



# **INSTITUTE FOR SPIRITUAL STUDIES**

A Ministry of St Peter's Eastern Hill  
*Anglican parish church of the City of Melbourne since 1847*

## **WINTER SYMPOSIUM: SPIRITUALITY IN THE AGE OF DISTRACTION**

**Saturday 2 June, 2018 | 10 am – 3.30 pm**  
**St Peter's Church, 15 Gisborne Street, Melbourne 3002**

*Morning and afternoon tea provided, please BYO lunch - or there are a number of convenient lunch venues within walking distance. Cost \$20 (concession: \$15).*

# Sessions and Presenters

## Session 1: Spirituality and Disability

Are people living with disabilities excluded from pursuing spirituality? One of the dangers of modern spirituality in all traditions is that it has become an intellectual exercise moving from the concrete to the abstract. Older traditions focused on spirituality as an exercise in how to live and relate. I will explore the notion that those who live with disability have a better grasp on the practice of community and mutuality that makes for lived spirituality.

Presenter:

***Rob Nicholls** is the Church Relationship Manager at CBM Australia, an international Christian development organisation devoted to improving the lives of people with disabilities in the poorest places on earth. He works on partnerships with churches on behalf of CBM using the Luke14 initiative, a set of resources and strategies to assist churches be inclusive of people living with disability.*

## Session 2: 'Parking on Whales and Speaking with Birds' - St Brendan and the Life of Prayer

No matter how hard we try to focus, our prayer life can be full of distraction. In this address, the early Celtic Christian story of St Brendan is explored as a metaphor of prayer life that can help us understand how our wandering unfocused thoughts can be shaped into deep reflection. Here disparate parts of ourselves find coherency and a hidden peace.

Presenter:

***Carol O'Connor** is a writer, teacher and the Manager of St Peter's Bookroom in Melbourne. She has a Masters in English Literature; a particular interest in poetry, meditation and Celtic spirituality.*

## Session 3: Spirituality and Ageing

Population ageing is becoming one of the defining features of 21st Century public policy and while spirituality has often been linked to adult ageing it rarely features in this debate. In this context, Simon addresses two questions: what is the

purpose of a long life and how will societies adapt to generations of approximately the same size? Empathic understanding, human vulnerability and inter-generational connection are explored as key spiritual elements that might guide a deeper understanding of the power of belief across the lifecourse.

Presenter:

***Simon Biggs** is Professor of Gerontology and Social Policy at Melbourne University and runs a research team on ageing at the Brotherhood of St Laurence. He is a Fellow of the British Academy of Social Science and was Director of the Institute of Gerontology at Kings College London. His latest book 'Negotiating Ageing' (which includes two chapters on spirituality) was published by Routledge at the beginning of this year.*

#### **Session 4: Meditation and the Adolescent Brain**

We all know that there is an increase in adolescent anxiety and depression. I am suggesting that this also correlates with a lack of purpose and meaning in one's life, which was once filled with the purpose that God gifted us. By combining meditation with a reconnection to the inner spirit, or manifestation of God within, we find purpose in life, meaning in what we do, and replace fear and anxiety with love, compassion and contentment. This workshop will look at the *Prayer of the Heart* program set up at Overnewton Anglican Community College and how this helped with the behaviour and focus of many students. I will also share techniques and mini meditations and will include a short hands-on session.

Presenter:

***Amanda Clifford** is a Christian with 15 years teaching experience in Religious Studies and English and a personal practice of meditating, in both the Christian and Hindu traditions. She is currently Head of Religious Studies at Overnewton Anglican Community College.*

# Program

9.00	Participants are invited to join the St Peter's parish community for the Eucharist	Lady Chapel, St Peter's Church
9.40	<b>Registration</b> Tea and coffee	Hughes Room, St Peter's Hall
10.00	<b>Session 1:</b> Spirituality and Disability	St Peter's Church
11.00	Morning tea	Hughes Room
11.15	<b>Session 2:</b> 'Parking on Whales and Speaking With Birds' - St Brendan and the Life of Prayer	St Peter's Church
12.15	Lunch	BYO – or visit a nearby café or takeaway.
1.15	<b>Session 3:</b> Spirituality and Ageing	St Peter's Church
2.15	Afternoon tea	Hughes Room
2.30	<b>Session 4:</b> Meditation and the Adolescent Brain	St Peter's Church