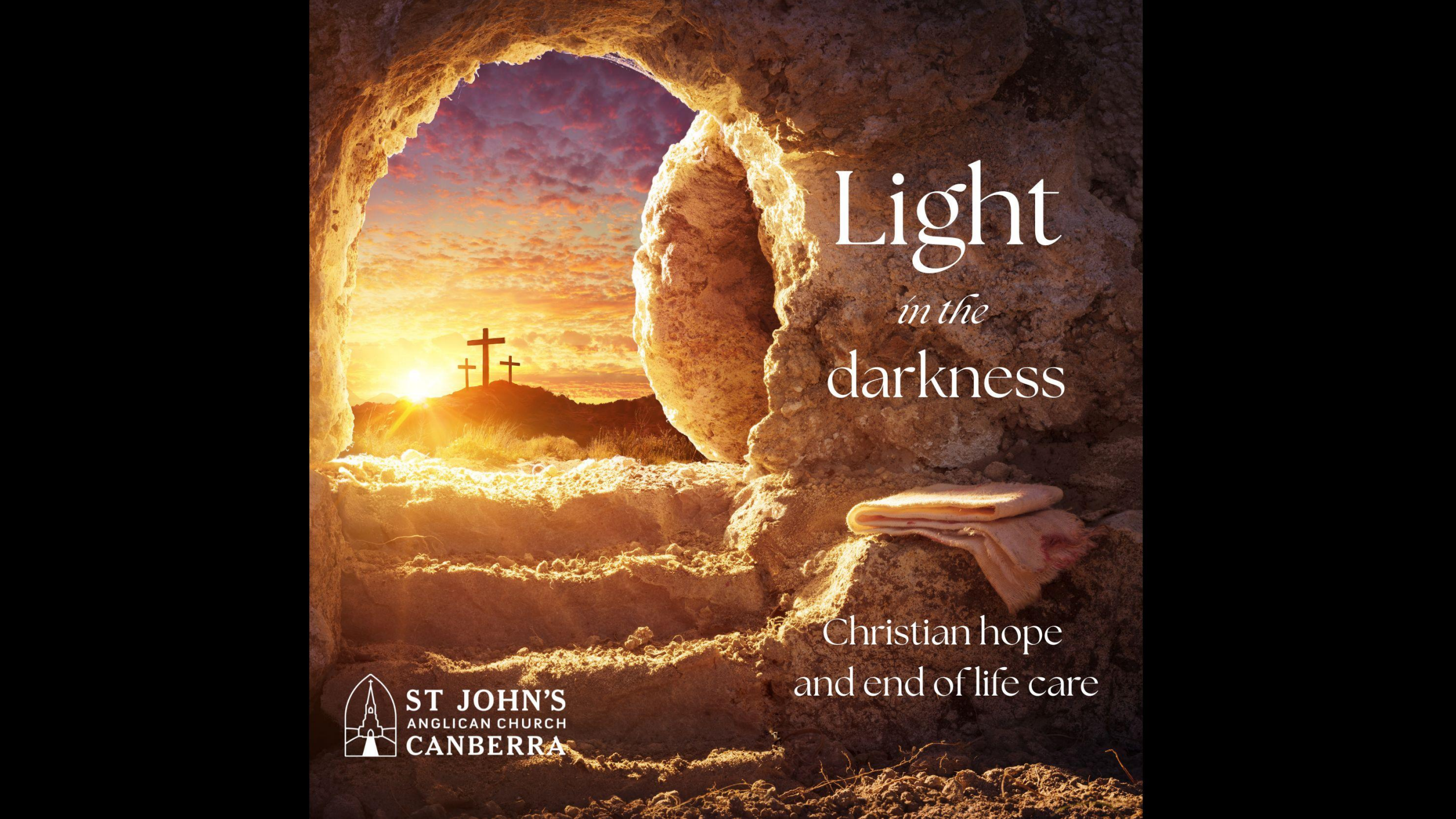




Light

in the
darkness

Christian hope
and end of life care



ST JOHN'S
ANGLICAN CHURCH
CANBERRA

Christian theology and the end of life

A different moral universe ...

An ancient moral universe ...

‘For the purposes of a territory law, and for the purposes of a contract, deed or other instrument entered into in the ACT or governed by a territory law, an individual who dies as the result of the administration of an approved substance by or to the individual in accordance with this Act ... does not die by suicide ...’

ACT Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2024

An ancient moral universe ...

'... suicide was regularly practiced throughout antiquity and was justified by many as an obvious means of deliverance from all sorts of affliction and oppression. In general, ancient society did not discriminate against suicide, nor did it attach any particular disgrace to it, provided there was sufficient justification for the act.'

- Arthur C. Droge

Christian theology and the end of life ...

A different moral universe ...

An ancient moral universe ...

Augustine's challenge ...

- dominion over animals, not each other, in the image of God
- God said, don't kill one another
- so it follows, nor should one kill oneself
- suicide look away from trust in God's kindness and provision
- refusing suffering runs counter to our training to handle suffering

... in orbit around the Resurrection

to 'free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death' (Hebrews 2:14).

a far bigger canvas: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory ... Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' (1 Cor. 15:54f)

a freedom even in suffering, a place to learn trust: 'I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!' Job 19:25-27:

Paul: 'my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly.' (Philippians 1:21–26)



'To this readiness of dying for his brethren Saint Paul had so accustomed himself and made it his nature that, except for his general resolution of always doing what would promote their happiness, he could hardly have obtained for himself permission to live. At first he says he did not know which to wish for, life or death. Therefore, unless some circumstance inclines or averts us, life and death are generally equal to our nature. Then, after much perplexity, he made up his mind, and he desired to be released and to be with Christ. Therefore, a holy man may wish it.

*'Still, he corrected that again, because he says, 'For me to abide in the flesh is more needful for you' (Phil. 1:24). **Therefore, charity must be the rule of our wishes and actions in this matter.'***

- John Donne

Christian theology and the end of life

Formation, formation, formation

'A man who is on the brink of suicide no longer has ears for commands or prohibitions.'
-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

... the arts of dying begin with the arts of living! ...

*'Lord Jesus, I die for thee, I live for thee,
dead and living I am thine. Who dies thus, dies well.'*
-Johann Friedrich Starck

‘under this Act:

(a) human life is of fundamental importance;

(b) every individual has inherent dignity and should be treated with compassion and respect;

(c) an individual’s autonomy, including autonomy in relation to end of life choices, should be respected;

(d) every individual approaching the end of their life should be provided with high quality, person-centred care and treatment, including palliative care, to minimise their suffering and maximise their quality of life;

(e) an individual should be supported in making informed decisions about treatment and end of life choices;

(f) individuals should be protected from coercion and exploitation;

(g) an individual’s personal, cultural and religious beliefs and values should be respected.’

Christian theology and the end of life

Formation, formation, formation

'If in a hundred years Christians are identified as people who do not kill their children or the elderly, we will have done well in our pastoral care.'

-Stanley Hauerwas

'Lord Jesus, I die for thee, I live for thee, dead and living I am thine. Who dies thus, dies well.'

-Johann Friedrich Starck

... text your question to

0477 689 421



