



SEMINARY of the 3rd Age

2022

THEME: FAITH AND RELIGION RELATING TO THE PRESENT AGE

**The theme for August Sessions:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH'S PAST AND THE PRESENT**

- August 4th **PANEL DISCUSSION**
Jonathan Barker/Judith Raftery/Bruce Grindlay
[The "Honest to God" debate - a defining moment revisited](#)
- August 11th **MIKE PIETSCH**
[The relevance of Bonhoeffer's religionless Christianity](#)
- August 18th **NORMAN HABEL**
[Sacred texts and their meanings: beyond literalism](#)
- August 25th **FERGUS MCGINLEY**
[Christianity and the Making of the Western Mind](#)

PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY NETWORK of SA

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Committee 2022

Janeen Barker
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Maureen Howland
Fergus McGinley
David McKirdy
Don Sinnott

Seminary of the 3rd Age

AN INVITATION TO ATTEND THE AUGUST 2022 SERIES

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH'S PAST AND THE PRESENT

We continued to have good attendances for the Seminary of the 3rd Age series in May on the relationship between religion and ethics. Previous sessions are available to view on the Effective Living Centre website (<https://effectiveliving.ucasa.org.au/podcasts/>) in case you were unable to attend or live stream at the time.

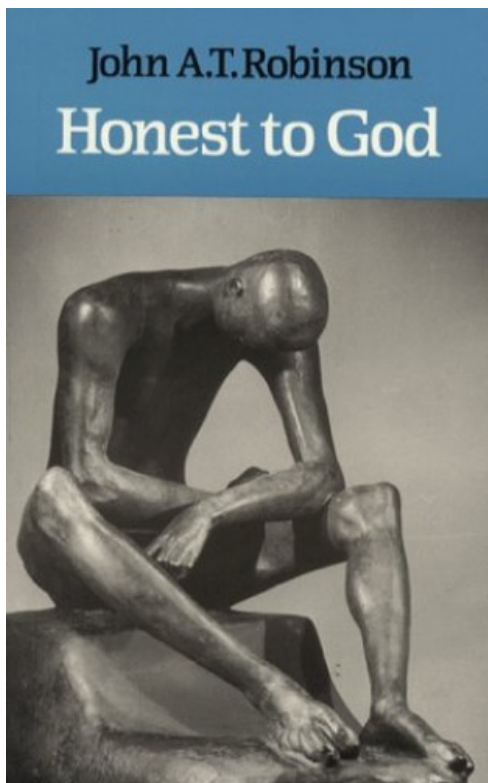
We invite you to attend the August series which begins on Thursday 4 August commencing at 7 pm. When registering for the first session you can also book for all four sessions.

- The costs remain the same: \$15 each session, \$12 concession, and \$5 live stream - with a 30% discount on general admission for Friends of ELC or a 25% discount on general admission when booking all four sessions.
- We would appreciate you registering prior to the event, by using the HUMANITIX links provided on page 1 or you can visit the [Seminary of the 3rd Age web page](#) and click on the booking links.
- Alternatively, you may telephone the ELC office on (08) 8271 0329 during its opening hours to pay by credit card. The office is open from 10am to 2pm from Tuesday to Friday. If you telephone outside of these hours, please leave a message clearly indicating which session(s) you will attend - you may pay by credit card on the night.

DAVID MCKIRDY
Convenor of the PCNet Task Group

2022 Seminary Brochure

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nXdGkseSEG24JmhKF-wTFAQ3N-Pnp_ni/view



HONEST TO GOD REVISITED

Sixty years ago in 1962
Bishop John Robinson
wrote the book with this title
causing a great stir amongst
Christian people at the time.

THE SEMINARY OF THE THIRD AGE

invites you to a forum which asks how being
honest may open the door to a recovery
of a meaningful faith for the 21st century

THE PANELLISTS ARE

Dr Judith Raftery
Rev Dr Bruce Grindlay
Rev Dr Jonathan Barker

Thursday August 4th at 7pm

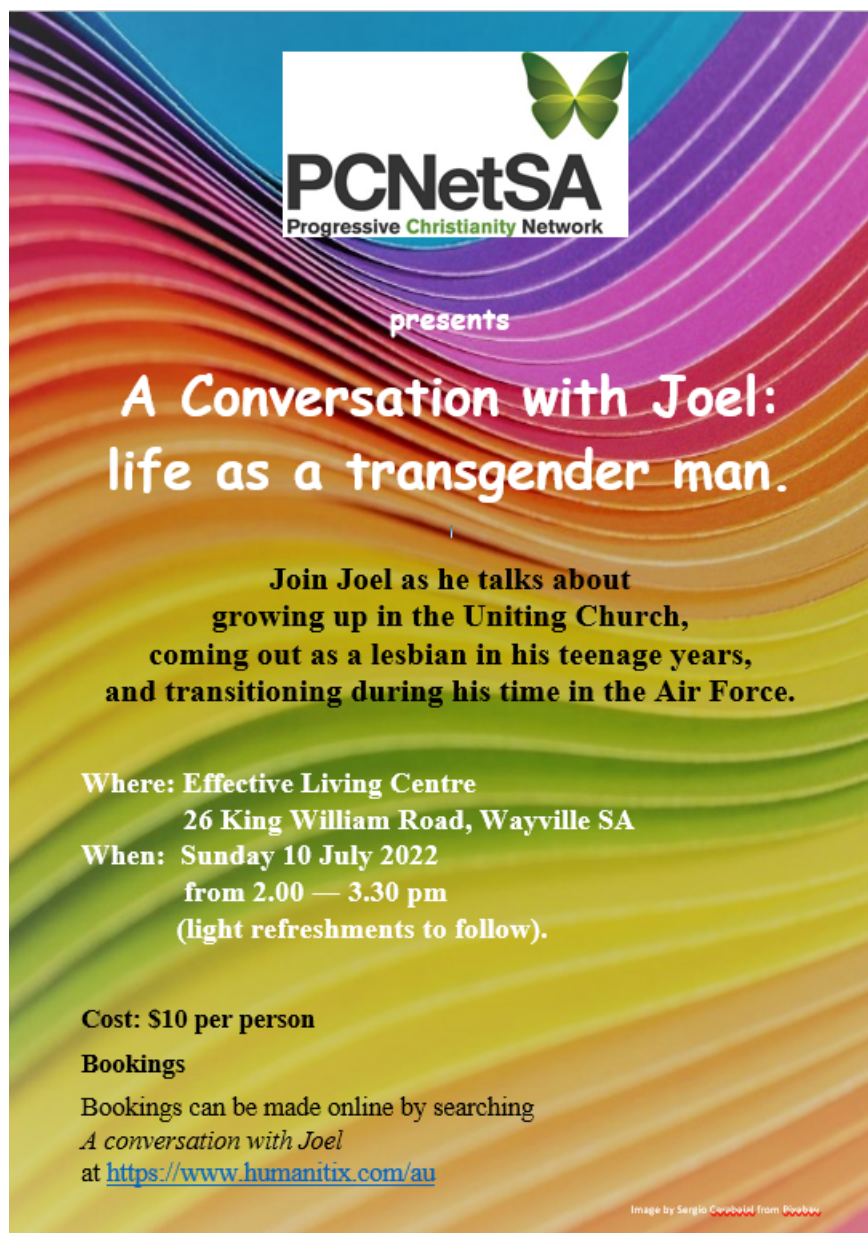
at Christ Church Uniting, Wayville

Bookings [The "Honest to God" debate - a defining moment revisited](#)

Sunday Afternoons in Winter

Re-scheduled from July 10th

"A Conversation with Joel: life as a transgender man", Sunday 7th August at 2.00pm at the Effective Living Centre (26 King William Road, Wayville).



PCNetSA
Progressive Christianity Network

presents

**A Conversation with Joel:
life as a transgender man.**

Join Joel as he talks about
growing up in the Uniting Church,
coming out as a lesbian in his teenage years,
and transitioning during his time in the Air Force.

Where: Effective Living Centre
26 King William Road, Wayville SA

When: Sunday 10 July 2022
from 2.00 — 3.30 pm
(light refreshments to follow).

Cost: \$10 per person

Bookings
Bookings can be made online by searching
A conversation with Joel
at <https://www.humanitix.com.au>

Image by Sergio Corbelli from Pexels

Joel will talk about growing up in the Uniting Church, coming out as a lesbian in his teenage years, and transitioning during his time in the Air Force. Light refreshments will follow the discussion.

The cost is \$10. You can book your tickets at <https://www.humanitix.com.au> by searching "A conversation with Joel". If you booked for July 10 you can use your original tickets.

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT RELIGION HAS LESS TO DO WITH WHAT'S TRUE AND MORE TO DO WITH WHERE AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN?

Kevin G. Thew Forrester responds



Everything that is, as it is, as it arises at this moment, is what I call Reality. With each moment, Reality arises completely anew.

On a macro scale, we can say that Reality is refracted by each culture. This means that each culture, constituted by the shared meanings and values (such as religion, art, etc.) of its people, sees Reality from a certain perspective. This cultural perspective is quite complex, being enriched by social systems (such as education, politics, science, communication, etc.) and unique persons. Each person emerges as an enculturated being, with their genetic disposition formed by the culture and its myriad systems.

Truth is a claim both individuals and cultures make about their experience of Reality. A religion is one cultural force that helps a given group and its members make sense of their experience of Reality within the context of their culture. An Indian Hindu might interpret her spiritual experience as a vision of Krishna; a Roman Catholic in Mexico might interpret a similar experience as a vision of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and a Zen Buddhist might interpret it as a vision of Avalokiteshvara.

Each spiritual experience is a personal perception refracted through the religious-cultural lens of our formation as a human being. To the degree that an experience discloses Reality as it is, it speaks or embodies truth – in this instance the dimension of Reality might be the strength of love. Where religion becomes lost is when exclusive claims are made about a culturally embedded experience of Reality. Each perspective embodies truth and is partial.

Where we are born is where our personal journey begins but not where it ends nor even where our most formative experiences might occur. Religion does have to do with where and when we are born. Religion has to do with what and how we learn, and how curious and open we are. Buddha, Jesus, Marguerite Porete, Rumi, Julian of Norwich: each of these teachers was greatly shaped by their time and place of birth, but none of them was completely determined by them. Their curious hearts led them to question the assumptions of their cultures and to see with new eyes what was possible for the human being. So it is with each of us.

Kevin G. Thew Forrester Ph.D. is an Episcopal priest and founder of the Healing Arts Center in Marquette, Michigan: he is author of - *I Have Called You Friends, Holding Beauty in My Soul's Arms*, and *My Heart is a Raging Volcano of Love for You and Beyond my Wants, Beyond my Fears: The Soul's Journey into the Heartland*.

[Visit Kevin's Blog: Essential Living: For The Soul's Journey.](#)

THE WEST, THE GLOBAL RULES-BASED ORDER, THE NEW COLD WAR

Well, the new Cold War is certainly heating right up at the moment—not only is Russia applying the blow-torch of war to Ukraine cities and fields, it is busily black-mailing the rest of the world on energy supply, hampering co-ordinated global efforts to combat climate change. At the same time China continues to sabre-rattle over Taiwan, and despotic regimes in Iran and North Korea threaten the world with their nuclear ambitions. Put it all together and it looks like the much-vaunted, so-called “Global Rules-based Order” is in trouble. Just last week Joe Biden (“leader of the free world”) was in Riyadh, cosying up to the same Saudi Prince who ordered the murder of journalist Jamaal Khashoggi in 2018, all in the interests of shoring up that order—Joe and Crown Prince MBS are now the best of “frenemies”.

Creation is sure groaning (Romans 8:22), in other words. You might wonder what any of this has to do with God’s continuing work in the world, through his Spirit, to bring the whole of creation to fruition—aka “The Kingdom”. On the surface of it, when you look at the mess we’re in, God seems to be conspicuous by his absence—at a time, perhaps, when we need him most.

I’m being provocative, of course; but if you’re interested in trying to work out what is really going on in the world at the moment, come to the Seminary of the Third Age on August 25 for a presentation on “Christianity and the Western Mind” ([see booking details elsewhere in this Newsletter](#)), during which there’ll be small group sessions for you to discuss these weighty matters and put in your two-bob’s worth.

The Global Rules-based Order as we know it today is very much a Western concept, a product of post-WWII international efforts to promote peace among the nations and prevent a third “war to end all wars”. It seems to be basically an extension of the idea of democracy (another Western concept) to relations between nations, maybe even (I’m being provocative again) the precursor to an eventual universal democracy.

The Western mindset, with the idea of democracy as perhaps its centrepiece, is, according to two recent best-selling authors, Tom Holland (*Dominion*, 2019) and Joseph Henrich (*The Weirdest People in the World*, 2021), each coming from very different points of view, primarily the product of 2000 years of Christian cultural influence in the West. American theologian Luke Bretherton (*Christ and the Common Life*, 2019) goes even further, and draws a direct link between democracy and the Gospel itself.

You might ask what possible alternative could there ever be to democracy? Surely there isn’t one? It’s definitely the best idea we’ve had so far—the only decent idea. But it’s sure taking a battering at the moment, seemingly hanging by a thread. As Stan Grant says in a recent post (ABC News website, 17 July), “For Joe Biden, the price of upholding a global rules-based order is to shake hands with killers and tyrants.” It’s a devil’s bargain—again, with no sign of God anywhere. So, if you’ve got some great answers to all these questions, or want to find some, come along to [Sem3A on August 25](#).

Fergus McGinley

The Positive Concept of 'Dissent'

The claim of 'bullying' can strangle dissent

Bully: a blustering, quarrelsome, overbearing person who brow-beats smaller or weaker people. (Macquarie dictionary).

The essence of this definition is a contest between one (the bully) who *deliberately* seeks to best another who is in a *less powerful* position. The deliberate and personally directed nature of the attack and the disparity in power are both essential elements. In any ordered society bullying, as defined, is unacceptable and bullies need to be called out.

But if we are talking about expression of a view on an issue and there is no sense of a personal 'attack' then the word 'bully' cannot be applied. Similarly, if there is no imbalance of power (or if it is inverted) the word is not appropriate.

If one were to disagree with another over an *issue* it is not bullying.

If a pauper were to criticise a king, it would not be bullying.

Regrettably, the words bully and bullying in popular usage have been extended to cover exchanges when neither the person/issue distinction nor the power disparity apply.

It is the former point that most bothers me: too often we hear, in effect, 'I perceive you are bullying me, therefore you are' when the complainant is simply discomforted by another's view. A resulting censoring or prohibition of discomforting views means debate must be conditioned by the sensibilities of the one deemed most likely to choose to be offended.

Voltaire's words ring hollow: 'I might disagree with your opinion, but I am willing to give my life for your right to express it'. These days it is often a reversal: 'If you express an opinion different from mine you are bullying me and you have no right to express your opinion.' It's a small step to 'cancel culture'.

In today's practice would Jesus' repeated references to the lawyers and Pharisees as 'hypocrites', as reported in Mt 23 (I counted five times, as well as a 'brim full of hypocrisy and crime'), be deemed bullying? Would Luther, or Wesley or Wilberforce be deemed bullies because they expressed dissent vigorously? In none of these cases is the critic operating from a superior base of power - quite the reverse. Do we today fear speaking truth to power lest we be labelled a bully; as protestants are we now uncomfortable with protesting?

Dissent needs to be encouraged more today than ever: in public life, politics, international relations, and most particularly within the church in its many manifestations. Today we are becoming conditioned to pull back from expressing a dissenting view for fear of being seen as 'failing to be a team player', or of offending someone who holds to a differing point of view, or of being deemed a bully. Rather than giving such emphasis to a questionable and negative concept such as 'bullying', as popular culture fosters, I would see more relevance in fostering and defining acceptable boundaries for the positive concept of 'dissent'.

Acknowledgement of Country



It's easy, too easy, to mouth the oft-used 'acknowledgment of country'...

We recently were led on a walk of the Murray River floodplain north of Renmark. One of our guides, a young woman with strong links into Indigenous culture, stopped us beside a canoe tree: a stately red gum with an extensive canoe-shaped scar.

She proceeded to recreate the scene of a family group making a canoe, on the ground on which we stood, stressing that the work would involve a community and maybe occupy the better part of a week's work. The men would mark out the outline on the tree's bark, using their hand stone tools, then more men would set to work following the outline and digging deeper into the tree until, to general jubilation, the thick layer of bark was prised free and carried to the fire the women had tended. There it would be moulded and dried until it assumed the shape of a canoe and its ends could be sewn and waterproofed.

What struck me, as the recreated scene played out in my mind, was the communal nature of what we might see as a mere woodwork project.

Today only a tree-scar reminds us of a community ritual now lost.

It's easy, too easy, to mouth the oft-used 'acknowledgment of country' when we hold public meetings, asserting recognition for 'elders past, present and emerging'. What we don't acknowledge, and overlook too easily, is recognition of colonial dispossession not only of country, which is intricately linked to culture, but of cultural practices, rituals and celebrations. I'd like to express recognition of culture: that which was, that which continues where it can and that which, like the stone hand-tool making of a canoe, is but a faint memory. A memory which we should honour.

Don Sinnott

Ma-Musu Nyande on Acknowledgement of Country.

Esmond Dowdy

Ma-Musu Nyande is originally from Sierra Leone and resettled with her family in Adelaide in 2004, under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Humanitarian Program. Following completion of her secondary education, she went on to complete a Bachelor of Business Management at Flinders University.

Ma-Musu has been an author of *Salt Magazine*, a platform for the voice of new and emerging African-Australian communities. In 2018, she launched her own business, *Nyandebo*, to create opportunities for women of colour to network, share experiences and bond. Ma-Musu is a Cultural Safety Facilitator, and is a regular compere for community events.

Because of her significant community involvement, Ma-Musu was selected to participate in Leaders Institute of SA programs on a full-scholarship. As part of this program, she was a 2019 graduate of the Governor's Leadership Foundation.

Ma-Musu recently wrote on Facebook this statement on Acknowledgement of Country.

For the past two years or so, I have started every public and private speaking engagement with this statement:

"First and fore-most I acknowledge the uncomfortable privilege that it is to live on stolen land, to be a beneficiary of the blood shed on this nation. I acknowledge the hurt that has been done and continues to happen to our nation's First Peoples. I acknowledge the living and thriving culture that continues to reap fruit even in the midst of oppression. I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging."

cont.

NEWSLETTER JULY 2022

I first wrote this statement after participating in a privilege walk during my time at a [Leaders Institute of South Australia](#) leadership course. It was in that moment that I recognised my privilege. As a minority, the idea of being privileged felt odd, but in that moment, I felt a great reckoning and it clicked — I am a privileged AFRICAN WOMAN living and thriving on stolen land, while those who belong to the soil I live and breathe on aren't.

As Australians we are constantly looking at the US and share our disapproval and disgust at the inhuman actions and human rights violations happening over there. We look at other world leaders and can't believe or comprehend how they get away with the atrocities they commit, but right here, within our shores, those same atrocities continue to occur to our First Nations peoples with no accountability whatsoever.

We have all, one way or another, been beneficiaries of the injustice, rape, mass incarceration, displacement, trauma and harm to our First Nations peoples and if that isn't a call for ACTION, I don't know what is.

'A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones' - Nelson Mandela.

WATCH [Incarceration Nation](#) and start the conversations within your homes, friendship groups, workplace and community to better understand your privilege. Sit with the discomfort of your privilege and create actions that are in support of establishing an Australia that is safe and fair for all.



The Unspoken Yes

What we cannot see
makes our blood to flow,
our lungs to fill
and our bodies to breathe.

What we cannot hear
lives in silence everywhere,
comforts us always
and saves our lives daily.

What we cannot touch
is beyond all knowing,
but arises in our awareness
and seeks us before we ask.

With the eyes of a lover,
open, intense, insistent,
this Holy Mystery invites us
to meet in our yearning.

In such gifted times,
when darkness glows
and silence hums
the Unspoken Yes,

we begin to live again,
as at birth and death,
while the universe
watches itself expand.

David Dunn



This image released by NASA on Tuesday, July 12, 2022, shows the edge of a nearby, young, star-forming region NGC 3324 in the Carina Nebula. Captured in infrared light by the Near-Infrared Camera (NIRCam) on the James Webb Space Telescope, this image reveals previously obscured areas of star birth, according to NASA. | Photo Credit: AP

NOTHING

that is worth
doing can be achieved in our lifetime;
therefore we must be saved by
hope.

NOTHING

which is true
or beautiful or good
makes complete sense
in any immediate context of history;
therefore we must be saved by
faith.

NOTHING

we do, however virtuous,
can be accomplished alone;
therefore we must be saved by
love.

No virtuous act
is quite as virtuous
from the standpoint of our friend or foe
as it is from our standpoint;
therefore we must be saved by
the final form of love which is
forgiveness.

Reinhold Niebuhr



Would you like to be listed on the PCNet database to receive the newsletter by email, or do you need to update your details?

email contactpcnetsa@gmail.com