



Our theme for the year, *Many Voices, Many Pathways* highlights the diverse backgrounds of the presenters programmed this year and recognises the many ways we can seek to engage with the divine. 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 to **PCForum 2026**.

#### 2026 Brochure

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IQj45Fx4FaNz4Jv-K2hB6pk8V1KZVq6k/view>

Videos of previous PCForum presentations can be viewed at

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

#### PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY NETWORK of SA

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#### Task Group 2026

Kym Bills

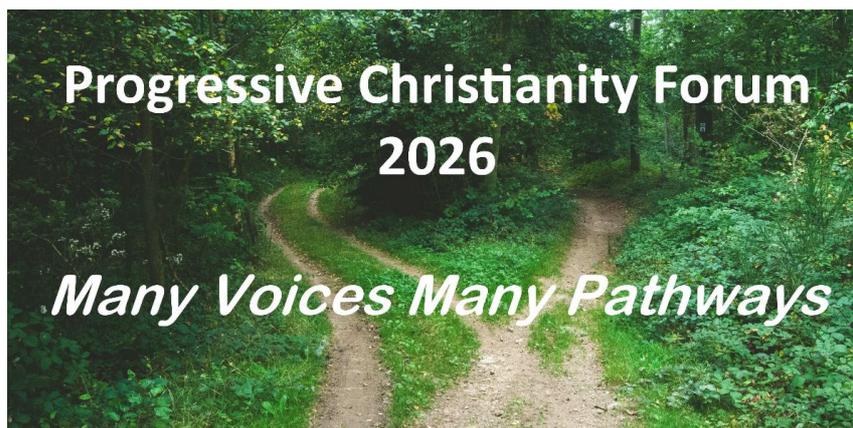
Maureen Howland

Esmond Dowdy

Fergus McGinley

Michael Dowling

Don Sinnott (chair)



## Welcome to the 2026 Progressive Christianity Forum (PCForum)

The PCForum program of presentations for 2026 is now under way, after a wonderful opening event on 5 February featuring Emelia Haskey and Ella Anderson speaking about Progressive Christianity in generation Y, Z and onwards".

Whether or not you were able to join us on this occasion, you are warmly invited to join us at successive monthly events in our 2026 series. The series continues the Progressive Christianity Network's tradition of having informed speakers on topical subjects, chosen to challenge us to explore how Christians might engage deeply with and live out their faith in a 21st century world.

Our theme for the year, *Many Voices, Many Pathways* highlights the diverse backgrounds of the presenters programmed this year and recognises the many ways we can seek to engage with the divine. 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.

Sessions are held on the first Thursday of each month, 7:00 PM at Christ Church Uniting Church (The Effective Living Centre) 26 King William Rd, Wayville, SA. The format allows for an hour for the presentation and audience questions, followed by supper and winding up by 8:30 pm. We commend the program to you and look forward to welcoming you.

Don Sinnott

Coordinator, Progressive Christianity Network (SA) Task Group

## **Review - 5 February 2026 Progressive Christianity Forum** ***'The future of Progressive Christianity: generation Y, Z and onwards'.***

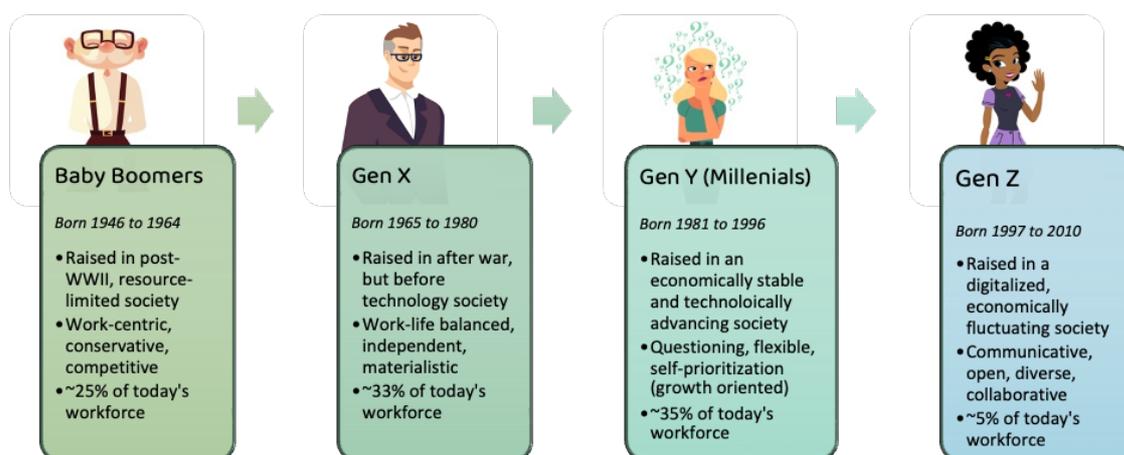
The first Progressive Christianity Forum for 2026 was supported by the Effective Living Centre and held at Christ Church UCA in Wayville. Two dynamic young Christian women spoke on the topic *'The future of Progressive Christianity: generation Y, Z and onwards'*. Both had backgrounds that were conservative but now held inclusive and progressive views on faith. They had met through an Anglican Rainbow Network. Ella grew up in, and remained active and engaged in, a charismatic evangelical Pentecostal church. She mentioned potential tensions between Church doctrine and young people who were less individualistic and/or who identified or sympathised with LGBTIQ. They were attracted to well-resourced youth ministry and large and professional music-based services, but the sermons, doctrine and governance could sometimes feel less tolerant and accepting. Church family and friendships added to pressure to not 'rock the boat' and against 'church shopping'. Also, mainstream denominations may be seen as old, stuffy, under-resourced and unattractive to move to. Doctrinal tensions without alternatives could lead to leaving any church and a loss of faith. Engaging critically with the difficulties of being theologically progressive in a conservative church, Ella shared how she navigates both spaces with compassion and curiosity, supporting queer young people who feel torn between their church and their identity. Providing supportive external links for such young people could help address such concerns.

Emelia Haskey grew up in a 'Christmas and Easter' Roman Catholic family and, with recently divorced parents, attended secondary school at a time when sexual misconduct scandals rocked the denomination. However, the 'feisty feminist' nuns who led the school provided a strong alternative. Liberation theology and a retired UCA Minister as Godfather helped her develop a progressive faith while completing a journalism degree. Emelia's heart for social justice and to address poverty was linked to the Beatitudes. She decided to go back to Church and found a warm welcome at Brougham Place UCA, becoming a youth minister, Synod officer and most recently a member of UCA's Assembly Standing Committee and part-time Pastor at Unley UCA as she completes her Bachelor in Theology in 2026. cont.

cont

Emelia suggested that one way that tired older congregations might move forward was to assess local needs and develop ecumenical and other collaborations to address them. Other niches could involve LGBTIQ and neuro-divergent people. Broadview UCA had responded to local Asian migrant and refugee needs through a coffee café and community lunches that attracted many younger people and parents who had left more conservative churches. Emelia considered Gen Z, born 1997-2012, were open to spirituality and curious about Christianity if there was not one rigid biblical worldview. Under 35s have been attracted to ‘high church’ ‘bells and smells’ services and did not seek to criticise creeds or tradition but sought a welcome with genuine personal interest. Inclusive orthodoxy embraces LGBT affirming theology but also affirms the ancient creeds and traditions of the church and does not attempt to re-write them just for the sake of looking progressive.

As they develop their faith, young Progressive Christians may meet others online from around the world. A great gift older Progressive Christians and congregations can offer is to welcome and get to know younger people and provide prayer and an occasional hot meal.



## Next PCForum March 5th 2026:

### Progressive Christianity Forum presents an interactive facilitated panel discussion with Marion Millin and Michael Dowling

“People with a more progressive outlook tend to see the need for the tradition to keep evolving in response to changes in the world. I would describe progressive Christians as generally being people who are open to new ideas, who are adventurous and exploratory in their thinking. In many cases they are disillusioned with the more traditional, orthodox forms of church, whose doctrines, in many cases, they no longer find convincing and helpful. They tend to be people who are looking for a way of being Christian that fits with their 21st-century worldview.”

The late John Pfitzner

PCNet Progressive Groups Network Day, Effective Living Centre, Saturday 12 November 2011

Marion Millin and Michael Dowling are two people who fit John’s description – two people for whom the journey to Progressive Christianity has been both challenging and fulfilling.

*“Someone remarked recently how our older generation had been through one of the greatest changes ever in human existence – I can look back and see how my own spiritual journey has progressed within it to now being on what I call the left wing branch of the vine! But it has also left me wondering how and in what form Christianity will continue into the future.”* Marion Millin

*“On my very non-linear journey into ministry, I discovered within myself a passion to make sense of this life that we live! I developed an almost insatiable curiosity about the intersection between our lived human experience; the workings of the natural world of which we humans form an integral part; the ever-changing scientific understanding of the same; and our understanding of and faith in the God who loves us.”* Michael Dowling

General admission \$15, concession \$12, live stream \$5. Or you can take out a full year subscription for \$90. Please see the full year’s program [here](#). Please book online [here](#).



## Sacred belonging - finding Jesus at the Mosque

For me this sense of sacred belonging began several years ago when I was working in Oasis, the multifaith centre at Flinders University.

We had a visit from Dave Andrews, a devout Christian and an activist who, for the month of Ramadan, had decided to engage in both interfaith and intra-faith. He fasted alongside Muslim brothers and sisters during Ramadan, and also spent the month deeply reflecting on *Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim* - a simple yet profound supplication which translates "in the name of God, the most Gracious, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful." He reflected on what this supplication meant for him as a Christian - the end result was a small book. I bought a copy.

His Bismillah reflections awoke in me a deep awareness of the presence of the divine in all religions, beginning a journey in which I found sacredness:

- as I sat in prayer with a group of Hindu students, praying a blessing for a pregnant woman and her unborn child, all of us connected by an unwound white thread.
- as my awareness grew of what Ramadan means for students from different countries, and its similarity to what we do in Lent
- as I asked questions and learned from the Celtic chaplain
- as I meditated with the Buddhist Chaplain (who loved singing Christian hymns!)

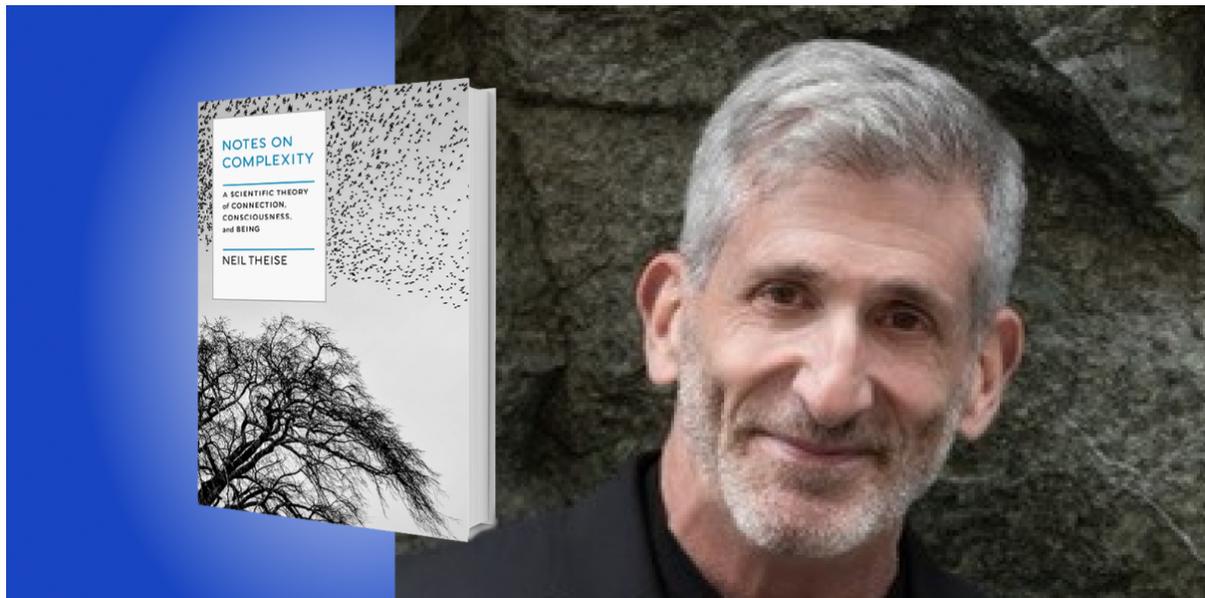
I travelled in Indonesia and experienced Batak Christianity - a blend of Christianity and Batak cultural practice.

I heard from Palestinian Christians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank who are being persecuted just as much as the Arab and Bedouin Palestinians - "we speak Arabic too, so when we speak of God we too say Allah".

Then, online recently, I came across the essay "Finding Jesus at the Mosque". The author had been invited to an iftar meal by a Muslim friend, was initially doubtful, as a Christian, whether he should go. But go he did, and for him, as for me, the experience of prayer and hospitality with others was uplifting, a feeling of sacred belonging.

It is said that there are many pathways to the mountaintop...or is it simply that when we engage with and listen to others, our understanding of the divine broadens, and we find that we are all seekers of wisdom on the same pathway?

## Book Review...



### **Neil Theise, Notes on Complexity: A Scientific Theory of Connection, Consciousness and Being, Spiegel & Grau, 2023, 205pp.**

I wish I had read this marvellous book before I reviewed Matt Strassler's 2024 *Waves in an Impossible Sea: How Everyday Life Emerges from the Cosmic Ocean* which was brilliant but rather hard going for a non-physicist and Neil Theise's book would have helped. Theise is a longstanding Professor of (diagnostic) Pathology at New York University, an acclaimed stem cell researcher, and moved on from early Judaic studies to become a Zen Buddhist. His book explains complexity theory and demonstrates its pervasiveness throughout the universe in contexts from vast cosmology described by relativity theory to the minute scale of quantum theory, from atoms, molecules and cells to living creatures including human consciousness and mathematics, meditation and mystical religion. While exploring the hard problem of consciousness, Theise found that "complexity turned out to be a science of being"...

#### **Kym Bills February 2026**

See full review on PCNetSA Book Reviews page

<https://pcnetsa.org/book-reviews/>

**A Prayer of a Credible Faith  
Students of CMBT283 - March 2007**

**God of the unfinished story,  
we thank you for what is still to come:  
our growing relationship built with you  
to become one in working to shape  
a more responsive and loving world.**

**We thank you for our minds,  
as in stumbling ways we seek  
to know more of you  
so we can share this with others.**

**We thank you for the insights of theology and science  
coming together in loving truth.**

**We thank you for journeying with us:  
feeling what we feel, our highs and lows,  
our struggles to understand.**

**Thank you for the knowledge  
that we are never alone and helpless.**

**Compassionate God, we cry  
for ourselves and for our world  
and discover in your weeping  
a strange and moving grace.**

**God of every story,  
hear - and share - our prayers  
in Jesus christ.**

**Amen**

**Two of the students who helped create this - Michael Dowling and Maureen Howland**



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