Journal of Contemporary Ministry

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About this Journal

Editorial

We are privileged to be presenting two issues of *Journal of Contemporary Ministry* this year. This Issue 7, like Issue 6, has come out of a conference and is edited by Robert (Bob) Dixon, whose guest editorial follows. I'm excited that such conferences are being represented in our journal. It not only exposes our readers to a wide range of topics in the broad field of contemporary ministry but also opens us up to a wider range of perspectives than we might otherwise publish. Hopefully this will stir up more thinking and many conversations: as you'll see in Issue 8, that has already happened from our first special issue. So let me introduce our guest editor.

Robert (Bob) Dixon was the Foundation Director of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Pastoral Research Office (now the National Centre for Pastoral Research) from 1996 to 2016. He is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Divinity and a former Honorary Professor of Australian Catholic University. In 2022 he was made a Life Member of the Association of Practical Theology in Oceania (APTO). He is the author or co-author of numerous publications and reports about the demography of the Australian Catholic population and aspects of Catholic belief and practice. Bob has a PhD in sociology from Monash University as well as degrees in science, theology and education.

Jon Newton

Guest Editorial

Healing is at the core of the mission of practical theology. How can churches contribute to bringing about healing in our troubled world? A prior question: *can* churches contribute to bringing about healing in our troubled world? This issue of the journal contains six articles that, in a broad range of ways, look at the need for healing in church and society and ask how well the churches and their ministers are equipped to offer healing to others and to themselves.

The six articles all began life as papers presented at the December 2020 online conference of the Association of Practical Theology in Oceania (APTO). Originally scheduled to take place in Melbourne in May of that year, the conference was initially postponed because of COVID-19 and eventually held as a fully online conference, featuring three keynote addresses and 47 presentations by APTO members and other academics, graduate students and ministry practitioners. In addition to these six articles, another 14 papers from the conference are being published by Coventry Press as Robert Dixon and Mary Eastham (Eds.), *Encountering God: Practical Theology and the Mission to Heal*, the third volume in the *Explorations in Practical Theology* series.

All of these articles were written in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; indeed, the APTO online conference where they were all initially presented was an early and successful effort at presenting an entire conference online, at a time when we were all still getting accustomed to using Zoom for conference presentations. Furthermore, all of them, with the exception of the paper by Philip Hughes, which is based on data from a 2018 survey, consider the impact of the pandemic on individuals, Christian ministers and ministries, or the wider society.

In this respect, then, **Philip Hughes** provides a baseline for the pre-COVID levels of Australian levels of confidence in the churches. He points out that, in 2018, only 11 per cent of Australia's adult population said they had a great deal of or complete confidence in the churches and religious organisations, compared to 22 per cent just nine years earlier, and asks how effective the churches can be in their ministry in the face of such lack of confidence. His analysis of data from the 2018 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes suggests that confidence in the churches will not be regained unless the churches can overcome the common perceptions that religious organisations are too powerful, that they contribute more to violence than to peace,

and that religious people are intolerant when it comes to matters such as gender equity and gender identity. Have Australians' attitude to the churches changed during the pandemic? We won't know that until the next comparable survey is held, but the remaining papers in this issue perhaps point to places where we might look for hints of change.

In his article, **Stephen Beaumont** notes the numerous challenges created by the pandemic, including the provision of pastoral care and support in a time of social distancing and isolation. While, in his view, these pandemic times have not resulted in much in the way of innovative pastoral care methods and models other than the increased use of technology, he argues that pastoral care can borrow the concept of "greenspacing" from urban ecology and apply it to the diverse practices of eco-spirituality, particularly in the form of walk-and-talk therapy, a practice he has himself has adopted for use with clients.

Chaplaincy in all sorts of contexts – educational, industrial, the defence forces, sporting clubs and so on – is another means by which spiritual and emotional support can be offered to Australians, and was particularly pertinent during the time of significant social crisis caused by the pandemic. There was a time when we all thought we knew what a chaplain was, but now the concept of chaplaincy, what it entails and who can do it is confused and contested. In their paper, **Des Cahill and Susan Ennis** examine the state of contemporary chaplaincy in Australia, noting that chaplaincy in multifaith and secular Australia appears to be at the crossroads, with mainstream churches gradually withdrawing from chaplaincy services even while the need for spiritual care services continues to expand. They discuss some of the challenges facing chaplaincy, including chaplaincy training and pluralisation and integration of faiths other than Christian, in relation to an underlying theological framework based around a ministry of presence, professionalism in institutional settings, and pastoral outreach and social care in multifaith contexts.

If the pandemic created problems in the provision of pastoral and spiritual care, it also created difficulties for those who provide pastoral and spiritual care, specifically clergy, counsellors, chaplains and other ministry professionals. As agents of the churches' mission to heal, they too need access to psychological and spiritual resources while also offering healing to others. **Maureen Miner and Dion Khlentzos** argue in their article that a vital resource both for Christian healers and for those in

need of healing is secure attachment to God. This is particularly true in the context of the pandemic when lockdowns and other restrictions on our normal personal interactions have strained human attachment relationships. They use both the literature on attachment to God and insights from Trinitarian theology to suggest ways in which churches can help their healers maintain secure attachment to God and thus resource them for their challenging but vital work.

Rev Associate Professor Darrel Jackson, who spent much of the first three decades of his life living on the Isle of Man, provides an interesting case study that takes us beyond Oceania to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on undocumented migrants and refugees entering the European Union. He notes that, while European churches play an active role in refugee advocacy and welfare, fostering processes of welcome and integration, there has been an increasing tendency, due at least partly to COVID-19, to prioritise the claims of the nation state above all other obligations, including those of international law or any sense of moral or ethical obligation. His article contrasts this approach with a constructive diaspora theology that is fit for purpose within the context of the European Union and its member states.

The final article, by freelance liturgical artist **Jenny Close**, reminds us of the importance of ritual in relation to the Christian mission to heal, and the problems encountered in this respect when the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited opportunities for communal ritual. Drawing on the theology of aesthetics and the practice of liturgy, and recognising the limitations of dualistic thinking, she explores seeming opposites such as illness/wellness, breaking/healing, absence/presence, celebration/lament and praise/reproach in terms of relationships rather than as mutually exclusive opposites. Her article provides an insightful conclusion to the collection.

In accordance with the usual standards of this journal, all the articles in this issue have been double-blind reviewed.

Robert Dixon.

Peer Reviewed Articles

Re-Building Confidence as a Prelude to Ministry

Philip Hughes

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Professor Philip Hughes was senior research officer with the Christian Research Association (CRA) from its foundation in 1985 until 2016. More recently, he has worked at Harvest Bible College, assisting with the development of the Doctorate of Ministry degree program, and then at Alphacrucis University College where he taught research methods and supervised doctoral candidates. For many years he was a research fellow at the Centre for Social Justice Research, Edith Cowan University. He is also an honorary research fellow with the University of Divinity and with the National Centre for Pastoral Research. With postgraduate degrees in philosophy, theology and education, he is particularly interested in the relationship between Christianity and culture, and has written many books on religious faith in Australia, on ministry and on religious education.

Abstract

In order for the churches to exercise ministry in Australia, there must be confidence in them. While confidence in a range of systems and organisations has been falling over recent decades, in 2018 just 11 per cent of the adult population indicated a great deal or complete confidence in the churches and religious organisations, having fallen from 22 per cent in 2009.

Analysis of data from the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018) identified some factors which contributed to this low level of confidence, including the following:

- Most Australians feel that religious organisations are too powerful.

- They also feel that religious organisations have contributed more to violence than to peace.

- Many are concerned that religious organisations are a barrier to gender equity and that religious people are too intolerant.

- Many reject the "knowledge" on which the churches are based, including the idea of God.

Building public confidence will need to address these issues of the perception of power, building the perceptions that the churches are contributing to peace, that they treat women and men equally, and that they are tolerant. It also means addressing its "knowledge base", helping people to understand the meaningfulness of the concept of God.

Key words: confidence, trust, churches, religious organisations.

Introduction

Data from the 2018 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes showed that among adult Australians the levels of confidence in churches and religious organisations was lower in 2018 than at any previous time that confidence has been measured. In 1983, 56 per cent of the Australian adult population indicated some or much confidence in churches and religious organisations, dipping to 42 per cent in 1995 (Hughes,1998). In 2009, it was up again with 53 per cent expressing some or much confidence in religious organisations (Hughes & Fraser, 2014, p. 116). In 2018, 37 per cent expressed some or much confidence. More notable was the fact that between 2009 and 2018, the percentage of the Australian adult population expressing much or complete confidence in the churches and religious organisations fell from 22 per cent to 11 per cent. This lack of confidence is likely to be a major inhibitor in the churches' engagement with and contribution to the wider society.

Three groups of factors have been identified as having an impact on levels of confidence in institutions and organisations. The first has to do with experience and knowledge of the institution itself and how it operates. Confidence in the major institutions in society is a major factor in the operation of contemporary societies. In village settings, trust was built through the reputation of the individual, formed as the behaviour of the individual was observed. However, in organisations within contemporary complex societies, the individuals are often not known personally and trust has to be built through the reputation of systems (Giddens, 1990).

The second has to do with general levels of trust and confidence in organisations (Hoffmann, 1998). The third group of factors are demographic, arising from the

patterns of socialisation, the individual's place in society and their levels of education (Miles & Rossi, 2018; Hughes et al., 2007, p. 92). The purpose of this paper is to explore the relative strength of these factors in the levels of confidence in churches and religious organisations using data from the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018).

Confidence in Expert Systems

The sociologist, Anthony Giddens (1990, pp. 83-92), has described well how modern societies have evolved "expert systems" through which specialist resources such as health, education and justice can be accessed. Similarly, there are systems for creating, distributing and selling consumer products and for communication. Most people do not know personally the doctors who treat them in a major hospital, the teachers who teach their children at school, the judges who sit on the bench in the court, or the people who build, sell or install an air-conditioner in the home. Their trust arises from their perceptions of the systems within which these people work.

Misztal, in her work on trust in organisations, made the point that people have trust when they see organisations acting in trustworthy ways. Trust in government is dependent on the record of promise-keeping by government, she noted. Trust in the health system is reinforced by experiences of care and of people returning to health. Awareness of promises not being kept erodes trust (Misztal 1996, pp. 198-199).

Giddens added the observation that confidence in people who use the resources of these systems is, in part, dependent on the confidence people have in the whole system and also in the technical knowledge that has been developed within the system (Giddens 1990, pp. 88-90). Few people will share the knowledge that is fundamental to the way the system works, but they have confidence that those people within the system know what they are doing. If there is no confidence in the technical knowledge used within the system, then there is little chance there will be confidence in the systems which are based on such knowledge.

Applying Gidden's perspectives to churches suggests that if people do not share the basic assumptions about the "technical knowledge" of the churches they may have little confidence in them. Few people have a deep knowledge of theology but most of those who attend churches have the confidence that this knowledge has been well formed and is soundly based. On the other hand, those who do not trust theological

knowledge or who do not believe in God may have little confidence in the churches. The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018) found that:

- 38% of Australian adults believed in God;

- 20% did not believe in God now, although they used to;

- 28% did not believe in God and never have; and

- 14% could not choose an answer to the question.

Indeed, it has been argued by the American sociologist, Mark Chaves (1994), that the decline in religious authority as measured by the decline in confidence in religious organisations is a way of understanding secularisation. However, Hoffmann (1998, 2013) pointed out that this does not explain the dips in confidence that appeared to be related to specific events such as the televangelist scandals of the late 1980s in the USA. After detailed analysis, Hoffmann remained noncommittal as to whether the higher levels of confidence in some people led them to higher rates of religious attendance, or whether religious involvement was the major factor which led to higher levels of confidence in religious institutions (Hoffmann 2013, p. 21).

Confidence in expert systems is also reliant on the assumption that those working in the system have mastered that technical knowledge, that they have been well trained and that their training is up-to-date. It is assumed that the companies that have hired those who work for them have checked their accreditation and hold them accountable. In the Wellbeing and Security Survey conducted in Australian in 2002, it was found that the factor that had the greatest impact on people's level of confidence in an organisation was whether people saw the organisation as concerned mainly with their own interests rather than the interests of customers, clients, or the community at large. Other factors were the difficulty people had in obtaining appropriate information and in making a complaint and having it dealt with (Hughes et al., 2007, p. 93).

In terms of confidence in the churches, some people distinguish between different denominations. They may also distinguish between different services of the churches: having confidence in their schools or in their charities, but not in the worshipping communities, for example. This distinction has been demonstrated in some surveys such as the Wellbeing and Security Survey of 2002 which found much higher levels of

confidence in charities, including those run by churches, than in the churches themselves (Kaldor et al., 2010, p. 126).

Underlying that confidence, however, is confidence in the processes which recruit, train, and accredit those who work in the churches. A most important factor in confidence is the belief that the churches will serve the people who seek assistance from them and not just serve the churches' own interests. Unless there is some level of confidence in the churches, people are unlikely to turn to them for help.

Confidence works differently for those who are active within the churches. People get to know the leaders, priests, ministers and pastors of churches personally. They see how they behave in a variety of situations. The leader develops a personal reputation and the levels of confidence that people have in a leader depends on that reputation. Trust grows in the local church and in its leaders and community. However, in relation to the operations of the broader church, trust in the system becomes important wherever people are unable to rely on personal reputations.

Confidence and Specific Issues Which Affect Attitudes to the Churches

In Australia, as in a number of other countries around the world, a major factor which has harmed the credibility of the churches is the sexual abuse perpetrated by clergy and other employees of the churches. In this regard, churches and people working in them have been seen to have betrayed the trust that was vested in them. Certainly, this issue has been on the front page of newspapers and has caught the attention of the Australian public over a long period of time. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse reported that, not only have the churches caused harm to many vulnerable people, but they have covered up the sexual abuse in order to protect their own reputations (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017, p. 44). In that regard, they have put their organisations before the care of those who have been injured by these abuses. The Royal Commission reported that the processes in relation to complaints were often "legalistic and lacked transparency" and "failed to appropriately recognise the long-term and devastating impacts on child sexual abuse on victims, survivors and their families" (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017, p. 54).

One Catholic bishop has described the issue in this way:

> Millions of good Catholics have been deeply disillusioned, both by
> the revelations of widespread abuse, and even more by what they
> have perceived as the defensive, uncaring and unchristian
> response on the part of those who have authority in the Church
> and claim to speak in God's name. The effects on the Church have
> already been massive and the poison will continue to eat away at
> the very foundations of the Church for as long as the issue remains
> (Robinson, 2013, p. 2).

As the Royal Commission showed, abuse not only occurred in Catholic churches and institutions, but also those of many other denominations (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017, p. 45). People of many denominations, as well as the wider public, have been deeply disillusioned by the revelations of widespread abuse.

While the issue of child sexual abuse has been a dominant concern in Australia, many other concerns have been raised about the operation of churches and religious organisations which have contributed to the lack of confidence. A major concern expressed by some people in the USA is that church organisations have tried to exercise political power in order to advance their own agendas. A 2021 survey in the USA found 70 per cent of adults said that "houses of worship should keep out of political matters", up from 63 per cent the previous time the question was asked in 2019 (Pew Research Centre, 2021).

While many Christians in the USA have used their political influence to support the abolition of access to abortion, other Americans have seen this as a misuse of influence. They have seen the churches as foisting their own moral agendas on people who have very different values (Stewart 2019, Chapter 3). There have been many other issues, too, where many Americans have voiced concern at the ways church organisations have used political power for their own purposes, such as the use of US Federal government money to promote religious schools to the detriment of public schools (Stewart 2019, pp. 186-208).

While the level of antagonism in relation to such issues in Australia has not reached the same level as in the USA, there are some similar concerns. There has been an

ongoing concern that public money has been spent on religious schools to the detriment of public schools (Maddox 2014, Chapter 3). There have also been concerns that churches and religious organisations have tried to exert political power to foist their own moral agendas on people outside their organisations. The major recent issue in Australia has been same-sex marriage. Most major denominations advocated strongly for prohibiting same-sex marriages in the plebiscite that occurred in 2017. Yet, two-thirds of Australians felt that such marriages should be legalized, as has now occurred. While some denominations spent much money trying to persuade the public to prohibit same sex marriages, they were accused by some people of running discriminatory agendas (ABC News, 2015). Such issues have certainly had an impact on the general levels of confidence in the churches and other religious organisations.

General Levels of Confidence in Organisations

The second category of factors has to do with the general levels of confidence in organisations. While confidence levels may rise and fall in relation to specific issues, as noted above, overall levels of confidence in organisations has fallen over recent decades (Hoffmann 1998, p. 322; Hoffmann 2013, p. 22; Twenge et al., 2014). It is thus possible that the decline in confidence in the churches and religious organisations is a product of this general decline in confidence. As shown in Table 1, between 2009 and 2018, the levels of confidence fell in most systems and organisations, including schools and education, courts and the legal system, and in Federal Parliament. How much these changes in general levels of confidence affect the levels of confidence in churches and religious organisations will be explored in the results section below.

Table 1. Percentage of Australian Adults Expressing A Great Deal or Complete Confidence in Various Systems and Organisations in 2009 and 2018

	Much Confidence in System / Organisations 2009 (%)	Much Confidence in System / Organisations 2018 (%)
Schools and educational systems	37	32
Courts and legal system	24	21

	Much Confidence in System / Organisations 2009 (%)	Much Confidence in System / Organisations 2018 (%)
Business and industry	20	19
Churches and religious organisations	22	11
Federal Parliament	15	7

Sources: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009, 2018)

It is worth noting that, between 2009 and 2018, there was also a change at the other end of the scale in those with no confidence in organisations. The percentage of the adult population with no confidence in churches and religious organisations rose from 20 per cent to 33 per cent. But there was also a rise in the percentage of the population with no confidence in other systems and organisations:

- from 10% to 13% in the courts and legal system;

- from 3% to 5% in the schools and educational system;

- from 5% to 6% in business and industry; and

- from 12% to 20% in the Federal Parliament.

Confidence in Institutions and Demographic Factors

Apart from these specific issues relating to the churches, research on confidence in organisations has shown that there are other demographic factors which have an impact on levels of confidence. Some of these factors have to do with the patterns of socialisation. Trust and confidence in others first develops through experiences with others in early childhood (Erikson, 1965; Giddens, 1990, p. 94). Schools are generally the first institutions with which children have significant contact which may have an impact on their subsequent confidence in institutions (Miles & Rossi, 2018).

In later life, those people who have most invested in society and who are most capable of negotiating its institutions tend to have higher levels of confidence in those institutions, as was identified in the Wellbeing and Security Survey. Younger people, those people with lower levels of education and less experience of negotiating social

systems, may find it harder to understand how organisations work, or what they are saying, or how to access what they have to offer (Hughes et al., 2007, p. 92).

Also, people with more invested in society, that is people with higher levels of income and more prestigious occupations, tend to have higher levels of confidence. They have greater understanding of how things work and more confidence in ensuring that organisations work in their favour (Hughes et al., 2007, p. 92). In a longitudinal study of confidence in the USA, Twenge et al. (2014) found that poverty rates were associated with lower levels of confidence in institutions.

The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018) provided the opportunity to examine some of these factors as they pertain to levels of confidence in churches and to measure the relative importance of these factors.

Methodology

The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes is a national survey conducted biennially by Academic Surveys Australia, the survey arm of the Australian Consortium for Social and Political Research Incorporated (ACSPRI), a consortium of universities and government research agencies. It is described by the consortium as "Australia's main source of data for the scientific study of the social attitudes, beliefs and opinions of Australians" (ACSPRI, 2022).

The survey is distributed to a random sample of Australian adults (18 years and over) identified from electoral rolls. Academic Surveys Australia has special permission from government to use the electoral rolls for this purpose.

A total of 1,287 Australian adults responded to the 2018 survey. Comparison with the 2016 Census showed that while the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes had the limitations of most surveys in that people who struggle with written English, the very elderly and people without ready access to email or the internet were poorly represented, the survey generally represented well the breadth of the Australian population.

The 2018 survey contained a number of questions about levels of confidence in organisations and questions about how people perceived religious organisations and religious faith. The questions were designed by an international consortium which organises the International Social Survey Program in about 44 countries around the

world. Questions from this program are regularly included in the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes and many of the questions in 2018 were the same as the questions asked in the survey in 2009. Thus, the questions on religion were not specifically related to the Australian context. They did not include explicit questions about the issue of sexual abuse or its cover-up.

However, some more general questions did cover the issue of whether people felt that religious organisations had too much power, whether religions contributed more to violence than to peace, whether extremely religious people were too intolerant, and whether religions are a barrier to gender equality.

There were also other general questions about levels of confidence, not only in religious organisations, but also in schools, courts, business and industry and in the Federal parliament. There were questions about people's own levels of religious commitment, the groups with which they identified and their levels of attendance at religious services. There were questions about respondents' belief in God and in other religious doctrines.

Other questions covered the usual range of demographic issues such as people's level of formal education, their gender and age, and their perceived place in Australian society.

Results

Religious Factors

The analysis of the factors influencing the levels of confidence in churches and religious organisations will be considered first in terms of the three categories of factors which have been identified. The first category is the level of involvement and belief in churches and in religion in general and opinions about religion. Table 2 shows that there is a strong positive relationship between the frequency of religious attendance and confidence in religious institutions. Ninety per cent of those who attend services frequently have some or much confidence, compared with just 20 per cent of those who never attend.

Table 2. Level of Confidence in Churches and Religious Organisations Compared with the Frequency of Attendance of Religious Services

Frequency of Attendance at Religious Services	Little or No Confidence	Some or Much Confidence	Total
Never Attend	80%	20%	100%
Occasionally attend	50%	50%	100%
Attend monthly or more often	10%	90%	100%

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018)

However, further analysis showed that even among those who attended a religious service monthly or more often, only 48 per cent said they had a great deal or complete confidence in religious organisations. Another 42 per cent said they had some confidence, and 10 per cent had little or no confidence. Not all who attend religious services frequently had high levels of confidence in religious institutions.

Along with attendance at religious services is religious belief. Most of those who believed in God had some or much confidence in the churches and religious organisations, but few of those who did not believe had some or much confidence, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Level of Confidence in Religious Organisations Compared with Categories of Belief in God

Categories of Belief in God	Little or No Confidence	Some or Much Confidence	Total
Do not believe in God	88%	12%	100%
Do not know whether there is a God or not	78%	22%	100%
Believe in a higher power but not in a personal God	78%	22%	100%
Believe in God some of the	55%	45%	100%

time			
Believe in God but have doubts	43%	57%	100%
Believe God exists and have no doubts	21%	79%	100%

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018)

While the relationship between belief and confidence was strong, there were many people who believed in God but had little confidence in churches or religious organisations. At the same time, there were a few people who did not believe in God but did have confidence.

The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018) canvassed a number of the opinions that may have had some impact on levels of confidence in religious institutions. Table 4 shows the responses to these attitudinal items and the fact that there was a negative relationship between each of these items and confidence in churches and religious organisations. Between 70 and 81 per cent of those who agreed with the statements about religion and religious organisations had little or no confidence in churches and religious organisations.

Table 4. Level of Confidence in Churches and Religious Organisations Compared with Agreement with the Following Statements

Attitudes to Religion and Religious Organisations	Little or No Confidence among those who agree with statement	Some or Much Confidence among those who agree with statement	Total
Religious organisations have too much power (62% agreeing)	81%	19%	100%
Religion a barrier to gender equality (51% agreeing)	77%	23%	100%
Religion contributes more to	74%	26%	100%

conflict than peace (72% agreeing)			
People with strong religious views are too often intolerant (75% agreeing)	70%	30%	100%

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018)

All four issues showed a strong negative relationship with levels of confidence. The issue which related most strongly with confidence in churches and religious organisations was that the perception that religious organisations have too much power, a statement supported by 62 per cent of the Australian population. Only 6 per cent felt that religious institutions do not have enough power, with the remaining third of the population believing religious institutions had around the right amount of power.

More than 80 per cent of those who considered that religious institutions had too much power said they had little or no confidence in them. It may also be noted that among those who rejected the idea that religious institutions had too much power, 29 per cent also had little or no confidence in religious institutions. The survey responses gave no indication as to what might be meant by having too much power; whether they were thinking of political power, economic power or influence over the lives of people is not known from the answers. It is also possible that people may have had different ideas regarding the power of major denominational institutions and the power of a local church. They may also feel quite differently about the power of different denominations, although, given the lack of differentiation in most people's thinking, it is possible that many Australians have a general suspicion of churches exercising power in the wider community.

The second issue in terms of its relationship with levels of confidence was the concern that religions can be a barrier to gender equality. While only half of the Australian population saw this as a concern, more than three-quarters of those who held that view had little or no confidence in religious organisations. Such concerns may have to do with some religions teaching distinct and unequal roles in home and in work as well as the leadership patterns within some religious organisations for men and women.

The third issue was that of religion contributing more to conflict than to peace. More than 70 per cent of Australians affirmed this, and approximately three-quarters who

thought this way had little or no confidence in religious institutions. Differences in religious identity have often been and continue to be behind many conflicts around the globe. In recent years, religious-based terrorism has brought the issue to the fore of media attention and people's thinking.

The fourth issue was that of religious intolerance. Three-quarters of the Australian adult population affirmed that people with strong religious views were often intolerant. Of those who agreed with that statement, 70 per cent had little or no confidence in religious institutions.

Demographic and Other Issues

As noted in Table 1, the decline in confidence in churches and religious institutions Could be related to a general decline in the levels of confidence in organisations.

There are also demographic factors which have been found to relate to confidence in organisations. Table 5 shows confidence in churches and religious organisations by a number of the demographic factors included in the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018).

Table 5. Level of Confidence in Religious Institutions by Various Demographic Factors

	Little or No Confidence	Some or Much Confidence	Total	Sig.*
Females	60%	40%	100%	.054
Males	65%	35%	100%	
Aged 18 to 39	68%	32%	100%	.002
Aged 40 to 59	62%	38%	100%	
Aged 60 and older	56%	44%	100%	
Born in Australia	65%	35%	100%	.011
Born overseas	56%	44%	100%	

Married	57%	43%	100%	.000
Divorced	74%	26%	100%	
Widowed	40%	60%	100%	
Never married	72%	28%	100%	
Own home	56%	44%	100%	.005
Paying mortgage	68%	32%	100%	
Rent privately	68%	32%	100%	
Rent from public housing	56%	44%	100%	
Other housing arrangement	64%	36%	100%	

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018)

* 'Sig' refers to the significance of the difference between the different groups as measured by chi-squared calculation. A figure of less than .05 means there is at least a 95 per cent chance that the differences found in the survey are reflected in the wider population. A figure of .01 or less means there is at least a 99 per cent chance that the differences found in the survey are reflected in the wider population.

Most people who were young, male, born in Australia, single or divorced, and renting privately had little or no confidence in churches and religious institutions. On the other hand, older females, widowed or married, and owning their own home were much more likely to have confidence in churches and religious institutions.

There was no clear or significant pattern between the level of education and confidence in religious institutions. However, whether one owned a home or was paying a mortgage, whether one rented privately or publicly, did make a difference.

Which are the Most Significant Factors?

The tables above have demonstrated that there are many factors related to confidence in churches and religious organisations. However, it is likely that some of these are secondary factors. Older, married and widowed people, for example, have been shown to be more religious than younger, single and divorced people. The levels

of religiosity, then, may lead to the levels of confidence in religious institutions rather than the demographic factors having a direct influence.

The best way of examining the relative importance of these factors is through regression analysis. The following model has been produced using binary logistic regression. The dependent variable, confidence in religious institutions, was originally an ordinal variable and has been reduced to a binary variable for the sake of the regression procedure.[1] The model has been created in terms of factors contributing positively to confidence in churches and religious organisations.

Table 6. Logistic Regression on Confidence in Churches and Religious Organisations

Factor	Exp(B)	Sig.*
Churches do not have too much power	3.18	.000
Religion brings peace rather than conflict	2.78	.000
Belief in God at least sometimes	1.90	.010
Religion is not a barrier to equality of gender	1.63	.017
How religious are you?	1.34	.000
People with strong religious beliefs are not intolerant	1.33	.237
Confidence in institutions (apart from religion)	1.23	.000
Own one's own home	1.16	.501

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[1] Most forms of regression are built on the assumption that the data, known as interval data, comes from scales where the gap between each number in the scale is similar. Ordinal data, such as that produced by questions which ask whether a person strongly agrees, agrees, disagrees or strongly disagrees to a statement, cannot be used in such forms of analysis as one does not know the size of the gap between each response. However, data which is in the form of 0 or 1 response, known as binary data, can used in regression. Ordinal data can be changed to binary data, in which disagree and strongly disagree are re-coded as 0 and agree and strongly agree are re-coded as 1, and then used in regression analysis. This special form of regression, where the dependent variable is in a binary form, is known as logistic regression.

How often do you pray?	1.10	.017
Social class (self-assigned)	1.10	.128
Married or widowed	1.09	.694
How frequently attend religious services	1.03	.010
Years of formal education	.97	.131
Male / not female	.91	.638
Born overseas	.79	.308

The factors in this regression model correctly predict the dependent variable for 91% of cases for those with little or no confidence in churches and religious organisations, and 73% of cases for those who do have confidence in churches and religious organisations. In other words, these factors explain well the overall differences in confidence in churches and religious organisations. * For an explanation of significance see the comment below Table 5.

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018)

In Table 6, Exp(B) functions as an "odds ratio". Thus, the model shows that the odds of a person who says that the churches *do not* have too much power having confidence in the churches and religious organisations is 3.18 times the odds of a person who believes the churches *do* have too much power having such confidence. That is, a person who says that the churches do not have too much power is much more likely to have confidence in the churches and religious organisations than a person who believes the churches have too much power. A person who believes that religious organisations bring peace rather than conflict is also much more likely to have confidence in the churches and religious organisations; here the odds ratio is 2.78 to 1. The model shows that these are the two most important issues which divide those who have confidence from those who do not. A third issue is that of gender equality. Those who reject the idea that religion is a barrier to gender equality are more likely to have confidence in the churches. The issue of tolerance was included in the model, but was not statistically significant.

The model in Table 6 also shows that belief in God and whether one sees oneself as a religious person are important in whether one has much confidence in religious

institutions. Whether one attends religious services and whether one prays are significant factors but add little more to the model of confidence above belief in God, which is a much stronger factor.

General level of confidence in institutions is a weak but significant factor in the model. Those people who generally have confidence in social systems such as the education, health and justice systems were a little more likely to also have confidence in the churches and religious organisations.

Most of the demographic factors included in the model, including years of formal education, whether one was male or female, self-assigned social class, married or not, or born overseas or in Australia, were not statistically significant when the attitudes to religion factors were taken into account. The strongest item was whether one owned one's own home or not, with home owners more likely to have confidence in churches and religious organisations, but that factor was also not statistically significant when all the other factors were taken into account.

Discussion

According to the model in Table 6, the factor which most strongly divided those people who have confidence in the churches and those who did not was the perception of the power of the churches. It is quite possible that this perception of the churches' power is related to the sexual abuse cases, which have been widely interpreted as abuse of power, as many abusers had positions of leadership and authority (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2017, p. 47). Further, the churches have been seen to have abused their power by covering up these cases and in the ways they have dealt with complaints and claims for redress (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2017, p. 54).

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson has explained the decline in confidence in the following way.

> A major reason why the revulsion against the Catholic Church over abuse has been so great is precisely that for centuries the Church presented itself as the great and infallible moral guide that could tell everyone else what to do and threaten eternal punishment for anyone who did not bow down and obey. And now this Church— which so vaunted its own perfection—has been shown to have a

> rottenness at its core. When the school bully is exposed, the whole
> school rejoices! If we are ever to come out of this crisis, there must
> be a far greater humility (Robinson, 2013, pp. 86-87).

The issue of church power has arisen again within recent months in regards to the legislation to protect against religious discrimination. There are some Australian Christians who feel they have become a "persecuted minority", because they and the churches no longer have the authority they once had. Their values, for example, on homosexuality, are not being accepted. On the other hand, many Australians may interpret the proposed legislation as a way of protecting the churches' power when it comes into conflict with other rights and freedoms (Liveris, 2022).

It is not evident from the survey results what powers Australians are concerned about: whether it is the power embedded in financial and built resources, their influence in political circles, or the ways they can shape the behaviour of those involved in them. Whatever the nature of the power which concerns contemporary Australians, it not only lowers the level of confidence in the churches, but also contradicts the churches' founding in Jesus who chose to have "nowhere to lay his head" and who said:

> Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,
> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the
> Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his
> life as a ransom for many (Mk.10:43-45, New International
> Version).

Confidence is also related to the perception of whether churches and religious organisations in general have brought peace or war. This issue has had a very long history and many wars have been fought in the name of religion. Many older Australians remember the enmity between the Catholics and Protestants in Australia (Dixon 2005, p. 5), divisions similar in kind if not in intensity to those that fuelled brutal wars in Ireland. It is likely that many Australians responding to the survey had in mind the terrorist acts that have been conducted by people in the name of Islam, particularly since 2001. There are two sides to the narrative. Christians have often been at the forefront of working for peace, as remembered, for example, in the activities of Bishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa. Which side of that narrative, for peace or for division, people feel is the dominant side of the churches' historical

narrative has a great impact on whether people have confidence in the churches and religious organisations.

The third major issue was whether people saw religion as promoting gender equality or as being a barrier to such equality. The male domination of leadership of most Christian denominations and the leadership of many other religions is an important issue for many Australians in contemporary society. It is another way in which many Australians feel that the churches and some other religious groups have not measured up to contemporary moral values.

Whether people see the extremely religious as intolerant does not appear to be a major factor in the model in Table 6 because it does not distinguish clearly between those who have confidence and those who do not. A large portion of Australian population feel that the extremely religious are intolerant, including people who have some confidence in the churches and religious organisations. The reason it is not significant in the model in Table 6 is because it added little to the issue of the power of the churches. Those who were concerned about power probably saw the intolerance of some churches and religious organisations as demonstrations of the misuse of power. Nevertheless, other studies, such as Bohr's Australian study of the attitudes of Generation Y to the churches, have noted the perception that many Christians in general and church leaders in particular are intolerant of different life-styles, particularly homosexual relationships. This study found this perception of intolerance was significant in younger people leaving the churches (Bohr & Hughes, 2021).

Apart from these issues, confidence in churches and religious institutions has a lot to do with whether one believes in religious teaching and whether one perceives oneself as religious or not. People who believe in Christian doctrines and who consider themselves religious are much more likely to have confidence in the churches. This confirms the general point made by Giddens, that confidence in systems involves confidence in the technical knowledge on which the system is based. Most people who do not believe in Christian doctrines have little confidence in the churches. The model found this issue was stronger than whether one actually attended church services.

What is not clear from this analysis is whether the lack of confidence in the churches leads to a lack of belief, or whether the decline in belief leads to the lack of confidence in the churches. The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes indicated that there were more people who believed in God but had little confidence in the churches than people

who had confidence in the churches but had no belief, as shown in Table 3. This suggests, but does not prove, that, for many Australians, confidence in the churches declines first and is followed by a decline in belief. However, it is likely that for some people it works the other way around: a decline in belief leads to a lack of confidence in the churches.

There is a general issue in society of a lack of confidence in institutions generally. However, the logistic regression results showed that this was not a large factor in relation to religious institutions and the levels of confidence in religious institutions are not likely to go up greatly if there is a rise in confidence in institutions generally.

Conclusion

These results are very significant for the churches in Australia at this present time, demonstrating the widespread suspicion of churches and religious organisations. Australians are currently less confident in the churches than they are in most institutions in society. If the churches are to play a role of service in the wider public, this must be changed. Although this will be difficult following the very public failures of trust in the sexual abuse cases and the attempt to impose on the public the rejection of same-sex marriage, confidence must be built.

First of all, the churches must recognise that they exist as "expert systems" and confidence is dependent on the trustworthy operation of the whole system. It involves careful attention to the processes of recruiting people to work in the system, to the processes of training and continuing professional development, and to the systems whereby people within the system are held accountable and complaints are examined.

The survey results shows that, in particular, churches need to be careful how they exercise power and how that exercise of power is perceived. Based on previous research, it is very important that the exercise of power is perceived to be in the interests of those people the churches seek to serve, in the interests of the vulnerable and the powerless. If the exercise of power is used to limit the recompense given to survivors of sexual abuse, for example, the confidence levels may continue to diminish. If the exercise of power is seen to be used to protect their own reputations, rather than to serve others, confidence levels will continue to diminish. It is quite possible that support for religious discrimination legislation could be seen as a move

by the churches to protect themselves, and may deepen further the widespread lack of confidence in the churches.

As Inglehart (2021) has well demonstrated, a significant gap has opened up in the Western world between the values of the churches and the values of the majority of the population. If churches seek to impose their own values on the wider public, as they did in relation to the same-sex marriage debate, that will hinder the development of confidence in the churches in the wider community. The debate was not about the morality of same-sex marriages but about its legality. People are not so concerned about the moral stance the churches may take in regard to their own members, but may well see the imposition of values on others as a misuse of power.

The ways the churches and other religious organisations operate internally also has some impact on how they are regarded by the wider community. There is evidence here that the fact that many denominations continue to treat men and women differently when it comes to leadership is a major stumbling block for many Australians. If churches are to regain the confidence of the community, they must treat women equally to men in positions of leadership as well as teaching equality. Their continued biases in this regard are offensive to the morals of the wider community.

Churches also need to show that they are contributing to peace and harmony rather than to division and violence. The churches and religious organisations of all kinds need to show that they are making positive contributions to peace, both in the relationships they have with each other and in the wider world. An immediate example is that Putin's invasion of Ukraine should be clearly condemned by all the churches and that the Orthodox Churches in particular should disassociate themselves from the Russian Orthodox Patriach, Kirrill, and other Orthodox leaders who have supported his invasion as a "holy war" (Grant, 2022).

Finally, the regression analysis suggests that very basis of the "knowledge" on which the churches are based must be addressed. As belief in God is understood as meaningful, there is a greater chance that the wider public may gain confidence in the churches as guardians of that knowledge.

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The author of this article is responsible for the analyses presented here.

Greenspace Pastoring: Integrating Nature-Based Therapy & Pastoral Care

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Abstract

The global pandemic's impact on the church in Australia was felt in many areas. Clergy faced numerous challenges, including providing pastoral care and support amidst social distancing and isolation. The need to innovate saw an increase in the use of technology such as hybrid services. However, there has not been much in the way of new pastoral care methods and models reported during these challenging times. What started as a personal journey for this author several years ago found traction during the Pandemic. This paper argues that pastoral care can borrow the concept of "greenspacing" from urban ecology and apply it to the diverse practices of eco-spirituality. While the potential expressions of this are endless, this paper explores a method for engaging in pastoral care and counselling through walking and talking. The empirically powerful modality of walk-and-talk therapy has been borrowed from psychotherapeutic tradition and infused with elements of eco-spirituality. While the walk is the focus, pastors are encouraged to integrate practices from various spiritual traditions to complement these greenspace encounters.

Keywords: Eco-therapy, eco-spirituality, pastoral care, counselling

Introduction

Physical church attendance appears to have returned to pre-pandemic levels as Australia approaches the fourth year of Covid-19, and for some churches attendance has increased (NCLS, 2021). Additionally, McCrindle Research (2021) contends that many Australians have engaged in a new spiritual search because of the pandemic. It's unclear what this implies for the church in the next years. Only time will tell if the pandemic's catchphrase, "the new normal" will stop being used when society returns to "business as usual".

Reflecting on these unprecedented times, pastors needed to adapt in the hope it would save their congregations. Many embraced new ways to care for and lead their congregations in response to closures, restrictions and subsequent decline in physical attendance. While not a topic of scholarly discussion in Australia, innovation and resiliency were identified as important features for churches during the pandemic (Covarrubias, Dunaetz & McGehee, 2021; Pillay, 2020; Thumma, 2021). The most visible of these innovations was the increasing use of technology. While there was increased technological use in religious life before the pandemic, for many church leaders this was a completely new way of connecting. During the pandemic it became a way to maintain "genuine, authentic connection with people" (McCrindle Research, 2021, p.30), when traditional pastoral care methods were severely hampered.

This article examines how pastoral care might be revitalised by building on the lessons learnt through Covid-19 and offering new opportunities in the spirit of further organisational innovation. Pastoral care ministry was a prominent area of disruption during Covid-19, even though there is little information on the actual experiences of pastoral carers and congregations (Abraham et al., 2021; Johnston et al., 2022); a finding that is consistent with reports of pastoral care in non-congregational settings, such as hospital chaplaincies and prison teams that had to navigate lengthy lockdowns and other Covid-imposed restrictions (Drummond & Carey, 2020; Zammit, 2021). Despite this acknowledgment, the research outside of media platforms offers few recommendations for enhancing pastoral effectiveness.

One noteworthy exception is a study from Indonesia that suggests a shift to small community groups and family altars (Abraham et al., 2021). The article aims to broaden clergy members' perspectives on the pastoral experience. Rather than relying on increased use of technology and the return of large public gatherings, there is an

opportunity to step outdoors into the greenspaces. I contend that congregations may benefit from a greenspacing of pastoral care as both a tangible expression of eco-spirituality and a legitimate response to the current context. In urban ecology, "greenspaces" refer simply to an open piece of undeveloped land accessible to the public. Open spaces are important because they provide recreational areas for residents and enhance the beauty and environmental quality of neighbourhoods (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2017). For churches during Covid, these under-utilised greenspaces are accessible for various corporate and individual spiritual encounters, including pastoral care.

Whether the pandemic has changed how people have interacted with greenspaces like parks and backyards is not just a question for urban ecologists (Lopez, Kennedy & McPherson, 2020). I, too, wonder how many churches used greenspaces for pastoral care during the pandemic. I suspect very few. But just as churches have embraced hybrid services, there is an opportunity to champion an innovative, contemporary and ecologically informed pastoral care and counselling method. While eco-spirituality is not a new concept, the pandemic has provided a unique opportunity for people to explore the greenspaces in their neighbourhoods or even in their backyards.

The model of green-spaced pastoral care suggested in this paper is informed and infused by nature-based therapies to promote healthy eco-centric spirituality. How I go about this is twofold. Firstly, I will review some key ideas in contemporary eco-spirituality for those unfamiliar with or suspicious of this term. Secondly, I will discuss the potential benefits of utilising the therapeutic modality of "walk and talk therapy" (WTT) as an exemplar for using greenspaces to promote pastoral care and counselling conversations.

Towards this goal, I will present my theological reflections on this emerging model, highlighting several key benefits. In this way, it is a combination of eco-spirituality and ecotherapy practices. For this to happen, my approach goes beyond just the walking therapy that draws lightly upon eco-psychological principles. At the time of writing, four years into the Covid-19 pandemic, its impact on Christian churches is becoming better understood. There is a small but growing body of scholarly literature focussing on a range of issues, including the restoration of worship attendance post-Covid (Martyr, 2022), but scant literature on pastoral care methods. This paper is a contribution to this ongoing conversation.

During the pandemic churches experienced unprecedented disruption to their services and activities, impacting attendance patterns (NCLS, 2021). While it is too early to tell what the future will hold, I have heard numerous reports from clergy stating that, because of Covid, many church members do not want to return to regular church life. While the overall attendance levels have, in some circles, returned to pre-pandemic levels, the patterns have changed, such as increased online attendance over face-to-face attendance (NCLS, 2021). However, even amongst those faithful ones returning to weekly church attendance, some will ask, "What is the new normal?" Behind this question is what they can now expect from their pastoral leaders. I have been privy to the rising frustration from some clergy and their often-mixed feelings about the need to justify what they have been doing during Covid while not running services. Some ask what pastoral care will look like and what the impact will be of increasing online attendance. While researchers such as McCrindle (2021) report a silver lining during the pandemic and a renewed spiritual search, the rate of loneliness, isolation and impact during this period increased significantly (AIHW, 2021). While it is too early to tell how churches have responded, I argue that a proactive pastoral care response is warranted.

Caring and Connection

There are many valuable lessons that people report having learned through the pandemic. A prevalent theme across many media is the need for the community to care for one another. So, what if we re-imagined a pastoral care and counselling method built upon this renewed desire for caring, a method that involved not only caring for each other and the earth but also receiving care from Mother Earth through theologically driven experiential encounters informed by eco-psychological principles and eco-spiritualities. Stephanie Dowrick (2021) eloquently captures our interconnection to each other and the ground:

> If the pandemic that began and engulfed the world in 2020 taught us anything at all it is that we are utterly and inevitably interconnected—and not only with each other, but also with this earth on which we wholly depend in all its brilliance, beauty, fearsomeness, and biodiversity. Yet this was also the time in which we witnessed and felt first-hand the agonies of isolation and

> loneliness, the need we have for one another, the need each of us
> has to be cared for—and to be caring.

The need to care for each other is not a unique societal response to the pandemic in Australia. There have been multiple natural disasters in Australia over the past decade. However, what was noticeably different during the pandemic was an observable absence of local leadership (Canberra Times, 2021). Throughout the pandemic, epidemiologists, health ministers and the National Cabinet were just a few of the political, scientific and medical figures that constantly weighed in on social media with their thoughts and directives. In contrast, the natural disasters of the last two decades, such as the 2011 floods, saw the emergence of community leaders who did not just issue media releases but got involved physically in the disaster. These leaders emerged before, during and after the crisis and took action to help themselves and others (Moreton, 2018).

During this pandemic, there is an opportunity for leaders across the broader community to contribute to strengthening social and community capital, with pastors and other religious leaders in a unique position to actively engage to help communities stay strong and connected. Rather than a limited response to an increased focus on technology, pastors could proactively utilise the many natural greenspaces to promote eco-spirituality and provide pastoral care.

Eco-spirituality

Eco-spirituality as an umbrella term is rich and diverse, with expressions found across numerous world religions. Despite the widespread practices, it is neither systematised nor operationalised. In response, I have adopted the definition of eco-spirituality by Lincoln (2000). He describes eco-spirituality as "a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment incorporating an intuitive and embodied awareness of all of life and engaging a relational view of the person to planet, inner to outer land-scape, and soul to soil" (Lincoln, 2000, p. 227).

For many pastors within a conservative tradition, the understanding of this term is often subsumed under the broader term eco-theology and therefore, linked inexorably with sustainability—the focus being on the spiritual dimensions of our ecological crisis (Troster, 2013). Eco-spirituality has become a topic of considerable scholarly interest, particularly amongst Catholics, as seen no more clearly than in Pope Francis'

encyclical *Laudato Si' (2015).* In other traditions, there may be less awareness of how people can connect emotionally and spiritually with and through nature, an innate desire in all people. This desire is known as the biophilia hypothesis which, according to Cordero (2021), can mean "both love for living creatures [*life*] and love for Nature [*Life*], understood as the set of living creatures plus the abiotic environment in which they thrive" (p. 287). Yet, despite the rich contemporary expressions of ecological theology, there appears to be a scarcity of models and methods in some traditions to integrate pastoral care theology into an eco-theology perspective. Here I am drawn to the definition of Christian spirituality by Patricia Gemmell (2017), who writes:

Christian spirituality has always been about the theory and practice of the Christian life, but both theory and practice constantly undergo change, not only in observable history but in the hidden transformations of our own lives. Our beliefs change and with them our spiritual practices. We are always searching. There is always something new to crack open our hearts a little wide.

Can pastoral care in greenspaces facilitate this? According to Bernau (2021), there have been several critical changes in the language of pastoral care in academic journals over the last 75 years. The first is a "linguistic shift from the universal to the particular as pastoral care professionals drop the language of human nature and morality for that of individual narratives". Secondly, the overtly religious language since the 1950s has declined "in favour of a more ecumenical language of spirituality, hope, and presence" (p.362). Lastly, these trends have followed a push for "evidence-based" pastoral care (Bernau, p.362). The evidence for the effectiveness of ecotherapy is growing is growing (Chaudhury & Banerjee, 2020; Suganthi, 2019; Townsend & Weerasuriya, 2010), and can accommodate expressions of eco-spiritualities that align with Bernau's linguistic shifts. For those less familiar with ecotherapy, the following is a brief overview.

Nature-based therapy

Ecotherapy is a term first coined by pastoral counsellor Howard Clinebell (1996), positing a form of "ecological spirituality" that combines self-care, earth care, and soul care (p. 1). However, as an umbrella term, it commonly defines approaches to physical and psychological therapy that are nature-based (Laguaite, 2021). The terms ecotherapy and nature-based therapy are interchangeable, which can be confusing.

Ecotherapies are a contemporary psychotherapy approach in Western cultures that acknowledges nature's vital role and addresses the human-nature relationship. Ecotherapies originate from the frame of ecopsychology. According to Chaudhury & Banerjee (2020), they have "coalesced as a discrete endeavour in the form of explicit environmental or ecological initiatives in counselling and psychotherapy termed 'ecotherapy'".

Sometimes, the connection to ancient cultural practices and worldview is explicit and other times implicit. At its best, ecotherapies consider "the latest scientific understandings of a universe and the deepest Indigenous wisdom" (Buzzell, 2014, p. 570). As a clergyperson and psychotherapist, I have practiced ecotherapy over the past two decades, specifically adventure-based approaches. Nature-based therapy builds on the idea that people are connected and impacted by the natural environment. According to Oh, Shin, Khil and Kim (2020), nature has a recovery effect. Research worldwide suggests that ecosystems and human ecosystem interaction as therapeutic devices for various physical, mental and developmental health issues are not only cost-effective but also therapeutically effective (Bloomfield, 2017). Townsend and Weerasuriya's (2010) literature review examined seven prevailing theories linking well-being and contact with nature. These authors recognised "that our need for nature is connected not just to material exploitation of the natural environment, but also to human emotional, cognitive, aesthetic and spiritual growth" (p. 10).

While pastoral care is more than improving a person's emotional, cognitive and behavioural functions, these can link to matters of the soul. Therefore, what if I could blend some of the eco-psychological principles with spiritual practices to be more holistic and, at the same time, more widely accepted across different traditions? This practice is congruent with Clinebell's (1996) second experiential dimension —"spirituality in nature"—where he affirms that many people can experience God while being intimate in nature (p. 9).

While challenging in the context of Covid, there appears to be an opportunity to explore this possibility. I suspect that there is a more profound yearning for a community that not only wants to care for one another and the earth but is open to allowing the environment to care for them. In practice, this means more than promoting an eco-friendly lifestyle or conducting my pastoral care visits out in the park, but intentionally modelling the inter-relationships between all living beings on earth and recognising their interdependency while appreciating their value for maintaining eco-balance. While this will take leadership, I am optimistic that the small steps I have chosen to blend eco-spirituality and pastoral care will gather momentum, not only because of their theoretical commonalities but because eco-spirituality may

resonate strongly with younger Christians seeking to reconcile their concern with the environment. In the search for an eco-therapeutic model, I have chosen Walk and Talk Therapy (WTT) due to its growing popularity and potential for integration.

Walk & Talk Therapy

WTT is an activity that resides within counselling practice and seeks to combine physical movement, nature and therapy for the client's benefit. Believed to have developed from running therapy, WTT emerged in the 1970s and is founded on the belief that by walking through nature, a client will grow in relaxation, as walking encourages present movement awareness (Revell & McLeod, 2015, p. 35). Due to the mind-body connection, the belief that mind and body are connected, it is believed that WTT is an effective form of therapy. While the evidence base for the efficacy of walking therapies is still emerging (van den Berg & Beute, 2021; Weir, 2011), the three reasons that Kate Hays (2003) gives for incorporating exercise with psychotherapy correlate with the author's own experience. These include (1) encouraging physical activity, which in turn promotes mental well-being (Queensland Government, 2020), (2) the belief that exercise can help a client move through the sense of being struck or depressed (Malhi et al., 2021), and (3) the belief it also inspires creativity leading to more profound ways of thinking (Steinberg, 1997). Many medical and allied health professionals encourage exercise, but I recognise that not everyone is physically capable or willing to walk, highlighting a limit to this approach.

The human-nature relationship is a topic of increasing research in various fields, such as theology and evolutionary psychology. According to Seymour (2016), humans are linked with the natural environment, as demonstrated by their preference for scenes dominated by natural elements, the sustainability of natural resources, and the health benefits of engaging in nature. Nature-therapy is linked to Owen Wilson's biophilia hypothesis that is based on evolutionary theory and suggests that humans have an "innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes" (Wilson, 1984, p1). The hypothesis has been critiqued by numerous scholars (Joye & De Block, 2011) and remains a subject of increasing investigation. In spite of the challenges to the concept, it is still widely applied in the mental health field.

Further, despite numerous gaps in current knowledge, a Christian worldview supports the idea that human beings are contained in and interact with God's creation.

According to Brown (2021), three primary Creation texts, Genesis 1, Psalm 104 and Job 38-41, each in their way "affirm the intrinsic worth of biodiversity, the expansiveness of life, and a God who values flourishing of all creation" (p. 1), depicting God as a "biophile" (p. 11). While, from a theological perspective, the human-nature relationship is conflictual, nature-based therapies provide opportunities for us to cultivate more adequate anthropologies and understanding of nature (Martin, 2015). Theology supports emotional evidence for fundamental theories regarding the human-nature connection (Gaekwad, Moslehian, Roös, & Walker, 2022).

The client can learn to interact with their broader connections through therapeutic walking. As a form of physical activity, WTT provides an opportunity to harness existing levels of awareness and, at the same time, support a more comprehensive public health agenda. Increased physical activity levels achieve this health agenda for clients, and the beneficial effects of spending time in outdoor environments enhance overall well-being (AIHW, 2018). When doing WTT, the client and therapist walk side-by-side, with the client setting the pace and choosing the location and direction. The sessions usually take approximately 50 minutes, with usual walking routes around local parks, lakes or other walking tracks. There are also multiple ways WTT can be used alongside typical counselling. For example, some sessions may begin with usual counselling and transition to WTT. Sometimes the whole session is conducted outdoors. The key is to offer the client the session in an informed, collaborative and planned manner. Hence, the importance of the client in the decision-making. Anything else utilised in the process of the WTT is done with the client's benefit in mind. While WTT does provide an alternative to traditional therapy, some approaches work better than others. For example, the external distraction of walking around could inhibit the psychodynamic work with the client's unconsciousness but, having had little scholarly attention, this is uncertain (Turp, 2007, p, 165). Alternatively, humanistic therapists may use WTT as a metaphor for resourcing and equipping the clients.

Other tools and techniques used in WTT derive from various therapeutic approaches, such as resonance, attunement and empathy. From a neuroscientific perspective, the external environment acts as a stimulus to neurochemicals that produce positive or negative emotions that influence one's behaviour (Basso & Suzuki, 2017). What the client may experience during the talking part of the therapy can be interpreted and reframed during the walk, resulting in psychological conditioning. WTT is a bio-psychosocial approach to therapy as it meets the biological needs of the client through

walking, the psychological needs of the therapy, and the social needs of the interaction with the therapist (Clark, 2019). Through walking in the natural environment, cognitive capacity, such as working memory and enhanced recall, is also boosted. Further, the physical act of walking one step after another also mirrors the inner journey occurring during therapy.

So, what does all this mean for my greenspaces approach to pastoral care? I am proposing to infuse the WTT model with authentic eco-spirituality. The challenge is how can I, as a pastoral carer, go even further than just using the walking to mirror the inner journey, beyond intrapsychic processes and general health benefits to a holistic model of pastoral care and counselling, combining soul and soil? Fortunately, elements from contemporary spiritual practices can be incorporated into the walk. I offer six as a starting point for our discussion.

Theology of Walking

Before we examine these six practices, I am aware that some readers may wonder where theology begins, as the article describes itself as a piece of theological reflection. Those searching for a theology of walking will soon realise that it does not feature strongly in the literature. While there are extensive references to walking in popular Christian literature, these refer primarily to "walking in the ways of God" (e.g., Eph.2:10) rather than using walking as discipleship. The apparent exceptions are the Emmaus Walk, pilgrimage walks, and wilderness hiking (backpacking) as a spiritual practice (Lane, 2014) which has been growing in popularity in the last decade. Cronshaw and Parker's (2018) theology of running as an embodied spiritual practice is a noteworthy contribution to the academic literature. According to the authors, running "can foster physical and emotional health, appreciation for nature, life-giving relationships with others, awareness of breathing, space for prayer, and teach life-giving lessons about enjoying faith, life and play" (Cronshaw & Parker, p. 1).

In extreme forms, these walks are called wilderness sojourns (Redick, 2016). The goal of wilderness walks is to allow the discovery of God amidst the beauty and unexpected terrors of nature (Lane, 2014), and are connected to Christian pilgrimage walks which have increased in popularity in recent years (for example, the *Camino de Santiago*). While many pilgrimages cover considerable distances, some of the principles behind them inform our theology of walking. George (2016, p.19) suggests that pilgrimage is

"rooted in the soil of the human soul", a practice for the Christian who seeks "to stretch their faith radically by discovering the God who invites us into sacred and risky intimacy". While the physical challenge of a pastorally focussed WTT is modest, this does not mean that exposure to nature along with intentional pastoral conversations cannot elicit sacred moments. They can make up for their lack of physical exertion in their regularity.

The two critical features of a walking theology are the walk and the setting. The setting does matter in the Bible. The Bible references geographical features such as topology, terrains, rivers and seas, gardens, flora and fauna. What would Sunday School be like without the lesson on ten weird animal stories in the Bible? Without the setting, much is lost in interpreting numerous events, such as the Exodus, the Flood of Noah, and some prophetic speeches.

In other words, you cannot understand much of the Bible without appreciating the natural setting. Creation is central to revelation, redemption and restoration (Harris, 2013). Stewardship of creation should include exploring ways to connect with the Creator. In terms of the actual physical walking, an examination of Jesus' own life and ministry reveals that much of what he did involved walking and talking in various outdoor settings. For example, in the first chapters of Mark's gospel alone, we find Jesus on a journey to the wilderness where he endured his first temptation (1:9-11), strolling by the Sea of Galilee to call his first disciples (1:16-19), praying in a lonely place (1:35), and returning to another desolate place by the end of the chapter (1:45).

We now turn to the six spiritual practices that can be integrated into our emerging greenspace pastoral care framework and involve or complement walking and talking.

The Emmaus Walk

The first of these is the *Walk to Emmaus*. Within this 3-day journey, participants often encounter the unmerited love of God (Estep, 2011), accompaniment (Heubsch, 2017) and brokenness (Astley, 2020). During the global pandemic, there is much-reported stress and fear in people's lives. People have many questions and increasing uncertainty. Inviting people to join you in the greenspaces provides an opportunity to have deep spiritual conversations. By resisting the temptation to recreationalise the walk, pastors can stay attuned to the Spirit and keep the discussion focussed on spiritual growth.

The spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude.

Entering the greenspaces provides an unprecedented opportunity to escape the noise and commotion of modern life. Many people felt trapped in isolation throughout the pandemic, and a call to "silence and solitude" may sound counterintuitive. However, people's bad news bias and tendency to endlessly doomsday scroll have increased stress and anxiety. Walking in greenspaces allows the opportunity to stop, breathe and listen to nature. In my context, I walk along a water esplanade, often stopping and asking the client to sit in relative silence. The companion is sometimes left alone, with or without further instructions, except to breathe.

Mindfulness and spiritually-based meditation

Adapting mindfulness techniques and spiritually based meditation is another practice that someone can incorporate into greenspace encounters. There is growing evidence for using mindfulness in mental health treatment, and many writers are connecting mindfulness to the Christian tradition (Timbers and Hollenberger, 2022; Trammel & Trent, 2021). WTT is not all about walking; regular stopping to sit and reflect is critical. Christian accommodative mindfulness (Garzon, 2022) is one approach that may be helpful to those concerned about the cultural and philosophical origins of mindfulness practice (for example, Buddhism).

Art as therapy

The effectiveness of art therapy has been the subject of few empirical studies, despite its popularity among adult clients. These include cancer patients, clients coping with various medical conditions, mental health clients, clients dealing with trauma, prison inmates, the elderly, and clients who have not been diagnosed with specific issues but who face ongoing daily challenges (Regev, 2018). While the long-term efficacy of art therapy is unclear (McMillan et al., 2018), there is evidence that it has a moderately positive effect on depression and anxiety symptoms in specific populations. There is now a growing number of integrative nature-based approaches to expressive art, such as Atkins and Snyder (2017). Further, nature is the medium for art amongst our First Nations People. In Indigenous art, identity, culture, spirituality, and relationships to Country intertwine (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2022).

While art as a contemporary spiritual practice in non-Indigenous cultures is less understood and practised, I see enormous potential in its use for spiritual care. At a minimum, greenspaces can provide an outdoor studio for artistic expression such as drawing, sculpture, writing poetry, journaling or dancing to music and song. At its best, it can be an expression of spiritual care outside of its chaplaincy use in healthcare facilities (Ettun, Schukltz & Bar-Sela, 2014).

Outdoor liturgy

In recognition that in some parts of conservative Christianity, the liturgy has found renewed interest, there is enormous potential to ground Christian liturgy and prayer in nature. Internationally, two movements have taken worship outdoors. This is called the Wild Church in the US and the Forest Church in the UK. I have not seen the Bush church movement in Australia but recognise that a few congregations have moved outdoors in alignment with the Simple Church movement (Rainer & Geiger, 2011). Whether or not this practice will continue when things return to normal after the pandemic is unknown. Yet, in the model I am proposing in this article, clients can worship and pray in the walk.

Indigenous spiritualities

The eco-spiritual perspective of pastoral care suggested in this article can be sensitive to Indigenous perspectives and traditional forms of helping and healing. At a minimum, this acknowledges the traditional owners and cultural respect of where the healing occurs. Currently, I am walking on Qundamooka country of the Nunagal, Goenbal and Ngugi People. It is the land and sea surrounding Mulgumpin (Moreton Island), Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island), the Southern Moreton Bay Islands, and the mainland coast. In my walks these names are used, as are the names of common animals found—Yalingbila (Whale), Buangan (Dolphin), Garumun (Kangaroo), Dumbiripi (Koala) and Gurigun (Curlew).

These spiritual practices are by no means exhausted but have provided me with a starting point to integrate spirituality into the walk. In the end, this model of pastoral care seeks to maximise the benefits of eco-therapeutic processes and is infused with dynamic spiritual practices. Walking is one method of utilising the greenspaces to practise a form of eco-spirituality. By taking the modality of WTT and infusing it with

the elements of various spiritual disciplines, I have been able to pastorally care for people in a way that I had never thought possible. I suspect this is what Dr. Preston (2007, pp. 8-9) alluded to when he wrote more than a decade ago that, in attempting to give some content to eco-spirituality, we need caution. He wrote:

The movement giving birth to eco-spirituality will span several generations, disturb personal and institutional boundaries and is inevitably diverse, experimental and eclectic. Of necessity there will be a subjective element—different pathways will suit different people at different stages of their lives. Some might find a practice which is built around communal activity more suitable while others are nurtured by solitude, some might be enriched more by an innovative use of symbols while others respond to the challenges of inspirational writings, some might be awakened to a sense of connectedness to nature by getting down and dirty in their gardens while others might be awakened by illness in their body which helps them discover how they are connected (embodied) to all bodies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the pandemic has provided an unprecedented opportunity to re-discover the greenspaces around us, not just for recreation purposes, but for a higher purpose —to receive care and grow spiritually. Innovative pastors who are searching for ways to connect differently with their church members can utilise approaches that tap into these spaces. In this article, I have argued that a walking theology can accommodate the empirically powerful modality of walk-and-talk therapy borrowed from psychotherapeutic tradition and infuse it with elements of eco-spirituality, and shown how a range of spiritual practices can be used in these greenspace encounters to complement or be part of walking. These are: (1) The Emmaus walk, (2) silence and solitude, (3) art as spiritual practice, (4) outdoor liturgy, (5) Indigenous spiritualities, and (6) Christian mindfulness and meditation. I hope pastors who utilised greenspaces during the pandemic will not withdraw from them now as few Covid-19 restrictions remain. For those who haven't yet discovered them, I implore you to do so.

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Chaplaincy at the Crossroads: Spiritual Care in and for a Multifaith Australia

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Abstract

Even though chaplaincy has been part of Australia's history since 1788, the theology and praxis of chaplaincy has not been as discussed as it should have been in general or for the various sector chaplaincies such as military, health care, criminal justice, emergency services, educational, industrial and sports. Chaplaincy would appear to be at the crossroads. The mainstream churches have been gradually withdrawing from chaplaincy services yet, at the same time, the need for spiritual care services has been expanding, as seen in the 2019-20 bushfires, and many volunteers have come forward. As well, there has been the movement towards multifaith chaplaincy as

Australia's religious profile has become vastly more diverse over the past three decades.

This paper will deal with the confused nomenclature issue. It will then examine the challenges facing spiritual care and chaplaincy, including (i) pluralisation and integration of faiths other than Christian (Buddhist, Hindu & Muslim), (ii) chaplaincy training, and (iii) spiritual care, all as related to an underlying theological framework based around a ministry of presence, professionalism in institutional settings, and pastoral outreach and social care in multifaith contexts.

Keywords: chaplaincy, spiritual care, multifaith, social care, pastoral ministry, chaplaincy training.

Introduction

Chaplaincy has been part of Australia's history since European settlement in 1788 with the appointment of Richard Johnson to the so-called First Fleet. It has a much longer history associated with military and prison chaplaincy and with personages such as monarchs, bishops and their chaplains. After this early colonial prison chaplaincy and other forms of spiritual care, chaplaincy in Australia expanded into military chaplaincy with the formation of the Australian armed forces soon after Federation in 1901 and the formation of army chaplaincy services in 1913.

Chaplaincy rarely hits the news headlines though one exception was at Ground Zero at 9/11 when the Franciscan chaplain to the New York Fire Brigade, Fr Myckal Judge, was the first officially declared victim of 9/11 when he risked his life to enter the burning inferno—there is talk of declaring him a martyr saint. He was killed by the falling debris from the collapsing North Tower, reputedly praying aloud, "God, please end this" (Daly, 2008).

Two recent UK studies have uncovered a narrative of dislocation, disconnection and lack of both support and validation by most religious bodies, but noting at the same time a significant investment in chaplaincy by secular employers (Slater, 2013; Todd, Slater & Dunlop, 2014). Slater (2015) notes its 'hiddenness' within church structures and argues that there has been insufficient theological reflection on the role of chaplaincy and its relationship both to the mission of the church and to parish ministry. Some would see it as ministering to the dispersed within society rather than a

community gathering of the faithful (Steddon, 2010). This reflects as well the reality of the Australian scene.

Chaplaincy in the Australian Context

This exploration in practical theology into chaplaincy and spiritual care flows out of our own interfaith work with Religions for Peace[2] in Australia over the last five years, in particular, three specific initiatives.

Firstly, our monograph on *Chaplaincy and Specialist Spiritual Care in Multifaith Victoria* (Cahill & Ennis, 2017) for the Victorian Multicultural Commission where we did an audit of spiritual care services was completed. With recent developments, it is now out-of-date.

The second was our workshops with the 175 Australian army chaplains in 2017 in moving from a denominational to a multifaith chaplaincy model for the Australian Army in accordance with the dictum, "The army is the people, the people is the army".

Thirdly, in 2020 we were again funded by the Victorian Multicultural Commission to examine multifaith chaplaincy, and this paper is partly based on the conclusions we reached from our interviews with 20 key people in the chaplaincy and spiritual care sector. Our work draws on the voluminous social science research and pastoral literature which we cannot adequately cover in a journal article. But it allows us to document and understand chaplaincy and spiritual care with its technicalities and complexities, and these developments allow us to clearly see contemporary chaplaincy as an emerging sign of the times. The aim of this paper is to suggest that, unfortunately, chaplaincy is at the crossroads for reasons which we will elaborate later in this paper. Our overall framework for the theology and praxis of religious chaplaincy and professional spiritual care, which differs from parish or community spiritual caring, is a multilayered reality with much possibility for professional and lay collaboration.

Sector Chaplaincy and Recent Initiatives

Sector chaplaincy and spiritual care is exercised in institutional or business settings such as:

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[2] Religions for Peace, founded in 1970, is the world's leading interfaith organisation working for peace and social cohesion. The Australian chapter is one of 96 national chapters, and has branches in the ACT, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania with observers from the Northern Territory and Western Australia. See www.religionsforpeaceaustralia.org.au

1   the military (army, navy, air force),

2   health care (hospitals, hospices, mental health, aged care),

3   educational (schools, colleges, universities),

4   criminal justice (police, courts, prisons),

5   emergency services (fire, ambulance, disaster, critical incidents),

6   industrial (factories, airports, seaports, railway stations),

7   sports contexts (cricket, football, Olympic/Commonwealth Games).

Another emerging area is business chaplaincy whereby chaplains are called to serve in corporate enterprises where the research suggests that the availability of a chaplain increases workforce productivity and happiness and allows the ethical dimension in business to flourish (Wallis, 2010; Webley, 2014). Stewart-Darling (2017) has drawn attention to how chaplains can support business organisations and their employees but it is not strong in Australia. In the US, there is a business-aligned organisation called Divinity Consultants! Other developments are worth noting. In Melbourne, Chaplains without Borders provides chaplaincy services to Myer and Target outlets together with Crown Casino Entertainment and the Southern Cross railway station, Melbourne's largest.

Another more contested development is the arrival of humanist or secular chaplains or spiritual carers as in the New Zealand and Dutch armies. Also contested is the arrival of the interfaith minister or chaplain with notions of interspirituality and double belonging such as being a Buddhist-Catholic or an Anglican-Buddhist. The New Seminary for Interfaith Studies founded in 1979 in New York is the oldest interfaith centre for ordaining interfaith ministers through training now delivered online.

The World Health Organization (WHO), as documented by Carey and Hodgson (2018), has divided the various chaplaincy services into five categories: Spiritual Assessment, perhaps using spiritual screening scaled instruments; Spiritual Counselling, Guidance and Education; Spiritual Support; Spiritual Ritual; and Allied Health Intervention–Spiritual Care.

Functions and Activities of Sector Chaplains

Regarding the activities and functions of the chaplain, in summarising the social science literature, especially the work of Carey and Rumbold (2015) in their study of Salvation Army hospital chaplains, there seem to be six that institutional chaplains

perform within their particular organisation. Firstly, chaplains act as spiritual listeners and counsellors to people, often in distress, bringing their actual religious presence and hospitality into the institution and bringing spiritual care and healing to people in workplace contexts or frontline situations. Secondly, chaplains design and lead religious ceremonies of worship and ritual for their own community and for multifaith occasions. Thirdly, chaplains are bridges and mediators within their own work setting between their own faith community and the real world of people, families and work. Fourthly, chaplains are professionals working collaboratively and creatively with their fellow staff colleagues and the members and clients of their organisation whether they are soldiers, patients, students, workers or sportspeople. Fifthly, chaplains are ambassadors and the public representatives of their faith tradition in a particular work setting or frontline situation within multifaith and secular humanist contexts. Lastly, chaplains are reconcilers, whistleblowers and ethical advisers in contexts of complexity, ambiguity and conflict, such as in end-of-life situations in hospitals or on the battlefield.

Towards a Multifaith Theology of Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care

It would seem that our foregoing reflections, our practical and research experience and our reading of the literature have resulted in a relatively simple framework that chaplaincy can be organised around three constructs in framing a theology of a multifaith ministry of chaplaincy and spiritual care. These intersecting constructs are (A) a Multifaith Ministry of Love, Service and Presence (B) Ethical Professionalism within Institutional Settings and (C) Pastoral Outreach and Social Care in Multifaith Contexts (see Figure 1).

In a Christian context, Archbishop Rowan Williams (2018) and others insist that chaplaincy is rightly embedded in an incarnational or sacramental theology with the emphasis on presence. Increasingly chaplaincy and spiritual care are becoming the primary meeting point between religion and society (Ryan, 2018). Andrew Todd writes that chaplains in their work come across those disenchanted with the institutional Church as well as those with no religious background or commitment at all:

> Chaplains encounter those wrestling with what is sacred in their
> lives, and how to mark that in ritual ways, in acute settings such as

healthcare, prisons and military operations, and in more everyday settings like the workplace, town centres, the retail industry and education (Todd, 2018, p. 162).

This paper insists upon the notion of the chaplain as a professional but it is a spiritual and ethical professionalism A chaplain's presence helps cover the ethical gaps that are emerging from secular institutions such as banks, armies and a backward-looking Church unengaged with the real world.

Figure 1. Framework for a Multifaith Theology of Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care
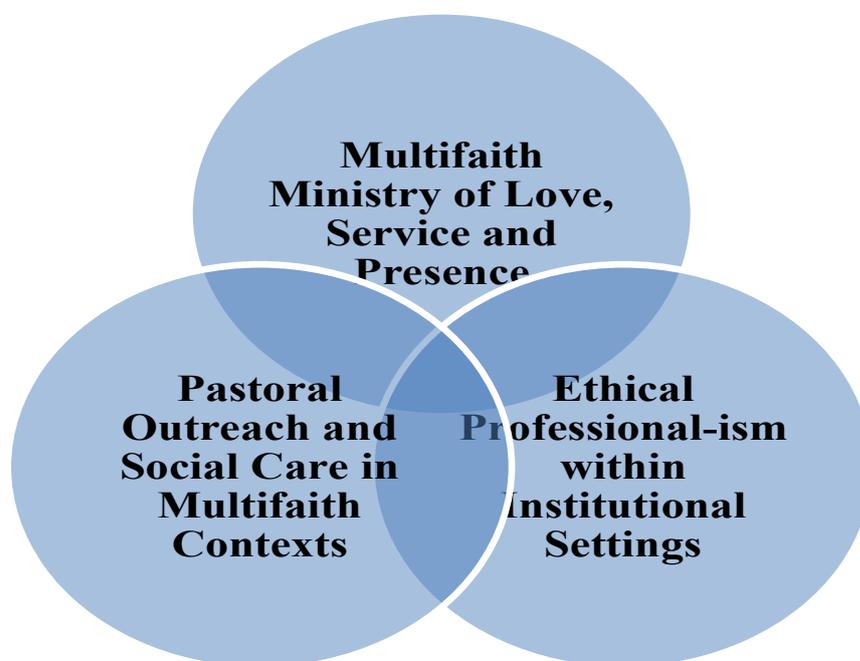
This framework can possibly assist in developing a more sophisticated and elaborated theology. On the basis of their data, Carey and Rumbold (2015) have enumerated the desirable personal qualities for a good chaplain as (1) good listener and good communicator, (2) interested in the development and encouragement of others, (3) able to build rapport with a variety of people, (4) interested in community and organisational development, (5) having both humility and confidence, (6) broadminded and flexible in temperament, (7) gracious, non-judgemental and non-discriminatory while tolerant of others' circumstances, (8) able to think and act holistically, creatively, opportunistically and courageously, and (9) able to think and act justly and ethically.

In terms of education and training, the professional chaplain and spiritual carer ought (i) to have a good and broad knowledge base in both secular and religious/spiritual matters, (ii) be qualified at the undergraduate level in both secular and religious/spiritual degrees, (iii) be qualified at the postgraduate level in either secular or religious/spiritual degrees, (iv) be trained in Clinical Pastoral Education or an equivalent training program or deep relevant experience, and (v) be specialist-trained for the particular context (welfare, prison, universities, schools, military etc.) (Carey & Rumbold, 2015). However, the reality, as our interview data shows, is that, except in the armed forces and in hospitals, the chaplaincy and spiritual care training system is pitifully inadequate.

Multifaith chaplaincy is a multilayered reality operating differently in sectoral settings but where there is the possibility for unique collaboration with professionals in the various sectors and with colleagues from other faith traditions. For Rowan Williams, chaplaincy in multifaith contexts challenges and is challenged by narrow, exclusivist and absolutist theologies of faith. In Christian discourse, he calls chaplains "embodiers" of the Word (James 1:2) (Williams, 2018). Within their institutions, where they have a poverty of power, they provide an embedded presence, a deep stabilising reference point as well as an anchorage point (Whipp, 2018). They are brokering a new relationship between religion and the world.

Chaplaincy at the Crossroads

In our assessment, however, institutional chaplaincy and spiritual care is at the crossroads in Australia. Firstly, there is an increasing demand for the services of chaplains and spiritual carers that cannot be merely attributed to an increasing and religiously diversified population. The rise during the COVID-19 pandemic in demand for mental health services, especially with the forced closure of places of worship, has highlighted the need for spiritual, emotional and welfare support when a society is in significant crisis. As has been seen in Victoria during our consultations, there has been an increase in sectoral demands for chaplains, most especially in the emergency services and its frontline responders, most particularly in police forces and ambulance services. The demands for school chaplaincy have also increased, though this has been possible through the Commonwealth-funded program. The demand for, and pressure placed upon, first responders is very obvious during bushfires, cyclones and floods but the data suggest that in fact emergency chaplains and their volunteer

assistants are more usually called upon in smaller incidents such as housefires, semi-public suicides, fatal traffic accidents, fatal air incidents, missing or lost person situations, deaths in sporting clubs or schools, and so on.

Likewise, Cheryl Holmes (2021), who questions an outdated chaplaincy model, has recently noted these movements towards a professional spiritual care workforce but assesses that progress has been slow and inconsistency persists. She has identified five key factors that will ultimately determine whether Australia or individual states have a qualified and credentialed spiritual care workforce able to deliver safe and high-quality spiritual care, namely, greater attention to international models and research with the need for evidence, greater government support and involvement, more investment from health service management, cooperation between the different religious communities, both Christian and other than Christian, and, lastly, leadership and advocacy from the spiritual care peak bodies.

Concept of Moral Injury

Secondly, the demand is often focused around suicides and psychological collapses associated with post-traumatic stress disorder. Over the last decade, according to their sector chaplaincy leaders, the number of suicides has risen amongst police and ambulance officers.

Here the notion of moral injury is most useful and this is a topic which social research attention has recently focused upon. It was developed by the American psychiatrist, Jonathan Shay, in the context of traumatised American veterans who had killed enemy soldiers or participated in or witnessed traumatic events while serving in Vietnam. Moral injury intersects with PTSD but is different and broader with the development of a Spiritual Injury Scale and a Moral Injury Events Scale (Carey & Hodgson, 2018). Litz and his colleagues have developed Adaptive Disclosure Therapy which is an adapted secularised version of the sacrament of penance with the critical and deliberate exclusion of the priest (Litz et al., 2017). Recently Carey and Hodgson (2018) have developed the counselling and listening tool of Pastoral Narrative Disclosure with eight stages: (i) rapport (ii) reflection (iii) review (iv) reconstruction (v) restoration (vi) ritual (vii) renewal and (viii) reconnection. Slater (2015), as an Anglican priest and a health care chaplain, has developed a ten-step developmental consultancy model for chaplaincy. These developments in chaplaincy and spiritual care

have emerged from professional pastoral workers working collaboratively with fellow professionals in pastorally challenging individual and group situations.

The third positive factor is that the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim faith communities have been in the process of increasing their commitment to chaplaincy even though the concept is not part of their tradition. However, for the Buddhists chaplaincy is seen as a form of serving others to relieve suffering in accordance with the Four Noble Truths. It is a form of dharma in action:

> Buddhist chaplains offer emotional and spiritual support, loving-kindness and compassion. Buddhist chaplains bring a caring presence and willingness to listen, especially in times of difficulty. We have ordained monastic chaplains (monks and nuns) as well as lay people with careers in addition to retirees (Buddhist Council of NSW, n.d.).

Among the Hindus in Victoria, chaplaincy development has been led by a former devout Catholic. Chaplaincy is foreign to Hindu patients in hospital. Hindu chaplaincy works closely with Spiritual Health Australia and there is now a Hindu chaplain in every major Melbourne hospital, and it is hoped to extend into other sectors. Muslim chaplaincy has been developing, especially in hospitals and prisons, usually working with the Board of Imams. There are many online programs offered by the University of Medina and Al-Azhar University in Cairo.

The Militating Factors

However, on the other side of the ledger, chaplaincy is at the crossroads. There is a series of factors militating against the appropriate delivery of chaplaincy and spiritual care services which are focussed around the twin lack of personnel and funds. This recently has been highlighted by the decision of the Salvation Army to withdraw from prison, court and airport chaplaincy. But the larger mainstream churches, led by the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches, are withdrawing from chaplaincy because of the lack of trained personnel and lack of funds as they concentrate on their core commitment to parishes. The gap is being partly filled by evangelical Christian groups as seen in school and sports chaplaincy but often they are volunteers minimally trained and with a narrow theological and pastoral vision. All faith groups have difficulty attracting and recruiting chaplains, and this is another factor holding

chaplaincy back. But funds are also a major negative factor. It is very difficult to make a living out of chaplaincy when the religious communities simply do not have the required funds. Another issue is proper training and entry levels. Each faith community essentially does "its own thing". The Nan Tien Institute of Higher Education, attached to the Fo Guang Shan Nan Tien Temple at Unanderra, just south of Wollongong, is offering undergraduate and post-graduate courses in Buddhist Studies, including a graduate Diploma in Human Well-Being. In other faiths, both Christian and non-Christian, there are no government guidelines to guide and govern course quality.

The Nomenclature Issue

We need to deal with the confused nomenclature issue here. The Christian heritage of the notion of chaplaincy has generated a resistance to its usage in multicultural contexts. Replacement terms such as pastoral services, spiritual care, spiritual health and spiritual direction have been introduced. But such phrases have vaguer, less defined parameters with emphasis on the individual rather than an institutional focus. In the 1990s in the UK, the term "sector ministry" was introduced and has received some legitimation (Slater, 2015). It is noted that chaplaincy has generally been retained as the descriptive label in the UK and USA, whereas Spiritual Health Victoria has adopted its term to cover the area of specialist pastoral care and chaplaincy services in health care settings. Spiritual animator is another term. The Indian Army uses the phrase "spiritual teachers" because that is their main function—to teach young Indian soldiers about behavioural and ethical issues. It is likely that various terms and phrases will gain legitimacy to cover the various institutional settings. However, it is possible the terms could be incorporated into a multilayered vision extending from volunteers to highly professionalised spiritual carers.

Chaplaincy and Its Connectivity with the Real World of Social Care

Chaplaincy as a multilayered reality is a distinctive form of religious ministry or service with considerable international variation. Swift (2014) has noted that contemporary chaplains stand at the intersection between the historic presence of the church in the public square, the onset of secularisation where belief in God is no longer axiomatic, contemporary spiritual expressions in civic and a-religious settings, and direct

engagement with the fundamental realities of people's lives. The chaplain's capacity and creativity to negotiate this space determines success and flourishing, and hence the place of chaplaincy in the various locations and sectors has had to be constantly negotiated and re-negotiated (Swift, 2014). This occurs in many institutions where chaplains have too often had to justify their presence and argue for the reality of the spiritual in real life. This is one reason why, in recent times, chaplaincy practice has triggered many research projects to justify its presence and empirically document the positive outcomes of this type of pastoral care. Chaplaincy represents a sacralising of the real world outside the traditional parish, and operating in professional and institutional contexts.

Yet religious chaplaincy has not been sufficiently framed beyond its religious parameters. Here the term "social care" is very useful. It is a term broader than social welfare because it can incorporate spiritual and preventive aspects. It is generally described as the provision of social work, psychological counselling, personal care, safeguarding and protection measures, and social support to children and adults in need or at risk arising from illness, disability, old age or poverty. It would seem that chaplaincy fits neatly within the notion of social care which emanates from the UK, particularly its 1990 *National Health Service and Community Care Act* though the notion has a longer pedigree. The notion is only now being transferred to Australia, and one university is currently exploring its possibilities. Since 2013, a journal, *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy*, has been initiated with Lindsay Carey, now at LaTrobe University, as one of the editors.

In Victoria, emergencies services chaplaincy began in 1977 but was formalised within the Government's Displan Welfare Plan after the 1983 bushfires. It has subsequently played an important supportive role in dealing with numerous State disasters and many local emergencies including the Ash Wednesday bushfires in 1983, the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009 and the floods in 2010/2011 and 2016. In the Bourke Street mall incident on 20 January 2017, Emergencies Ministry Chaplains and Personal Support Workers from the Victorian Council of Churches were on site in the mall for the following 12 days. In this huge, unheralded effort, 3,321 persons were supported, with the Victorian Council of Churches deploying 162 individual personnel conducting 311 days of volunteer service (www.vccem.org.au) over that period.

By their presence, chaplains provide Emotional Spiritual Care (ESC) which can include (i) psychological first aid, (ii) personal support, (iii) intentional creation of safe and calm spaces to aid in the emotional and spiritual processing of the event, (iv) listening to affected people's stories, (v) grief and loss support, (vi) religious rituals on request, (vii) memorial services, and (viii) funeral services.

Hospitality is defined as creating space for the other and is also key to the work of chaplains, not least in armed forces and university settings. Geoff Boyce, Uniting Church minister and longtime chaplain at Flinders University in Adelaide, has named his centre as "The Oasis", suggesting a place where travellers may find nourishment and interchange for their life journey. Its primacy is to effect human transformation (Boyce, 2010). He particularly draws on Henri Nouwen and it is worth re-quoting:

> Hospitality…means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines…The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances, free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt a life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find their own (Nouwen, quoted in Boyce, 2010, p. 83).

Hence, while chaplains do formally preach, their form of preaching is, perhaps primarily, through sheer presence, as in hospitals and prisons and through the hospitable act of making space for the other as listeners and counsellors, as mediators and reconcilers and as ethical advisors. Within the context of befriendment and hospitality, the chaplain finds opportunities to worship and pray with individuals and communities. Much more than in parish settings, chaplaincy, both ordained and lay, is exercised in settings in the real world of an intensive care unit or in a prison. Chaplaincy can be seen as a sacralising presence in the realities of the world, as previously mentioned.

In dealing with the survivors of moral injury, chaplains can take the lead, seeing healing as a multifaceted and dynamic process of healing over the lifespan. Another aspect to this attribute is the multifaith element. Military chaplains can be in the situation where they may have to pray with wounded or dying soldiers from faith traditions not their own. The chaplains in both the Australian and British armies always have with them their special Prayer Book which contains prayers from various faith traditions, both Christian and other than Christian.

Within institutional chaplaincy, the priest chaplain works at the behest of his bishop or religious superior but equally within the institution he or she is subject to: a military commander or a hospital director or to a prison governor. Chaplains are professionals working alongside professionals in professional settings.

Prisoners might appear to be a difficult group to love. Corrections Victoria in arrangement with Fulham and Port Phillip private prisons contract faith-based organisations to provide chaplaincy services with coordination provided by a Regional Liaison Chaplain (Department of Justice, 2014). Every prisoner has a right both to a chaplain and to speak freely to the chaplain. Chaplains can walk freely around a prison, including into solitary confinement.

In Victoria, in an empirical study, Webber (2015) has provided a window into prison ministry with its chaplains and many volunteers whose efforts often go unrecognised in their work with prisoners and their families, including in the post-release phase. They provide practical and emotional support as well as religious and spiritual nurturing. Her focus was on the Catholic prison ministry where the St. Vincent de Paul Society is very supportive. The philosophy is to "walk with prisoners on their journey" in a non-judgemental and respectful way. Webber found that prisoners are appreciative of the efforts of the prison ministry. As one prisoner expressed it, "They helped us accept our fate as well, to be accepting of where we've found ourselves and not being judgemental as to why" (Webber, 2015, p. 15). Generally they make prison life more bearable and help prisoners deal with their vulnerabilities. Female prisoners are especially appreciative. Such is the work and efficacy of chaplaincy.

In conclusion, gradually chaplaincy must move towards a more multilayered reality, towards a fully professional and paraprofessional spiritual care model which takes into account the great diversity in the different sectors. There are some key decisions to be

made within the realms of government, faith community leaders and sector leadership but gaining cohesion, even in one sector, will not be easy.

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Helping the Healers by Supporting Secure Attachment Relationships with God

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Abstract

Christian counsellors, chaplains and psychologists are agents of the church's mission to heal. As such, they need psychological and spiritual resources to help them

maintain their own homeostasis whilst also offering healing to others. COVID-19 is a challenge not just to physical health, but to the psycho-spiritual health of everyone. In the context of the pandemic, a vital resource for Christian healers and those in need of healing is secure attachment to God. Attachment is a relational bond that functions to provide safety and security in contexts of threat. A believer's reported relationship with God includes features of attachment and can be assessed as secure or insecure. Secure attachment to God is associated with both psychological health and spiritual well-being. Thus, particularly during COVID-19 when human attachment relationships may be strained, churches should not only recognise and address material suffering but also support secure relationships with God. This paper uses both the literature on attachment to God and insights from Trinitarian theology to suggest ways in which churches can help their healers maintain secure attachment to God and thus resource them for their challenging but vital work.

Keywords: attachment to God, Trinitarian theology, psychological health, spiritual well-being,

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated communities across the world in terms of loss of life and overwhelming the hospitals for the last two years. It has also produced adverse social effects such as the greatly reduced opportunity for people to meet with each other in various circumstances. It is this loss of social connection that has especially impacted the mental health of Australians. The inability of Christian believers to meet together in church and other settings has presented a further problem for them to receive the same level of spiritual nourishment as they had received previously. The first sections of this paper will examine the history of healing in the church, and the challenges presented by the pandemic for Christians in Australia, including both those seeking psychological and spiritual support, and for those Christian professionals and volunteers who work with those affected by these various challenges.

Healing in the Church

Jesus was and is the great healer. There are many examples in the Bible of Jesus healing the sick and those with congenital illnesses or demon possession in each of the four gospels. Jesus also gave the power to heal to his disciples (Mt.10:1; Acts 5:16). In the early centuries of the Christian church, healing practices followed Christ's example of

laying on hands for physical and spiritual or mental illnesses, including demon possession (Barrett-Lennard, 1994).

From the late 19th century, psychotherapy emerged as a discipline with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis at the forefront. His approaches to healing severe mental distress included such radical techniques as hypnosis and catharsis. American pastor and theologian Seward Hiltner (1958), and later British hospital chaplain Rev Louis Marteau (1973), who were influenced by Sigmund Freud's psychiatry and later Carl Rogers' person-centred psychology, worked to bridge the gap between these secular approaches and Christian approaches to counselling. Just as medicine is needed to cure much of modern sickness, social work for social concerns such as poverty and injustice, and individual psychology for working with the individual sufferer, the Holy Spirit heals a person's heart and soul. Since the early 1990s, US Professor in the psychology of religion, Harold Koenig, has studied the relationship between faith and recovery from both physical and mental illness. His extensive research has consistently found a positive relationship between healthy spirituality and sound physical and mental health (Koenig, 2005).

Hiltner (1958) was one of the first people to coin the term psycho-spiritual healing, describing a healing which has often been carried out by Christian counsellors, chaplains, psychologists, or other related professionals as agents of the church. The church as a healing community also plays its part by offering a relational space to heal: a space marked by safety, security, acceptance, and allowing people to be known and heard. Many churches also provide a space for community groups, not all of which are specifically Christian, such as parenting groups, ESL (English as a Second Language) or AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) groups, or GROW groups for mental health recovery, some of which are held in churches or church halls. There are also drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation services run by Christian organisations such as the Salvation Army, as well as outpatient services run by other Christian churches, and other spiritual support such as prayer, biblical counselling or confession.

Challenges Presented by COVID-19

Since March 2020, the impacts of COVID-19 in Australia have been spiritual and psychological as well as physical and medical. Some of the early economic impacts of the pandemic included a record fall in GDP and a 20-year high in unemployment (ABS, 2021).

And as we so often heard since early 2020, self-isolation has been required at various times to keep our society safe, but this can lead to a profound sense of social isolation, loneliness and mental health issues (AIHW, 2022). The rise in mental health problems since the start of the pandemic in Australia has been well documented. This has included increases in symptoms of anxiety and depression in the general public early in the pandemic in particular (Dawel et al, 2020), as well as increased substance use by existing users (AIHW, 2020). Studies also found large increases in mental health symptoms in Australian adolescents in particular (Werner-Seidler et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021). Another major concern has been domestic and family violence (DFV), which was flagged by the Federal Government as a risk early in the pandemic; the statistics have indeed shown evidence of increased levels of DFV since March 2020 (AIFS, 2020).

For Christians and other people of faith in Australia, lockdowns and other state-based measures aimed at reducing the spread of the virus have led to a decreased opportunity to attend church services, home-based Bible study groups and other communal religious activities. Whereas online church services, which for some churches pre-existed the pandemic, have continued to provide support to elderly, sick, disabled, and other Christians who have had difficulty attending in person with safety, for many this difficulty has often meant having to settle for meeting as a church community via zoom or just watching the service on YouTube. The richness of personal and spiritual encouragement by one's Christian brothers and sisters, particularly for younger Christians, has been greatly impacted by such restrictions.

Other Challenges for Mental Health Professionals

Because of COVID-related stress, there has been an increased demand for mental health services together with an increase in the severity of the presenting symptoms in those seeking such services. Examples of stressors that impact mental health include family tensions that may not result in violence but manifest in withdrawal and loss of engagement with other family members (Fotea et al., 2021), inability to attend funerals and so reduced opportunity to mourn in a healthy way, thus increasing the risk of dysfunctional grief and depression (Caycho-Rodríguez et al., 2022), and the vastly reduced capacity for people to engage in festive experiences including parties and weddings. From the last observation it appears that for many Christians an important issue during the pandemic has been the

deprivation of the ability to worship and to celebrate, whatever the occasion. This has had a profound impact on people's psycho-spiritual health. For example, in the state hardest hit by the pandemic, Victoria, there was a 22% increase in the number of phone calls to the Lifeline crisis counselling service during 2020. This included an increase in the number of calls related to threats of suicide (Lifeline, 2020).

These issues all present new challenges to counsellors and psychologists generally, with an increased workload for many, including having to provide counselling services over the internet, perhaps for the first time, with the accompanying problems of connectivity and stability of the online platforms such as zoom and skype, as well as reduced privacy, with many patients calling from home with other householders often able to see or hear these sessions. Another severe problem is vicarious trauma for counsellors, which is caused by having to work frequently with traumatised clients (Diehm & Roland, 2015).

COVID has, of course, also affected the capacity of those in the helping professions to maintain sound mental health themselves, reducing their ability to engage in healthy social and professional activities such as networking and supervision. All these issues suggest the importance of psycho-spiritual healing for Christian counsellors as well as for their clients.

Secure Attachment as a Resource for Healing

Much can be said about the challenges of COVID but it is important to propose some means of coping and healing. On the internet there are many tips for self-care and helping others but there is little information that has good theoretical grounding and empirical support, particularly theological and spiritual grounding and support. Nonetheless, attachment theory is well attested and there is empirical evidence that attachment to God is an important healing resource. The next sections of this paper attempt to justify this claim and propose ways of applying insights from attachment to God to healers and their healing.

From the work of John Bowlby (1969), attachment is understood to be a biologically driven behavioural system with the goal of coping with threat. Attachment is secure when the attachment figure, the person sought under conditions of threat, provides safety and reduces the experience of stress. Markers of the securely attached child and adult include seeking closeness to others in times of threat, experiencing others as their safe haven and

secure base, expressing separation anxiety, and holding a positive sense of self and other regarding worthiness to be nurtured and capacity to nurture respectively (Ainsworth 1985; Bowlby 1969). Attachment is insecure when the attachment figure is experienced as unable or unwilling to provide nurture, giving rise to avoidant attachment, or inconsistent in providing nurture, giving rise to anxious attachment (Ainsworth, 1985). An important pre-requisite for secure attachment is that the attachment figure is attuned to the needs of the other: empathically aware of the other's emotions and needs and oriented towards meeting those needs (Benjamin, 1995). Attachment bonds are important for providing physical safety, emotional regulation, and scope for autonomy and competence (La Guardia, et al., 2000; Schore, 2003).

The ways individuals experience attachment to others affect the outcomes of stress and trauma. There is a consistent relationship between insecure attachment and worse outcomes, and between secure attachment and better outcomes (e.g., meta-analyses by Woodhouse et al., 2015). Studies of long-term trauma, such as that caused by warfare and terrorism, show a relationship between insecure attachment and worse symptoms (Besser et al., 2009). These studies are relevant to people experiencing the stress and trauma of COVID where lockdowns and social isolation reduce access to attachment figures, including those who provide secure attachment bonds.

Just as parents, partners, friends, and mentors can be human attachment figures, God can be an ultimate attachment figure for Christian believers (Kirkpatrick, 1999), many of whom experience God as always present and close, providing safety at times of threat and a secure base for activities in the world (Kirkpatrick, 1992). Similarly, from Trinitarian theology, Christians understand God the Father as loving and self-giving, Christ the Son as knowing us intimately and empathising with our suffering, and the Holy Spirit as binding us to the Father in love (Gunton, 2002). However, both secure and insecure styles of attachment to God have been reported amongst Christian believers (Belavich & Pargament, 2002; Beck & McDonald, 2004; Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Insecure attachment to God occurs when people experience God as unavailable (utterly holy and transcendent) or themselves as unable to be nurtured by God (perhaps because of perceived sinfulness).

There is growing evidence that attachment to God affects outcomes of stress. Insecure attachment to God is associated with the perception of greater stress and

psychological symptoms beyond the effects of human attachment relationships (Miner, 2009; Reiner et al., 2010). On the other hand, secure attachment to God amplifies the effects of secure parental attachments on outcomes of outpatients diagnosed with psychosis (Prout et al., 2012). Secure attachment to God is also associated with reduced psychological symptoms (Limke & Mayfield, 2011), and greater life satisfaction (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Although secure attachment to God is psychologically healthy, there is a need to replenish spiritual resources to maintain healthy engagement in the world. As a spiritual resource, secure attachment to God promotes work engagement but, over time, engagement with work reduces spiritual resources (Bickerton et al., 2014). Thus, if Christians are to retain psychological health and well-being in times of stress, they must pay attention to their attachment relationship with God.

Insights from Trinitarian Theology

Although the main argument of this paper is based on psychological theory and research, it is also consistent with contemporary works in relational theology which deepen one's understanding of attachment to God. Some insights from Trinitarian theology of relevance to attachment include that God can be known relationally, God creates a relational universe, and God is attuned to the needs of people (Miner, 2007).

From relational theology there is the premise that God is knowable to some degree: understanding of God is not through projection or philosophy but God's actions in salvation history (Rahner, 1970). This proposition addresses the bias that God is cognitively knowable only (placing a premium on right belief) with the counter that God is known subjectively and relationally (see also La Cugna, 1991, Moltmann, 1981, and Torrance, 1996, for treatment of God as relationally knowable). Further, Colin Gunton (2002) argues that subjective, personal knowledge of God in the world transforms relationships and gives rise to objective knowledge of God: the actions of God in salvation history confirm the objective knowledge that God is love. That God is knowable relationally and is intrinsically love forms a basis for asserting that God can be an ideal attachment figure for humans. The intrinsic relationality of God leads to the next assumption that the universe itself is relational. Colin Gunton (1993) develops this argument by arguing that God's actions in the world reflect God's being as sharing a "dynamic mutual reciprocity, interpenetration

and interanimation" (p.163) but retaining the distinctiveness of Father, Son and Spirit by the role of the Spirit in maintaining and realising the particularity of all things. Hence, he concludes that the universe is marked by relationality: its Creator is a being-in-relation and all that is created likewise exists as uniquely itself because of its relationships. People are created in the image of God and share some of God's attributes. Key attributes are Spirit and love. The Holy Spirit gives the gift of spirit, making people open to God, and love, enabling people to love others (Gunton, 2002). La Cugna (1991, p.288) holds that "Persons are essentially interpersonal, intersubjective. The doctrine of the Trinity is the sine qua non for preserving the essentially relational character of God, the relational nature of human existence, and the interdependent quality of the entire universe." If the universe as a whole is relational, and people are created with the capacity to form loving relationships with God and others, then a further pre-requisite for secure attachment relationships is met.

A third theme from relational theology is that God is attuned to creation. Within the Godhead there is mutual attunement, seen most clearly in the Father, Son and Spirit suffering together at the Crucifixion. Gunton (2002) states that the Father commands and suffers the Son's identification with humanity under judgment; the Spirit enables the suffering of the Son to be redemptive. This attunement within the Godhead reaches to humanity because, just as God suffers in the actions of Trinitarian members, so God is moved by human suffering. Gunton's point is echoed by Miroslav Volf (1996) who writes of God's embrace of humanity on the Cross. Their understanding of God is of Creator-Redeemer who is empathically aware of human emotion and need and is present with suffering humanity, offering solace and healing. Yet within this relation of attunement between God and persons, the distinctiveness of God and creation, and the mystery of God as never completely knowable are retained. These qualities of attunement within an attachment to God relationship are echoed in human-to-human attachment relationships in which the independence and ultimate unknowability of each in interaction are maintained.

Implications for Christian Healers

Christian healers experience the same stressors as other citizens living with COVID in the community. In addition, there is the stress of being a secure attachment figure for clients: providing empathy, helping clients down-regulate heightened emotions,

listening closely to their pain and providing emotional support for their healthy coping. Healers must pay attention to self-care as well as the care of others in order to be secure attachment figures.

Self-Care

In order to remain engaged with clients in healing work, Christian healers must maintain their own secure attachment to God (Stevens & Miner, 2017). As a form of relationship, attachment to God is not maintained by adherence to prescriptive beliefs or behaviours. Rather, it is maintained by making space for emotionally based experiences through practices of meditation, prayer and Bible reading. Meditation that supports secure attachment is cultivating awareness, or mindfulness, of God. It can include times of solitude in nature when we reflect on God, or spiritual journalling of our experiences of God. Prayers that foster secure attachment are not lists of petitions but involve adoration of God and listening for God's response. Attachment-related Bible reading is not the cognitive seeking of wisdom (valuable as it may be) but immersion in narratives that allow the reader to experience something of God's care and nurture. An example is the narrative of the Prodigal Son that reminds us of, and helps us experience, the Father's love and forgiveness.

Once there is a foundation of secure attachment to God, the healer can practise spiritual disciplines that help to maintain secure spiritual attachment. These are not prescriptive tasks but rather practices that are chosen to be appropriate for the individual's needs. Examples of spiritual disciplines such as those discussed by Tan and Gregg (1997) include solitude, mediation, surrender, repentance, contrition, service, and fellowship. Other means of maintaining secure attachment to God and spiritual resources are spiritual retreats, spiritual mentoring or supervision, and engagement with Christian communities such as churches or home groups. Concurrently with maintaining secure spiritual attachment, healers should also tend their human attachment relationships by repairing important but ruptured relationships and seeking nurture in stressful times from human attachment figures (see Stevens & Miner, 2017).

Care of Others

The healer becomes a figure with whom a client can become securely attached by consistent nurturing. Such nurturing involves being attuned to the emotions and needs

of the client, providing a space where emotions can be released safely through empathy, respect and unconditional regard (the Rogerian triad), and being a secure base from which the client can explore ideas, activities and relationships. In addition, the healer becomes a spiritual attachment figure by being attuned to the spiritual content of the conversation, providing safety for spiritual exploration, and explicitly and implicitly referring to God as a fully adequate attachment figure (Stevens & Miner, 2017). Such reference to God as our ideal attachment figure involves pointing to experiences where God is felt to be present, caring and supporting. The healer can also model spiritual nurturing by caring for clients as psycho-spiritual wholes.

However, some clients have insecure styles of human attachment and correspondingly insecure styles of attachment to God (see Proctor et al., 2009). Those with insecure-avoidant styles do not trust God's goodness, availability and willingness to nurture them. As a result, they seem to be detached from God, just as they are detached from people. They sense that God has abandoned them or at least is not interested in them. They may assert independence from God, minimising the relevance of God to their life, but display a defensive and shallow self-confidence through to consistent devaluing of oneself. Those with insecure-anxious styles do not experience themselves as worthy (through Christ) of God's nurture. They may experience God's protection and help but expect it to be withdrawn, thus sensing that God is inconsistent and unpredictable. The person can become preoccupied with their relationship with God, never feeling safe and secure with God and constantly concerned with failure and whether they merited God's attention.

In cases of insecure attachment to God, the healer firstly needs to repair human attachment relationships marked by avoidance or ambivalence. Then they provide corrective experiences of God to counter the negative working models (thoughts, feelings and experiences around perceived unavailability, abandonment, inconsistency etc.). For those with avoidant styles of attachment to God the cognitive-affective focus is on God's love; for those with anxious styles of attachment to God the cognitive-affective focus is on God's forgiveness and steadfastness (Stevens & Miner, 2017).

Implications for the Church as Healing Agent

Churches can promote secure attachment to God amongst healers and congregations in several ways. Those whose relationship with God is insecure are usually insecurely

attached to people, displaying detachment or anxious clinging towards others in the congregation. They are either not engaged in congregational activities (Kent & Henderson, 2017) or overly enthusiastic as a way of gaining approval from others; as such, they are the most difficult to support in fostering secure attachment to God. However, churches can accept and include those whose attachment to God is insecure. Leaders can model God's caregiving by being carers themselves. In the context of experiencing care within a congregation, members can absorb teaching about God as a nurturer and themselves as worthy of God's love in Christ. Through this combination of explicit teaching and implicit experiences of God's love, congregations can begin to sense God's presence and personal care (Hall, 2004). This secure attachment can then be expressed and further experienced in silence, congregational prayer, worship, and sacraments.

Conclusion

Attachment to God is an important foundation for works of healing by individuals and the church, especially during the stress and challenge of COVID. COVID has been experienced as a severe, unpredictable stressor that can directly elicit PTSD symptoms in patients and medical staff, as well as a range of mental health symptoms in those affected by social isolation and other measures designed to reduce its impact on communities. In addition to experiencing this COVID-related stress alongside community members, Christian healers face other stressors as they work in conditions of lockdown, economic uncertainty, and social tensions. Christian healers have had less access to face-to-face resources such as supervision and networking with colleagues and other Christians. This gap in potential resources highlights the importance of personal psycho-spiritual resources.

For healers, the resource of secure attachment to God is important in itself and because it is a foundation for accessing other spiritual resources that can need replenishing over time. It is also an important resource for clients and congregational members in their healing from the stresses and symptoms of COVID. Churches can intentionally support secure attachment to God by attending to relational issues within the congregation and promoting healthy experiences of God. Such work is fully consistent with contemporary Trinitarian theology.

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Bordered by COVID-19 and the EU-27: Imagining a theology of global domicile[3]

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Abstract

The European Union legislates the free movement of people, capital and goods, within and between its member states. This political commitment has been hard-pressed by the undocumented migrants entering the EU. The COVID-19 pandemic catalysed restrictions upon the free movement of people within the EU. Whilst legal, these restrictions posed a significant existential threat to the EU. Accompanying these is an increasing tendency to prioritise the claims of the nation state above all other obligations, including those of international law or any sense of moral or ethical obligation. European churches play an active role in refugee advocacy and welfare, fostering processes of welcome and integration, accompanied by the development of ecclesiologies that simultaneously transcend borders and acknowledge their legal and political necessity. This paper highlights the responses of nation-states to migrants and contrasts these with a

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[3] The concept of "global domicile" was first introduced to me by one of my PhD students, Kamal Weerakoon, but requires further definition and description.

constructive diaspora theology that is fit for purpose within the context of the European Union and its member states.

Keywords: diaspora theology, European Union, COVID-19, migrants, integration, free movement of people

A brief personal reflection of being "bordered" by COVID-19 lockdown restrictions

I have prepared this article in circumstances I would not have chosen. When I first agreed to contribute the paper on which it is based, I was unable to travel from my Sydney home to my place of work in Melbourne or to the Melbourne unit where I have housed my personal library and archives.

I have experienced, in some measure, what it means for my scholarly activity to be a "bordered" activity, even where there existed the possibility of overcoming some of that "bordering" through e-book purchases or the use of online journal databases.

In shaping this paper, I reflect that I relied, in some instances, upon memory and impressions of books read and sitting on shelves over 600 km away; memories that are invariably partial and fragmentary. It leads me to ponder the extent to which scholars in diaspora must face similar restrictions of access to necessary and needed resources. Perhaps that is the nature of migration for the academic, a process of scholarly dislocation from the networks and associations within which scholarship has been nurtured and stimulated. The legacy of dislocation vests us with partial accounts or recollections of previous knowledge and acquaintance, perhaps even our former selves and lives. The risk is that these become forever partial and fragmentary.

COVID-19 and lockdown within the European Union

I have had a research interest in the European Union (EU) since around 2003, and I arrived in Australia in 2012 with a visa that identified me as an economic migrant.

The 1957 *Treaty of Rome* established the forerunner of what has become the European Union (formerly the European Coal and Steel Community, European Economic Community, European Community) and enshrines the freedom of movement for workers, imagining labour as a transportable commodity and consequently a strategy of popular European integration. In 1986, the *Single European Act* made

significant amendments to the 1957 *Treaty*, and its Article 13 envisaged "an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured…" (European Communities, 1987, p. 7) Throughout this period, the concept of the "third-country national" was adopted as a way of describing citizens from countries outside of the European Community. Following the Maastricht Treaty (1992), border legislation was drafted into EU Law and the EU was granted competencies in patrolling external borders.

The EU, established upon the free movement of people (and the right to seek asylum), has been sorely tested by the challenge of undocumented migrants crossing its external borders. More recently, the lockdown and travel restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted a perplexing conundrum seemingly at odds with the foundational principles of the EU.

This is the legal and political context upon which I reflect, as a practical theologian, and as I try to understand the principles of governance that must determine the policy and practice of European governments as they balance their historic commitment to human rights, including those of the asylum seeker and refugee, and their public healthcare obligations during the current global pandemic. The practical theologian's role is to consider what constitutes good government during such times, to offer counsel that reflects a commitment to shared life and the common good, and to do so in way that is consistent with the traditions of Christian ethics and morality.

Derogation from the human right to freedom of movement

If the EU is established in the notion that States must act collaboratively to further their individual aspirations, it seems sensible to set our discussion of the EU's response to COVID-19 in the broader context of global governance.[4]

The UN's *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (United Nations, 1966a, p. 4) contains provisions guaranteeing "the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health" and requires governments to develop policies and practices that ensure the "prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases".

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[4] The fact that I presented this at an APTO conference serves as a reminder that border control was implemented to good effect by the Pacific nations in the effort to protect their vulnerable populations.

The *UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* located the right to health, irrespective of being a refugee or asylum seeker, alongside other human rights:

> 3. The right to health is closely related to and dependent upon the realization of other human rights, as contained in the *International Bill of Rights*, including the rights to food, housing, work, education, human dignity, life, non-discrimination, equality, the prohibition against torture, privacy, access to information, and the freedoms of association, assembly and movement. These and other rights and freedoms address integral components of the right to health. (United Nations, 2000, p. 2)

The *UN Economic and Social Council* and the *UN Human Rights Committee* juxtapose these fundamental human rights with the freedom of movement during states of emergency. In adopting the *Siracusa Principles*, in 1984, the UN outlined principles that frame any derogation from rights contained within the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (United Nations, 1966b). Where a "public emergency threatens the life of the nation", the *Siracusa Principles* make provision for the derogation from the right of freedom of movement (American Association for the International Commission of Jurists, 1985, p. 3). Any restriction of the freedom of movement is required to be lawful, necessary and proportionate, and should consider any impact experienced by especially vulnerable or marginalised groups within the wider population.

In 2020, the UN High Commission for Refugees moved to caution against the removal of the rights enjoyed by vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees, by declaring that:

> Under international law, States have the sovereign power to regulate the entry of non-nationals. However, international law also provides that measures to this effect may not prevent them from seeking asylum from persecution. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020, p. 1)

The response of the European Union has highlighted some of the complexities of pan-EU governance. To date, the member states of the EU have not conferred competency upon the EU in the arena of public health; the EU can only play a supporting role. Consequently, healthcare responses have been disparate and uncoordinated. Article 5

(1) (Right to liberty and security) of the *European Convention on Human Rights* (Council of Europe, 1950, p. 7) obliges member States to act proactively in the provision of healthcare. However, Article 15 of the *European Convention on Human Rights,* a fundamental document for the 27 EU member states, contains provision for derogation from human rights during "war or other public emergency threatening the life of the nation", such as pandemic or bioterrorism. This provision is similar to that in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*, mentioned above.[5]

The complexities are on view in the instance of Italy, arguably the first European country to experience the pandemic character of the virus. In early November 2020, the UK *Guardian* reported on attempts by the European Commission to gain greater competencies regarding public healthcare across the EU, noting that "At the height of the first wave of the pandemic, the Italian government hit out at the lack of solidarity within the EU after its urgent calls for medical resources from fellow European governments were ignored" (Boffey, 2020). At the same time, the former Italian deputy Prime Minister, Matteo Salvini, and a leader of the far-right Northern League (*Lega Nord*) was on trial in Sicily for the 2019 "kidnapping" of 116 migrants from North Africa prevented on his orders from being disembarked from a coastguard ship whilst he was Italy's Interior Minister. Moreover, Salvini's attempts at political capital "wrongly linked COVID-19 to African asylum seekers, calling for border closures" (Devakumar et al., 2020). Commentators argued that "the issue…has nothing to do with the spread of COVID-19. Rather, COVID-19 has become a platform to deliver anti-migration rhetoric aimed at African immigrants in Italy" (Chamburuka & Gusha, 2020, p. 5).

Borders and "bordering"

The political opportunism might not necessarily surprise for, as some suggest, the limitations upon national sovereignty remain contested, at least among the member states of the EU. This reflects the historical legacy of Westphalian notions of sovereignty that grant the right of border control to the State. However, writing in the September 2020 edition of the *Canadian Public Administration* journal, six academics argued that the COVID-19 crisis will force governments to "reconceive international and sub-national borders where new 'borders' are being drawn; and [require them to]

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[5]   For more on the impact of COVID on rights to international travel, the reader can consult the work of Lebret (2020) and Bachmann and Sanden (2020).

anticipate a steady stream of crises similar to the COVID-19 pandemic arising from climate change and related challenges" in the face of "imperfect expert knowledge and public skepticism" (Brousselle et al., 2020, p. 369).

Thomas Nail's philosophy of motion, kinopolitics, and his theory of borders rely upon the notion that borders are in constant motion, designed to circulate the movement of people rather than prevent it, and that they are tools of primitive accumulation (Nail, 2015, 2016, 2018). His central, and perhaps counter-intuitive, move is to argue that borders do not describe movement merely because they facilitate the passage, or movement, of people, but that *borders themselves are in motion*. Most obviously, geomorphological factors shift borders. Additionally, physical erosion, decay and decomposition result in borders that imperceptibly shift over time. States might cede, exchange or claim new territory. More catastrophically, territorial conflicts might see borders redrawn. Some borders remain indistinct or disputed. Nail quotes favourably from Nick Vaughan-Williams, who insists that the border is "(re)produced through modes of affirmation and contestation and is, above all, lived. In other words, borders are not natural, neutral nor static but historically contingent, politically charged, dynamic phenomena that first and foremost involve people and their everyday lives." (Vaughan-Williams, 2009, p. 1)

The phenomenological dynamism of the border, especially the activity of "bordering", is not only central to Nail's work but, as noted above, is anticipated by the authors of the *Canadian Public Administration* article. Elsewhere, Teresa Hayter argues that "The morality of frontiers…is threatening to invade the interiors of countries" (Hayter, 2004, p. 150). It's important to remember that the State border is only one form of frontier. My own practical theological discipline of missiology has an ambiguous relationship with frontiers. It has often used the metaphor of the frontier in talking about those things that divide people into several binary categories (Heathen–Christian / reached–unreached / believing–unbelieving / etc.) Whatever the virtue of those binaries, the fact remains that frontiers represent far more than merely borders. A hardening of the borders must inevitably find its correlation in a hardening and policing of internal frontiers (whether conceived upon race, religion, caste, criminality (think of New Zealand residents in Australia who have broken the law and are subject to deportation), wealth, social status.

If COVID-19 forces a reconsideration of borders, and possibly frontiers, such outcomes might ultimately prove beneficial to those formerly reckoned as needy foreigners, even enemies, who have "illegally" crossed a border and therefore deserve punishment.[6] In an effort to accelerate a reconsideration of borders and bordering, the voices of theologians and moral philosophers must swell the chorus. Reflecting on a year without travel, Secretary General of the World Evangelical alliance, Bishop Efraim Tendero suggested that "…with the borders closed to travel, we have found that we live in a borderless word" (Tendero, 2020, p. 199).

The Zimbabwean scholar, Philemon Chumburuka, uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to reflect on the consequences of COVID-19 for bordered existence, social inclusion and neighbourliness. He concludes that:

> even those that have built walls on their borders could not prevent the pandemic from entering their countries. We now perceive the world as a global village and therefore we cannot live in isolation. Social inclusion is therefore an important lesson to be drawn from the parable and it is an important aspect in fighting the pandemic as nations. The audience, the lawyer and the wounded man had to learn that the one who was perceived by history as an enemy was in fact a neighbour. (Chamburuka, 2020, p. 6)

This reading of this familiar biblical narrative from Luke's gospel provides biblical and theological correspondence with the views of scholars of race who argue that, for example:

> Immigration controls have their origins in racism. Time and again, in the history of controls, it becomes clear that the reason for them is not excessive numbers of immigrants, or any realistic assessment of immigrants' effects on jobs, housing, crime, or health, but the supposed "non-assimilability" or "inferior stock" of certain immigrants. (Hayter, 2004, p. 21)

Returning to our opening theme of the freedom of movement and the right to seek asylum, Hayter argues that immigration controls, as one form of bordering, impose increasingly harsh conditions upon refugees and migrants, undermine human rights, in reality are

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6   We might ask whether discrimination grounded in criminality has become a proxy for discrimination grounded in race? Why has it become so necessary to describe undocumented migrants as illegal? Why are black residents of city centres frequently described as criminals, racists, muggers, joyriders, drug abusers, etc.?

designed to be a deterrence to others rather than to be a fair or just treatment of the asylum seeker, and are incompatible with liberal democracies.[7]

Diaspora theologies of solidarity

Whilst some of the hoped-for changes in the way that borders are conceived might seem hopelessly optimistic, there nevertheless remains a question that is central to our own theological sub-disciplines, namely the question of how we are to respond theologically. What are the theological, ethical, moral, philosophical and biblical resources that communities of faith can apply to the current realities? The very brief survey of possibilities listed immediately below is certainly in need of wider research, but it will be at least suggestive and illustrative.

For example, Kwame Anthony Appiah envisages the notion of "rooted cosmopolitanism as a form of global citizenship and common humanity" (Appiah, 1996, p. 22). Emily Askew proposes a "theology of Cross/ing in which the crucified Christ challenges the status quo of state policies that promote injustice, suffering, exploitation, and poverty" (Askew, 2018, p. 188). The editor of *Christianity Today* speculates on the fact that:

> …proximity is both geographic and relational. Perhaps our shared
> experiences with this virus—rich nations and poor nations—will
> bring us all a little closer once we've emerged from the haze of
> self-isolation. Perhaps the next time we hear of some faceless
> people group out in the world suffering from an invisible, enigmatic
> predator, those people won't be so faceless after all, because we'll
> see ourselves in them. (Olsen, 2020, p. 40)

A theologically conceived commitment to global solidarity runs through each of these examples, and is also on display in Roger Nam's reading of the biblical narrative of the widow of Zarepath and Elijah (Nam, 2020). Through his reading, Nam lays bare the inequalities of COVID and he writes, "The economic burden of COVID-19 falls more heavily on those with less access to resources, access that is both racialized and gendered". He continues, "How do the biblical texts resonate with our experience of inequality, heightened by the reality of COVID-19?" (Nam, 2020, p. 603). The work that Nam does with the Hebrew Bible text is mirrored in the work undertaken by Chamburuka on the New Testament texts of Luke. The parable of the Good Samaritan is important in

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[7]   Although Nail would argue they are a highly valuable tool of neo-liberal accumulation (Nail, 2019, pp. 199-202).

that it addresses the discriminations heightened by our response to the threat posed by COVID-19, discriminations that rely upon stigma, hate and stereotypes (Chamburuka, 2020). The alternative is informed by a theology of solidarity.

Anticipating the theological rationale for a supra-statial right to global domicile

In advancing an agenda directed towards outlining such a rationale, we will have to consider the extent to which creation might be ontologically bordered. If it is apparently un-bordered, what might this suggest or imply? Alternatively, what would a bordered creation suggest or imply? Are examples of social and political bordering in the biblical narratives primarily inclusive or exclusive acts of bordering?

Moreover, what is the correlation, if any, between the biblical reference to God marking out the territory allotted to each "nation" and the bordering that makes possible the existence and continuance of the modern nation state?[8] Why is the nation state unthinkingly privileged in much contemporary biblical interpretation? Whilst Thomas Hobbes's arguments that state sovereignty defines legitimacy might suggest moral support for state actors reinforcing and regulating borders, in contrast, Daniel Groody's exposition of Roman Catholic social teaching insists that the sovereign rights of states are never an absolute right, nor are they unquestioningly self-legitimising. He writes,

> It affirms that God—and not the state—grants rights to people, asserting that the state's responsibility is to protect and defend those rights when they are threatened or diminished; it does not see the state as the fundamental source or grantor of these rights. (Groody, 2015, p. 51)

However, in practice, it is frustratingly the case that morality is constantly assumed to be on the side of the national interest and it is *not* necessarily considered immoral to refuse the asylum seeker entry on the grounds that certain privileges, enjoyed by citizens, might be thereby threatened. Within the provisions of international law, undocumented migrants are never left without the protection of their rights to flee persecution, ensure the safety of their family and seek meaningful employment. In practice, these are only adequately protected through the acquisition of citizenship. Kristin Heyer draws a stark contrast:

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[8]   In, for example Acts 17:22-28 "he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands". A post-colonial reading of this text with regard to the imperial context for its delivery might assist in illuminating its otherwise confusing aspects.

> Whereas the basic human rights reflected in international rights regimes and presupposed in Catholic social thought are universal in theory, in contemporary practice their exercise depends upon legally sanctioned membership in a political community. (Heyer, 2012, p. 110)

Building upon this statement of *realpolitik*, Heyer proposes an ethic of immigration grounded in Christian hospitality and neighbour love, including the promotion of structures and practices marked by kinship and justice alongside a commitment to global solidarity (Heyer, 2012, p. 4).

To the extent that a theology of global domicile is conceivable, a Christian moral vision must encompass the notion of a global citizenship and its rights, grounded in a notion of human flourishing (Volf & Croasmun, 2019). It would be seen as immoral if food was prevented from crossing a border to feed the starving citizens of a country experiencing a famine. The same would be true for economic aid, including technological assistance, professional skills, or financial support. Ethics grounded in the priority and interests of the nation-state, or economic efficiency, pose well-documented threats to human life and dignity, bodily integrity, family unity and the rule of law. Global solidarity, resting in a theological vision, must present a more compelling narrative than those offered by neo-liberal accounts of globalisation.

Concluding observations

For more than half a century, European churches have maintained an active role in refugee advocacy and welfare, fostering processes of social and ecclesial welcome and integration throughout this period. More recently, these concerns have been matched by a growing awareness by the same churches of the need for ecclesiologies *sans frontières* that are acutely sensitive to the legal and political realities of borders and bordering, and which, through their witness and testimony to reconciled diversity, are able to persuasively demonstrate that bordering as a political and social act continues to have devastating personal, familial, communal, social and ecclesial consequences.

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God of light and darkness

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Jenny Close earned her first degree in Fine Arts (painting) and then trained as a teacher. For many years her working life was shared between secondary school teaching for Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) and freelance liturgical art making. Later she was employed by BCE to work in multimedia: video, animation and book illustration. At the same time, she studied theology and in 2005 was awarded a PhD from Griffith University. The title of her thesis was 'A Feminist Understanding of Liturgical Art'. Since 2005, she has worked as a sessional lecturer in theology at Australian Catholic University and Broken Bay Institute. At the same time, she has maintained her art practice, which has become more digital over the years. She retired from full-time work in 2018, but since then has maintained her liturgical art practice and a professional and pastoral engagement with theology.

Abstract

This paper is part of an ongoing project in which I aim to rethink the traditional understanding of beauty as an attribute of God. Working within the context of the theory and theology of aesthetics and the practice of liturgy, I examine liturgical expressions of light and darkness, and beauty and ugliness. My aim is to show how these pairings are related rather than mutually exclusive.

The project was reshaped somewhat in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the problematic liturgical situation in which we found ourselves. So, here, I examine the seeming opposites such as illness/wellness, breaking/healing, absence/presence, celebration/lament and praise/reproach. These will be explored in terms of relationships rather than oppositions. The theological implications of these relationships are used to explore our understanding of the nature of God and the flow-on implications for our Christian mission to heal.

Keywords: Liturgical art, COVID-19, nature of God, dualism, feminist theology, healing,

There is a movement among contemporary theologians to revise the traditional understandings about God as omniscient, omnipotent, impassable and immutable,

that is, a theology of God from above. Some feminist theologians, such as Australian Pat Fox (2001), are focusing on Christology, which gives them scope to construct theologies of God from below.

My approach is decidedly from the ground up. My project is situated in the here and now, when the Covid-19 pandemic is still ravaging Australia and the rest of the world. At this moment in history, it is vital to ask the question: How can we trust that God is loving and good?

Let me provide some background to my struggle with this question. Since my fields are primarily art and liturgy, I generally use liturgical images as a starting point for theological reflections. See in Figure 1, for example, the installation that I made a few ago for a Lenten season.
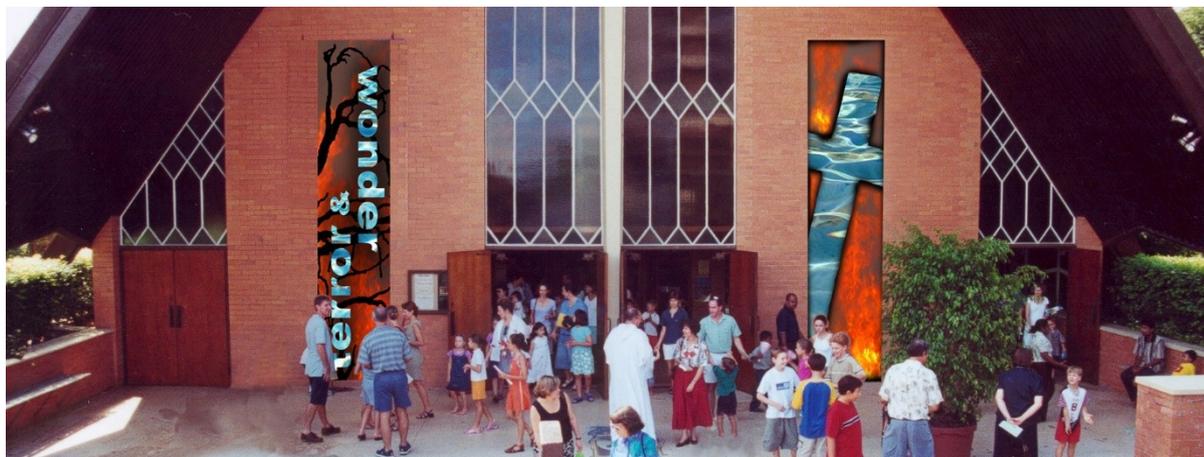
Figure 1. Lenten installation at Mt Carmel Catholic Parish, Brisbane. Artwork and photograph: Jenny Close.

Here you can see what I have been mulling over for many years—the odd relationships between what seem to be opposites—in this instance, fire and water. That year, there were ravaging floods in northern Queensland and, at the same time, devastating fires in some southern states. As we know, this is a recurring cycle in the Australian landscape and it's getting worse with global warming.

It seemed to me that fire and water, which are also common liturgical symbols, hold both terrible and wonderful aspects. In the readings for the first Sunday of Lent (Year B cycle of readings in the Roman Catholic Lectionary), for example, destruction and salvation, flood and covenant are drawn into alignment in Genesis 9:8-15. Then in the

second reading (1 Peter 3:18-22) the flood imagery indicates a baptism in which we are saved by water.

On the third Sunday in Advent, Year C, the gospel reading refers to a baptism with water and fire: "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16). Water and fire don't cancel each other out here, they are, in a mysterious way, related: this is a baptism of earthly and heavenly elements. So, here are these paradoxical relationships in nature and in scripture which are drawn together in our sacramental liturgies.

As a liturgist, I am fascinated by the images that the church uses for prayer. As an artist, my first instinct is to start with the natural world in order to seek understanding of the divine. As a theologian, I know that there are plenty of precedents for this approach: in the tradition I look to Bonaventure and among contemporary schools, I look to feminist and eco-theologians, notably Elizabeth Johnson and Denis Edwards.

In his thirteenth century classic "The Soul's Journey to God", Bonaventure claims that we can encounter God through the things that God made. The material world "is itself a ladder for ascending to God" in which we find "traces" of God's hand (St Bonaventure, n.d.). Bonaventure juxtaposes "the book of creation" with the "book of Scripture" which both reveal God to the world. So, when we look at the terrible and wonderful events in nature and symbols such as fire and water in our liturgies, what do they tell us about God?

I was discussing these ideas at a liturgy conference a few years ago and a British theologian pointed me in the direction of this passage: "I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things" (Is.45:7). Terror and wonder are clearly evident in this Old Testament image of God.

There is a similar reference a little closer to home for Christians, however: the cross and resurrection. These realities are interestingly imaged in the San Damiano Cross (Figure 2).

The figure on the cross has the wounds of crucifixion, so this is a suffering figure, but not a corpse, since the eyes are open and looking straight out at the viewer. Jesus is standing, rather than hanging—there is confidence, not defeat in the pose. The cross is, paradoxically, a triumph.

On the left of the main figure, Mary the mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple, St John, gaze at each other consolingly. On the other side stand Mary Magdalene, Mary, Mother of James and the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his slave (Lk.7:1-10).

At the top of the cross Jesus ascends into heaven. The ascended figure carries a cross, which has been transformed from a symbol of suffering and defeat to a golden emblem of triumph. Between the crucified and the ascended figures are the words which were nailed to the cross: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. The irony is not lost on the well-informed viewer. Both human suffering and divine triumph are evident here: terror and wonder.

Figure 2. San Damiano Cross. This image is public domain: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kruci fikso_de_Sankta_Damiano.png

The allusions to important people and events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth help to remind us that, even in his divinity, Jesus was human. This is an eschatological image of the Paschal Mystery which is comprised of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. It captures both the darkness and the light of these realities.

We traditionally associate light with positives like goodness, and darkness with negatives like evil; but how can both light and darkness come from God? Is not our God all goodness? This is what Elizabeth Johnson has to say:

> God is good; but God is not good the way creatures are good; but God is good in a supereminent way as Source of all that is good.
>
> At this point our concept of goodness cracks open. We literally do not understand what we are saying. Human comprehension of the meaning of "good" is lost, for we have no direct earthly experience of anything that is the Source of all goodness. (Johnson, 2008, pp. 18-19)

Johnson claims that God's goodness is a mystery, but I cannot just shrug my shoulders and move on. I gaze with fascination at the paradoxical in nature and use that as a starting point for grappling with the mystery of God.

Our theology tells us that Creation is fundamentally good, but we know that not everything in the garden is wonderful or lifegiving: evolution has costs. Denis Edwards identifies the problem: "…death, the pain involved in parasitism, predation and disease, the waste involved in the abundance of organism, and the extinction of species" (Edwards, 2010, p. 13) are characteristic of the evolutionary processes. He also claims that "It is congruent with a view of God who acts creatively and providentially in and through the laws of nature, in all the randomness and lawfulness that allows and enables a life-bearing universe to evolve" (Edwards, 2010, p. 11) So he sees that "Extinction [for example] is part of the evolutionary pattern of life on Earth… part of the natural cycle of life" (Edwards, 2010, p. 13).

If Edwards is right, then God's creative act includes working through parasitism, predation—and dare I say, pandemics. This is confronting, but Edwards thinks that, ultimately, we cannot know how to interpret the nature of the universe because we don't fully understand the emergent evolutionary process, but he trusts in the value of both the positive and the seemingly negative potentialities of the process. So, what does this tell us about the nature of God? Is this a reflection of Isaiah's "weal and woe" – "light and darkness"?

Of course, it is no news that the nature of God is mysterious and unknowable. But I'm hungering to know more about the God of light and darkness. In my study of the theology and the theory of aesthetics, I came across *On the Sublime* by Longinus (Longinus 2006). This work was written in the first century of the Common Era.

Longinus describes the relationship between art (or human design) and nature—a pair of seeming opposites—as a sort of symbiosis.

> …in all cases the vital informing principle is derived from her [nature], yet to determine the right degree and the right moment, and to contribute the precision of practice and experience, is the peculiar province of scientific method. The great passions, when left to their own blind and rash impulses without the control of reason, are in the same danger as a ship let drive at random without ballast. (Longinus, II:1-3)

He claims that, in order to achieve perfection, art and nature must be integrated rather than mutually exclusive: "For art is then perfect when it seems to be nature, and nature, again, is most effective when pervaded by the unseen presence of art" (Longinus, XXII:1).

According to Longinus, nature without human design is creative, but chaotic, unstable and formless. But art without nature is lifeless. Reflecting on this kind of interdependent relationship between opposites gave me a starting point for understanding those interesting, but problematic images, such as water and fire, that I had been working with for so long.

Two hundred years after the time of Longinus, Neoplatonic philosophy was a powerful influence over early Christian theology. As we know, Neoplatonism was underpinned by unhelpful dualisms creating false separations, alignments and valuations: for example, it placed the spiritual in opposition to, and above, the material and it placed male in opposition to, and above, female. These were not pairings–they were mutually exclusive opposites. The outcome is obvious: Heaven, soul and man were aligned, just as earth, body and woman were aligned. Further, beauty and light can be added to the heavenly side and ugliness and darkness to the earthly side.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of dualism, I took a leaf out of Longinus' book and started thinking in terms of relationships. I devised the model of a continuum which spans the space between heaven and earth—using the fire and water of Luke's baptismal imagery (Figure 3). Rosemary Radford Reuther (1992, p, 35) uses the term "dynamic unities" which adds a useful layer of meaning to my continuum.

On the heavenly end of the continuum, all is spiritual, harmonious, ordered, stable, light, beautiful and ultimately finished. On the earthly end, all is natural, raw, discordant, chaotic, dark, ugly and ultimately creative.

Figure 2: Illustration "Heaven & Earth" by Jenny Close

When you look at it like this, heavenly ideals have the potential to inspire faint hearts with hope, and foster contemplation, while earthly realities have the potential to confront injustice, challenge the status quo and foster discipleship. Heavenly ideals are comforting while earthly realities are challenging.

It would be easy to align the heavenly attributes with holiness and earthly ones with sinfulness. But that is not how it works here. Similarly, in her deconstruction of ontological dualism, Reuther identifies an alternative approach through "relationality":

> This ethic is not based on setting one part of reality, body, over against another, mind, regarding the one as the principle of evil and the second as the principle of good. Rather, good and evil, and hence ethics, are rooted in relationality itself, life-sustaining and renewing relationality versus a distorted relationality that destroys both sides of the relationship. (Reuther, 1992, p. 36)

It is clear to see how Reuther's idea of "dynamic unities" works here. I go a little further with my model, however. Somewhere in the centre of the continuum there is a

balance between the heavenly ideals and earthly realities, but the centre is not a fixed point. In the life of individuals or communities, that centre is constantly being renegotiated—now towards one end, now towards the other. However, serious imbalances occur at either extreme.

When heavenly ideals lose their connection to everyday life, they become bloodless. Here, heaven is the only site of redemption. Celestial joy and contentment are the norm. Because everything is complete, there is no possibility of anything new. There is the constriction of the closed circle, the status quo and uniformity. The focus is the "centre" and the "edge" is dangerous and out of bounds.

By comparison, when earthly realities are isolated from heavenly ideals they become soulless. Here, suffering humanity is more "real" than the communion of saints, but there is no way to look beyond the suffering. Nothing is finished, the chaos of change makes for creative challenges, but there is no rest. Life is salvific and the world is the site of redemption, but life is lived on the edge and the bitterness of reality poisons hope.

Isolating heavenly ideals and earthly realities from each other is disastrous. Sinfulness exists at the extreme ends of the continuum—both ends: when our focus on heaven disconnects us from the realities of everyday life, or when we are so taken up with present realities that we lose sight of the hope offered by heaven. On the other hand, holiness thrives when the tensions between heaven and earth are successfully negotiated.

In the San Damiano Cross, we can see an image of the perfect confluence between the heavenly and the earthly in the person of Jesus Christ. But, as noted before, this is an eschatological image and we live in the here and now, so how does it apply?

Elizabeth Johnson's ecological theology reminds me of the way my model of relationships works.

> …divine creativity is the source not just of cosmic order but also of the chance that allows novelty to appear. Empowering the world from within, the Spirit not only grounds lawful regularities, but also embraces the chanciness of random mutations and the chaotic conditions of open systems… Unpredictable upheavals might be

destructive, but they have the potential to lead to richer forms of order. (Johnson, 2008, p. 195)

If opposites such as cosmic order and randomness are both part of God's creative process, then how do we understand the vision of the fulfillment of creation as imagined by, for example, Isaiah (11:6), who described a peaceable Kingdom in which "The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid"?

This image seems to favour only the heavenly attributes of the continuum: harmonious, ordered, stable etc. Where are the earthly attributes? On the face of it, I've always found Isaiah's description a less than wonderful image of the Reign of God. There is clearly no room for dissention in the peaceable kingdom and it sounds a bit bloodless to me. Is this the "new creation" to which 2 Peter 3:13 refers? Denis Edwards describes the new creation this way:

> There is radical continuity between creation and new creation. This continuity is grounded ultimately in God's fidelity to what God has created…
>
> God created the universe with precisely those characteristics that are needed as preconditions for God's act of new creation. (Edwards, 2010, p. 158)

So, the new thing that God does is not discarding and replacing the creation, but rather, bringing it to fulfillment—whatever that means. But the ecological theology of Johnson and Edwards seems to imply that all the attributes of creation—including the seemingly negative ones like extinction events—will all still be there in the new creation, which has nonetheless been transformed.

Bruce Morrill picks up something of the "radical continuity" between the here and now and the reign of God that Edwards describes. Morrill is not talking about evolution or the end times, however, he is describing the unfolding of salvation in the here and now. He claims that "salvation comes not in magical escapes from reality but rather in a renegotiation of our place in this world—before God and people—according to the paschal mystery" (Morrill, 2009, p. 49). I can't help thinking that this is a more promising way of understanding the reign of God than Isaiah's peaceable kingdom.

Elaine Wainwright describes our participation in the basileia of God as "the restoration…of full and right relationship with God, with others of the human community and with the material world" (Wainwright, 2006, p. 119). Further, it is Jesus, in his cross and resurrection, who does this work of restoration of relationships, that is, the work of healing.

Morrill and Wainwright seem to agree that, in the here and now, our world is in the process of being healed and restored by a good God—a loving God. This is a very appealing concept, but can a "restored" creation, be a "new" creation? Perhaps this is a question for another time.

Returning to the image of the God of light and darkness, the following extract from a prayer by Methodist minister Kenneth Howcroft expresses the anguish of those who find themselves held in the tension between the terror of the pandemic and the wonder of God.

A Psalm of lament and praise in a time of coronavirus

How can I praise you, Lord?
Are you plaguing us with this virus
to punish us because we have all done wrong,
or thought wrongly,
or felt wrongly,
or just been wrong?
If so, why do only some die,
and those, apparently, the ones who
are the least worst or most caring
amongst us?
Or are you trying to teach us a lesson?
If so, why is it so hard to learn?
And how are we to find the answer
when we do not even know the question?
Or are you still the same loving God,
coming to us in our sufferings

and opening up the way to new life in Jesus?
Lord, I will try to praise you.
Through gritted teeth,
I will try to praise you.
I will try to remember that you have created all things,
and this virus is part of your creation.
I will try not to hate it
but seek to mitigate its harm.
I will try to keep myself and others safe.
I will work to pray for them
and seek to help in whatever way I can.
Lord, when I cannot pray or worship
help me be aware of all your people
and your saints and angels
hovering around me,
lifting me up.

When I feel alone,

let me feel you near me,

even if only for a moment that enables

me to go on.

Let me hear you say

"Peace be with you".

Lord, I will praise you.

Let all the peoples praise you.

(Howcroft, n.d). Used with permission.

Howcroft's prayer gives us an example of the light in the darkness—praise *in the face of* lament. In fact, there is an enviable acknowledgement of, and trust in, the God of light and darkness here.

In this study, I have not tried to arrive at definitive answers to my many questions, but I have explored some evocative ideas that will help in my quest for understanding. Ultimately, I agree with St Augustine, that if you claim to understand God, then it is not God you have understood (*Sermon* 117, 5). Nonetheless, my hunger to know more about the God of light and darkness urges me on. By thinking of pairs of images, such fire and water, as related rather than mutually exclusive, and Jesus as the one who heals all wounds and restores all relationships, I can begin to understand how the God who "formed light and created darkness, who made weal and created woe" (Isaiah 45:7), is also the good God, the loving God, who gave creation all the potentialities needed for final fulfillment and transformation.

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Book Reviews

Freedoms, Faiths and Futures

Andrew Singleton, Mary Lou Rasmussen, Anna Halafoff and Gary Bouma, *Freedoms, Faiths and Futures: Teenage Australians on Religion, Sexuality and Diversity* **(London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), ISBN 978-1-3501-7956-1, Hardback, 235 pages. Also available in ePDF and eBook formats.**

For today's teenagers, Australia's religious, cultural, spiritual, gender and sexual diversity is a part of everyday life. *Freedoms, Faiths and Futures* is a report of the first Australian national study exploring important questions about how teenagers experience living in such a diverse society.

The book is the product of exceptionally important research on the religion and spirituality of Australian teenagers. It is important for its innovative research methodologies and for its findings about teens' views on religion, sexuality and diversity.

Drawing on data from the mixed methods *Australia's Generation Z* study, the book offers new ways of understanding the complexity of young people's lives and the ways they are apprehending and dealing with cultural and religious diversity, and gender and sexual difference. After collecting data in three stages— focus groups, a national survey, and in-depth personal interviews with selected survey participants—the authors used a powerful form of statistical analysis called latent class analysis, often described as a 'person-centred' approach, to create a typology of six different types of teenage worldviews. Five young people from each of the six groups were interviewed to ensure that the types were more than theoretical assumptions by checking that they made sense to the teenagers themselves, and the book includes numerous extracts from these interviews.

The book examines how teenagers engage with organized religion, exploring patterns of conventional religious belonging, belief and practice. More teenagers than ever before live in a non-faith world; most are not interested in religion, but that is not to say that they are not interested in alternative spiritual beliefs and practices. There is still an openness to the transcendent. And there are still teenagers for whom religion plays an important and defining part in their lives.

Completed against the backdrop of the global pandemic that has severely impacted young people's schooling, mental health and economic prospects, the book provides evidence that informs education about diverse religions and worldviews in Australia. By taking the pulse of teenagers' worldviews, it will assist professionals working with this age group, within and outside schools, to tailor programs and curricula that better reflect their complexity and interests.

One shortcoming of the book is its failure to refer to Philip Hughes' excellent publications on the religious outlook of teenage Australian's, such as *Putting life together: Findings from Australian Youth Spirituality research* (2007) and *Educating for purposeful living in a post-traditional age* (2017), both published by the Christian Research Association. Nor do the authors, while constructing their typology of young Australian's approaches to faith and life, apparently consider earlier work in developing similar typologies, for example, those developed by Peter Kaldor, Philip Hughes and Alan Black in *Spirit Matters: How Making Sense of Life Affects Wellbeing* (Mosaic Press, 2010) or by Jörg Stolz and his colleagues in *(Un)believing in modern society: Religion, spirituality and religious-secular competition* (Ashgate, 2016).

Freedoms, Faiths and Futures is very well-written, easy to read, and has an occasional dash of Aussie humour. The complex statistical material is explained very well, so that the meaning is clear to all readers, specialists and non-specialists alike. It contains valuable insights for anyone working in ministry with young people in Australia today. As the authors themselves, all experienced Australian sociologists of religion, include the late Gary Bouma, note on page 186, by "taking the pulse of teens' worldviews" they have assisted "people working with this age group, within and outside schools, to tailor programs and curricula that better reflect the complexity and interests of the group".

Dr Robert Dixon

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Religiosity in Australia

Neil Francis, *Religiosity in Australia*, Parts 1, 2 and 3 (Hawksburn, Vic: Rationalist Society of Australia, 2021-22). 416 pages in total. Only available as PDF from https://rationalist.com.au/religiosity-in-australia/ .

Neil Francis is a social researcher who has been involved in medical research, particularly in the area of rare genetic diseases. However, this three-part report on religiosity in Australia, commissioned and published by the Rationalist Society of Australia, appears to be his first foray into research on religion. It is described on the Rationalist Society's website as "the most comprehensive report on the nature of religious adherence ever written in Australia". That claim is wildly exaggerated, but the report does examine aspects of religiosity in Australia which have been under-developed by other researchers.

The major intent of the work is to demonstrate that religion plays a minor role in the life of most Australians. Indeed, the report has been written specifically for politicians and community leaders to persuade them that they should ignore Christian lobby groups such as the Australian Christian Lobby and the Catholic bishops when they are speaking about social issues such as abortion, voluntary assisted dying, marriage equality and schools discriminating against gay students or gay teachers.

The argument begins in Part 1 with an examination of Australian census data on religion. Francis claims that the census "over-counts" Christians partly because it includes children, who, he claims, are too young to have a religion. Francis uses the word 'affiliation' when discussing the census figures and suggests that the decline in affiliation in the census would represent "a congregational loss" (Francis 2021, Vol. 1, p.11). It is a good demonstration of the lack of understanding of religious data and religion which Francis shows throughout the report. Every author on religion in Australia knows that a proportion of people who indicate a religion on the census form rarely if ever attend worship at an institution which bears the same name. While 44 per cent of the Australian population identified with a Christian denomination or simply wrote in 'Christian' in the 2021 Census, the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2018) showed that only 10 per cent of the population attended a Christian church monthly or more often. Francis notes correctly that many of the people who indicate 'Christian' on the census do not believe in God and do not hold other Christian beliefs.

Part 2 of the report is a mishmash of observations about the nature of religion. It draws on a wide range of articles on religion from all over the world and Francis generally assumes that these articles describe the nature of religion in Australia. Strangely, Francis ignores almost all the literature on religion in Australia. He almost never mentions any of the works of Gary Bouma or other prominent scholars who have written about religion in Australia, and never discusses the extensive work of NCLS Research or the Christian Research Association.

Part 3 of the report explores further Francis' underlying argument: that religious attitudes on social attitudes should be ignored by government and political parties. He draws on data which has not been used by most other researchers on religion in Australia: the Australian Election Study. The 2019 edition of this survey involved random responses from 2,179 voters and was conducted by the Australian National University. It is a valid set of data for research on this topic.

Based on that data, Francis argues that those who attend a church monthly or more often tend to align themselves with Coalition agendas and while a few have aligned themselves with the Greens, the proportion of church attenders aligning themselves with Labor has declined. His contention that church attenders align themselves with Coalition agendas for economic reasons rather than for religious or social reasons is suspect. However, his observation that most attenders take a conservative stance politically as well as on social values is affirmed by other surveys such as the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes. He also correctly points out that, on the other hand, many church attenders do support abortion, marriage equality, voluntary assisted dying and the decriminalisation of marijuana, issues more commonly associated with the Labor side of politics. It is true that the Australian Christian Lobby and other church leaders who speak out on social issues do not necessarily speak for most people who identify themselves as Christian, or even for those Christians who attend church.

Francis ignores the roles that the churches play in education, welfare, aged care and health care, and in advocating for people on the margins of society. The report is not well balanced in that regard. Its analysis of data is basic and Francis often misinterprets it. Thus, it must be read with great caution. On the other hand, it is a helpful reminder of our social context and that ministry now takes place in a post-

Christendom context. When religious organisations are engaging with government and political parties, it is helpful to know both the origins and positions of other lobbyists.

Professor Philip Hughes

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Imagination in an Age of Crisis

Jason Goroncy and Rod Pattenden (Eds.), *Imagination in an Age of Crisis: Soundings from the Arts and Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022), ISBN 978-1-6667-0688-8, Paperback, 372 pages.

Since the start of COVID-19 in 2020, we have become accustomed to the familiar "cancelled conference". These announcements have often been met with disappointment and sorrow. Jason Goroncy and Rod Pattenden took the vision and energy from an arts and theology event to be held in Naarm/Melbourne in July 2020 and transformed it into this exquisite collection of essays, poetry, artworks and reflections. Goroncy, Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Divinity, and Pattenden, Adjunct Fellow with the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, gathered an array of voices and artistic genres to create a smorgasbord for the reader. Whether you are seeking scholarly justification for the place of imagination in times of crisis or the solace of a poem which speaks the words you have not yet found, this compilation contains a myriad of offerings.

Although the book has a distinctive Australian flavour, the 35 contributors offer a window into the universal nature of times of crisis. The reader is introduced to a New Zealand artist's portrayal of two non-violent Maori figures by Scott Kirkland and a few pages later hears Trish Watts reflect on the power of song for children in Cambodia. Jennifer Wakeling presents the power of textless music by French composer Olivier Messiaen before we find ourselves in locked-down Paris in the poetry of Kevin Hart. Turn the page again and the prophetic works of Chinese artist, Ai Weiwei, provoke a passionate response in solidarity with those across the world. The global nature of this diverse anthology does not simply represent isolated artistic expressions in distinct locations, but brings them into conversation. Jason Goroncy's own article examines the scripts of Irish playwright, Samuel Beckett, and how they have inspired Japanese playwrights to address trauma in their own context. Rod Pattenden unearths another dialogue between Australian artist, George Gittoes, and the war-torn countries of the Philippines, the Middle East, Sudan, Cambodia and Ukraine over the last five decades.

The collection has been gathered in such a way that the reader may dip their toe in at any point and find challenge and inspiration. In saying this, I read the book as it is presented and found its careful crafting guides the reader on a significant journey of

discovery. The introductory essay by Jason Goroncy sets the scene by presenting a convincing argument for the place of imagination and the arts in times of crisis. What follows is a montage of evocative poetry, poignant artworks, insightful essays and personal reflections. Each piece is an invitation to look more deeply, linger a little longer and savour each offering. This is not a book to devour, but invites a more reflective, contemplative reading.

The intended audience of this collection seems as broad as the contributions. While there is plenty for the scholar of public or practical theology to digest, ministry practitioners will also find a wealth of inspiration within this work. The book is not only an exemplar of how the artist is both witness and prophet in times of crisis, it paves the way for new expressions to emerge in the reader. On more than one occasion, while engaging with *Imagination in an Age of Crisis*, I was inspired to take up pen or paint brush to respond to my own experience of the world around me. At the conclusion of other sections I found myself searching the internet for a piece of music or art, each opening a new door into a different world. Through the generous sharing of the contributors, the reader is invited to engage both their head and their heart in responding to this age of crisis.

I was particularly impressed by the significant contribution of Indigenous Australian artists, writers and actors throughout the collection adding a profound depth and sacredness to the experience. The breadth of contributors and genres represented widened my own thinking and challenged me further to explore the use of the arts in my own ministry. My only disappointment with Goroncy and Pattenden's book was the noticeable absence of dance as a significant art form. As I read, I was reminded of memorable dance performances in the wake of Australian bushfires and tragic loss. Perhaps this could be included in the next volume.

Imagination in an Age of Crisis is an invaluable gift to the conversation between arts and theology. I would highly recommend it to anyone involved in the thinking or feeling of what it means to live as people of God in a time of much pain and despair in the world. I know I will be revisiting many of the contributions again to take more time to linger and learn.

Rev Dr Catherine Lambert

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Research Project Administrator – Spirited Project

Encountering God

Robert Dixon and Mary Eastham (Eds.), *Encountering God: Practical theology and the mission to heal*, **Explorations in Practical Theology series (Bayswater, Vic: Coventry Press, due to be published in 2023), paperback.**

The current work is the fourth volume originating from the regular conferences of the *Association of Practical Theology in Oceania* (APTO) and the third in the series "Explorations in Practical Theology". The book continues the important ecclesial trajectory of intellectual praxis through the application of theology to particular and various aspects of pastoral ministry in the context of Oceania. That said, the authors collectively do not shy away from a number of key existential questions about the future of the Church, including: "has Christianity been a force for good in the world?" And "how can churches contribute to bringing about healing in the world" in the light of the Royal Commission into Institutional Sexual Abuse?

The book contains fourteen chapters by individual scholars from around Oceania who contribute to the broad area of practical theology, with a focus upon healing from various perspectives: theological, social, cultural, political and ethical concerns of the region. [A further six papers from the 47 presentations at the APTO conference appear in this issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Ministry*.]

Encountering God: Practical theology and the mission to heal is divided into three sections which analyse: "Healing Shattered Relationships", "Frameworks for Healing", and "Creating Healing Communities". Part One addresses the range of shattered relationships caused by the sexual abuse crisis and two horrific instances of terrorist violence. Part Two explores the adequacy and appropriateness of traditional Christian resources for healing and justice—communitarian, scriptural and mystical—to the healing task at hand in the contemporary Church and world. Drawing further on these traditions, Part Three highlights creative and hope-filled efforts of Christian communities in the region that are expressions of healing.

Particular highlights for this reader included the courageous chapter by Francis Sullivan AO on "Being Church after the Royal Commission", and how we might explore the possibility of bringing healing to the effects of sexual abuse, together with Robert Dixon's chapter and his must-read insights into the impact of the sexual abuse crisis

on ordinary mass-attending Catholics and the essential need of the Catholic Church to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission, if it seriously intends to support the victims of abuse.

Mary Eastham's chapter analysing the terrorist attack against the Muslim community in Christchurch, New Zealand, is equally poignant. The author convincingly makes the case that the Catholic bishops of Oceania must take seriously their interfaith responsibilities to work for religious harmony and mutual respect. It is past time that the churches made a courageous effort to move beyond interfaith dialogue towards the deeper and potentially dynamic healing capacity of interfaith relations on a variety of issues, including religious tolerance, peace in our world and ecological justice.

Catherine Lambert's chapter highlights a further major concern and case for healing in the church, the relationship of women to the hierocratic church. Lambert constructively identifies approaches that have brought healing to women through the understanding of spiritual authority and provides practical suggestions for how the church could embrace the ministry of woman more fully and provide concrete support for their faith development.

Overall, this wide-ranging and inclusive book serves in its own right as an inspiring work of healing ministry. The authors in various ways and contexts, united by their association with practical theology through APTO, speak boldly and name the historical reality of suffering in our churches and in our world. The book highlights the ethical imperative of the churches to bring healing to those who are suffering, and to take responsibility to advocate for those on the margins of society.

The work will support the work of the theological academy; after all, pace Lonergan, it is through practical theology that the entire theological enterprise bears fruit in the concrete life of the people the churches are called to serve. The book will be of interest to a wide-ranging audience of academics, practising ministers, church leaders and ordinary Christians who are committed to the ministry of healing and justice in our broken church and world.

Professor Anthony Maher

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Australia's Religious and Non-Religious Profiles

Hughes, Philip. *Australia's Religious and Non-Religious Profiles: Analysis of the 2021 Census Data* **(Box Hill, Victoria: Christian Research Association, 2022), ISBN 9781875223893, Paperback & Electronic, 128 pages.**

Australians should feel quite privileged to have a national Census which includes a question about religion. They should feel equally fortunate that such high-quality data is updated every five years, and that most Australian Census data is readily available to the general public and free of charge. However, many involved in Christian ministry fall into the trap of thinking that the data is therefore easily understandable and interpretable, which is not necessarily so.

Australia's Religious and Non-Religious Profiles is a new reference publication providing an overview of 26 of the main religious and non-religious groups according to the 2021 Australian Census of Population and Housing. Details are provided for religious groups which had 10,000 or more Australians identifying with them in the 2021 Census. In this book, Philip Hughes has done the hard work for everyone in analysing and presenting data in such an accessible format that all level of readers, from secondary school students to university academics, can take something away from it.

The book is structured to ensure quick and simple access to data about the religious group of one's choice, either by using the table of contents, the index or simply by flicking through its pages. It is a fascinating read in its entirety or as the reference book it is intended to be.

Australia's Religious and Non-Religious Profiles opens with a short essay about religion in Australia today, providing responses to key questions related to religious identity, cultural change, the impact of immigration, and the growth and decline in religious groups, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and the Australian population as a whole. The essay also intermittently elicits questions about the impact of religious change in Australian culture and society.

For each of the 26 main religious groups, the book provides background information and a description of the demography of those identifying with the group. It then includes graphs, tables and commentary on growth and decline, age profiles, relationships and households, education, ethnicity and language, as well as maps of variations in the population around the states and capital cities of Australia. While the majority of the data in the book comes from the 2021 Census, for each religious group it also contains historical data from earlier Censuses, some as far back as the first Australian Census in 1911. One interesting and valuable feature of the detailed statistical information is a summary on the number of religious leaders in each group. There is additionally a summary for other smaller religious groups of less than 10,000 Australians identifying, including those groups with a Christian heritage, those associated with other religions, and a variety of other groups.

Absent from the book, though, is a summary section where one might turn in order to compare the changes in Australians' identification with, for example, the various Christian denominations, or between non-Christian groups, although this data can easily be obtained from other publications of the Christian Research Association and elsewhere.

In summary, *Australia's Religious and Non-Religious Profiles* provides its reader with an accurate, up-to-date and engaging account of Australia's religious landscape and will prove to be a useful and important resource for those in local church or denominational ministry, or indeed for anyone studying or interested in religion in contemporary Australia.

Dr Stephen Reid

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