



WONGA PARK & MERNDA REFORMED CHURCH NEWSLETTER



25 October 2026

This Week's Service:

Preacher:

Chris Pretorius

Elder on duty:

Martin van der
Merwe

Prayer Leader:

Janette Fernando

Bible text:

Acts 4:1-22

Sermon Topic:

Rising opposition to
the Gospel

Bible Reader:

Lynette

Children's Talk:

Joseph

Coffee:

Michelle Horn

Giving

Today's Second Offering:

RTC

September Budgeted

giving:

\$17,610

Actual Giving:

\$14,711

THANK YOU!

I wrote this article two years ago and it still seems relevant today. So as we approach 31st of October, let's consider how Christians can interact with this day.

Halloween can be a confusing time for Christians in Australia. Every year, it becomes more in your face. We have kids in costumes knocking on our doors more and more each year. Vaguely befuddled parents help them wade through the spooky decorations that show up in ever increasing numbers. As followers of Jesus, I think we should carefully think about Halloween, what it celebrates these days, and how that influences our children.

A Culture Not Our Own

The first thing I think Australian Christians in particular should think about is that Halloween comes from a culture we don't belong to. Halloween is not originally an Australian celebration. It is something we have adopted from a country whose number one export to the world is culture. Many people today are concerned about the effects of historical colonialism, and rightly so. But we also need to recognise that adopting other cultural traditions as our own, without thinking critically, is essentially opting in to being colonised. You don't need ships and guns to culturally colonise another nation. You just need Hollywood, TV, movies, and pop music. This might seem like a small point, but as Christians, we need to think carefully about the cultural practices we choose to make our own. Or is it truly something that reflects who we are as a community?

The History of Halloween

The second thing I think we need to think about is the origin of Halloween, and this applies not just to Australian believers, but Christians everywhere. Halloween traces its origins to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, which marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter. The Celts believed that during this time, the boundary between the living and the dead became blurred, and they would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off wandering spirits. When Christianity spread throughout the Celtic regions, the church sought to reframe these pagan practices to help new Christians see the world through a more Christ-centered lens. Pope Gregory III designated November 1st as All Saints' Day, and the evening before became known as All Hallows' Eve. This eventually evolved into what we now know as Halloween.

(continued on page 2)

Front Page Article (continued)

Even if the original celebration of All Hallows' Eve has links to what is supposed to be spiritually helpful (although let's be honest, that is a dubious claim to begin with), it is important to recognise that Halloween, as it is celebrated today has strayed very far from its historical roots and has largely become a secular celebration with an emphasis on indulgence and death. If we are to pursue godliness and, as Paul writes in Philippians 4:8 to think about "whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable", does the practice of Halloween really have a place in our lives?

How Halloween Shapes our Children

The third thing I think we should think about is what Halloween today celebrates in practice. I would like to suggest to you that Halloween promotes excess and entitlement in our children. As parents we should think very carefully about what we get our children to participate in. The idea of trick-or-treat may seem harmless, but that is what I think makes it so dangerous. The pursuit of lollies, the excitement of getting as much candy as possible subtly indoctrinates our children that indulgence is something to be celebrated. As Christians, we understand the dangers of idolatry, of letting our desires control us. Halloween, with its focus on indulgence I think, fosters this in our children and shifts their focus to material things and unhealthy choices. Is this ultimately going to be helpful or harmful to their spiritual lives?

Celebrating the Darkness

The fourth and most concerning thing, however, is modern day Halloween's focus. Our neighbours celebrate Halloween and they delight in dressing up their children as ghouls, dead children, devils and demons. Halloween is a celebration of the dead, the scary, the evil, and the demonic. But we serve a holy God, and we are called to walk in His light. Paul in Ephesians 5:11 tells us to "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them." I believe that Halloween, as it is celebrated today, is one of Satan's great success stories. It trivialises what is truly evil, makes it look fun or cute, and then rewards children for participating in this desensitisation of evil, by giving them candy. This is operant conditioning at its finest. There is a reason that evil is supposed to be frightening. It stands in direct opposition to God's goodness. By handing these things to children and calling them fun, we risk distorting their understanding of right and wrong and desensitising them to the true nature of evil. It is this reason above all that I won't let my children celebrate or partake in Halloween.

A Better Alternative

So, what should we do? I think we have an opportunity to be creative. Halloween is the same day as Reformation Day, a day which reminds us of the time when the Church recommitted itself to the true and pure teachings of scripture. The Reformation brought us back to the true good news of Jesus. Perhaps it is wise to condition your children into that!

In our family we have dubbed this celebration "Life day". We wrote a little liturgy, which was very loosely framed like the Jewish Passover celebration. We sat down, had a special meal, and talked about how God delivered us from death. In this liturgy our kids at various times were instructed to say "But we choose life". So it would look something like this:

One of the children: Why is this night different than all other nights?

Dad: Because on a night like tonight, when everyone else celebrates death.

Everyone say: "We choose life!"

Dad: Yes because of Jesus, we have life.

Mum: Once we worshipped idols and were enslaved by our sins, but God in His goodness and mercy forgave our sins and called us to be His people. He gave us life.

Dad: Therefore, tonight is different than other nights because we have gathered to remember who we are, what God has done for us, and to tell to our children the story of God's grace through Jesus. Because of him, say it with me: "We choose life!"

It goes on like this for a while. But anyway, the point is that we have this liturgy that teaches our children that they are different to the world. While the world celebrates death, "We choose life!". We could see the little kids walk up and down the street in their death-celebrating costumes, but we choose life. Even to this day, almost a year later, if you say something like "but we..." one of them will pipe up and say "...choose life!".

It is not that I necessarily want everyone reading this to do the same thing, I am not asking you to follow us in instituting a new ritual. A dear Christian friend of mine and his family have taken the approach that rather than withdraw from Halloween, they are going to be agents of change from within the tradition. In their case instead of going to each house and asking for lollies, they go and bless the homes they go to and give the people who live there a gift instead. If my memory serves, I think it was home made biscuits last year. It is totally counter cultural to what the rest of the kids on the street are doing and opens up a range of conversations with the neighbours.

What might a good alternative look like in your family? Ultimately how we interact with Halloween should glorify Jesus. Does how you interact with Halloween do this?

THINGS TO PUT IN YOUR CALENDAR



Dates for upcoming services:

25 October:
4:00pm - Worship Service

15 November:
4:00pm - Worship Service

BOTH CHURCHES

25 October, 5pm: Reformation Sunday
Joint Worship Service @ Box Hill
(see page 4)

3 November, 7:30pm: Prayer meeting

15 November 10:00am: Lord's Supper

VISITING OR NEW TO WONGA PARK OR MERNDA REFORMED CHURCH?

Jenna, our community engagement worker, would love to meet you and answer any questions you have about our Wonga Park church community.

Feel free to contact her on
0403650398.

Meet Janette this Sunday

Janette Fernando will be at church this Sunday, 25 October, with copies of her new book of poems and prayers, ... that's how the light gets in, before she heads off to join Roger in the NT.

If you would like a copy, please see her after the service (more details on page 7).

Summary of October Church Council Meeting

The Council meeting focused on strengthening church leadership and pastoral care, preparing for ministry developments in 2027, supporting the growth of the Mernda congregation, and progressing outstanding property, worship and administrative matters.

A major outcome was agreement in principle to a revised leadership structure, with implementation planned for February 2027. The Council also confirmed plans to recruit additional elders, prepare for the October deacon election, and coordinate ministry planning across both campuses.

Key outcomes and decisions

1. Revised leadership structure

The Council agreed to develop a portfolio-based leadership structure, retaining overall oversight with Session. Three areas of responsibility are proposed:

Teaching, Training and Mission: All elders will participate, focusing on vision, direction, training and worship review, with quarterly meetings.

Care and Community: Monthly meetings with a broader team, including deacons, to coordinate pastoral care and community engagement.

Assets and Enablement: Oversight of property, assets and supporting operational teams, meeting monthly or as required.

Martin has agreed to lead Assets and Enablement, while Chris is expected to lead Care and Community. Other details are yet to be confirmed. The revised structure is scheduled to commence in February 2027.

2. Deacon election and pastoral care

The election of deacons by acclamation was scheduled for Sunday 18 October. The deacons reported substantial pastoral and practical care needs among church members and intend to strengthen their team following the election. Professional gardening services have commenced, supported by deacon funding.

3. Planning for 2027

Establishing the 2027 church calendar and preaching arrangements. Managing changes in campus attendance and associated rosters. Improving visitor welcoming and follow-up. Developing introductory Christianity and new members courses, and training leaders for these ministries.

4. Mernda congregation and ministry development

The Mernda congregation is stabilising and growing, with returning visitors and attendance reported at approximately twice its initial size. The website is active, and local printed outreach is underway, including 2,000 bookmarks. A promotional video for Wonga Park is approximately 90% complete.

5. Youth, young adults and profession of faith

Young adults ministry continues positively, and youth activities are resuming for the final term, with a lighter program around examinations. Mount Evelyn youth will participate, with three leaders expected to assist regularly. Five people have confirmed interest in profession of faith so far. Convention preparations are also progressing, with ten participants still attending.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 10 November 2026.

Peter Williams

Reformation Sunday – Joint Worship Service

Sunday 25 October, 5:00pm

Reformed Church Box Hill, 28 Watts St, Box Hill

Guest preacher: Nick Arundell (Chalmers Presbyterian)

The Reformed Church Box Hill warmly invites us to join them and other local churches for a joint Reformation Day service. It is a great opportunity to strengthen ties and fellowship between our churches. Supper follows the service – you are welcome to bring a plate to share (not compulsory).

Want to support the training of the next generation of Pastors and gospel workers?

For more than 70 years the Reformed Theological College has provided training for most of the ministers in our denomination, and for hundreds of men and women employed in other roles in Reformed, evangelical churches and gospel-focussed organisations. RTC fills a significant place in Australian theological and ministry training, and is integral to our denomination as the 'glue' that helps to keep our churches together both theologically and relationally.

RTC is governed by a Board of volunteer Christian men and women from RTC's supporting churches across Australia and New Zealand. If you have skills in ministry, education, business or people management, and you'd like to use them to support RTC to train another generation of workers in the Lord's harvest, we'd love to hear from you. Opportunities to join the RTC Board arise every year for people with relevant skills, a love for Christ and His people, and a heart to serve the Lord in this way.

Drop a note to RTC Board Secretary, John de Boer at jdeboer@rtc.edu.au, and we'll send you more information on what a Director of RTC does and how the Board works to support RTC's mission. And, if you wish, we'll set up a time to talk with you about it. If being a Director of RTC isn't for you, please join us in praying for those who are!

TERM 4 2026 SUPERDASH



BIBLE STUDY

Juniors: Bible Timeline

Seniors: QA Discussion with Chris

7:30 PM @ Wonga Park CRC



STATE YOUTH SERVICE

4 PM @ Geelong

*Sunday**



NO SUPERDASH

DUE TO MELB CUP HOLIDAY (3rd of NOV)



BIBLE STUDY

Juniors: Bible Timeline

Seniors: Book of Acts

7:30 PM @ Wonga Park CRC



BIBLE STUDY

Juniors: Bible Timeline

Seniors: Book of Acts

7:30 PM @ Wonga Park CRC



SOCIAL NIGHT

Seniors: Church Sleepover

7:30 PM @ Wonga Park CRC

FOR MORE INFORMATION SPEAK TO YOUR YOUTH LEADERS

Request for driving roster

We would like to appeal to congregation members staying in the Bayswater, Kilsyth, Mooroolbark, Croydon or Ringwood areas to please consider assisting with a driving roster for Leonie Stork.

She would like to continue visiting our church and we would like to get her here.

Please contact Leonie if you can assist her with a lift this sunday.

New Release

... that's how the light gets in
a collection of poems and prayers by Janette Fernando

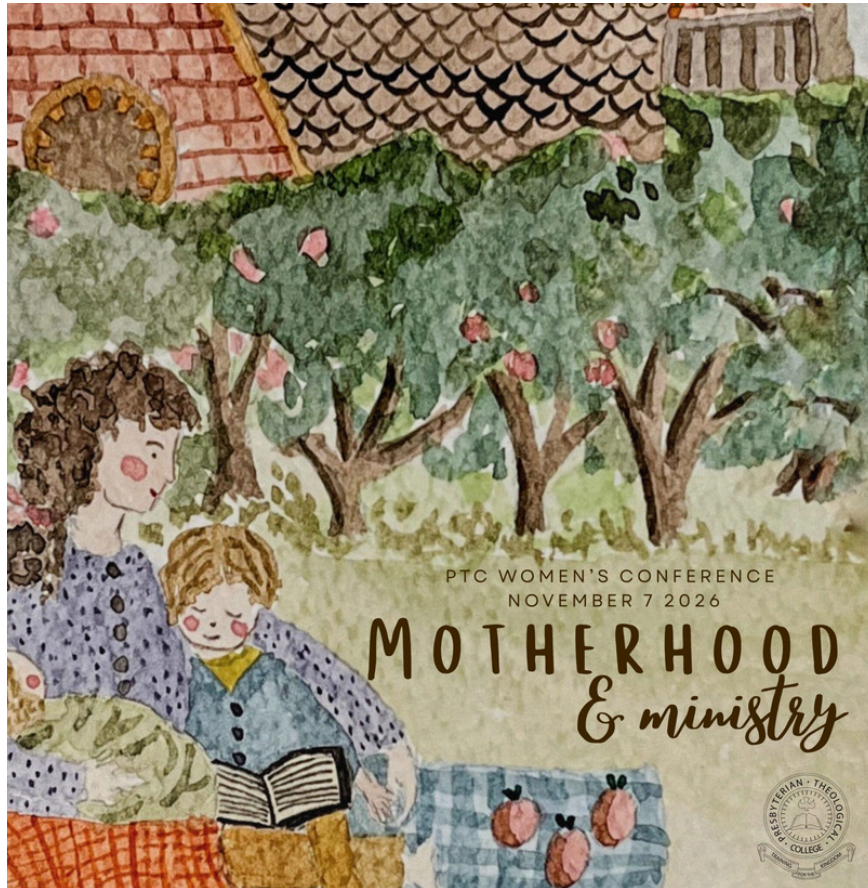
Poetica Christi Press is pleased to introduce its latest book, ... that's how the light gets in, a collection of poems and prayers by Janette Fernando.

Soft cover, 122 pages, \$20

“This inspired collection paints minutiae from Australian landscapes, cultures and peoples, while reaching through time and space. From witness to contemplation, the poetry speaks with a gentle confidence that studies, feels, prays and trusts in the Creator within creation... Life reaches beyond life in these love poems to God. This collection unveils our humanity, invites us to be ‘full of words/ or sometimes silence’. It exposes a way of being in the world, reseeding hope through caught mysteries and kindnesses – each poem ‘a unique sculpture’ revealing through the cracks a spark – ‘that’s how the light gets in’.”

– Tru S. Dowling, Poet, Freelance Writer & Editor, Performer, Teacher

If you would like to buy a copy of Janette Fernando’s new book of poems and prayers, please speak to her in person or take a copy and, to pay, use the order forms in the foyer next to display copies of her books.



REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

PTC Women's Conference is back! It is a great opportunity to learn, fellowship and encourage each other as women.

TOPIC: Motherhood and Ministry

SPEAKER: Jocelyn Loane (Chaplain at Moore College)

WHEN: Saturday 7th November from 10:00am

WHERE: 684 Elgar Rd, Box Hill North, VIC 3129

TICKETS:

Early Bird – \$45 (until 3 October)

Standard – \$55

Late registration – \$65

Group of 5 – \$200

Group of 10 – \$350

REGISTER HERE

www.ptc.edu.au/event/ptc-womens-conference-2026/

PRAYER POINTS

Personal prayer points

Father, in the prayers we bring may you be worshiped, glorified, honoured, and adored.

As we go into the coming week let us daily pray;

Giving thanks for the Holy Spirit interceding for us ensuring that the prayers we pray are the prayers we ought to pray.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (Romans 8:26 ESV)

Give praise and thanks to the Lord our God for cleansing and adjusting our prayers so that they are acceptable to him.

Congregational prayer points

Please continue to pray for Sally Moore as she comes to terms with her relationship with her daughter, pray that the Lord will grant her his comfort and peace.

Please continue to pray for Anne and Bryce Keegel as they move to a smaller home, pray that the Lord will smooth the way and grant them peace.

Please pray for the marriages in our congregation, pray that the Lord will strengthen them so that his holy name is glorified.

Please pray for our Pastor Chris and Sarah and the children, pray that the Lord will lead them, strengthen them and guide them as they lead our congregations.

International prayer points

Please pray for our state as the elections draw closer, pray that the Lord will cause a government that more closely aligns with his word and principles to be elected.

Please continue to pray for our nation that the Lord will bring about a great revival so that he will once again be worshiped as Lord at the highest levels.

Please continue to pray for all those affected by disasters around the world both natural and man-made.

Please pray for our family in Christ in Somalia (see next page).

Please pray for our family in Christ in Somalia.

NAIROBI, Kenya, October 8, 2026 (Morning Star News) – The Muslim uncle of a 20-year-old woman in Somalia has confined her to his home, where he has beaten her and deprived her of adequate food and water for converting to Christianity, sources said. Mariam Fatuma has lost significant weight and become noticeably pale, raising concerns about her health, sources said. She has lived with her uncle in a town in southern Somalia undisclosed for security reasons since her parents separated years ago.

Fatuma put her faith in Christ on Feb. 15 following contact with an outreach ministry. She was at home on Sept. 27 when her uncle's daughter discovered her praying in Christ's name, severely rebuked her and told her not to speak of Christ to other family members, sources said. When Fatuma began crying over the rebuke, other family members learned of her conversion. Her uncle learned of her faith that day and viewed it as an act of disrespect toward him, his family and the wider Muslim community, sources said.

Fatuma has been confined to a room at her uncle's home since Sept. 27 under life-threatening conditions, the sources said, and he has told her she will remain there until her father can be reached and consulted. After separation from his wife, her father remarried and established another household. Relatives pressured Fatuma to reveal the person who introduced her to Christianity, but she refused to do so, a source said. "When brought before a family member for punishment, she said she would not disclose the person's identity even if she were physically harmed," the source said.

After receiving Christ, Fatuma became increasingly open about her faith with friends and distant relatives, seeking opportunities to tell them about her beliefs, the sources said. Those trying to help her said she has remained committed to her Christian faith and has also expressed desire to remain connected to her family despite the conflict, saying, "We can live together and die together."

The members of an area underground fellowship in Somalia were concerned about Fatuma's welfare, saying her immediate needs include physical safety, adequate food and water, medical attention and protection from further violence and unlawful confinement. They also cautioned that any effort to assist her should take into account risks associated with exposing her location or identifying people who may be supporting her. Members of the fellowship requested prayer for protection, physical recovery and an opportunity for Fatuma to receive assistance and continue her life safely.

Somalia ranked No. 2 on Christian support group Open Doors' 2026 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. The country's constitution establishes Islam as the state religion and prohibits the propagation of any other religion, according to the U.S. State Department. It also requires that laws comply with sharia (Islamic law) principles, with no exceptions in application for non-Muslims. The death penalty for apostasy is part of Islamic law according to mainstream schools of Islamic jurisprudence. An Islamic extremist group in Somalia, Al Shabaab, is allied with Al Qaeda and adheres to the teaching.

Source: Morning Star News

Our next prayer meeting will be held on Tuesday 3 November at 7.30pm.

Growth Group Questions

Acts 4:1-22

Chris has started writing these questions as a Bible study, so they can easily be picked up by anyone in the congregation.

Read Acts 3:1–10 first as a reminder, then read 4:1–22 aloud. If you have time, read on to 4:23–31.

Getting started

1. Think of a time you kept quiet about your faith when you could have spoken up. What was going on in you at that moment? (Leaders: let people answer honestly. We come back to this at the end.)

Looking at the text

2. Who is gathered against Peter and John in verses 1–7? Look especially at verse 6. Annas and Caiaphas are the men who put Jesus on trial only weeks earlier, and the last time Peter was in the high priest's house he denied Jesus three times (Luke 22:54–62). What would Peter have been feeling as he stood "in the midst" of this court?
3. Verse 3 puts the apostles in jail, and verse 4 says, "But many of those who heard the word believed." Then in verses 17–18 the council orders them to stop speaking. What does Luke want us to see about what human power can and cannot do to the gospel?
4. The council asks, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" (v. 7). Trace "the name" through verses 7, 10, 12, 17 and 18. Why is this name so important to the apostles, and so threatening to the rulers?

Seeing Christ

5. In verse 11 Peter quotes Psalm 118:22 and adds "by you": "the stone that was rejected by you, the builders." Who were the "builders" standing in front of him? What has God done with the stone they threw away, and what does that tell us about whether Jesus' opponents can ever have the last word?
6. In verse 9 the word for "healed" is the same Greek word as "saved" in verse 12. How is the man standing in front of the court, lame for over forty years and now whole, a picture of what Jesus does for us? Why is Peter's "no other name" (v. 12) good news and not only a hard truth, even for the men who crucified Jesus?

The source of boldness

7. Compare Luke 21:12–15 with Acts 4:8, 13–14. What did Jesus promise, and how is he keeping that promise here? What does this tell us about where Peter's boldness came from? (Note "filled with the Holy Spirit" and "they had been with Jesus.")
8. The rulers call Peter and John "uneducated, common men" (v. 13). In 4:31 the whole church is filled with the Spirit and speaks boldly. How does this encourage those of us who feel we don't know enough, or aren't the "bold type", to speak about Jesus?

Living it out

9. Peter and John say, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (vv. 19–20). Is that grim duty or overflow? What has God done for you in Jesus that you "cannot but speak" about? Where do you most feel the pressure to stay quiet, whether at work, with family, with friends or online?
10. Go back to your answer to question 1. Peter the denier became Peter the witness, through Christ's prayer for him (Luke 22:32) and the Spirit's filling. What hope does that give you? Who is one person you could speak to about Jesus this week? Spend time praying together as the church did in 4:29: "grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness."

SERMON NOTES

Bible passage:

Date:



Something
that shines
from the
passage



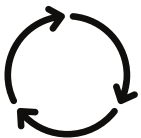
Anything
hard to
understand
or any
questions



Personal
application
for your life



Theme of
passage



How does it
fit with other
passages in
the Bible



Who will you
tell about
what you have
learnt?

HELPING HANDS

	25 October	1 November	8 November
Preacher	Chris Pretorius	Crosbie de Kretser	Chris Pretorius
Elder on Duty	Martin	Kasha	Peter
Prayer Leader	Janette	Kasha	Herman
Music Leader	Nelleke	Inge	Brendina
Children's Talk	Joseph	Nicky	Jenna
Bible Reader	Lynette	Stephen	Nina
Welcoming	Ina	Anne	Marlene
Sound	Justin	Nicolas	Nina
Visuals	Ené	Isaac	Salme
Broadcasting	Michael	James	Christo
Coffee	Michelle Horn	Colin, Maggie & Lynette Pretorius	Herman & Heather Linde