

strongest intuitions, and derive from the strongest communities to which we belong. To remain Christian therefore, means the church needs to be the strongest community to which we each belong.

This brings me to the second lesson we can learn from the early church. Community in terms of its day-to-day details might look different in a city than in a rural village. But there are certain elements the church in every place will share: worship and fellowship. Gathering together on the Lord's Day, praying, singing God's praise, hearing the Word read and preached, celebrating baptism and the Lord's Supper, giving materially to the church's work—these are things all Christians should do when gathered together.

It might sound trite, but a large part of the church's witness to the world is simply being the church in worship. Paul himself comments that when an unbeliever accidentally turns up at a church service, he should be struck by the otherworldly holiness of what is going on. The most powerful witness to the gospel is the church herself, simply going about the business of worship. We don't engage culture by offering it a reflection of itself. Instead we present it with another culture, another form of community, rooted in our liturgical worship practices and manifested in the loving community that exists both in and beyond the worship service. The church protests the wider culture by offering a true vision of what it means to be a human being made in the image of God.

This approach is certainly hinted at in second-century Christian literature. The so-called Greek Apologists, such as Justin Martyr, addressed the Roman Empire from a Christian perspective. They didn't spend their time denouncing the evils of the emperor and his court. Rather, they argued positively that Christians made the best citizens, and as citizens of an earthly city, we share with the world common interests or loves, above all the peace and prosperity of the earthly city. Both pagans and Christians wanted these things and could work together to achieve them.

But is this approach a failure to engage in aggressive and direct confrontation? Is this defeatism and withdrawal? I think not. On key issues such as abortion, Christians in the West are still at liberty to use their rights as members of the earthly city to campaign for the good. I'm not calling for a passive abdication of civic responsibility or that no connection be made between civic duty and religious belief. I'm suggesting rather that engaging in cultural warfare using the world's tools, rhetoric, and weapons is not the way for God's people. The historical evidence suggests that this approach proved remarkably effective over time. And so it may again—perhaps not in my lifetime or even in that of my children. But God is sovereign, God plays the long game, and God's will shall be done, on earth as it is heaven.

Collect

Lord our God, by your Holy Spirit write your commandments upon our hearts and grant us the wisdom and power of the cross, so that, cleansed from greed and selfishness, we may become a living temple of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**



St Luke's Anglican Church Emerald

Cnr Ruby & Theresa St.

Phone – 4982 1802

Email – emerald@anglicanchurchcq.org.au

Website – stlukesemerald.org.au

God spoke these words and said, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me[Exodus 20:1]

Lent 3

3rd March

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalms 19

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

John 2:13-22

Lent 4

10th March

Numbers 21:4-9

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22

Ephesians 2:1-10

John 3:14-21

Learning from the Ancient Church in a Strange New World

Carl Trueman – TGC 11 July, 2022

Traditional Christians are typically those who take history seriously. We have a faith rooted in the historical claims of the New Testament and see our religious communities as standing in a line extending back through time to Pentecost and beyond. Thus, when faced with peculiar challenges, Christians often look to the past to find hope for their experience in the present. Though there has been no golden age of Christianity we may find in the second century and the immediate post-apostolic church, a precedent for our times.

There, Christianity was a little-understood, despised, marginal sect. It was suspected of being immoral and seditious. And the claim then as now, that "Jesus is Lord!", was on the surface an unwillingness to bow to Caesar. Like our spiritual ancestors in the second century, we too are deemed immoral and seditious. We are considered irrational bigots for our stance on gay marriage, and decried as representing a threat to civil society. For these reasons the church's response in the second century may well be instructive.

First, it's clear from the New Testament and from early writings that community was central to church life. The Acts of the Apostles presents a picture of a church where Christians cared for and served each other. It is clear also that the church rejected abortion and infanticide, and that served to distinguish them from the surrounding world. Christian identity was clearly a very practical, down-to-earth, and day-to-day thing.

This makes perfect sense, for identity is shaped by the communities to which we belong. And we all have various identities. The strongest identities we have, form our

A guide for our prayers during the week

Monday

Our diocese and the gospel

- Bishop Peter
- Other parishes
- Dean for Cathedral – Rev. Ross Nicholson

Tuesday

Our church and the gospel

- Children and youth
- Families
- Seniors
- Ivy, Larry, Chris, Shovarn, Rinette

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

Dates to Remember

3 March	Blackwater at 3 pm with Alan T
7 March	Bible study at 5.30 pm
10 March	AGM
	Service at 4 pm in hall
	Food for body & soul at 5.30
29 March	Good Friday
31 March	Easter Sunday

	3 March	10 March
Service Leader	Dianne	
Welcome	Alan	Alan
Power Point	'no power'	
Read	Donna, Carolyn	Larry, Nancy
Prayers	Russell	
Sunday School	Cate & Noah	Cate & Noah
Morning Tea	Donna	
Shop		
Mowing	Nuku (Friday)	

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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