



Townsville Ministry Unit

July 2026 Parish News



Eucharists
9am Sunday

Wednesday
12 noon & 5.30pm

St James is open most
weekdays 8.30am-noon

Rev Kevin Bourke

Email kgb1960@icloud.com

Assisting Clergy

**Bishop Freier
Rev Vic Hall
Rev Christine Readman
Fr Mitchell Porter
Rev Shirley Thomson
Rev Frances Maltby**

Wardens:

Owen Stanley
0419656816

Leigh Kennedy
0473974282

Phone 0432 833 451

Post PO Box 108, Townsville, 4810

Email: stjamescathedral@hotmail.com

Website: stjamescathedral.com.au

Facebook: [/townsvillecathedral/](https://www.facebook.com/townsvillecathedral/)

[Instagram@cathedral.tsv](https://www.instagram.com/cathedral.tsv)

Our Ministry Unit

Dr Philip Freier began his career as a teacher in northern Australia, teaching on Thursday Island, Kowanyama, and Yarrabah. He was also an advisory teacher in Aboriginal education with the Queensland Education Department.

After his ordination in 1982, Freier was a curate in Kowanyama, Queensland. During his time in Kowanyama he studied and became a fluent speaker of one of the local indigenous languages, the Koko-Bera language and is now one of only approximately 50 speakers of this endangered tongue.

He then became the rector of St Oswald's Banyo, an then Christ Church Bundaberg.

In 1999, he became Bishop of the Northern Territory, and from 2014 to 2020, Dr Freier served as the 16th Anglican Primate of Australia. From December 2006 to February 2025, he served as the 10th Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne and the 13th Bishop of Melbourne. Before ordination. Bishop Freier has been a chaplain to the Royal Australian Air Force Reserve since 2001.[]

He was chair of the Brotherhood of St Laurence and has extensive experience on boards, including higher education providers.

Bishop Freier's ministry covered all socio-economic and cultural groups with a strong interest in and concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

He chaired the Board of Delegates of the Australian College of Theology and was Chair of the Doctrine Commission of the General Synod. His previous positions include Examining Chaplain to the Archbishop of Brisbane, Area Dean of the Burnett in the Diocese of Brisbane, Rector at Christ Church Bundaberg in the Diocese of Brisbane, and Rector St Oswald's Banyo in the Diocese of Brisbane.

Bishop Freier retired as Archbishop of Melbourne on 9 February 2025, his 70th birthday

He maintains a keen interest in Australian Anglican history. From 2000 to 2003, he was an Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Law, Business and Arts at the Northern Territory University.

He is also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

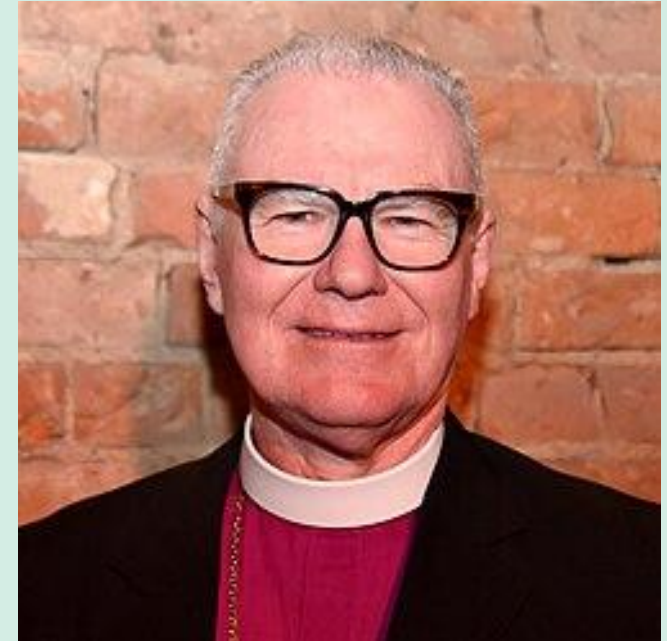
The Federation University Council appointed Dr Philip Freier as Chancellor in 2025. Dr Freier has served on the Council since 2021 and as Deputy Chancellor since 2023. He is Chair of the Governance and Strategy Committee and sits on multiple Council committees. Bishop Freier retired as Archbishop of Melbourne on 9 February 2025, his 70th birthday

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Thank you to Bishop Freier for taking some services in the absence of the Dean



[Bishop Freier](#)



What's Happening

in July

Mass Roster— July 2026

Version 2 (St James Cathedral)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 "COMING OF THE LIGHT" TORRES STRAIT 12:00 Extended Communion GA 5:30 Eucharist at St James VH	2	3 THOMAS	4
5 6TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. 9:00 Eucharist at St James MP	6 JOHN FISHER & THOMAS MORE.	7	8 12:00 Eucharist at St James DGC 5:30 Eucharist at St James VH	9	10 6:00pm Ordination to the Diaconate of Dr Lynore Geia at St James. KJ	11 BENEDICT OF NURSIA
12 7TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. 9:00 Eucharist at St James FM (Sea Sunday - Mission to Seafarers)	13 SYDNEY JAMES KIRBY BCA	14	15 12:00 Extended Communion GA 5:30 Eucharist at St James VH	16	17	18
19 8TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. 9:00 Eucharist at St James PF	20	21	22 MARY MAGDALENE 12:00 Extended Communion GA 5:30 Eucharist at St James VH	23	24	25 JAMES
26 9TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. 9:00 Eucharist at St James KB	27	28	29 MARY & MARTHA OF BETHANY. 12:00 Extended Communion GA 5:30 Eucharist at St James VH	30 WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.	31 JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA.	



- *Coming of the Light celebration 1959 Kemus, Erub, Torres Strait.* © [Queensland Museum](#).

July 1st Coming of the Light



Each year on the 1st of July Torres Strait Islanders celebrate The Coming of the Light – this commemorates the coming of Christianity to the islands. It began on the 1st of July 1871 when the Reverend Samuel MacFarlane of the London Missionary Society anchored at Erub Island and was welcomed on the island.

This day is an island specific public holiday and many Torres Strait Islanders whether they live on the islands or the mainland will come together every year to celebrate this day.

**Ordination
of
Dr Lynore Geia as Deacon
in the Church of God

St James' Cathedral

Friday July 10th at 6.00pm.**



Please bring a plate for supper

CLEVELAND SINGERS, in association with OPERA QUEENSLAND
and GREAT BARRIER REEF ORCHESTRA
present

G.F. HANDEL'S
Messiah

Conducted by Volker Hedtfeld (Berlin, GERMANY)

Siobhan Patrick | soprano

Deborah Rogers | alto

Connor Willmore | tenor (OQ)

Jia-Peng Yeung | bass (OQ)

Saturday 11 July 2026 | 3:00pm

St. Patrick's College Auditorium
45 The Strand TOWNSVILLE



Tickets

\$45 / \$35 conc.

<https://www.trybooking.com/DLVVJ>

Brought to you by:



SEA SUNDAY



Please join us on **SEA SUNDAY** July 12th

Join churches worldwide to pray for and support the brave seafarers who navigate life's most challenging storms. Help us bring Peace in the Storm, as we reflect on how Christ's calming presence brings hope and assurance, both on the high seas and in our daily lives.



For more information on our work visit **mts.org.au/sea-sunday**

Join us this **SEA SUNDAY**

Look around: the tea in your cup, the clothes you wear, the fuel that heats your home – around 90% of it arrives by sea. Behind all of the world's shipments are 1.9 million brave men and women who spend months away from home, often in isolated and challenging conditions, separated from everyone and everything they love.

Seafarers are some of the most invisible heroes. On Sea Sunday, churches around the world are coming together in prayer and thanksgiving for those who keep our world moving – and to offer them practical help in Christ's name. As you share in today's service, you have a simple, powerful opportunity to turn gratitude into action.

This action, in the form of a gift or the volunteering of your time, will go towards providing practical, emotional, and spiritual support – creating Harbours of Hope for those who serve us at sea.

Your generosity today can provide the practical care, emotional support, and spiritual encouragement that seafarers desperately need. Every gift – whether monthly or one-off – becomes a Harbour of Hope for someone who might otherwise feel forgotten.

If you are able, please consider starting a monthly gift first. Regular giving allows the Mission to plan ahead, respond quickly, and be there for seafarers' day after day, year after year.

towards providing practical, emotional, and spiritual support – creating Harbours of Hope for those who serve us at sea.



Support Seafarers **EVERY MONTH**

Many supporters choose to give monthly, because it provides steady, reliable care for those who serve us at sea. Even a modest amount, given regularly, has a deep and continuing impact.

\$10 a month

keeps families connected, providing phone cards and SIM data so seafarers can stay in touch with their loved ones.

\$25 a month

brings chaplains on board, funding regular chaplain visits, offering prayer, listening ears, and practical support to isolated crews.

'For these isolated seafarers, a chaplain's visit offers more than conversation - it's recognition, prayer for those who need it, and the reassurance that someone sees them.'

**Entries close
July 15th**

Friends of St James Cathedral 2026 Art & Craft Exhibition

Opening: July 29th

**Exhibition runs
July 30th – August 9th**

Art Prize: “*Townsville Icon*”



St James
Sculpture
Erwin A. Guth

[Further information](#) for Artists including Entry Form



Friends of St James Cathedral

**Meeting
9am Saturday
July 18th**

Discussions about
the up-coming Art
and Craft Exhibition

All Welcome

<https://www.stjamescathedral.com.au/friends-of-the-cathedral/>

July 25th
St James
(the greater):

His symbol is the
scallop shell
which is the
symbol of
pilgrimage and
stands for this
apostle's zeal and
missionary spirit



TCB



Sat, 25 Jul at 16:00

Heroes & Villains Concert
St James' Cathedral, Townsville

★ Interested ▼

What to expect

From the Incredibles to Attila the Hun, the Australian Outback to New York City.

Prepare for a musical clash between good and evil.



July 26th St. Anne

- According to Church tradition, Anne was the mother of the Virgin Mary.

Our window was donated by the Estate of Myrtle Olive May Smith in memory of Elizabeth Fenton

- Dedicated 7th June 1981
- Designed and made by Michael Murphy, Sandringham, Victoria at a cost of \$2000.

Founders Weekend

We welcome St Anne's Alumni and
the Cathedral School of St Anne and St James String Ensemble



2026 ART AND CRAFT EXHIBITION

Friends of St James Cathedral

OPEN DAILY 10AM – 2PM & SATURDAYS 10AM – 5PM

Over the years the annual **Art & Craft Exhibition** has given local artists a venue in which to display their works. This year, more than 85 artists will display their most recent works. The exhibition will feature a diverse range of artworks from talented artists, each providing unique perspectives.

**Friends of St James Cathedral
2026 Art & Craft Exhibition**

Opening: July 29th

Exhibition runs
July 30th – August 9th
Art Prize: "Townsville Icon"



EXHIBITION OPENING

**6pm Wednesday
July 29th**



Mayor Nick Dametto

Announcement of Art Prize, "Townsville Icon", will be made at the Opening

FEATURED ARTIST

6pm Friday August 7th

Donna Beningfield

Topic: Through my exhibiting career.....



Donna is a qualified teacher and award-winning Townsville artist who specialises in portraiture.

Her presentation will focus on **exhibiting** and what it has meant to her over the years. She would like to inspire others to follow this path.

CATHEDRAL TOURS

11am Sat Aug 1st & 8th

Sun Aug 2nd & 9th



St James Cathedral is widely acknowledged as an important building in Townsville and is a major landmark on Melton Hill, being seen from around the city. Explore its artwork and learn about its interesting history.

A DAY OF MUSIC AND ART

Celebrate Creativity in the Heart of the City Saturday, August 1st

This vibrant event is designed to encourage visitors to explore the Cathedral and its beautiful gardens, whilst enjoying live performances and artistic displays throughout the day.

Artists will be creating and showcasing their work both inside the Cathedral and around the gardens, offering a unique opportunity to witness art in progress.

Musical highlights include soloists and small ensembles, providing a delightful soundtrack for your visit.

A relaxing day filled with music, art, and community spirit.

BRASS UNDER THE ARCHES



4pm Saturday August 8th



EUCCHARIST & ORGAN

9am Sundays

Hear the original pipe organ played.
Installed in St James' Church in 1884.

St James Cathedral, 36 Cleveland Terrace, Townsville City

July 29th

EXHIBITION OPENING

**Installation
of the 14th
Dean of St James Cathedral
the Very Rev Jeffery Akoai
St James' Cathedral
Friday July 31st at 6.00pm.**



Please pray for Jeffery, his wife Julieth and their two sons, Jeff and Jedd

Please bring a plate for supper

MISSION OF THE MONTH

The Mission to Seafarers



*Caring for Seafarers in
Australia since 1857.*

**Donations can be made through the envelopes
or direct debit, marked with the name of Mission**

- **BSB 034 222**
- **Account Number 250713 250713**

You Can Be a Lifeline of Care

ONE-OFF DONATION

A one-off gift makes a vital difference, monthly contributions provide constant care.

- \$35** Helps provide access to digital chaplaincy, so seafarers can reach out for support at any hour of the day or night.
- \$65** Helps supply emergency aid, safety equipment, and pastoral support when crews face crisis.
- \$120** Helps cover transport and communication costs so chaplains can respond swiftly and offer ongoing care when it is most needed.

**Thank you for being part of
this vital ministry. Together,
we can be Harbours of Hope
for those who serve us so
faithfully at sea.**



Reach Those Who Feel Forgotten

Life at sea can be lonely, frightening, and exhausting. Many seafarers face family separation, stress, and anxiety with no one close by to turn to. Yet through The Mission to Seafarers, the love of Christ reaches right into that isolation – through chaplain visits, centres of welcome, and simple acts of kindness that change everything for someone far from home.

For these isolated seafarers, a chaplain's visit offers more than conversation – it's recognition, prayer for those who need it, and the reassurance that someone sees them.

Please visit mts.org.au/seasunday to learn more about our work.



@mts_aust



@MTSAustCouncil



**WHAT
HAPPENED**

**in
June**



Holy Baptism

**We welcome into God's Family
Hudson Reed STYLES**



Last Sunday Service at St Mark's Church





MUSIC

IN THE CATHEDRAL

6 SATURDAY 4PM
JUNE 36 Cleveland Terrace,
Townsville

Gold Coin
Donation

Enjoy an afternoon of
classical music with our
Cathedral School Musicians

ENSEMBLES PERFORMING

Flute Ensembles
Reed Ensembles
Chamber Strings
Guitar Ensemble
String Quartets
Brass Ensemble





Secularisation Service

St Marks, Belgian Gardens

Friday, 19th June 2026

6.00pm



1931 - 2026

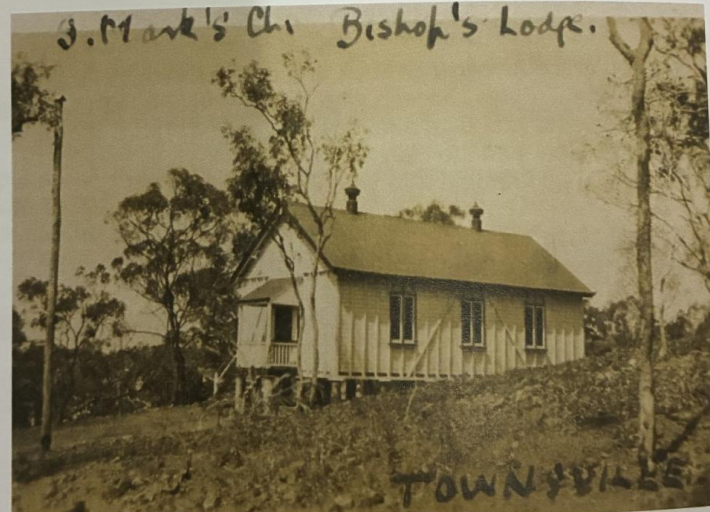
By the Bishop of North Queensland

The Right Reverend Dr Keith Joseph

on

19th June, 2026

*St Mark's Anglican Church,
Belgian Gardens (Queensland)
was originally built in Sellheim in 1903.
The building was relocated to Townsville in 1931
to serve as the Bishop's Lodge chapel
and was moved to its current site
on Bundock Street in 1958.
It was secularised this day on 19th June, 2026.*



Charles Wesley 1707—88 alt.

SECULARIZATION OF THE BUILDING

Bishop:

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray

Dear friends in Christ, we who are gathered here know that this building, which has been dedicated and set apart for the ministry of God's holy Word and sacraments, will no longer be used in this way, but will now be used for other purposes.

To many of you, this building has been hallowed by cherished memories, and we know that some will suffer a deep sense of loss. We pray that you will be comforted by the knowledge that the presence of God is not tied to any place or structure.

Let me further assure this congregation that the sacred furniture and vessels will be removed and protected from desecration. It is the also the intention of the Diocese that none who worshipped here should be deprived of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments.



*St Margaret of Scotland Anglican Church,
Magnetic Island (Queensland)
was originally a barrack building from the fort area of Florence Bay built during
the 2nd World War.*

*The building was purchased by Archdeacon Bill Hohenhouse and relocated to
Endeavour Road Arcadia, to become St Margarets on land donated by the
Hayles family in the 1920's.*

*It was refurbished in the 1970's and an altar from the Seaman's Mission in
Palmer Street, Townsville was installed.
It was secularised on this day 20th June, 2026.*

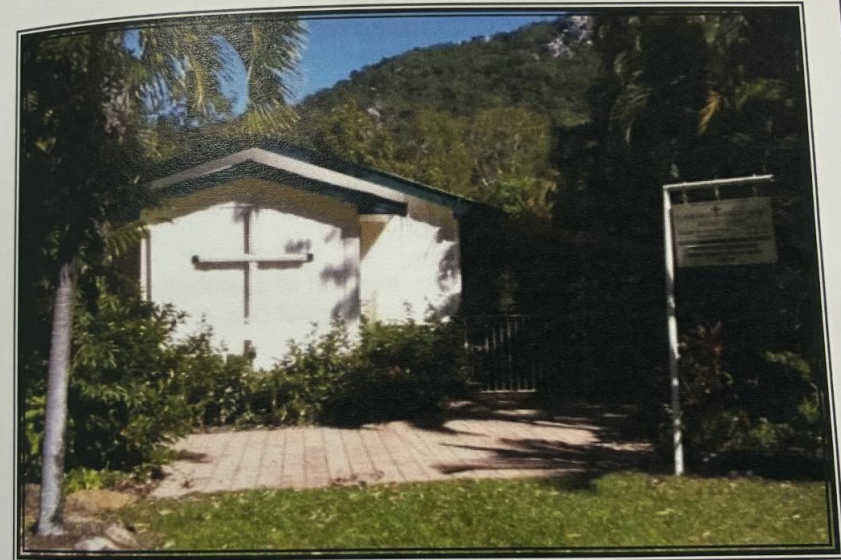


Secularisation Service

St Margaret of Scotland, Magnetic Island

Saturday, 20th June 2026

5.00pm



1942 - 2026

By the Bishop of North Queensland

The Right Reverend Dr Keith Joseph

on

20th June, 2026.





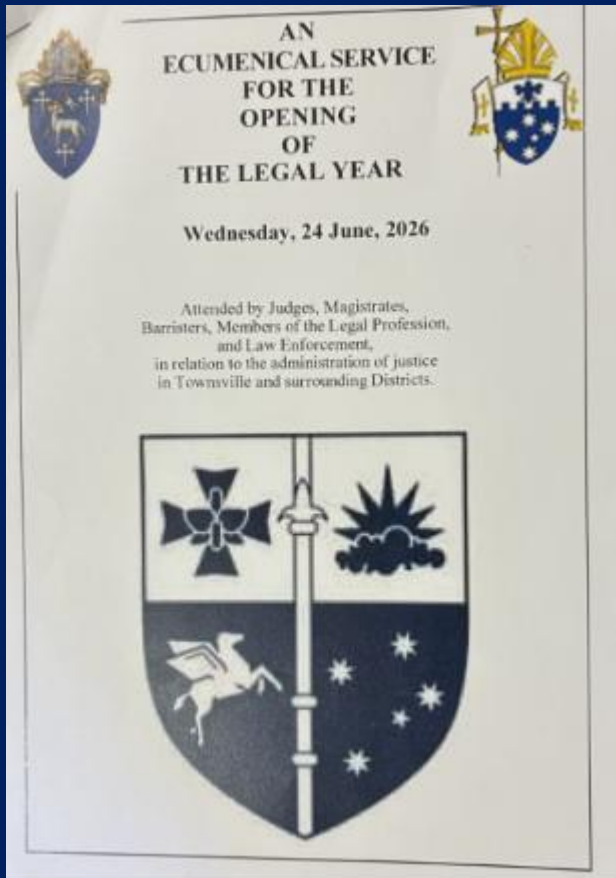
The Priory in Australia
of the Most Venerable Order of
the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem
St John Ambulance: Queensland



CHURCH SERVICE
& PRESENTATION CEREMONY
SAINT JAMES' ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL
TOWNSVILLE
Sunday 21st June 2026







Historical Roots

Australia's Opening of the Legal Year is a ceremonial tradition inherited from English common law designed to mark the beginning of the judicial calendar. It features a combination of religious services and formal court sittings where the legal profession gathers to reflect on the administration of justice.

The ceremony dates back to the 13th century in England and Europe. Its earliest origin is the Christian "Red Mass", which was first recorded in Paris in 1245 and later adopted in Westminster Abbey during the reign of King Edward I to seek divine guidance for judges.

Evolution of the tradition in Australia

As Australian legal institutions are substantially derived from the English legal system, early colonial judges and lawyers replicated this traditional opening. In most cities, the legal year begins in late January or early February, following the long summer court recess, but it may be held at other times in various States and cities.

Background to the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation.

After the bombing of Coventry in 1940, the Provost viewed the destruction of the once beautiful Cathedral. He paused and picked up a piece of charcoal from the rubble and walked to what was left of the wall behind the High Altar and wrote "Father Forgive."

These words have become the central part of the now world famous Coventry Litany of Reconciliation prayed by millions of visitors to the Cathedral and now prayed world wide by the Community of the Cross of Nails of which St James is a part.

 **Queensland Law Society®**





...to those who unloaded Brother Robin Warsop's 4,000 books that were donated to the Archives.



...to Helen and Tom who have spent many hours preparing the Deanery, inside and out, for the arrival of Fr Jeffrey and his family



**Have you
checked out our
Cathedral Book
Shelf lately?**

Thank you Rev Shirley
for sorting the books



"Swagman Saint" Is Honoured

BRISBANE, Sunday.—A bishop whose remarkable pastoral ministering took him into remote settlements of North Queensland today became Australia's first saint.

He was Bishop John Oliver Feetham, the "Swagman Saint," who was Bishop of North Queensland from 1913 until his death in 1947.

His promulgation as a saint and a hero by the Anglican Church in Australia was made in Townsville's St. James' Cathedral by the present bishop, the Rt. Rev. Ian Shevill.

Bishop Feetham's ashes are buried under the altar of St. James' Cathedral, his church during his 34 years as Bishop of North Queensland.

He was born in England in 1873 and came to Australia in 1907 as the principal of the Bush Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd in the Bathurst diocese.

In 1913 he was elected Bishop of North Queensland and his long episcopacy from 1913 to 1947 was carried out in a diocese the size of Victoria.

Bishop Feetham was affectionately known as the "Swagman Saint" because of his habit of wearing old clothes and carrying a swag during trips to the most remote areas of his diocese.

60 years ago

120 years ago

The Daily Telegraph
04 Jul 1906, Wed Page 10



grants. These may, however, require assistance in the matter of passage money in the first instance.

BISHOP FRODSHAM'S VIEWS.

BRISBANE, Tuesday.—The Northern Synod was opened at St. James' Cathedral, Townsville, to-night. Bishop Frodsam delivered an inaugural address. Dealing with Kanaka deportation, the Bishop pointed out the hardship which was being inflicted upon the Kanakas, who were now prevented from obtaining employment whilst waiting deportation. He urged that there should be some relaxation in the administration of the Act.

130 years ago

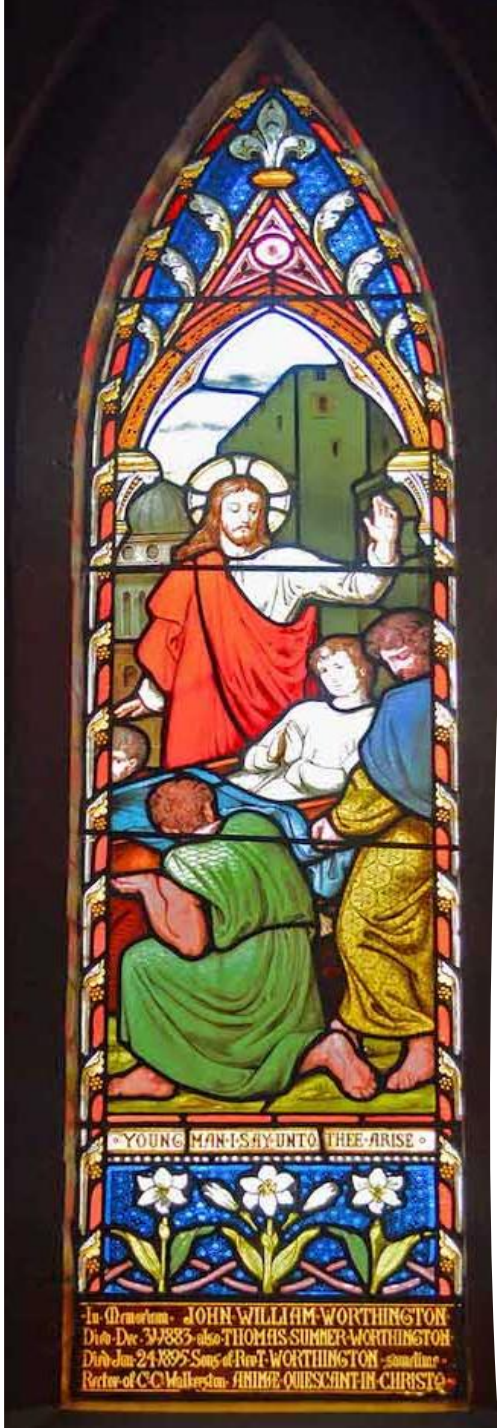


Jesus Raising the Widow's Son.

- In memory of Thomas S. Worthington and his younger brother, John William.

Donated by Rev T. Worthington (South Australia) and Rev H.W. Worthington (Herberton) in memory of their sons and brother

This was the first window installed in the Cathedral
Installed on **July 1st 1896**



150 YEARS OF Mothers' UNION

Join us, Join in

Lighting the way for
generations to come



- In 2026, we will celebrate 150 years since Mothers' Union was founded in the small parish church of Old Alresford, Hampshire, by Mary Sumner, a vicar's wife with a bold vision. She believed that women, regardless of class or status, could come together in faith to support one another and strengthen family life within the Church.

News from the Townsville Cluster



Our first fundraising activity was a Quiz Afternoon. It is always fun with people decorating their tables and supplying their own afternoon tea.

Our Lady Day Service was held at St Matthew's where Rev Stephanie gave the address. Afterwards we had a talk on Elder Abuse and Scams. The Speaker

was Jan Hagerty a Townsville Intake and Support Worker Townsville Community Law Inc.

Everyone went away with a clearer understanding of what constitutes elder abuse and what to look out for with Scams.



As an Outreach, Robyn organised a talk by Dr Amanda Nickson on **Living by Faith and Building Resilience Skills**. She shared her faith journey and then spoke well about what we can do to be more resilient and bounce back when life gets difficult.

Nearly 50 people enjoyed the afternoon which began with the usual amazing afternoon tea. The lucky door prizes were two of Amanda's books and two photo books created by Coral – "This is My Story, This is My Song".

- From that single spark of an idea, a global movement was born – and Mothers' Union has grown to 4 million members across 84 countries. As we look to the future our members will continue working to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities around the world. At the heart of everything we do will remain our unwavering belief that faith and compassion can transform lives.

Don't waste your points! Redeem and pass onto Althea

Discover the Curtis Stone Glass Container range!

Earn one glass container credit for every \$20 spent in one transaction with your Flybuys.*

[Shop now](#)

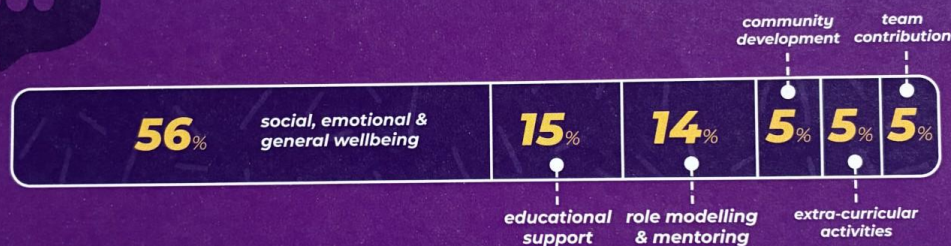
*Earn credits until 4/8 & redeem by 11/8 (redemption unavailable on the Coles App). Exclusions and T&Cs apply.



what does a school chaplain **do**?

School chaplains in Australia provide social, emotional and pastoral support to school communities. They contribute to the overall wellbeing strategies and educational goals of our local schools.

School chaplains are in the prevention and support business: helping students find a better way to deal with issues ranging from family breakdown and loneliness to friendships and mental health



where you can serve as a chaplain

We have vacancies all over Australia, to find local opportunities near you, visit: startchaplaincy.com/jobs



“hey, you might be our next **chaplain!**”

More than 200 schools across Australia are **urgently** seeking an SU school chaplain to provide social, emotional, and pastoral support for students, staff, and families.

If you’ve got a heart for young people, or know someone who does, visit startchaplaincy.com to find out more today.

If you have any questions about your application or credentials, please email recruitment@su.org.au or call **1300 478 753**.

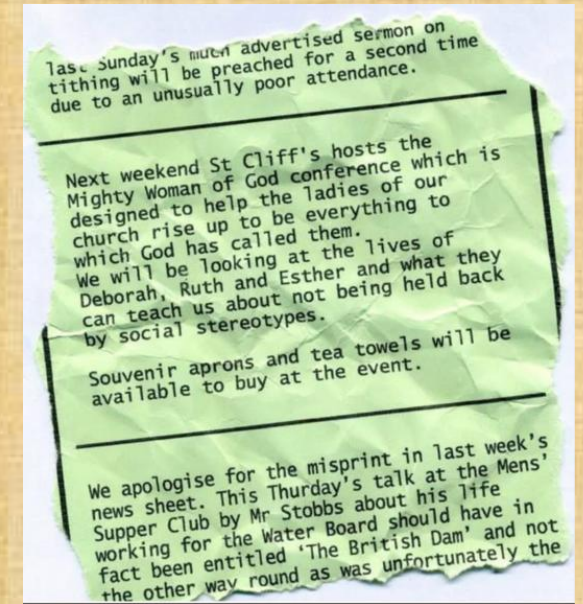
startchaplaincy.com

Catering

We are looking for Ladies **OR Men** who would like to help with Sunday Morning Teas or some upcoming catering. There is a lot on in July/August

July 10th -Supper for Lynore Geia's Ordination
July 29th -Art and Craft Exhibition Opening 6pm
July 31st -Supper for Installation of Dean
August 7th -Featured Artist Presentation 6pm

Thank you to all who cater for the Sunday Morning Teas. Thank you also Brenda and Helen for catering for the Law Year Opening Morning Tea



ESSAY

JOHN MAC GHLIONN

FAITH IS BACK IN FASHION

Gen Z is
rediscovering
religion in two
different ways

Rosalía on her
LUX tour

Something strange is happening in religion. For most of modern history, women filled the pews while men filed into the pub. Now, we have some interesting numbers to consider in the light of recent cultural trends: in Australia, Gen Z may be the first generation where young men are more religious than young women. That's according to data from NCLS Research's 2022 Australian Community Survey, which found almost 40 per cent of men under 28 identify as Christian, against just under 30 per cent of young women.

In the US in 2025, Christian research group Barna found men outweighed women in church attendance 43 per cent to 36 per cent, with attendance on the rise for all young adults and Gen Z and Millennials the most engaged.

That's what's happening inside the building. The cultural surface tells a different story, and women are mostly driving it. In November, Spanish artist Rosalía released LUX, a four-movement orchestral epic recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra. Each of its tracks was inspired by a female saint or mystic, and among the 13 languages used are Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, and Sicilian.

Gen Z women turned a literal hagiography set to opera into a Billboard juggernaut. The album scored No.1 debuts across five different charts, an unprecedented feat. The Lord, as Rosalía might put it, works in mysterious ways.

Then there's The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives, the Hulu hit that made "what conservative Christian women actually get up to on weekends" appointment television. For the uninitiated, MomTok is a group of Utah TikTok-mom influencers who spent years soft-swinging. The arrangement involved swapping partners for everything short of actual intercourse, which apparently kept things technically Temple-compliant. The whole arrangement detonated in 2022, when MomTok's ringleader, Taylor Frankie Paul, announced her divorce, confessed the group's unholy arrangement on camera, and admitted she had broken the one rule by going all the way with

someone else's husband. Four seasons in, it's the show your sister, your girlfriend and your mother-in-law all swear they don't watch and very obviously do.

The Chosen, meanwhile, is a crowdfunded Jesus drama set to enter its sixth season later this year. It has now pulled more than 200 million viewers across virtually every country on the planet – a reach most Marvel films would envy – with a Guinness World Record for the most-translated TV series. It did all this on donations and word of mouth before any major studio touched it. Who knew a first-century carpenter in sandals could outperform a billion-dollar superhero franchise?

And then there is the tradwife feed. Saints on the wall, sourdough starters on the counter, modest dresses, three children under five, all shot in golden hour like a Caravaggio with a content strategy. The iconography is everywhere. The actual buildings, with actual priests asking for actual commitments, tend to draw more men than women. Women may want the candles and the cosmic stakes, but very few, if any, are pining for sermons from a man whose hairline has begun its own spiritual journey toward the back of his skull.

I argue that what the church numbers and the cultural appetites reveal is a real hunger taking two different forms. Chuck Peters, director of Lifeway NextGen at America's largest evangelical Christian publisher (whose research arm, Lifeway Research, has tracked church attendance for decades), thinks the surge of men is real but partial. He believes "that the ratio may be shifting because a growing number of females are disengaging." In other words, the pews look more male partly because the women have stopped showing up.

The men who do show up, Peters suggests, may not be there for purely spiritual reasons. The return "seems to be more closely connected with a desire to become upstanding citizens with good morals and values who are successful in their careers and start businesses". They tend to "identify as conservative, masculine men", but "the depth of their faith may be lacking, potentially more socially or culturally motivated than driven by true spiritual depth and dedication". The assassination of Charlie Kirk, the American conservative

activist and co-founder of Turning Point USA, shot at Utah Valley University in September, drove a wave of young men into churches across the US, and Peters wonders aloud how much of that influx will translate to real discipleship.

What he is sure about is an underlying ache. The research behind his book, Flip the Script, co-authored with Jana Magruder, found Gen Z to be "the most connected generation of all time through technology" and "simultaneously the loneliest and most isolated generation in history". "This is a generation that is starving for a place to belong," Peters says. "Guys are discovering that they can find this kind of acceptance in the church and in the faith community."

What are we to make of these apparent trends? If Peters is right and young Gen Z men are looking for a place to belong, it could help explain why they are heading for the structure-heavy traditions. Catholic, Orthodox, and traditional Anglican: a faith that hands them a clear job, a brotherhood and a 2000-year-old playbook has resonance.

The women's path may be running in the opposite direction, seeking the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of faith without the institutions that they read as hostile. So Rosalía gives them mass without the priest. The tradwife grid gives them imagery of devotion without the parish council.

The Chosen, it should be noted, is a rare crossover. The producers report a near-even gender split among viewers, which is unusual for any Christian property. Men get a Jesus who flips tables and a cast of fishermen and tax collectors who wouldn't look out of place in a Scorsese film. Women get a show that explores the inner lives of Mary Magdalene, Joanna and the other women around Jesus, who, in most retellings, get about three lines between them. The show asks nothing of anyone beyond a streaming subscription.

Men are mainly driving the bodies-in-pews revival, women are behind the cultural one, that your algorithm keeps showing. The boys want security, structure and a guy with some answers. The girls want the soundtrack, the wardrobe, the mystery and absolutely no advice from a man in a collar. The God-shaped hole, it turns out, comes in two sizes. ♡