

# VOX

## The University of Divinity Magazine

Issue 1, April 2015



*Professor Peter Sherlock*

### GRADUATION

The University of Divinity Melbourne Graduation for 2015 took place on Friday 20 March in St Michael's Uniting Church, Melbourne. For photos and stories see [pp. 4-6](#).

### NEW CAMPUS

Catherine Booth College has moved to Ringwood and celebrated the move with a dedication ceremony on Saturday 7 February 2015. Read more on [p. 2](#).

### THEOLOGY IN ZAMBIA

Revd Dr Merryl Blair spent part of her recent sabbatical at Northrise University in Ndola, Northern Zambia, a university founded by former MCD student, Dr Moffat Zimba. For the full story turn to [p. 12](#).

Welcome to the first issue of *Vox: The University of Divinity Magazine*.

Change is the dominant characteristic of our time. Our world continues to respond to phenomenal developments in knowledge, technology, and imagination, yet struggles more and more with the age-old problems of war, injustice, and poverty. In Australia, the university sector is undergoing a once-in-a-generation transformation, the end of which is uncertain.

The University of Divinity, too, has experienced transformational change in recent years. In 2012 we attained University status, building on the century of achievements of the Melbourne College of Divinity, founded in 1910. We have grown to include new Colleges and new parts of the Christian tradition, notably the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Our vision, therefore, is to empower our learning community to speak into this ever-changing world, to respond to the changes around us, and to be agents of change, always grounded in the riches of our ancient theological traditions.

This new publication aims to help us achieve our vision by telling and sharing the stories of the University community. This community includes the staff and students of the Colleges, our alumni, and our partners in the churches and religious orders representing eight major Christian traditions.

The University is full of extraordinary stories of the diverse intersections of theological scholarship and research, formation for ministry, and the effects of theological engagement in the public realm. These stories range from the launch of new Colleges and the opening of new campuses to the journeys of our most recent graduates through theological study into new or renewed callings to serve our contemporary world.

Please enjoy the magazine, and do let us know how we can reflect your story in future issues.

Professor Peter Sherlock  
Vice-Chancellor



Photo by Earl Carter



## Catherine Booth College moves to Ringwood

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For more than 35 years, The Salvation Army's Officer Training College operated from a 10-storey converted motel in Parkville, Victoria. 303 Royal Parade was the home base for education and training for those preparing for ordination as Salvation Army Officers. From this centre, newly commissioned officers were then sent out to ministry throughout the Australian Southern Territory, which includes Tasmania, Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria.

Now, after two years of preparation, planning, building and renovation, Catherine Booth College has moved to its new home in Maidstone Street, Ringwood. This transition also heralds the beginning of a new structure where three 'schools' now operate from a single campus. These include the School for Officer Training (previously the Training College), the School for Christian Studies—linked to the University of Divinity—and the School for Learning and Development which has a focus on

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**On Saturday 7 February 2015, the opening of the new facility was celebrated with a dedication ceremony and open day attended by members of the local community, Salvationists and friends from the wider University of Divinity.**



*Attendees of Catherine Booth College's opening and dedication ceremony, including the Melbourne Staff Band and other guests.*

employee and volunteer education and training for the broader Salvation Army community.

On Saturday 7 February 2015, the opening of the new facility was celebrated with a dedication ceremony and open day attended by members of the local community, Salvationists and friends from the wider University of Divinity. The opening ceremony was led by the Chair of Catherine Booth College, Major Gregory Morgan, and the new building was dedicated by the Territorial Leaders for the Australian Southern Territory, Commissioners Floyd and Tracey Tidd. The Chancellor of the University, Dr Graeme Blackman, participated in the ceremony as well as representative staff, students and other project partners. The Melbourne Staff Band of The Salvation Army also supported the event.

The campus includes residential accommodation for students, comprised of town houses and apartments around a college green providing independent living arrangements. It has significant administration and teaching spaces, and three key community hubs—a café area, library and chapel.

*Meredith Faragher, Registrar, School for Christian Studies, Catherine Booth College*

Catherine Booth College photos by The Wizarts

### Trinity College Theological School

On Thursday 19 February 2015, in the presence of the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of the University of Divinity and the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, the Provost of Trinity College, Mr Campbell Bairstow, formally launched the Trinity College Theological School as a College of the University of Divinity. The Vice Chancellor, Professor Peter Sherlock, spoke of his satisfaction in seeing both Trinity College and Pilgrim Theological College become full Colleges of the University, noting that he looked to Trinity to continue its leadership as a place that fosters and values excellence in Anglican liturgical practice, music and ministry, as well as being a centre for the highest quality theological research.

The launch was preceded by Festal Choral Evensong with the Choir of Trinity College, during which the new members of the Trinity College Theological School faculty were commissioned by Archbishop Freier. The Dean of the Theological School, the Revd Canon Professor Dorothy Lee, officiated. The Bishop of Wangaratta, the Rt Revd John Parkes, Chair of the Theological School Committee and a member of the Board of Trinity College, preached a stirring sermon on the parables at the end of Matthew 13.

*Dr Peter Campbell, Registrar, Trinity College Theological School*



**TRINITY COLLEGE**  
**THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL**

### Pilgrim Theological College

Pilgrim Theological College is, in the words of the front page of our website, an 'enacted vision that declares that all the people of God are invited into deep reflection and learning about faith and discipleship'. Our task as we developed a vision for the College in 2014, and our hope as that vision is now enacted in 2015, was and is that Pilgrim will be a place of ecumenical breadth and scholarly depth, continuing and developing the commitments and values of the former United Faculty of Theology.

We are related structurally to the University of Divinity and the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. We are located physically within the Synod's Centre for Theology and Ministry and next to the Dalton McCaughey Library. And we have started the year enthusiastically with a new curriculum, new administrative team, and renewed passion for the work of theological education.

*Revd Associate Professor Sean Winter,  
Academic Dean and Deputy Principal,  
Pilgrim Theological College*



**PILGRIM**  
THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE



Melbourne Graduation 2015  
 Friday 20 March 2015  
 St Michael's Uniting Church, Melbourne

**The summons to reconciliation that Paul and his fellow apostles make as 'ambassadors of Christ', is a summons to enter the new creation, to 'walk in newness of life', with the 'newness' of Christ's risen life.**

*Emeritus Professor Brendan Byrne SJ*



*Emeritus Professor Brendan Byrne SJ, delivers the Melbourne Graduation Address 2015*

At the Melbourne Graduation 2015, Emeritus Professor Brendan Byrne SJ reminded graduands, their family and friends of the cross-cultural journey students undertake in studying theology. What is true of biblical studies in particular, is true of all areas of theology: that students are called to leave their homelands and engage critically and sympathetically with worldviews other than their own. This is the case quite literally for overseas students, especially those for whom English is their second, third or even fourth language, said Professor Byrne. But it is also the case for those who have only travelled between suburbs to study. His Graduation Address offered a careful interpretation of the Scripture Reading, 2 Cor 5:14–21, read in a translation Byrne had provided by Dr Stephen Iskander. Developing Paul's themes of new creation and reconciliation, Byrne said: 'I hope you can see what rich reserves of theology emerge as we run past a Pauline phrase such as "new creation": how it conjures up an entire vision of a world made new.' The challenge to graduands is to allow 'the Great Story to which Paul so constantly appealed reach out across the centuries', catch them up in its vision and find ways to make it 'speak meaningfully to our world today'.

Of the 409 graduands, 169 attended the ceremony and 240 graduated in absentia. Doctoral degrees were awarded to Gregory Brown, Trudy Dantis, Sally Douglas, Simone Rickerby, Audrey Statham, Robert Mitchell and Race Mathews, their research demonstrating the depth and diversity of theological scholarship at the University. Seven Vice Chancellor's Scholars 2015 were named for showing excellence in one or more of the University's Graduate Attributes: Matthew Boland, CTC; Kevin Gallagher, Sentir; Elizabeth Huglin, Whitley; Elizabeth Murray, Stirling; Colin Reynolds, Catherine Booth College; Dinah Rofael, St Athanasius' Coptic Orthodox Theological College; Elissa Roper, YTU.

The Graduation was held at St Michael's Uniting Church, a magnificent nineteenth-century church in Collins Street. This was the first time the University of Divinity had held a ceremony on this site since 1954, and it followed in the tradition of ceremonies held at St Paul's Cathedral in 2013 and at St Patrick's Cathedral in 2014. The ceremony was attended by Mr Dan Wootton, Moderator of the Uniting Church in Victoria and Tasmania.



*Graduation Entrance Procession*



*The Revd Canon Professor Dorothy Lee reads the intercessions*

*The University's Director of Academic Services, John Bartholomeusz, asked three graduating students to respond briefly about their history, previous studies, and what led them to study theology; how they heard about the University of Divinity, and what initially attracted them to UD; the most important thing they have learned from their studies here; their next main goal or stage in life, and how their degrees will help them meet these.*



*Elissa Roper receives her Graduate Diploma*

### **Elissa Roper, Graduate Diploma in Theology and Vice-Chancellor's Scholar 2015, Yarra Theological Union (YTU)**

Elissa describes herself as 'a country girl from Ballarat' whose studies in Chemical Engineering and work in computer networking brought her to Melbourne where she met 'a devoted and delightful Catholic man' whom she eventually married, and where she joined a Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) programme as preparation for baptism. 'One of my RCIA leaders had studied at YTU and highly recommended studying there', she says. During the course of her studies, Elissa married and had four babies. 'I have had to progress from riding a motorbike to class to now driving a "people-mover" vehicle.'

On being named a Vice-Chancellor's Scholar, Elissa comments: 'I dearly love doing theology—especially the essays, hence the desire for research!—and I am very passionate about bringing my skills to the service of the people that are the Catholic Church. I have felt very small in the past, especially as a complete novice in a biblical studies class. Receiving the award was a delightful surprise and it helps me feel a lot stronger in my self-confidence.' Amid the inevitable stresses around combining family obligations and study, Elissa has found YTU a friendly and hospitable community welcoming both herself and her family. She speaks of 'the joy of really connecting with people who have their own stories to tell of living in God's grace' and looks forward to further study as an M.Theol research student. For Elissa this is part of an ongoing story of response 'to where the Spirit is leading' her.

## Juliette Tautala'aso, Bachelor of Theology, United Faculty of Theology

Juliette Tautala'aso is a second generation NZ-born-Samoan woman whose parents migrated from Samoa and met in New Zealand in the late 1950's. 'I was raised "faa-Samoa" (Samoan way) in the home', says Juliette, but school influences led to 'questioning Samoan and Anglo cultural understandings of identity' and ultimately 'to questions of faith and culture'. With no prior tertiary qualifications but long experience in banking, Juliette was drawn to theological study as 'the result of discerning a call to candidate for ordained ministry' and became a student at the former United Faculty of Theology. At 'a crossroads', she reflects, 'I wrestled with my personal faith journey and Samoan cultural understanding, as a Christian working mother charged with the responsibility of nurturing my NZ-born and Melbourne-born children, in our Australian context; trying to bridge the new and old challenges that manifested in our migration to Australia'. 'Remaining true to God' in her circumstances contributed to her discernment 'to take up God's call' for her 'and to face the challenges of theological studies through the University of Divinity'.

Speaking of the way the University has opened her heart to more learning, Juliette comments on the University's role in addressing the particular needs and learning styles of students of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, especially women. For Juliette compassion and relationship are significant elements of teacher-student engagements and the University has not only prepared her for ordained ministry but has also 'ignited' her 'passion to continue with further tertiary studies'. Alongside her congregational placement, she hopes to undertake further study, focusing on seeking 'cultural understandings of God, particularly from a New Zealand-born-Samoan woman's experience'. She would like to research theology and Samoan culture, 'addressing the taboos imposed onto, or interpreted into, the role of women in the Church, and the effects in communities'. This is Juliette's passion.



*Juliette Tautala'aso receives her Degree*

## Dr Stephen Iskander, Diploma in Theology, St Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College

*Stephen first heard of the University from his Bishop Anba Surriel, Dean of the St Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College. He was keenly interested in the College's journey of accreditation.*

Theology and God have been a prominent part of my life. Growing up in a Coptic Orthodox household, for me faith, church and its community have always been a constant. As I grew older it became apparent to me that not everyone has the same idea of God and how God relates to them or doesn't in some cases. So for me the study of theology was and still is a journey of understanding not only of a God that I seek to know more personally but also how others might understand Truth and how to relate this loving God to others.

So the formal study of theology was a natural progression of my love and faith. Such study is far removed from my previous studies and profession in the health sector but has given me skills in analysis and objectivity which otherwise I wouldn't have.

The fact that the University is very ecumenical and has a wide variety of Christian denominations attracted me. Coupled with the flexibility of online delivery and evening classes, UD made it possible to juggle studies with work and church ministry.

There is so much that I have learnt over the course of my studies and my study at UD has enhanced my sense of justice and open-mindedness: to be able to look at things from different perspectives; to establish a deeper understanding of oneself, others and the environment; to be able to break down prejudices and stereotypes and search for the why.



*Dr Stephen Iskander receives his Diploma*



## New Ceremonial Robes

**In 2014 the University Council commissioned new ceremonial robes in the form of gowns for the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor. In issuing the commission, the Council sought to have the University of Divinity's new identity, including its logo, represented in a material way at formal University events, most notably its Graduation ceremonies.**

The commission was awarded to the Revd Kenneth Crawford, parish priest of St James the Great, Darlington, in the diocese of Durham within the Church of England. For many years he has designed and created ceremonial robes for ecclesiastical, civic, and academic institutions. Prior to moving to the United Kingdom in 1997, he served as a priest in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, including as Canon Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral. Most fittingly, Kenneth is an alumnus of the Melbourne College of Divinity, where he received his Bachelor of Divinity in 1994.

The design of the robes is unique, and draws together the centuries-old tradition of university robes with the University's logo and colours.

The robes are based on the University's colours, red and gold. The Chancellor's gown is of red St Margaret damask, giving richness to the gown, augmented by gold lace and red and gold diced braid. The Vice-Chancellor's gown has black sleeves and silver lace to differentiate it from that of the Chancellor. A bonnet of black velvet is worn with each gown, the Chancellor's circled with a red and gold tassel and the Vice-Chancellor's with a red tassel.

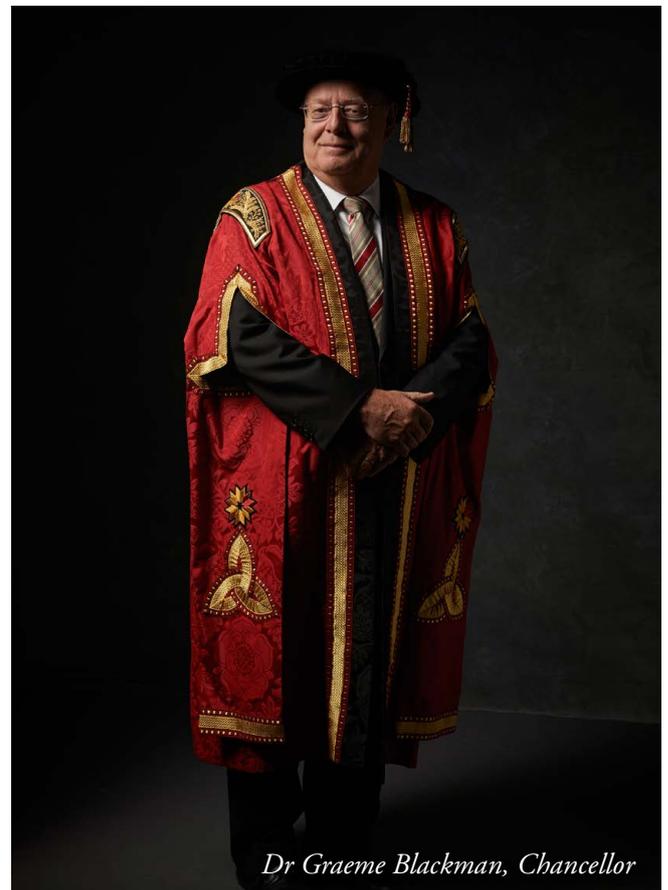
The wing at the top of each sleeve shows a stylised illustration of the Australian national flower, the Mimosa. The embroidery is in gold for the Chancellor

and silver for the Vice-Chancellor. The sprigs of 'wattle' surround the central device, which is the badge of the University in proper colours. In the 'boot' of each sleeve, the badge is repeated, together with a triquetra, alluding to the Holy Trinity.

The new robes were completed in July 2014. Appropriately, they were first worn by the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor at the University's first Graduation in Adelaide on 5 December 2014 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

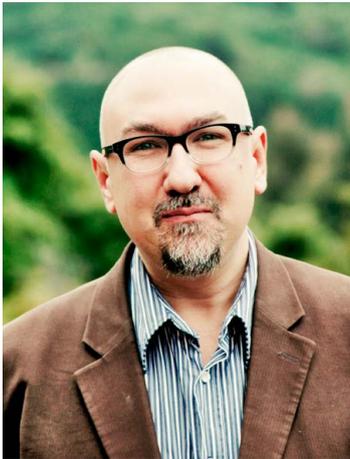
*Professor Peter Sherlock, Vice-Chancellor*

Photo and details of Ceremonial Robes throughout *Vox* by Earl Carter.



*Dr Graeme Blackman, Chancellor*

## New to the University of Divinity



**Jason Goroncy**  
Whitley College

Photo courtesy of  
Jason Goroncy

The Revd Dr Jason Goroncy joined the faculty at Whitley College in 2015, taking up the position of Lecturer in Systematic Theology. Ordained by the Baptist Union of Victoria in 1999, Jason has served as a pastor of Baptist and Uniting churches, as a teacher at the Koh Lo Traw Theological College on the Thai-Burma border, and as a lecturer and Dean of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership in New Zealand. He chairs the Church and Society Working Group for the Theology Network of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Among Jason's many affections are cooking (especially Indian and Sri Lankan dishes), reading, visual arts, bushwalking, whisky, folk and classical music, ornithology, and fishing (with a strong preference for fly fishing, on the basis of the undisputed fact that, in Norman Maclean's words, 'all first-class fishermen on the Sea of Galilee were fly fishermen').

His current research interests lie in the areas of Christian doctrine, theological aesthetics, P. T. Forsyth, and twentieth-century Scottish fiction. His publications include *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Sanctification of All in the Soteriology of P. T. Forsyth* (2013), and the edited collection *Tikkun Olam—To Mend the World: A Confluence of Theology and the Arts* (2014). He blogs at [www.jasongoroncy.com](http://www.jasongoroncy.com)



**Lee Van Rossen**  
Australian  
Lutheran  
College

Photo courtesy of  
Australian Lutheran College

*Lee van Rossen, beginning theological studies at the University of Divinity in 2015, writes about what attracted him to the University, his initial impressions, and his hopes for the coming year and five years hence.*

I had a heart conviction to further study scripture as a basis or foundation for the rest of my life as a God-fearing man, regardless of what I end up doing. My experience at ALC began with what I can only describe as awe. I expected to find people knowledgeable about scripture, but found many of the lecturers and other students to be people I truly admire. In the introductory week, Dr Jeff Silcock spoke on the definition of good theology—and what I expected to be a very mundane lecture inspired me. His statement that theology gives deep joy and peace, a desire to glorify God, has had a major impact in how I view all my study.

Where will I be in five years? I am willing to follow wherever God leads. I have a heart for the mission field, but also have a strong heart for the police force. For this first year at UD, while I want to make lasting relationships and learn as much as possible, my main goal is to get every assignment handed in on time and not fall behind. To anyone else looking to study through the UD, I would say to trust; do not let funds, or commitments, or anything get between you and God's will for your life.

Excellence in learning, teaching, and research, stewardship of our resources, and engagement with the churches and community in Australia and internationally. We demonstrate how to live in unity with diversity. Strengthening our Collegiate University



**John McDowell**  
**Director of  
Research  
Office of the  
Vice-Chancellor**

Photo courtesy of  
John McDowell

*Professor John McDowell was most recently Morpeth Chair in Theology and Religion at the University of Newcastle, NSW, from 2009 to 2014. Vox asked John what attracted him to the University of Divinity, what are his first impressions and what is one goal he has for his first year here.*

I was attracted to the University of Divinity by the commitment not only to critical academic excellence but also to community engagement, especially in the context of taking seriously the rich diversity of, and co-operation between, the Christian traditions. At a time when the 'corporate university' is regulating higher education, the responsibility to engage in care for social flourishing can become a particularly vital witness to the ongoing need for 'the university'.

I have been impressed by the number of HDR students at the UD, and by the energetic collegiality of the institutions that support them. There is significant potential for the University to become internationally recognised as a centre of theological excellence, and to take a prominent place in resisting the increasing religious illiteracy in our deeply secular Australian culture.

Put most broadly, my goal for my first year at UD is to find appropriate ways of efficiently supporting and enhancing the profile and excellence of the research community at the University in its rich collegiate life.



**Kerrie Burn**  
**Library Manager  
Mannix Library  
Catholic  
Theological  
College**

Photo courtesy of  
Kerrie Burn

*Kerrie is current chair of the University's Library and Academic Resources Committee (LARC) and a member of the Academic Board. In addition to qualifications in science and library studies, she holds an MA(research) from MCD.*

Being a theological librarian is a vocation for me. When I started in this role in April 2014 it felt like I was coming home. My previous experience includes over 12 years as a theological librarian at Whitley College and Ridley College in Melbourne, before holding various positions in library and research administration at Southern Cross University in Lismore, NSW. Immediately prior to coming to Mannix Library, I worked at the Australian Catholic University as Senior Librarian (Research Support).

In all of my roles I am keen to bring fresh eyes to a range of library services and procedures, improve support for research, and increase access to online resources for all staff and students of the University. I love the collegial nature of the work that I do and am mindful of the fact that as librarians associated with the University of Divinity we are custodians of many unique collections. Together our combined collections, with their varying histories, strengths and specialisations, provide a valuable resource for the entire University community.



## Engaging with the Religious Dimensions in Public and Civic Affairs

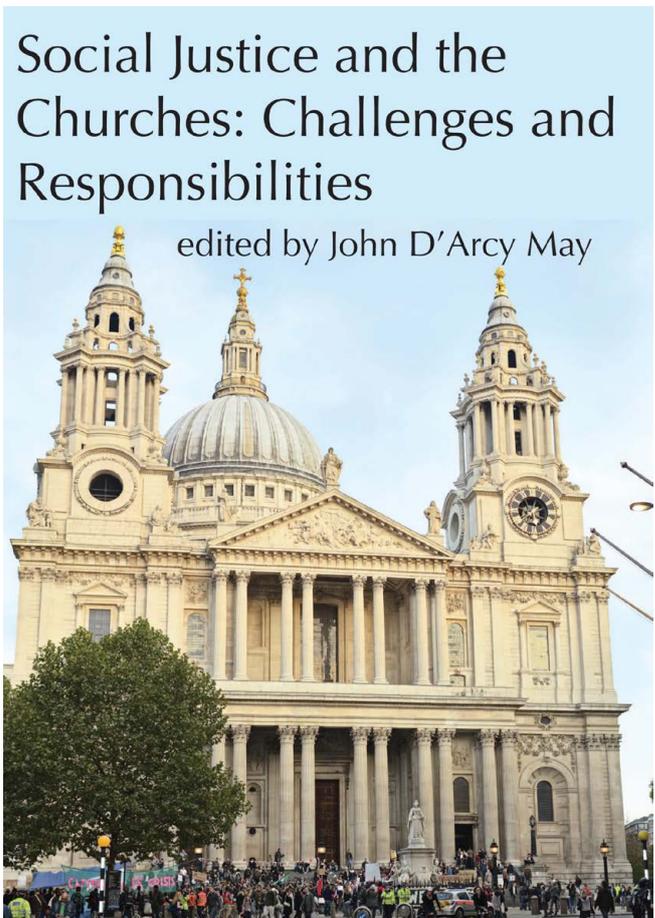
**One of the key goals of the University of Divinity is to engage more closely with people in our part of the world in the struggle to enhance human wellbeing, especially for those on the margins.**

This is a particularly critical time, as economics has been in crisis and the costs as well as benefits of globalisation have become more apparent, with extreme inequality, wars, terrorism and religious conflicts, and the threat from global warming. The University of Divinity is providentially placed to help address such issues as all of them have religious dimensions, and involve decisions about social justice and the common good. Australia is becoming a cosmopolitan nation, and we also need to build bridges of understanding and mutuality among religious traditions.

The Yarra Institute for Religion and Social Policy was founded in 2008 to draw from the scholarly resources within the MCD to engage more closely with pressing social issues. Among its research projects have been studies on asylum seekers, church roles in East Timor's independence struggle, the churches and dealing with trauma from disasters, Christian perspectives on globalisation, the morality of torture, and connections between the faith of young people and social justice.

Representatives of seven churches within the University of Divinity in late 2013 presented papers at a conference on their social traditions, later published as *Social Justice and the Churches: Challenges and Responsibilities*. The Yarra Institute is planning another conference this year on the social thinking of world religions.

The University can play an important role not just by focusing scholarship on philosophical and theological dimensions underlying social and civil issues, but by engaging with specific matters, such as overseas



### Social Justice and the Churches: Challenges and Responsibilities

edited by John D'Arcy May

aid, welfare policies, indigenous issues or Australian involvement in overseas conflicts. We can bring a clearer moral compass to wider civil conversations about such issues. It would mean, of course, encouraging growing expertise within the University, and working collaboratively with church and other networks with their specialised skills and knowledge.

*Revd Dr Bruce Duncan, Director of the Yarra Institute for Religion and Social Policy*

*Social Justice and the Churches: Challenges and Responsibilities*, edited by John D'Arcy May is available for purchase from The Yarra Institute <http://www.yarrainstitute.org.au/Publications/Books.aspx> for \$25 plus \$5 postage.

## Educating for Democracy in Australian Schooling

**Dr Audrey Statham, Research Associate,  
Health in Society Research Network,  
School of Social Sciences, Monash  
University**

The stimulus for my doctoral research in Philosophy of Education, completed in 2014, was the publication of a national education policy called the Australian Values Framework (AVF) which outlined 'nine values for Australian schooling'. The Australian Federal Government endorsed AVF in 2005 and disseminated it to all Australian faith and state schools. My thesis investigated the disturbing disparity that exists between the vision for achieving world peace through democratic education described by another key document for Australian schooling, UNESCO's Delors Report, and AVF's response to the Delors Report. I found that the cause of AVF's preference for realising a homogenous social unity through imposing common values that narrow down pluralism—and which is thereby exclusionary of religious groups—is not due to the secular nature of Australian society.

Since completing, I have written two articles for *The Conversation* about the new Australian curriculum and the school chaplaincy program, drawing on a key finding from my research, namely, that the meaning of



*Audrey received the award of Doctor of Philosophy from University of Divinity at the Melbourne Graduation*

the secular is not intrinsically exclusive of the religious, but can describe a democratic attitude of openness towards those with and without religious faith. My current employment as a Research Associate and Project Co-ordinator on an ARC Linkage Project, the Supported Decision Making study, in the School of Social Sciences at Monash University is enabling me to explore more deeply from a sociological perspective a question of central importance for my doctoral research: 'Is Australia becoming a kind of inclusive democratic society that can contribute to building a more peaceful, less bellicose, globalised environment?'

Audrey's thesis is available in the University of Divinity Repository to registered users or on application  
<http://repository.divinity.edu.au/1609/>

**PACIFICA**  
AUSTRALIAN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES



### ***Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies***

Founded in 1987 by the Pacifica Theological Studies Association and now wholly owned by the University of Divinity, *Pacifica* is a peer-reviewed journal of Christian theology and its associated disciplines whose contributors include established and emerging scholars from within Australia and around the world. Published three times a year, *Pacifica* is available worldwide in print and online through SAGE publications:  
<http://paa.sagepub.com/>



## Revd Dr Merryl Blair's Sabbatical at Northrise University, Ndola

With a dream to found a university, Moffat Zimba, from Ndola in Northern Zambia, came to Melbourne to study. He and his wife Doreen became good friends of Merryl, her family and colleagues at Churches of Christ Theological College (now Stirling Theological College), where Moffat obtained a BTheol and DipMin through the former MCD. After going on to do a Doctorate at Fuller Theological Seminary in the U.S., he returned to Ndola to found Northrise University (<http://northrise.org/>) which opened in 2004, with faculties of IT and theology, offering certificates, then diplomas and now degrees.

Five years ago, Dr Moffat Zimba invited Merryl and her husband Graeme to visit and teach at Northrise. On their first visit for three months in 2010 the university had around 200 students, including in theology, IT and business, at a city location. The university was building on the outskirts of the city where they now have a farm, a chicken processing plant and a large banana plantation. Northrise is committed to ecological farming using permaculture principles.

Last year Merryl spent six weeks of her sabbatical at Northrise, her third visit in five years, each visit bringing her more deeply into the community. The university had grown to around 500 students, most of whom are from villages, very poor but supported by scholarships. Initially, overseas donors were the key funding source but now the university funds around 70% of its needs through its fee paying adult students and its farm.

In addition to teaching biblical studies Merryl has taught community development at Northrise, where one of the students has started a school, feeding programme, classes, and micro loans programmes for women, support for the children's carers, and links with local health care to assist with getting children tested and treated for HIV and AIDS. Another woman, on the Constitution committee, used insights gained from one of Merryl's talks on Genesis to argue successfully against



*Merryl's student Shefred graduates, with plans to become a police chaplain.*

writing the subordination of women into the Zambian Constitution.

The influence has been two way. Merryl has found her Zambian students more alert to the rhythms of oral story telling than their Melbourne counterparts. Her experience has opened up her understanding of biblical worlds. 'Now I understand the world of the OT that I'm actually teaching, because I see people living it out.' When they first visited Northrise, Merryl and her husband said to each other 'we're standing in a miracle'. The miracle was Dr Moffat Zimba's dream.

*Revd Dr Merryl Blair is Lecturer in Old Testament at Stirling Theological College, University of Divinity. Stirling Theological College has a Memorandum of Understanding with Northrise University.*

Photo on page header: Dr Moffat and Doreen Zimba with Merryl and Graeme Blair, Jess Holt and Bec Lee. Photos courtesy of Merryl Blair.

