



You are invited to join us in a series of 11 events which continues the Progressive Christianity Network's tradition of having informed speakers on topical subjects, chosen to challenge us to explore how Christians might live out their faith in a 21st century world.

Our theme for the year, *Challenges, Questions and Values we face in engaging with the Church and the World* attempts to encapsulate the presentations, and presenters, we have assembled for 2025. We have been delighted at the positive response we have met when asking busy people to take time out to be part of the series. We commend the program to you and look forward to welcoming you.

[2025 FORUM Brochure FINAL](#)

PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY NETWORK of SA

Mail c/- Effective Living Centre,
26 King William Rd, Wayville 5034

Office Tues - Fri 10am - 2pm

Email contactpcnetsa@gmail.com

Phone 8271 0329

Website www.pcnetsa.org

<https://www.facebook.com/pcnetsa/>

Task Group 2025

Kym Bills	Fergus McGinley
Esmond Dowdy	David McDougall
Maureen Howland	Don Sinnott - Chair

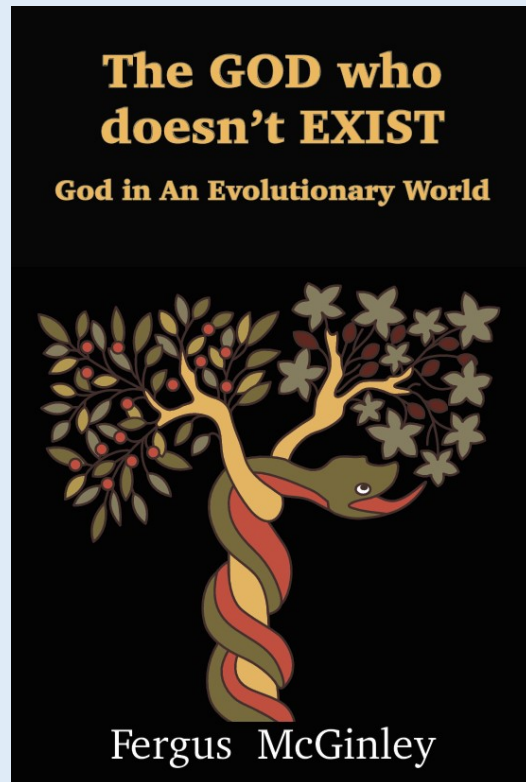
2025 PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY FORUM



**Thursday 6 March
at 7.00pm
BOOK LAUNCH**

THE GOD WHO DOESN'T EXIST
<https://antitheologia.com/books/>

Fergus McGinley



General admission \$15, Concession \$12
Live stream \$5
Full year subscription \$90

For bookings, please scan the QR code or see:
<https://events.humanitix.com/book-launch-the-god-who-doesn-t-exist>



Effective Living Centre
26 King William Road Wayville
Email: office@effectiveliving.org
Phone: 08 8271 0329



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia



Fergus McGinley, *The God who doesn't Exist* - God in an Evolutionary World

ATF Press, Vol.12 No.1 in *A Forum for Theology and the World*.

An entertaining and provocative piece, written for a general audience, the author goes on the trail of a new understanding of God for our evolutionary age.

Drawing on insights from parenting, education, theoretical physics, evolutionary theory, philosophy, psychology, comparative religion, biblical exegesis and political theory—an eclectic and original approach the author playfully describes as anti-theology—the amazing story unfolds of two Gods: one who doesn't exist whom we created ourselves, and one who does exist whom we didn't create.

The first of these gods is the familiar God of human history, the God or gods we believed in just about forever, then very recently dumped. An unpredictable and judgemental God who seemed occasionally to do right by us, but more often went missing in action just when we needed them the most. We lived in constant fear of offending them and were terrified that if we didn't play our cards right in this life, they'd consign us to hell in a handcart in the next.

Good riddance to the God who doesn't exist! The God who exists, however, is a very different god to the one who doesn't. Their primary quality seems to be something vastly more urgent for the human race than providing daily bread, saving us from enemies or forgiving our sins: it is selfless love teaching. Yes, the acquisition of the capacity for intentional selfless cooperation is a fundamental evolutionary imperative, essential for our survival and flourishing generally, especially critical right now when we seem to be on the brink of self-destruction.

Self-destruction: yes, will we survive our current poly-crisis, with threats of global warming, nuclear holocaust, pandemic, rising authoritarianism, uncontrolled development of AI, facing us at every turn? Will the selfless love-teaching God who exists ride to our rescue just in the nick of time? Read on, if you dare, and find out ...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fergus McGinley is an Adelaide writer, teacher, lay preacher, with a background in science, philosophy, education and theology. He is a long-standing member of PCNetSA.

MORE INFORMATION: Go to <https://antitheologia.com/books/>

The 2025 Progressive Christianity Forum Program

How do you put together an annual program of talks that responds to what we perceive to be our community's interests, draws on expertise accessible to us, challenges and engages without being academically overbearing and is aligned with our understanding of what it means to be a 'progressive' Christian?

It's a tall order. The PCNet Task Group began planning its 2025 program in the final quarter of last year, beginning with a brainstorming process of identifying key issues in the church and world. The butcher's paper lists that resulted were then turned into a document from which a start was made on framing the program.

The experience of our brainstorming underlined the complex and challenging world we now live in, and the speed at which it is changing. Many of the world's old certainties are either gone, are in retreat, or have been replaced by 'alternative facts' in which truth is malleable. Multiple crises invade us, instant communications and connectivity threaten to bewilder us, and there is widespread loss of confidence in institutions. In this climate, some seeking to express an authentic faith may find the conventional certainties of religion unsatisfactory and search for new ways to engage with a world in flux. It is for this 'searcher' community that the Progressive Christianity network stands.

Yet much of the head of steam that characterised the progressive Christianity movement in Australia has abated since its 'glory days' when a 2001 presentation by the late Bishop Jack Spong would fill Bonython Hall and the 1,100 seats of Wesley Uniting Church at Kent Town. Today the ranks of those who see themselves as progressive Christians have thinned.

It is in this climate that the Progressive Christianity Network in this state retains its conviction that there needs to be space within the Christian church for a questioning faith; that the Church can be enriched, not damaged, by questions—and that questions are often more consequential than answers. So, our program is based around questions. Every topic, other than the book launch, is framed as a question.

We were delighted, and deeply grateful, to get enthusiastic support from those we contacted with an invitation to be a speaker in the program. Inevitably there were scheduling clashes and some juggling to work around the priorities of busy people.

And then, finally, Judi Maschmedt in the ELC office gave us some suggestions for the brochure design, from which we selected the eye-catching design with its background of multiple question marks. (See link to brochure on the first page)

Suffice to say that our next event is a book launch by our own Fergus McGinley on 6th March. We hope to see you there, and at succeeding events on the first Thursday of each month.

Don Sinnott

Chair, Progressive Christianity Network of SA

Presentation by Kym Bills, How can we live in a time of poly-crisis and hyper-connectivity? Insights from Brian McLaren and Systems Thinking.

This was our opening presentation of the 2025 program. Kym is a member of our PCNet Task Group, a man of deep and diverse learning and one well able to communicate key messages and challenges relevant to our community.

As for all but one of our events this year, the topic was framed as a question—'how can we live...?' Kym drew on the work of Brian McLaren, linking it with the discipline of systems thinking, from Michael C Jackson and others, to extract some key, if disquieting, issues which do indeed invite us to consider, 'how can we live...?'

The compound words *poly*-crisis and *hyper*-connectivity are apt descriptions of the world of today in which multiple (*poly*-) challenges to our existence are amplified, and distorted, by the speed and penetration (*hyper*-) of internet communications and social media. Conventional thinking, which breaks down any problem into constituent parts to be considered separately, fails us in trying to understand what's going on and how we deal with it. Only if the whole system is considered, with all its interactions, can we make any headway in understanding.

With this background Kym went on to lead us into a frightening set of predictions drawn from a recent report from the UK Institute & Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA) on planetary risk resulting from climate change, itself a result of complex and interacting human actions. The figures quoted were deeply disquieting: a 'catastrophic' outcome attending a 2-3 deg C global temperature rise by 2050 would see world GDP plunge by more than 25%, more than two billion lives lost, massive population shifts and social-political fragmentation.

At this point Kym invited attendees to come to the microphone to offer comments or raise questions. It is fair to say that the general tenor of comments and questions was of helplessness in the face of impending doom.

From there Kym introduced us to the writing of McLaren, to consider possible actions and consequences for humanity—the 'how can we live...?' question. There were lessons exposed, but no easy, or even difficult, solutions. A key point, focussing on individual and group responsibility, was, *"The things you are doing now as an individual really matter, and the many things we come together to do matter even more."*

So, it wasn't a cheerful evening and several of the feedback sheets submitted reflected a sense of gloomy inevitability and powerlessness.

For me, this presentation underlined how crucial it is for those of us with a faith ready to ask question—the really difficult questions of humanity's continuing existence—to continue to resist simplistic so-called solutions. These include those that are salvation-based and personally focussed. We must work hard collectively to avert catastrophe, even if it seems our efforts promise only a 'least-bad' outcome.

It seems odd to label such investment as 'faith', but maybe it is.

Don Sinnott

Videos of previous PCForum presentations can be viewed at

<https://effectiveliving.ucasa.org.au/podcasts/>

Book Review

Dr Matt Morgan, [A Second Act: What Nearly Dying Teaches Us About Really Living](#), Simon & Schuster, 2025, 261pp.

Dr Matt Morgan is a 45-year-old Intensive Care Unit (ICU) consultant doctor based in Cardiff who is married with two children. Unlike his parents, he is not a Christian but recognises the importance of spirituality and has Church links through the normal patterns of Welsh life and in dealing with critical illness, dying and death in daily work with patients and their friends, families, colleagues and the hospital chapel. His first book, published in 2020, was *Critical: Stories from the Front Line of Intensive Care Medicine*. Morgan ended that book with 'simple' words of advice to 'Work hard, ask questions, be kind' but writes that he would now prefer 'Be kind, listen for answers, work hard at living life'.

A Second Act: What Nearly Dying Teaches Us About Really Living draws from a small red notebook that Morgan carries with him to record patient stories, particularly of those who are clinically dead but are among the '6 per cent club' whose heart failure is not fatal. The book's ten main chapters each highlight such a story, with a great deal of enrichment from Morgan's own experience and medical, philosophical, psychological and literary wisdom. The chapters are bookended at one end by a Prologue based on the funeral of a cherished unmarried aunt who died at age 97 and whose whole life was rich with love and service to family, friends and community. At the other end is a chapter in which recently Morgan and seven close friends celebrated their funerals and eulogies while still alive, and an associated Epilogue that encourages the practice to lead to a 'Second Act' of more meaningful life without nearly dying.

In chapter one, 'Struck by Lightning' one English teen friend died after being struck while the other survived his heart failure because he was slightly closer and able to receive CPR first from a nearby off-duty fireman. Random survivor's guilt meant he relived the events daily but later his love for his son made life worthwhile. In chapter two 'Blue Blood' a mid-20s Italian pharmacist died of Covid until specialised equipment arrived to sufficiently oxygenate his blue blood to revive him. His post-death lessons included the power of words from his loving immediate family, doctors able to say be direct and say 'I don't know', and healing through nature including planting trees in memorial of those who didn't make it and those who cared for them.

In chapter three 'Red Dust' a FIFO worker in WA lithium mines had heart failure as a result of hefty wages that enabled consumerism, partying, and alcohol and drug addiction. He found meaning through 'moments' not drugs and things. In chapter four 'Summer' a young woman of that name with a history of depression, anorexia and attempted suicide had a relapse when life overwhelmed her and she swallowed sedatives that led to heart failure.

During recovery, choosing the right people to be around, the love of her family and completing a mental health nursing course has given her renewed purpose.

In chapter five 'Drowning not Waving' a recreational fisher whose family was away for the weekend sought isolation but was swept out to sea and only revived by CPR because of a random conjunction of a handful of relevantly-experienced people. In chapter six 'A Heart in a Jar' congenital heart failure that would inevitably take the life of a young mother was avoided by a last-minute transplant.

In chapter 7 'Go Nuts' a severe allergic reaction led to cardiac arrest for a young man who inadvertently ate cereal with tiny nuts. Seeking to vomit and his EpiPen could not counter the anaphylactic shock. He was revived in hospital and back at work within days. In chapter eight '3 Billion Beats' (the average human number of heartbeats in life) an apparently fit similarly-aged intensive care doctor to Morgan had overworked himself in all areas of life. He would have died after heart failure without his wife's CPR as their young children watched. He now does less and makes time for more music in his life.

In chapter nine 'Heartless' a former Welsh Rugby International recovered from a first heart attack that followed a playing chest injury but alcoholism lead, after five years, to another massive heart attack. Receiving help with alcoholism and self-forgiveness enabled him to become fit enough to be eligible for an artificial heart (which has no beat). In chapter ten 'Frozen Solid' a young mountaineer was caught on a ledge separated from his friend below in overnight freezing conditions and his unconscious body temperature was 26C when rescued. The cold enabled him to be revived after nine hours of heart failure and nine hours of CPR and 6 months later he was able to do what he loved and climb with his friend again.

Among other lessons outlined by Morgan along the way include the importance of crying to release stress, signal empathy and gratitude, and address grief and other emotional pain. Being present and remembering that 'at our core we are all made of stories'. Look back at old photos and remember important events daily. Learn how to do CPR. Use check-lists. Heed the advice of St David, Patron Saint of Wales, as he died whispering 'Do the little things in life' and find meaning in the small things. The ongoing wisdom in Viktor E. Frankl's famous book *Man's Search for Meaning* was cited several times.

This is a delightful and insightful book with many lessons for Progressive Christians and for each one of us individually and as members of communities - highly recommended.

Kym Bills, February 2025

Prayer for Lent — Cara Heafey, UK

Wild and restless spirit of God
Accompany our Lenten journeys.

Give us courage to spend time in the wilderness
The place where you bring us face to face with ourselves.

Help us to pray with honesty
Help us to live with simplicity
Make us hungry and thirsty for your life-giving presence.

When we return to the comforts of our lives
And the company of others,
May we do so as those who have been transformed
By the sharp truths of the desert.

<https://worshipwords.co.uk/a-prayer-for-lent-cara-heafey-uk/>



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or do you need to update your details?**

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