

SEMINARY OF THE 3RD AGE

THE FAITH FACTOR – Faith in the 21st century

MARCH 2019 SEMINARS
RE-THINKING SPIRITUALITY
AT 26 KING WILLIAM RD, WAYVILLE

March 7 - 'Prayer as a Path for Spiritual Perception'
Martin Samson



March 14 - 'Faith and Faiths - Where on Earth is God'
Vicky Balabanski



March 21 - 'Worship as Participation in Evolution'
Martin Samson



March 28 - 'The Way We Pray Determines What We Believe'
Alison Whish



Thursday evenings from 7:00pm - 8:30pm
Book online www.trybooking.com/ZZGZ or ring ELC Office on 8271 0329
Check the website - www.pcnetusa.org \$45 for all 4 seminars or \$15 each



PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY NETWORK of SA

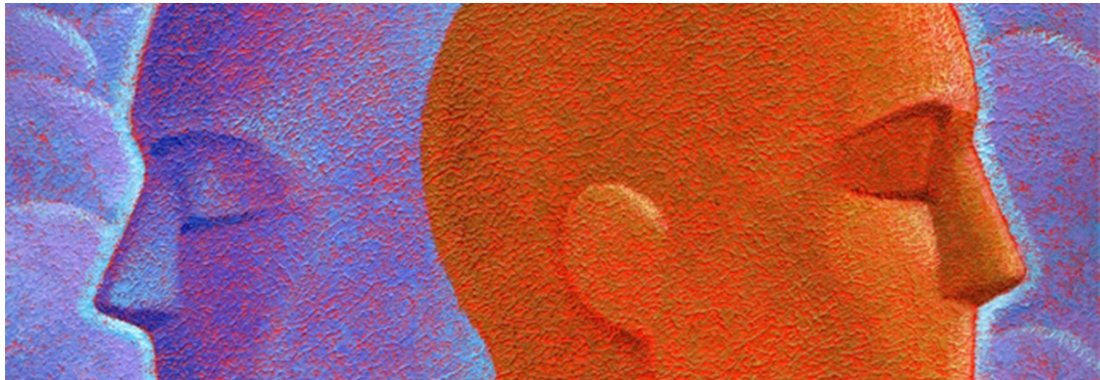
Mail c/- Effective Living Centre,
26 King William Rd, Wayville 5034
Office Tues - Fri 10 am - 2 pm
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Committee Members 2019

Jonathan Barker	Sue Jarrad
Bruce Collins	David McKirdy
Esmond Dowdy	Martin Samson
Norm Habel	Val Thomas
Maureen Howland	Sarah Williamson

Seminary of the 3rd Age 2019

Re-thinking Faith in the 21st Century



You are invited to participate in the second year of the Seminary of the 3rd Age.

The program, conducted by respected theological scholars and leaders, offers persons young and old, of any faith or no faith, the opportunity to explore and reflect on questions of faith and spirituality relevant in the 21st Century.

The seminars are designed to enable free discussion and debate as to what faith, spirituality and identity might mean amid the paradox of knowledge and mystery we now associate with the 21st Century.

The Seminary of the 3rd Age is supported by the Progressive Christianity Network of SA, which recognises the evolving nature of spirituality and also values intellectual honesty, recognising the contribution of science and history in informing our world-view.

Each seminar topic in the Seminary of the 3rd Age is of four weeks' duration, taking place on Thursday evenings during the months of March, May, August and October 2019.

RSVP essential: book your seat online using www.trybooking.com/ZZGZ or ring the office for assistance 8271 0329.



Common Dreams 2019

to be held in Sydney

11 - 14th July

Update

Norman Habel will be delivering a major presentation at the Common Dreams Conference in which he will be challenging the churches to say more than 'sorry' and to acknowledge the sovereignty and faith of the Aboriginal Peoples, pressing for a treaty, based on the precedent of Abraham who acknowledged the indigenous Canaanite God, El, made a treaty with Canaanite communities and respected their ownership of the land.

Aboriginal leaders Anne Patel Grey and Ivan Copley will be responding.

‘For though my faith is not yours and your faith is not mine, if we are each free to light our own flame, together we can banish some of the darkness of the world.’

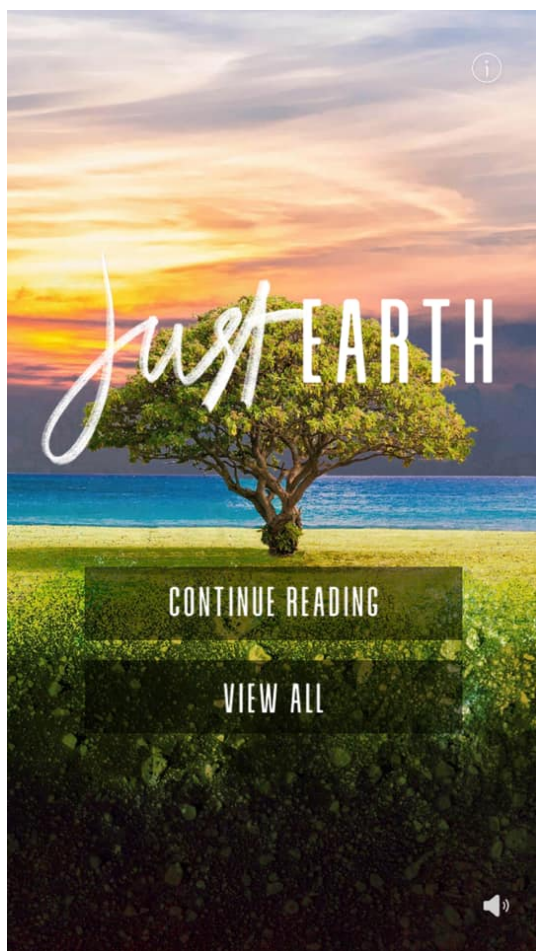
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks



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Website Update from the PCNet committee

The pcnetsa.org website is being reconstructed after an attack from a nasty virus that kept making it crash. It's pretty basic at the moment but is still being worked on. Back to normal soon!



This brand new new app from the *Environmental Action Group* was launched by UCA President Dr Deidre Palmer on Feb 14th at the Effective Living Centre, Christ Church.

Guest Speaker Dr Ingo Weber, Doctors for the Environment, Australia spoke about the health impacts of climate change, especially on children.

Available now! **'Just Earth'** - a journey of faith with creation.

Check it out and download.

Apple App:

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/just-earth/id1451886485...>

Android App:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details...>

KEEPING IN TOUCH...

Would you like to be listed on the PCNet database to receive the newsletter electronically or would you like to update your details? Do you know of anyone who might like to receive the PCNet newsletter? Phone the Effective Living Centre, 8271 0329 Tues, to Fri, 10am-2pm or email contactpcnetsa@gmail.com with your contact details.

UNPACKING CHRISTMAS FOR THE WHOLE YEAR

Howard Thurman's poem, "When the song of the angels is stilled" (see below) reminds us that it is only after the birth of Jesus that the true meaning of the nativity gets to be lived. The significance of these stories is not limited to the Christmas season! We noted in our PCNet studies series held at Christ Church and in Swan Hill (Victoria) last year that all the birth narratives were written well after the cross and resurrection, with the full knowledge of the transformational experience of the Christ event. Thus the stories of the beginnings reflect and affirm the witness of the adult Jesus and the early church. Much is written back into the Nativity events.

I want to make four affirmations to summarise the ongoing revolutionary significance of the Christmas stories. These affirmations are that the Jesus Christ event is historical, radical, universal and relational. What does this mean?

First of all **historical**. It is not surprising that Matthew and Luke, writing long after Jesus' birth without the fact-checking facilities we have today should mix up some dates and historical figures. For example there was no census of the whole Roman empire ever recorded; only a census in Judea for taxation purposes held after the date of Jesus birth in 4BCE. But the point is not whether all the facts stack up as accurately as we would insist today, but that Matthew wants to positively affirm that the child Jesus entered into the historical process as a human being, as one who is counted in a census. And as we know this same new born would eventually die as an adult with the historical connivance of the civil power of Rome and the religious authorities. Furthermore, the birth stories insist that Jesus as a player in the historical process is the incarnate one, living our fleshly existence and shaped by the religious and cultural context of the first century. Yes, his life and mission is truly historical, indeed later to become the pivot of what we now call the Common Era.

Second, the birth of Jesus is a **radical** event – beginning with the premonitions of Mary about the destiny of her son who would eventually catalyse a reversal of fortune within the social order. There would be a power shift where the abused, forsaken, oppressed and unloved are raised up to claim their rightful place in the human family. The whole ministry of Jesus exemplified a preferential option for the excluded and marginalised, which offended the privileged and challenged the rich and powerful to let go of their entitlements. Yet, this promise of the just and fair society was not all that new. Isaiah had such a vision of a new order. So the Jesus event is radical in the original meaning of the word, that is to do with the "roots" of the tradition – its core meaning. Both Matthew and Luke inserted all the references they could think of to connect Jesus with the religious tradition. One example is the infant Jesus being linked with the Moses story. Furthermore, radicality requires the courage to make decisions such as whether the significance Jesus is something to stake one's lives on.

Third, the birth of Jesus is **universal** in its significance. The visit of the Magi from outside the Jewish tradition is an episode which powerfully and symbolically casts Jesus as the one in whom all truth seekers find their journeys end. Who did Jesus live and die for? Was it just for an obscure religious elite who thought they were the chosen ones above all others? No. The full significance of the Christ event is for all individuals and nations. This is a bold and seemingly arrogant proposal. However, it is good to remember that we are not talking about belonging to a particular ecclesiastical organisation which assumes a universalist superiority but to a transforming grace-like experience which can happen to anyone irrespective of any particular cultural or religious tradition.

Fourth, the birth of Jesus is **relational**. This means that the significance of the Jesus event actually transcends history and the story of just one person. We included in our studies the prologue to the gospel according to John, which begins with the claim that "In the beginning was the Word" (in Greek "Logos" which can be translated as "meaning") evoking the cosmic birth story

This cosmic drama declares after each scene of “isness” coming into being that it is “good”- not good in the moral sense, but a relational affirmation that all-that-is, is good. Indeed after the final scene when humans appear on the planet it is all declared to be “very good.” A “yes” is stamped on all creation. What’s the connection with Jesus? While grounded in history, this Jesus who would be declared as one in whom God is well pleased, is not so much the one to be “believed” but the expression of ultimate meaning that a “yes” transcends time, history, culture and religion. The theologian Elizabeth Johnson uses the term “deep incarnation” to signify that the Word enters into the solidarity not only with all humanity but also with all of creation.

How then do we encounter this Jesus in our experience? Firstly it is within our personal *history*, in moments when we are made aware of our humanity with all its failings. When, despite our failings we can accept the fact that we too are the dwelling place of divine grace. To say yes (an act of faith) to our acceptance is to make the most *radical* decision of our lives. This is the core of Christ Event. As a consequence we perceive all other humans as members of the one human *universal* family. We are then drawn into a new *relationship* with the whole cosmos, ready to work towards restoring a just balance in a world of social and ecological distortions empowered by the radical vision of a more compassionate and equitable society. Then the work of Christmas has truly begun.

Jonathan Barker

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Share in conversation and reflection on the question of truth that emerges from the encounter between Pilate and Jesus: a question apt for a time when some claim we live in a “post truth” era.

Topics to explore include:

Truth corrupted - denying truth

Truth uncovered – acknowledging truth

Truth victorious – empowered by truth

Truth witnessed – living the truth

Four weekly sessions during lent **commencing Friday 22nd March 2019**

12 noon to 1.30pm at Unley Uniting Church

187 Unley Road (Cnr Edmund Ave)

BYO lunch – coffee/tea provided – total Cost is \$5

Led by Jonathan and Janeen Barker

RSVP by Friday 19th March to ELC Office 8271 0329 Email office@effectiveling.org