries, evangelists, youth workers, chaplains and other church leaders and pastoral helpers.

As we look ahead, we pray for God to bless our graduates as they serve in various roles and environments, and to lead our new Principal with wisdom and grace. We give thanks for God's provisions and entrust the future of our college to His wise and sovereign care.



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH WMV?

With no regional conferences in 2025, you might have been wondering what Women's Ministries Victoria has been up to!

Firstly, we were very excited to welcome Jan Martin to the WMV team in October last year. Jan has taken on the role of Ministry Coach and is meeting one to one with women who are leading women's ministries in their local church. Ministry coaching is a fantastic opportunity to think intentionally about the ministries that women oversee, and Jan has been helping women to set strategic goals and talk through obstacles and how to overcome them. If you would like to investigate women's ministry coaching for a woman in your church, please get in touch with the WMV team.

Secondly, in March, we hosted our first Ministry Mini-Series, "Talking About Jesus," with Amy Isham. This was a wonderful time to consider how we can be more gospel-focused in our conversations and move beyond small talk. Over 50 women participated, and a few churches even registered for group tickets so they could watch the series together. Amy's talks were insightful, engaging, and full of practical tips. One participant said, "I really liked the practical parts where we practiced, talked, and set specific goals. It made it feel much more achievable and helped to actually take steps." Another mentioned, "It was excellent to meet with like-minded people [who were] keen to learn and grow." We've been so encouraged to hear reports of wonderful gospel conversations women have had since the series, and how what they learned has helped them be bolder in sharing the good news.

Following this wonderful event, we're looking forward to our next Ministry Mini-Series on Prayer in August. Over four weeks, Michelle McIntosh will lead us through Scripture to explore models of prayer throughout Biblical history. This Mini-Series will also be on Zoom on Monday evenings from 7:30-9:30 PM. If you'd like to participate but can't make the live sessions, an "on-demand" ticket is available so you can watch at your convenience. However, we encourage you to join live if possible, to make the most of the group discussion, prayer, and Q&A time.

We've also been busy behind the scenes preparing for our State Conference, which will be held at Assembly Hall in Collins Street, Melbourne, on Saturday, September 13th. Jenny Salt will be speaking to us from Hosea about God's relentless love. There will also be four fantastic workshops to choose from. We encourage you to join us for a wonderful day of learning and fellowship with women from around the state.

Details about our Prayer session and the State Conference can be found on our website at wmv.org.au, where you can also find recommended resources to help you in your women's ministry.

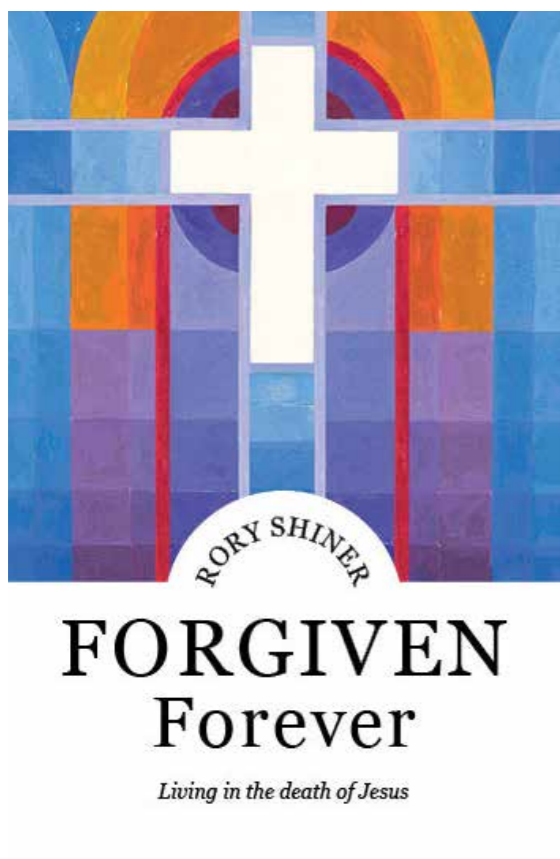


JENNY SALT

REVIEW:

FORGIVEN FOREVER: LIVING IN THE DEATH OF JESUS

BY AMY ISHAM



Forgiven Forever: Living in the death of Jesus
Rory Shiner
9781922980021 | Paperback

I found reading *Forgiven Forever: Living in the Death of Jesus* by Rory Shiner an important time of reflection on the forgiveness I enjoy in Jesus and an opportunity to delve into why his death was necessary for me to be forgiven. *Forgiven Forever* is part of a series in which Rory explores the eternal nature of the gifts God gives us in Jesus, including *Raised Forever* and *One Forever*.

READING FOR STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE

Although *Forgiven Forever* is designed to be read in order, readers can interact with the chapters that interest them the most, first, without subtracting from the flow of the text. Each chapter works through a different aspect of Jesus' death for the forgiveness of sin, and the implications his death has for our faith, our spiritual life, our holiness, church, and our leadership of others. Over thirteen chapters, Rory provides a systematic breakdown of the circumstances, theology, and context of Jesus' death and resurrection in an admirably short book.

READING ABOUT JESUS THE PERSON

Chapters 1-3 provide the date, approximate time, and place of the events preceding Jesus' death. The tone reminded me of a true crime podcast, with its stylistic attention to detail of Jesus' final hours. I felt curdling dread in my stomach as the events unfolded, punctuated with time stamps, locations, and contextual detail. Starting the book with Jesus facing his last meal, his pleading tears in the garden of Gethsemane, his arrest, humiliation, and death on the cross bring a sobering humanity to Jesus' sacrifice. His death is a murder, and a tragic one, even though Jesus' submission unto death led to cosmic victory over our sin.

READING FOR A CULTURE WITHOUT FORGIVENESS

Chapters 4-6 provide a detailed Old Testament context for the concept of sacrifice. Understanding the sacrificial system of the temple, sin, offerings, the need for propitiation, and the role of the high priest is essential for fully grasping the significance of Jesus' work. He is not just the one who provides an appropriate sacrifice to deal with our sin, he is the great high priest who represents us before God. More than that, he is the sin offering slain for us.

These short chapters introduce a loaded and complicated historical context into a simpler form but engage with a culture which seems unable to accept atonement for sin. In a post #metoo and cancel-culture era, our society has its own system for dealing with unwanted behaviour. The priests of this system don't accept atonement offerings.

The social media pile-on is how we send sinners into the desert. No substitute is provided. There is no goat to stand in anyone's place (p. 58).

Rory argues that our culture understands the power of holiness in phrases like toxic masculinity, cancel culture, and the stain of colonialism. However, the courts of social media create overwhelming burdens of shame and guilt. Incidentally, shame and guilt are what Rory proceeds to deal with in the next chapters.

READING FOR GRACE, HEALING, AND LEADERSHIP

Chapters 7-9 begin to apply the theology of the previous chapters to the Christian life. Most Christians will struggle with guilt, shame, and assurance of salvation. For Christians who struggle with assurance of salvation, whether due to spiritual attack, or ruminating on sinful past actions, these chapters provide biblical reassurance and a foundation to develop servant leaders who grasp that they are forgiven so that they offer forgiveness to others. Rory uses the example of cult leaders who lead through "charisma, coercion, threat and reward (p. 110)" as a contrast to servant leaders who follow the example of Christ. Dealing with our guilt and shame biblically is a first step to embodying and modelling non-coercive and servant leadership.

READING TO PREPARE FOR THE APOCALYPSE

I loved chapter 11, How to use the Cross in the Event of a Zombie Apocalypse. Using the language of zombie apocalypse helps us recognise the cosmic scale of Christ's work on the cross, and the battle we remain embroiled in as we live according to Jesus' teachings in a world that is against Him.

The cross is a battlefield. Not just a standard-issue, nation-versus-nation battlefield, but an all-out Zombie Apocalypse (p. 134).

Even though the evil spiritual forces have already been defeated by the cross and will be wiped out forever on the last day, they still wage war. We live in the time in-between the cross and the last day, with all its pitfalls and risks. We live in the zombie apocalypse.

We are at war against temptation. Sometimes this war is in the form of a demonic attack that we cannot see, other times the war is more obvious. This chapter prepares us for a real fight in the knowledge that we are more than equipped for that fight in Christ. Rory reminds us that our focus should be on the cross in three main ways: recognizing the enemy, the tactical power of the cross against the enemy, and obeying Jesus' command "Be not afraid (p. 142)."

READING FOR AUDIENCE

I think that 'Forgiven Forever' was written for an educated audience in one of three broad categories. Those who are: 1: investigating the claims of Christianity and are seeking to understand the theology of salvation with greater depth; 2: those new to the faith and seeking to understand the mechanics of forgiveness, particularly as to how Christ's sacrifice is a fulfilment of Old Testament law and prophecy; 3: those struggling with assurance, doubt or existential anxiety about their status as forgiven people.

Rory's thoughtfulness and clarity in *Forgiven Forever* is a blessing to readers. He uses fun and memorable illustrations, metaphors and similes to make his points land well. However, this book isn't lightweight. The theological depth of the cross is richly explained. Rory's accessible prose speaks to the heart as well as the mind. However, because of the rich treatment of deep theology in 'Forgiven Forever', I think that this book is better suited to university educated readers.

If someone in your congregation thrives on the teaching of this book, it might be time to tap them on the shoulder to consider leadership. Readers of this book will have a strong foundation of the Christian message as well as a deep sense of the servant heart of Christ. Christ didn't shrink from death and continues to offer forgiveness from the mighty throne of God. Leaders who have grasped and can embody this sacrificial message will have a significant impact on their families, churches, schools, and workplaces, to the Glory of God.

Amy Isham is the Library Manager at Mannix Library at The Catholic Theological College in Melbourne. Amy has a doctorate in Leadership, is a CPX Associate, and is on the Board of Publica. Amy is married to Pastor Luke Isham at St Kilda Presbyterian Church and has one gorgeous teen daughter, one adorable teen son and two agouti guinea pigs.

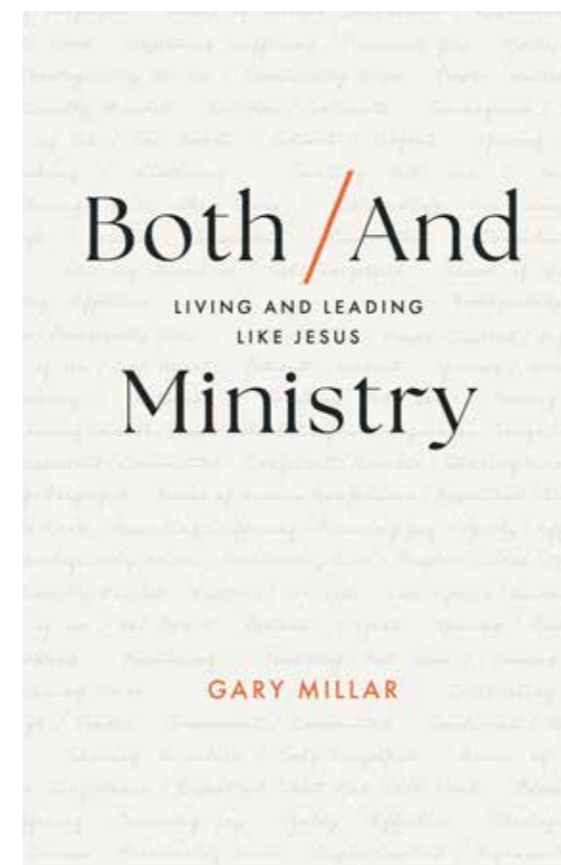
MINISTRY MOVES

- The Presbytery of Maroondah inducted Rev. Jordan Born into the Donvale Pastoral Charge on Sunday 16th March.
- Rev. Miles Fagan was inducted into the pastoral charge of Mount Evelyn by the Presbytery of Maroondah on 23rd March.
- On Friday 28th March, Rev. Dr. Jared Hood was inducted as the Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College at the college commencement and graduation service at Scots' Church, Melbourne.
- Chris and Julie Dean were commissioned to serve with CMS in East Timor at a service at Berwick Anglican Church on 29th March led by Rev. Ray Patchett from Warragul Presbyterian Church.
- On Friday 4th April, the Presbytery of Melbourne North inducted Rev. Kevin Maxwell into the Pastoral Charge of Reservoir.
- Rev. Jesse Walz concluded his ministry at Eaglehawk Presbyterian Church in April and is available for a call.
- The Commission of the General Assembly elected Rev. Rod Waterhouse from Portland as Moderator-Designate, meaning he would be elected to chair the General Assembly beginning with its meeting in October this year.
- The Presbyterian Youth & Children's Committee has appointed Liza Christian as Assistant to the Youth & Children's Worker.
- The PCV's Ministry Development Officer, Rev. Chris Siriweera, has been appointed as the next APWM National Director to succeed Rev. Kevin Murray.
- Rev. Samuel Christian will succeed Rev. Rob Duncanson as pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church, Ballarat West, when he is inducted on 19th July by the Presbytery of Western Victoria.

REVIEW:

BOTH/AND MINISTRY: LIVING AND LEADING LIKE JESUS

JOY ARUNDELL



Both/And Ministry: Living and Leading Like Jesus
Gary Millar
SKU: 9781802541267

Gary Millar's new book *Both/And Ministry: Living and Leading Like Jesus* has been a joy to read as he addresses a complex and broad principle in a digestible and relatable book. The gospel principle of 'both/and' explains how we live all areas of the Christian life (thought and deed) imitating Christ by doing seemingly opposite things simultaneously. Some examples are things like: confidence and humility, urgency and patience, denying ourselves and finding rest. Doing these things one at a time is relatively straightforward, but the 'both/and' principle means we are to do these things simultaneously. This is unpacked chapter by chapter beginning with general principles and moving into leadership principles.

OVERVIEW

Chapters 1-3 begin with theology, seeing God as a 'both/and' and God and salvation as having 'both/and' implications for our identity and relationships. Chapters 4-6 move into applying the 'both/and' principle to ministry and church leadership warning leaders of the dangers when they lose their 'both/and' perspective. Chapter 7 affirms how difficult this principle is and leaves us with many motivations to work hard in this area.

tone

Gary challenges readers to grow in their thinking, loving, and leading. Challenges to grow are often painful. He minimises the pain by writing like a dear old friend, standing alongside us as a brother in Christ, showing us his own struggles with sin, and graciously pointing us to the gospel. The reader can see him working out his own principle in real time, which makes sense and feels attainable.

BOTH/AND IN THEOLOGY

Our sinful tendencies are under the microscope in each chapter. Sometimes we are not willing to

fully submit to God as he has revealed himself, so we easily fall into favouring and meditating on one angle of the gospel at the expense of the other. It can be easy to over emphasise Christ's humanity at the expense of his divinity. By applying the "both/and" model, we can wrestle with God's sovereignty and human responsibility or aspects of the Trinity and not be bamboozled because "He's a both/and God, in all three Persons of the Trinity (p. 19)."

BOTH/AND IN CHARACTER

Both/and thinking grows our character. Chapter 3, which shows us how we love others in our relationships, is fascinating and helpful. I've been wrestling with how I can truly be a slave of Christ without ceasing to be myself, and the both/and principle is the key. Christ is transforming my character to be more Christlike, which is what I've been made for and how I will truly flourish. "It's important to hold onto the glorious positivity that flows from the fact that our God is in the transformation business (p. 57)." Sometimes, we justify sin by using "personality" as an excuse. Miller acknowledges that a lot of our default behaviour (based on our personality, our family of origin, our history and experience) is not sinful, but at times, our default behaviour can be selfish. We shouldn't operate from our default, what Gary calls 'freewheeling' (p. 59), or we will miss the chance to truly love people the way Jesus did. If we are freewheeling, we can be very narrow and miss opportunities to serve beyond our comfort zone. We shouldn't downplay our unique personality, but we can ask the Holy Spirit to develop character in us that mirrors Jesus'. Are you someone who tends towards truth speaking or active listening? We should all strive for "both/and". After each chapter there is a helpful tool to assess which areas we default to so that we know what to pray for and what areas of our character we need to work on. Are you someone who sees yourself as complete in Christ, or a work in progress? Gary encourages the reader to address any areas necessary with the gospel.

BOTH/AND IN MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

Gary's heart for Christian leaders really comes out as he applies the gospel to areas of ministry. A lot of current binaries that are discussed in leadership circles are addressed, like using my gifts or being ready to do anything (p. 81) or being theologically driven and practically wise (p. 101). Each time

Gary carefully shows us that we want to fight that tendency to prioritise one over the other. Instead, we need to apply truth to the area that we are weak in and develop a clear both/and solution. Applying both/and truth to weakness is difficult but "more than worth it! (p. 149)." In ministry, we face days of guilt and shame. Sometimes we are not being who God has called us to be. Other times we are prideful and self-confident. When we swing between these extremes, ministry suffers. People suffer. Instead, we need to do both. Then we can find joy in the Lord, whatever our ministry looks like or feels like.

AUDIENCE

Anyone could enjoy this little book, whether you are in ministry or not, but the second half would really be helpful for students preparing for ministry or those currently in ministry. No doubt all readers will find themselves turning pages, repenting, and believing with humility and joy.

I appreciate Gary's pastoral approach in this book. He anticipates how spiritually depressing and demotivating exposure of sin is. But he gets in front of this by taking readers back to the gospel. We need to follow the "both/and" principle to see that we do all fall short, and repent. Even though we fall short, God in Christ by His Spirit assures us of our firm and secure identity as his children. I so very much appreciate Gary's hard work in this book on the Christian life and his deep desire that we mature as Christians and find life to the full following Jesus.

Joy Arundell trained at the Presbyterian Theological College in Melbourne and has worked for the Presbyterian Church in Melbourne and in India, as well as with AFES at Deakin Uni. Joy is the Women's Training Advisor at the PTC, Melbourne, where she helps support the training of women and wives of students for future ministry. She also currently serves alongside her husband Nick at Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Hawthorn East. Joy loves reading the Bible with women of all ages, especially her two daughters!

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LANGUAGE IS INTEGRAL IN GOD'S TRANSFORMATION OF HEARTS



NOV 24 INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE TRANSLATION WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, DARWIN

Anne Spragg, one of APWM's newest missionaries, grew up in Wagga and Terrigal, NSW. She studied linguistics at university and then Wycliffe Bible Translators. Anne hopes to begin service as a Bible translator in Arnhem Land, the Northern Territory, in May this year. Anne belongs to the Ashfield Presbyterian Church. She writes:

"Over this year one question I have been asked is "Why invest so much time translating the Bible for a small language group rather than teaching everyone to read the Bible in another language like English?"

As I pondered this question, I was drawn to the story of Pentecost in Acts 2. Growing up, whenever I heard this story, I was always drawn to the wonder of the miracle demonstrating the Spirit's coming and fulfilling prophecy. But as I've studied this year about the relationship between language and identity and listening to the experiences of my fellow students, this passage has become richer. I am drawn to how the apostles' speaking of 'our languages' is a focus of the passage that is constantly repeated.

At the end of the passage, we get the description that they were 'cut to the heart.' Hearing God's words in their own language significantly impacted them as over 3,000 came to faith. The impact of hearing God speak

their own language expresses my vision as a new Wycliffe member. God's word transforms lives when people hear it. I now see in Acts 2 not only a miracle fulfilling a prophecy but a model of mission where language is integral in God's transformation of hearts.

Anne is currently seeking people to partner with her in this ministry through prayer and financial support.

She writes: "Reflecting on trust has also been helpful for me as I continue growing my team of financial and prayer partners."

Throughout this process I have felt intimidated by the size of the task. I recently met with a friend who reminded me of Paul's words in Philippians 4. I find it a beautiful encouragement that when Paul was dependent on others to support his ministry, he found true contentment was found in surrendering control to Christ who strengthened him.

At the time of writing (early May) Anne has supporters who will provide 83% toward her budget. Will you join her in the task of making the Bible available in one of Australia's Indigenous languages? Please go to: wycliffe.org.au/member/anne/

Anne can be contacted at:
anne_spragg@wycliffe.org.au

To watch a video about the 2024 Indigenous Language Translation Workshop go to
www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFFcBh9cQYc



ANNE SPRAGG

NATE AND SAMI HO: HEADING TO JAPAN



APWM would like to introduce our newest Partner Church missionaries, the Rev Nathanael (Nate) and Deaconess Samantha (Sami) Ho, who plan to serve in Japan. Nate is the minister at the Campbelltown Presbyterian Church (NSW) and Sami is a Presbyterian Church of NSW Deaconess.

Unlike most of APWM's missionaries, who are Partner Agency missionaries serving with organisations like OMF or Wycliffe, Nate and Sami will be sent directly by APWM as Partner Church Missionaries with the Presbyterian Church in Japan, specifically serving with the Setagaya Presbyterian Church in Tokyo.

Serving in Japan has been a long-term goal for Nate and Sami. Over the course of a decade, they have made numerous trips to Japan to immerse themselves in the culture, make connections with

churches, and explore opportunities for service.

Sami, who studied Japanese in high school before meeting Nate, has considerable fluency. Nate, on the other hand, speaks very little Japanese, so language learning will be his primary focus during their first term.

They recently had a holiday in Japan and write:

"After meeting the team formally, we felt this was a good place to begin our first term. We hope to reach out to community contacts through church-based events and home-based hospitality, just as we did in Campbelltown! It also allows us time and breathing space to process living as a family in a different cultural context."

During their time in Sydney, they have joined a local Japanese playgroup, and their two young daughters have both commenced Japanese language learning.

The Ho family aim to depart for Japan in early 2026.

To find out more you can visit Nate and Sami's web page www.hofaminjapan.com

If you have any questions or would like to support them, please contact the APWM office at (02) 8073 7490 or visit the APWM website at www.apwm.org.au/missionaries/

TALUA: TWO VIDEOS

Many have read about the Talua Theological Training Institute, but few have had the opportunity to visit. We've put together a 9-minute guided tour as APWM missionary, Rob Falls walks us through the campus. To watch the video please click on this link: vimeo.com/1079231399. And click on this link to watch Ian Smith, a former missionary to Talua, reflect God's faithfulness to Talua over the last 35 years. vimeo.com/1079228880



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