

## About prayer

“Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night.”

— George Herbert

“God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer.”

— Mother Teresa

“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”

— Martin Luther

“I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day.”

— Abraham Lincoln

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# Saints Alive

Quarterly Newsletter of All Saints Anglican Church  
Northcote  
Parish of South Darebin

Volume 2 Number 21

## Reflections of an octogenarian

*Rev'd Philippa Wetherell*

In October this year I will be 83, and as I allow myself to feel the import of this, I ask how have I used these many years and who have I become. These are God questions, godly questions, and surely they need God's help in in answering them. Perhaps the second question cannot be answered by me alone, I need to look to trusted friends who know me well.

How was it that God had an important place in my life perhaps even from my birth? I recall my mother reading me Bible stories and a strong sense of both my grandmothers having God in their lives, and my mother's Uncle Willie who had become an Anglican priest after retiring early from the PMG. My father rather scorned any idea of religion and Church, but it seemed that I enjoyed Sunday School from the age of four. I remember as a child in primary school, setting up a little Altar and reverently baptising a favourite doll. This was not of my doing, but of God and his mysterious grace reaching out to me.

Confirmation at age 12 was a significant milestone in my young life, the laying on of the Bishop's hands and the momentous words asking that I should continue as a child of God for ever, were etched into my spirit. Yet I don't suggest that only God things were important to me, because I know that I was an enthusiastic child, loving school and learning, throwing myself into sport, forever devising plays to act out, and eager to help with the animals on my uncle's farm near Kingaroy.

Before beginning secondary school at Brisbane Girls Grammar in 1953 I had begun to teach a Sunday School class and receiving weekly Holy Communion continued to be



**Philippa at the age of 19, making palm crosses, Palm Sunday 1958** Image: Brisbane Courier Mail

important to me. Nevertheless I was surprised when I found myself responding to a teacher's question as to what I was going to be, 'A missionary, I think.'

The most formative Christian events of my teenage years were Summer Schools organised by the Diocesan Board of Religious Education, and held for a whole week after Christmas in Toowoomba. These brought together Anglicans of all ages and notable national and even international speakers, and I recall particularly the impact of an English Franciscan Friar. God must have been at work when two Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Advent (SSA) turned up the next year, the first Anglican Sisters I had met. On arriving home, bursting with

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*“This was not of my doing, but of God and his mysterious grace in reaching out to me.”*

enthusiasm, I shocked my poor mother by saying that when I was 21 I intended to test a vocation to the Religious Life!

Aged 18, I began at Teachers' College and with the support of caring Anglican friends joined a junior fellowship group meeting each month at the Community House of SSA, much to the bewilderment of my parents who thought that I was condemning myself to a life of misery. Indeed I had to weather my father's anger as he thought a 'nun' was a shameful thing and wanted to throw me out of the house. These next three years proved very challenging as I began teaching in a state primary school, joined an Anglo-Catholic parish, became deeply involved in the wider Diocesan life of the Anglican Church, and struggled to maintain my sense of vocation while praying that my parents would come to understand and accept it.

I persevered and, barely 21, went to live at the Mother House of the Order, and was asked to teach a Grade 6 class at St Margaret's School next door, while being introduced to the round of prayer of the Community. After a month I became a Postulant and wore a navy dress with a short white veil, and my life was now to be ordered by the Novice Mistress. Everything was so different from my casual self-determined life with many friends and much frenetic activity. But I felt that God had chosen this life for me, and I knew a sense of fulfilment and peace in the midst of the struggle to grow closer to God and conform to the Religious Life of the sixties.

While SSA was not solely a teaching Order, it had a number of schools, both in Brisbane and in North Queensland. Before the sixties passed I had lived within four of them, but it was never the work or ministry of the Community that was foremost for me, but the living of the dedicated Religious Life under the Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. As a young Novice I believed that this was the way I could live a simple life of deep commitment to God in loving service to others. I made these Vows at Profession in 1963 with intention to keep them for my whole life. Amazingly, to my joy, my father came to my Profession, having been convinced by a Roman Catholic golfing friend, proud of his daughter's reception as a Presentation Sister.

The late sixties and early seventies were turbulent years both in the Asian and wider Australian world, with protest against the Vietnam war, and the post-Vatican 2 changes in Catholic Religious Life. Anglican Communities were not unaffected and Sisters began to rightly question the way of life and the need to recite seven Offices (set forms of prayer) each day, together with the wearing of what now seemed a medieval habit, while the Church was experimenting with a Eucharistic Liturgy in contemporary English. In the mid-seventies I began a university degree, having completed the Licentiate Diploma as a teacher of Speech and Drama, and at James Cook University in Townsville my eyes were opened to the true history of colonisation by that marvellous historian and brilliant teacher, Henry Reynolds. Studying both English Literature and Australian History in a very open environment was, for me, a richly rewarding experience.

You might well be wondering how it is that having committed my life to God under Vows, I later chose to leave the Community, in the mid eighties. It was not a decision I made lightly or easily: my Vows were precious to me as promises made to God, but I no longer believed that I could fulfil them within the Order. For a number of years I had sought to convince the Community that we needed help, counselling, to grow into the fullness of our humanity as mature women. I was considered to be trying to lead the Community in a different direction, in short to go my own way. Yes, I did feel change was called for in the Community, and in me.

The catalyst was my appointment to the chaplaincy team at Queensland University in 1985, where I was fully accepted by a group of six men of different Christian traditions, all aware of world events and grounded in the real life. This was the year of the protest by academic staff and students against the University's decision to award a Doctorate to the Queensland Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who despised tertiary education. I joined the students in their protest on campus and was seen on television holding a placard. My Community forbade me to protest, under threat of withdrawal from the Chaplaincy team. I accepted this, but felt that I was betraying my principles in doing so. I stayed on at the university until the end of the academic year, having been awarded an Arts Degree with Honours, and then told the Community I was leaving.

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*Reflections — continued from page 2*

But where was I to go, after 26 years within this Queensland Religious Community? I felt it was best to move right away if I was to make a new life for myself. I took a risk by writing to Bishop Peter Hollingworth, at that time the Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, daring to ask if there might be any place within the Brotherhood for a graduate in Medieval English Literature! I knew and valued the ideals of BSL, but what could I expect an organisation committed to eliminating poverty and deeply engaged with those in need, to do with such a person? Never will I forget his letter! He offered me the Sambell Bursary which would allow me to do pastoral work with the Brotherhood for a year; the Bursary would pay for a year of Clinical Pastoral Education, and there was a flat I could have in East Melbourne! Surely God was working out his purpose through Bp Peter in this.

So I came to live in Melbourne and a whole new life opened up for me. I had so much to learn and of course made many mistakes and took some winding paths, but with the guidance of the BSL Chaplain and many good friends in the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW), I found a place. I believed fully that God was calling women to be Anglican priests, and again risk-taking was demanded. How thrilled I was to be present in St Paul's Cathedral at the very first Ordination of women to the Diaconate, and for the next six years I stood outside the all-male ordinations in that same Cathedral – yes, bearing a placard!

In 1994, after eight years in Melbourne, I felt ready to venture on my next risk, for which I had been preparing during these years. I knew that God was calling me to go to a developing country, somewhere outside Australia where there were people who also wanted to grow, whom I could learn from, and who would stretch me beyond my comfort zone. When studying for a theological degree through the United Faculty I had chosen a course entitled Education for Justice, and as I had believed that barring women from ordination was an injustice, so now I wanted to play some small part in bringing God's justice to those who were deprived beyond my home country. I became an Australian Volunteer Abroad, and was assigned to Papua New Guinea as a teacher. It was a challenge as I had not taught since leaving the Community, and now I would be in completely unknown territory.

Again God blessed and guided me as I found myself at a lovely Catholic school administered by De La Salle Brothers, with an Australian Principal, two other Australian brothers and a Filipino Brother, together with Sisters from Canada and the USA. I

knew something of PNG and its people through my long support of the Anglican Board of Mission, but living and working alongside people of another culture was entirely new to me.

I loved my students, with their hunger for education and their willingness to work hard, their sense of the spiritual and their care for community. When Rosary was chosen as the Chimbu school to take the first students at Year 11 level, I was delighted, even though it meant spending a week in steamy Port Moresby to learn the new curriculum. I became head of the English Department and worked with dedicated New Guinean women, valued colleagues indeed. I was asked to write an article about my time at Kondi for a Newsletter commemorating the 75th year of De La Salle in PNG, and I recently reminisced on my time there with my former Principal and two colleagues.

Even after those four years I was not ready to go home. I couldn't leave PNG, so I offered myself to our Anglican Theological College in hot steamy Popondetta and lectured there for another four years. This was a challenge of a different kind, for the adult candidates for ordained ministry came to live at the College with their wives and many children. Some of the men were not comfortable with a woman teaching them, especially theology, PNG still being a patriarchal society. But there was a program for the wives of the students at the College, and I worked with them in this, and also supported the women who had joined a community founded by the Community of the Holy Name as a way for Papuan women to live the Religious Life. I learnt much by throwing myself into every aspect of life in this Oro Province.

For my next adventure, much to my surprise, I was invited by my friend Lesley of MOW days to join her in ministry in the Eyre Peninsula of South Australia, another place I had never been to. The Bishop of the Diocese of Willochra gave me a Licence as a Lay Minister, and in 2002 I came to live in the delightful little farming town of Wudinna. There were seven centres of worship and for the first year I travelled around them all with Lesley, appreciating the warmth of country people and sharing God's love with them in their struggles.

Before the end of that year I knew that God was calling me, at last, to Ordination as a priest, and in March of 2003 I was made Deacon in a

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*“Jesus is my guide and I believe that he has shown me that eternal life is offered here and now in the present...”*

wonderful ecumenical service in Wudinna, and in December, at the age of 65, I was priested in Port Augusta. I also bought a second hand Mitsubishi Colt and learned to drive! These eight years (my life has travelled in cycles of eight, I discovered) proved the most fulfilling of my life, lovingly affirmed in ministry by Bishop Garry Weatherill, and encouraged to develop my gifts as a woman even beyond the Eyre Peninsula. Wudinna and its people remain very dear to me, and I am so thankful that God called me to that place.

In 2009, at the age of 71, I knew it was time to leave ministry in SA, and return to Melbourne. One of my parishioners, in recognising this, said ‘You seem to have been a volunteer all your life, now you need to do something for yourself.’

Here I am in 2021, having lived more than eight years in what I call ‘active retirement’, and I find myself returning to my original question: ‘How have I used these years and who have I become?’ I had first to tell my story, at least the bare bones of it, and hopefully I am ready to look more deeply into myself, and to ask God’s grace to show me how I can yet become the person God is calling me to be. My remaining years may be few or many, but God is not finished with me yet. To me it seems so important to reflect on life and especially on the end of life and on death.

Jesus is my guide and I believe that he has shown me that eternal life is offered here and now in the present, and that I am a part of all God’s creation, infinitely bound up with the unknown future of the whole planet. I care greatly about the sacredness of all life, and the need to recognise the destructive element in humankind. What is Evil and does it originate in God, in evolution?

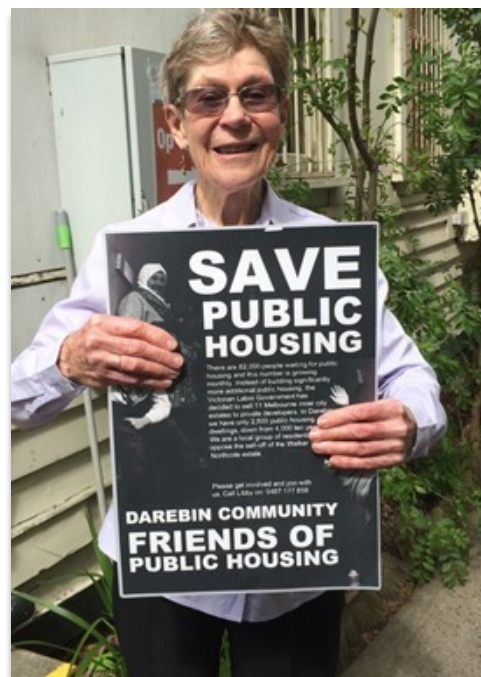
As I face these deep philosophical and theological dilemmas I look at the question of forgiveness, of the need to ask forgiveness of others, and to accept that I am forgiven. I am conscious that I have hurt others deeply at times, and where this is possible I must admit this and ask their forgiveness. How am I at this stage of my life, to grow more loving, less concerned with self, and reach out with passion to those God places in my path? A way that helps me to do this is my commitment as an Oblate of the Community of the Holy Name, for I have continued to see the Vows that I made in SSA as Simplicity, Singleness and

Service, after Jesus’ loving humble oblation of himself.

I still question who God is for me, finding in the poets I love that same searching. RS Thomas, Welsh priest and poet, asks if God is hiding from his searching even in church, and speaks of ‘nailing his questions, one by one, to an untenanted Cross’. I have also found the Ignatian Exercises offered by the Jesuits an imaginative way to approach Jesus, and more recently I have found with the Carmelites, a way to open up the Gospels. How exciting it is to continue to search!

Classical music, opera, poetry and drama, particularly Shakespeare, will forever continue to feed my spirit and, as my beloved TS Eliot writes in ‘Little Gidding’:

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*



Rev'd Philippa: still standing outside churches holding a placard



## The joy of hearing the Word

Liz Neumann

It's all Dutch to me! Or was that Kriol or Maori? Actually, it could be Welsh, English, Spanish or German: it depends on your origin and your mother or adopted tongue. Worship with full understanding is powerful. Remember when Latin was used (well of course you weren't there – you know what I mean) for church services? Symbols and actions held things together. Deeper involvement in a situation requires interaction and understanding. In church we have symbols to aid us and service guides and one of the world's oldest books, in translation, to help us.

On 5 May 2007, after 27 years and the work of 100 translators, a Kriol Bible, the first complete edition in any Indigenous Australian language, was launched in Katherine, NT. Thousands of people from western Queensland across to the Kimberley in WA speak this form of pidgin as their first language. A report at the time, on the ABC RN internet site, included this comment from Michael Miller, an Indigenous Australian:

*Kriol important to me, because it is my language. English very hard for me. Only Kriol I understand...I read Bible every day and every night.*

Translators anchor their work in the understanding and culture of the readers. To people of cattle country, the twenty-third psalm became the Lord is my Stockman. They had no sheep or shepherds to relate to.

Here is another quote from the ABC report, from Peter Carroll, a linguist:

*The Gunwinggu people use a different part of the body to express emotions, and they have a word that is, broadly translated, 'insides'. And so to love God with all your heart was to want God with all your insides. And it was that use of the word 'insides', not the word 'heart', that established the right connection with emotions and made the translations effective.*

In New Zealand the Anglican Church operates in a bicultural and bilingual society. In April 2007 I picked up a pamphlet at the Christchurch Cathedral Shop, the *Lord's Prayer in Maori*. This talked of equivalent rather than translations:

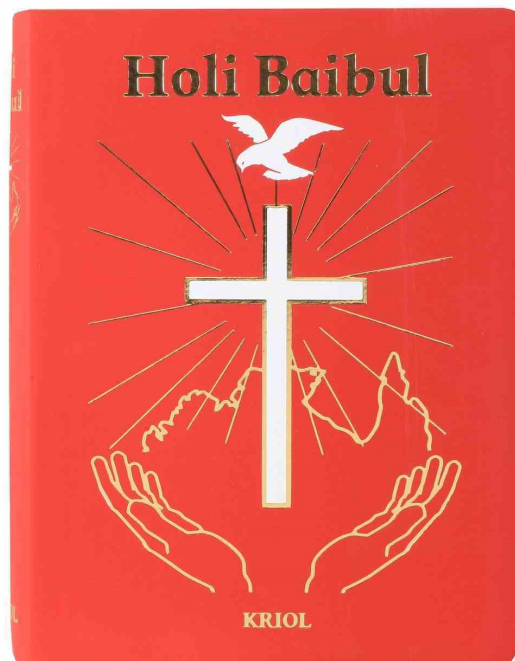
*Matua* (parent, male or female) is used for 'Father'. This word suggests the caring, loving, disciplining, helping and protecting aspects of parenting.

*Tapu*, used for 'Hallowed', describes reverence, respect, honour, and importance.

*Taro* is used for 'bread' and includes food that is useful in all situations, the stuff of life.

This request for daily bread becomes a comprehensive request for daily support. 'Deliverance from evil' is broadened into 'May you be a whole person, away from things evil, may you have life'.

Perhaps we need to reconsider the words and meanings by 'doing the voices', reading with pauses or reading out loud. Reading aloud, with consideration, in church adds much to words that have become 'everyday'. As you become your own translator, ask 'Where do words anchor in my experience and latch on to my life?'



**Holi Baibul, the Kriol Bible**

Image: Koorong.com

## Preventing violence against women

*Chris Peterson and Roberta Stead  
Family Safe Champions*

The Melbourne Diocese has a program directed towards preventing violence against women. Its aim is to support and equip leaders and church communities to work towards a future in which women and girls can live lives free from violence and free from the fear of violence. The program has an holistic approach, including training and mentoring for church leaders, and resources and tools for church communities. Further, it aims to develop best practice policy and governance procedures as well as connecting churches with specialist and local service providers. This program, with its focus on prevention in a church context is one of the first of its kind in the world. Its vision of freedom from violence and the fear of violence is based upon the knowledge that God is working amongst us to find healing, restoration and justice across communities and in our lives. The Diocese has developed a Communication Guide to help bring about and enact this vision.

A lay leadership role of Family Safety Champion has been established to support the vicar and the pastoral care team to address the issue of family violence.

At All Saints, we have volunteered to be Family Safety Champions. The role is not a professional one. Family Safety Champions raise awareness of the professional family violence support services available, and will be the point of contact for any questions, and for circulating information.

There is a need to talk about violence against women. As Christians we believe all people are created in the image of God. However, the figures tell us of the seriousness of the problem in Australia:

- One in three women (34%) has experienced physical violence
- One in five (19%) has experienced sexual violence
- Two in five women have experienced some form of violence since the age of 15 years
- Women are most likely to be victimised by men who are known to them: their current or previous cohabiting intimate partners and/or boyfriends or dates.

(Source: VicHealth)

Violence affects women across every part of society, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, age, culture or faith. The harm caused to women is profound and long-lasting. Women experiencing violence often have children in their care. The impact on children is seriously detrimental.

Violence against women includes incidents of controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour. This includes verbal, emotional and psychological abuse, social control and isolation, financial abuse, stalking and causing harm to animals and property.

### Training

Chris attended an all-day workshop on Violence Against Women, provided by the Diocese. It was coordinated by Robyn Boosey, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne and run in conjunction with the University of Melbourne. The format was presentations and videos mixed with group activities (in groups of three or four), and reporting back results. The overall theme was how can churches respond to violence against women, and how can we be involved in prevention?

The goals were to work towards churches being able to:

- support people well
- help shape values, beliefs and behaviours
- make the most of their opportunities to reach out and transform.

The main topics covered were:

- Defining violence against women and family violence: types of abuse; impact of family violence; power and control
- Prevalence of violence in Australia: how violence affects men and women differently; women are targeted more; our Christian motivation for addressing violence against women
- Signs that someone might be experiencing violence / someone might be perpetrating violence: how to start a conversation with the individual person
- How to respond well to reported instances of family violence: referring

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## Preventing violence against women — continued from page 6

people to professional family violence services and understanding prevention

- The transformative role of church leaders and the church: preventing social enablers that make violence against women more likely, for example attempts to justify violence; male-dominated control of decision-making and resources; fixed ideas and harmful expressions of masculinity and femininity; disrespect for women.

Questions were asked of workshop participants on a number of topics and we were asked to provide a rating response. These were asked before the workshop and after to measure the effect of the training on knowledge and awareness. For example:

'It is all right for a man to keep his female partner from accessing money/finances.'  
*Agree strongly | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Disagree strongly*

'It is all right for a man to physically punish his female partner if she does not do what she is supposed to.'

*Agree strongly | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Disagree strongly*

### What can churches do?

Robyn Boosey suggested:

1. Put up a Violence Against Women poster
2. Discuss the issue at the Parish Council
3. Engage with the congregation about violence against women
4. Have 'How to Respond to Family Violence' guidelines distributed to staff.

We both attended a further event in May, a Preventing Violence Against Women Forum.

*If you have any concerns or would like to discuss these issues, Chris and Roberta are your first contacts.*

Resources and more information about the program are available at [www.melbourneanglican.org.au/pvaw](http://www.melbourneanglican.org.au/pvaw)

For the latest research on preventing violence against women, search [vichealth.vic.gov.au](http://vichealth.vic.gov.au)



**Disrespectful and abusive behaviour is never OK.**

If you're worried about behaviour that's unhealthy, abusive or violent in a relationship, you can call **1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**

*Love does no harm.*  
Romans 13:10



A MELBOURNE ANGLICAN INITIATIVE

The All Saints BSL store is not just a retail operation. It is a partnership, and our support for it is part of our mission in Northcote. Please bring donations of good quality clothing, books and small household items, tell others about the store and encourage them to donate and to shop there. If you would like to offer other forms of help to the Brotherhood, such as volunteering as a worker, ask Brad or John about this, or contact the manager on 9489 6183.

## On disability — The Diving Bell and the Butterfly 2007

*Today, my life feels like a string of near misses. Women I was unable to love, opportunities I failed to seize, moments of happiness I let drift away. A race whose result I knew beforehand, but failed to pick the winner. Had I been blind or deaf, or did the harsh light of disaster make me find my true nature?*

— Jean-Dominique Bauby

### Bruce Clezy

The problem with movies is that their futures are always already determined. No matter how much we scream at the heroine *not* to open the door, she always does. This of course is part of the delight of movies. We want a story. We want an ending. So we pay our money, buy our tickets and take our seats. The lights dim. The screen lights up, and away we go. Sometimes a movie forces us to watch images we may not want to see. Sometimes we delight in plot twists. Sometimes we thrill to the fact that the heroine does open the door *despite* our protestations. For some, even already knowing the ending is itself a source of certain pleasure (think Shakespeare). Regardless, the film has already been filmed and we are powerless to change anything about it. We are locked in.

*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (2007) is a French movie that takes this idea of being locked in as one of its central themes. Based on the 1997 memoir of the same name (in French *Le Scaphandre et le Papillon*), it graphically recounts the final year of its author's life.

Jean-Dominique Bauby (Mathieu Amalric) is the highly successful editor of *Elle Magazine* France, when his life is tragically curtailed by a massive stroke at the tender age of 43. After three weeks in a coma, Bauby (or Jean-Do as his friends affectionately call him) wakes up in a rehabilitation hospital in Berck-sur-Mer. To his horror, while he can see the world and has access to language, he cannot speak, nor can he move. As the local neurologist explains, Bauby has what is called 'locked-in syndrome', an extremely rare condition in which the patient is completely paralysed, but mentally remains in their pre-morbid condition — as if the stroke had never occurred.

Bauby can see, think, recollect, imagine, feel and pray. He just cannot move, except for the sole ability to blink. With the aid of the hospital's speech pathologist Henriette (Marie-

Josée Croze), Bauby must learn a new way to communicate through a series of winks. Once this is mastered, he sets out to write his memoir *The Diving Bell and The Butterfly*, again with the aid of a transcriber.

Much of the film's content focuses on the struggle to learn this new form of communication, for Bauby, his friends and his family. Visually, cinematographically, however, we learn what is like to live in Jean-Do's body. Through the camera lens we see exactly what Bauby sees. His eyes are our eyes and as he awakes to the world, our vision is so blurry. We see how uninterested some staff are, how his friends and family must lean in so that we can see them. In one horrific scene, one of 'our' eyelids is sewn up by an ophthalmologist, so that 'our' cornea does not become sceptic. The effect is gut-wrenching, yet spine-tingling at the same time. Through the brilliance of modern cinema and visual technique, we the audience can learn, experience, even feel what it is like to have locked-in syndrome.

As Bauby's world opens up through his new speech (winking) so too do the camera angles. Strict, confined point-of-view shots move to more traditional cinematic framing with the camera becoming a kind of third eye. We now see Bauby lying in bed, on the beach spending time with his family, undergoing rehabilitation with the help of physiotherapists.

Similarly, the magic of cinema also lets us escape Bauby's locked-in world, allowing us to relive his memories and understand more fully his complex perspective. In a revealing sequence for example, we travel back in time to Lourdes, on a pilgrimage of sorts, and begin to learn how it is that Bauby came to reject religion, reject faith. In another scene the Empress Eugénie floats down the hospital hall! Flashbacks, memories and cinematic fantasies are the 'butterflies' that allow the viewer to escape the claustrophobia of the diving bell and of the author's condition.

“...an extraordinary movie, full of humour, pathos, and a deep understanding of the beauty and complexity of everyday life.”



## Bruce's film review — continued from page 8

*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* is an extraordinary movie, full of humour, pathos and a deep understanding of the beauty and complexity of everyday life. It had me howling in tears at one moment, but laughing uncontrollably the next. It truly is a feel-good movie, despite its bleak subject matter, and one could easily be led to universalise. Bauby is a kind of everyman, and the clever use of camera angles, point-of-view shots, and indeed the very nature of the cinematic experience keenly suggest that we are all locked in. The movie would have us believe that we are all Jean-Do (John Doe).

Ultimately, despite the beauty of the film, despite the cleverness of its cinematic view, however, I think that we have to reject the authority of its central premise. For no matter how locked in we all feel, no matter how trapped we remain in our own bodies, to equate the lives of those who are able bodied with those who have a disability remains fundamentally, *politically* flawed. To do so denies the very real oppression that people living with disabilities face on a daily basis. Living with a disability is always so much more than a mere point of view.

*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (with English subtitles) is currently available for streaming on STAN.



Directed by Julian Schabel, the film won awards at the Cannes Film Festival, the Golden Globes and the BAFTAs, and received four Oscar nominations. It appears in the BBC's 100 Greatest Films list.

Image: [Oscars.fandom.com](https://oscar.fandom.com)

## Poems from Arnaud

### Jab time:

Inside exhibition building,  
Queue moves slower  
than a sleepy snail.  
There is great  
reverential quiet:  
We are in  
the temple  
of anti-COVID.  
\*\*\*

### Sky palette:

Aquamarine to  
Steel grey to  
Baby blue to  
Pale lemon to  
Something beyond colour.  
\*\*\*

### What's there?

My friend awakes  
at my knock.  
I enter a place between  
dream and reality;  
A floating sensation;  
immanent possibility.  
\*\*\*

### Rough night:

Gale force  
Rushes about me,  
About the trees,  
About the house.  
Branches and roof  
shriek at the strain;  
the iniquity:  
sonic tossing  
and shaking  
of consciousness.  
From shelter,  
I breathe deep,  
Awake to the drama.  
\*\*\*

### Floating dream:

Trees grow in boat.  
Tall pines, mast-like,  
too many.  
Bendigo Laurie cuts  
one, another, another.  
Felled radiatas flip out,  
missing him by inches.  
Boat is now mound of earth,  
stumped for meaning.  
\*\*\*

### To seek is to perceive:

By attending to rhythms  
of sun, moon, gaia,  
And movements of  
wind, water, fire and earth,  
May I ground myself in  
a mysterious peace greater  
than high status anxiety.  
\*\*\*

—Arnaud Gallois



## Understanding church governance



### DIOCESE

### Archdeaconry

### Deanery

### Parish (this is us)

The five dioceses in the province of Victoria are Ballarat, Bendigo, Gippsland, Melbourne, and Wangaratta (<https://vicanglican.org.au>)

For information about legislation, Synod and membership of Archbishop in Council, search: [melbourneanglican.org.au/governance/](http://melbourneanglican.org.au/governance/)

Laura Tsakmakis

Since 1 July 2014, parishes in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne have been governed by the *Parish Governance Act 2013* (PGA). It is one of many Acts of Synod that regulate the life of the Church in Melbourne.

### What is a parish?

Section 5 of the PGA explains the Anglican understanding of a parish. In short, the parish is a geographical unit used to organise the mission of God throughout the Anglican Church. To put the parish into perspective, the parishes sit within deaneries which sit within archdeaconries, of which there are several in a diocese (the diocese is the basic unit of the church), and there are five dioceses in the province of Victoria.

### Who makes decisions about parishes?

The governing body of the Diocese of Melbourne is the Archbishop in Council, established under the *Archbishop in Council Act 2018*. It is made up of the Archbishop, clerical and lay members elected by Synod and appointed by the Archbishop. Assistant Bishops, the Dean, the Registrar, the Chancellor and the Advocate are entitled to attend but not vote. Parishes and their boundaries are declared by the Archbishop in Council. The Archbishop in Council also has the power to merge and divide parishes.

### Parish councils and worship centres

Each parish is required to have a Parish Council, which usually consists of the vicar, three churchwardens, and nine others. Of the members of the Parish Council other than the vicar, two-thirds are elected by the parishioners and the vicar appoints or nominates the remaining third. Some parishes have one church only. Others, like South Darebin, may have two or more. The word 'church' is not widely used in the PGA, which instead refers to 'worship centres' as the key legal term. Each parish must have a principal worship centre, and if it has multiple worship centres the others are known as 'local worship centres'. Enrolled parishioners of a local worship

centre may resolve to have a local annual meeting and local vestry for that centre. A local vestry consists of the vicar, churchwardens, treasurer, and six others from the local worship centre.

To be a churchwarden or a member of parish council you must be a parishioner. This is defined in the *Interpretation of Diocesan Legislation 2016* as a person enrolled on the parish electoral roll. You also need to be a parishioner if you wish to nominate someone else for one of these roles. The PGA sets out other criteria for the electoral roll, such as being a baptised layperson who is a member of the Anglican Church or another church in communion with it. You must regularly attend public worship in the parish and you can only be on the electoral roll of one parish at a time. If you would like to check whether you are already enrolled or if you are interested in enrolling, please speak to Brad Miles, the lay member of the electoral committee at All Saints.

### Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the vicar, churchwardens, and parish council are found in sections 23–25, 33 and 34 of the PGA. The vicar is responsible for the administration of public worship and the mission of the parish. The vicar is also required to work in cooperation with the churchwardens and parish council in ensuring the governance and management serve the identity and mission of the church.

The churchwardens are largely responsible for the care and maintenance of the church and other parish property, legal compliance, and the proper keeping and management of parish funds. However, it is the parish council which has general direction of the parish funds and must approve the annual budget. The parish council is also responsible for promoting the mission of the church in the parish and supporting and assisting the churchwardens.

### Our future

The parish of South Darebin has been working towards compliance with the PGA in respect of a parish council in recent months. The vestries

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of St James Thornbury and All Saints Northcote have been meeting together with Bishop Genieve Blackwell on a monthly basis, and it is anticipated that a parish council will be formed when our annual general meetings fall due. This will provide an opportunity for those on the electoral roll to elect members.

**Changes to parishes**

In addition to explaining how a parish must be governed, the PGA also provides rules on how to declare, divide, create, alter, merge, support, and close parishes. It also allows parishes to enter into agreements with each other either for sharing property, ministry or governance, or for sharing resources.

Arrangements for shared property, ministry or governance require approval by a statutory parish meeting and the Archbishop in Council. Arrangements for the sharing of resources must be approved by the parish council and Archbishop in Council. The Archbishop in Council, before dividing a parish or creating a parish from more than one existing parish, must have a report with the views of the following people:

- The vicar
- The parish officers
- A statutory parish meeting of the parish or parishes directly affected.

Where the boundaries of a parish are proposed to be altered by no more than 25% of the area of the parish, the Archbishop in Council may alter those boundaries as proposed with the written agreement of the vicar and parish officers of all affected parishes. Where the diocese wants to maintain a parish in a geographical area but it is no longer possible to maintain a viable parish there, the Archbishop in Council may designate it a supported parish. The Archbishop in Council must first, however, consult the vicar and parish council, and a statutory parish meeting must agree to it. Such a designation allows the registrar of the diocese to assume the responsibilities of any or all of the parish council, churchwardens, treasurer or secretary. Where there is a serious and continuing failure of governance, administration or legal compliance in a parish, the Archbishop in

Council can appoint a diocesan manager to conduct the affairs of the parish if it is in the interests of the parishioners, the diocese, or the Anglican Church. This gives the registrar the power to appoint churchwardens, members of parish council and the incumbency committee members. Somewhat sadly, the PGA also provides a process for discontinuance of a parish, but requires that it be done ‘in a manner that is orderly, constructive and respectful of parishioners and their faith community and that honours so far as reasonably possible those serving the mission of the church in the parish.’

Discontinuance first requires that a parish be designated ‘under consideration’. The parish council must then set a period of between 1 and 3 years at the end of which a statutory parish meeting will vote on whether to discontinue the parish, ask to become a supported parish, or ask that they no longer be under consideration. A vote to discontinue the parish must be carried by a majority of at least 75 per cent of the total number of parishioners. If a parish is discontinued or merged, the Archbishop in Council determines how to distribute the property, assets and liabilities, but must take into account the recommendation of a statutory parish meeting or the parish council, and it must be done in a way that is pastorally sensitive and that honours those who have given to the parish in the past.

**Conclusion**

In summary, a parish generally sets its own path and manages its own affairs, but is subject to the powers of the Archbishop in Council in terms of its boundaries and its existence. While these powers are significant, the PGA provides throughout for the voices of the parishioners to be heard and respected. The PGA ensures that significant changes cannot be made without consultation with the parish and, in some cases, enshrines in legislation the right of the parishioners to be respected and to have their work honoured.

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