

# PELICAN BRIEF

Spring 2021

St Saviour's Cathedral Goulburn Snippets

*Spring is in the air...*



*There's an illness that has been documented by poets for centuries. Its symptoms include a flushed face, increased heart rate, appetite loss, restlessness and daydreaming. It's spring fever, that wonderfully amorphous disease we all recognize come September.*

*It begins as a rapid and yet unpredictable fluctuating mood and energy state that contrasts with the relative low of the winter months that precede it. Clearly, there are marked correlations between moods, behaviour and the lengthening days of spring, but the precise cause for our renewed energy remains elusive. The evidence for spring fever remains largely anecdotal.*

## For Christians, Bruce D. Prewer writes of “Signs of Grace in Springtime.”

Our Father in Jesus and our God,  
earth and sky,  
sunshine and rain,  
tree and flower,  
speak to us of your creative power.  
*Lord, open our eyes to see your beauty.*



The sheep on the plains,  
the cattle on the hills,  
the fish of the sea,  
and the birds of the air,  
tell of your bountiful providence.  
*Lord, open our hearts to experience your goodness.*



The jacaranda bursts into flower,  
with a robe of royal beauty-  
a symbol of Christ our Redeemer,  
a glory he alone is fit to wear.  
*Lord, you are the King of love and we are your people.*



The lush greening of the vines  
reminds us of Jesus, the True Vine,  
in whom we must abide  
if we are to bear fruit.  
*Lord, you are the Vine, and we are the branches.*



The crimson bottlebrush  
witnesses to the blood of the cross,  
the cost of our salvation,  
and the wonder of forgiveness.  
*Lord, your mercy makes all things new;  
we open our lives to your grace.*



The singing of the birds  
at dawn and dusk  
awaken within us the melodies of  
faith, hope and love,  
stirring a hunger for the world-wide harmony  
and peace which you have promised.  
*Lord, we thank you, we trust you, we love you,  
we praise you, and we worship your name,  
world without end.*

## Why church can't be the same after the pandemic – Kate Shellnutt

Across the country, clergy have ushered weary parishioners through virtual worship setups, lonely hospital stays, funerals, job losses, intense political tensions, and relentless debates over pandemic precautions. Churchgoers making their way back through the church door will carry the weight of trauma and divides built up over more than a year spent apart – if they decide to return to the building at all. During the first months of the year, fewer than half of regular churchgoers made it to an in-person service, according to the Pew Research Center, though many said their churches had reopened. Attendance has continued to rise, but some have become used to the convenience of online worship – or have checked out altogether.

We need to retrain people from the beginning on why they should bother to assemble, Why the Body of Christ is Essential. The immediate challenge is to get people to see the church as a community requiring their involvement rather than as content to consume on their own – a problem that was widespread even before COVID-19 struck. “The sense of deep-rooted connectedness that most people have to a local church is becoming more and more transactional, less and less frequent.”

The past year and a half didn't just change how Christians met; it changed their hearts and minds towards the church. Church leaders who revert to doing things the way they've always known them, but the population in general and millennials are going to find that this disruption of COVID altered their habits and perspectives on the role and relevance

### Daffodil

When the storm has passed,  
As it will,  
You may see a daffodil.

When four mad winds  
Have torn the trees apart,  
When cold and fearful was  
The human heart,  
When poison words have burned  
And looks could kill.  
You may see a daffodil.

And when the wheel has turned,  
When all your precious days are done  
And you become the earth  
That loves the rain and sun  
As you will  
You may be a daffodil.

- Michael Leunig

Christians had to face the threat of the coronavirus, away from the people and spiritual practices they typically relied on. Clergy will have to be transparent about their personal experience on the pandemic. Modelling that in the congregation gives permission to the congregation and opens them up to doing the same in small groups or one-on-one situations. What feels like struggles atop struggles could be an opportunity for the church to live up to its ideals, to care well for each other and look to God in their suffering.

Many come to church and it almost feels like that's the place where you hide and pretend everything's okay. There's a sad irony to it because our faith is built upon a trauma: Christ died on the cross. Our faith has so much to say to people who have survived things, which is most of us. COVID is a mass trauma on a global scale.

Throughout the pandemic, so much outreach was done from a literal arm's length, without the ongoing conversation, prayer, and physical togetherness that grounds Christian community. The pandemic has forced churches to prioritize people over programs. People are hungry now to be in person with each other and to have real relationships, so the church needs to offer more points of connection. Members who have never done Bible study and leaders exploring ideas for “micro communities” to open up new settings for prayer, worship, and teaching on a smaller scale. The “micro gathering” trend, where Christians from the same church worship in homes and backyards, took off during the pandemic, especially in places where restrictions on worship extended for much of 2020. It's expected to carry on even now that it's safe to return to full services.





## Am I preaching to myself? - JenWilkin – author and Bible teacher

You've probably heard a clergyperson remark during a particularly pointed exhortation, "I'm preaching to myself." That line is often used to reassure listeners that, "Yes, what I'm telling you is a hard word, but it's one first and foremost for me."

I have always respected this attitude but recently came to appreciate it in a deeper way. Scrolling through Instagram, my eyes fell on a scripted quote overlaid neatly on a soft-focus photo: "You will never turn from a sin you don't hate." It felt like divine timing. The message came not long after I had committed a familiar sin, one of those I had hope was behind me. A believer for over four decades, I was keenly aware that the Lord's patience should have run out on me by now on this particular weakness. How was I still battling it? The answer was spelled out before me: I didn't hate it. Not completely enough to extinguish it once and for all. Like Lot's wife, I had turned back towards something I should detest, something from which I had been dragged free. With my conviction and confession still fresh, God chose to deliver a miniature sermon to me via Instagram. Using, of all things, my own words.

It is the great liability of a teaching ministry: knowing you will likely out-teach your own ability to obey, knowing there will be days when you will not practice what you have preached. But it's also a liability of the Christian life. Paul exhorted his listeners to follow him as he followed Christ while also acknowledging he was still at war with sin. All who faithfully proclaim the Good News of

Hypocrites habitually preach what they have no intention to practice, but the average faithful person preaches knowing that even a habitual obedience is not a perfect obedience.

There will be days when our past words exceed our current deeds. Lord, help us. Sanctification, while certain, is not sudden. But we wish it could be. We love a quick fix. When I was growing up in the '70s, it was the nose wiggle that could instantly clean a messy house on *Bewitched*. These days, it's before-and-after pictures on social media. Swipe to see a closet go from chaos to order. Swipe to see a room go from filthy to spotless. Swipe to see a face go from blemished to flawless. We know that in between the first and second frames, hours of work have been spent, but we care more about how it all turned out than the process of getting it there. If only the Christian life could be like that. Positionally, we go from wretch to redeemed in an instant. But practically, we "work out our salvation" over the course of many years. Sanctification is not a swipe but a slog. It rarely looks like an immediate ceasing of a particular sin. Instead, we become slower to step into the familiar traps and quicker to repent. This becomes a mantra of hope. Our hatred of sin is learned across a lifetime.

Reading my own words in an Instagram square, I knew this to be true. Yes, I had turned again to an old, familiar sin, but I couldn't remember the last time it had happened. Across many years, a sin that had been frequent had grown seldom. Thanks be to God! Jesus taught that those who mourn their sin would be comforted. There is renewed grief in our confession of a repeated sin, but there is real comfort in seeing the distance stretch between those confessions. That widening distance tells me that the grace of God is indeed teaching me to say no to ungodliness and training me to lead a self-controlled, godly life (Titus 2:11-12). I am being transformed. And the God who is

*Editor's postscript: Right now, in this period of lockdown, we are preaching to empty pews!*



Empty, but full of prayers and grace.



## What Christian Aid Workers Want You To Know About Afghanistan - Rebecca Hopkins

US forces are withdrawing after 20 years, but the story of Christian aid work goes far beyond military conflict.

With the Taliban now firmly in control, it's easy to forget that the church was at work there long before America's "forever war" began – and will remain at work there, now that the war has ended. There are about 140 nongovernment charity organizations, many of them Christian, doing aid work in Afghanistan. There are also another dozen UN organizations. They are providing food, medical care, cash transfers, education, and tools and seeds for farmers. They are encouraging music, art, literature, and sports. In the midst of war and conflict, they have encouraged community and civil society. They have, perhaps most of all, formed deep connections with the people of Afghanistan.

Aid workers are just there for the people, facilitating, coming to save you. The area of ophthalmology is one example of how aid workers help. Beginning in the 1960s, a Christian aid organization helped establish an ophthalmology department at Kabul University, training Afghan eye doctors. Then these doctors trained others, and today all the ophthalmology is done by Afghans for each other. The real transformations that have happened in the country have been done by the Afghans themselves. Aid work will not end with withdrawal.

### Pray for Afghanistan

O God of mercy and peace,  
We hold before you  
the peoples of Afghanistan;  
be living bread to those  
who are hungry each day.

Be healing and wholeness to those  
who have no access to healthcare  
amidst the ravages of the pandemic.

Be a true home to all  
who have been displaced.

Be open arms of loving acceptance  
to those who fear because of their  
gender, ethnicity,  
religious or political views.

Be peace to those engaged in armed conflict,

But they also say they are doing work that did not begin with the US invasion and will not end with the US withdrawal. They want people to know that God loves them, and love has to be practical and physical.

Aid provides stability in a country, and for Christian aid workers at least, it is explicitly nonpolitical. That doesn't mean there won't be dangers. In the past 20 years, aid workers have experienced a lot of risks. They and their families have had to make careful, calculated decisions about what to do and how vulnerable they are willing to be. One family's home was broken into by armed men, a close family friend was kidnapped and killed, and they were forced to evacuate the country. But peril is also an opportunity to live out one's faith.

Of course, it's not just aid workers and Christian foreigners who face threats. The conflict has been dangerous for many in Afghanistan, and a small but vibrant group of Afghan Christians pray and worship behind a protective veil of privacy.

There are less than 0.3% of the 34 million Afghans who belong to a minority religious group, whether Christian, Hindu, Sikh, or Baha'i. But accurate numbers are hard to come by. The population is predominantly Sunni Muslim, and the constitution states that Islam is the state religion. Minorities are allowed to practice their faith, but it's not considered culturally acceptable in public spaces.

Turn our hearts and minds to your ways  
of just and gentle peace;  
open our eyes to see you  
in all acts of compassionate care.

Strengthen our hearts to step out in solidarity  
with your suffering people, and  
hold us all in your unfailing love.



*Image caption and credit: Germany has the second largest military contingent in Afghanistan after the United States. (Wakil Kohsar/AFP)*

***1 September. Giles, hermit, c. 710***



An immensely popular saint in the Middle Ages, all that is known about Giles (Aegidius) is that he was born in the early seventh century and that he founded a monastery in Provence at the place later called Saint-Gilles, on land given him by Wamba, the Visigothic king of Hispania and Septimania. Giles' shrine became an important pilgrimage centre on the routes for Compostella and for the Holy Land, as well as being a place for pilgrimage in its own right.

The tenth century legendary Life made Giles an Athenian by birth, who became a hermit near the mouth of the Rhône not far from Nîmes, attracted to the area by the renown of Caesarius, bishop of Arles. While in pursuit of a hind, King Wamba shot an arrow at the beast which wounded and crippled Giles, with whom the hind had taken refuge. Another legend made an emperor seek forgiveness from Giles for a sin he did not dare confess. At Mass the next day, Giles saw in a chart written by an angel the nature of the sin, the letters of which entry disappeared as Giles' prayers were so efficacious. Towards the end of his legendary life, he went to Rome and offered his monastery to the Pope, who gave him two doors of cypress wood which the saint threw into the sea, but which were miraculously transported to a beach near his monastery.

From Provence (*provincia sancti Aegidii*) his veneration spread, partly through Crusaders, to other parts of Europe. Based on the story of the hind and King Wamba, he became the patron of cripples, lepers, and nursing mothers. The legend of the effectiveness of his intercessions contributed greatly to his popularity. In England alone at least 24 hospitals and some 162 ancient churches were dedicated to him, most notably St Giles in Edinburgh and St Giles, Cripplegate, London. His churches are often found at road junctions, which travellers could visit while their horses were being shod in in smithies nearby, of which Giles was also patron.

based on material from The Oxford Dictionary of Saints



## 2 September. The Martyrs of Papua New Guinea 1901-1942



The Church in Papua New Guinea has been enriched by martyrdom twice in the 20th century. James Chalmers, Oliver Tomkins and some companions were sent to New Guinea by the London Missionary Society. They met their death by martyrdom in 1901. Forty years later, during the Second World War, New Guinea was occupied by the Imperial Japanese army and 333 Christians of all denominations died for the faith. Among them were priests, Henry Holland, John Duffill and Vivian Redlich, who remained with their people after the invasion of 1942; evangelists Leslie Gariadi, Lucian Tapiedi and John Barge; May Hayman, a nurse; and teachers Margery Brenchley, Lilla Lashman and Mavis Parkinson. Also remembered is Bernard Moore, shot while presiding at the Eucharist in New Britain.

A reading from *The White-Robed Army of Martyrs*  
by David Hand, first Archbishop of Papua New Guinea.

As the thrust of the Japanese invasion approached Papua New Guinea in 1942, Bishop Philip Strong broadcast over the radio a message to his staff which has become famous in the annals of missionary history. He said:

*We could never hold up our faces again, if for our own safety, we all forsook him and fled when the shadows of the passion began to gather around him in his spiritual body, the Church in Papua. Our life in the future would be burdened with shame and we could not come back here and face our people again; and we would be conscious always of rejected opportunities. The history of the church tells us that missionaries do not think of themselves in the hour of danger and crisis, but of the Master who called them to give their all, and of the people they have been trusted to serve and love to the uttermost. His watchword is none the less true today, as it was when he gave it to the first disciples: 'Whosoever would save his life will lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall find it.'*

*We could not leave unless God, who called us, required it of us, and our spiritual instinct tells us he would never require such a thing at such an hour. No, my brothers and sisters, fellow workers in Christ, whatever others may do, we cannot leave. We shall not leave. We shall stand by our trust. We shall stand by our vocation.*

*Papua is a body, the church: God will not forsake us. He will uphold us; he will strengthen us and he will guide us and keep us through the days that lie ahead. If we all left, it would take years for the Church to recover from our betrayal of our trust. If we remain - and even if the worst came to the worst and we were all to perish in remaining - the Church will not perish, for there would have been no breach of trust in its walls, but its foundations and structure would have received added strength for the future building by our faithfulness unto death. This, I believe, is the resolution of you all.*

*I know there are special circumstances which may make it imperative for one or two to go (if arrangements can be made for them to do so). For the rest of us, we have made our resolution to stay. Let us not shrink from it. Let us trust and not be afraid. To you all I send my blessing. The Lord be with you.*

What happened? To a man and woman, all the bishop's staff stood by their people until it became clear that that course might imperil their people. The bishop himself was bombed and machine-gunned. He escaped injury, despite travelling freely and fearlessly around his diocese to care for and encourage his staff and people, as well as acting as senior chaplain to the military.

Among those who died were two Gona sisters, teacher Mavis Parkinson and nurse May Hayman. They were handed over to the Japanese, and bayoneted to death at Ururu where an altar-shrine now marks the spot.

Father Vivian Redlich of Sangara, who refused to abandon his Sunday Mass when warning came that the Japanese arrival at his camp was imminent and Lucien Tapiedi, his devoted teacher-evangelist who had said to his married colleagues: 'Take your wives and families to the bush and hide. I am single; I'll stay with the fathers and sisters; it doesn't matter if the Japanese get me'; the Sangara missionary-teachers Lilla Lashmar and Marger Brenchley, who had laid the foundations of the Church's educational work in the Orokaiva area, all perished.

John Barge, recently posted to open up work in a totally unevangelized area, refused to 'go bush' with the nearest Roman catholic priest. Forced to dig his own grave, he was then shot into it by Japanese guns.

Many people blamed Bishop Strong for not taking out all his staff to safety. But it was, ultimately, their own choice. To the world, it seemed a waste, a tragedy, a failure - like Calvary. But look at what God has done with it - with their 'defeat'. He has turned it into victory. Look at the rise of the Martyrs' School in their honour - a living organism, not just a memorial, serving God and the nation. Look at the fruit of martyrdom in the ability of the Orokaiva Church to resurrect after the Lamington eruption. Look at the post-World War II leap forward into inland Papuan areas, the New Britain Resurrection and the great 'putsch' in the New Guinea Highlands.

### **Almost every day of the year we can celebrate a saint. Some you may know are listed below for the month of September.**

3 September	Gregory the Great
8 September	The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary
13 September	John Chrysostom
14 September	Holy Cross Day
17 September	Hildegard
20 September	Saints, Martyrs & Missionaries Australasia/Pacific
21 September	Matthew
27 September	Vincent de Paul
20 September	Michael and all Angels

### **Important days in September 2021**

**8 September - Global Literacy Day.** Celebrated to raise awareness about the significance of education.

**10 September - World Suicide Prevention Day.** The International Association of Suicide Prevention and the World Health Organisation celebrate this day to raise awareness among people to prevent suicides.

**14 September - World First Aid Day.** Celebrated to raise awareness about first aid and make it accessible to all so that lives can be saved in an emergency.

**15 September - World Democracy Day.** Celebrated to make people aware of democracy and its importance for a sustainable life.

**16 September - World Ozone Day.** Celebrated to remember the Montreal Protocol, which was signed to prevent the depletion of the ozone layer of the earth. On this day, people are made aware of the importance of the ozone layer and how to protect it.

**21 September - World Alzheimer's Day.** Celebrated with World Senior Citizens Day to ensure older adults living with Alzheimer's disease get proper medication and do not have to face difficulty like poverty or hunger in their last days.

**22 September - World Rhino Day.** Raises awareness of the dangers that rhinos are facing and how to preserve these endangered animals.

**26 September - World Contraception Day.** Raises awareness of the importance of an effective contraceptive method for a better society, its significance and why people should use it.

**26 September - World Rivers Day. (4th Sunday of September).** Celebrated to raise awareness about protecting the rivers and their ecological system for a better future.

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*We hope you have enjoyed reading our new edition of the Pelican Brief*

*Articles provided for your information and enjoyment. Any perceived political biases are those of the authors, not the editor.*