



LAIDLAW NGĀ KŌRERO O TAKURUA WINTER SESSIONS

26 JUNE 2021 | 9:30am-3pm



**“Jesus Christ did not say, ‘Go into all the world and tell the world that it is quite right.’”
– C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock***

Christianity offers a distinct vision for the world. We can agree with our neighbours on many things, but if the faith that we hold leads to us thinking and living the same way as everyone else – especially on the big issues of our day – we may have missed the point. Our 2021 Winter Sessions are focused on exploring what Christianity can say distinctively in our time. How can we as Christians think well and respond to the challenges and questions facing our society, our Church and our world?

SESSION TIMETABLE

- 9:30am** Session #1 | Dr Roshan Allpress
Session #2 | Dr John de Jong
- 10:45am** Morning Tea
- 11:00am** Session #3 | Dr Maja Whitaker
Session #4 | Dr Myk Habets & Lisa Spriggens
- 12:15pm** Lunch
- 1:00pm** Session #5 | Lorraine Taogaga
Panel | All Speakers
- 3:00pm** Finish

*conversations of
faith, purpose and
transformation*

SESSION OVERVIEW

DR ROSHAN ALLPRESS

“Where two or three are gathered”: How Christian institutions and communities are changing

DR JOHN DE JONG

Myanmar: New Geopolitical Challenges and the Role of the Church

DR MAJA WHITAKER

Conspiracy theories everywhere: how do we know what to believe any more?

DR MYK HABETS & LISA SPRIGGENS

The spiritual saga of a creaturely soul

LORRAINE TAOGAGA

Reconciliation in Aotearoa

“WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED”

Dr Roshan Allpress

**“Where two or three are gathered”:
How Christian institutions and
communities are changing**

The way we meet as Christians has changed significantly over history, as have the institutional forms and patterns of the Church's life of worship, community and discipleship. Reflecting on the history of the Church in recent centuries helps us understand more fully how the institutions that we have inherited or started are serving the Gospel, and what kinds of reforms and renewals might be needed in twenty first century Aotearoa.

Session 1





MYANMAR: NEW GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES AND THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

Dr John de Jong

The 21st century is a complex time. We are living in a post-colonial world yet with much geo-political manoeuvring from the major powers. It is also the first century in which most Christians are part of the majority-world church, yet they are often religious minorities in their own nations. International aspirations of western style democracy clash with non-western social, cultural and political patterns and values.

Myanmar is very much a place in which these changing power dynamics are converging and has become a centre of contested democracy as its citizens clash with the military after a recent coup d'état. In this session we discuss how Myanmar is a window into this changing world, how the church in Myanmar is responding to these challenges and how we in New Zealand can respond.

Session 2

CONSPIRACY THEORIES EVERYWHERE

Dr Maja Whitaker

Conspiracy theories everywhere: how do we know what to believe any more?

QAnon, a flat earth, 5G towers spreading COVID-19, vaccines causing autism... Why are people so drawn to conspiracy theories like these, when objectively they are often preposterous? The answer in part lies in our human nature as story-telling people, but also in the explanatory power that stories have. In modern culture we have great freedom to tell our own stories about our lives and the world around us, but that freedom can become a burden. We

need to be able to tell a story to make sense of our lives and the world around us, in order to feel in control amongst the ever-shifting landscapes of culture and world crises. However, our power to do so is inevitably limited. Within this milieu, critical thinking skills are more important than ever, and when developed within a Christian framework they lead us to embrace God's grand narrative for our lives and the world with hopeful trust.

Session 3





THE SPIRITUAL SAGA OF A CREATURELY SOUL

Dr Myk Habets & Lisa Spriggins

Personal identity sits right at the centre of the Christian faith – knowing who God is and knowing who we are are key parts of the story of Scripture. Repeatedly in the Old Testament people encounter God and ask “Who are you?” and “What is your name?”. In the New Testament we get the final answer: the great “I AM” of the Old Testament is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – this is my name. What of us? Who are we and what is our name? In our current climate identity is something we choose and construct for ourselves, but what happens when this comes

into dialogue with a vision of God that gives us our identity? We are Adam, we are flesh and we are spirit, we are human. But we are more than that. We are called by name, we are given new natures, and we are destined for immortality. And along the way, we have to stop and remind ourselves of some of the details of that story. What does identity mean in Christ? Are there limits to my autonomy? Does character count? In the final analysis what we want to know is this: who does God say I am?

Session 4

RECONCILIATION IN AOTEAROA

Lorraine Taogaga

It is impossible for us to avoid questions of race, culture, identity and politics right now.

It is an extremely uncertain world in which we live together. From BLM protests to clashes between political extremes, the world is in the middle of some significantly open conversations about how we live well together and what justice looks like for ourselves and others. As gospel people we do not want to simply push our own ideas about how we live together or what justice looks like, but to do more than this; to create sites

of reconciliation in which we can live our lives. In Aoteroa we have our own story to tell with unique origins which will require an approach that fully encapsulates the unique voice of this nation. It is a voice that cannot be imported from other parts of the world uncritically. Our unique story is told in the land, the forests, the sea, the environment and the first peoples of Aotearoa, Māori. In this session, Lorraine will share some of her own story to help us build a picture of what reconciliation has looked like for her and how it might look for all of us as the body of Christ and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners together.

Session 5





The
BIBLE
is our
STORY

JESUS
is our **LORD**

The
CHURCH
is our **COMMUNITY**

RENEWAL is our
VOCATION



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