

# Beyond 2020 Vision

A Publication of Morialta Uniting Church

November 2022

Morialta Uniting Church—follow us on Facebook or check out our website at [www.morialtauca.org.au](http://www.morialtauca.org.au)

## Welcome to our November edition

Colin Cargill, Editor and Helena Begg, Publisher

Welcome to the November edition. This month we feature an article about worshipping Jesus or following Jesus, and whether there is a difference and as Advent draws nigh, we bring two Advent reflections from different perspectives.

There are also several articles about life around Morialta UC, including the MUC Christmas Market, as well as requests for support for refugees, ending violence against women and children, and helping end gambling, especially on sport.

The cut-off date for the December edition will be **25<sup>th</sup> November**. Either drop copy in to Nicole at the Office or call or email Colin

0427 122 106 or [snout-n-about@bigpond.com](mailto:snout-n-about@bigpond.com)

Go well.

## Mighty Magill Christmas Market 9.00am to 12noon, 19<sup>th</sup> November



Are you able to help? The Market is nearly upon us again and this is our major fundraiser for the year! Convenors have already been approached and volunteers are required to help set up stalls, sell items or help pack up stalls.

If Bruce, or a stall convenor, has not already approached you and you would like to help with stalls, BBQ, setting up etc., please speak to Bruce or Helena as soon as possible.

If you have questions, either about volunteering or about things you would like to donate, please speak to Bruce.

Donations for the market can be left at the church from the first week in November. For more information please check the weekly Newsletter. Thank you.

## Worshipping Jesus versus following Jesus

Adapted from an article by Herb Montgomery on the Patheos website September 2022

In Luke 11:27-28 we read: “As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, ‘Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.’ He replied, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’”

Montgomery believes that Luke’s gospel is contrasting the unilateral hero-worship of Jesus with the value of a community that practices Jesus’ teachings. Jesus responded to those who revered him by saying it is much more important to follow the values he was setting forth than to have a high opinion of Jesus himself. Jesus counters the woman with a blessing on the community of “those” who together are “hearing” and “obey” his life teachings, teachings he defines as the “word of God.”

Also, Jesus uses “those,” “those who hear and obey.” Remember, Jesus’ teachings make very little sense when removed from a context of community. For him to have said “the one who hears and obeys” would have contradicted the very wisdom he promoted and wanted his followers to obey. Jesus’ wisdom, his solutions to our world’s challenges, and his call to survival, resistance, liberation, restoration, and transformation came through the creation of community.

Community is what gives us the resources to follow Jesus’ teachings. You cannot follow him without community – whether it be through resource-sharing, mutual aid, or wealth redistribution – it’s all done within community.

Valuing and seeking to create community, and depending on that community to ensure our survival in the future is very different than worshipping an isolated hero for his past acts. Christianity has largely practiced the latter.

In Luke’s words, Jesus refocuses his followers on the intrinsic value of the things he taught and the importance of putting those teachings into practice. If the gospel we teach does not challenge racism, sexism, and classism; if it does not inspire tangible, concrete ways to help make the world a safer and more compassionate place for those on the undersides of our society; if that gospel allows people to remain bigoted and does not challenge bigotry at its core, while all the while holding Jesus in high regard; then the fruit of such a gospel would not be for the “healing of the nations,” but the destruction of human lives.

So why is it easier to talk about Jesus than the things Jesus talked about? Because what Jesus talked about has the potential to change our world. We are called not to merely praise Jesus, but to practice values centred in the experiences of those surviving, working for liberation informed by the teachings of Jesus, and endeavouring to put those teachings into practice.

We will not always get it right. We will fail at times and there will be times where we succeed. But we can choose a path of preferring to apply teachings that point to establishing justice and recovering our humanity. Those are teachings that would have real effects in our world.

In a tradition that offers to help us learn the differences between what is right and wrong, this saying in Luke invites us to practice greater compassion as we learn together what trends toward life and promotes equitable thriving for all. “I want to practice compassion; hero worship is not enough”.

*Herb Montgomery is director of Renewed Heart Ministries and an author and educator*

## Let it be

Adapted from an Advent Reflection by Rev Carl Gregg - 2011

“What would Christianity look like if the focus were *birth*, not death; human *flourishing*, not suffering; and *this world*, not the next?” Advent is a time for pondering these possibilities.

After Mary first knew that she was “with child,” we hear her ask; “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” My inclination is to proceed cautiously because I believe the most important point being made here is not about biology, but about *theology and politics*. Jesus was neither the first nor the last person whose origins were attributed to a “virgin birth.” Decades before Jesus’ birth Virgil published the Greco-Roman classic *The Aeneid*, which claimed a divine origin for the line of Caesar: “From this noble line shall be born the Trojan Caesar, who shall extend his empire to the ocean”.

While there are many different aspects of the virgin birth story to consider, Gregg believes that we are so familiar with this story that we sometimes fail to consider the many difficult implications of Mary’s situation as an unwed teenager. At the same time Advent invites us to focus, not only on Mary’s socially-suspect pregnancy, but also on the hope, possibility, and wonder associated with *all births*.

Mary’s second response is *humility*. “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Just as Gabriel’s greeting, “Hail Mary,” inspired the *Ave Maria* prayer that has been prayed countless times and rendered into unforgettable music, so too, Mary’s response, “Let it be” has also inspired artists – perhaps most famously as the title track of the Beatles’ 12th studio album: *Let It Be*. (Whisper words of wisdom, let it be)

From the perspective of Advent, Gregg invites us to hear the Beatles’ “Let it Be” as if for the first time. Listen with the

words of Mary echoing in your ear. Listen with an openness to how the Spirit may be calling you to slow down, open your eyes in wonder, and expectantly wait. How is God inviting you to echo some form of Mary’s words of humble openness and acceptance? Give yourself permission to be still and listen.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, in his Advent book ‘Ponder These Things: Praying with Icons of the Virgin,’ writes that: “There is a poem by Rilke, ‘The Angel,’ in which the poet warns us against inviting angels into the house, because they will turn the whole place upside down and seek out all the hidden corners and mould us into new shapes.”

When we open ourselves to the Spirit, when we echo Mary’s prayer, “Let it be,” we may find ourselves turned upside down and our priorities rearranged, as Mary experienced when Gabriel appeared in her house.

For now, Gregg invites us to pause in a few moments of contemplative silence and to continue to ponder:

How is God surprising me this Advent season?

How am I being called to slow down or let go?

How does it feel to begin to pray an echo of Mary’s open-hearted response, “Let it be. May it be so. Let it be. Let it be.”

Take some time to prayerfully consider how God is speaking to you in response to these questions.

*The Rev. J. Carl Gregg is the pastor of Broadview Church in Chesapeake Beach, Maryland, and a Doctor of Ministry candidate at San Francisco Theological Seminary.*

## Book review

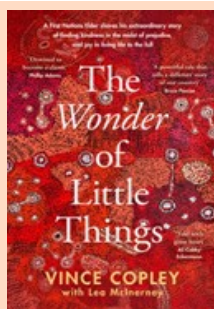
**‘The Wonder of Little Things’  
by Vince Copley with Lea McInerney**

From Jenny Swanbury

‘Always remember you’re as good as anybody else’ Vince Copley’s mother often told him. And he did. Vince was born on a government mission into poverty in South Australia in 1936. This is his story written over many cups of tea with his friend Lea McInerney. Lea also grew up in South Australia in the Clare Valley on Ngadjuri Country.

It was at St Francis House in Adelaide, a home for First Nations boys to assist in education that Vince began life-long friendships with other boys. Vince like some of the others became a star footballer and cricketer. Along with him many became future leaders and well-known activists for advancing and improving the lives of their own Aboriginal people.

This is also a love story with his beloved wife Brenda being there for every step along his adult life. Many of the people and events in his story are familiar to us in our South Australian and Australian history.



Vince welcomes us to his story. It is a story for us to know. I agree with the publisher that he tells his story with humour, humility and wisdom: a story of ‘finding kindness in the midst of prejudice’. I can also see, as the publisher does, that it’s ‘an Australian classic in the making, a plain-speaking account of hardship, courage and optimism told without self-pity or big-noting’.

I find this book, this story, inspiring and informative as it brings insight into a ‘different story of our country’. Again, as the publisher says, ‘Vince’s love of life will make you smile, his heartache will make you cry, and his determination to enjoy life in the face of adversity will inspire you to find the wonder in little things every day’.

I agree. Have a read. *The Wonder of Little things*: a new publication in conversational style. It’s available now in our church library.

**‘The Wonder of Little Things’ by Vince Copley with Lea McInerney. (HarperCollins Publishers 2022)**



## End violence against women and children 2022 - 2032

From the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for Justice, Ecology and Peace

A new National Plan to 'End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032' has been released. It is a 'shared vision' from national, state and territory governments.

The Plan starts with a statement from victim-survivors: *It is time to transform our pain into action. There can be no more excuses – that it is too hard, we don't know what to do, it's too complex. It is everyone's responsibility to end the perpetration of violence against women and children, and all victims of gendered violence.*

There will also be '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence', from 25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December. This year's theme is, "UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls". The campaign begins on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and there will be an online event, prioritising the voices of people with lived experience and promoting an end to violence.

You can be part of the Online Event on 25<sup>th</sup> November by registering at: [bit.ly/25NovSJS](https://bit.ly/25NovSJS)

## Support for refugees needed

Although the current Government has promised to end Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs), no timeframe has been announced for this long-awaited change.

Many people on TPVs and SHEVs have been waiting more than a decade, so it is high time that they are given the security and peace of mind that permanent protection offers.



As protection and support for refugees and asylum seekers is one of MUC's social justice priorities identified in "Spring into Action", this is an opportunity for us to act. We can offer support by contacting our local Federal MP and State Senators to call for the Government to introduce this important policy change without delay.

Contact details for all MPs and Senators may be found at: [www.aph.gov.au/](http://www.aph.gov.au/)

## The letter

From Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for Justice, Ecology and Peace

"The Letter" is a ground-breaking documentary film, released by the Laudato Si' Movement, that tells the story of front-line champions from around the world and brings Pope Francis' vision of Integral Ecology to life.

The film is freely available and opens with a young African man on the edge of the sea introducing himself. "Hello everyone. My name is Bilal Seck. My home has been affected by rising sea levels. Houses have been destroyed. Now, there's not enough work."



Many perspectives are shared beautifully and powerfully in the film. Each person represents a voice that is not being heard – the voice of the Indigenous, the voice of the young, the voice of the poor, and the voice of nature.

The film follows these people coming together in dialogue with each other and Pope Francis himself. Throughout the film, we see the characters find unity in their distinct world views and strength in the common values we all share.

This film is a call to action and you can share its message by holding a screening with your friends and family.

"The Letter" runs for 80 minutes and you can watch it at <https://theletterfilm.org>

## Climate Action Resources Expo

26<sup>th</sup> November 10am – 3pm at Blackwood Uniting Church

The Climate Action Resources Expo is being organised by the Blackwood Uniting Church, in collaboration with representatives from Australian Parents for Climate Action, Conservation Council of SA, Blackwood Sustainable Communities, Twenty Metre Trees and the City of Mitcham.

**Purpose:** A mini expo of information and resources to encourage and educate the local community in easy ways to take small actions that can positively affect climate change.

**Details:** The event will comprise speakers, stalls (inside and outside), displays, information sessions, handouts and activities for children.

**Speakers:** Prof Holger Maire (University of Adelaide); Ariella Helfgott (Premier and Cabinet); Nina Keath (City of Onkaparinga) and Chris Daniels (Green Adelaide)

**Exhibitors:** Include the following categories – transport (incl. electric vehicles); Food (incl. wax wraps); Clothing (incl. Ecolateral); Waste (incl. KESAB, REPURPOSE and REUSE); Energy; Buildings; Music; Plants; and Education.

Learn more about what you can do. Full details at <https://blackwooduc.org.au>





## Advent in a time of crisis

*Adapted from an article by J.E. Dyer published on the Patheos Website 2010*

Stately beauty was a key feature of the Advent of my childhood. I don't know that I would have the same memories of it without the liturgical solemnity and traditional music. Those elements speak an inner quiet to me that I don't find in contemporary forms of worship. (Which is not an indictment of contemporary worship.) But that ready-made connection to the generations who have celebrated Advent before us is not the source of the season's defining significance for me. Nor is that source the connection of Advent with childhood and family, important as those are.

It is *this year's* Advent, in fact, which has crystallized the season's greatest meaning for me. Many adults have a sense of impending crises and looming decisions for mankind, burdens of political and social turmoil for which our shoulders simply are not broad enough. This apprehension of the responsible generations is the opposite of the childlike freedom from concern that enhances the magical wonder of Advent and Christmas.

But the Christmas story itself has the answer – and the prelude of Advent is essential. It reminds us that there were prophecies and wars and destruction, and centuries of yearning and doubt, before the prophecies were fulfilled in the life of a humble family. Into that little family, subjects of an indifferent pagan empire, the child of promise was introduced as a helpless baby. In this story God did not send a powerful, broad-shouldered warrior or a great political leader.

Advent reminds us of this. It reminds us that neither Christmas nor Easter is the end of the liturgical year: the longest stretch of the church calendar falls after Pentecost, the period in which our thoughts turn to our life and work as the church of today. We can relax during Advent. We can enjoy the ceremony, the beauty, the treasuring and pondering. We can look forward to things with the trust of little children. Because Advent reminds us of the most important things of all: it is not all up to us – and we know how the story turns out.

*J.E. Dyer is a retired naval intelligence officer and evangelical Christian.*

## Do not be daunted

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.

Do justly, now.

Love mercy, now.

Walk humbly, now.

You are not obligated to complete the work,  
but neither are you free to abandon it.

*The Talmud*

## Stay cool this summer

*Adapted from an article published in The Conversation by Christian Moro and Charlotte Phelps, Science and Medicine, Bond University.*

Most people's bodies are happiest when their inside temperature sits around 36.5-37.5°C, as our bodies work best at these temperatures. Yet we complain when the air temperature approaches 35°C. Our body temperature can be a bit lower when we are asleep and vary when we feel hungry, tired or cold. It also rises sometimes when we are sick and have a fever.

To keep your temperature around 37°C, muscles, especially the ones in our arms and legs, contract and relax and this process generates heat. Our blood then carries this heat around our body.

But to stop our inside temperature getting too high, for example when we are exercising on a hot day, our body needs to lose some heat. Warm blood travels through blood vessels close to our skin and heat is then "lost" to the air around us. If that is not enough to cool us down, our body will also start sweating. This speeds up how we lose heat through our skin.

We usually feel most comfortable when the air temperature is around 18-24°C. This seems to be a nice temperature that allows any extra heat to escape into the air and it is also not so cold that we need to move around to keep warm. Things that get in the way of losing heat through the skin can make us feel hot, such as wearing a woolly jumper in summer.

But we can also feel uncomfortable on a hot and humid day. That's because the warm outside temperature makes it hard for us to lose heat from our skin to the air around us (because the air is already quite warm). And without a breeze, especially when it is humid, it's even harder for the heat to be carried away.

So, to keep cool on hot days:

- Drink water often – this not only keeps our body happy; it gives us extra liquid to turn into sweat. Sweating helps us lose heat;
- Avoid direct sunlight and try to keep to the shade or places with a cool breeze;
- Wear thin clothing and natural fibres, which can allow a clear flow of air;
- Wear light-coloured clothing, as this can keep you cooler than darker colours;
- Avoid running, jumping or riding a bike in the middle of the day;
- Jump in a pool, or try to escape the heat by putting on the air-conditioning inside;
- sit in front of a fan – the breeze carries heat away from our skin by evaporating moisture into the air around us, cooling us down quickly.

Stay cool friends!

## Special days

From Worship and Faith Education Team

### November 11 – Remembrance Day

is universally associated with the remembrance of those who died in the First World War. This conflict mobilised over 70 million people and left between 9 and 13 million dead and as many as one third of these with no grave.



### World Day of the Poor

**November 13 – World Day of the Poor** is commemorated annually on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time in the liturgical calendar. "As members of civil society, let us continue to uphold the values of freedom, responsibility, fraternity, and solidarity. And as Christians, let us always make charity, faith and hope the basis of our lives and our actions." *Pope Francis*

**November 16 – International Day of Tolerance** means building societies founded on respect for human rights, where fear, distrust and marginalization are supplanted by pluralism, participation and respect for differences.



**November 20 – Universal Children's Day** Investing in our future means investing in our children – which is why the United Nations has designated every November 20 as Universal Children's Day. It's a time to promote togetherness around the world, awareness of the problems children face in every corner of the globe, and improve the welfare of all children.



### November 25 – International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

is to raise awareness around the world that women are subjected to rape, domestic violence and other forms of violence; one of the aims of the day is to highlight that the scale and true nature of the issue is often hidden. The day begins '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence'.



### November 27 – Advent Sunday

We begin our preparations for the celebration of Jesus's birth.



**December 2 – International Day for the Abolition of Slavery**  
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/slavery-abolition-day>

**December 3 – International Day of Differently Abled People**  
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/day-of-persons-with-disabilities>

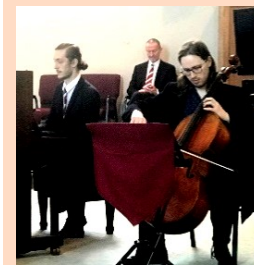
## Adelaide Male Voice Choir at Morialta

From the Community Building & Fund-Raising Team

The Adelaide Male Voice Choir not only brought us a magnificent afternoon of music, but also helped to fill the church with their own audience.



The concert was a wonderful mix of music genres and styles with the highlight being a solo cello performance by Julian Leske, accompanied on the piano by his charismatic cousin Nikolai Leske. Nikolai is also the Deputy Choir leader.



Sincere thanks to the Choir Director Bill Shaw, and the members and friends of the choir for an enjoyable afternoon of music.

Special thanks to Morialta members and 13 guests, who supported us, served tea and coffee, and contributed to a very pleasant afternoon.

In all over \$612.75 was raised for Morialta Projects.

## That's amazing

Adapted from a post by Thisharaka Dilan on 'Damn that's amazing'

The Jewish family Karnofsky, who immigrated from Lithuania to the United States, took pity on a 7-year-old boy and brought him to their home. There he stayed and spent the night in this Jewish family home, where for the first time in his life he was treated with kindness and tenderness.

When he went to bed, Mrs Karnovski sang him Russian lullabies, which he sang with her.

Later he learned to sing and play several Russian and Jewish songs. Over time, this boy became the adopted son of this family. Mr. Karnofsky gave him money to buy his first musical instrument, as was the custom in Jewish families. Later, when he became a professional musician and composer, he used these Jewish melodies in compositions such as St. James's Hospital and Go Down Moses.

The little boy grew up and wrote a book about this Jewish family, who adopted him in 1907. He proudly spoke Yiddish fluently. In memory of this family and until the end of his life, he wore the Star of David and said that in this family he learned "to live a real life and determination."



This little boy's name was Louis Armstrong and he became known as Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong. "Satchmo" is Yiddish for "big cheeks, a nickname some say was given to him by Mrs. Karnofsky!

## The fellowship of the least coin (FLC)

FLC is a worldwide ecumenical movement of prayer for peace, justice and reconciliation. Through this movement, Christian women around the world seek fellowship with each other and are reminded to live a reconciling and forgiving life with others. Though 'least coins' are given with each prayer, it is not a fundraising project, but a movement of prayer without any discrimination of race, colour, culture, or denomination. It enables all, whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate, in urban or rural areas, to participate in the offering of their 'least coin', with prayer, thus providing 'gifts of love' to be given for projects all over the world. These coins are sent regularly to that country's FLC collection point, where it is forwarded to the FLC Fund. It is important that only the 'least coin' of each currency be set aside so that even the poorest women of each country can be a part of this fellowship of love and care.

The idea for the FLC emerged as a vision from God to Mrs Shanti Solomon of India. In September 1956, she was part of the Pacific Mission Team of seven women from different countries that travelled in Asia after World War II with a message of reconciliation. It was organised by Dr Margaret Shannon of the National Office of Presbyterian Women in the USA. Shanti Solomon was refused a visa to Korea during the trip, so she travelled to the Philippines while the others went to Korea.

In the Philippines, Shanti reflected on the experiences of the war-torn countries of Asia, and the national and economic barriers that kept women apart. Shanti suggested that prayer could transcend every national boundary. She then challenged the Christian women of Asia and of the Presbyterian Church of the USA to launch a project of Christian prayer and positive action, in which every woman could participate, no matter her economic position. Every time a woman prayed; she was to set aside a 'least coin' of her currency. It was an encouragement to the women of the team to demonstrate their unity in Christian faith, regardless of their country or economic circumstances.

The seed which was planted in Manila, quickly gained acceptance, not only among the women of Asia, to whom it was first presented, but also among women of all the world continents. In 1966, women from 24 countries participated when the FLC celebrated its tenth anniversary. When they celebrated this silver jubilee in 1980 women from 75 countries celebrated and in 1996, women from 80 countries celebrated the fortieth anniversary.

Each year between 35 and 50 projects are given grants. The Women's Desks of Regional Ecumenical Conferences, the World Council of Churches and the World Day of Prayer International Committee are given block grants to enhance their work and to strengthen ecumenical solidarity.

Emergency grants for disaster relief and rehabilitation are also given. Other projects include: opportunities for awareness-raising and/or educating women on gender issues; programmes of literacy, health, social concerns and leadership development; programmes enhancing justice, peace and reconciliation for women and families, communities, countries and the world; and opportunities for women to meet in ecumenical fellowship in regional, national and worldwide gatherings.



The FLC logo is praying hands forming a lotus flower.

The 'least coins' in Australia are received and dedicated at the annual World Community Day service which is usually held in October across Australia, and convened by Australian Church Women. Least coin donations can be made by contacting the national Secretary of Australian Church Women at [margaretker48@gmail.com](mailto:margaretker48@gmail.com)

## World Council of Churches – Statement:

### Confronting racism and xenophobia, overcoming discrimination, ensuring belonging

This major statement from the WCC Assembly urges confronting racism, revisiting “complicity of some religious bodies”.

Declaring that “there is no justification in either faith or science for the racism, xenophobia and discrimination that we are witnessing in the world,” the leadership of the World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee adopted a public statement that condemns these social forces.

The statement was prepared by the Public Issues Committee at the WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany in September 2022.

You can read the full statement at <https://www.ncca.org.au/ncca-newsletter/october-2022-1/item/2923-world-council-of-churches-2022101>

## Is greed a form brain failure?

From "Through a Glass Darkly" by Donna Leon

"Brunetti had once read in the science column of La Repubblica a report on experiments done with people suffering from Alzheimer's. Many of them lost the use of the brain mechanism that told them when they were hungry or full, and if given food repeatedly, would eat again and again, unconscious of the fact that they had just eaten, and should no longer be hungry. He sometimes thought it was the same with people afflicted with the disease of greed: the concept of 'enough' had been eliminated from their minds".





## Religious freedom and freedom from discrimination

*Adapted from articles by Rev Dr Elenie Poulos (Guardian online) and Stan Grant (ABC)*

Religious freedom has become a hot topic of public debate since around 2015. During the same-sex marriage debates and more recently in debates about the failed religious discrimination bill, many church leaders and conservative lobby groups have regarded the progress of LGBTIQ+ rights as a direct and profound threat to religious freedom.

The result has been a public debate around the polarisation of two different freedoms – freedom of religion or ‘belief’ and freedom from discrimination.

Some Christians have argued that freedom of religious belief is a more fundamental human right than equality rights. When it comes to matters of employment, for example, religious freedom should always get right of way. This has been the unspoken principle behind the responses to the resignation of the CEO of an AFL Club.

But not all churches have responded this way to religious freedom and equality rights. The Uniting Church chose a different path. Concerned about the religious discrimination being experienced by Australian Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs and others, it has long advocated for better religious freedom protections in Australian law and for a comprehensive Human Rights Act. It has also recognised the harm and discrimination that many LGBTIQ+ people have suffered at the hands of the Christian church.

While the Uniting Church is more theologically and socially progressive than most Australian churches, it has struggled with theological diversity on a whole range of issues. However, it has never given up on learning to live with that diversity.

The Uniting Church now has two marriage rites and also very clear statements on many other issues, such as the rights of

refugees and asylum seekers and climate change. There are church members who do not share the church’s official positions on these or other issues. But, by and large, we strive to live together in respect.

The church has a national president, synod moderators, and local leaders who chair the governing councils. They are expected to uphold and promote the values, ethos and policy positions of the church. It is an inherent requirement of leadership, and it would be strange for one of them to take another leadership role in an organisation where the values conflicted, such as CEO of an energy provider that is not committed to transitioning to clean energy.

What such an organisation would do with a CEO who has a conflicting responsibility to uphold and promote clean energy in the public forum would be for them to determine.

To quote Stan Grant (ABC On-Line) “In the case of the AFL Club, it is not saying it discriminates against Christians as a group. This is about values. Is it not unreasonable that the club expects its CEO to uphold the values of the club he leads.” There are no doubt people who work for the Club who do not share the organisation’s position on LGBTIQ+ rights and it does not appear that their employment is under threat. Nor should it be.

Religious freedom and equality rights are not inherently incompatible but they have come to be understood that way.

An organisation (religious, sporting, not-for-profit, corporate) should be able to choose leaders whose values are aligned to its own and who are able to unambiguously uphold and promote the organisation and all it stands for.

*Rev Dr Elenie Poulos is a minister of the Uniting Church in Australia, and an honorary postdoctoral associate at Macquarie University*

*Stan Grant is a journalist and writer with the ABC, Charles Sturt University vice-chancellor's chair of Australian/Indigenous Belonging and a Senior Fellow at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.*



## Help end gambling advertising

In the August edition of Vision, we invited you to join the UC Vic/Tas Synod and Transparency International in their campaign to help stop gambling advertising for good.

Sports wagering is the fastest-growing form of gambling in Australia, with losses now exceeding more than \$1.2 billion annually (and turnover about 10 times that).

Just over half of Australians who gamble online are at risk or already experiencing gambling-related harm.

75% of Australian children aged 8–16 years, who watch sport, think betting on sport is normal and can also name one or more sports betting companies (25% can name four or more).

33% of high school students report they have already gambled. Students with a mental health condition are also more likely to report they had gambled in the previous month.

If these statistics concern you, then you can express your concerns to the Federal Minister by collecting one of the post cards on the table in the foyer, signing it, and posting it to the Minister.

We invite you to take action if you wish to 'End Gambling Advertising'.



## The art of living

The art of living is to enjoy what we can see and not to complain about what remains in the dark. When we are able to take the next step with trust that we will have enough light for the step that follows, we can walk through life with joy and be surprised at how far we go.

*Henri Nouwen*

## The necessity of forgiveness with accountability

Adapted from an article by Leah D Schade, published on Patheos Website 2020, based on Matthew 18: 23-35

Schade starts with a question. Is it theologically valid to use a passage such as Matthew 18:23-35 to convince an abused person – or an entire race, or even an entire nation – to just “forgive and forget” when there has been an abuse of power?

Schade thinks not. When it comes to forgiveness, we must also factor in the dynamics of power and accountability. In this parable of ‘the Unmerciful Servant’, there is vertical power and horizontal power. The king has vertical power – he is above everyone. The slaves start off as equals (horizontal power) but that changes when one slave owes his fellow slave a debt. One slave then has the power to have the other thrown in prison. But this is a hypocrisy that the king will not tolerate and he punishes the slave whose debt he has forgiven.

In Schade’s opinion we cannot use this passage as a means by which to counsel those who have been subjected to violence and injustice to forgive a perpetrator who has (had) power over them. Whether it’s domestic abuse, misogyny, racism, xenophobia, economic servitude, or lies told to cover up the truth. We cannot use scripture to excuse the abuse of power and to silence those seeking justice.

In the parable it’s the one who has the power who is expected to extend mercy. When the indebted slave is thrown in jail, the king doesn’t go to him and say: “Ah, you must forgive the

one who had you thrown in jail.” No, his retribution is for the one who abused his power. Even after the king had demonstrated the correct way to use one’s power – with mercy and forgiveness.

What can we learn from this parable? What is the church’s role in teaching about forgiveness and the consequences of abusive power?

In an “outrage culture” that stokes fires of revenge to the point of violence, how can the church speak a prophetic truth about both mercy and accountability? What kind of church shall we be, knowing what this passage models for us, knowing that after hundreds of years, we still search for accountability around systemic racism in our communities with righteous anger?

The church can use this parable to remind those who are abusing their power that they need to change, or there will be nothing but anger and pain. The common values that undergird our society, and our church, and our relationships are: respect, mercy, forgiveness, and the reciprocity of grace.

In this parable the whole system breaks down. Everyone ends up either angry, imprisoned, or tortured. Those are the results when mercy is absent and we fail to use the precious gift of forgiveness. The church needs to proclaim radical forgiveness and divine mercy, as well as the surety of accountability and justice.

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## ***They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people.'* (Luke 2:10)**

It seems odd writing about the Moderator’s Christmas theme, for I am writing this some time ahead of Christmas. The theme is connected with one of the most ‘Christmassy’ of scenes in the gospels, told in Luke’s gospel, an angel appearing to the shepherds and announcing ‘Good news of great joy for all people’ and then a multitude of angels appearing and singing praise to the glory of God. Words and images that are picked up in songs and hymns, Christmas cards and great works of art. The shepherds respond by going to Bethlehem to see for themselves what the angels have proclaimed.

The gospel of Luke and its companion piece, the book of Acts, are extraordinary works of narrative theology. At the heart of the birth narrative is Mary, who Luke holds up as an exemplar of discipleship. When the shepherds come to Bethlehem and tell their story of angels announcing good news of great joy, the crowds are amazed, but Mary we are told ‘treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.’ (Luke 2:19 NRSV)

Being amazed is a good thing. A sense of wonder is life giving. It keeps us growing, nurtures our spiritual life. But Luke seems to be suggesting that it is not enough. Mary does more than just wonder, she treasures the words, and she ponders them in her heart.

There is a range of spiritual disciplines and Christian practices that are designed to help us notice, treasure and ponder what God is up to in our lives and world. Almost every renewal movement in our history, including most monastic movements, the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century and the Evangelical Revival of the 18th century have some practices to help us learn to stop, listen, treasure and ponder.

On the board in my office I have two lists of practices from different writers to remind me of some of these disciplines. (One list is from Samuel Wells and his book ‘Incarnational Ministry’ and the other is from Methodist scholar Elaine Heath when she did a presentation for our team in the Synod Office.)

Both lists have similar starting points of showing up, being present and paying attention. In a world that can be filled with distractions these moves are not so easy. It takes practice to be present to yourself, to other people and to God. It takes practice to stop and pay attention to what is in front of you. And then not to forget but to ponder what you have noticed. People have written much on this, entire books.

My encouragement as we enter another Advent Season, as we celebrate good news of great joy, is that we pause, be present and attend to the grace and joy that God is bringing into our midst.

*Philip Gardner Interim General Secretary*