

and institutions not being trusted, people looked within for meaning and purpose. Advertisers reinforced the message of looking after the most important person in the world – you! Disney urged us to *wish upon a star* so that *so that anything your heart desires will come to you*. And Hollywood sought not simply to inform and entertain us, but to conform us into their own image and likeness.

What's important and indeed persuasive in the new religion is its aesthetic. How it looks and how its perceived is king. And nobody does glitter and spin better than Hollywood and the elite culture of personality. "Love is love" in such a culture, is always more persuasive than: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

Though our culture lacks intellectual integrity, when it comes to discipleship, it excels. It has ignored or demonised the past. It has labelled any expression of traditional values to be inherently racist and sinful. And it has cast a vision for a glorious future where love reigns supreme and there shall be no sorrow or suffering, and certainly no need for a police force. The Western world has embraced this story, not because it conforms to reality, but because it reinforces a created reality that tells them what they long to hear.

If the church is to survive long term, then it cannot seek merely to be a sanctified reflection of the culture. It needs to present itself truly as an alternative community, living by an alternative gospel. If the gospel and the community it creates is simply on the margins of our life, then the discipleship of our children, our grandchildren, and ourselves, will be forfeited to the new religion.

Bunkering down with a fortress mentality is not the way through these challenging days. But holding fast to the gospel, and developing thick communities of faith, will create an ark, (an alternative gospel community), to pick up the refugees of a failed cultural religion that has left them lonely and unforgiven. Things will get worse before they get better, so we play a long game.

Guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you. [1 Tim. 6:20-21]

Collect

Grant O Lord, that we may see in you the fulfilment of all our need, and may turn from every false satisfaction to feed on the true and living bread that you have given us in Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



St Luke's Anglican Church Emerald

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Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us [Ephesians 5:1-2]

Ordinary 19 (11th August)

1 Kings 19:1-8

Psalms 34:1-8

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

John 6:35, 41-51

Ordinary 20 (18th August)

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

Psalms 111

Ephesians 5:15-20

John 6:51-58

Playing the Long Game

It is no great revelation to anyone that rapid changes are happening in our culture. And the transition from sexual liberty to sexual identity is not just a development of thought, but a new religion. That is, gender identity is said to give us our deepest sense of reality, and human flourishing can only occur as we embrace our new identity and express it individually. What the new religion promises is a world that's diverse, inclusive and equitable. A world where boundaries and identities are fluid and constantly changing.

Question the new religion, and you are not simply doubting their beliefs, but denying their very identity. Personal autonomy and self-determination is both the centre piece and sacrament of the new religion. To doubt it in any way makes you not simply a heretic but also a hater. Any expression therefore, of an alternative Christian ethic is not regarded merely as mistaken, but as harmful.

So if the new religion is as problematic as it seems, why is it so readily and easily embraced by so many in our culture. No doubt the reasons for that are numerous and complex, but we shouldn't think that it emerged suddenly in a vacuum. The cult of individualism and personal autonomy has been strong in our culture for a long time. When it meant taking responsibility for your own actions, it was a force for good. When it morphed into being responsible to no one for your actions, then it became a force for reckless selfishness. It gave birth to the sexual revolution in the 1960's and left in its wake a tsunami of broken lives, dysfunctional families, and communities ravaged by drugs, prostitution, sexual abuse, child abuse, and domestic abuse. Though it promised a revolution of liberty it delivered a devolution into slavery.

As a result, people looked to institutions to rescue them. But governments can't change sinful and wounded hearts, and many churches surrendered to the sexual revolution in the name of relevance and tolerance. With family structures crumbling

A guide for our prayers during the week

Monday

Our diocese and the gospel

- Bishop Peter
- Other parishes

Tuesday

Our church and the gospel

- Children and youth
- Families
- Seniors
- Kerry and Nancy

Wednesday

Our community and the gospel

- St Luke's Op Shop
- Blackwater
- Emerald Churches

Thursday

Our nation and the gospel

- Prime minister
- State and local government
- Religious Freedom legislation

Friday

God's world and the gospel

- Islamisation
- War and poverty
- Persecuted Church
- CMS and ABM

Saturday

Ministry and the gospel

- Bible Studies
- Food for Body and Soul
- Wardens and Parish Council
- Rev Daniel and Jenni

Dates to Remember

Today	4 pm service
	5.30 pm Food for Body & Soul
13 August	Parish Council meet at 4.30 pm
	Mark Drama Info Session 6-7 pm
17 August	Clearing/Overflow Sale
24 August	Lay Development Day – Emerald
25 August	Fellowship lunch

	11 August	18 August
Service Leader	Dianne	Russell
Read	Russell	Donna
Prayers	Natalie	Dianne
Shop	Therese & Peg	Donna & Ted
Grounds		

The BCA Prayer

Lord our God, help us to remember those who live in isolated and remote parts of our land. We ask you to strengthen and encourage all whose ministries are supported by The Bush Church Aid Society.

Refresh them in times of discouragement and loneliness and call others to stand with them in the task of making Christ known.

Grant that, through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, through caring service and by support for young people, the message of your redeeming love may be proclaimed and accepted by the people of our land. We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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