

Christianity in a secular Age

Rev. David Carter (PWV Chairperson)

In my first parish in the mid 80's I often heard about the good old days when the Sunday Schools were full, the annual service would have kids stacked almost to the ceiling. My stock response was - I never attended a Sunday School.

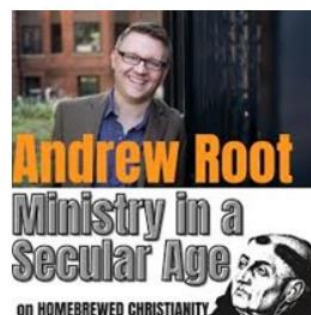
In my third placement in the mid 2000's Sunday schools had long gone, but there was an incessant demand for weddings, more than a dribble of infant baptisms (and some adult), funerals were frequent, not occasional.

Something changed between my ordination in 1986 and my retirement in 2018 - a short 32 years. The collapse of the need for church rituals in hatching, matching and dispatching was rapid. Weddings conducted by celebrants; infant baptisms dried to a trickle, and funerals far more occasional.

I have been exploring the backstory of this huge shift in belief and practice. The Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, in his "The Secular Age" asks a fundamental question: why was it almost impossible not to believe in God in 1500 in the West, while in 2020 it is almost inescapable? His big and complex tome (which I only dip into) and I have found a guide, or two who help unpack his analysis for Protestants.

One is James K A Smith (a Canadian philosopher/theologian) who wrote a guide book to Taylor's big book. Titled "How (not) to Live in a Secular Age" it offers a guide shaped by Taylor's big book.

The second contributor is the work of Dr Andrew Root (Lutheran) in his trilogy Faith Formation in a Secular Age, The Pastor in a SA, and Congregations in a SA. Andrew is a story-telling theologian, and a synthesiser of ideas which invite a lot of reflection. His website andrewroot.org. If you prefer listening Andrew has a podcast - "NewTime Religion" www.newtimereligion.org. Also there is a YouTube series "Religion and the Spiritual Crisis" hosted by him, and his colleague Dr Tripp Fuller (Edinburgh University). These are great resources for exploring the secular age which every congregation, every lay leader, every minister, deacon or pastor feels and experiences deeply.



Molly Meldrum, on the pop show Countdown urged **"Do yourself a favour - go and read / listen to him."** I am reading (slowly), as I keep being sidetracked by other commitments, but I highly recommend teaming up with colleagues to discuss one of these resources together.

Secular and Sacred

Releasing Resources within our Community

Mat Harry (eLM New and renewing)

G'day Practitioners

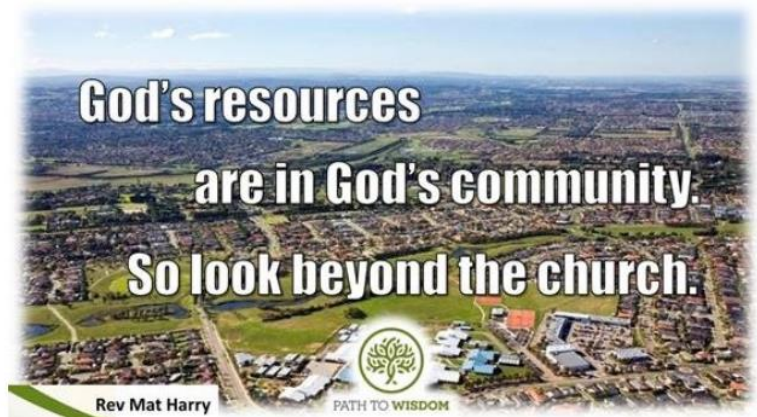
The highlight of my week has been the very encouraging coaching session I had with one of the practitioners I coach. During this coaching session, one of the things we discussed was... **Releasing Resources.**

It seems as though a HUGE amount of our time within the church is spent in meetings attempting to manage our resources. Maintain our buildings, minimise all of the risks to our resources, balance the budget etc. etc. From our actions it may appear as though we believe that our fruitfulness – possibly even our faithfulness – is based upon our ability to own resources.

When it comes to church life people often tell me... “We don’t have the people; All our people are tired; We don’t have the money; Our building isn’t suited to what we need to do.” All of these reasons, or as I would suggest “excuses”, are based upon the assumption that the resourcing needs to come from within the Christian communities themselves. *Is this really a correct assumption?*

Consider Luke 10:1-10 and the instructions Jesus gave to the seventy when they went out on the road to minister, “carry no purse, no bag, no sandals” (Lk 10:4). In other words take so little resources you have to rely upon the hospitality of others. This missional tactic relied upon the goodwill and resources of persons of peace.

The fruitfulness of this mission was precisely not based upon the reliance of the followers of Christ upon their own means. It was based upon the followers of Christ’s ability to express peace and love, and for other people to contribute resources as well, in order to help this happen. Jesus modelled and taught his followers it was all about collaboration with those who were open to collaborating for the sake of the Kingdom.



My long time mentor – Peter Roennfeldt – taught me so well that God’s resources are in God’s community. There are people within the wider community who desire to make a purposeful contribution with their time, talents and resources and there are organisations who seek to do good for others and wish to collaborate.

We need to look beyond ourselves and include other individuals, other organisations, all collaborators who are willing to work together for the sake of the Kingdom.

So it isn’t about whether we have the people, or the resources ourselves; rather whether we possess the ability to release the resources within our community.

Maybe by extension we can say... ***Fruitful ministry will not be about what we have, but how well we inspire others with the Kingdom of God.***

The video link below with Christine Palmer touches on this as Christine has few resources...

Feel free to use this video in your context if there is value in it for you. Here is the link that you can view and share:- <https://youtu.be/hoah9OMRpQs>

JUSTUPDATE

ACT WITH JUSTICE IN MIND

JUSTICE and INTERNATIONAL MISSION

End Gambling Ads on TV: SBS

SBS has played an important role in community TV for more than 40 years. But right now they're putting revenue ahead of community safety by broadcasting dangerous and addictive gambling ads. They've strayed from their core values and we need to get them back on track. We know 91% of SBS viewers nationwide hate gambling ads and want to see an immediate end to them.

Send an email to key members of the SBS Board and it's managing director and tell them why SBS needs to #EndGamblingAds!

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Joint Presbyteries Minister's Retreat



Sunday Sept 5 – Wednesday Sept 8, 2021

Formal program will start from Monday Lunch and conclude after 3pm on Wednesday. Ministers can come from Sunday afternoon onwards – Sunday evening meal will not be catered for.

Where: UCA Campsite Norval House / Halls Gap

Who: Open to all ministry agents, chaplains and Pastors in placement, and retired ministers in long term supply.

What: The theme of the retreat will be **Renewal – Psalm 119: 114**

Guest Speaker: **Julie Perrin** is a storyteller, writer and chaplain. She has been a part of the Uniting Church for 30 years, and prior to Covid, taught the Art of Story at Pilgrim Theological College. Over two decades ago she wrote the words to the song *Deep Stillness*. During the last two years MediaCom have published her books *Tender, stories that lean into kindness*, and *A prayer, a plea, a bird*. Julie is currently on the pastoral care team at Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Julie says of the coming Presbytery Retreat, "I am so looking forward to gathering for stories and silence, for walking and listening. There will be a range of invitations to still our minds, to rest and to spark imagination."

Accommodation: share cabins – two people to a room

Cost: We have received in kind funding from Uniting Camping. \$150 per person for three nights (i.e. come to camp on Sunday Arvo); \$120 per person for two nights (i.e. come to camp on Monday AM); Meals included (except for Sunday evening) Extra Costs: Linen hire \$18.20 – you can bring your own linen for free.

Booking: Trybooking. <https://www.trybooking.com/BQUHO> Final payments and bookings Friday Aug 20, 2021



Education Events



9th August
9:30—12:30pm

PWV Pastors Day



12th August
6—9 pm

Pastoral Care in a Pandemic—Part 1



14th August

PPW Presbytery Meeting

Zoom Meeting



20th August
9:30—12:30 pm

Pastoral Care in a Pandemic—Part 1

In-person at Hoppers Crossing UC & ...



20th August

Speaking of Christ/Christa/Christx: A Feminist Christologies Seminar

Contact: Stephen.burns@pilgrim.edu.au

26th August
6—9 pm

Pastoral Care in a Pandemic—Part 2



21st August

PWV Presbytery Meeting

Norval, Hall's Gap



3rd - 5th September

Sacred Edge

Queenscliff

5th - 8th September

Joint Presbytery Retreat

Halls Gap



Discipleship Learning Community 2021 Exploring Old Testament



For [Lay preacher Training](#) or [just wanting to learn more...](#) Cost Free.

Text Book: \$50- 'Studying the Old testament: A Companion by Rhonda Burnette Bletsch, Abigdon Press, 2007. This course was written by Mel Perkins eLM.

Exploring the Old Testament, online learning community, has these 10 topics and tutorial dates-

Reading the Old Testament 10 Aug; Foundational Stories 24 Aug; Exodus 7 Sept;
Living in relationship with God #1 21 Sept ; Living in relationship with God #2 5 Oct;
Prophetic Voice 19 Oct; Exile and the X factor 2 Nov ; Wisdom's Feast 16 Nov,
The things in Between! 30 Nov; Looking Back and Looking Forward 14 Dec

Email: Geoff Barker on gbarker333@hotmail.com or phone on 0407 349 578

