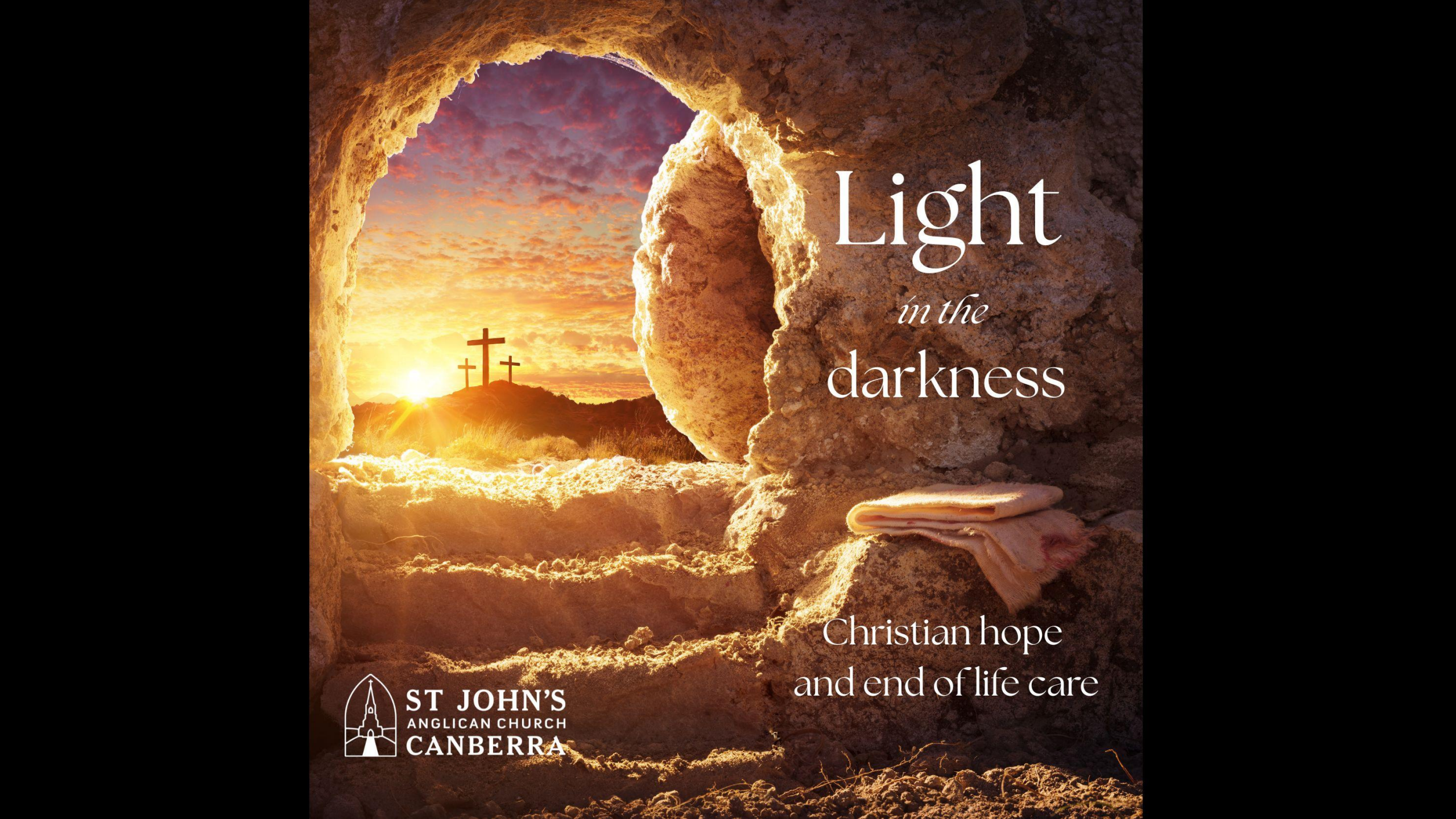


Ministry in the light of VAD

What are your options?
(and some theological things)
(and some rants)

Andrew Cameron
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Light

in the
darkness

Christian hope
and end of life care



ST JOHN'S
ANGLICAN CHURCH
CANBERRA

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1. Rationale ...

- A different moral universe
- An ancient moral universe
- Augustine's challenge

2. Proceeding with neighbours ...

- A framework for disagreement
- Mix it up
- A published policy
- Formation, formation, formation

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 aways 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

Proceeding with neighbours: a framework

Handout & tinyurl: 'Life outside churches' *JuL* ch 35

- **'cooperation'**: relaxed detente toward the plans and purposes of others
- **'subversion'**: joy, hope, grace, generosity (against despair, fear, vengefulness, 'scarcity')
- **'exposure'**: shining light into darkness ('whistle-blowing')
- **'separation'**: departing someone's 'game' to create something better

Cooperation

*... the 'default'
situation?*

Jer. 29:7?

Col. 3:22-23

Eph. 6:5-9

Rom. 12:17

1 Pet. 2:13

*'every human
creation' !?*

Cooperation	Subversion
<i>... the 'default' situation?</i>	<i>... off-balancing grace and generosity</i>
Jer. 29:7? Col. 3:22-23 Eph. 6:5-9 Rom. 12:17 1 Pet. 2:13 <i>'every human creation' !?</i>	Matt. 5:13-16 Col. 4:5-6 <i>the salty speech of grace</i> 1 Pet. 3:15-16 2 Cor. 8:1-9:15

Cooperation	Subversion	Exposure
<i>... the 'default' situation?</i>	<i>... off-balancing grace and generosity</i>	<i>... shining of 'light' into 'darkness'</i>
Jer. 29:7? Col. 3:22-23 Eph. 6:5-9 Rom. 12:17 1 Pet. 2:13 <i>'every human creation' !?</i>	Matt. 5:13-16 Col. 4:5-6 <i>the salty speech of grace</i> 1 Pet. 3:15-16 2 Cor. 8:1-9:15	Ezek. 3, 33? Eph. 5:11 1 Pet. 2:12,15 <i>Rare in the NT; compare 1 Cor. 5:10,12</i>

Cooperation	Subversion	Exposure	Separation
<i>... the 'default' situation?</i>	<i>... off-balancing grace and generosity</i>	<i>... shining of 'light' into 'darkness'</i>	<i>... walking out of someone else's 'game'</i>
Jer. 29:7? Col. 3:22-23 Eph. 6:5-9 Rom. 12:17 1 Pet. 2:13 <i>'every human creation' !?</i>	Matt. 5:13-16 Col. 4:5-6 <i>the salty speech of grace</i> 1 Pet. 3:15-16 2 Cor. 8:1-9:15	Ezek. 3, 33? Eph. 5:11 1 Pet. 2:12,15 <i>Rare in the NT; compare 1 Cor. 5:10,12</i>	Acts 4:19 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1 <i>Metaphor to symbolize not endorsing or participating in some social activity. (Does it warrant literal geographical separation?)</i>

Cooperation

*... the 'Anglican
default' !?*

No questions
asked

Easing their
journey

A new dawn
with family

?Reifies local
culture

?Unlikely to
discuss
eternity

Cooperation	Subversion
<i>... the 'Anglican default'!?</i>	<i>... probing with grace; spiritual care practices</i>
No questions asked Easing their journey A new dawn with family ?Reifies local culture ?Unlikely to discuss eternity	Question drivers and assumptions Discern and attend spiritual distress ?Christian distinctives not heard, lost in nuance

Cooperation	Subversion	Exposure
<i>... the 'Anglican default'!?</i>	<i>... probing with grace; spiritual care practices</i>	<i>... shining of 'light' into 'darkness'</i>
No questions asked Easing their journey A new dawn with family ?Reifies local culture ?Unlikely to discuss eternity	Question drivers and assumptions Discern and attend spiritual distress ?Christian distinctives not heard, lost in nuance	Disagree with the practice Exhort a change of mind Point to alternatives ?Generational contempt for 'the church' [?Legal jeopardy?]

Cooperation	Subversion	Exposure	Separation
<i>... the 'Anglican default'!?</i>	<i>... probing with grace; spiritual care practices</i>	<i>... shining of 'light' into 'darkness'</i>	<i>... walking out of someone else's 'game'</i>
No questions asked Easing their journey A new dawn with family ?Reifies local culture ?Unlikely to discuss eternity	Question drivers and assumptions Discern and attend spiritual distress ?Christian distinctives not heard, lost in nuance	Disagree with the practice Exhort a change of mind Point to alternatives ?Generational contempt for 'the church' [?Legal jeopardy?]	Refusal to participate Pursue vocation under a different regime ?Boundary-keeping fixation ?Reinvent new culture

Mix it up ...

No one posture; context-dependent choices ... e.g.:

- I may *cooperate* with a family in grief, who may be dazed and confused by the manner of their loved one's departure.
- I may '*subvert*' the despair-driven expression of hastened death for someone newly-diagnosed in terminal illness; or inviting discussing with someone wishing to schedule their funeral
- I may *expose* the deceptions of VAD ideology in lower-stakes settings (such as St John's *Light in the Darkness* conference!)
- I may *separate* from the practice, by not accepting advance funeral scheduling; or by declining to be present at a VAD death-event; or by declining to valorise VAD at a funeral; or by personally directing health carers never to offer it to me

Moving between such possibilities **maintains my integrity and agency**

A published policy...

More carefully wordsmithed than below; put it on website; circulate it to funeral directors. OBVIOUSLY each of these sentences are premised on yours and your church's moral deliberation and discussion! (noting vicars and rectors do have authority over your policy in matters of faith and worship ...) DRAFT, HYPOTHETICAL, EXAMPLE ONLY!!!! ...

'St _____'s understands that some people will choose to die under a process of voluntary assisted dying, also known as euthanasia (etc.)

'We at St _____'s seek to become those who look forward to dying naturally, in God's own timing, and we encourage people to pursue palliative care options rather than VAD.

'Our clergy are very willing to discuss spiritual and existential matters with those planning a VAD death, although we do not generally offer sacraments to someone with that intention, and cannot be present at a VAD death.

'Funerals for people who have died under VAD are held at St John's. If a family chooses not to divulge how the person has died, we will respect that.

'We will not accept funeral bookings in advance that are premised on VAD scheduling. We will not tolerate use of the funeral to advocate for or valorise VAD.

'We recognise that many bereaved people have mixed feelings about a deceased person's use of VAD. We don't judge those reactions. If a bereaved person would find it helpful, we aim to be available to discuss the complexity of their reaction to their loved one's death.

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

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