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The Journal of Contemporary Ministry **is published by the Christian Research Association, 90 Albion Street, Box Hill, VIC 3128. Email: admin@cra.org.au.**

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The Journal of Contemporary Ministry acts as a place for reporting research and discussing issues related to contemporary ministry, including related theological and biblical questions. Its goals are to:

- Stimulate informed discussion regarding issues faced by contemporary Christian churches and ministries worldwide.
- Encourage research, including empirical research, into diverse forms and contexts of contemporary ministry and the practical, theological and biblical issues that arise from ministry practice.
- Enable students and graduates in postgraduate Ministry programs to speak to a wider audience.
- Build the credibility of Ministry as a field of study and research.

The Journal of Contemporary Ministry provides a specific forum for post-graduate students in accredited colleges and universities in Australia and other countries, to publish the results of their research.

The Journal of Contemporary Ministry contains these kinds of material:

- Scholarly articles on topics related to contemporary ministry. These are subject to "double blind" peer review by two relevant scholars. Usually 4 of these will be included in any issue of the journal.
- Book reviews on recently-published books in the field of contemporary ministry. These will be subject to review by the book review editor.
- Student essays from post-graduate students in accredited colleges and universities in Australia and other countries (generally only one of these will be published in any issue, subject to the editor's discretion).
- Pastoral reflections of a thoughtful, informed nature about issues related to contemporary ministry grounded in the pastor's or minister's own experience (generally only one of these will be published in any issue).
- Research notes on current research projects in the field.
- Short summaries of recent doctoral theses in the field of contemporary ministry.

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Editorial

How do we do ministry in a contemporary and modern setting?

That is what this journal attempts to answer, and this issue is filled with some great discussions of that very question. This issue contains a pastoral reflection, five research articles and seven book reviews.

These articles address significant issues such as women in leadership, three articles on intercultural ministry, and one article on why young adults leave the church. These articles demonstrate the changing culture that the church exists in: one where there is an increasing (good) demand for gender equity, where diverse cultures are increasingly intermingling which presents both challenges and beautiful opportunities, and where young adults are increasingly leaving the church. This changing context calls for new practices, new approaches, new mindsets to what it means to do and be the church, and what it means to do ministry.

All of these articles went through a rigorous double blind peer review process and were subject to various rounds of revisions – proving the quality, determination, and value of these articles and their authors.

First, we have **Dr Sue Holdsworth** who explores how volunteers in intercultural pastoral care express Jesus' command to love God and one another – and shows how hospitality, active listening, and nurturing relationships can strengthen church ministry towards migrant communities.

Second is **Dr Daisy William**, who also explores ministry to migrants through an informal English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching program. William's findings add to those by Holdsworth that it was through the caring Christian community that participants encountered Jesus – rather than through a formal devotion, sermon or Bible study.

Third is **Nathan Polley** and **Ky Vannary**, explore the concept of *koinonia* (fellowship) in the context of a Cambodian ministry to help rescue women from prostitution. The authors find that a holistic, community-driven approach integrating spiritual, relational, and vocational support is needed in this context. This weaving of community is clear so far.

The fourth article is by yours truly, **Tim Mullen**, where I explored why young adults are disengaging from the church – and I found that religious dogmatism is what causes young people to leave the church. I call my readers to consider using open dialogue and relationally inclusive approaches – something that continues this weaving of the importance of love, community, and humility.

In line with inclusivity, fifth is **Reverand Karen Haynes** and **Dr Pam Condie**, who explore the history of the Baptist Church in Queensland with regard to approving women's ordination in 2024. This article is a fascinating discussion of why this took so long for approval, where other states had approved women to be ordained long prior. While this article does not explore the same themes of community, and the love of Jesus explicitly, there is much to be said for how the church can express its love to women by freeing them to do what God has gifted them to do. That would be a truly loving an inclusive church community.

Then is a pastoral reflection by **Neville Carr**, which builds this emphasis on love for one another and the community of faith by challenging readers to consider how pastoral care is not only the job of the pastor – but a responsibility and joy which all congregants can partake in.

Finally, we have seven book reviews, which are stimulating and engaging. Thank you to Stephen Parker for editing this section.

There are clear questions that these articles cause us to consider in our contemporary ministry:

1. How am I being inclusive and creating belonging? How am I removing barriers that alienate people from the church?

2. How am I participating in creating a caring, supportive and healing church environment?
3. How am I balancing tradition (and doctrine) with adaptability and humble dialogue?
4. How am I extending beyond spiritual formation to engaging justice and community needs?

I truly hope that these articles, reflections, and book reviews are encouraging and edifying to you, dear reader, in your journey of faith and in wherever (and in whatever form) God is having you minister.

Tim Mullen
Editor

Peer Reviewed Articles

Expressing love of God and neighbour: The use of pastoral care practices at four, church-based, intercultural initiatives

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Abstract

This article details a study of four, church-based, intercultural initiatives in Melbourne. Although many Australian churches run mid-week, church-based initiatives for new migrants, little research has been conducted into their effectiveness in expressing love of God and neighbour. Participants were volunteers or staff and were mostly members of each congregation represented at the initiatives. In this grounded theory study, ethnographic methods were employed including participant observation at initiative sessions. Church services and other church-based events were attended and searches through church documents were conducted.

It was discovered that volunteers often failed to meet together to pray, plan, or reflect. Little or no training was offered to participants and spiritual formation for volunteering was not always a consideration. This resulted in uneven levels of care expressed at initiatives. This study demonstrates that group training in the principles and practices of pastoral care would strengthen expressions of love. This would nurture individual and group spirituality and would include practices of prayer, applied bible study, and reflection. The development of church core narratives prioritising love of neighbour would equip participants in the course of church life. Spending time with initiative attendees beyond session times would deepen mutual friendships.

Introduction

This article describes major findings from a study of volunteers and staff at four, church-based, intercultural initiatives in Melbourne. These were two, weekly, church-based English conversation classes for migrants, a sewing club for refugee women, and a church-based training school enabling new migrants to find employment as child- care workers. Few studies have been conducted about what takes place at similar, church-based projects. While this study, based on my PhD research (Holdsworth, 2022), specifically concerns intercultural initiatives, the conclusions are broadly applicable to any church-based programs.

The study investigated how love of God and neighbour was expressed by the volunteers and staff during initiative sessions and how this love might be expressed more effectively. I studied what participants believed they were doing and what they were actually doing. I also wanted to understand their motivations for service. I expected to observe love of God expressed toward attendees through loving actions and words, strengthened through prayer and training.

Ethnographic methods were used, including participant observation, interviewing, and document searches. Findings are discussed in conversation with pastoral care literature. This study makes a clear case that expressions of love of God and neighbour are strengthened when principles and practices of pastoral care are employed.

Context of the Study and the emerging research question

Australia is one of the most multicultural countries in the world (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). For the year ending June 2019, 239,000 people migrated to Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). This was reflected in the fact that migrants and refugees from China, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, and Iran were all represented at the four initiatives studied.

Adapting to Australian society is challenging for migrants with little or no English. Many migrants discover that their qualifications are not recognised, preventing work in their trade, skill, or specialization, leaving migrants feeling stressed and isolated (McAllister,1995, p. 441-68). These trends were evident at the initiatives, and specific

‘living difficulties’ were the focus of each church-based project, focused on empowerment through the provision of a service.

I have worked amongst, and been a member of, diaspora communities in Europe, the United States, South Korea, and Australia and I have been a member of three international missions. My experiences led me to the research question that sought to understand the dynamics taking place during initiatives sessions and the wider contexts that informed this.

The four congregations

Swindon Baptist is a large, multi- congregational church in an affluent, multicultural Melbourne suburb. Every Tuesday morning a team of ten volunteers conducted conversation classes for new migrants. Everyone would gather in a room to hear a talk in simple English about an aspect of life in Melbourne. Attendees were then assigned to tutors who conducted small, hour long classes in different rooms in the building. Participants were observed once a week for fourteen weeks, to understand how love of God and neighbour was expressed by participants to those attending. Interviews with participants took place over several weeks, immediately following classes. I attended nine church services, one tutor’s social event, one newcomer’s event and three teaching training sessions for new tutors. Three of the pastoral staff were interviewed, plus the founder of the English program. Attending other church events and interviewing church staff provided thick data (a term coined by Geertz, 1973) and context for the study.

The study of the sewing club at St Nicholas Anglican Church was the smallest, with only four volunteers remaining by the end of the research period, indicating a need for further studies. The club aimed to meet practical needs of the many Muslim refugee women living locally, through the provision of sewing equipment for a few hours each week. The club had run for over twelve years at the time of the study. Sewing machines were set up at a large table in a community room on the housing estate where the women lived and where the congregation met for worship. The women would arrive with their fabrics to be sewn, waiting until a machine became available. To understand the context of the club within church life, I attended three

church services, one church community meal, a planning meeting for a camp provided annually for the local residents, and a post-camp debriefing session. Interviews were conducted with each sewing club volunteer and the pastor. The sewing club was observed over seven visits.

Govan Church of Christ is situated in a highly multicultural, largely blue-collar suburb, in Melbourne's north. English conversation classes had run on Saturday mornings for several years and had commenced in response to need. Tables were set up in the main sanctuary, one for each volunteer tutor and attendees chose where they sat. Migrants did not need to sign up for classes and attended when they could. Most tutors volunteered twice a month. Classes lasted for one and a half hours with a break for refreshments. Seventeen observations in classes meant each participant was observed on at least three or four occasions. I attended one Sunday service and additional data came from sampling past church bulletins which provided information about church events, and pastoral concerns. Nine volunteers and the pastor were interviewed, in addition to observations during classes.

Hope International is a very large, multicultural Pentecostal church in an outer northern suburb, in an area with many recent migrants. Northern Training is a government accredited training school run by members of Hope International. Many of the local migrant population needed to retrain for work in Australia and market research done by church members had indicated that childcare was in growing demand. In response, church leaders decided to start the training school to enable new migrants to obtain employment. Students were mostly young women from the Indian sub-continent, as were most staff. Most staff (participants), known as trainers, held professional qualifications which, as migrants, they could not use in Australia. They had therefore trained to teach child- care to these students as an expression of hospitality and care for local residents. Lessons took place in a part of the church dedicated to the training school and students attended for one full day a week, over one semester. Observations of classes were conducted on most weekdays, over three months. One graduation service was attended plus three visits to worship services. All participants were interviewed, plus two pastors, a total of eight interviews.

Literature review

Love of God and neighbour cannot be quantified, but its outworkings are apparent. Pastoral care practices can be described as loving others well. The foundations and practices of pastoral care provide a framework for assessing expressions of love of God and neighbour by participants at church-based, intercultural initiatives. It also offers a framework for the development of pastoral care skills at the initiatives.

Hospitable practices align closely with pastoral care in the contexts of this study. Doehring focuses on the nature of interpersonal relationships and suggests that the 'process of stepping respectfully and compassionately into another's narrative world can be described with the metaphor of hospitality.' (Doehring, 2015, xvii). This defining metaphor sits well with the intention and practices of each initiative, where contexts and participants immediately present cross-cultural challenges.

Building on the work of Clebsch and Jaekle (1964), Lartey identified the pastoral functions of care, including healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, liberating, and empowering (2003, pp. 60-68). The nurturing theme emerged in Clinebell's pastoral counselling era and later, in his work on prophetic care (Clinebell, 1979). These functions are all outworkings of love.

Lartey notes that healing, in pastoral terms, can occur in contexts of care. It "involves a recognition and a facilitation of the activity of the 'transcendent in the midst' of life." (2003, p. 62). Active listening and empathic responses can create healing relationships (Clinebell and McKeever, 2011, chapter 2), and sustaining care means helping a person endure difficulties (Clebsch and Jaekle, 194, p. 89). Augsburger's 'theology of presence' speaks to these forms of care, aiming to provide sustenance through genuine companionship, always a key aspirational dimension of some workers in the initiatives (1986, p. 18). Guidance is defined by Lartey as helping people discover their latent skills, a goal accepted readily in each skill-based program studied. Lartey notes that healing can occur even when it is not a primary aim. Embodied listening supports the creation of a nurturing environment that enables and empowers.

Practices of intercultural and pastoral care, as expressions of love, bring additional dimensions of complexity of care of others. Lartey suggests that the discipline of pastoral care is becoming tailored to the global situations of practice, recognising that Western paradigms are not necessarily applicable or effective in different cultural contexts. Doehring highlights the need for a “radical respect for alterity.” She encourages intercultural spiritual caregivers (which includes pastoral care) to draw on “their theological education, practical training, and ongoing relationships with peers, mentors, and supervisors to reflect theologically and psychologically on… [their] encounters with otherness.” (Doehring, 2015, p. 3). This statement critically anticipates a formational gap within the profile of study participants, sets a potential agenda for supervision and training, and offers a template of themes for data analysis.

Lartey describes the intercultural pastoral carer as needing to progress from sympathy, (often counterproductive) to empathy, to interpathy (2003, pp. 91-4). Augsburger’s definition captures the movement that needed to emerge across the sites, through formation and reflective practice if possible. He revisits and extends comment on interpathy by identifying the core dynamic of this shift in affect as

> an intentional cognitive envisioning of another’s thoughts and feelings, even though the thoughts rise from another frame of moral reasoning and the feelings spring from another basis of assumptions… I (the culturally different person) take a foreign perspective, base my thoughts on a foreign assumption, and allow myself to feel the resultant feelings and their cognitive and emotive consequences in personality as I inhabit, insofar as I am capable of inhabiting, a foreign context. (Augsburger, 1986, p. 29-30).

This anticipates the importance of discovering the ability of participants to engage with difference and their levels of understanding of other worldviews.

Spirituality for Pastoral Care

Nurturing spirituality is an important practice for pastoral carers. Links between love of God and care for those attending the initiatives needed discerning through their

words and actions. Lartey provides a thematic structure for an understanding of Christian spirituality that offers criteria that can allow actions or behaviours to be categorized. Relationships with *transcendence* refers to a participant's relationship with God, intra-personal spirituality concerns participants' relationship to self, and interpersonal relationships refer to one-on-one relationships with attendees and other participants. The fourth dimension outlined by Lartey is relationships *among people*, which aligns with relationships amongst the teams studied (2003, pp. 140-41). The fifth dimension, relationship with space, was not considered relevant to this study. These themes align closely with interpersonal dynamics of expressions of love and contain potential guidance for data analysis.

These dimensions complement the three dimensions of spirituality outlined by Nouwen (1975, pp. 21-49), who expresses Lartey's interpersonal and corporate dimensions as a single category. Nouwen's categories offer a clear picture of the workings of inner life and motivation: towards and into self, towards others, and towards God. Both Lartey and Nouwen present nurturing spirituality as vital for effective care of others and their arguments indicate that participant activities in the study need to be evaluated as to whether they are grounded and nurtured by individual and corporate relationships in partnership with God.

Methodology

Parameters for the study were: A church that regularly and historically planned and implemented a community initiative that attracted people from migrant cultures. Regularity provided a planned timetable for engagement, while practice over time establishes patterns of behaviour amongst participants who each develop understandings of attendees and their own roles. All the initiatives studied had been running for at least a few years.

I sought to study initiatives with volunteer staff largely made up of church members. Participants were expected to represent church core narratives and express the relationships formed through the life of the church. Volunteers were initially sought, as they are normally the members who staff church-based initiatives. Northern Training, however, employed staff. I flexed the study parameters in this instance, as

the origins of the training school were like the other initiatives, in that church members wanted to meet a local need for migrants as a way of expressing care. Most staff at Northern Training attended the church at which the school was based. I required participants previously unknown to me, as I did not want to enter the field with existing biases. Permission of the pastor or church leaders was required as an ethical requirement for conducting research.

I sought to study different denominations. This created the possibility of noting differences in outlook based on doctrinal beliefs, although insufficient data was collected in this regard to draw any conclusions. I required a minimum of six study participants for each location. Six was considered the minimum number of participants for providing sufficient data to generate emerging theories, which could be tested at subsequent sites. This number was admittedly arbitrary and, as necessary, further locations would be required for data generation. Only four completed the study at St Nicholas indicating the need for further study.
A willingness for participants to participate in one-on-one interviews was an important consideration. Only two participants overall did not participate in interviews, due to personal circumstances. These were both at Govan. Interviews provided thick data for analysis as did church documents.

Research Design and Methods

An ethnographic approach, including participant observation, enabled full access to the phenomena studied and allowed for detailed observation and note-taking. Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce suggest that participant observation is clearly an appropriate method for ethnographic research (2013, p. 51). Charmaz believes that participant observation may limit focus to one aspect of daily life (a fair critique), while ethnographers seek to understand the complexities of life in the studied phenomena (Charmaz, 2014, p. 35). This limitation was overcome by using the following methods.

I collected as full a picture as possible of participants as possible until no new data was emerging. This usually took many weeks. I sought understand the situations from the participants viewpoint as well as my own, an important distinction in ethnographic research (Schensul et al 2013, chapter 1). Semi-structured interviews

were conducted with participants after several weeks of observations. Church services and other church activities were attended and interviews with pastors and church leaders were conducted. Searches through church records were also conducted where possible (Schwandt, 2007, p. 296). This all provided thick data and context for understanding participants and significant themes within church life.

Data was analysed in an iterative process, both during and following immersion in the fieldwork settings and constant comparisons of data were also made within each situation. Study of the four locations were sequential. Findings from the first situation challenged findings from the second and subsequent locations. In this manner, hypotheses were built, tested at subsequent locations, dropped where necessary, and developed into theory where findings were consistent at all sites.

Data from observations, interviews, and research of church archives were all coded. Coding of data produced tentative categories which were refined and reinforced at subsequent locations. For example, the category ‘skills’ emerged from analysis of coding. This category included findings regarding skills for conducting the service offered to migrants in addition to interpersonal relating skills observed, both positive and negative.

Theoretical sampling was used, and I explored links between motivations for volunteering and how participants interacted with those attending (Holton, 2007, pp. 275-77; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, pp. 128-150). For instance, I sought to learn whether participants experienced joy in relating, and whether they celebrated others. This was especially important given contrasting findings from the first two locations, Swindon, and St Nicholas.

Motivations for volunteering

- What do you see as the purpose of the English classes/sewing club/childcare training school?
- What motivates you to volunteer?
- What would you say the hoped-for outcomes of the sewing club are?

Intercultural understanding

- When you are with women at the club, do you make any personal adaptations to the way you speak, behave, dress?
- Do you notice differences between the cultures? [of those attending the initiative]
- Do all the students join in classroom discussion? Do you see that as culture or personality primarily? (Northern Training)

Evangelism

- Where (if at all) does this initiative fit with evangelism?
- Would you continue to volunteer even of there was never any chance of anyone becoming a Christian?
- Do you think matters of belief should be kept completely out of the classroom?

Willingness and ability to learn and grow

- As you've come along [to this initiative] have you ever wondered whether what you knew about a culture was accurate?
- What have you learned from this experience, specifically about interacting with people from different cultures?
- Did you learn anything from the women [attending the initiative] themselves?

Spirituality

- How would you say your faith interacts with teaching English?
- Does the team pray together? How and when is this done?
- When you note that the desire to empower [motivates you], is that something that is part of your faith?

Interviews

Interviews only commenced after observations had been conducted for numerous sessions. The delay allowed participants to become accustomed to a researcher being present and to develop rapport. This also afforded time to formulate questions around topics emerging from observations. Interview questions were grounded in observations and developing hypotheses. They were semi-structured, and participants were encouraged to talk about anything to do with the initiatives, to prevent forcing the data. Such methods give participants a voice and act as a corrective to the researcher's insight (Silverman, 2007, pp. 18-24).

Structured questions asked what participants considered to be the purpose of the initiative and what motivated them to volunteer. Questions pertaining to intercultural understanding indicated when participants might need further training to express love of God and neighbour effectively. Participants were asked whether they had learned from attendees, indicating whether relationships had any degree of mutuality.

Questions about participant's spirituality explored degrees to which faith was thought to interact with volunteering, as motivation or through words and actions. Questions included asking whether the team prayed together and explored connections between faith and service.

Participant responses to these questions were analysed together with data from observations and document searches. This provided triangulation of data. Findings from these approaches to data collection are outlined in the following section.

Findings

Coding was compared iteratively as the study progressed, and three rounds of coding at each location resulted in the creation of three categories. These accounted for the data from all locations and were expressions of love, motivations, and skills. Each category was multi-faceted and included both positive and negative aspects.

The methods of data collection and analysis outlined in the previous section revealed links between church teachings, through sermons, bulletins and some church meetings, and participant behaviour. For example, "welcoming others in the name of

Jesus," was a phrase often spoken by the pastor at Swindon, during sermons, other meetings, as recorded in the minutes, and in church bulletins. Participants at the English classes there appeared pre-disposed to welcome the students and none questioned the importance of welcoming them. I identified this welcome of strangers as a church core narrative — a belief central to the life of the congregation.

Love was often expressed practically and directly to those attending the initiatives. In a friendly learning environment, for example, participants gave time and individual attention to students, another example of the practice of presence. Empathy was often evident and numerous other codes effectively indicated "empathy in action," for example, "reassuring students" and "giving emotional support." These actions speak to Lartey's exploration of sustaining care (2003, pp. 63-4). Students at Northern Training knew what the trainers were thinking, while also knowing that they cared, enabling an open, honest environment that encouraged a deeper level of relationships.

Love was expressed to Swindon initiative attendees when tutors met in a local park with them and their families and when one participant invited two students to share Christmas with her family. Participants at Northern Training regularly provided practical and emotional support. They made themselves available to students by phone and by providing meals and practical support to sick students. These actions will have reinforced expressions of love during classroom sessions.

At St Nicholas, codes created in the coding category "expressions of love," indicated a willingness to pro-actively love others by volunteering at the classes, based in a genuine interest in others. This also resonates with Augsburger's theology of presence noted above. This group prayed together before the service each week and prayer was mentioned often, a behaviour indicative of both love of God and others.

The commitment and faithfulness of participants at the sewing club over many years was seen as a pro-active form of intentional loving, as were cultural adaptations by participants, such as sensitivity to style of dress at the sewing club. Many instances of displays of interest in the migrant women were recorded generally and participants

at times reflected that they saw the women as individual personalities. Additionally, many instances of expressions of love were recorded, such as when a volunteer gave medications to one woman. Kindness, amongst other 'fruit of the Spirit,' was evidenced multiple times (Galatians 5:22-23. NIV). Such acts of love appeared to be only one way — from participants to the migrant women, participants failing to create mutual space for the migrant women to input into their lives. It also appeared situation specific, as the women were not celebrated during interviews. This may be indicative of a project mentality amongst some participants, where expressing love during sessions was aimed at conversion. Participants did not listen to the women's stories during sessions, a possible indication that relationships were based around participants as 'givers' and migrants as 'receivers.'

Empathy and compassion are themes that fit well with the category, 'expressions of love.' Displays of empathy and care through words or actions were common. For example, in describing challenges for new migrants, Jean, a Swindon participant, said of her own overseas experience, "everything is different. Everything is strange. Not as strange as it would have been for [students], but nevertheless, there's an issue of coming into a new culture." Another striking moment in which empathy was conveyed, was when I observed a Swindon participant convey empathy through a warm smile for a struggling student.

An example of hospitality, another expression of love, was shown at Govan through the friendliness of participants and a relaxed atmosphere during classes, demonstrating interest in students, and conveying love and care to them. Compassion for students was expressed often during interviews. For example, one participant indicated she appreciated the difficulties of students who arrived in Australia speaking no English. Her compassion resulted in the initiation of the church-based conversation classes.

Higher- level thinking about love was indicated during interviews and observed in practice. This was demonstrated when a Swindon participant related how her experiences of working amongst overwhelmed overseas university students helped her appreciate the living difficulties of any migrants.

Love was expressed positively through faithful attendance at initiatives and warm interactions with attendees at all locations, while for some, love was expressed through talking about God during sessions. Love occasionally failed, as when one participant lost her temper with an attendee. It also failed when participants spoke during interviews of people women attending an initiative as “difficult” and said they worked on “tough ground.” In this situation, I did not record participants speaking of the people attending in kind or terms or attempting to understand their lives and difficulties.

The category ‘motivations’ included findings regarding motivations for service at the initiatives, and motivations regarding evangelistic engagement during sessions. These varied significantly. Sewing club participants were motivated for evangelism, while most at Swindon and Govan were opposed to this. One participant was motivated to make friends with other church members who also volunteered at the Swindon English classes, while another participant wanted to care for new migrants, as she had known many lonely overseas students when working for a university, an expression of empathy.

Skills for service also varied widely amongst participants. A few were found to possess low levels of interpersonal skills, such as the participant who constantly talked about herself during English classes. Another expressed frustration to his beginner English students at their rudimentary level of English. This was a demonstration of a low level of relating skills, at least in that instance. While participants at Northern Training were necessarily skilled to deliver an accredited qualification child-care, most tutors at Govan and Swindon English classes had received little or no training.

The three categories created through coding interact well with the principles and practices of pastoral care. For example, expressing love, empathy, and compassion, are foundational practices for pastoral carers (Doehring, 2015, pp. xvi). Motivations for service can be examined through reflective practices, an important pastoral care practice (Schieb, 2014, pp. 705-17), although opportunities for this were largely absent. Spirituality is a foundation for pastoral care (Lartey, 2003, pp. 140-41) and should also be for Christians who are providing a church-based initiative with an aim of providing care.

The functions of care listed by Lartey were all apparent at the initiatives (2003, p. 35). Healing was made possible to lonely migrants through the compassionate and regular provision of a service, such as at the initiatives studied. Sustaining care was offered to homesick migrants and a form of guidance was offered to students at Northern Training, as staff enabled them to dig into personal resources to forge a new future through employment. As people from different countries and cultures grew to know and love one another, as was apparent at Northern Training, reconciliation between ethnicities occurred. Nurture was apparent at all four locations, as participants offered potentially life enhancing skills and the sewing equipment necessary for the African women to thrive. Liberating care includes helping others liberate themselves from unhelpful mindsets (Lartey, p. 40). This was enacted through the help and patience of tutors at Swindon who helped struggling students believe they were capable of learning English. Attendees at all four initiatives were potentially empowered, through gaining skills or making culturally appropriate clothes to wear.

Spirituality for expressing love of God and neighbour.

Where spirituality was nurtured in participants, it was reflected at the initiatives, during interviews, in church bulletins, and meeting minutes. In some cases, this was limited to an individualistic journey that hindered a sense of group identity and resulted in a lack of prayer, planning, and reflection together. This was the case at Govan, where participants did not pray or plan together and where the weekly church bulletin had a strong bias toward including articles about aspects of individual discipleship. This bias was apparent in the manner of relating between participants and missed Lartey's spiritual category of being *among people* (2003, p. 141). For instance, group spirituality at Northern Training created a sense of unity and a sense of connection between faith and service. This was evident in the use of the word 'family' used by several participants, to describe their relationships. This was reinforced by stories indicating participants knew each other well and practically supported each other.

'Overt expressions of spirituality' emerged as a sub-category of 'expressing love' at Northern Training, the first setting where this happened. Within this sub-category, prayer was discussed during interviews, occurred amongst staff, and occasionally

with individual students. Christian staff spoke easily of their perceptions of God working in the training school and their responses to this. Love of God was therefore easily discernable at this location and participants displayed loving attitudes to other staff and students.

Almost all Swindon participants attended the church. None, however, spoke of their Christian faith during interviews, unless directly asked, and then only indirectly when asked how their faith motivated them. Research journal notes mused of a spiritual element at Swindon, ‘God has gone underground!’ Spiritual nurture was present at this location, but I needed to dig deep to discover it through interviews and noting attendance amongst the volunteers at church services.

Missing elements of pastoral care at the four locations

Some elements of pastoral care were not noted at the four locations, and these might have enabled expressions of love of God and neighbour during sessions. Prayer amongst participants was absent at two locations, along with any form of group meetings. Group reflective practice and supervision, formal or informal, was absent at all locations. An exception was the ongoing professional formation of staff at Northern Training. Interpathy was not noted at any location, although it may have featured.

Levels of self-awareness, which can be nurtured through reflective practice, were varied amongst participants at each location. Self-awareness is an important skill for pastoral care practitioners (Queensland Health, 2010). For example, some teachers at both English classes possessed low levels of self- awareness, dominating conversation. Others made space for their students to speak, while giving focused attention and using non-verbal communication. One volunteer at the St Nicholas sewing club reflected on her ability to express love, correlating with my own observations of her quiet, gentle interactions with the women attending, while another volunteer failed to recognize that her frequent talk prevented the women from sharing about their own lives. Spirituality was not nurtured amongst any participants in a team setting.

Discussion

Lartey defines pastoral care as “an expression of human concern through activities.” (2003, pp. 26). The four initiatives aimed to address human concerns through activities, ranging from learning English to assisting integration into Australian life, or training childcare workers hopeful of employment. The following discussion seeks to explore vital elements of pastoral care principles and practice in relation to the initiatives studied.

Empathy and compassion

Empathy and compassion are strong themes to have emerged from the data. Lartey suggests that empathy has “three characteristics…a *feeling* (affective) level, a *thinking* (cognitive) level and a *tendency to action* (conative) level (2003, pp. 25-26). Empathy then, is a way of being with other people, which enters into how it feels like to be who they are.” (Lartey, 2003, p. 92). A cognitive level of empathy might be discerned if volunteers match caring words and actions to specific needs and difficulties of migrants. A conative level of empathy is apparent simply through faithful volunteering at initiatives and when care is extended at other times, such as when a Swindon participant helped her student make a hospital appointment.

For Doehring, the intercultural dimensions of “empathy and compassion play a central role in pastoral and spiritual care. Empathy involves imaginatively stepping into another person’s emotional experience while remaining aware of and anchored in one’s own emotional state.” (2015, pp. 39-40). Teaching these concepts to participants and volunteers at other, similar, church-based initiatives has potential to result in relationships with attendees that communicate care and understanding. Environments of care are created when initiative attendees are empowered for change. This includes learning skills taught at initiatives or life changes, either directly through interactions with volunteers or because of improved self-esteem as a consequence of secure, loving relations with them. Maintaining boundaried emotional involvement with students facing crises is a skill that can be learned through supervision, group reflection, or teaching sessions. This helps prevent volunteers from overextending themselves beyond physical, emotional, or spiritual capacities.

Interpathy was the next learning bridge to be crossed when participants described their feelings or experiences. For westerners raised into a worldview that often implies that Western culture is superior, this may be a particular pastoral formation challenge. Developing interpathy will not happen overnight and this necessitates ongoing formation through group work and training. Church leaders may need to learn this concept for effective supervision of volunteer groups in intercultural settings.

A friendly and welcoming environment

A commitment to friendship and journeying together (to varying degrees dependent on context) is a realistic expectation of Christian practice in similar intercultural, church-based initiatives that welcomes others into their lives. These are practices reflected in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37), which calls Christians to care beyond the boundaries of race, religion, or status. Hospitality creates potential for mutuality, friendship and community, and all initiatives held potential for long lasting friendships and community-building. The biblical and pastoral theme of hospitality amongst Christians served to identify aspects of hospitality noted at each project (Isaiah 58:7; Titus 1:8). Warmly welcoming students as they arrive at initiative sessions is a simple act easily overlooked if volunteers are busy or engaged talking with each other. Welcome is expressed through taking an interest in the lives of students through carefully listening to them, perhaps as they speak in broken English, or whatever the local language might be. Hospitality expressed through the provision of food and drinks enjoyed by attendees — green tea for Chinese migrants, for example — displays thoughtful care which implies a willingness of volunteers to enter into the lives of others.

These examples demonstrate hospitality and friendship-building in a community context and should be key elements of a model of pastoral care at these and similar church-based intercultural initiatives. Deep and careful theological reflection upon this theme can inform carers as they re-assess the levels of care, they are willing or able to provide, and also reframe the focus of further training. This might be done through group work during which bible passages concerning hospitality are reflected on together. The biblical story of Mary and Martha is one such example (Luke 10:38-

42). Core church narratives of care are reinforced through preaching, home group discussions, bulletins, and during other church gatherings.

Ross describes hospitality as a two-way process in which hosts (participants) have much to learn from those at the margins and indeed become guests of the migrants attending initiatives: “Perhaps we, who inhabit the centre (however we define that), need those from the margins to confront our perceptions of reality and our understandings of our place in the world in order to uncover and unmask our own need for transformation.” (2016, chapter 6). This suggests, therefore, that pastoral care is a two-way process of hospitality that becomes a meeting point where an exchange of power teaches and empowers and holds the possibility of transformation for the carer. Relationships between church-based volunteers and migrants are to be marked by a mutuality that is important for the formation of genuine friendships. This requires a willingness to listen and learn from attendees and perhaps, more fundamentally, a realisation that Christians have much to learn from people outside the church and, at times, need their care.

We are called to invite the stranger to “a free and friendly space where he can reveal his gifts and become our friend… Really honest receptivity means inviting the stranger into our world on his or her terms, not on ours.” (Nouwen, 1975, p. 98). To do this in an intercultural setting, such as at the four initiatives, we must acknowledge and contain our tendencies towards ethnocentricity and develop listening skills, requiring self-awareness, which take us beyond empathy into interpathy (Augsburger, 1986, pp. 27-32). This necessitates education and intentional formation in growing and developing pastoral and spiritual care skills.

Clinebell outlined a “model for spirituality-centered holistic pastoral caregiving”, describing its capacity for “transformational caregiving.” He recognises the “importance of community and collaboration in a transformational model of pastoral caregiving” (2011, p. 21-22), a concept reflected, the findings suggest, in Northern Training’s very high student retention rates. The sense of community there was formed by the participants, who made themselves equally available to students. This had an impact. Teaching skills at Swindon were quite varied and yet students kept attending, as did a core number of students at Govan. Perhaps the very fact that the

tutors were volunteers, with a personal interest in the students, met a felt need for community and for relationships with Australians.

Supervision and reflective practice

It is significant that virtually all pastoral care formation literature is accompanied by reflective practice skills developed through, for example, Supervised Theological Field Education (STFE) that is generally church and parish-based (Floding, 2011, p. 1), or alternatively, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in healthcare and other settings that may include parish (Perry-Wallace, 2017, pp. 5-6). If pastoral and spiritual care formation incorporates such agendas, I am suggesting this should become normative for church-based volunteers. Supervision, at least on some level, should be made available, required even, of all staff and volunteers. This should include elements of spiritual care. Spiritual reflection by volunteer or (at Northern Training) staff groups, plus reflection on practical skills would have raised standards of care at all initiatives.

Spirituality for pastoral care as an expression of love

Nouwen's movements of spirituality relate closely to practices of pastoral care and are relevant to this study. These are "reaching out to our innermost self…from loneliness to solitude," thus knowing and nurturing oneself, reaching out "to our fellow human beings…from hostility to hospitality," enabling the establishment of a corporate identity between Christians and a sense of mutuality with all others. The third movement, "from illusion to prayer," acknowledges our lives as they truly are, recognises God's transcendence, and includes prayer. As most participants were Christian and all implicitly represented their sponsoring church, a Christian spirituality organised around love of, and love from, God, in the person of Christ, love of self and love of others, is the context for discussion.

Christian spirituality may not be readily discernible, as observed at Swindon. Peterson comments that, "the Christian religion…is sacramental: the visible is evidence of the invisible." (1992, 56). Care for others is, however, also a societal value and where participants did not easily speak of their faith, it was not clear whether their care for migrants was rooted in the internal and transcendent

movements of spirituality. This is a loss, in that mutual encouragement in fostering a spiritual life was absent and those attending the initiatives could be less likely to appreciate that the care they received was an expression of God's love.
The findings note that participants at Swindon were not marrying their faith journey with their care for migrants, further highlighting the importance of volunteers being encouraged to engage with, and speak of, their formational journeys, even in selection and application processes.

Greenman agrees with Nouwen, suggesting that where love of God is present, spiritual formation is in evidence:

> My definition of spiritual formation seeks to reflect the biblical logic of divine grace exemplified in the truth that "we love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19)…God's gift precedes and makes possible the human task of discipleship, witness and service. (2010, p. 25).

Greenman's argument reinforces the point that spiritual formation is necessarily rooted in God's love, which precedes any outward manifestations. This makes a strong case for times of reflection and formation amongst participants, something wholly absent at the initiatives.

Jesus teaches us to love others as we love ourselves (Luke 10: 27) and this has direct relevance for volunteers seeking to provide care to others. Loving others as much as ourselves and practicing self-compassion provides psychological flexibility. When our awareness of God is rooted in a sense of God's love for us, we may gain the sensitivity to discern how he would express God's love for others, through us. In the contexts explored in this article, this will be through hospitality and acts of service.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Practice

This study indicates that church-based intercultural initiatives will become more effective in expressing love of God and neighbour when organisation and delivery follow principles, practices, and functions of intercultural pastoral care. The following

recommendations for church based, intercultural initiatives, will enable deeper levels of care, rooted in experiencing the love of God.

I have noted that the nurture of spirituality enables the knowledge of God's love to grow in Christians so that love of God and neighbour finds expression in service. A culture where the spiritual formation of a congregation develops through services, home groups, prayer meetings, outreaches and social events can encourage members to reflect on their personal journey of spiritual formation. This helps create core church narratives of care for strangers.

Embracing Lartey or Nouwen's movements of spirituality supports effective intercultural pastoral care. If such explorations of spirituality and insights into transcendence are developed as key issues for group consideration, then this can nurture the foundational beliefs on which the initiatives were supposed to be based.

Group work encourages, monitors, and maintains accountability between team members, even where time is at a premium. These brief, focused times of relating after each session could range from debriefing to simple affirmation, whatever emerges as important. Encouraging accountable relationships enhances the self-awareness so important for empathy, care and listening. Compassion, empathy, and interpathy are enhanced through reflective practice and self-awareness to become caring practices that express a theology of presence (Augsburger,1986, pp. 17-47).

Group prayer is vital for the nurture of spirituality and the nurture of love that gives substance to our spirituality as pastoral carers. Meaningful group prayer emphasises the importance of drawing on God as the source of all creativity. In a weekly half-hour team meeting, is there space for prayer, or occasional longer meetings devoted to prayer together?

Whether volunteers limit friendships with migrants to session times, or extend hospitality at other times too, is a matter for individual consideration. Volunteers able to offer more time might be paired with those who have less discretionary time.

Nouwen encourages us to create space in relationships in which others can truly be themselves (1975, pp. 65-77). This is particularly relevant for volunteers interacting with migrants. Opportunities to explore how guest-host roles become flexible and sensitive to context are critical for pastoral formation.

This article has demonstrated that principles and practices of intercultural pastoral care provide a rich foundation from which love of God and neighbour can be effectively expressed at church-based, intercultural initiatives.

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The impact of church-based ESL classes on participants' social capital

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Abstract

Background: Migrants and refugees can be exposed to various stress factors which affect their mental health before and during their migration journey. It then extends to during their settlement and integration. The World Health Organisation claim that stress from their migration journey can increase the risk of developing mental health conditions.

Purpose: Through the lens of social capital theory, the researcher is taking the stance that church-based ESL classes help in the development of immigrants' and refugees' social capital. Social capital is understood to be a network of connections which help in the development of societies and in this case, in the improvement of the quality of life of immigrants and refugees.

Methodology: This article is the researcher's reflection of the role church-based English as a Second Language (ESL) classes play in assimilating immigrants and refugees into their communities. This reflection is from the perspective of an academic and manager, having managed a variety of ESL programs for many years.

Findings: Although ESL programs run by churches are an evangelistic tool, Christian principles and values are not imposed on the adult learners. ESL classes are run with the hope that participants may encounter Jesus in the context of genuine Christian care, acceptance and friendship.

Introduction

Church-based English as a Second Language (ESL) classes run by the Anglican churches in Sydney play a significant role in enhancing participants' social capital by providing not just language skills but also opportunities for networking, cultural integration, and emotional support. They also foster relationships and provide access to crucial resources. These programs go beyond language learning to build a sense of community and empowerment leading to greater social capital, mobility and well-being for participants.

They are also unstructured, have irregular attendance, lack uniformed levels and lack collaboration amongst churches. After multiple decades of running ESL in churches, research and development in this field in Australia is still in its infancy stage. Many studies have been carried out on church-based ESL programs in the United States (Bradridge & Walsh, 2019; Bretz, 2021; Chao & Kuntz, 2013; Chapin, 2016; Chao & Mantero, 2014; Sanchez, 2017; Gallagher, 2017; Smith, 2018; Tsaneva, 2022) but very few are focused in Australia (Russel, n.d).

The scope of this article is my reflection of church-based ESL classes within the Anglican churches in Sydney. My reflection is of an academic and manager, after having managed a variety of ESL programs for many years in Malaysia and Australia. I have also been the Director of an English centre for an Australian university and a university college.

Through the lens of social capital theory, I am investigating if church-based ESL classes help in the development of immigrants' and refugees' social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Leana & van Buren, 1999; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital theory is discussed further in the literature review section below.

In the course of this study, two research questions emerged. They are:

1) What are the notable positive aspects currently present in the teaching of ESL within the Anglican churches in Sydney that impact on participants' social capital?

2) What are the notable negative aspects currently present in the teaching of ESL within the Anglican churches in Sydney and what strategies can be implemented to address the findings?

The aim of this research is to consider the impact of church-based ESL classes on participants' social capital. When exploring the impact, both positive and negative aspects will be discussed, practical effectiveness will be considered, and sound recommendations will be provided to improve the delivery of these classes. Before that can be done, a review of current literature is needed.

Literature review

In this section, the key themes of the research will be investigated and the gap that exists in the literature for church-based ESL classes within the Australian context determined. Before any of the secular literature is reviewed, it is important to first evaluate how the ESL ministry is justified in the Bible.

Contemporary Christian Ministry

Church-based ESL classes serve dual purpose. Firstly, they are an evangelistic tool and secondly, through this ministry, immigrants and refugees are taught English. Therefore, many view this ministry as a legitimate way to both serve their communities and have a Christian witness (Chapin, 2016).

The Bible[1] in many instances instructs believers to reach out to non-believers. Bearing witness or evangelising to non-Christians is considered to be a mandate from Jesus and the early church. The following are some of the Bible verses that instructs Christians to share the gospel.

- Luke 9:2 says "…and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal."
- 1 John 1:5 says, "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."
- Mark 16:15 says, "And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."

[1] All Bible references, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the English Standard Version.

- Matthew 24:14 says, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”
- 2 Timothy 4: 17 says, “But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.”
- Matthew 5: 14-16 says, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that[a] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

As demonstrated above, there are many instances when Christians were asked to share the good news of Jesus Christ. By sharing the gospel, Christians hope that those hearing it will come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour. Therefore, many Christians believe that when non-Christians ask God to forgive their sins (Psalm 32: 1-5), they will be forgiven and no longer be separated from God. This act is believed to spare them from eternal condemnation.

In Chao & Kuntz (2013) study, they explored the ways in which artifacts and classroom discourse of a church-based ESL program in a Southeastern U.S. city facilitate or constrain the immigrant adult learners’ participation. They concluded:

> This study indicates that the church-based ESL program is a Christian figured world that is not natural but nurtured and naturalized. This program serves as a linguistic, cultural, and community broker to help the adult learners with learning English and socialization, whereas Christian principles, norms and values are imposed on the adult learners. This can lead to some learners’ resistance or non-participation. The church-based ESL program is therefore a missionary tool to proselytize. Learning English in this Christian figured world is a process of being, self-assigned or other-assigned identity transformation. (p. 470)

The above findings are damning for the church-based ESL class especially if Christian doctrines, practices and tenets are forced onto non-Christians. It is not the teaching of the Bible to forcibly convert people. Another serious issue that the above study raises is the possibility that ESL class is the front for conversion. That premise suggests that the church lacks a genuine interest in teaching participants English and instead exists solely to convert them.

The second purpose for the church-based ESL classes is to help those less fortunate. Throughout the old and new testaments, believers were told to provide help to the fatherless, widows, orphans, sick, etc. The verses below demonstrate this request.

- Deuteronomy 14:29 says, “And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.”
- Proverbs 19:17 says "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed."
- Proverbs 3: 27 says, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it."
- Matthew 25:44-45 says, " Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ **45** Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

Immigrants and refugees are seen as people who need help. They lack English proficiency which reduces their ability to make friends, communicate with health professionals, obtain employment and discuss their children’s education with their teachers. Therefore, helping immigrants and refugees to learn English is like helping the ‘fatherless, widows, orphans, sick, etc’.

Since ESL classes delivered in churches are for immigrants and refugees, it is important to explore the migration journey of these two groups of people.

Immigrants and refugees

According to the World Health Organisation (2022), more than 1 billion people which amounts to 1 in 8 people are on the move globally. International migrants accounts to 281 million people while those forcibly displaced amounts to 84 million (World Health Organisation, 2022). The World Health Organisation (2022) also claim that they expect the number of people on the move to grow due to poverty, lack of security, lack of access to basic services, conflict, environmental degradation and disasters. This data includes the migration to Australia.

When the global pandemic occurred in 2020, it caused the closure of borders and disruptions to international travel. Covid-19's border closure resulted in a noticeable reduction in the number of visas approved in Australia to permanent migrants in 2019-20 financial year (Cross, 2022). Australia's permanent migration intake fell to its lowest level in the last decade to 140,366 which was significantly lower than the planned ceiling of 160,000 and the 10- year average of 175,000 (Stayner, 2020).

The above situation changed after the pandemic. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), there was a net gain in overseas migration to Australia. This means there were more people migrating to than from Australia in the financial year ending 30 June 2022. Overseas migration contributed a net gain of 171,000 to Australia's population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This represents a very large increase in net overseas migration compared to the 2020-21 financial year which saw a net loss of 85,000 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). According to past data, more people immigrated to Australia than left the country each year which means overseas migration has been a significant source of population gain for Australia.

According to the World Health Organisation (2021), migrants and refugees can be exposed to various stress factors which affect their mental health and well-being before and during their migration journey. It then extends to during their settlement and integration. Some of these stress factors are unemployment, poor socioeconomic conditions, and lack of social integration. The World Health

Organisation claims that stress from their migration journey can increase the risk of developing mental health conditions.

Therefore, learning English will reduce their stress levels as it helps immigrants and refugees secure jobs in Australia, improve their socioeconomic background, make new friends, navigate their daily lives and increase their confidence which will encourage them to integrate socially.

According to a paper released by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) (2019), English language skills have increasingly become the focus in the Australian Government's settlement and multicultural policies for immigrants and refugees. This report claims that for new arrivals to have long-term settlement outcomes, it is important to have English language skills. The report states that English language skills help people to navigate Australian life such as transport, housing, employment and education, and the health and justice systems. Therefore, the lack of English language skills would be a barrier to successfully settling in Australia because of the difficulties in accessing the labour market and accessing government services.

The FECCA report released in 2019 clearly defines the need for newcomers to Australia to have or learn English language skills to help them feel that Australia is home which will give them the sense of belonging.

Church-based ESL program

The church-based ESL programs run in Anglican churches in Sydney belong to their individual church and are considered to be a ministry. They are managed and run by volunteers. The volunteers are not required to have any special qualification such as a qualification in TESOL or similar. Some training can be provided by Anglicare which is explained in greater detail in the next section, but this training is not mandatory for the volunteers who wish to teach English in their church.

The program is left to the volunteers to determine if they would like to teach any or all of the macro skills which are reading, writing, speaking and listening. The volunteers also decide if they would like to have one group of participants with mixed

abilities or separate groups with varying proficiency level. Participants are not required to take a placement test to determine their level or assessed during their time there. This means participants do not progress in a systematic manner from one level to the next. This program is not aligned with any of the awards (such as a Certificate I, II, III or IV) in the Australian national awards system.

Immigrants and refugees come to Australia with a variety of different mix of education, experiences and upbringing (FECCA, 2019). They also have different needs which then requires that language providers consider their needs to ensure a socially cohesive society (FECCA, 2019).

For those reasons, English language providers, whether they are organisations or individuals, teaching English to immigrants and refugees for a fee or for free must consider FECCA's policy recommendations below.

1. Acknowledge that migrants/refugees in Australia learn in diverse ways.
2. English programs for migrants/refugees must be flexible to respond to diverse needs.
3. English learning for beginners must include a focus on everyday English.
4. English classes for migrants/refugees must be available in a safe place where focus is on trust.
5. Acknowledge that, while English language skills are essential in the early settlement period, English learning begins at different stages in life and throughout life in Australia.
6. Acknowledge that English learning is a life-long process.
7. Keep, support and resource community English programs.
8. Develop a database with resources community driven English language programs providers can access.
9. Develop a range of learning-based practices to increase accessibility for all.
10. Ensure resources are available to ease access for all migrants/refugees to Australia to access English fitting their needs.
11. Facilitate and encourage connections and collaborations between community driven English language programs, AMEP and settlement support providers.
12. Acknowledge the need for community driven English language programs to complement the AMEP (FECCA, 2019, p. 5).

Since church-based ESL classes serve immigrants and refugees, all the recommendations above from FECCA are relevant for this ministry.

Practical effectiveness

One volunteer ESL teacher said that although he had not taken any formal training in ESL instruction, he claimed that there was evidence that language learning did occur.

He said that circumstantial evidence indicated that learning did occur in his classes because the participants wanted to continue attending ESL classes. The participants also informed their Pastor that they learned a lot. They were also able to clearly indicate the learning that took place from the phonetics lessons (Chapin, 2016).

In a study by Chao & Mantero (2014), they investigate immigrants who are parents who attend church-based ESL classes. The research concluded a more positive outcome stated below,

> …the programs are sources of funds of knowledge for immigrant parents. Local knowledge is used in the church-based ESL literacy education. Through field class, a way of reaching out to the community, the programs use it as part of language, literacy, and cultural learning. By doing so, the programs not only build the parents' confidence in their own ESL literacy learning, but they also empower them to exercise parental authority and agency in family literacy practices (p. 106).

The above findings reflect more closely to my experience working with coordinators and volunteer teachers in the church-based ESL classes in the Anglican churches in Sydney than Chao & Kuntz (2013)'s claims. The Anglican church ESL ministry in Sydney is supported by Anglicare through various means which is mentioned below.

Anglicare

Anglicare is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to serve people in need in communities in Sydney to enrich lives and share the love of Jesus. It holds true to the Christian motivation while responding to meet the changing needs of these communities. Anglicare seeks to promote and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as

the organisation serves those who are ageing, vulnerable or marginalised; respecting and valuing every person as made in the image of the living God (Anglicare, n.d).

Anglicare has a Cross-cultural Services team which comprise of eight Cross-cultural Advisors that serve different regions in Sydney. This team works in partnership with churches to assist them run their ESL ministry (Anglicare, 2023). Each advisor visits the Anglican churches in their region and provide assistance such as resources, training and other help as mentioned below. There are nearly 100 church-based ESL classes across the Diocese of Sydney (Anglicare, n.d). Each of these ESL ministries belong to the individual churches. ESL ministry is a community outreach program geared to helping immigrants and refugees who need to learn English and adjust to a new culture while demonstrating to them Christian care, acceptance and friendship.

Anglicare's aim is to train, equip and support church volunteers in the ESL ministry through a variety of ways (Anglicare, 2023). They provide:

- Teacher training for volunteers that consists of eight hours of training.
- Two conferences a year
- Ongoing support through the help of Cross-cultural Advisors
- Teaching resources
- A well-resourced ESL Library (Anglicare, 2023).

From time to time, the Cross-cultural Services team of Anglicare develop new initiatives to equip and support churches to widen their cross-cultural outreach beyond ESL with activities like cultural awareness training (Simon, 2022). Volunteers set aside a few hours a week to prepare and teach lessons that often include Bible segments (Simon, 2022).

In this study, I will be reflecting on the church-based ESL ministries run by Anglican churches in Sydney using social capital theory.

Social capital theory

A socially cohesive society increases the social capital of that society. Social capital is the value available in both the physical aspects of a social network and the content of the network relationships (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Leana & van Buren, 1999; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In other words, social capital is understood to be a network of connections which help in the development of societies and in this case, in the improvement of the quality of life of immigrants and refugees.

Since the early 1980s, social capital has been conjectured in different ways (Martin, et al., 2020). Although there are many different views of social capital, we will be using Lin's (2001) conceptualisation of it which is explained below. It is viewed an individual's social network as a pool of resources that helps the individual achieve a goal (Lin, 2001; Son & Lin, 2012;). Social capital theory theorises that although individuals can achieve goals independently of their social networks (Lin, 2001), the resources exists in their social network offers valuable assets to them that can be positively pulled together (van der Gaag, 2005).

Therefore, social capital theory indicates that in addition to the people whom an individual knows, what the people in the individual's social network know is also critically important. In the case of immigrants and refugees, their social capital is enhanced with their interaction with church-based ESL classes because the networks developed through their interactions in their local churches improve their social capital in more ways than one. They not only gain English language skills but also leverage their network's connections to help them settle into the society.

Gap in literature

Literature for church-based ESL classes in Australia is very limited. Furthermore, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no literature connecting church-based ESL classes to the participants' social capital. As mentioned above, social capital is defined as the value of the physical aspects of a social network and the content of the network relationships (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Leana & van Buren, 1999; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). This is the gap that this study aims to investigate.

Methodology

Reflections is a qualitative methodology. The role of reflection in research has been discussed since the early 1900s (Dewey, 1933). However, it is only since the 1980s that this method became prominent in discussion of practitioner, including teacher development. In the field of English language teacher education, reflection is often promoted as an important feature of effective practice (British Council, 2015). According to van Beveren et al., (2018), the term lacks conceptual clarity while Man & Walsh (2017) claim that there is relatively little understanding about the role of reflection in language teacher development.

In teacher reflection, Anderson (2019) suggests a more intuitive and conscious reflection that rejects academic knowledge as 'technical rationality', and encourages teachers to draw on experiential knowledge as the main source of learning. According to Dewey (1933), reflection is a metacognitive process in which a person can consider their feelings, responses, views, theories, information and experiences (Vinjamuri, Warde & Kolb, 2017). This process allows individuals to critically analyse their experiences and capture the knowledge emerges from them (Johns, 2004; Plack et al., 2007).

There has been a move from quantitative research methodologies toward naturalistic methods where many of these research methods have emerged in teacher training sector and identified as teacher research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993), action research (Winter, 1987), reflective practice (Schön, 1983, 1987). According to Newman (2000), at the heart of all of the naturalistic methods has been a focus on practice-as-inquiry (Newman, 1992). Newman (2000) goes on to say that there is no one "right" way of doing action research, of being a teacher researcher, of engaging in critical reflection. She also claims that practitioners engaging in this newer methodology that are more open and reflective are inventing methodology as they go along.

I am using Donald Schön's (1983, 1987) understanding of reflective methodology where he sees practice as inquiry conducted primary to inform and change on-going practice. My study is aimed to improve and change the current practice of running

ESL classes. As suggested by Anderson (2019), I will be drawing on my experiential knowledge to analyse my data. I will also be using the suggestions presented in Dewey's (1933) seminal paper which are using feelings, information and experiences (Vinjamuri, Warde & Kolb, 2017).

This study did not require ethics approval because it is a reflection of my time working as a cross-cultural advisor with Anglicare. I did not interview anyone. Unlike other methodologies such as action research where the issue of how the consent of the research subjects were obtained and if they would be affected by the ways in which they are represented collectively in the research could be questioned (Wolfson et al., 2022), this study is purely a reflection.

My data collection was from the 1 March -30 June 2023 when I worked as a Cross-cultural Advisor for the western suburbs for Anglicare where I visited 11 Anglican churches and had meetings with all the other Cross-cultural Advisors who covered the whole Sydney regions and Wollongong. I reflected on the participants, the volunteer teachers, the way the program was run and the role of Anglicare in supporting the ESL ministry when I worked in the above capacity in Anglicare.

In this study 'data' was my reflections based on the categories in the table below. My reflection is from the perspective of an academic and manager, having managed a variety of ESL programs since 1992. I managed eight ESL programs in eight language centres, taught ESL in nine language centres and was the Administrator for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Centre, Examiner (Reading and Listening) and Marker (Writing and Speaking) for an Australian university centre.

Findings

As mentioned in the literature review, church-based ESL program has been viewed by those in the church as a legitimate way to both serve their communities and have a Christian witness. The findings in this section are based on my reflections of the ESL ministry in the Anglican churches in Sydney.

Table 1: Researcher's observations

	Category	**Observation**
1.	Purpose for enrolling in the ESL classes	Attend classes to learn English, make friends, get local information, learn Australian culture, overcome loneliness and/or escape domestic violence.
2.	Class attendance	Not regular, participants start and stop when they like. Some return to their home country and re-join the class when they come back to Australia. Many miss classes regularly for personal reasons such as childcare, housework, health reasons, family arrangements, etc.
3.	How the programs are run	Each ESL program has different levels, use different resources, have different teacher qualifications and use different styles of delivery.
4.	Volunteer qualifications	A small group of volunteers have TESOL qualifications while most of them do not have a formal TESOL qualification and have attended 8-hour training provided by Anglicare. A small group have neither TESOL nor Anglicare training.
5.	Volunteer commitment	Volunteers care for the whole-person and are not only concerned about teaching English. Most of the volunteers have been in the role for many years.

6.	Evangelistic tool	The church-based ESL program is an evangelistic tool.
7.	Resources	Most of the classes use Anglicare resources while a small group use other resources like English File, Headway, Side by Side, etc.
8.	Class days and times	Different churches choose different days and times to teach ESL. Classes are run one weekday. The earliest class starts at 9am and the latest class ends at 9.30pm.
9.	Class duration	Most church-based ESL classes run for a total of two hours per week during school terms, but some run multiple two-hour sessions per week as the need arises.
10	Impact of participants' social capital.	The resources that exist in the social network of volunteers and the church offers valuable assets to participants that can positively help immigrants and refugees settle into Australia.

From my observation, I found that immigrants and refugees enrol in ESL classes not only to learn English but for other reasons as well. This ministry helps immigrants and refugees not only learn English but also to make new friends, get local information and learn Australian culture. Some participants use the classes to overcome loneliness or escape domestic violence. Therefore, participants join these classes for a variety of purposes.

Participants' attendance is not regular, and some participants drop off and return to class as they feel. Some return to their home country for a few months and rejoin

these church-based ESL classes upon their return. Many miss classes regularly for personal reasons such as child-care, housework, health reasons, family arrangements, etc. This lack of commitment to learning English may be because the participants do not take the ESL classes seriously and attend when it fits in their daily life. That could be because the ESL programs are not aligned with any of the awards offered in the Australian national awards system.

Central to the issue of attendance is the casualness in which these classes are run. Each ESL class has different levels, use different resources, have different teacher qualifications and use different styles of delivery. Although each of the ESL ministry is set up to help their community, be it by teaching English, providing practical support or making friends, they are run with no clear structure. This could be why many participants do not take it seriously enough to attend regularly. As far as can be determined, this aspect of church-run ESL classes has not be explored in the USA or Australia.

My next reflection is that the volunteers who either teach, help in class or prepare morning or afternoon tea are extremely committed and give up a lot of their time for these new arrivals. They do this as their service to God and may do so because they see it as a worthy cause. These volunteer teachers and helpers are usually mature Christians and are always ready to lend a helping hand, provide comfort or show immigrants and refugees where they can get help. I noticed that participating in these church-based ESL classes is an empowering experience, grounding adult English learners within their communities and giving them a voice in the larger society as Chao & Mantero (2014) claim.

Although ESL programs run by churches are an evangelistic tool, unlike the conclusion from Chao & Kuntz ‘s (2013) study, I found that Christian principles and values are not forced on the adult learners. It reflects more closely to Chao & Mantero (2014)’s findings. From the churches’ angle, ESL classes are run with the hope that through this ministry, immigrants and refugees may encounter Jesus in the context of genuine Christian care, acceptance and friendship and respond to Him as their Lord and Saviour.

I also saw that church-based ESL classes are very relational. The volunteers take their relationship with the participants and each other very seriously. These relationships exist in and outside the class. Volunteer teachers often act as cultural directors by helping immigrants and refugees navigate their life in the Australia culture by explaining norms and behavioural expectations. These volunteers go well beyond their classroom duties and in many instances welcome migrants and refugees into their home to have a meal and fellowship. This is what Anglicare Team Leader and Advisors also claim (Simon, 2022). Some even meet lonely participants for coffee or a meal on days when there is no class. Since social capital, as mentioned in the literature review, is the value available in both the physical aspects of a social network and the content of the network relationships (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Leana & van Buren, 1999; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), the way in which the volunteers embrace their relationship with the participants help them increase their social capital.

Volunteers care for the whole person and not just the participant's English language learning. These participants are seen as someone with a family and community context and for that reason, they may connect them with other Anglicare services like the mobile food pantry, counselling, youth support services or men's mental health service. I believe this immensely increases individual participant's social capital. This aspect of looking at their participants as a whole and not only helping them with their language training helps to create a more socially cohesive society which then increases the social capital of that society.

Anglicare plays a supportive and not a leadership role. According to the Team Leader, Louise Afful, "The purpose of the team is to inspire, equip and support local churches as they reach out and respond practically to their multi-cultural communities and under God make Jesus known." (Simon, 2022). Both Anglicare and the churches see the delivery of ESL classes as a ministry where casual, unstructured learning and teaching of ESL within the community takes place.

Anglicare cross-cultural services team write ESL resources for the churches. Each resource seems to have different number of lessons. Some have eight chapters while others have ten or eleven or even twelve chapters. The ESL classes in the

churches run on a ten-week term and that is not reflected in Anglicare resources. Whilst writers claim the number of chapters in a book is not important because churches progress at their own pace, the writers have not taken into consideration that the church-based ESL classes run for ten weeks a term and four terms a year.

The cross-cultural team in Anglicare provide much support to the church-based ESL classes. They are often just a phone-call away, ready to help volunteers with lesson plans, ideas, resources and fun activities.

Discussion

Discussion from the findings

From the ten observations in Table 1 above, the researcher has reflected on each one and determined whether they are strengths or weaknesses in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Researcher's reflections

	Category	**Observation**	**Strength (✓) or weakness (×)**
1.	Purpose for enrolling in the ESL classes	Attend classes to learn English, make friends, get local information, learn Australian culture, overcome loneliness and/or escape domestic violence.	✓
2.	Class attendance	Not regular, participants start and stop when they like. Some return to their home country and re-join the class when they come back to Australia. Many miss classes regularly for personal reasons such as childcare, housework, health reasons, family	×

		arrangements, etc.	
3.	How the programs are run	Each ESL program has different levels, use different resources, have different teacher qualifications and use different styles of delivery.	×
4.	Volunteer qualifications	A small group of volunteers have TESOL qualifications while most of them do not have a formal TESOL qualification and have attended 8-hour training provided by Anglicare. A small group have neither TESOL or Anglicare training.	×
5.	Volunteer commitment	Volunteers care for the whole-person and are not only concerned about teaching English. Most of the volunteers have been in the role for many years.	✓
6.	Evangelistic tool	The church-based ESL program is an evangelistic tool.	✓
7.	Resources	Most of the classes use Anglicare resources while a small group use other resources like English File,	×

		Headway, Side by Side, etc.	
8.	Class days and times	Different churches choose different days and times to teach ESL. Classes are run one weekday. The earliest class starts at 9am and the latest class ends at 9.30pm.	✓
9.	Class duration	Most church-based ESL classes run for a total of two hours per week during school terms, but some run multiple two-hour sessions per week as the need arises.	✓
10.	Impact of participants' social capital.	The resources that exist in the social network of volunteers and the church offers valuable assets to participants that can positively help immigrants and refugees settle into Australia.	✓

Six of the observations are strengths. Together they contribute to participants' social capital. For example, by attending English classes, participants learn English be it in a slower pace or at the pace of a structured English language centre. This is supported by Chapin (2016) mentioned in greater detail in the literature review. Learning English help them make friends, be successful in job interviews, communicate with their health practitioners, etc.

The other four reflections are considered weakness. These will be further discussed below and recommendations made to remedy them.

Recommendations

As mentioned in the findings section above, there is no real structure and levels in the church-based ESL classes currently offered in the Sydney Anglican churches. Currently, participants have no idea of when they will progress to the next level, if another level even exists. Participants remain in a class indefinitely. They are not given an assessment to determine how much they have learnt during the whole term or year. This issue could be rectified by creating a rubric that clearly shows the different levels of proficiency such as ‘absolute beginner’, ‘beginner’, ‘elementary’, ‘pre-intermediate’, ‘intermediate’, ‘upper intermediate’ and ‘advanced’. The rubric should indicate what participants should be able to do for each macro skill for the different levels. Initially, it may not be viable for each church to have that many levels. However, over time it may be possible as participant numbers grow. Another way of overcoming the issue of not being able to have all levels is to collaborate with other churches within a close proximity. This way, churches may be able to provide a more structured, language centre-like ESL ministry where participants can move from one level to the next and possibly even receive a certificate of attendance. This may improve the participants’ attendance. Anglicare could also investigate the possibility of aligning the church-based ESL classes with one of the awards offered in the Australian national awards system.

All volunteers should be trained in second language acquisition theories and methodology of teaching English as a second language (TESOL). This volunteer training should be made mandatory by the churches. Anglicare’s cross-cultural services section could play a pivotal role in training volunteers. Volunteers should also receive a structured on-going mentoring by a qualified TESOL practitioner. This way, the church-based ESL ministry can play a more sound role in teaching English to immigrants and refugees.

As mentioned above, Anglicare plays a supportive role in the delivery of ESL classes in the Anglican churches in Sydney. The cross-cultural advisors are always willing to help and support the churches with ideas, training and resources. That is a massive undertaking by a small group of advisors headed by an experienced and committed Team Leader. Since each ESL ministry belongs to their individual church, Anglicare

tries to only play a supportive role and not be overbearing. Therefore, although there appears to be a shared common and aligned sense of purpose across the different churches' ESL ministries, they do not collaborate. A strong and aligned sense of purpose and identity can improve the delivery of English classes. In the absence of such alignment, the volunteers in the ESL ministries turn to Anglicare for only support and advice and not leadership.

Anglicare cross cultural section write their resources based on four levels which are beginner, high beginner, intermediate and high intermediate. The resources developed by Anglicare are utilised by many church-based ESL programs but there is no uniformity in the way they were written or used. Currently, there are resources with different themes, different number of volumes and different number of chapters. Some resources introduce participants to the Australian culture while others are language-based or even Bible-based. There is also no clear progression from one level to the next in any particular theme.

In other words, there are not enough resources on a particular theme that would take a participant from term one in the beginner level to term four in the high intermediate level. The lack of uniformity means some coordinators struggle to decide which resource to use at a particular level and how the progression would look.

Since ESL classes in the churches run for four terms in a year and each term consists of ten weeks, a well-consulted Master Plan for writing resources could first be developed taking into consideration ten-week terms and four terms a year. Each level could have four volumes of resources. Each volume could have ten chapters so the volunteer teachers could teach one chapter a week and then progress to the next volume. This way, a participant could start term one in the beginner level and progress through each volume until they get to the fourth volume in the high intermediate level.

After writing any resource, a focus group of coordinators from different churches should be invited to view them and give feedback before they are published. Consultation should be a large aspect of writing.

Impact on the researcher

Observing and analysing church-based ESL classes provided me with first-hand data on how grassroots organisations contribute to education, especially in underserved communities. I gained valuable insights into how informal or community-driven programs differ from traditional institutional settings. It allowed me to explore how religious institutions impact immigrant and refugee communities' social capital. This understanding may in the future contribute to broader research on community support networks and their role in language acquisition and cultural integration.

Observing and presenting church-based ESL helped me understand how theories of language learning (e.g., communicative approaches) play out in real-world, low-resource settings. These classes often go beyond language instruction, fostering cultural exchange and social integration. Examining them enriched my understanding of the broader impacts of ESL education. They taught me how language learning intertwines with cultural identity and assimilation.

I gained access to unique qualitative data, such as learner narratives, challenges specific to community-based programs, and volunteer teacher experiences. I realised that the insights I gained highlight gaps in policy or resources and inform future recommendations. Engaging with participants and instructors helped me better understand the lived experiences of those involved. This improved the quality and empathy of my research. By discussing a church-based ESL class, I contributed to the dialogue on how non-traditional educational programs address social and linguistic barriers. It allowed me to explore the intersection of language education, community support, and faith-based initiatives, giving my research a multidimensional focus. I contributed to an understudied area especially in Australia, such as the role of religious organisations in addressing linguistic and cultural barriers.

Conclusion

Church-based ESL programs serve as a crucial support system for immigrants and refugees who seek to improve their language skills whilst assimilating into their new

communities. These programs provide more than just language instruction as they help build social capital by fostering relationships, increasing access to resources, and enhancing community engagement. This paper explored the various ways in which church-based ESL classes contribute to students' social capital.

The first research question which is, ‘What are the notable positive aspects currently present in the teaching of ESL within the Anglican churches in Sydney that impact on participants’ social capital?’, was answered through my reflections in the findings part of this paper. Through this study, ten findings were uncovered and discussed above. Of the ten, six were identified as strengths which impact on participants’ social capital.
The second research question is, ‘What are the notable negative aspects currently present in the teaching of ESL within the Anglican churches in Sydney and what strategies can be implemented to address the findings?’ From the ten findings, four were identified as weaknesses. In the recommendation part above, I have made constructive suggestions on how to solve those weaknesses. By adopting my recommendations, the ESL classes run by Anglican churches in Sydney could improve immigrants’ and refugees’ social capital.

There are also some limitations to this research. One limitation is that my time with my participants was quite short. This was not intentional but because the position was a short-term employment. Another limitation is the research in church-based ESL classes in Australia is sparse in contrast to those in other countries such as the United States.

Future research in this field could focus on collecting raw qualitative data by interviewing the volunteers and participants. Exploring qualitative data might reveal more in-dept benefits, issues and solutions. A mixed-methodology study that includes quantitative data such as number of weeks participants attend these classes, number of participants who are successful in obtaining jobs, etc could be analysed. These studies could push the boundaries of knowledge.

In conclusion, this paper proves that what the churches are doing through their ESL ministry is phenomenal. With limited training and difficulties in using Anglicare

resources, they still continue to reach out to their local communities. The volunteer teachers and helpers do a great job by fulfilling the mandate to reach out and help the less fortunate. The ESL ministry in the Anglican churches in Sydney help immigrants and refugees increase their social capital and settle into the community more smoothly and comfortably.

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Towards a redemptive pedagogy: Koinonia as a basis for transformation in a faith-based social enterprise in Cambodia

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Abstract

Despite strong progress over the past 30 years, Cambodia continues to face socio-economic challenges in the areas of gender inequality and human trafficking. This study explores an approach within an Australian faith-based social enterprise operating in Cambodia to create a 'redemptive' pedagogy in the form of a curriculum and learning community that develops and supports women socially, relationally and spiritually as they leave the sex industry and reintegrate into Cambodian society. Consistent with the faith roots of the social enterprise, the study drew on the concept of *koinōnia* and how this is understood and applied in Cambodian faith communities by interviewing eight Cambodian faith and/or vocational education leaders and facilitating focus groups with a further four Cambodian educators and six students. The evidence was analysed using a grounded theory methodology to create a model of two interrelated communities. The first community is characterised by being open and inclusive and encourages fellowship in a safe and dignified environment and through loving, honest and trusting relationships. This community feeds a related secondary community characterised by a spiritual, practical and relational dimension. This article further outlines a proposed curriculum that integrates the Beatitudes and leverages these concepts through peer-to-peer learning and concludes by outlining areas for further research.

Introduction

Cambodia is a Southeast Asian nation that has seen significant development over the past 30 years as it recovered from the earlier civil war, genocide and occupation. While results have been economically successful with relatively high and consistent growth in GDP, it has been accompanied by social impacts that include growing inequality and widespread human trafficking – including sex trafficking. Cambodia is ranked in the top 10 nations in the world where modern slavery occurs (International Organization of Migration, 2018) but has seen recent improvement (Walk Free, 2023). Contributing factors include poverty (Bendana, 2018) and a poor rule of law that make human trafficking and prostitution more attractive.

The impacts of human trafficking and forced prostitution in Cambodia on human well-being are felt socially, relationally and emotionally. The mostly female victims have faced ongoing exploitation with one report noting how 38% of these women had entered the industry because of their virginity being bought (Brown, 2007). This exploitation often starts with the family, with reports noting around 75% of women entered the sex industry through the influence of a trusted family member, neighbour, or community member (Derks et al., 2006). When in the sex industry, women (and particularly those who were trafficked) are susceptible to higher risks of sexually transmitted infections, sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS and their often-limited education and vulnerable economic position make these women unable to escape the industry (Derks et al., 2006). Even among women who 'voluntarily' entered the sex industry, many face limited economic options or deception (International Organization of Migration, 2018). While individual stories may differ, evidence highlights a need for a holistic solution to address the physical, social, relational and economic challenges faced by these women.

Cambodia has a range of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) focused on supporting these women such as Hagar, the Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre, Daughters of Cambodia and Agape International Missions, to name a few. While each NGO has a different mission, many are faith-based and recognise the need for holistic redemption and offer services that may include education, family care and employment (Bendana, 2018). While the many transformed lives attest to the success of these programmes, these NGOs are often limited in their scope and sustainability as they operate using a ministry or crisis centre model (Bendana, 2018) and may not provide long-term vocational training or alternatives that provide employment for women to complete their programmes. These factors point to the need for vocational education that can be delivered within faith-based NGOs or social enterprises to provide support and sustainable employment outcomes.

The study addresses this need by exploring how a community and curriculum can help create redemptive outcomes in a faith-based NGO or social enterprise based on the Greek concept of *koinōnia*. The study begins by exploring the historic and ecclesiastic concept of *koinōnia* in Ancient Greek politics and society (Stephanides, 2022) and early Christian communities (Sakupapa & Nalwamba, 2017). It then applies a grounded theory approach to explore Cambodian Christian leaders' perspectives of *koinōnia* before integrating these insights into a proposed curriculum and community in a social enterprise to create inclusive and dignified learning.

Koinōnia as the basis for community

From the earliest passages of Scripture, there is a clear emphasis on relationships. Christian theology emphasises how the triune nature of God is bestowed in humanity as they are made in His image (Puffer, 2017), so every person has an equal measure of the image of God irrespective of their qualities, class, wealth or gender (Marshall, 2001, pp. 57–58). While this concept, *imago Dei*, is a basis for individual worth, it requires a community to realise and affirm this (Marshall, 2001, pp. 58–60). In community, the *imago* fully reflects their nature to others (Henderson, 2015, p. 148) and is expressed in the Eucharist where the Apostle Paul believed humanity can know and express *imago Dei* irrespective of ethnicity, religion, culture or class (1 Cor. 10:16, Gal. 3:10-11) in communion with God and each other.

The New Testament term often used to describe this community is *koinōnia* which derives from Ancient Greek concepts of community, fellowship, joint participation, partnership and a shared gift, collection or contribution (De Maré, 2018). The root word, 'koinon' or "common to all" (Kenney, 1985), speaks of a community ranging in size from a single family to a polis who share a common goal (Stephanides, 2022). Despite differences in size, class and individuals, *koinōnia* provided unity around a central purpose and a sense of civic and collective identity for those living in the Greco-Roman world.

Balancing the tension of unifying individual identity with collective diversity was possible for Greeks through a sense of proportionality and collectivism. In its broadest form, *koinōnia* appealed to a collective identity held by individuals in separate Greek city-states who identified with others who held a 'common' language, custom or character (Stephanides, 2022). In separate city-states, there was a 'common' culture where everything from dialogue to resources should ideally be "shared among friends" (Forst, 2017). This duality suggests *koinōnia* may help societies bridge divides caused by genocide or apartheid (Marumo, 2019) or to advance or express 'democracy' (International IDEA, 2022). Given Cambodia's troubled history and efforts to build democracy, *koinōnia* offers a unique perspective relevant to the Cambodian context.

While *koinōnia* has a rich etymology and a long history in the Greek language and Christian culture, it is infrequently used in modern political discourse and has no direct English or Khmer translation. Despite a resurgence in the use of the term in the past 30 years, *koinōnia* remains largely centred around Christian theology and fellowship. There is limited research on *koinōnia* despite calls for more clarity on how to create *koinōnia* (Stephanides, 2022). Given this context, this study sought to explore:

1. How is the concept of *koinōnia* understood and applied within a Cambodian Christian context?
2. What can be gleaned from a Cambodian understanding and application of *koinōnia* that may support holistic development in a faith-based learning organisation?

Koinōnia in a Cambodian Christian context

Despite Christianity first arriving in Cambodia in 1555 (Ford, 2017), Christianity in Cambodia remains relatively nascent. Early missionary efforts were generally unsuccessful and most later French Catholic missionary activity focused on Vietnam (Ford, 2017). Although Cambodian Protestantism celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2023 (Thompson, 2023), Christians still only account for up to 2% to 3% of the Cambodian population (United States Embassy in Cambodia, 2023). Despite their small size, Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and NGOs operate approximately 228 religious (and mostly Christian) schools in the nation (United States Department of State, 2017) and a sizeable number of Christian medical facilities (United States Embassy in Cambodia, 2023). The presence of FBOs like the social enterprise in this study positions Christians to significantly contribute to community development and nation-building in Cambodia.

As with other Christian communities, the Cambodian church emphasises Scripture as a basis for their faith. While mirroring aspects of earlier Greek thought, biblical authors also broadened the concept of *koinōnia*. The term *koinōnia* in Scripture is derived from κοινός (*koinos*) which speaks of something held in common. From this base, derives *koinōnia* (often translated as fellowship) and *koinōnis*, or those engaged in *koinōnia* as partakers (Matt. 23:30, 1 Cor. 10:18, 2 Cor. 1:7, 1 Pet. 5:1, 2 Pet. 1:4), partners (Luke 5:10, 2 Cor. 8:23, Phm. 1:17) and companions (Heb. 10:33) as they share a common identity grounded in language, ethnicity or faith (Kärkkäinen, 2007). This identity was ideally expressed in an egalitarian community the apostles hoped to create in the church (Neufelder, 2012). This is shown when Luke states in Acts 4:32 that “the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common” (NKJV). This common faith and property was the basis

for a horizontal and communal relationship with each other and a vertical relationship with the divine (Oprean, 2021). Table One summarises the use of *koinōnia* in English and Khmer.

Table One: Use of koinōnia in Scripture

Verses referring to koinōnia	English terms used for *koinōnia*	Khmer terms used for *koinōnia**	IPA translation
Acts 2:42, 1 Cor. 1:9, 2 Cor. 6:14, 2 Cor. 8:4, Gal. 2:9, Eph. 3:9, Phil. 2:1, Phil. 3:10, 1 John 1:3, 1 John 1:6, 1 John 1:7, Phm. 1:5	Fellowship	សេចក្តីប្រកបគ្នា or ការប្រកបគ្នា (Fount of Wisdom, 2022)	*Səckdəy prakɑap knie* or *kaa prakɑap knie*
Rom. 15:26	Contribution	រែគ្នា (Institute Bouddhque, 1967c)	*Rey knie*
1 Cor. 10:16, 2 Cor. 6:14, 2 Cor. 13:14	Communion	សម្ព័ន្ធរវាង (Khmer Online Dictionary, 2023b)	*Sampʊən vʊəŋ* *Mien camnaek* *Səckdəy ruəp ruəm Knie*
2 Cor. 9:13	Distribution	ផ្តល់ (Institute Bouddhque, 1967a)	*Pdal*
Phil. 1:5	Fellowship	រួម (Institute Bouddhque, 1967b)	*Ruəm*
Heb. 13:16	Communicate	ចែកចាយ (Khmer Online Dictionary, 2023a)	*Caek caay*

Table One illustrates how *koinōnia* has no direct equivalent in English or Khmer but can be described as sharing, communion, participation and contribution (NKJV). A common Khmer translation is ‘səckdəy prakɑap’ which broadly translates to ‘fellowship’ with God or a Christian community. For this reason, koinōnia is almost exclusive to Luke-Acts and the epistles as these books explore the concept and foundations of the church. While this gives some context and basis for *koinōnia* in Cambodian Christian communities, Wyatt and Welton (2022) found Christian faith and interpretation of Scripture were significantly shaped by local

culture and beliefs. More research is needed to understand how Cambodian culture has shaped Cambodian Christian perceptions of community.

Koinōnia in support of Cambodian education

Despite earlier studies suggesting *koinōnia* may help in developing or recovering nations like Cambodia (Marumo, 2019), there is a dearth of literature exploring *koinōnia* in Cambodia and few current and contextualised Cambodian studies to directly draw from. Studies have conceptualised *koinōnia* in a Catholic education context (Lachner, 1978), illustrating how *koinōnia* can be more broadly applied but with little relevance for any contemporary study or a Cambodian context. Another study explored how a Cambodian ESL teacher, his US-based class of Khmer adults and their children created a supportive classroom community (Hardman, 1999) but did not directly relate this to *koinōnia*. This study and others focused on learning communities, demonstrate how these can improve learner achievement (Lichtenstein, 2005) as learners are more likely to succeed when the pedagogy encourages cooperative learning (Summers & Svinicki, 2007). Some studies even proposed instruments to measure classroom community (Rovai, 2002). While all these dated studies do not directly refer to *koinōnia* in contemporary Cambodia, they suggest a learning community – possibly in the form of *koinōnia*, can support or improve learning.

Research design

The study applied a grounded theory approach as it best fit the study context of limited Cambodian research, cultural-linguistic barriers and the absence of a pre-existing model, definition or use of *koinōnia* in the Khmer language. In Straussian grounded research, researchers avoid an extensive pre-research literature review (Glaser & Strauss, 1999) and focus on making meaning from emerging evidence. To do this, the primary author undertook initial interviews in English where he asked questions to recognised custodians of Khmer and/or Christian culture based on the term and concept of *koinōnia*. The researchers then worked to make meaning from these interviews and refine key terms and associations after these had emerged and been broadly defined in interviews and subsequent focus groups.

The use of grounded theory meant we approached the study curious and careful to explore where the evidence led rather than postulate and test a hypothesis. This approach precluded the use of cultural tests – which are often criticised as being permeated by cultural and ideological perspectives (Verma & Mallick, 1988) and encouraged us to use broad questions in semi-structured interviews. In addition to meeting the Cambodian government's ethical requirements for research, we made provision for all data collected in this study to be stored securely for seven years and for the study to apply ethical guidelines. To minimise any

biases and preconceptions, the primary author used a reflexive approach where he maintained a journal to document personal reflections and coding decisions.

Participant selection

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase interviewed a purposive sample of eight expatriate and Cambodian Christian ministry or technical and/or vocational education leaders with most having taught marginalised students. Four participants were Christian ministers experienced in vocational education (two Cambodian and expatriate males and females), one was a Cambodian theologian (male), one was a Cambodian manager and vocational trainer (female), and two were NGO managers (one Cambodian and expatriate female). All participants were adults and all expatriates had lived in Cambodia for over 20 years. Lastly, all participants understood the study was voluntary and they could decline to respond or withdraw at any time (no participant withdrew from the study). A participant summary with English pseudonyms is given in Table Two.

Table Two: Interview participants

Variables		Cambodian	Expatriate
Gender	*Male*	3	1
	Female	2	2
Education	*Vocational diploma*	1	1
	Undergraduate	3	-
	Postgraduate	1	2
Occupation	*Ministry leader*	2	2
	Manager	3	1
Sector	*FBO*	2	2
	NGO	1	1
	Seminary	1	-
	Business	1	-
Names of participants in this study		Belinda, Charlie, Manfred, Sam, Victor	Alice, Michael, Rachel

The second phase facilitated two focus groups with a purposive sample of four teachers (group A) and four students (group B). This phase sought to validate the emerging model and learner responses and to identify further strategies in how to implement these. All participants in the focus groups were Cambodian adults selected for their lived experience in teaching and/or learning in Cambodian higher education which made them distinct from interviewees who served in various Christian ministries. These focus groups helped broaden perspectives on how learning within a Cambodian context which was important as no women from the social enterprise were available for interviews or focus groups. In place of this, the study triangulated information from students, managers and social workers. A summary of focus group participants is given in Table Three. To differentiate between interview and focus group participants, Khmer pseudonyms were assigned to these participants.

Table Three: Focus group participants

Variables		Focus Group A	Focus Group B
Gender	*Male*	1	3
	Female	3	3
Education	*Undergraduate*	1	6*
	Postgraduate	3	-
Occupation	*Student*	-	4
	University lecturer	2	-
	Vocational trainer	1	-
	Secondary teacher	1	-
Names of participants in this study		Channary, Rithy, Socheat, Sokha	Chhorvon, Dara, Leakena, Manet, Mony, Vimean

*Note – these students are currently completing a bachelor programme.

Data collection and analysis

Steps were taken to ensure the study met the required ethics and quality measures. Participants were provided with an information sheet and interview schedule of likely questions, and they signed a consent form stating that they understood and agreed to the study requirements. Interviews were conducted in English and in-person in a quiet space

and away from distractions or online while focus groups were conducted online in Khmer by a Khmer researcher. Recordings and transcripts of interviews and focus groups were made available to all participants and a draft report for review which interviewees indicated accurately captured their beliefs and opinions. Initial coding was developed based on the research questions and used to create open codes that were analysed to create axial and selective codes. A reflective process of coding, summarising and journaling was then used based on the principles of storyline (Birks et al., 2009), to develop a theoretical model that had credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Towards a redemptive community

This section analyses interviews and focus groups to answer the two research questions and explore how *koinōnia* is understood and applied within the Cambodian Christian community. We then consider the challenges to fostering these in a Cambodian context and propose a curriculum for the social enterprise.

Understanding *koinōnia* in Cambodian Christian communities

While participants understood the term *koinōnia*, few used the phrase regularly. This was particularly true of Cambodians who used the Khmer term 'prakaap' and not *koinōnia* to describe fellowship. Yet even prakaap is unfamiliar to many Cambodians. As Victor said:

> *Because Christianity came to Cambodia later, the term prakaap (i.e. fellowship) was originally… used by [translators of] the first Khmer Bible… Not many Cambodian people understand the term. If you talk to a non-Christian, they will have no idea what you're talking about* (Victor, Pos. 5*).*

An alternate term – ប្រិយសម្ពន្ធ or 'prai sauphorn', could be used but like prakaap, this is infrequent in Khmer conversations. As Victor shared:

> *We don't understand what 'prai sauphorn' means because it's a technical term [for fellowship. Some] Cambodian or Khmer words… come from Indian Sanskrit… I'm not sure if the term koinōnia is heard from the pulpit or 'prakaap'. I'm not even sure how many pastors could explain [prai sauphorn]. I haven't heard of any* (Victor, Pos. 7).

While these terms may not have a clear definition for many Khmer Christians, these concepts are understood in Khmer culture. As Belinda said:

> *I am also involved with counselling. Some [of the terms used for] counselling are hard to explain too. But [Khmer] get familiar with it when they know how it works. If you go to them and say 'prakaap', they may not understand [the term] just like they*

> *may not understand counselling terms… [But] after we explain it, and I show them what it really means, [they get it]* (Belinda, Pos. 25).

While participants recognised that prakaap was a social term meaning 'eating together', they noted it had a spiritual dimension where people built deep and meaningful relationships that model Christ's love and service. Chhorvon believed fellowship:

> *Can build up spiritually. Sometimes when we are alone and fall, it is hard to stand up again. Fellowship means we partner to share our testimonies.* (Chhorvon, Pos. 7)

While this relationship may occur in Christian and non-Christian groups, many participants believed there should be a unique dimension to this type of community in the Christian church. As Charlie said:

> *There should be two [communities] at the same time. One is a normal community. The second will be a Christian community… When you have an intention to share Christ, you connect them to a community - we call it a Christian community* (Charlie, Pos. 18).

This Christian community is distinctly Christ-centred, intentional in fostering deep relationships to disciple other Christians and practical in expressing its faith. Participants pictured this fellowship to be akin to a loving family. As Michael shared how:

> *We have testimonies of individuals [who see his ministry] as their forever family. They understand family in a Cambodian context, but… this is a deeper family because they feel more loved and accepted within this family* (Michael, Pos. 4).

While separate, participants did not see this faith community being exclusive or closed. In contrast, all participants felt the broader *koinōnia* community was designed to feed into the faith community. Rachel explained how women:

> *[Engaged in the faith community because] of how they're treated. They're treated with this unconditional positive regard - love, care, etc. and they just soak it up like sponges… They're hungry to know more about this. So, they come to church because they've already been captured in their hearts by this love and kindness [in the broader community]. They're very receptive* (Rachel, Pos. 25).

While Rachel highlights the inclusive nature and strength of the broader community, several participants emphasised that membership in the broader community does not mean automatic transition to a faith community. Individuals must choose to transition to a faith community, and some people are unable to transition into either community. The challenges in building both communities and facilitating a transition to a faith community are discussed later.

Development of *koinōnia* communities

Consistent with the nature and occupation of most participants, *koinōnia* was often perceived in the context of ministry and education. Alice – a pastor and an educator, shared how there could be contextual overlap between ministry and education:

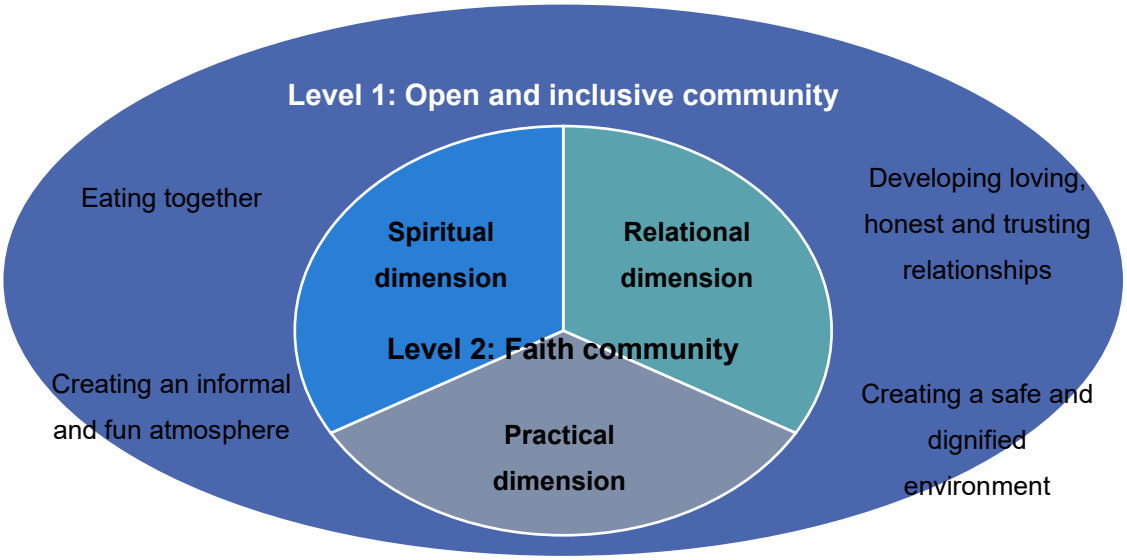
> *I've always seen [koinōnia] as a core understanding for relationship. It's a good word that describes what a relationship would be… So that's why I think koinōnia is a very important word in the Christian [ministry] context and in education, as you build relationships in schools* (Alice, Pos. 2).

Developing *koinōnia* in both contexts occurred in two levels with the first focused towards developing an inclusive community and the second focused on a faith community. While most participants experienced *koinōnia* in a faith community, several participants recognised that fellowship also existed outside of a faith community. As Socheat shared:

> *People [who] are non-believers have fellowship as well but in their own way. For example, [in Cambodia this could be] partying, having friends over, doing a Khmer BBQ, having food - that's all a kind of fellowship* (Socheat, Pos. 8).

A summary of this model and the key dimensions is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Development of koinōnia in a Cambodian context



Creating an open and inclusive community

All participants recognised the importance of an inclusive community that fostered strong relationships. For Dara, *koinōnia* brought unity as it means:

> *We do one thing together in one direction... [Koinōnia] unites us even if we are from different places as we have one goal and try to reach it together.* (Dara, Pos. 2)

While *koinōnia* had no consistent context or starting point, almost every participant linked prɑkɑɑp with a fellowship that came from eating together. As Rachel shared:

> *Sharing of food creates a sense of [koinōnia]. [In our workplace, it creates] this sense where it's not just the staff treating me with kindness, but my peers treating me in this kind way… Food is definitely a factor in terms of fellowship* (Rachel, Pos. 5).

While recognising a relationship between fellowship and eating, Channary noted how:

> *I don't see fellowship as only related to food or eating, but how people meet together. The purpose is [important as fellowship can be about] remembering how they miss each other, and they want to see each other* (Channary, Pos. 10).

While eating together could be non-religious and festive or Christian and associated with Communion, many undergraduate students like Leakana emphasised the importance of maintaining a fun or informal atmosphere which centred around interpersonal relationships. For Alice, this is important because:

> *I watch [Cambodians outside these communities] when they're with one another and I see the hurt… in their face. I think the challenge is to recognise that there is a thing called koinōnia… [and] agape love. This is an experience that you can have. Most of the time it must come through experiences* (Alice, Pos. 15).

While Alice ultimately hoped to bring people into a faith community, she first aimed to create an inclusive community. All participants believed this level of community was characterised by loving relationships that offered genuine compassion and support. For most participants, this relationship reflected fellowship like that of a Cambodian family. Belinda shared how:

> *In Cambodia, we focus more on relationships than knowledge. This means you are loved more [for who you are] than [what you] know… [Teachers must] start with true fellowship through unity, like in the family… [For Cambodians] the heart is what we lost in our broken history. [It started] in the family [and went] to the political [domain]. Every area was affected. That is why we need koinōnia* (Belinda, Pos. 2).

In recognising the need for community, all participants highlighted how this must be based on honesty and trust that was expressed in a safe and dignified environment. An attribute of this was confidentiality so there could be an authentic expression of personal identity and dignity. This was particularly important for Rachel and Sam as they worked with marginalised and exploited women. Rachel shared how:

> *[Women in our context have] zero self-esteem, zero hope in their life and zero sense of their identity besides being a sex worker who is trying to seduce customers… Because of this, they start to experience from day one this crucial element of unconditional positive regard. By that, I mean being treated with dignity, spoken to with kind, fair and nice words and being taught skills kindly* (Rachel, Pos. 3).

As an educator and social worker, Sokha felt trust was essential given the study context:

> *I think for women - especially Cambodian women, if we have a problem, we don't want to share. We will hide. I'm also a woman. I know this well. For us to help these women… [you must] provide mental support and build trust. Trust is very important for a woman, but how we can build that trust is difficult* (Sokha, Pos. 50).

Despite representing different contexts, all participants believed Cambodians need to belong to inclusive, safe and loving communities that create genuine fellowship and acceptance based on reciprocal feelings of trust.

Creating a faith community

The heart of a faith community is a desire to grow in a personal relationship with God and others and is expressed through practical, relational and spiritual dimensions. For most participants, this spiritual dimension was found corporately in reading Scripture, worship and prayer. Students like Manet, Mony and Vimean associated this with discipleship that fostered mutual, humble and honourable interpersonal relationships through sports, road trips or other joint activities. Alice shared how:

> *[In] those moments, you can really help others understand what agape love is or how [it] can change a situation… I feel my life is me living [koinōnia] and telling stories, [whether this is] frequently telling stories in my Bible lessons or using samples of people in the Bible who absolutely were able to have koinōnia* (Alice, Pos. 15).

All participants believed deep *koinōnia* relationships can shape interpersonal relations and enable transformation when people model Christ-like behaviours and responses. Charlie called this the ‘transformed life’ and believed this must be reflected in a faith community as:

> *A [Christian community] must have different means [of living] and not just a difference of possessions. There should be change in the characteristics of your behaviour, how you relate to people, the way you talk and model your family... For me, [this] community must be Christian* (Charlie, Pos. 20).

This faith must also shape how the community engages each other. Michael believed a faith community must have a relational dimension that encourages candid and deep sharing so:

> *Individuals start talking about [their struggles so], freedom comes, healing comes, understanding comes… [I sometimes] comment… "go deep or go home" because our groups are only going to go as deep as a leader goes deep* (Michael, Pos. 6).

Alice, Belinda, Rachel and Sam also shared this sentiment. Michael also shared how:

> *To go deep on a real level… requires a whole deeper [level of] community and… no [culture is] there yet. This is a biblical model of [community]... [as Jesus spoke] about community and bringing people together* (Michael, Pos. 18).

Like Charlie, Michael believed a faith community must be transformed and communal. An aspect of this communal life that was a practical dimension that shared resources. For Manuel, a *koinōnia* community resulted in:

> *Sharing resources like [in] the first-century church; like the resources that they put at the feet of the disciples. [They then asked] "How can this resource [be] used to expand God's Kingdom?"* (Manfred, Pos. 5).

While participants described faith communities differently, all participants believed faith communities must deepen members' faith, develop deep interpersonal relationships and serve others practically. While all participants recognised the value of a faith community, they also realised this was not possible or practised in Cambodian Christian communities.

Challenges in building *koinōnia* communities in Cambodia

Most participants discussed how *koinōnia* communities require careful cultivation over time and are not always successful. Challenges to creating and growing a *koinōnia* community came from incompatible socio-cultural or personal beliefs and values that conflicted with the Christian faith or historic trauma that came from past abuse. Alice shared how this left one student unable to understand how to do deep interpersonal relationships. She shared how:

> *I'll never forget that experience where he was fighting over [the idea of koinōnia]. When I encouraged the idea of koinōnia and [deeper relationships], he was getting hurt… Why should I get hurt? Why should I do this? When I explained it [he realised] that it's either you feel nothing, or you can feel cared for and important [while also at times] you can feel rejected* (Alice, Pos. 8).

Similarly, Sam shared how in her work with trafficked women:

> *Past situations [in the life of these trafficked women] means they cannot think about anything wider because they feel nothing changes… and they live without positivity… I want to say to them "[you can be] a role model, a decision maker, and an independent woman" and encourage them* (Sam, Pos. 4).

Belinda also felt this was a problem as many of the women she worked with came from broken families. She shared how:

> *We need a lot of patience… grace… [and] love to… relate to or reach these people and to bring them into fellowship. In Cambodia, we love fellowship. If you let them feel that you love them, it is enough… They want to be loved in the area where they're missing love* (Belinda, Pos. 19).

Rachel also shared how these women were most likely to leave their programme early as:

> *They haven't quite understood that this is a community that can help them… If they make it past the first month, they don't leave because by then they have experienced the love, care, kindness and community… But in the first week, they're still in fight or flight mode* (Rachel, Pos. 35).

Most participants also noted how the longer a person was in an inclusive community, the more likely they were to stay and transition to a faith community. While these challenges reflect the need for an inclusive community, it can be difficult to find or cultivate inclusive communities as this trauma continues to be felt – even in churches. Alice shared how:

> *Students would say to me, "You're so different than my pastor… if I say something that he doesn't like, he starts yelling at me and it's really hurtful. It makes me angry. I want to yell at him, but I can't cause he's older"... They're coming from the provinces [with stories about] the pastor [and] this is the only pastor they knew. It [feels] like a lot of that has changed. It's not as bad now as before* (Alice, Pos. 13).

This example was an exception and most participants had positive experiences with church leaders who helped develop inclusive communities. Rithy, a Cambodian pastor, shared how:

> *[Koinōnia] requires a good example. [I provide this example to]… a lot of men who I fellowship with… I often check with them to find out what they want to do… then I [organise events like volleyball]… and have the men pray… and talk about God… [If I make a mistake, I]… apologise and say "Sorry, it was me who made the error". If they slip when playing, I spend time with them and bandage up their wounds. [In this way] we always talk and worship together* (Rithy, Pos. 28).

Although most participants perceived church leaders positively, Charlie, Michael and Manfred believed the process of building inclusive communities was still a real issue in contemporary Cambodian churches. Manfred shared how:

> *The problem [in churches] is… 'institutional design programmes' [so] that we miss the fellowship and relationships we need to build the Kingdom* (Manfred, Pos. 17).

Other participants also noted how Cambodian churches often failed to build an inclusive community. Several participants linked this to shifting work patterns and a decline in the perceived value of community in Cambodian villages. Victor shared how:

> *Khmer [used to] have the Buddhist temple context and they lived in the same village and the same group. But in the city, people are from different places. This makes for different ideas of a community and no common definition… Everything has changed because, in the village, mostly middle-aged people leave the village for jobs. Only their elderly or older people are left* (Victor, Pos. 95-97).

Supporting this transition can be hard as Khmer often face personal financial pressures which makes them more likely to avoid or leave communities. Michael related how:

> *One of my leaders has two jobs. He still volunteers but… he's exhausted. Both of our Khmer women leaders work two to three jobs. They're exhausted but they've experienced freedom [in our community], so they want to be a part of it* (Michael, Pos. 20).

While Cambodia has improved socially and economically, significant challenges remain in creating and fostering *koinōnia* communities.

Discussion

The attributes of a faith community largely reflect how *koinōnia* is described in Scripture. The first time *koinōnia* appears is in Acts 2:42 (NKJV) where Luke says the church:

> *Continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers… Now all who believed… had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

Luke described how this *koinōnia* community had a common theology and worship (i.e. spiritual dimension), shared resources (i.e. practical dimension) and strong interpersonal relationships (i.e. relational dimension). The framing of *koinōnia* by Cambodian Christians demonstrates how Cambodian Christian communities have contextualised Scripture to their local context. This is positive given findings also showed the term *koinōnia* to be infrequently used and poorly understood – a situation mirroring other church communities who also wrestled to understand and apply *koinōnia* (Marumo, 2019). While evidence suggests it is possible to cultivate *koinōnia* in Cambodia, community leaders will benefit from further teaching and resources.

The concept of concentric communities reflects earlier Greek ideals for *koinōnia* that strove for a plurality that balanced the complexity of human interaction, inclusiveness and

collectivism. Like Greek communities in the Delian League who based *koinōnia* on a common Greek identity (Stephanides, 2022), this may support a flourishing Cambodian society as it provides a sense of Cambodian community and identity. While *koinōnia* communities in this study had a common ministry and/or education focus, they could plausibly focus on other interest groups. As larger or broader *koinōnia* communities are likely to be more impersonal, harder to manage and potentially less inclusive, these groups would likely benefit from integrated faith communities.

While often overlooked, concentric *koinōnia* communities are evident in the ministry and communities of the first-century Greco-Roman world. In each city, Paul engaged with different communities including philosophers (Acts 17:19), politicians (Acts 13:7; 25:23) and various religious leaders (Acts 9:1; 23:2) with varying degrees of success. His approach was to initially engage Jewish communities (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19) to form a Christian community within and from this group but when rejected, turned to other *koinōnia* communities (Acts 13:46; 18:7,8). The interwoven and close connection of Jewish and early Christian communities meant many Christians retained a strong Jewish identity and prayed and worshipped in the Temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 4:1; 5:20, 42; 21:26) and near other Jewish communities (Acts 16:14; 17:17; 18:7). From the life and ministry of Paul, we see tiered and interwoven aspects of *koinōnia* in the polis, temple, synagogue and church communities. In these examples, we see that the Early Church had a faith community within other *koinōnia*.

The interwoven nature of secular and faith communities requires care so there is genuine inclusivity and diversity of individuals yet authentic and orthodox faith. Participants in this study resolved this tension by describing separate communities as they felt inclusive and faith communities each emphasised a common but different common. A similar parallel exists when Paul reconciles differing roles and gifts within the Christian church in 1 Corinthians 12. Paul highlights a diversity of gifts, but the same Spirit (v4) a diversity of activities, but the same God who works all in all (v6) and a body with many members (Jews and Greeks, slaves and free) but one Spirit (v12 and 13). This common God who works in all provides a central reference point to the *koinōnia* community and sense of identity. Likewise, a shared Cambodian culture could create a common reference that enables diversity and inclusivity while allowing an authentic and connected faith community.

Despite common ideals, inequality will emerge in a *koinōnia* community in time as it grows. Though emphasised, this was evident in the social and communal hierarchies between learners and teachers, congregants and pastors and workers and managers. Community inequality was also present in Athens with its classes and in the Early Church with its divisions of Jews or Greeks, slaves or free (1 Cor. 12:13) and rich or poor (1 Cor. 4:8-13). While Athens *koinōnia* permitted class inequality, Stephanides (2022) argued this was

moderated by jointly emphasising public honours and merit. In practice, this meant fairly and pragmatically balancing inevitable inequality with ability, from a perspective of collective outcomes and with individual dignity. Paul demonstrates this in 1 Cor. 12:12-31 by emphasising individual members (e.g. hand, ear and eye) and the collective body. For Paul, individual 'weaker' parts are essential and less 'honourable' parts are dignified since the collective is more important than the individual. Based on this, Paul then ascribes ministry roles and hierarchy. While it is unclear if and how this was applied, outcomes are mixed with different *koinōnia* communities being egalitarian (Acts 2:42), while others had schisms (1 Cor. 11:21). While this may broadly link to modern debates of equality of opportunity and outcomes, *koinōnia* is distinctive in pragmatically considering collective benefits, honour, merit and human dignity.

While the context of *koinōnia* communities described in the study differed, all evidence emphasised that these require loving, honest and trusting relationships in a safe and dignified environment. One way to create an inclusive *koinōnia* community – what Prefontaine (2023) calls a 'safe container', could be by fostering an informal environment based around shared meals. In time, this may allow for a 'dialogic circle' with 'no sides' (Prefontaine, 2023) by building deeper and reciprocal relationships that serve each other and explore faith. The proposed curriculum seeks to facilitate this journey through peer-to-peer learning, reflective questions and a supportive redemptive pathway. Despite the success of similar AA and CR programmes, it is too early to know how successful this programme will be.

Findings suggest *koinōnia* communities in the villages, families and churches are threatened by shifting social trends. The issues of labour migration in Cambodia are widely recognised (International Organization of Migration, 2018), but little consideration has been given to the impacts on churches and Cambodian Christians. Participants felt *koinōnia* communities may influence personal and collective identities – a finding consistent with other studies (Haule, 2015), and may reduce access to safe and meaningful relationships – a factor that could increase mental health issues (Park et al., 2023). Furthermore, as this study highlighted the importance of trust in a *koinōnia* community, it is unclear how these changes will shape future social relations between community groups, businesses and the government given these can be tense (MacPhillamy et al., 2022). While the study has insufficient evidence to answer these questions, it suggests Cambodian society can benefit from faith communities building and maintaining *koinōnia* communities.

Towards a redemptive curriculum and further research

Drawing from these insights, the social enterprise developed an accompanying curriculum to support redemption in the marginalised communities served by the social enterprise. The curriculum drew on Freire's social constructivist approach (1970) so learners challenge their dehumanisation in a confidential learning community through conscientisation, a process where learners question their reality and sense of dignity. The pedagogy was modelled on Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Celebrate Recovery (CR), existing peer-to-peer recovery programmes focused on alcohol, smoking, drugs and depression recovery (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2023; Celebrate Recovery, 2023). Like AA and CR, it has a spiritually inclined 8-step recovery pathway based on the Beatitudes and *imago Dei* and drew from Henderson's *No Ordinary People* (2015) to be inclusive of diverse backgrounds, faith traditions and cultures by allowing inclusive language to explore questions of God and spirituality. The programme is also designed to be facilitated by a trained psychologist or counsellor who can work individually with learners to provide or coordinate additional support services.

The research also drew on the study to inform how lessons are conducted. In keeping with these findings, lessons are centred around food, personal reflection and trusting relationships that support and restore learners socially and relationally in a learning community as they reintegrate into society. The 90-minute lessons are based around the eight foci of the Beatitudes, which were chosen because they helped exemplify human and Kingdom values, with three lessons in each module. Each lesson opens by reviewing the programme purpose, the Serenity prayer and the programme guidelines and principles. Following the introduction, the facilitator shares a redemptive concept, and learners share their prepared personal reflections on this concept and their current development. During this time, learners can share their reflections, thoughts or concerns without interruption or group crosstalk. Following personal reflections, the facilitator introduces a short lesson on emotional intelligence with key terms, a short explanation, an activity and a reflective discussion. Lessons conclude with a simple assessment so learners articulate what they learnt and provide feedback, a closing prayer, and a short introduction to the next session.

While focusing on educated, urban Cambodian Christian communities align with the context of the social enterprise and may inform learning in Christian tertiary, vocational and higher education, it limits the study's generalisability. The study omitted the experiences of provincial Cambodian Christians who represent approximately 75% to 85% of the Cambodian and Christian populations (National Institute of Statistics, 2020) and at-risk or trafficked women who are future learners. The study findings could be strengthened by

exploring provincial and uneducated Christian communities and considering how these findings are relevant for approximately 97% of Buddhist Cambodians. Further research should validate the programme's effectiveness by interviewing marginalised learners and graduates in Khmer about their learning expectations, experiences and outcomes from the programme in their redemptive journey.

Conclusion

The *koinōnia* model presented offers insights to Cambodian leaders as they grapple with the past and transition towards being a developed nation. While the Cambodian context may be unique, the concept of *koinōnia* presents a powerful model to other leaders for fostering inclusive communities that have genuine fellowship, a safe and dignified environment and are based on loving, honest and trusting relationships. Lastly, this model signposts to faith leaders and communities what true *koinōnia* is by emphasising the importance of spiritual, relational and practical dimensions.

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Why are young adults in Western Australia leaving the church?

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Abstract

This article will discuss the relationship between cohesion, integration and reasons for young people leaving the church. In a phenomenological research project conducted in 2018 (Mullen, 2020) the author interviewed 15 young adults regarding their experiences of church – a mix of those who no longer attended church and those who still attended church at the time of the study. This research established that *leavers'* experience of church was one of dogmatism, and was originally analysed through a George Herbert Mead lens of symbolic interactionism in Mullen (2020). The original publication simply reported findings, however, this article will further analyse the research from an Émile Durkheim lens of social cohesion and social integration. This article will demonstrate that a Durkheimian focus on cohesion and integration causes the church to be perceived as 'bad', and religious dogmatism leads young people to leave the church and perceive it negatively. This article will argue for a new way forward through seeking dialogue, a new approach for churches to take in ministry, contributing to practice a potential way forward for churches.

As a church-going practicing Christian, I have significant interest in why young people are leaving the church, and the place of the church in the lives of young people. Having volunteered in youth ministries, worked as a school Chaplain, taught youth work degrees and am now completing a doctorate focusing on youth ministry, this is a subject close to one's heart. Australia's relationship with the church has changed significantly since 1966, and as a result this calls into question whether the church is perceived as good for society or bad. This article will present the results of a study conducted in 2018 into young people's experiences of the church, and analyse these results through the lens of Durkheim's concept of cohesion and social integration.

Cohesion

The origins of the concept of cohesion are usually attributed to Émile Durkheim, a French sociologist from the late 19th century, whose most notable work is his book, *Suicide* (Durkheim, 1897/1952). Durkheim's theory was based upon the premise that death by suicide was most common among groups of people that are least socially integrated, drawn from research which has been met with critiques (Kushner & Sterk, 2005) which will be discussed later. Durkheim posited that in order to reduce death by suicide, it is important to increase the individuals' social integration through socialising members of society into understanding their place as a cog in the machine of a stable society (Poole & Germov, 2019a). Durkheim believed cohesion to be the 'glue' that holds society together, and is essential for its functioning and stability (Poole & Germov, 2019a). Cohesion was achieved through each individual being integrated into society via having a role in society through their work, or through the *conscience collective* – participating in the consensus of shared beliefs (Poole & Germov, 2019a; Holmes et al., 2015). Hence, the individual's social integration could be argued to contribute to societal cohesion as a whole. Such a theory was important for a French society where a recent revolution had transformed society, hence, new ways of participating in society where needed (Holmes et al., 2015). This theory was later built upon by functionalist sociology, a category of sociology that describes society as a functioning machine that needs all

its parts to play their part for society to function with stability, proposed by Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons (Poole & Germov, 2019a).

Merton and Parsons added that aspects of society such as churches, schooling, hospitals, and so forth, were seen as having the latent function of socialising members into participating 'properly' (Poole & Germov, 2019a). Legal and punitive systems were seen as ways to deter and punish those who did not follow expectations, labelling them as 'deviant' (Poole & Germov, 2019a). Social cohesion theory assumes that as each individual plays their part, follows norms and performs sanctioned behaviour, it increases the individual's social capital, which in turn acts as a 'glue' for societal cohesion, which then in turn increases positive health outcomes (Carrasco & Bilal, 2016; Kushner & Sterk, 2005). It requires that all members of society hold shared values in order to adopt functional behaviours (Jensen, 2002), in other words, the *conscience collective* mentioned earlier. Hence, discussions of cohesion tend to focus on how to control the behaviour of, and assimilate, the individual for the benefit of societal stability (Carrasco & Bilal, 2016). Durkheim in particular saw religion as having an important role in such social integration, norming, and generating this *conscience collective* (Holmes et al., 2015). Aspects such as a shared belief system, shared ideas about what is 'good' behaviour and what is 'good' for society, and social integration into society could be aspects to how religion achieves this.

Recent research from the Scanlon Foundation indicate that Australian cohesion has been in decline generally (O'Donnell, 2023) until 2024 where it has remained steady (O'Donnell et al., 2024). However, their 2024 report showed that despite the "resilient cohesion" (p. 6, O'Donnell et al., 2024) that Australia is showing, the attitudes towards religion has declined. While negative attitudes towards Christianity have been slowly increasing, the 2024 report showed quite a stark increase in negative attitudes and decrease in positive attitudes towards all major religions in Australia. For example, 16% of the research participants had a negative attitude towards Christianity in 2023, but this increased to 19% in 2024. Conversely, positive attitudes towards Christianity decreased by five percentage points from 2023 to 2024. However, it is not just towards Christianity, but to all

major religions that attitudes have become increasingly negative (O'Donnell et al., 2024).

Formally, Australia has no established religion and has a formal separation of church and state, as per Section 116 of the constitution (Randell-Moon, 2008), despite a multitude of blogs, articles, and other popular media claiming Australia as a Christian nation (e.g., Donnelly, 2015; Zimmerman, 2014). Most arguments that claim this to be fact tend to neglect Aboriginal and migrant perspectives on faith and spirituality (e.g., Australian Christians, 2022). However, it is very clear that the numbers of people who associate with Christianity in Australia has changed significantly over the past 60 years. In 1966, well over three quarters (86%) of Australians identified themselves as a Christian, however, in 2021 this portion has almost halved to 43.9% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, 2017, 2022). On the other hand, those electing 'No religion' on census surveys increased to 38.9% in 2021 from 0.8% in 1966 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, 2017, 2022). This number is highest among young people at 44% (ABS, 2022). Young people's attendance rates to church are very low, resulting in an underrepresented population: according to Hughes (2013), young people represent 25% of the population but only 8% of the church population. Singleton et al. (2019) on the other hand found that 12% of Generation Z young people (defined by McCrindle et al., 2021, as those born between 1995 and 2009) attend a worship service weekly or more. This figure represents all religions, hence, the number of young people attending a Christian church would logically be much lower than the figure given by Singleton et al. (2019). Young people are clearly leading the 'exodus' away from the church, with each successive generation associating with church less (Bohr & Hughes, 2021). Hughes (2015) found that of the Australian young people who attended a church service at least once a month when they were 11, by the time they were adults 72% no longer attended a church and 46% no longer considered themselves Christian. This is a significant fact that has been met with moral panics over the loss of truth and morality (such as in Campbell, 2022) and the belief that Christian voices are being excluded or deemed irrelevant from political and public dialogue over major issues (such is described in Grant, 2022). Some view this decrease in significance of Christianity and an increase in diversity of religious views as a threat to societal

cohesion (Jensen, 2002). Some may use these changes to explain the decline in societal cohesion discussed above (O'Donnell, 2023). Regardless, this does lead one to question how people perceive the church, in particular, the young people who are leading the 'exodus' (a term borrowed from Smith and Denton, 2005).

Research methods

In order to understand why young people might be leaving the church, a phenomenological study was conducted among young adults aged 19 – 27 years old. Phenomenology is a research method used to investigate how people experience a phenomenon, in this case, the church. This age group was chosen because literature (Kinnaman & Hawkins, 2011; Hughes, 2013) showed it to be the age group when the so-called 'drop off' in church attendance was most significant. The phenomenology involved 15 open ended interviews in early 2018, seven of whom were female-identifying and eight of whom were male-identifying, eight who were still attending a Baptist church at the time of the research ('stayers'), and seven no longer attending a Baptist church at the time of the research ('leavers'). The interviews were conducted in a neutral location chosen by the participant, recruited through asking Baptist churches in Western Australia to refer potential participants to the researcher, and through flyers in a University psychology class and around the campus. Then, snowball techniques were used to recruit more participants. Two focus groups were intended to be conducted, one with stayers and one with leavers, however, due to lack of response from the leavers group only a focus group was conducted for the stayers to fact-check interpretations. A thematic analysis was then conducted, using a symbolic interactionist paradigm. Symbolic interactionism defines society as a web of interpersonal interactions, rather than an external structure (Poole & Germov, 2019b). This paradigm studies these individual interactions and looks for symbols of meaning in these interactions by empirically studying individual experiences.

The original study (Mullen, 2020) sought to understand why young people leave and stay in churches. This broad research question resulted in six themes of leaving and staying, which is fully explained in Mullen (2020). This study then re-analysed these results with the question of how these young people's experiences of

church relate to concepts of religious dogmatism, social integration and social cohesion.

Results

Intriguingly, the research elicited that some emerging adults stayed in church even when they had negative relational experiences and others left the church even when they had positive experiences. Once this curiosity was further analysed, it was discovered that the common thread among the stayers was a deep sense of spiritual connection in staying in church. Either they found that church was a place where they experienced God regularly (for example, felt close to God during worship or sermons), or they found a sense that they were part of something important by attending church (for example, by being part of transforming the culture of that church). Conversely, the common thread among the leavers was some combination of experiences of religious dogmatism, with a lack of spiritual gain from church attendance. The phrase *religious dogmatism* is used to describe experiences where religious authority figures or peers spoke, acted, or responded in ways that implied that their own perspective was the only correct perspective, with no allowance for others, a forcefulness of a particular belief, and a lack of openness to dialogue.

This was particularly relevant in the early months of 2018, where the Australian plebiscite on marriage equality was recent history. Many participants in the study expressed disappointment in the way public Christian leaders and pastors speaking from pulpits or other public forums expressed their disapproval of marriage equality. Participants felt that such apparent manners of speaking gave no allowance for a diversity of views, dialogue, or consideration for how LGBTQIA+ people might receive the words spoken. One participant expressed sadness for their gay friend, who was part of a church service where marriage equality was preached against:

> *I felt so bad for my mate- he should have a place where he feels like he can be ministered to, doesn't matter if he, if he's gay or if he's not gay, it [sic] should still be welcomed into church.*

This participant felt as though their church was not willing to accept anyone who did not conform to the 'norm' of heterosexuality, nor allowed congregants to express any affirmative views of marriage equality. Hence, leaders demonstrated

authoritative leadership styles that dogmatically did not create room for alternative viewpoints.

However, such dogmatic behaviours were not only exhibited by authority figures, but also by peers. For example, one participant spoke of an experience where they brought their non-Christian partner to a church service and the response of others made the participant feel they were no longer welcome: “I felt the stares … you could just tell by people’s body language that they weren’t as welcoming and so I was like I don’t really wanna [sic] go anymore.” This participant experienced a symbolic rejection from their church for not following sanctioned behaviour, internalising this rejection and choosing to leave. Another participant spoke of being stigmatised, for an unsanctioned behaviour that he did not in actuality partake in – social media posts that were interpreted as ‘partying’ led to the assumption he was participating in drunkenness and consequently was stepped down from a leadership role despite the fact that he had not gone to drunken parties. He then left because the stigma stayed attached to him, and the church no longer seemed useful: “So I would go, every now and then, but more and more just that stigma is attached stayed there and if I’m not gaining any real, you know, spiritual growth from it, didn’t see point of attending that church.” These peers demonstrated that the behaviour or decisions of the participant were ‘unsanctioned’ through body language, through stigmatising an individual based on rumours, and through reporting supposed rumours to authorities.

The interesting factor was that most of these experiences regarded what could be considered ‘grey’ or non-central areas. In other words, participants never spoke of receiving dogmatic treatment for beliefs about the deity of Christ, soteriology, the nature of God, and so forth. The experiences of religious dogmatism were more concerned with behaviour, or with politically relevant and contentious issues. For example, dogmatism was experienced in relation to behaviours such as perceived ‘excessive’ alcohol consumption, premarital sex, clubbing, being friends with non-Christians, sharing an apartment with the opposite sex, or non-regular church attendance. A participant commented on how these types of behaviours were demonised, while pride, gossip, and lying were ignored. These could be considered issues that might give someone the appearance of Christianity, rather

than the inner spiritual life of the person or their treatment of other individuals. Dogmatism was experienced in relation to contentious and/or politically relevant issues such as legalising same-sex marriage, legalising abortion, the role of women in church, Israel and Zionism. These were experienced through a church leader or a peer being uninterested in hearing an alternative viewpoint on a particular political or social stance or by giving placating or dismissive answers; through a lack of space to discuss doubts and ask difficult questions; through family members attempting to force views on these young adults or force them to church; or, through peers treating a person differently after discovering their different views or unsanctioned behaviours. Those who left as a result of such experiences of religious dogmatism had to face a choice: either they change themselves to fit the expectations of religious leaders, peers, and/or family, or, they had to leave the church so they can maintain integrity. The leavers evidently chose the latter.

Discussion

That these participants were forced into an 'either-or' scenario is clearly strongly relevant to this discussion of cohesion and faith communities in Australia. A Durkheimian lens might interpret these results by explaining that when authorities engaged in authoritative teaching and leadership styles, and placating or shutting down of alternative viewpoints, they sought to maintain a social homeostasis (Rodolfo, 2000). In other words, they aimed to keep the status quo in order to maintain cohesion and stability. In order to maintain local social cohesion and avoid conflicting stresses, the authority must enforce certain viewpoints. According to a Durkheimian lens, without such enforcement the group would descend into chaos, and hence, when there are dissenting views this is a threat to the stability of the group but also a threat to their own authority. These teachings and sanctioned behaviours then become accepted as the norm of that church community.

As a result, the congregants internalise these norms through the *conscience collective*, which they then reinforce to each other through disapproving body language, criticism, or reporting behaviour to authorities. These peers and family members treat those engaging in unsanctioned behaviour as 'other' (Holmes et al., 2015). They began to treat that person as someone they no longer owed solidarity

to, as someone who they believed no longer belongs. When study participants engaged in so-called deviant behaviours or held deviant beliefs, their peers responded in ways to reinforce the unsanctioned nature of such beliefs and behaviours. For example, when one research participant expressed supporting a woman if she decided to have an abortion, that participant received a strong negative emotive response from his peers, who then began to treat him as though he was no longer a Christian. These peers engaged in dogmatic behaviours toward the participant by acting as though one's opinion on abortion determined whether one was truly a Christian – even though this is not a central tenet of the Christian faith. According to a Durkheimian lens, their dogmatic behaviours may have been utilised in order to seek a stable and cohesive group by rejecting him – so that the group could be in agreement over a contentious issue and therefore experience cohesion once more. The group attempted to label this individual as deviant, a practice that makes those who agree feel more cohesion with one another (Holmes, et al., 2015). It appears that for participants, the impact of peers dogmatic attitudes held the same weight as authorities engaging in dogmatic leadership styles.

Alternatively, the theory of social integration could be used to interpret why these young adults left. When they experienced symbolic rejection, they determined that they were no longer welcome and so left the church. From a social integration interpretation, this could be used to explain that they no longer felt socially integrated into that community and sought communities where they could feel that integration. The example of one participant whose family demonised 'outsiders' fits well here. Her family repeatedly taught her that non-Christians are bad people, teaching her not to mix with them. She tried to believe in God, tried to integrate into the church community, but neither were possible for her. She was unable to build any meaningful friendships until she started to make friends outside of the church, discovering that they were not bad people as her parents asserted. Because she felt no sense of social integration as part of her church community, but felt social integration outside of the church, it felt logical for her that she left church and engaged with peers where she felt integration. Hence, the lack of integration in one setting led to finding integration elsewhere. This participant was treated as deviant by her family, disrupting the sense of cohesion within her family unit.

Durkheim also spoke about the concept of deviance as being a functional part of creating a cohesive society: conformity (rule keeping) is defined in opposition to deviance (rule breaking) (Holmes, et al., 2015). Hence, the way institutions and societies respond to deviance can reinforce it as unacceptable behaviour and create more social cohesion amongst those who continue to conform (Holmes et al., 2015). In this study, young people could be considered the 'deviant' ones, because they have attempted to challenge the accepted beliefs and notions of acceptable behaviours of their churches and peer groups. The concept of *Ideas Marketplaces* by Singleton et al. (2021) certainly has some merit in contributing to this discussion – since young people are able to 'shop around' for ideas and choose what they believe, they are more likely to hold eclectic views (Singleton et al., 2021). Young people would be able, through their smartphones, to explore different beliefs even within Christian denominations over what is the "accurate" interpretation of theological concepts such as hamartiology, eschatology, soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and so on. This increased likelihood to hold eclectic views could challenge those who wish to maintain a status quo of acceptable beliefs, norms and behaviours. This would clearly lead to behaviours, by leaders, family and sanctioned-behaviour-conforming-peers, to try and prevent dissent and encourage conformity – rejecting any belief that does not conform, such as what was seen through the behaviours of peers, family members, and authority figures experienced by participants in this study. Their attempts to enforce conformity are compounded by the loss of trust in the institution of the church as a result of the increase in public controversies involving the church such as sexual abuse allegations, sexism, corruption, and slavery (for example, see Cooney, 2005, Smith, 2007, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017, Westmore-Peyton, 2022, McKinell, 2023, Ward, 2023, Shorter and Riches, 2023). Singleton et al. (2021) claim that this is a significant factor for young people's decreased religiosity: they have lost hope in the church. Hence, the refusal of church communities to allow spaces for plurality and dialogue of different views – through enforcing the 'accepted' view/behaviour – as well as the controversies involving the church publicly, are driving young people away from the church. This is especially significant against a backdrop of what is becoming an increasingly pluralised society (evidenced by Singleton et al, 2021; O'Donnell, 2023). Hence, to hold a dogmatic

view in a pluralistic society is beginning to equate to being seen as 'bad' in Australian society. It appears that young people perceive a 'good' society both at the micro level (i.e., a church community) and at the macro level (i.e., all of Australia) is one where a multitude of values and beliefs are welcomed (Singleton et al., 2021).

Paradise lost?

Returning to Durkheim's theory of social cohesion, one could consider that this means the idyllic 'paradise' of social cohesion through a *conscience collective* is being lost as young people are looking for a place where they are not told what to believe. However, one main critique of Durkheim's theory of social cohesion and integration is that it assumes that when everyone believes the same thing (in the conscience collective), there will be cohesion. Some people might falsely assume, then, that Australia had great social cohesion in the early 1950s when the majority of the country identified with Christian values (and prior to the sexual revolution and Vietnam war protests). However, I would argue that Australia only would have *seemed* to have great cohesion (in retrospect) because the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were excluded formally from the census and from voting (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018), because women were "economically and politically subservient to men" and hence, silenced (Poole, 2019, p. 153), and the colloquially named White Australia Policy prevented non-white migrants from entering the country (Possamai, 2008), just to name a few. In other words, Australia was only cohesive in the 'paradise era' because marginalised groups were silenced. It was only cohesive so long as marginalised groups remained silent about their marginalisation and kept their opinions to themselves.

In a sense, the experiences of participants of this study echoes this idea. Participants could only experience integration into the community if they represented that which was deemed most acceptable to their authorities, peers and family members. If they remained silent when they disagreed – pretending to agree, if they toed the line with their behaviours, and if they never challenged the status quo – then perhaps they may have experienced integration and a sense of being part of a cohesive community. However, if they did not abide by certain behaviours, they were shamed into leaving so that the majority could experience cohesiveness

brought by a conscience collective (Holmes, et al., 2015). Hence, cohesion for the group could only be brought about when everyone agreed, and dissenters remained silent, or left. Young people appear to be no longer accepting this way of approaching faith, and are hence rejecting the church. This supports the findings by Bohr and Hughes (2021) that one of the main reasons young adults leave the church is because of rigid theology, demonstrating that this way of thinking is becoming less popular and those who hold it are seen in a negative light.

This seemingly puts the church into a somewhat awkward position, where they could take two stances. One, they could compromise on all values, affirm every behaviour and take the popular stance on everything. However, this would lead to the church no longer being distinct from the world, like the allegory of the salt in Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV). It might lead to more young people attending this 'edgy' church; however, they may find the church to be shallow and shift quickly with whatever is popular, losing the essence of what the church 'is'. It would be no different from a for-profit company seeking to capitalise on Pride Month in order to keep making more sales and remain popular, making sure to take down rainbows oat the end of the month. Alternatively, the church could go to the other extreme, and condemn publicly behaviours it does not agree with. It could be outspoken, hold protests, lobby the government, in order to try and prevent society from changing; in order to keep the church in a position of power and influence over society. This is the type of dogmatic attitude that is causing young people to leave the church, as evidenced by the findings of this research. This could also be considered an unloving and ungracious approach, certainly not reflecting the principle in 1 Peter 3:15: "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with *gentleness and respect*". How then, can the church maintain theological and moral integrity without slipping into dogmatic behaviours in an increasingly pluralistic society?

A way forward?

Perhaps the Durkheimian focus on cohesion is the wrong direction for the church. Cohesion as a concept has been critiqued for Durkheim's research methods

that underpinned the theory. Durkheim, in studying suicide, excluded deaths by suicide among stay-at-home-mothers and men in the army, claiming these were not true suicide (Kushner & Sterk, 2005). He then built his theory upon all other suicides, where he found that these other suicides occurred with those people who were not socially integrated (Kushner & Sterk, 2005). By excluding the forms of suicide from individuals because he claimed they were too integrated for it to be true suicide, this has undermined the whole thesis behind integration, and its link with generating cohesive communities and societies (Kushner & Sterk, 2005). Additionally, as discussed earlier, Durkheim's cohesion through the *conscience collective* requires that everyone agrees, and that those who do not are silenced, or that there are clear boundaries on who is 'in' and who is 'out' (Jensen, 2002). With these issues in mind, and a recognition that doctrinal conformity is not achieving the goals hoped for, perhaps a new approach is needed. Essentially a focus on a cohesive community would require either the church to conform *to* the world and follow its standards, or try to enforce conformity *on* the world by dogmatically insisting laws, culture and congregants follow its standards and doctrine. As argued, these are both flawed approaches if the church wants to be good for society. An approach that moves away from cohesion through consensus is needed.

Perhaps the approach instead is that of dialogue between diverse views, rather than seeking to enforce one standard view. Dialogue is sometimes used as a method of decreasing conflict between religious groups in Europe and can allow people who have different perspectives to discuss these and begin to understand the perspectives and motivations of the other (Orton, 2016). It does not require that the dialogue concludes with everyone agreeing, however, it can result in a deepening of one's own faith and own theological understanding (Orton, 2016). It does not require that one relinquishes conviction in pluralistic dialogue, but that one approaches dialogue with openness, humility, and a willingness to learn. In this sense, dialogue between diverse views can create the safety that participants in this study seemed to be seeking: safety to express their views and remain to be seen as welcome in the group, or safety to be accepted unconditionally rather than based upon their adherence to norms. Those seeking dialogue can certainly learn from youth work and psychology practices of mutuality: a focus upon *knowing* and *being*

known, mutual understanding and equal relationships, as opposed to seeking to correct and conform (Lester et al., 2019). If there can be a shift in church culture from social sanctions being placed upon individuals for nonconformity, towards a culture of approaching the *other* with the desire to understand and respect their viewpoint, this may prevent the experiences described by participants in this study. This, however, would require further research to identify whether youth and young adult ministries might already be engaging in dialogue, and whether it is a viable option to prevent conformity focused options.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that young people tend to leave the church when they have experiences of dogmatic attitudes. These dogmatic attitudes took the form of disapproving statements, placatory responses, shifts in body language, or change in treatment of that individual. The dogmatic attitudes were equally exhibited by peers, family members and authority figures alike, holding equal value. These attitudes and experiences can be understood through a Durkheimian lens of church communities seeking cohesion and integration through uniformity of beliefs (conscience collective), and the 'deviant' individual who does not conform must be treated in such a way to maintain that sense of cohesion through uniformity. Such a way of thinking is flawed because it is causing young people to leave the church, and this paper has proposed that a new method is required. This is perhaps utilising dialogue as a platform for seeking to know and to be known, rather than to enforce conformity. This is perhaps where the church can impact society once more – through creating spaces for humble, respectful, and unconditionally loving dialogue.

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Women Ordained for the first time in 2024 by Queensland Baptists: Why it took so long and what comes next

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Dr Pam Condie, OAM, has been involved in ministry leadership roles with young people, for most of her life. Pam grew up in Girls' Brigade (GB) and, as an adult, was a leader in local companies and at the state level in Queensland, including as State Commissioner. Pam also served in the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF). In civilian life, she has served as GB Queensland's State Training Co-ordinator, Project Officer for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DEA), her local church Administrator and, most recently, the Queensland Baptists' (QB) Archives Officer. Other roles have included serving on the GB Qld State Council, GB Australia National Council, DEA State Award Committee, Mueller College of Ministries Board, Mission Aviation Fellowship Australia (MAF A) Board (including four years as Board Chair), QB Board member, and South Pine Community Church elder. Pam was awarded a Medal in the Order of Australia for services to youth in Queensland in June 1999. She has served as president of the WRAAF Association Qld (2018-2022), is currently the WRAAF delegate to the Council of ExService Women (CESW), and has also served with Everyman's Welfare Association. Pam established the annual GB residential Leadership Development Course in 1992, serving as Course Director for 10 years. She remains actively involved in this course, currently serving as Staff Chaplain. Pam's theological training commenced at the former Mueller College of Ministries where she earned a Diploma of Theology. Pam then enrolled at Malyon College and completed a Bachelor of Theology, Grad Dip Theology, and a Doctor of Ministries (awarded August 2020). Pam's doctoral thesis explored *The Views of Queensland Baptists regarding the ordination of women*. Pam is married to David and they have three adult children.

Abstract

This paper examines the Queensland Baptist Assembly's landmark 2024 decision to permit the ordination of women, a significant shift from its historically conservative stance. Historically, the denomination's cultural alignment with male-dominated leadership structures and patriarchal family models reinforced the traditional gender roles within the Baptist community. Furthermore, the Baptist Theological College of Queensland, actively opposed women's ordination at the denominational level. Attempts to advance the discussion of women's ordination were repeatedly thwarted by a cautious denominational secretariat. The 2024 decision, influenced by factors such as revealing congregational views through research, individual church advocacy, and the growing concern of churches regarding centralisation, marks a pivotal moment for the denomination. By framing the motion as a matter of local church autonomy, the denomination garnered broader support for the change, than would usually be found in a handful of churches with large pastoral teams. However, the slow progress of women's pastoral opportunities in other Australian State Baptist denominations suggests that realising the full potential of this decision will require ongoing efforts to support and encourage churches to sponsor and employ women pursuing pastoral ministry within the Queensland Baptist context.

Introduction

Until 2024, ordination was not possible for women equipped, called and gifted to be pastors in Queensland Baptist Churches. This was despite other sister denominations making equal standing available to women, by the close of the previous century. Baptist women in the United Kingdom had been serving as ordained ministers since 1917 (Coltman, 2019), but it was not until 1978 that the first Australian Baptist woman, Morita Munro, was ordained by Victorian Baptists (Cronshaw, 1998). The following year, 1979, South Australia also approved women's ordination (Baptist Churches of South Australia and Northern Territory, 1979; Manley, 1979). Over the next two decades other Australian state Baptist denominations, with the exception of Queensland, accepted women's ordination or its equivalent. At its 1995 Assembly, Western Australian Baptists granted parity to women, recognising their giftedness and calling to ministry "without regard to gender" (Baptist Churches of Western Australia, 2014). In 1999, NSW & ACT Baptists followed suit (Hughes & Cronshaw, 2013). But for nearly one-quarter of the twenty-first century, Baptist women in Queensland continued to be denied recognition of their calling to serve God as ordained ministers until, on 2nd May 2024 at its 147th Annual Assembly, Queensland Baptists finally voted to ordain women (Elsmore & Cathie, 2024).

This article will review the history of change that has brought Queensland into line with other Baptist state denominations. It will bring focus to the particulars of the debate and vote, and will consider what this realistically means for women's participation in pastoral leadership in Queensland, particularly noting the progress, stalling and backwards steps of some comparable denominations. Finally, a hypothesis of future opportunities for women's service alongside men in Queensland Baptists will be given.

Early History of Women's Acceptance in Pastoral Ministry

The issue of women in ministry leadership has had a chequered history within Queensland Baptists. For decades Queensland Baptist women, and many men, sought to have women's gifting and calling to ministry leadership recognised and accepted as being equal to that of their male colleagues. In comparison to women's involvement in leadership roles in other Australian state denominations, and overseas examples such as the United Kingdom, the leadership of the Queensland Baptist denomination has also remained significantly male-dominated.

It is 40 years since the prospect of Queensland Baptists (QB) ordaining women was first raised officially. In February 1985 Frank Stone, former General Superintendent of the Baptist Union of Queensland (BUQ), presented a well-researched discussion paper to the BUQ executive supporting women's ordination (Stone, 1985a). Despite support from denominational leadership, repeated Assemblies failed to accept such a move until it was finally passed with considerable support at the May 2024 Annual Assembly. Why did QB grapple with this issue for so long? Historical research revealed that such opposition was not originally the case.

In 1912, Queensland woman, Janie Bell requested theological training for the ministry. After passing the entry exam she was accepted by the Queensland Baptist College but for reasons now unknown did not pursue her studies (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1997a). Over 40 years passed before another woman, Belle McMahon, also applied for theological training in 1955. However, McMahon did not receive a similarly straightforward response such as Bell had experienced.

Whereas Bell's request had been dealt with directly by the College, in marked contrast, BUQ, the College, and the then Home Mission Department were all involved in considering McMahon's request. Further research was carried out nationally, as well as internationally (the United Kingdom and Germany) before this application was accepted (Stone, 1985a). One may ask, to [mis]quote Professor Julius Sumner Miller, *why was this so*? (Miller, n.d.) The answer to this question can be found in the two significant influences which may be seen to have affected QB during the years between these applications. First, from the 1920's onward, Queensland's growing societal conservatism resulted in its "reputation [as being] the most conservative state in Australia between 1968 and 1989" (Lewis, 2012); and second, the impact of the American Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in shaping QB's direction in the post-World War II era. Following the 1959 and 1968 Billy Graham Crusades, QB became increasingly involved with the SBC.

Arguably, the mid-60s involvement in the Australia-Missouri Crusades deepened the growing focus towards adopting Southern Baptist methodologies into QB churches. The SBC's growing trend towards patriarchy and insistence upon male-headship/female submission in both home and church life discouraged women from functioning in ministry leadership and saw the withdrawal of women's ordination in the latter decades of the twentieth century (Hughes & Cronshaw, 2004). Howe states the SBC also refused to "endorse the Equal Rights Amendment" (Howe,

1982; Southern Baptist Convention, 2016). These factors suggest their impact upon the traditionally male-dominated QB denomination deepened grass-roots level resistance to the concept of women's ordination. Hence the reaction to McMahon's 1955 application for Theological College entry.

Queensland Baptists and Women in Ministry

1955-1978

McMahon's request did herald the beginning of a new era, however. Following College Principal Warriner's paper on the biblical teachings, McMahon was admitted to the Baptist Theological College of Queensland (BTCQ) for the requisite three-years' study in the newly established *Order of Deaconesses* (Stone, 1985a). Although graduating deaconesses were commissioned, not ordained, BUQ regarded "commission" to mean "for life" (Stone, 1985a), and during the 17 years the course was offered (1955-72) 18 women undertook the course (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1997a; Stone, 1985a).

Deaconesses undertook many ministerial responsibilities in churches and BUQ over many years but "only three served as Pastors in their own right, in the same country church because of a shortage of men." (Stone, 1985a) Frank Stone (BUQ Secretary 1956-70; General Superintendent 1970-81) believed deaconesses' abilities and dedication compared favourably with their contemporary male colleagues and that they could function independently as pastors (Stone, 1985b). However, the Order lapsed during the 1960s-70s, a failure that Stone blames on women's realisation that there was "no meaningful and satisfying ministry in being a deaconess…women had begun to consider the role as…that of a "second-class minister" (Stone, 1985b). Although two Australian state Baptist denominations, Victoria and South Australia had resolved the issue favourably (Stone, 1985c), Baptist women in Queensland could only watch from afar.

1979-1989

Ordination *per se* was on the Annual Assembly agendas for 1979, 1981 and 1984. These Assemblies endorsed recommendations concerning guidelines for ordination candidates, without mentioning women (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1979, 1981, 1984). However, the issue of

women in ministry leadership could no longer be ignored as two QB churches independently appointed women to supervisory pastoral roles.

In 1984, Windsor Road appointed Dawn Courtman as a pastor with several ministry oversight responsibilities (Windsor Road Baptist Church, 1984). Then in March 1986 the Holland Park church appointed Dr Dorothy Harris to their pastoral team to train pastors and missionaries. Articles featuring this appointment were published in *The Sunday Mail,* (Hammond, 1986) *The Queensland Baptist* (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1986b) and *The Australian Baptist* (Australian Baptist Churches, 1986).

Situated between these two events, Rev Frank Stone's paper, *Ordination and Women,* which recommended women's ordination, was brought to the 1985 Assembly but failed to gain acceptance (Stone, 1985c). The meeting resolved that the College Faculty be asked to prepare a biblically based paper on both ordination and women's role in ordination for distribution to the churches during 1986 (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1986c).

BTCQ's paper "The Ordination of Women", presenting a case for and against women's ordination with no specific recommendations, was distributed to all QB churches in 1986 (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1986c). Whilst stating, "the ordination of women is out of the question" (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1986a), the paper offers options retaining "both the principle of male headship and the right of women to be ordained" (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1986a). The College's second paper, "Ordination Among Queensland Baptists", concluded women's ordination was untenable because "male headship is a continuing biblical principle" (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1986b).

The 1986 Annual Assembly deferred these College papers to the 1987 Assembly (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1986c) on which occasion both the Executive paper, *Ordination – Executive Recommendations*, and the proposed *Definition of Ordination* were accepted. However, the issue of women's ordination was deferred once again, to the 1988 Assembly (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1987). Finally, the 1988 Assembly discussed women's ordination resolving that women not be ordained but could be accredited as pastoral assistants functioning in full-time team ministry pastoral care roles (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1988).

Continuing Challenges

1990-2009

During the final decade of the twentieth century, the issues of women's ordination and women in ministry leadership re-surfaced. Four events and their outcomes are of particular interest.

1. Response to 1992 Annual Assembly keynote speaker.

During Assembly 1992 the keynote speaker, Dr Gordon Moyes, addressed the QB Women's Ministries Conference. He challenged QB women to accept greater ministry leadership roles and responsibilities, citing early church examples of prominent women leaders. Moyes argued the contemporary problem was neither theological nor biblical but was, at its heart, "our attitude towards the role of women in the church" (Martin, 1992a).

Moyes's address featured in the *Queensland Baptist's* October edition. The editor, Suzanne Martin, attracted considerable criticism for publishing the report and was accused of using the denominational paper to promote a feminist philosophy. Martin, a young journalism graduate, resigned in 1994 after which the denomination tightened its control over the paper's content (Martin, 1992b, as cited in Manley, 2006). The next two matters concerning QB women in ministry leadership were outcomes of the 1997 Assemblies.

2. Assembly decides no change for women's role in ministry

At the 1997 March Half-yearly Assembly, the discussion paper "Women in Ministry in Queensland Baptist Churches" presented five questions:

- "Should women even be in ministry?"
- "Should the status quo simply continue?"
- "Should women be restricted to team ministry roles?"
- "Should women function as solo or senior pastors?"
- "Should women be ordained?" (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1997b).

Assembly Minutes state no changes to the current situation could be expected at least in the near future (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1997c).

3. Election of QB's first woman President declared invalid.

Although not an issue of women's ordination, the circumstances surrounding the traumatic aftermath of the 1997 election of BUQ's first female President-elect, Helen Smith, are indicative of the denominational attitude towards women in senior leadership positions. In addition to Assembly Minutes, articles published in two national publications addressed this particular incident. Throughout Assembly, Smith was relegated to the background and denied the traditional opportunity of briefly addressing the delegates to acknowledge her appointment and no photos were taken to commemorate the occasion. Smith's election was challenged later in the day on a point of order and then deemed invalid (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1997c; Groves & Morrison, 2005; Manley, 2006a, 2006b). All those elected were re-nominated for new balloting at Special Assembly to be held in December.

At the December Assembly, Smith was the only member of the Executive not re-elected (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1997c). It is on record that "one person cheered when the result was announced…[and]… immediately the vote was taken a large number of people left", despite there being further business on the agenda (Groves & Morrison, 2005).

4. Women accredited as Pastoral Assistants.

Over the next nine years supporters were encouraged as some positive steps forward were achieved. The first of these occurred two years after the Smith episode when women were able to be officially recognized as pastoral assistants. The 1999 Assembly accepted Guidelines for Accreditation of Ministers, previously approved by the March Half-Yearly Assembly. The Guidelines stated BUQ's official position regarding women as follows:

> …women are not accepted as applicants for accreditation as Ordained Ministers, Un-ordained Ministers, or Student Ministers. Women may be accredited as Pastoral Assistants and have their names included in the list of Accredited Pastoral Assistants provided they are to function in an ongoing pastoral care role in a team ministry (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1999).

Steps forward continued when the 2004 Annual Assembly approved the recognition of women as Registered Pastors, rather than Pastoral Assistants, but continued to withhold ordination (Baptist Union of Queensland, 2004). The on-going denominational history regarding the ordination of women may be traced through archived denominational documents including Assembly Minutes, Ordination Guidelines (Baptist Union of Queensland, 1999), the 2004 Quinquennial Review and the 2008 Ordination Review Committee (ORC) report (Nickerson, 2008).

In October 2006, nine years after the Helen Smith debacle, Lorraine Walker was inducted as President of Queensland Baptists (Baptist Union of Queensland, 2006a). That same Assembly approved a motion instructing the Board to appoint an Ordination Review Committee (ORC). Scope included: "Who should be ordained?" and "Should women be ordained?" (Baptist Union of Queensland, 2006b). However, when the ORC recommendation that QB ordain women was brought to the May 2009 Special Assembly, it was again rejected (Baptist Union of Queensland, 2009). This outcome prompted the online blog *neoBaptist* to publish an article "Why Queensland Baptists won't ordain women" (Fetting, 2009). Nevertheless, the next decade would see some progress.

2010 - 2024

In a paper published in 2011 Baptist historian, Dr Anne Klose, commented on the need for QB to determine whether responsibility for ordination lies with the denomination *per se* or with the local church as recommended by Grenz (Grenz, 2000; Klose, 2011) . Progress was made when the 2013 Assembly accepted the revised *Registration and Ordination Guidelines* (Queensland Baptists, 2013). Women could now become Registered Ministers, but ordination was still denied. The matter lay in abeyance for another 10 years. In the Discussion paper circulated in 2023, the Board cited three factors that had prompted their decision to revisit the issue:

- Several churches had requested the issue be revisited;
- Condie's doctoral research showed 64% of Queensland Baptists supported women's ordination;
- The number of qualified women already serving as pastors who believed God had called them to this ministry (Queensland Baptists, 2023a).

The topic was placed on the 2024 Annual Assembly agenda (Elsmore & Cathie, 2024).

Ordination Allowed by the Queensland Baptist Assembly

In 2023, the Director of the QB Movement, Pastor Jason Elsmore introduced a proposal for women to be ordained in Queensland Baptist churches in a manner that would emphasise the autonomy of the local church (Hendrick, 2023). This emphasis would create a pathway for churches who wished to ordain their already registered female pastors, but held enough emphasis

on local church autonomy to reassure churches that were conservative on the issue, and that this change was not being forced upon them. The passive language used appeared to be enough to reassure some churches that their conversative interests were protected. The key changes explained by Rev David Elvery, were firstly, that a local church, rather than the candidate, would initiate the process; and secondly, that the church would have representation on the ordination recommendation committee, which had previously been a specially appointed sub-committee of the Queensland Baptist Ministerial Committee assessment panel.

Consistent with many significant changes made by the denominational services group, a twelve-month consultation process would be conducted in time for a refined motion to be put to the assembly in 2024 (Hendrick, 2023). Questions or comments were made by six male pastors, one female pastor and one female lay person (Hendrick, 2023). The general tone was one of urging civility and gentleness in the upcoming debates. The exhortations alluded to the stress experienced by women particularly in the 2008 and 2009 assemblies: a phenomenon understood from conversation with affected women but had not been formally recorded. A year of consultation before the 2024 Assembly vote followed.

The passing of the vote at Assembly in 2024 for women to be ordained

On 2 May 2024 the Queensland Baptist Assembly passed by secret ballot:

> That local churches have a more significant participation in the ordination process including the identification of men and women as candidates for ordination according to their theological understanding of ordination and of who may be eligible and subject otherwise to the Registration Guidelines (B8.04) as amended from time to time (Elsmore & Cathie, 2024).

After the counting of the votes, between other items of business, the assembly was notified that the motion had passed. There was no expansion, prayer nor other moment to mark the significant milestone. The Queensland Baptist denomination did no social media, press releases, nor any other public communication to announce the significant change.

Concerns over loss of local church autonomy

A key issue for delegates and pastors was the importance of the preservation of local church autonomy in a climate of increasing centralisation of governance. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic some Baptist pastors and members were highly concerned at the swift, centralised

action taken by the government and communicated through denominational bodies on the health measures taken on matters such as vaccination and restricting group gatherings. These anxieties found particular focus in documents such as the "Ezekiel Declaration" (Littlefield et al., 2021) with the ideas later expanded upon in the book published by two vocal Queensland Baptist Pastors, Matthew Littlefield and Tim Grant (Littlefield & Grant, 2022). Their arguments on the importance of individual liberty and church autonomy were met with some sympathy among many in a time when local church congregations felt a loss of control over their worship practices to the higher authority of secular government. While the churches most concerned with the ideals of conscience, may also be observed to have been conservative in their views on the role of women in ministry, their voiced anxieties put local church autonomy on the agenda. Pastor Tim Eyschen at the 2023 Baptist Assembly (Hendrick, 2023) began his comments with an explanation that he did not see a biblical mandate for women to serve in pastoral ministry. He did however, credit Dr Anne Klose, lecturer in Baptist Distinctives at Malyon College (the Queensland Baptist Theological College), for teaching him that autonomy of the local church is a key Baptist distinctive. In the interests of this distinctive and intellectual honesty he flagged his intention to vote in favour of women's ordination. The words of this student pastor were compelling in their honesty and logic and likely represented what became a sizable group of voters at the 2024 assembly. Many who voted in the affirmative on the grounds of church autonomy, expressed confidence in the prediction that women would never be ordained in their local church. The denominational leadership's choice to emphasise church autonomy was a smart emphasis to get the vote over the line but left little mandate for the specific nurture of women's leadership in the next few years.

What came next

The new process was not made available to churches until 26 June, 2024 (Pieper, 2024). While on the surface the change would appear to be only a matter of order, the understanding of how church endorsement would be established was not universal. Many evangelical churches, including Queensland Baptists, have broad statements of belief that make no mention of gender in leadership. Changes to the language and eligibility of women into leadership roles are more likely to be scrutinised and criticised than other staffing changes (Matthews, 2022). The availability of the new process was communicated to churches through the QB Hub, a weekly

internal email, with little fanfare. The denominational roll-out of eligibility for women to be ordained was quiet, bureaucratic and not discernibly celebrated.

In 2024, two female pastors were ordained. Firstly, Karen Haynes was ordained at Life Point Christian Church on 10 November. Rev Haynes completed the necessary study and experience requirements for ordination in 2012 while serving at North-East Baptist Church. Since 2016, she has been served as a full-time Air Force Chaplain, endorsed by Queensland Baptists (Campbell, 2024). Lorraine Pfeffer was ordained the following week on 17 November at Ashgrove Baptist Church, where she had served in ministry with a focus on pastoral care since 2005 (Ashgrove Baptist Church, 2024). Hoa Trinh, Queensland Baptists' only current female senior pastor, and a small number of other women are most likely to navigate the ordination criteria in 2025. Women likely to be successful, will have been employed in large churches as pastors, have undertaken theological study in Baptist institutions and have churches that have expressed confidence in their ministry as indicated by their use of equal language to describe the ministry of the women they employ (Queensland Baptists, 2024). Other women who are currently serving as pastors will need to navigate the minimum recognised work requirements, further study, and the unclarified positions of their church communities when considering whether ordination is a beneficial milestone for their ministry.

Queensland Baptists Trajectory in light of Sister Denominations

Comparison to New South Wales and ACT Baptists

Despite having had ordination for women for over 25 years, New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory (NSW & ACT) Baptist Churches have not experienced impressive growth in women's participation in pastoral ministry. In the 2023 Queensland Baptists Directory, 20 women were Registered Pastors (with an additional three women holding a dormant registration) out of 334 Registered Pastors (Queensland Baptists, 2023b), a 5% representation on a headcount basis. This is a generous expression of the numbers given women are more likely to hold part-time roles. This figure contrasts with the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT whose 2024 figures

show 32 accredited women out of 296 Accredited[1] Pastors or 10% (G. McWhitter, personal communication, 29 August, 2024). Women have been eligible for ordination in the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT since 1999 (Thornton, 2020). The difference of just a 5% proportion between NSW & ACT Baptist Churches and Queensland appears relatively small given the twenty-five year head start on ordination. While accreditation and ordination are different processes, for most pastors with a sense of vocational call, ordination represents a key milestone in realising this calling. Having had the full pathway of recognition open to women for twenty-five years, the experience in NSW & ACT is still one of challenge for women to be able to navigate this journey. The eligibility of women for ordination is thus only one ingredient required to see a more equitable proportion of women enter and maintain pastoral roles.

Comparison to Western Australian Baptists

To consider where the future may lie, a state denomination in a similar cultural context to Queensland may be a more useful model than Queensland's neighbouring state. Western Australia, like Queensland, is a large state geographically with a focus on resources and agriculture, but smaller in population, 5.5mil in Queensland vs 2.9mil in Western Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2024). In the spring of 1995, following a task force review, the Baptist Assembly accepted the recommendation that the denomination eliminate ordination, leaving accreditation as the denominational instrument of recognising gifting and calling of pastors, accessible to both men and women (Baptist Churches of Western Australia, 2014). Since the mid-1990s women have had a continued presence in pastoral ministry, but the numbers are humble. Looking to 2021 data, the Baptist College, Vose, had a female student participation of 37.14%. While 12 out of the 60 students studying for accreditation were female, just 9 out of the 12 were accreditation candidates. Twenty-two pastors across Western Australia were female, with only one in a full-time senior role (Velebir, 2021). The Western Australian level of female participation in pastoral ministry appears commensurate with Queensland Baptists, also boasting strong levels of women studying at the Baptist college, but with registered pastors in the low 20s and only one female senior pastor (Queensland Baptists, 2023b). Pastor Christine Velebir, one of Western Australia's pastors, argues that more than permission, a cultural change including an

[1] State-base Baptist Unions around Australia use the language of "accreditation" to denote pastors with a professional recognition and ongoing professional development. Queensland changed the term to "registration" in 2009 in order to communicate increased professional development expectations.

intentional program of role-modelling, advocacy by Baptist institutions and the patronage of influential men is needed (Velebir, 2021). It is reasonable to suggest that without initiatives to support discernment, encourage employment and provide opportunities, then women's participation in pastoral leadership in Western Australia is unlikely to see significant growth.

The ongoing challenge to realise the change across Queensland

A trajectory of greater participation of women in pastoral roles is not necessarily a guaranteed prediction. In Queensland, churches can turn from egalitarian back to complementarian relatively quickly, given the congregational construct that in practice is reliant on the Senior Pastor for biblical interpretation. Women's leadership is not seen as a key issue for busy members, while contemporary churches have become adept at spotlighting enough talented women to avoid appearing prejudiced (Matthews, 2022).

Churches are the gateways to discernment, sponsorship and development of pastors. Encouragement or discouragement in early years of discernment is highly influential. An opportunity for women to serve in leadership requires the sponsoring pastor to have an egalitarian framework, high confidence in his (usually male) ability to navigate reputational concerns, as well as a high degree of egalitarian leaning from much of the formal membership. The likelihood of these factors all breaking out in favour of women's sponsorship are low. Thus, Queensland Baptists' history of engagement, or lack thereof, would indicate that, in many Queensland Baptist churches, women are unlikely to discern a call to pastoral ministry.

Without vigilance, progress can be lost

Gen Z women's numbers are falling

While women have traditionally outnumbered men in the churches, Australian Bureau of Statistics, NCLS data and anecdotal observation all point to a slow yet steady exodus of young women who no longer see a place to belong, in large part due to their perceived secondary status and concerns about abuse of power (Gaddini, 2022; Graham, 2024; Shorter & Riches, 2023, Medhora, 2024). Researchers note that women under the age of 28 in particular are concerned about male-dominated structures and their lack of opportunity to meaningfully participate in leadership and decision making (Medhora, 2024). Whether openly acknowledged or not, a

growing body of research and resources are pointing the church to dangers of male-only voices in making institutions less safe for women and children (Common Grace, 2018). The steady decline in young women's participation in church may cause evangelical churches, including Baptists, to consider the root causes of this.

Defunding Women's Ministry

As a denomination, Queensland Baptists does not focus on women's discernment or development while it does set aside resources for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) leadership development. At the same 2024 assembly, the decision by the Services Group (affirmed by the assembly) to defund denominational Women's Ministry was announced (Hendrick, 2023). This followed the national trend of closing state-based denominational women's ministry in favour of a more integrated approach (Baxter, 2023). For Queensland Baptist Women, the denominational Women's Ministry events were one of the few opportunities women had to see and hear women preach if they did not attend one of the handful of churches with women preachers. At a national level, the Australian Baptists have created a new body to specifically focus on empowering the leadership of women (Gan et al., 2023). Queensland Baptists have not communicated this new venture, nor placed any paid senior leaders of the denomination onto the task force. So, while women's ministry in other states has transformed from ministry to women to empowering the ministry of women, Queensland Baptists, at a denominational level no longer resource either cause.

Presbyterians Backward Steps

It can be observed there is a quiet expectation in the mainstream of the Baptist movement, that there is an inevitable slant towards "progress" with regards to the inclusion of diversity, whether by ethnicity, gender, class or educational background. This confidence is not based on data or experience, but likely the vague notion that the church will keep up with society's best progress based on common sense and its own survival instincts. Such a view denies the instincts of the small groups of leaders, that as a cohort, benefit from the narrow selection criteria of church leaders to men like themselves, and in plenty of cases, their sons. The Presbyterian Church in Australia paints an obvious picture of regression of progress. With the amalgamation of churches in 1977 into the Uniting Church, the continuing Presbyterian Church has lost its more progressive and centrist churches. With this change it was simultaneously understandable by the

numbers, but shocking to Christians' assumptions, that access to ordination for women was removed in 1991 (Downie, 2012), while ordination and privileges attached were retained for already ordained women (The Presbyterian Church of Australia, 2010). The assumption that ordination for women in Queensland Baptists has settled the matter of allowing women to contribute according to their gifting and calling is premature. The opportunities for women to meaningfully serve in pastoral roles in Queensland Baptist churches remain limited and may even reduce if a backlash is released by conservative churches and not meaningfully countered by the denomination and engaged "middle" churches. Given the lack of concerted championing of women's development by the denomination, a growth in participation appears permitted but neither expected nor encouraged.

Role Modelling and Discernment

Women's lack of role models may be an issue for women discerning their future, an issue which society and business at large are motivated to correct (Paule & Yelin, 2022). Seeing women lead in a local church or preach outside of Mother's Day is a novel experience for most Queensland Baptists. Whether members are cognitively aware of this or not, exclusion is caused by benign neglect or system design. Consequently, the chances of women discerning a call to ministry leadership drop with a lack of role models who could demonstrate a legitimate and practical means of exercising their God-given gifts.

Christian churches across Australia are seeing a decline in pastors available for full-time vocational leadership at a senior or solo level (MacBride, 2023; Mitchell, 2020). Clare Steel, CEO of Compassion Australia, argues that women need to be visible as church leaders for younger women to be able to see themselves in such roles (McCrindle, 2020). Conversely, as highlighted by the numerous "firsts" in the history of Baptist ministry, a sense of calling can be a powerful enabler for women alongside supportive male counterparts. The idea that women will discern a calling to ministry without female role-models belies the Baptist distinctive of discernment within a local church setting. Pastors, deacons and the church membership are expected to take an active role in identifying believers gifted and suitable for pastoral leadership. While the requisite gifts are often identified in young women's service in children's, youth and worship ministry, they mysteriously disappear when considering those who would be suitable for vocational ministry. The pipeline of potential talent that churches can identify is very healthy,

when looking at young, emerging leaders. Project 11 is a Queensland Baptist Services Group program designed to support local churches foster emerging talent. The percentage of women in the program was 53% in 2022 and 2023 and 51% in 2024 (Mandall personal communication, 29 July, 2024). If the future mimics the past, most of these women will not proceed beyond deputy or ministry leader roles to pastoral, eldership or diaconate appointments without significant culture change in the local church's view of suitable pastoral leadership.

Some Realistic Challenges

The change made to allow women to be ordained, is a historically significant moment while simultaneously keeping the system structured towards male dominance in leadership. The path to ordination requires sponsorship by local churches, heavily reliant on their senior pastor, a long course of expensive study, an expectation of full-time pastoral employment while navigating hostility toward part-time work and work breaks to bear children (D Elvery personal communication 21 February, 2022). Given the numerous systemic barriers to the inclusion of women in the church and denomination in pastoral and leadership roles, one can surmise there is unlikely to be an influx of women heading towards ordination and life-long vocational ministry in similar number to men. Instead, women are likely to be found leading in the context of team and bi-vocational ministry as more often befits their lives of holistic service (Zikmund et al., 1998).

The eligibility of women for ordination may be hindered by the extensive study requirements. The path women may utilise is more likely to be the vocational path with a particular emphasis on equipping bi-vocational pastors from non-English speaking backgrounds (Malyon Vocational Training, 2024). This path focuses on more affordable, shorter and practical study. Such a path would be more appealing to women who need to manage career breaks and portfolio careers, while tending to caring responsibilities and having less opportunity to realise the economic benefits of higher education. To date, no CALD women have used the program to seek registration, but three women have used the Diploma of Christian Ministry to achieve registration since it was made possible in 2017 (C. Thomas, personal communication, 3 October, 2024). While the Ministerial Services Committee is currently not open to allowing a break from registered ministry for the purposes of bearing and raising children (D. Elvery, personal communication, February 21, 2022), it can be supposed that this will become the norm as a

younger generation of pastors seek to take a more equal and active role in parenting their children (World Economic Forum, 2024). The changes to theological education brought about by the merger of Malyon and Morling, as well as the refocus on ministry pathways, will give Queensland Baptists the opportunity to consider the issue of study (MacBride, 2024).

The changing nature of church ministry teams may give further opportunities to women. As churches experiment with a more diverse composition of pastoral team members, women are likely to be included in higher numbers. Whether the denomination will move in a timely manner to cater for greater specialisation of ministry or remain committed to prioritising the full-time vocational model remains to be seen. The low prioritisation of the Ministry Worker registration, also endorsed by the assembly in May 2024, points to the immediate focus on full-time, long-term pastors (Elvery, 2024; Queensland Baptists: CGSG, 2024).

A Conservative Evangelical Culture Remains

Queensland Baptists is an evangelical denomination, in federation with other Baptist state-based denominations that are linked through Australian Baptist Ministries. Arguably, Queensland has the most distinctively conservative tradition (Condie, 2020; Hope, 2023), with the slow take up of women's ordination being one sign of a singular approach to evangelistic faith while other states hold together a broader range of evangelical belief and practice. Given this narrow focus, Queensland Baptist churches are the most likely to imbue a gender essentialist view of pastoral leadership. In this view, men are expected to serve through agentic leadership behaviours, while women are expected to demonstrate communal leadership behaviours (Dzubinski, 2016). For most Queensland Baptist churches, the eligibility of women for ordination is therefore a theoretical change with little application to their congregation. This is despite a challenging lack of pastors in their thirties and forties making themselves available for Senior or Solo pastoral ministry (MacBride, 2023; Mitchell, 2020). Women will be expected to contribute to the life of the church through the gendered roles of children's ministry, pastoral care, music and administration and titled as workers and assistants rather than as pastoral leaders. Women who expect to be given the tools of equitable remuneration, title and authority to accomplish their assigned objectives are likely to be penalised for their "unfeminine" behaviour (Dzubinski, 2016; Eagly, 2007; Koenig et al., 2011). History and the current situation would suggest that Queensland Baptist churches, for all their progress in technology, safety and community

connection, remain gender-essentialist in their approach while other Queensland faith and non-faith based organisations reach for greater input from women.

For Queensland Baptists there lie two possible pathways ahead for greater participation of women in pastoral leadership. First, that the denominational leadership, at a board and vocational leadership level will change direction and champion the pulling from a broader pool of church members in the task of discerning pastoral calling. Second, that the churches themselves will pursue to a greater degree more specialist teams made up of part-time pastors. This structure would suit the inclusion of more women who tend to have greater non-linear, portfolio careers where specialist skills have been developed. In the meantime, a symbol of recognition of calling has been gained for the few women who can navigate the existing congregational and organisational hurdles. Whether the pathway will become wider and more welcoming of women remains to be seen.

Conclusion

2024 has been a break-through year for Queensland Baptists. The denomination now demonstrates parity with other states in allowing women to access the entire pathway of study, registration, and ordination in support of their calling to pastoral ministry in Queensland Baptists. The pathway to opening this opportunity was unusually long as key figures in the denomination and Bible College opposed, or failed to support, efforts to allow women to access these mechanisms. Condie's doctoral research demonstrated that Baptist congregants supported women's participation in these mechanisms to a higher degree than had been demonstrated by the voters at the Baptist Assemblies (Condie, 2020).

The vote to allow women to be ordained, reemphasising the sponsorship of the local church, tapped into the highly valued distinctive of autonomy in the local church. The lack of fanfare or publicity following the change signalled the denomination having put a controversial issue to rest. The experience of NSW & ACT Baptist Churches as well as Western Australian Baptists points to the likelihood that while women will continue to serve in pastoral ministry roles in Queensland Baptist Churches, there is unlikely to be strong growth in either numbers or seniority. To see a greater participation of women in pastoral leadership, more work involving supporting discernment and creating opportunities would be needed.

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Pastoral Reflection

Pastoral Theology and Practice: Personal Reflections

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Introduction

Scripture urges an unequivocal call of scripture to all believers, not just clergy or Christian professionals, to care for others. This paper affirms existing pastoral activities in the home, church or community, but aims to stimulate an even deeper commitment to a love for and knowledge of God, the creation, the self and humanity.

My reflections are shaped by an upbringing in a clergy home, my own sinfulness, and ongoing biblical study. While grateful for an evangelical heritage and Reformational theological college, my graduate studies helped bridge a disturbing gap between scripture and culture, with Bible as a lens through which to understand God and society. My own interaction with Christian thinkers has played a more formative role than church worship, sermons and music.

I've been challenged firstly, by Jeremiah's criticism of the religious leaders of Judah:

> *The priests did not say, "Where is the Lord?" Those who handle the law did not know me; the shepherds transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit (2:8).*

Secondly, by Jesus's frustration with contemporary religious leaders:

> *You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but cannot interpret the signs of the times (Matt. 16:3).*

Thirdly, by Christ's call of the twelve:

> *to be with him* (Companionship)*, and to be sent out to proclaim (Gk. kerussein) the message* (Communication) *and to have authority to cast out demons and to cure every disease* (Confrontation) *- Mark 3:14f, Matt. 10:1.*

Anyone seeking to nurture disciples of Jesus might reflect on these provocative statements. If scripture is a sharp sword calling for a change of heart, mind and life (Heb. 4:12), too much evangelical preaching does more to comfort than admonish: to explain scripture, but not life.

It was in my loneliness as an undergraduate away from home, and through the support of a caring pastor, that I read *Search the Scriptures*[1] and sensed God's intimacy and love. It was only after a year at theological college, with its cerebral approach to everything, that I read the *Psalms* and Calvin's *Institutes* devotionally,

[1] https://www.ivpress.com/search-the-scriptures .

which lifted me out of a disconnected faith. An older friend and earlier graduate of the same institution shouldered me through the remainder of my training there.

Pastors often experience, among encouragements, a good deal of pain, disappointment and frustration, which explains why many are leaving the ministry or are burnt out. Some were never cut out for an integrated approach to pastoring and teaching, lacking adequate emotional intelligence.

Reflections on parenting, ministry and mission work in Asia and Africa can lead to a sense that our toil has often been in vain. Observing God's interest in and care for us and the creation reminds us that the way of the Cross inevitably involves suffering, troubles and heartache, mixed with joy and satisfaction.

This was certainly the case for Moses (Numbers 11:11-15), Jesus and the early church. The call to costly discipleship has been muffled today by the consumer-driven thirst for the good life.

God's pastoral interest and care are reflected in the visits to Adam and Eve in the garden and to the enslaved people of Israel in Egypt (Exod. 3:7f):

> *I have observed the misery of my people ... and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians*

in the regular call:

> *Don't be afraid for I am with you, ... I am your God* (Isa. 41:10)

and in the care of the Good Shepherd (Ezekiel 34, John 10), who seeks the lost, binds up the wounded, feeds the hungry and lays down his life for the sheep.

The apostle James reflects both the prophetic and wisdom traditions:

> *religion that is pure and undefiled before God ... is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world (1:27).*

Throughout our marriage my wife and I have opened our home to needy and often wounded people. Though costly, we take God's word seriously. With this background, we turn to some seminal parts of the Bible.

Scriptural Clues

A reader might well expect a focus on the gospels and epistles for pointers to the nature and practice of pastoral ministry – the ministry of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount or Paul's spiritual gifts and 'one

another's'[2] - to which all believers are called. We begin, however, with the creation narrative and its pointers to 'ministry'[3] and pastoral care.

Order from chaos, light from darkness (Gen.1: 1-4). Into the formlessness and chaos ('an uninhabitable waste'), God brought order and light, suggesting that only God's word or wisdom can dispel our confusion and lostness. In helping anyone deal with shame, doubt or fear, we must always seek God's light and truth as a filter for other human suggestions. It was only after Adam and Eve listened to an alien voice that sin entered their world (Gen.3:1, 'Did God actually say?), whereas ten times in the opening chapter, the repeated refrain is, 'God said … and it was so'.

Created in God's image for relationship, discovery, work and rest (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:3). The trinitarian hint in the words 'let *us*' (1:26, 'like one of *us*', 3:22; cf. Isa. 6:8), and in the meaning of 'image and likeness of God', suggests that God wants to share life with humans in a way that reflects God's own nature, shown through God's interest at the cool of the day in their work (3:8). My own pattern with intentional friendship is to pose questions about these four dimensions of human activity, often asking Jeremiah's question ('Where is the Lord?') as the basis for discussion. With 'discovery', for example, I might ask, 'What are you learning about God, yourself, your relationships, the world?' With 'rest', I may ask. 'How do you balance priorities (work, exercise, sleep, diet, family) so as to make worship central?'

Maleness and femaleness suggest oneness of purpose, yet difference, as equal partners and stewards of the earth, commissioned and blessed by a wise and benevolent Creator. The Hebrew word *ebed* in Gen. 2: 15 ('tend and guard' the garden), has both secular (work) and sacred (serve) connotations, indicating how such projects are sacred. The word 'servant' is often used of a person accountable to a superior: 'my servant Abraham' (Gen. 26:24). The word can mean 'tend', work or 'cultivate' (soil) - whence 'culture'. If 'serve', then working the earth and economic production are acts of devotion, and must never be exploitative or self-serving. Butcher, baker and candlestick-maker alike have sacred tasks[4]. The poet John Milton found comfort

[2] https://www.mmlearn.org/hubfs/docs/; https://overviewbible.com/one-another-infographic/. E.g. Gal. 5: 13, 'through love serve one another'; Eph. 5:21, 'be subject to one another'; Gal.6: 2, 'bear one another's burdens', or his pastoral prayer for the Philippians (1:3-11). Dr. Bill Walker suggested that applying the idea of Jesus as 'the way, the truth and the life' to a unifying pastoral strategy might be another pathway into this discussion. Over-emphasising truth, as many evangelical churches tend to do, is often at the expense of 'practising his way and experiencing the abundant life Jesus came for' .. where truth itself 'is personal and found in Jesus.'

[3] The NT use of the Greek *diakonia* encompasses the call to serve the poor and oppressed. Its root meaning is acting as a go-between, referring to a wide variety of practical and spiritual tasks that many different people, not just the first apostles of Jesus, do in service to the Christian communities. Note Gal. 2:10's call by James, Cephas and John for Paul 'to remember the poor'.

[4] 'A cobbler, a smith, a peasant—each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops', Martin Luther, *An Open Letter to The Christian Nobility* (1483-1546). 'The number of pages theologians have devoted to the question of transubstantiation—which does or does not take place on Sunday—for instance, would, I suspect, far exceed the number of pages devoted to work that fills our lives Monday through Saturday', Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: A Theology of Work* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 69.

and hope even in blindness: 'God doth not need either man's work or his own gifts: who best bear his mild yoke, they serve him best ...They also serve who only stand and wait'[5].

The word *shamar* (guard, keep) is used again in Gen. 3: 24 to refer to the cherubim and flaming sword God placed in Eden 'to guard the way to the tree of life', protecting God's temple-garden from harmful intrusions. Adam and Eve were supposed to be caretakers of a lush forest, with its river, fruit trees and wild life. The serpent should have been banished, not welcomed by the primal couple. Later on, the Korahite gatekeepers of the Temple enforced the death penalty on trespassers in the house of God. They had responsibility (*shamar*: 'watching over', 'guardians' of its security, 1 Chron. 9: 19, 27).

Cain's sarcastic reply to God's question, 'Where is your brother Abel?' (i.e., the shepherd, v.2), is 'Am I my brother's keeper or protector (*shamar*)' – to shepherd the shepherd? Pastoral ministry involves guarding the 'flock' from evil or danger – a key parental role, but with broader application.

Parents as nurturers and gatekeepers passing on the faith. Parenting is a priestly-pedagogical or pastoral task that is often neglected by churches:

i. Gen.18:19 – God called Abraham to command his children and household to guard (*shamar*) the way of the Lord by practising what is right and just, thereby fulfilling God's promises. Note the connection between talking and modelling: children aren't fooled if they don't observe their parents walking the talk. Jesus was the Word incarnate who 'became flesh and dwelt (lit. tabernacled, encamped) among us and we have seen his glory ... full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). The work of equipping saints for service and thus building up mature Christians (Eph.4:12, Col.1:28), must give far higher priority to parental, alongside kids' or youth formation. After all, from birth upward, parents spend most time with their children – not clergy or Sunday School teachers - and need mentoring.
ii. Deut. 6:4-9 – Parents must drill their children in the scriptures[6]. It's not a hit or miss task, but has a clear intentionality – an unremitting process of education, through a series of opposites: sit/walk (being at rest/active), lie down/get up. Love for God is a full time, every circumstance project[7]. A clergy friend wrote: 'I found it interesting to learn that in the Church of England, it was normal practice in the 17th century for the father to discuss, teach and inquire of his family, including servants, the content of the morning's sermon after Sunday lunch.[8] Most sermons today are forgotten after coffee, unless people discuss in a small group or forum.

Shepherding. At the time of the judges, 'there was no king (*melek*) in Israel, [so] all the people did what was right in their own eyes' (Judges 21:25). They clamoured for a king 'like other nations' (1 Sam. 8:5). Despite

[5] https://www.owleyes.org/text/on-his-blindness/read/text-poem.
[6] The Shema here was the foundational principle of the Ten Commandments, the essence of God's covenant with Israel, pointing out the nature of God and the need for a deeply ingrained heart response.
[7] See also Ps. 78:3-8, Eph. 6:4, 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14f: handing on the tradition to the next generation includes grandparents.
[8] Revd. Dr. Robert Ireland, March 10th, 2025.

Samuel's objections, subsequent rulers, with few exceptions, proved failures. David, however, grew up as a shepherd, protecting sheep from danger - a man 'after God's own heart' (1 Sam.13:14, Acts 13:22). Yet even he was reprimanded by the prophet Nathan via a shepherding parable (2 Sam. 12). The word 'shepherd' (*roeh*) was a 'common ancient Near Eastern metaphor of a king as shepherd of the people'[9]: 'Saul was king (*melek*) over us ... The Lord said you (David) shall be shepherd (*roeh*) of my people ... ruler/leader[10] (*nagid*) over Israel' (2 Sam.5:2).

The prophets were critical of most Israelite rulers, David a deeply flawed exception. Ezekiel's condemnation is savage (Ezek. 34), but pointing ahead to the Good Shepherd (John 10: 1-18, 27-29) who would lay down his life for the sheep (1 Peter 2:25 - Jesus the 'shepherd and guardian (bishop) of your souls'). Note the link between 'shepherds [pastors] (*poimenas*) and teachers (*didaskalous*)' in Eph.4:11[11]. Clergy formation should give priority to *both* functions, testing background, personality type, skills and experience in candidates before commencement.

To teach and admonish one another, for Paul, is the task of the whole community (Col.1:28). Warning aims at repentance and teaching at faith, producing insight and wisdom (maturity) gained from the gospel.[12] Admonishing can mean correcting error, instruction, accountability and mutual encouragement. Maturity (*teleios*) is grounded in the outworking of God's purposes through union with Christ: 'actualisation of the redemption in Christ in personal and corporate Christian living.'[13]

Mentoring and discipling. When the Creator strolled through Eden (Gen.3:8), he revealed his nature as relational, interested in the everyday lives and work of his creatures – God with and for us along the journey. Moses had this unique relationship with God who used to speak to him 'face to face, as one speaks to his friend' (Exod. 33:11). Jesus called the twelve to be with him, to proclaim[14] the message, to heal the sick and cast out demons (Mark 3:14f, Matt. 10:1). Companionship with Christ was the key to the growth of the early church: travelling the roads with him, observing him with others at weddings and in homes, watching miracles, listening to his questioning and teaching, witnessing his suffering and crucifixion, learning to pray, responding to the 'Great Commission'. His call to 'love one another as I have loved you', and to lay down their lives for others[15], is followed by the remarkable claim: 'You are my friends (*philous*) if you do what I

[9] SL McKenzie, *Dictionary of the OT Historical Books*, eds. Arnold, Williamson, IVP, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2005, 212.
[10] Thus avoiding ancient pagan mythologies around the word 'king' (John Woodhouse, *2 Samuel – Your Kingdom Come*, ed. R Kent Hughes, Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2015, 147).
[11] ie. 'some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and teachers', the latter pair suggesting two functions in the one person. The Message version reflects this well: 'pastor-teacher'. Significantly, Paul referred to himself as a 'herald (*kerux*) and an apostle and a teacher' (2 Tim. 1:11). Note his reflection on his own pastoral relationship with and influence on Timothy: 'You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me' (2 Tim. 3:10f).
[12] E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1971, 77, footnote 72.
[13] David Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2012, 133.
[14] The word 'preach' carries the limiting connotation of 'sermonising' (e.g. NASB, ESV, NIV, but cf. NRSV 'proclaim'), where the Greek means 'announce', 'declare', 'publish'. Even Paul saw himself as a '*herald* (*kerux*), apostle and teacher.'
[15] e.g. the self-emptying mindset and servanthood of Christ in Phil.2:1-11.

command you. No longer do I call you servants (*doulous*), for the servant doesn't know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you' (John 15: 14f).

I've found over the years that prayerful and intentional friendship, listening, teaching[16] and transparency are key to effective long-term pastoral care.

Conclusion.

Among other influences, several scriptures and personal experiences have shaped my own pastoral theology and practice. To reiterate, parents ideally, or faithful servants outside the family have the primary formative role in guarding and nurturing Christian belief and character within a family (e.g. Lois and Eunice, 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:14f)[17].

Until churches allocate more thought, effort and finance into educational support of parents, then current pastoral, preaching and pedagogical strategies may miss the mark. Parents need help in guiding their kids to train their faculties by practice to 'distinguish the good from the evil' forces, in their studies and the embedded individualism and idolatry of our culture and social media (Heb.5:14). At a congregational level, worship and sacrament, instruction and pastoral care all need to bridge the gap between scripture and culture, disturbing members[18] out of their comfort zones, and forming mature members committed to i. gospel proclamation, ii. prayerful servant leadership and iii. confrontation of the powers of darkness. The call of Jesus (Mark 3:14, 15; Matt.10:1) hasn't been withdrawn. Pastoral practice that honours God via proclamation, instruction, modelling, admonishing and mentoring, will therefore demonstrate a balance between guarding the truth and promoting 'maturity in Christ' (Col.1:28)[19].

[16] Note Paul's advice to his 'mentoree' Timothy: 'Take the things you heard me say in front of many other witnesses and pass them on to trustworthy people who are also capable of teaching others' (2 Tim. 1:2, modelling).
[17] Jesuits say, 'Give us a child till he's 7 and we'll have him for life'.
[18] Bill Walker: 'True, but many are wounded, & casualties. Some need disturbing, but others are already disturbed enough to be right on the edge (like many among us who are struggling and desperate to hear those words of hope which speak as a balm into their brokenness)'.
[19] Or again, 1 Tim. 1:5 - 'love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith'.

Book Reviews

Ighofose, Carol S. and Joyphen Henry et al. *Dementia and the Church: A Practical Guide*. Dementia.uk, 2023, 162 pages.

Christian ministry with people living with dementia is experiencing real growth in terms of the number of books being published. *Dementia and the Church: A Practical Guide* (DC) is an important new offering from the United Kingdom.

Indeed, it is the first book in this context to be written from a Pentecostal Christian perspective. While other key Christian dementia authors come from a range of denominational backgrounds (e.g. Elizabeth Mackinlay is an Anglican minister, John Swinton is a Presbyterian Minister and Kenneth Carder is a retired United Methodist Bishop), their denominational perspectives are not dominant in their writing. The only other significant Christian denominational dementia resource I am aware of is Dementia: Hope on a Difficult Journey by Adrian Treloar, which has a strong Catholic flavour.

The other significant contribution of DC relates to it authors. Specifically, seven of the eight contributors are female, though this is unsurprising as most of the world experts on dementia spirituality are female. DC also accurately notes women are more impacted by dementia both in terms of diagnosis and caring for loved ones living with dementia. What is perhaps more important is that all the authors are black. Again, as DC correctly notes, people blessed with significant melanin are more likely to develop dementia than their paler peers. Therefore, a black perspective on dementia and faith is a critical one. Certainly, John Swinton, the preeminent dementia theologian, is of African-Caribbean descent. However, John does not normally write from this perspective and his multi-author works have typically had contributors from multiple races, although John is currently working on a project focused on dementia amongst African Caribbean people, which is exciting.

DC has an easy reading style, clear chapter heading and, at 135 pages, is short. This makes it ideal for its intended audience: church members, families and caregivers.

I enjoyed and was challenged by 'Introduction: Dementia has no boundaries', chapter 1: 'An overview' and chapters 6a and 6b 'living with someone with dementia' which were basically biographies. 'Chapter 5: The law and dementia', covered an important topic

but some of the material is not easily transferable outside the United Kingdom as different laws apply.

My biggest concerns were that DC did not engage with the literature about dementia spirituality, and while Bible verses were found throughout the text, they were more in the form of memory verses rather than detailed exposition. A less significant 'problem' is there were three books titled 'Dementia and the Church' published in 2024; thankfully they all have different subtitles. I believe DC is the best of the three.

Overall, I think DC will be core reading for people interested in a Black Pentecostal Dementia theology, and particularly in the United Kingdom. I would also recommend it as an introduction for churches looking to start engaging in dementia ministry.

Ben Boland

Seniors Living Chaplain (Churches of Christ in QLD)

Lapa, Charles Nombo and Janet Dickson. *Searching for Paradise: A Story of Chiefs, Gangs, Prime Ministers, and the God beyond the Clouds*. Resource Publications, 2024, 214 pages.

I was absolutely underprepared for just how deeply this story would move me. What began as a slow introduction to village life, in what is now known as Papua New Guinea, ended with tears streaming down my face as I considered the power of the Holy Spirit to transform people's lives. While *Searching for Paradise* by Lapa and Dickson is something of a memoir, the stories contained within have something to offer to those who are working with minority groups and/or cross-culturally.

The first part of *Searching for Paradise* describes the somewhat idyllic village life that Lapa enjoyed as a child. The village life in the highlands of Papua New Guinea was guided by traditions that bound them as a community and gave them peace and hope for the future. Even when there were tribal wars, these still had a sense of tradition and structure to follow. They looked after one another through, "valuing the common good and community above individual acquisitiveness" (p. 22), through caring for the balance of their ecosystem by being careful not to overhunt, and through a truly democratic "system of tribes and chiefs … leading through discussion and consensus rather than by force" (p. 51). Their attitudes reflected Christ before they encountered him (Matthew 20:6; 24-28).

This idyllic village life is then interrupted in part two, when the villagers meet "white men", never even being aware of their existence until the 1960s. These colonisers took their tribes and country by force and without consent, using fear and weapons to intimidate them into obedience. Police officers and missionaries alike acted in ways that treated them as sub-humans. Part three shows the reader just how truly damaging these actions were: where chiefs experienced humiliation, broken spirits, loss of dignity, breaking down their communities and stripping them of their culture that gave them identity. Young men formed gangs to find once more a sense of purpose and identity in a close-knit community. They were looking for their tribe, finding it in violence. They did violent things to women to feel powerful; they killed their enemies in ways they had learned from Wild West movies.

Lapa then recounts that amid this violence, confusion, and displacement, he encountered the Holy Spirit. Radically transformed by this experience, Lapa brought the transforming gospel of Jesus to gang members, but also to their victims, and taught them by example the way of forgiveness, grace, gentleness and peace. Part four of the book closes off the story by showing how this transformative gospel even transformed the government who would respond to violence with prayer, repentance, and forgiveness.

The fact that *Searching for Paradise* is a memoir might preclude some from considering the book to inform their ministry. It is not written in the typical western format in that it jumps around and was at times hard to follow. The beginning of the story was slow to begin with, and at first, I was worried at the theology of the writers when they described their encounters with missionaries. It appeared that they supported the questionable tactics of the missionaries, for example, when missionaries declared that Lapa's whole tribe had been converted simply by receiving gifts from them, this was described without critique. However, I was soon corrected, and so I suggest to any reader to persevere through these concerns, persevere through the slow beginning, and persevere through a different style of storytelling, because the big picture of the memoir offers context to the transformation in later parts and a lot to the contemporary ministry practitioner.

Reading this book challenged me on a deeper level to understand the impact of colonisation. Lapa and Dickson give a gentle critique of the actions of the colonisers – respecting the individuals while describing the deep and devastating impact of their actions. One could read this book as simply a history lesson, but the reality of the matter is that indigenous peoples are still affected by colonisation to this day – in Australia too, as a very current reality. Lapa and Dickson show that when people who represent majority groups work with an ethnocentric mindset, the consequences are dire.

Not only does Lapa and Dickson's writing offer some description of harmful ways of working, but it also offers some ideas of how tribal traditions and Lapa's own practice exemplifies effective ministry with vulnerable groups. This is clearly relevant to working with minorities and vulnerable groups, but it could also be relevant whenever ministering in a position of power. Lapa's ministry exemplifies keeping the

transformative power of the gospel central, ministering from a place of humility, service, and consultation rather than presuming to have all the answers.

Searching for Paradise is an excellent book for anyone to read before or during ministry with those who have less power. It illuminates the damage done by thoughtless ministry and building one's own sense of prestige, power and importance, or by seeing those we minister to as somehow inferior and ourselves as their saviour. It shows the way towards how decolonising ministry can be transformative and powerful, and the power of ministry done alongside rather than over others. But it also moves us to remember the power of God in the lives of those who fully surrender to him.

Timothy A. Mullen

Lecturer (Acknowledge Education) and Editor (Journal of Contemporary Ministry)

Mackay, Hugh. *The Way We Are: Lessons from a Lifetime of Listening*. Allen & Unwin, 2024, 358 pages.

Hugh Mackay will be known to many of us through his numerous books. He has always written in a way which accurately reflects patterns and trends in contemporary society. His style is accessible and he manages to convey profound themes in a readable manner. This book is a little less descriptive than some of his earlier books. Alongside some observations of society, much of the book is dedicated to exhorting people to embrace his ways of overcoming the problems that beset our society. As always, his exhortations make a lot of sense.

Mackay begins with the simple observation that Australians are lonelier than they have ever been. This is driving the epidemic of mental ill-health in Australian society, the domestic violence, and the social fragmentation that is occurring. It is rooted, he argues, in the fact that the number of people living together is shrinking and that more than 50 per cent of households in Australia consist of just one or two people. This contributes to a second factor, which is the high rate of relationship breakdown with between 35 and 40 per cent of all contemporary marriages likely to end in divorce and where there is a lot of disruption in families, friendship circles, neighbourhoods and communities. This is accompanied by high rates of mobility both in terms of people moving home but also in terms of people travelling widely. People are relentlessly busy: too busy to stop and listen to each other or engage with each other's interests. He also notes the sharp decline in religious faith and practice which, he says, has had a huge impact on the character of our society.

However, one of his major concerns is about the impact of information technology, in particular social media. It promised to make us more connected than ever. He argues that it has utterly transformed the ways in which we live, work, socialise, gossip, and inform (and misinform) ourselves. He says the internet " feels like social interaction but isn't" (p.25). Even the personal Zoom conversation is not the same as a face-to-face meeting. He argues that the crucial element of human interaction is missing: eye contact. "You can't make eye contact with someone on a screen, no matter how much you might try to trick your brain into thinking you can."

The result of all this is that we have developed a 'me-centred' culture which is less cooperative and more competitive and narcissistic. The result is a culture in which there is widespread anxiety, depression, hypertension, inflammation, sleep deprivation, and vulnerability to addiction, which can all contribute to a lower life expectancy.

Part of the problem is being drowned in information, a lot of which is misinformation. There is a plethora of 'fake wisdom' for any crazy theory you might want to propose. Indeed, he suggests that some of the widespread opinions are fake. For example, he rejects the ideas that there are distinctive 'Aussie values', that the mass media are more powerful than we are, and that social media can satisfy our need to belong. He argues that it is fake wisdom that to change people's behaviour, you must first change their minds. No, we need to change the social and physical environment in which people are operating. Behaviour causes attitudes rather than the reverse, he holds.

In the third chapter of the book, Mackay begins his exhortation to a different world. He begins by arguing for true gender equality: where women and men are treated equally. He wants us to move not only beyond male supremacy which he argues is bad, ugly and stupid, but also beyond female supremacy too. "We need to become gender-blind in politics, in employment, in academia, in the arts, in religion and in the culture more broadly", he writes (p.149), and this involves recognising that gender should be conceived not in purely binary terms as once thought, he suggests.

He argues that poverty is a major issue in Australia and is a problem for us all. It is a problem rooted in inequality in the families and social contexts into which we are born, and in under-employment and the housing crisis. Our social systems including our education system institutionalise poverty.

Fundamental to our psychological and physical health is kindness which he defines as "anything we do to show other people that we take them seriously" (p.260). Kindness needs to be nurtured. It is time to hone our listening skills, he says: not just hearing, but really listening. And this is not something we can really do online. It comes down to the ways in which we manage our personal relationships: within the workplace and beyond it. "We are born to cooperate, communicate, connect and contribute" he says, and it should start in our street.

While he appeals to a wider public than those who attend a church, I believe his descriptions of the problems of Australian society are, by and large, accurate and should be considered carefully by all church leaders. And his solutions are inherently reasonable and very much in line with the Christian Gospel. They should be considered by all of us.

Philip Hughes

Emeritus Professor (Alphacrucis University College)

Pearcey, Nancy. *The Toxic War on Masculinity: How Christianity Reconciles the Sexes*. Baker Books, 2023, 352 pages.

I first heard of Nancy Pearcey and her recent book *The Toxic War on Masculinity* (TTWM) on a podcast interview with former Australian Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson, where she challenged the cultural emasculation of men. Helpfully, she approaches the controversial discussion with a "show, don't tell" approach, which blends historical and sociological facts with personal stories and anecdotes." Pearcey's thesis is that masculinity itself is not "originally or intrinsically toxic" but that true masculinity is a gift from God, whereas toxic forms of masculinity are sins that need to be repented of. I agree with her and find it to be liberating, empowering, and a breath of fresh air, as have many who have read it upon my recommendation.

TTWM has three parts, which are bookended by an informative introduction and an encouraging epilogue that gives "a tribute to manhood." The three parts are titled as follows:

1. The Good News about Christian Men.
2. How the Secular Script Turned Toxic.
3. When Christian Men Absorb the Secular Script.

Each part cascades into the next, with a logical flow and legible progression in thought. Part two is the most comprehensive portion of the book, containing nine of the fourteen chapters. It is within this part that Pearcey takes the reader on an "excursion into history," starting with the pre-Industrial period, "to ask why the secular world gets masculinity so wrong."

Coming from a Christian home and personally being involved in various levels of pastoral ministry, I have observed the tendency for Australian churches to disempower and berate men. This creates a culture that devalues their role as men and fathers, producing passivity and ungodly behaviour. Pearcey addresses this phenomenon at regular intervals throughout the book. As an Aussie, I would propose that this is part of the reason why, as of 2021, only 39% of the Australian church are men (NCLS). I would echo Pearcey by saying that, generally speaking, we've succumbed to the secular script on masculinity, forgetting that manhood is a gift from God and that toxic forms of

masculinity are the result of sin, not masculinity itself. Making the distinction between masculine ontology and sinful behaviour is a major theme in TTWM.

From a practical ministry perspective, education in this historical progression will significantly impact how we approach our men's and young adult ministries. Education on this matter for pastors and those in ministry is of utmost importance. If we can shift our language and the way we approach discipleship with our boys and men, then I believe we'll begin to see a revival towards healthier men and stronger Christian families. We must counter the secular script with God's narrative to do this. Insightfully, Pearcey notes that "Men will be drawn back into family life only when they realise that being a good husband and father is a manly thing to do; that paternal duty and compassion are not female standards imposed upon men but are integral to the male character as it was created by God." TTWM is a brilliant book that includes many biblical and historical Christian insights that can help us, who are in pastoral ministry, orient ourselves towards this vision.

As an Australian, one minor critique is how Americanised the history and sociological observations are. Granted, this is written by an American scholar, but it does lead to some dissonance when reading as Australian culture among men is different in many ways. From my observation, Australian men are generally more passive and less likely to be given to dutiful action than Americans (something unheard of a century ago). Having said this, the American portrayal within TTWM is not so far removed from our Australian experience that the insights are left devoid of value or relevance.

In sum, TTWM offers a readable, logical approach to these three questions: "(1) What is the God-given pattern for manhood? (2) How did the Western culture lose it? And (3) How can we recover it?" I have and will continue to recommend this book to every Christian man of any age group. It offers a thorough examination of the culture we are in and therefore, most importantly, I recommend pastors to read it. Ultimately, if we can move our Christian communities away from the secular view of masculinity towards God's redemptive view, I believe that we'll see a revival of men in our nation.

Josiah D. Trigg

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Prilleltensky, Isaac and Ora. *How People Matter: Why it Affects Health, Happiness, Love, Work and Society*. Cambridge University Press, 2021, 332 pages.

This book does not mention Christian ministry. Indeed, it is written by people with a Jewish background. However, it has profound implications for ministry and should be read by anyone involved in Christian ministry.

The authors are social psychologists, now working in Miami, USA, but originally from Argentina and Israel. They lived in Australia for a while and the book makes specific reference to Australian contexts. The book is built on the growing field of psychology around the notion of 'mattering'. In order to find a sense of meaning, people need to feel that they 'matter' to others, that they are valued, appreciated, respected and recognised. And they need to feel that they add value, that they are making a contribution to the lives of others and making a difference in the world.

The book maintains that there are four major areas in which people need to feel that they are valued and in which they feel they add value: in the self, and in relationships, work and community. After examining the psychological theories of mattering, much of the book is devoted to describing how 'mattering' applies to these areas of life. While acknowledging that we have limited time and energy to invest in each area, they argue that, because these areas are interconnected, people need to be involved in all four areas. Incidentally, 'work' includes voluntary as well as paid work. And community includes small local communities such as churches as well as the wider society.

The psychology of mattering is helpful in terms of describing why and how some people find a strong sense of meaning in life while others do not. The Prilleltenskys note how a sense of personal wellbeing, self-worth and sense of security is related to the earliest personal attachments which children form with their parents or guardians. It is developed through the relationships that people form in which people feel that they are valued and in which they add value to others. This material is important for counsellors and psychologists.

Of great importance to those in leadership in small groups or large churches is the material on mattering in work and community. In these interpersonal contexts, leaders need to seek to build relationships in which people feel that they are valued and that they can add value. They advocate for building a SER culture which is Supportive,

Effective and Reflective. They describe a supportive culture as one which recognises, affirms and appreciates people. It involves creating a psychological climate of safety and acceptance in which people feel they can be honest, that they can make mistakes and can be forgiven, and in which there is trust in which feedback can be given and received. It is a culture in which people are treated fairly and equally, in which no one is excluded, rejected, or devalued. Bullying and mistreatment are particularly corrosive. My experience is that while most churches would claim to create such a culture, there are many churches where in councils, boards, small groups, or in the church as a whole, the culture is far from being supportive for many people involved.

Secondly, the culture needs to be effective in having clear objectives and plans. The traditional language in many churches is having a clear sense of mission to which people are committed. To develop such a culture, people need to listen to each other and make shared decisions. They need to be aware of each other's needs, roles and perspectives. Within that environment, people are invited to play a part, but with some autonomy in shaping the role and responsibility so that it is consistent with their interests, skills and levels of competence.

Thirdly, the culture needs to be reflective in terms of recognising people's contributions and rewarding them in an appropriate way. It is also a culture in which people reflect on what has been achieved and on mistakes which have been made. This culture allows people to own their mistakes and people who make mistakes are treated with compassion. It is a culture in which there are opportunities to grow and learn.

Ultimately, the book is about creating a human world in which there are social systems in which there is equality, respect and dignity. It is a world in which resources are shared in ways which are fair, where people build on each other's strengths for the good of all. The book talks a lot about creating a 'We' culture rather than a 'Me' culture, in which the corrosive barriers to racism, sexism, and populist nationalism are overcome.

To me, their vision sounds very much a contemporary picture of the Kingdom of God for which all Christians should be striving. In this book, that vision is rooted in the theories of contemporary social psychology and the understanding of basic human drives. But it shows how in small and large ways, the ways in which we relate to each other can be

extended to creating a better world. While it is a book which is essential reading for all ministers, pastors and leaders in churches, it is book which I would recommend to every person who wants to contribute to a better world … and that should include all of us.

Philip Hughes

Emeritus Professor (Alphacrucis University College)

Ringma, Charles. *In the Midst of Much-Doing: Cultivating a Missional Spirituality.* Langham, 2023, 570 pages.

Charles Ringma's *In the Midst of Much-Doing: Cultivating a Missional Spirituality* could be a landmark work for those involved in Christian mission, potentially doing for mission spirituality what David Bosch's Transforming Mission did for mission theology. Though rich in diverse wisdom, it's also strikingly personal, offering guidance that is as practical as it is deep. Here is a wellspring of inspiration for anyone looking to live out an active, resilient life of Christian discipleship and mission. Ringma's book feels like a journey alongside a seasoned guide who has walked the path of mission spirituality before us and has returned to show us where the treasures can be found. In his gentle and wise way, he invites readers to engage with a spectrum of voices from church history and Scripture, connecting us with profound thinkers, mystics, and practitioners who can help shape a spirituality resilient enough to sustain mission in today's world.

Ringma insists on the integration of our inner and outer lives. He challenges the assumption that mission work should be preoccupied with evangelistic goals or social justice victories. Instead, he draws attention to the spiritual practices and rhythms essential for sustaining wholistic mission over a lifetime, pushing against the cultural tendencies toward busyness and burnout. His chapters on Bonhoeffer and Radical Evangelicals, in particular, serve as a mirror, prompting a reflection on how many of us might have focused so much on the demands of our tasks that we've neglected the spiritual depth needed to carry that work forward sustainably. He reminds us that without deep wells of spiritual resource, we risk falling into despair, cynicism, and burnout—issues that have impacted an entire generation of Christian leaders.

Through this book, Ringma critiques the "management and marketing" approach to Christian leadership, urging readers to step away from a fixation on metrics and outcomes and instead cultivate a spirituality that is rich, reflective, and life-giving. This is not a call to withdraw from the world; rather, it is a call to engage more deeply and sustainably by drawing from a broader set of traditions and practices. His approach is one of drinking from "diverse fountains"—learning from ascetics, mystics, and theologians whose wisdom provides both a refuge and a challenge for those on the missional journey.

I started reading this book on Kindle, but got bogged down. At times it feels repetitive, but actually we are circling around themes and going deeper every time we encounter them again. The paperback version helped me move back and forward a bit more. It is also the kind of book you can read just one chapter, mull over inspiring quotes and slowly let it all sink in.

Ultimately, *In the Midst of Much-Doing* is more than just a book; it's an invitation. It calls us to slow down, to integrate our inner and outer lives, and to root our work in a spirituality that can withstand the challenges and complexities of the world we seek to transform. This book isn't only timely; it's necessary for those who long to leave a lasting legacy of compassion, justice, and peace. With Ringma as a companion, we can begin to cultivate a mission spirituality that is sustainable, joy-filled, and deeply rooted in God—a spirituality capable of releasing shalom into our local communities and carrying the next generation forward in faith, hope and love.

Ash Barker

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Selvaratnam, Christian. *The Craft of Church Planting: Exploring the Lost Wisdom of Apprenticeship*. SCM Press, 2022, 284 pages.

During the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, many books were written on church planting. There were good reasons for this outpouring of literature. First, there had come a realisation, particularly in the Church of England, that church planting was more effective in reaching unchurched people than the expansion of existing churches. Second, a distinction was made between Church Extension, which was the provision of facilities for the faithful, and church planting which did not necessarily emphasise the initial provision of buildings or even full-time clergy. The literature helped to awaken Christian leaders to the possibilities that church planting in this new framework could offer.

So, the arrival of a new book on church planting is an intriguing prospect. Christian Selvaratnam tells us that the focus of his ministry lies in the areas of "…leading in evangelistic mission, developing new leaders and starting new churches." That is what Christian is well known for in England. He is also an excellent speaker, teacher and writer.

Two caveats before we explore the book itself. First, the book has a focus on England and, in particular, the Church of England. That does not mean that others can't learn from this particular source, but it is a very obvious feature of the book. Second, Christian writes that, "This book is based on study which formed part of my Doctor of Ministry research at Asbury Theological Seminary." The book certainly feels like an academic treatise with all the strengths that academic research provides. It also means that much of the book is intended to inspire thoughtful reflection as compared with immediate action.

Christian tells us that the book is divided into five parts. The first three parts deal with issues such as his personal journey, biblical background, theological frameworks and wisdom from church history and what he calls "craft guilds". In many ways, his reflection around craft guilds goes to the heart of what he is trying to explore, namely, how do we adequately recruit, prepare and sustain church planters so that the whole exercise of church planting might be more effective?

Speaking as someone who has attempted to train church planters, this strikes me as a crucial conversation. When church planting first emerged as a new movement, particularly in the 1990s, there was an assumption that people could learn the theory and then go and do it. To some extent that was a reflection of what we had done for decades in terms of training more generally for ministry. However, what we have learnt in recent years is that a post Christendom context for mission and ministry requires a much stronger emphasis on apprenticeship.

For apprenticeships to work, we also need those who are skilled craftsmen who can shape the apprentices, not just through telling but by demonstrating practice, and walking alongside those who begin the journey of putting theory into practice. This requires formation, not just teaching. In turn that implies the creation of communities of practice, not just schools of teaching.

Christian suggests that a community of practice will take account of how we recruit the right people, develop appropriate training, select trainees for suitable roles and continue to support them as they enter the mission field. All of this is a long way from the traditional training models of many denominations, although one could argue that the Church of England has attempted to include many of these aspects in their recruitment and formation processes for traditional clergy roles, such as an emphasis on the importance of curacy. However, we are currently in a situation where resources are under pressure so developing these kinds of systems for church planters is not likely to be straightforward.

This is where parts four and five of Christian's book are so helpful. Chapters ten to fifteen contain most of the practical application of all that Christian is suggesting in terms of the master/ apprenticeship approach. He has conducted research into the qualities that a "master" needs in order to work well with an "apprentice". Interestingly, his research reveals that male and female leaders highlight the importance of slightly different personal qualities. Given that training in the past has almost always been dominated by men, it is refreshing to receive the insights of women.

He offers six models for applying his approach, which essentially feature different sizes of groups, and then goes on to explore actual training models as well as making

recommendations for networks and denominations. Perhaps his final observation is the most crucial. Christian notes that all denominations would benefit from the creation of church planting networks as the location for the development of appropriate master/ apprenticeship models.

In summary, this can be a challenging read in parts and is not a simple "how to" manual but it seems to me that it is an essential read for leaders who are shaping mission strategy and training systems. That can be at a denominational, regional or local level. Christian has offered some original thinking reinforced with careful research.

Martin Robinson

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