

# NEWSBEAT

NEWSLETTER FOR THE PORT  
PHILLIP EAST PRESBYTERY



March 2025

## Welcome, Rev Viola!

*Mulgrave UC inducts new  
Minister of the Word*

**REV DR KARINA  
KREMINSKI:  
MISSION MATTERS**

**BRIGHT 2025!  
PRESBYTERY RETREAT**

**THE WISDOM OF  
WELCOME:  
REV DR ROBERT  
JOHNSON**

**ART, CULTURE AND  
DIVERSITY AT  
HAMPTON PARK UC**

**ORMOND LEARNING  
HUB LAUNCHES  
CLASS**





**Calling all Artists**  
**Free Entry to Join our Art exhibiton**

**ART, CULTURE & DIVERSITY Exhibition**

**Friday 14th-15th March 2025**

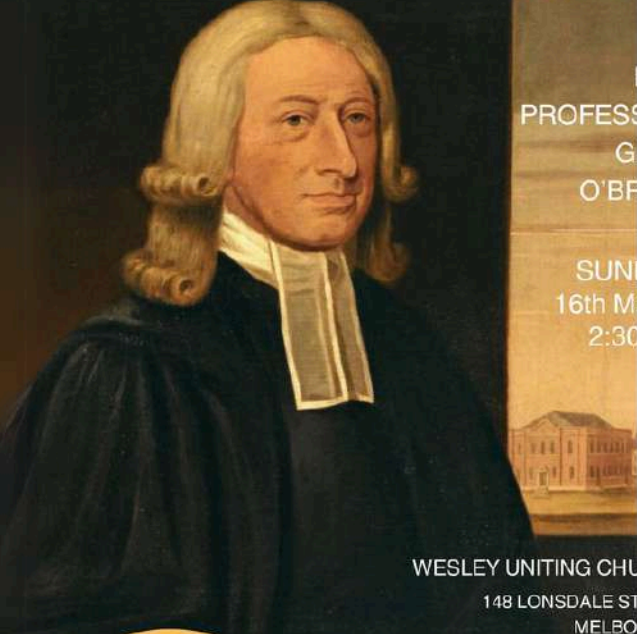
Entries Close Monday 3rd March 2025

Entry forms Call or email office@unitingplace.org

Uniting Place  
 1 Coral Drv, Hampton Park  
 (03) 9799 7994

AUCA VIC/TAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLIC LECTURE

# John Wesley's POLITICAL WORLD



REV PROFESSOR GLEN O'BRIEN

SUNDAY 16th March 2:30 PM

WESLEY UNITING CHURCH  
 148 LONSDALE STREET MELBOURNE

ATTEND LIVE OR EMAIL FOR LINK TO: KEN.BARELLI@BIGPOND.COM

**FREE EVENT**

**Lenten Bible Study:**  
*Money Talks: Capitalist Ethics, Colonialism and Divine Governance: Coventry Press.*  
 By Creative Ministries Network member, Rev. John Bottomley.

Money Talks engages the lectionary psalms and gospel texts for Lent 2025. The studies acknowledge it is not possible for a disciple of Jesus Christ to replace the worship of God with the worship of wealth.

Follow the QR Code below to find your copy:




ORMOND LEARNING HUB PRESENTS

# The Heart of Welcome

**Understanding and Practising Christian Hospitality**

Discover the transformative power of hospitality in this engaging three-week course offered by the Ormond Learning Hub. Grounded in biblical wisdom and rich Christian tradition, this course will challenge and inspire you to see hospitality not merely as a social activity but as a dynamic act of worship and a core expression of your faith.

**Venue:** Ormond Church of Christ, 585B North Rd, Ormond VIC 3204  
**Dates:** 16th, 23rd and 30th of March, 2025  
**Time:** 5:30 (followed by a light dinner each week)  
**Cost:** \$45 (or whatever you can afford)  
**Facilitator:** Brad Denniston  
**Enrolments or Enquiries:** Visit ormondunitingchurch.org/ormond-learning-hub or; Call Gate on 0411 958 127 or; Email office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au

**Week 1** introduces the deep historical and biblical roots of hospitality, exploring how it shaped early Christian communities and served as a bridge between household and church. You'll uncover how welcoming the stranger mirrors God's gracious character and builds the Kingdom of God.

**Week 2** dives into the practice of hospitality today, emphasizing love and sacrifice. Through reflections on shared meals and the Eucharist, you'll see how hospitality becomes a sacred act of justice, equality, and connection that nurtures both host and guest.

**Week 3** looks to the future of hospitality, inviting you to consider how authentic welcome—both given and received—can be a catalyst for healing, belonging, and transformation in a fragmented world.

This course is designed to be stimulating yet accessible, with no prior theological knowledge required. Together, we'll explore practical ways to embody Christ's welcome in our homes, churches, and neighbourhoods.

Join us for a thought-provoking and meaningful exploration. Whether you're new to the practice or looking to deepen your understanding, you will leave encouraged to share God's love in meaningful, tangible ways.



# FROM YOUR PRESBYTERY MINISTER - TEAM LEADER:

Welcome to 2025!

Another year is beginning and, as usual, there is lots to look forward to and lots to reflect upon.

I'm excited for us to continue forward movement of the Casey Cardinia Region with the signing of the Covenant by congregations and Presbytery, a Regional Council being put in place, profiles being created for ministry team positions in the region, and exploring and discerning mission possibilities. Conversations about our shared future are happening all over the Presbytery as groups and congregations discern connections and opportunities to work together, and the growth of our different cultural congregations all contribute to the feeling of excitement and hope.

This year will bring challenges that may include property issues, financial issues, the ability to find a ministry agent or two, and shrinking congregations. In all these challenges and in all the excitement and hope too, the Presbytery team - Anneke, Robin, David, Anne, Jeff and Naomi - are there to help, share and journey with you.

This year will also bring some Synod-wide happenings.

- Rev David Fotheringham concludes his role as Moderator at the Synod meeting that takes place at the end of August/beginning of September.
- At this time Rev Salesi Faupula will be installed as our new Moderator for the next 4 years.
- You have the opportunity to be a Synod member as a representative of our Presbytery. Information about what is required and how you can nominate for Synod Membership will be distributed soon.
- The responses and thoughts around Faithful Futures will be finalised and ready for implementation.
- Work will begin on the Act2 project that will require Synod involvement and discernment.

Lots for us to think about and hear about.

However, what I am most looking forward to is hearing from you!

With thanks to Naomi, our Communications Officer, *Newsbeat* tells us all about the live blood, the people, the works and the places of this Presbytery. So, this is where I want to spend time - reading about all of you.

I invite you to join me and the team as we share in whatever it is 2025 will bring us!



PRESBYTERY MINISTER - TEAM LEADER, PORT PHILLIP EAST PRESBYTERY



Earlybird Registrations

**NOW EXTENDED**

A PORT PHILLIP EAST PRESBYTERY SPECIAL EVENT

# What is “Mission”?

The prospect of “Mission” feels daunting in 2025. If you’ve ever grappled with the idea of sharing God’s love with your neighbours and community in an increasingly secular world, Karina Kreminski’s “Mission Matters” workshop is for you.

Glen Waverley Uniting Church  
10-12 Bogong Ave  
Glen Waverley

When: 29 March 2025  
Time: 9:30am - 12:30pm  
Regular cost: \$50pp

All are welcome.

Early Bird registrations before 21st  
March only \$20.

Follow the QR Code to register now:



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## NOTICES

# Karina Kreminski

I chatted with Karina ahead of her highly-anticipated *Mission Matters* workshop for the Port Phillip East Presbytery.

By Naomi Cardwell  
Photo supplied

**On her website, Rev Dr Karina Kremeksi describes herself as a *flaneuse* - a character type of modern literature who strolls in her city, observing, but never entirely integrating into the hustle and bustle. You might say the *flaneuse* is in her city, but not of her city - she's one of millions of strangers, all walking in a foreign land.**

“I’ve been thinking about “strangeness” lately,” Karina tells me, and recalls the reference in our Basis of Union document to the “Strange Ways of Christ”. “It’s such an odd word... but Christ’s ways *are* strange, and we are a strange people.” Never have many of us felt it more than now, in an era that feels distinctly post-Christian, and in an Australia that remains so estranged from itself.

In the loneliness of these modern circumstances, where we live so close together, but seem so far apart, Karina reflects, “the Church is not at the centre (of society) any more. It’s at the margins.”



Having had our share of the mainstream over the centuries, we run the risk of estrangement from our neighbours by practising our faith in a way that withdraws from 'earthly' concerns and 'worldly' preoccupations.

In her book, *Urban Spirituality: Embodying God's Mission in the Neighbourhood*, Karina searches for ways to slow the deepening of this separateness that's become baked-in for many Christians.

So what does it take, then, to turn our churches outward from an inward-oriented practice?

Firstly, it takes time," Karina says. "Culture change is a really slow thing. But right now, we are answering questions that non-Christians are not even asking."

Karina's own mission has always been about reaching out - from her suburban Australian roots to a city apartment in Buenos Aires, through a period of conventional ministry and as a lecturer, and now to Surrey Hills in New South Wales, where rather than planting a church, she's answered God's challenge "just to love the people in my neighbourhood". Having

gradually established a thriving faith community who gather together over questions of "spirituality, faith, meaning-making," and a good meal shared together, Karina says it's not so bad out here on the margins.

With a doctorate that delves into the heart of what it means to be a missional church in such a time as this, she launched Neighbourhood Matters with her husband Dr. Armen Gakavian. Their project searches "beyond the four walls of institutions", seeking to renew a posture of curiosity, relationship building, and love for one's neighbours in Christian practice.

For too long, Karina says, Christian spirituality has been about retreating - into theory, conferences, sermons - and cautiously tweaking our approach rather than reaching out and "radically befriending" the

marginalised in our communities.

But Karina suggests a new vision: a church emboldened to take risks and reimagine

itself in this strange new world. "What is the pearl of great price for us?" she asks. "Is it the church? The mission of God? What are we willing to sacrifice even though we love it so much?"

Most important of all, Karina says, must be our continued striving for the greatest goal: "We still have the beautiful story of God to offer to the world", a story we are commissioned to tell. As custodians of this story, are we doing our best to meet our neighbours where they are? Or are we still waiting in our stone buildings for them to come and seek us out?

Karina's ministry focuses on finding new, authentic ways to reach out, as the gospel tells us over and over to do; to form a company of strangers, drawn together by Christ - who came to us, after all, as the ultimate stranger.



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**Follow the QR Code to register for Karina's workshop "Mission Matters" on Saturday, 29th March at Glen Waverley Uniting Church.**

**Early Bird registrations only \$20 until 21st March .**

**10-12 Bogong Ave, Glen Waverley - 9:30am - 12:30pm.**



# Beginning 2025 the *Bright* way

**January 2025 saw the Presbytery team mobilise to beautiful Bright, Victoria, for a week spent in retreat to prepare for a massive year ahead.**

Over the week, we worked, worshipped, cooked, ate, laughed, and prayed together, and most of all, thanked God for the gifts he continues to provide to our Presbytery.

Seconded to Bright for the summer to lead the wonderful Bright Uniting Church congregation, Rev Anneke Oppewal made it possible for the team to join her for a low-cost retreat together. We felt blessed to be there at high season, with the little alpine town's clear air so wonderfully refreshing against the hot weather. We are so grateful to the congregation of Bright Uniting Church for taking care of our

Anneke while she was there, and for their hospitality. And we are grateful to Anneke and her husband Harman for letting chaos descend!

We joined the ranks of hundreds of families who'd come together from all over Victoria to spend some precious time together. I spoke to one enormous extended family who'd been holidaying here for twenty years. Another time, a cafe owner laughed when I said I'd popped in for some quiet time, to think and write. "You won't get any of that around here at this time of year!" she said.

And while it's true that the little town was busy, it felt good to be among families who were savouring these last days in each other's company before 2025



kicked off in earnest. As I joined the team for our walks among the relaxed, happy, groups, I felt like part of a family too.

I don't mind telling you that I'm a slower thinker and mover than this lot. It takes time for me to take in an experience, and being new to the Presbytery team, it's all been such a whirlwind. Work, meetings, and events all flew by in 2024, and weeks seemed to slip away so



quickly. All year long, I'd had a sense of badly wanting to hold on to moments just a little longer before letting them go. And so I jumped at the chance to spend a little extra time with the Presbytery ministers who barely stop to eat and work at crazy hours to keep up with the day's obligations, and whose generosity and humour I wish I could bottle.

When I asked the ministry team about their hopes for a Bright 2025, the answers I received were such an apt expression of each of their callings.

Rev Jay Robinson, our Team Leader, hopes that we "continue to listen to the calling of Christ, and that together we work to share the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven." And Jay is just the kind of leader who keeps Christ as her compass in every expedition she heads up.

Anneke, our Pastoral Care minister, envisions a Bright 2025 filled with the kind of warmth and closeness she herself engenders, hoping "that we will grow in faith and understanding of what the gospel asks: to be Christ's people

together in a way that makes a difference to the world". David, our Presbytery Chair, looked forward to a Bright 2025 "where every person has a part in the ministry of Christ, and all are welcomed to contribute their gifts to God's mission." Anyone who has received David's gentle encouragement and precious friendship knows the confidence he gives us to throw our hats in the ring.

Rev Robin Yang, our minister for Church Development, looks forward to a Bright 2025 in which congregations, individuals, and faith communities are resourced, equipped and supported to navigate the challenges of modern ministry in God's name. And knowing how seriously our resident SES guru takes equipment and resourcing, I know we'll be in great hands.

My own hopes for a Bright 2025 are a little smaller. I hope to stretch every moment this year out for as long as I can, visit as many wonderful faith communities and congregations as possible, and continue to strengthen ties with this, our big extended family of the Presbytery of Port Phillip East.

***"My hopes for a Bright 2025? That we will grow in faith and understanding of what the Gospel asks: to be Christ's people together in a way that makes a difference in the world."***

**• Rev Anneke Oppewal**



*Dinner and a laugh, with Anneke and Harman Oppewal, Jay and Bruce Robinson, David and Val Higham, and Robin Yang .*

# Mulgrave UC Welcomes Rev Viola Ye Liang

By Naomi Cardwell    Photography by Dee Zhang



*Presbytery Chair David Higham prays for Viola*



*Viola addresses her new congregation*

**Mulgrave Uniting Church welcomed Rev Viola Ye Liang into its close-knit family on February 2nd, in an afternoon service filled with warmth and welcome for their new Minister of the Word**

It was delightful to gather in such a bright, creative space, with beautiful stained-glass porthole windows dotted around the Cross like a cluster of little stars. Each little window is a step along Christ's journey, beginning with the guiding star of Bethlehem, then the Holy Spirit, which descended like a dove as Jesus was baptised.

The next window recalls the

Sermon on the Mount, with a mountain depicted in radiant light, and finally, at the centre, the cross is ringed by thirty pieces of silver and lit in triumphant colour.

Belinda Clear delivered a beautiful sermon which remembered the story of Anne of Green Gables, whose rigid induction into faith in Marilla Cuthbert's household is one of the many cultural shocks Anne encounters at Avonlea. Constrained to pray on her knees by rote, rather than outdoors and from her heart, Anne's authentic spirituality is expected to take second place to the conventions of her new hometown.

"Do our traditions serve as locks, rather than keys?" Belinda asked,

and following a beautiful reading of Luke 6:1-16 by Julia Risler, Belinda encouraged us to think critically and ask questions about our faith practice, cherishing the authenticity of our personal relationships with God.

Viola, who immigrated to Australia in her thirties from China, is used to cultural challenges. Although people of Chinese heritage account for eighteen per cent of the world's population, this proportion is not represented in the Uniting Church, where they remain one of the smallest minority groups.

Viola says this often left her feeling like a "minority within a minority", as she studied

Theology in English and navigated a journey from lay pastor to ordained ministry amidst vastly different community and cultural practices and expressions of faith.

English is Viola's third language, but you'd never know it from her beautiful and thoughtful reflection on her journey, which would put many native speakers to shame. "At the heart of the Great Commission," she explains, "is one simple word: 'Go'."

"I thank God," she continues, "for giving me the courage to 'go' - and the Holy Spirit for calling me to cross linguistic and cultural barriers, leading me into different ethnic faith communities and allowing me to see a completely different world."

With fifteen years of ministry behind her, the church was packed with Viola's mentors, friends, ecumenical colleagues, rows of fellow ministers, and a mix of

members of her former congregation at Warrandyte Uniting Church and her new Mulgrave Uniting Church family. We were also very honoured to spend time with Viola's parents, Guanying Liang and Rudi Ye, who are clearly so very proud of their daughter.

The congregation of Mulgrave Uniting Church are a warm and thoughtful bunch who had clearly prepared the service with great care. The queue for a hug and a happy word with Viola stretched all the way to the back of the church after the service. It was wonderful to share a cool drink and a homemade treat in the company of such a wonderful group of people, all united across our many different backgrounds, languages and cultures, to welcome Viola and wish her well.



*"This journey has not been one I walked alone. I am especially grateful to the congregations of Warrandyte Uniting Church and Mulgrave Uniting Church, as well as my mentors during my placements, Rev. Ji Zhang, Rev. Anneke Oppewal, Rev. Jay Robinson, Rev. Swee Ann and Rev. Gavin Blakemore, etc .*

*I also deeply appreciate the fellow candidates who went through formation with me—we later became strong supporters of one another. Together, we have walked and will continue to walk this heavenly journey. As I look back on the ups and downs of these years, I am even more convinced that God's kingdom transcends culture and ethnicity, and everything I have experienced has been part of His process of shaping me for better service."*

*- Rev Viola Ye Liang, Mulgrave Uniting Church.*



Viola and her parents, Guanying Liang and Rudi Ye

# The wisdom of Welcome

*Rev Dr Robert Johnson reflects on the meaning and purpose of the Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country in Australia today.*

By Rev Dr Robert Johnson  
Photos Supplied



*The cross at Mount Martha UC, looking out over the bushland*

**There is a lot of discussion - and some heated argument - about whether and why we should Acknowledge Country, and be Welcomed to Country.**

I have friends that ask me, *Why should I be welcomed into my own country? I am Australian – this is the only country I have.* I have others who ask why we start each church service with an Acknowledgement of Country, where we acknowledge that we are on the land of the First Peoples of that area.

I have answers to those questions, and sometimes, but not always, I am listened to. Some of my friends' minds are made up, and they don't seem to be able to hear another perspective.

I love a good Welcome to Country, where we hear from an elder of the people whose land

this has been for thousands of generations, following the tradition of welcoming people from other areas to their country.

Yes, I live here now too, as has my family for six or seven generations. I have no other country to go to. However, the original owners of this place didn't invite us to their country. We took the land with force, pushing the First People of that land onto the margins of society.

I greatly appreciate the fact that those First Peoples are generous enough in the face of their

mistreatment to say, *You are welcome in this place. Let us care for it together.*

A Welcome to Country isn't something we should dilute into background noise as we scramble for a meat pie before kick-off at a footy match. It's a formal ceremony, and a great reminder

***“God was here placing the First Peoples of this land in this place tens of thousands of years ago.”***

of how we have come to be together in these spaces.

I think it's worth having a sensible discussion about how to protect the appropriate gravitas for the Welcome to Country, and preserve its meaning and power.

The other question is why we commence our gatherings, including our church services, with an Acknowledgement of Country.

Too often, this too can sound like a string of words we rattle off as a formality, without thinking too much about their meaning. That is a pity: I believe it's far more important to understand and mean what you say, which might help others to understand the people who have cared for this land for so long, and still celebrate their ties to it, and advocate for its just treatment.

A much bigger proportion of Australians now know whose land they stand on, and this is good.

At the start of worship, I actually think it is important to acknowledge first that this is God's place, and God placed the First Peoples of this land here. They too acknowledge a Great Creator Spirit, and that leads us into a much stronger acknowledgement when we begin on common ground, with that Great Creator Spirit, God, whom we both acknowledge, as we move toward our shared commitment to care for this land together.

It is important to worship in your words, words that will help those gathering there to be open to the God who is already in that place, and has been since creation.

Recently at Mount Martha Uniting Church, where from inside we looked out past the central cross to beautiful bushland, I used these words:

*We come to worship God.  
God is in this place. God was here at creation.*

*God was here placing the First Peoples of this land, the Bunurong, in this place tens of thousands of years ago, acknowledging the Great Creator Spirit who gave them the task of caring for this country.*

*We, the Second Peoples of this land, join in partnership with them to care for this place.*

*So let us be open to God's presence here and respond in worship and praise.*

The Uniting Church has a marvellous Preamble to its Constitution which is worth reading again and again. It reminds us that God was already in the land when the colonists arrived, and that God nurtured and sustained the First Peoples of this country. It commits us to a *Covenantal relationship which is a foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation.*

What do you think?

I would love to hear people's views.



Rev Dr Robert Johnson

**“They too acknowledge a Great Creator Spirit, and that leads us into a much stronger acknowledgement when we begin on common ground.”**



*Narre Warren South MP Gary Maas, facilitators Sienna Balsom, Heather Shepherd, Lyn McBain, Rev Robert Elkhuizen, and facilitator Sha Yamin*

# Art, culture, and diversity!

**On February 22, Uniting Place, Hampton Park Uniting Church, hosted a fabulous series of free art workshops in the lead-up to its acclaimed annual Art, Culture, and Diversity exhibition on March 14 and 15.**

The church, which is built around its generous central kitchen, brims with creativity and hospitality, and seems to have more impressive initiatives waiting around every corner. Facilitators Lyn McBain and Heather Shepherd show me through a fine display of art which previews the work of local noted artists, before taking me to see a community pantry overflowing with essential supplies, supporting dozens of local families each week.

Just around the bend, two support workers share an office to offer guidance and access to even more resources. There's a laundry initiative for people in need, and every

fortnight, a bus from Monash Hospital arrives to provide vital healthcare services, free of charge. Outside, a thriving community and sensory garden is filled with sculpture, artworks, and outrageously well-tended plants in thriving gardens – little natural works of art, themselves - which are lovingly tended by volunteer gardeners throughout the week.

Inside, I've signed up for artist Sienna Balsom's workshop on Indigenous dot art. We gather around a big community table and try our hand at the meditative, intricate technique her grandmother taught her.

“Start in the middle,” Sienna encourages, and tells us the story of how this painting tradition has migrated from rock, bark, and body painting onto canvas. The process itself is as important as the product - “no two works can ever be the same,” she explains,

pointing out how simple dots can depict escape, connection, family, fertility, and new life.

We're each given a canvas and ample paint, all free of charge, and as we work, we swap stories and laughter. As someone sadly born without the Art Gene, I'm awed at the talent around me. Clara Simpson-Braden, who tells me she is turning eleven, leads the way at our table with her magnificent blue composition, pictured overleaf.

It's exciting, as an amateur, to get a glimpse into Secret Artist Things—from savouring the colour curling through my water jar as I rinse my brush, to watching the irrepressible artists start sneaking outside one by one to collect sticks and leaves to use for texture in their works. All around me, everyone helps one another

and mucks in with opinions about medium, technique, and story.

In the next room, Sha Yamin runs a workshop on Pakistani Truck Art, this time adapted onto clay vases. She shows me a row of vibrant, colour-saturated designs and explains that in Pakistan, truck drivers—who often don't see home for months—paint murals on their vehicles to express their local identities. Rather than be lonely, they paint the things they miss on their vehicles, and thereby take their homes with them in gorgeous colour wherever they go. I marvel at the resilience of anyone who can maintain such exuberance in the face of homesickness. In miniature, the class group have produced beautiful work on individual flower vases in staggering quality.

Everyone in this humming space is preparing for the Art, Culture & Diversity Exhibition on 14th and 15th March. This festival will see the building's doors thrown open once more to showcase paintings, drawings, sculpture, craft, photography, poetry, music, quilting, and so much

more. Having seen the fierce talent among this congregation, I can understand why the exhibition is such a drawcard for artists and art collectors alike. "Work at this exhibition *sells*," Heather tells me, and in this economy I can imagine how much it must mean for talented people to be given the opportunity to display and be paid fairly for their labour.

I feel as though I came to visit a church, and accidentally stumbled upon an artist's colony. This congregation puts its heart and soul into the outreach, care, diversity and acceptance that all churches aspire to.

It's a space that offers a cuppa, a creative outlet, and a mountain of resources and good will. There's so much to learn from this community, who whole-heartedly devote their considerable talents to hospitality. "I love being a part of this place," artist and volunteer Kellie tells me. "You just never know what you're going to find here!"



Impressive artwork produced by Clara Simpson-Braden, 11.

### Can you help?

Hampton Park UC's pantry serves a large catchment and relies on donations of **bulk staples** to keep up with demand. The church have requested any help sourcing **large-quantity donations** of pasta, rice, flour and oil.

Contact [office@unitingplace.org](mailto:office@unitingplace.org)



## Calling all Artists

Free Entry to Join  
our Art exhibiton

ART,  
CULTURE &  
DIVERSITY  
Exhibition

Friday 14th-15th  
March 2025

Entries Close Monday 3rd  
March 2025

Entry forms  
Call or email  
[office@unitingplace.org](mailto:office@unitingplace.org)

Uniting Place  
1 Coral Drv, Hampton Park  
(03) 9799 7994

# Enrol now at Ormond!



Enrol now! Follow the QR Code above, or see contact information on the flyer

**Newsbeat readers will remember our update last year on Ormond learning Hub, with facilitator Brad Denniston reflecting on the Hub's vibrant blossoming as a place to connect, learn, and reflect together, with no prior theological education required.**

Classes are now launching for 2025, with the Learning Hub's first offering, *The Heart of Welcome: Understanding and Practising Christian Hospitality*, beginning on March 16th and continuing through the end of the month.

Students of all ages, all walks of life, and any level of prior education (or none!) are welcomed. "For some, it's about finding answers," Facilitator Brad Denniston says. "For others, it's about uncovering new questions. But for all, the focus is on how faith intersects with real life."

With a light dinner provided after class every week, this three-week course seeks to explore the transformative power of hospitality, exploring Christian tradition and biblical wisdom to frame the practice as a dynamic act of worship, and a core expression of Christian faith. Bring a friend along, or make a new friend when you arrive!

ORMOND LEARNING HUB PRESENTS

## The Heart of Welcome

### Understanding and Practising Christian Hospitality

Discover the transformative power of hospitality in this engaging three-week course offered by the Ormond Learning Hub. Grounded in biblical wisdom and rich Christian tradition, this course will challenge and inspire you to see hospitality not merely as a social activity but as a dynamic act of worship and a core expression of your faith.

**Venue:** Ormond Church of Christ, 585B North Rd, Ormond VIC 3204

**Dates:** 16th, 23rd and 30th of March, 2025

**Time:** 5:30 (followed by a light dinner each week)

**Cost:** \$45 (or whatever you can afford)

**Facilitator:** Brad Denniston

**Enrolments or Enquiries:**

Visit

[ormondunitingchurch.org/ormond-learning-hub](http://ormondunitingchurch.org/ormond-learning-hub) or;

Call Cate on 0411 958 127 or;

Email

[office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au](mailto:office@ormond.unitingchurch.org.au)

**Week 1** introduces the deep historical and biblical roots of hospitality, exploring how it shaped early Christian communities and served as a bridge between household and church. You'll uncover how welcoming the stranger mirrors God's gracious character and builds the Kingdom of God.

**Week 2** dives into the practice of hospitality today, emphasizing love and sacrifice. Through reflections on shared meals and the Eucharist, you'll see how hospitality becomes a sacred act of justice, equality, and connection that nurtures both host and guest.

**Week 3** looks to the future of hospitality, inviting you to consider how authentic welcome—both given and received—can be a catalyst for healing, belonging, and transformation in a fragmented world.

This course is designed to be stimulating yet accessible, with no prior theological knowledge required. Together, we'll explore practical ways to embody Christ's welcome in our homes, churches, and neighbourhoods.

Join us for a thought-provoking and meaningful exploration. Whether you're new to the practice or looking to deepen your understanding, you will leave encouraged to share God's love in meaningful, tangible ways.



# Book review -

## *Relational Change: The Art and Practice of Changing Organisations*

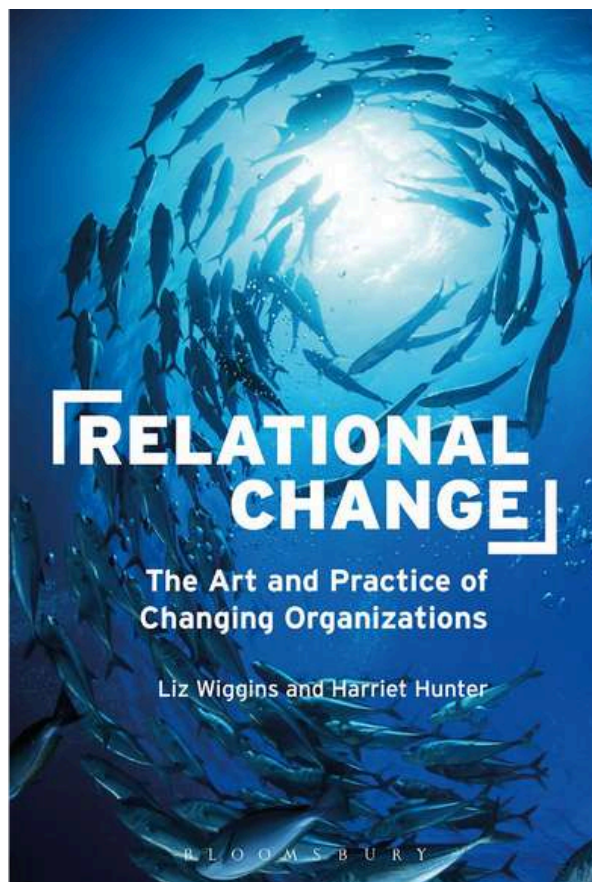
Bloomsbury press:  
Lyn Wiggins and Harriet Hunter.

By Rev Anneke Oppewal.

Over the summer holidays, I took the opportunity to read a book that was recommended to me through the Reflective Leadership group I attend through Gestalt Australia.

I've found this book eminently helpful, clearly written and bringing together a lot of the theory I've gathered in various courses over the years in a way that is not only very accessible and readable but also very practical in applying some of that theory to real life situations. Although it is not a book written for the Church context specifically, the theory is very applicable and the practice recognisable for anyone who's found themselves in a context of change in communities and organisations, great and small.

I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone who is involved in change (aren't we all?) and would love to have some further conversations with those who are interested to explore what is in it further with other leaders in our Presbytery.



<https://www.bloomsbury.com/au/relational-change-9781472932686/>

## *Letters to the Editor*

*May we all be as courageous and compassionate*

I'm in support of Episcopal Bishop of Washington, the Right Rev Mariann Edgar Budde and her powerful sermon at the National Prayer service for the Trump administration on January 21st, 2025. It was incredibly brave of her to call on President Trump, to his face, sitting stony-faced in the front row, to be merciful to those people who are being deliberately targeted by many of the Executive Orders he signed immediately after his inauguration, especially the queer and migrant communities. In the purest of ways, she spoke Biblical truth to power. And she has suffered dreadfully for it by those who felt threatened by her message for unity, built on dignity, honesty, and humility.

- Nick Toovey, Beaumaris UC.



*Email your letter now!*

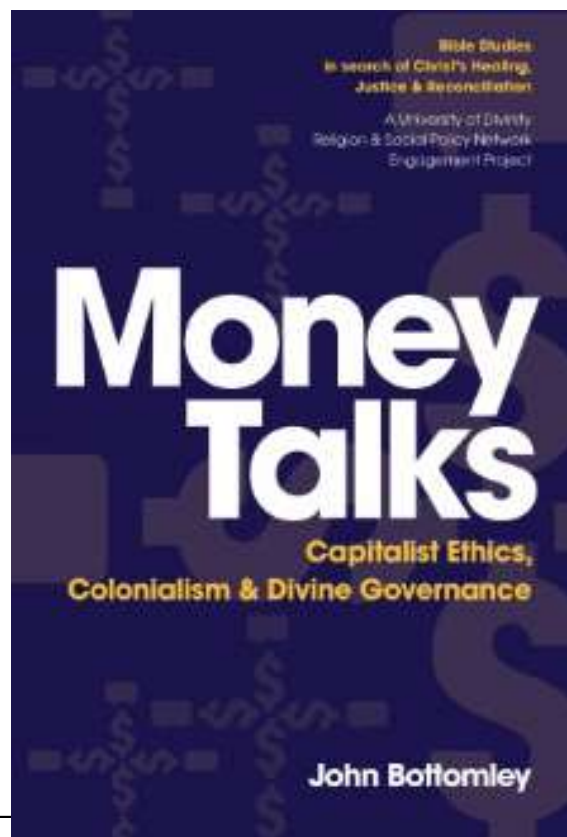
# Book review:

## **Money Talks: Capitalist Ethics, Colonialism and Divine Governance.**

Bayswater: Coventry Press,  
John Bottomly.

By Matthew Anslow

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I find the phrase “money talks” rather evocative. For me, it conjures images of smartly besuited people – specifically men – shaking chubby, orange-tinged hands on some dubious business deal involving property, a merger, or some shady aspect of our political life.

“Money talks” gives voice to the prodding feeling many of us experience that numerous of the decisions made in our society are the result not of democratic voices but of economic ones. If money talks, what it says seems profoundly consequential, though many of us are not conversant in its language. It seems fitting, then, that Money Talks is the title of John Bottomley’s excellent series of studies on capitalist ethics and colonialism.

Bottomley’s studies invite us to consider what money might be saying and to listen to its conversation with other important and interested voices.

The book is composed of a series of small group studies. It is not an academic treatise, but a group activity for laypeople, featuring readings, questions for reflection and discussion, and prayers. As such, Money Talks is not an attempt to break new theological or economic ground, but rather to aid the task of Christian discipleship as it pertains to the world of finance.

Bottomley makes some sharp economic-focused readings of Scripture available to the layperson, and in doing so provides an important service to the church. Where Bottomley

does provide innovation is in his use of observations about our contemporary economic context, in particular those relating to the financial services industry. Each study oscillates between biblical reflection and testimonies from those working in the financial sector (taken from the University of Divinity’s Religion and Social Policy Network for Australia’s Finance Sector Union). These testimonies emphasise the ethical dilemmas faced by such workers and paint a disquieting picture of the state of the financial sector, even in the aftermath of the 2018 Royal Commission into banking. By knitting together biblical reflection and testimony from within the financial sector in this way, Bottomley brings the economic wisdom and judgement revealed in Scripture to bear on a realm of life

that affects us all but that almost none of us understands.

Study One of Money Talks explores the connections between ethics and vocation within the context of capitalism, using Luke 4's story of Jesus' temptation as a starting point for considering our own ethical framework in contrast to the market ethics inherent within capitalism.

The second study focuses on Jesus' rebuke of Herod's corruption in Luke 13:31-35, asking readers to contemplate the corruption and oppression they see and experience in their work, as well as the roles of lament and whistleblowing in the struggle for justice. Study Three uses Jesus' words on coming judgement in Luke 13:1-9 to encourage reflection on imagination and repentance.

Bottomley suggests that repentance is a kind of conversion of the imagination, such that we begin to see things as they really are. He goes on to explore, using the work of Trawoolway theologian Garry Deverell, the way in which acknowledgement of colonial idolatry and listening to Indigenous voices are crucial to

“liberation from falsehood and lies” (p. 45). Study Four uses Luke's Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15) to explore covetousness (qua sin against God and neighbour) and restorative justice. Bottomley considers the way in which the covetousness inherent in colonial capitalism's approach to the world has led to environmental ruin and economic inequality. He suggests The Uluru Statement from the Heart might represent a voice yearning and hoping for a change of heart, much like the father in the parable.

The fifth and final study in Money Talks uses the story of Mary's anointing of Jesus in John 12:1-8 to reflect on love and solidarity in the shadow of death. Here, the testimonies from workers in the financial sector, outlining instances of attempted suicide on account of the pressures, alienation, and abuses of power within the industry, are particularly poignant. Bottomley looks to the unconditional love between Mary and Jesus as an alternative to the soul-destroying work detailed by the aforementioned testimonies. Overall, the biblical reflections

here are solid and well-articulated. There is the occasional questionable assertion – for example, the Pharisees being accused of “legalism” (p. 59), which is increasingly regarded as an outdated and somewhat anti-Jewish claim in contemporary New Testament studies. Further, depending on the education level of the group using the material, some points could be challenging, but generally it would suit most churchgoing audiences. At times the studies move quickly from one focus to another and, as a result, they can feel erratic. This necessitates that the group leader(s) have read through the material prior to using it with a group.

Talking about money is, as Bottomley's introduction notes, a social taboo. Indeed, I suspect most Christians would prefer to discuss pornography than their money. But the questions asked by Bottomley's book are important and these studies are well worth a look, particularly for those in the Australian context.

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***Follow the QR Code to purchase your own copy of “Money Talks.”***



# Notices

## PROOF READERS WAMNTED

Do you have an eagle eye, a great sense of humour, and an hour or two per month to spare? Naomi would love for you to join the *Newsbeat* team as a volunteer proofreader! Email [comms-officer@ucappep.org](mailto:comms-officer@ucappep.org) today!

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*See you there!*



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# PORT PHILLIP EAST PRESBYTERY STAFF



1 Allan Street, Noble Park VIC 3174  
www.ucappep.org  
secretary@ucappep.org • (03) 9558 4710

## **PRESBYTERY MINISTER - TEAM LEADER**

Rev Jay Robinson  
t: 0410 465 836  
e: pm-tl@ucappep.org

## **PRESBYTERY MINISTER - PASTORAL CARE**

Rev Anneke Oppewal  
t: 0437 298 454  
e: pm-pastoral@ucappep.org

## **PRESBYTERY MINISTER- CHURCH DEVELOPMENT**

Rev Robin Yang  
t: 0416 190 723  
e: pm-cd@ucappep.org

## **PRESBYTERY SECRETARY**

Anne Kim  
(Tuesday - Thursday)  
t: 0438 181 812  
e: secretary@ucappep.org

## **PRESBYTERY COMMUNICATIONS**

Naomi Cardwell  
(Tuesday & Thursday)  
e: comms-officer@ucappep.org

Website: [www.ucappep.org](http://www.ucappep.org)

Facebook: [facebook.com/ucappep.org](https://facebook.com/ucappep.org)

## **PRESBYTERY CHAIR**

David Higham  
t: 0405 435 644  
e: chair@ucappep.org

## **PRESBYTERY TREASURER**

Jeff Gardner  
t: 0419 886 659  
e: treasurer@ppe.victas.uca.org.au



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