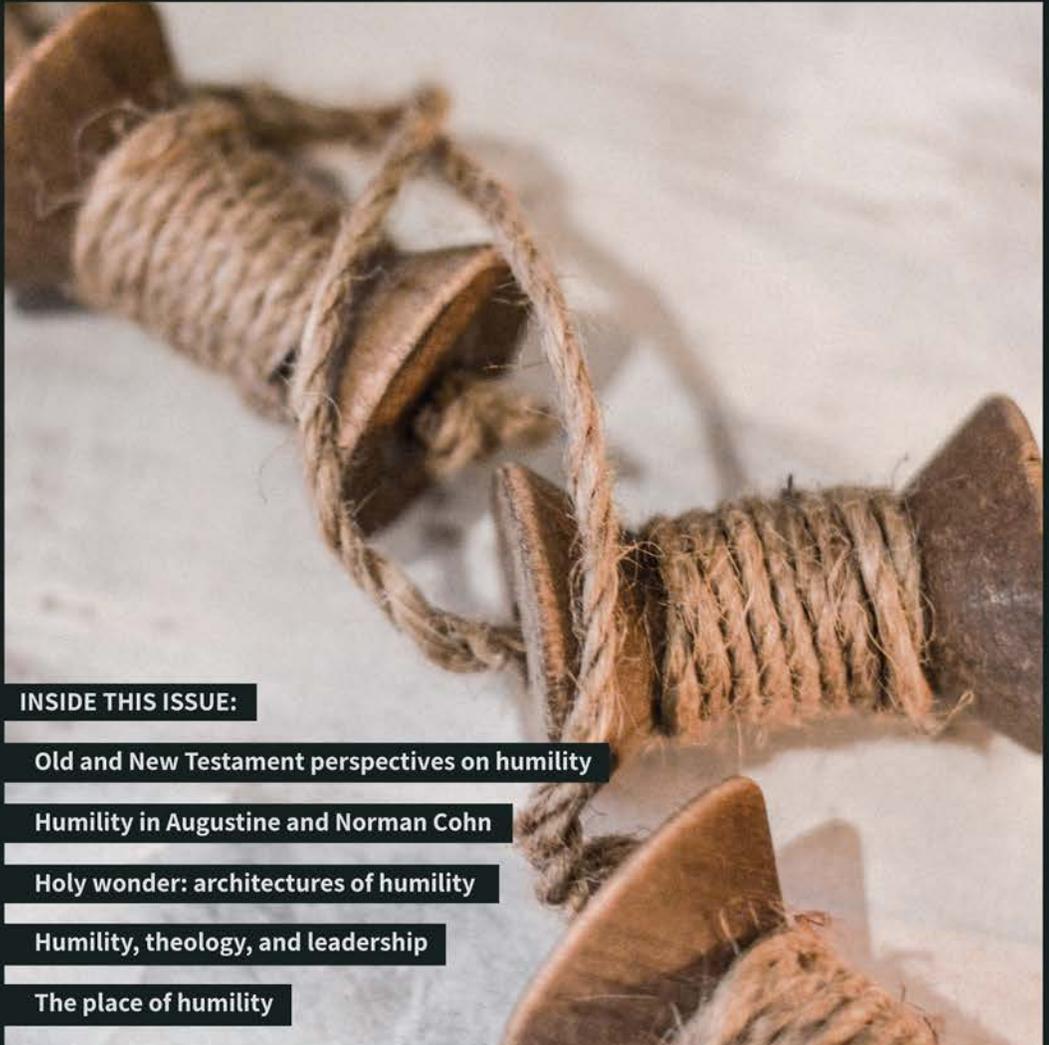




Threads of humility



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Editor Dr Michael Gladwin
Editorial committee Chair: Rev. Professor Andrew Cameron
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Please address all correspondence to:

The Editor, *St Mark's Review*
15 Blackall Street
BARTON, ACT 2600 Australia
admin@stmarks.edu.au

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Editorial

This volume of essays is a *Festschrift* in honour of the Rev. Dr Jane Foulcher, marking her retirement from St Mark's National Theological Centre, Canberra. Of all the current staff at St Mark's, Jane has the longest history with this institution; she also has the longest history with this publication, *St Mark's Review*, via a response to an article by poet Geoff Page, published in no. 174 (1998). It seems fitting, as a kind of bookend, that one of Geoff's poems (about Jane) is included in this number of the journal.

Jane began a part-time Graduate Diploma of Theology in the early 1990s, attending evening lectures which she juggled around work and parenting responsibilities. During that time she became a ministry student working towards ordination in the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, and was among one of the early groups of women ordained for ministry in the Anglican Church of Australia.

Jane spent some ten years in pastoral and chaplaincy ministries in Canberra and Coffs Harbour. Early in 2004 Jane and her husband John were the inaugural scholars-in-residence in the newly refurbished Louise Fell Visiting Scholars Residence, the brainchild of former director of St Mark's, Stephen Pickard. After returning to Canberra from Coffs Harbor, Jane served as priest at St John's Reid and chaplain to on-campus St Mark's students in the St John's student community. Jazz Dow, one of the students at the time, recalls the valuable ministry Jane offered in that role:

Jane would host us for dinner one night per week. She is an incredible cook. Around Jane and John's dinner table conversation ensued that traversed the territory of religion and politics with ease. Much laughter and many tears were shared. I greatly value this time in my own formation. Life is turbulent for young adults and to have Jane holding space for me while I explored, questioned, rebelled, and tested during those formative years was a gift that has contributed much to my ministry.

Jane returned to study herself at St Mark's after it had become part of the School of Theology of Charles Sturt University, commencing her doctoral work under the supervision of Heather Thomson and Sarah Bachelard in 2007. She secured a scholarship through the Public and Contextual Theology (PaCT) Research Centre of CSU and continues her association with PaCT as a professorial scholar

(theology, ageing, and spirituality). A highlight of Jane's doctoral candidacy was six months spent in Paris where she accompanied John, who had been granted a poetry fellowship. The period in Paris facilitated Jane's French-language consolidation, enabling in-depth research of one of the French-speaking monastics in her study, Christian de Chergé.

The substance of Jane's doctoral thesis was published by Cistercian Publications under the title *Reclaiming Humility: Four Studies in the Monastic Tradition* in 2015. It was reviewed in *St Mark's Review* in no. 233 (2015) and became the focus of a later issue, no. 236 (2016) where a number of eminent scholars provided responses to Jane's work as part of a colloquium. In some respects, the studies in this issue of *St Mark's Review* are responses to Jane's first (but surely not last) book.

Following a further stint of pastoral ministry, during 2011–14 Jane returned to St Mark's to work as Acting Director of the Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies (CAPS), overseeing one of the graduate programs offered through CSU, as well as working as a sessional lecturer in the School of Theology. When the position of Lecturer in Systematic Theology at St Mark's opened up, Jane was the successful candidate and commenced full-time work at St Mark's in January 2015. Jane's administrative and corporate skills rose rapidly to the surface and she was appointed Deputy Director of St Mark's in 2016 and Associate Head of the School of Theology in 2019. Unexpectedly, however, after only a few weeks in the role of Associate Head of School, she found herself thrust into the role of Acting Head of School, in which she proved not only competent but also creative, thereby ensuring that the good reputation of the school in the wider university community was maintained.

One of the roles that Jane undertook at St Mark's was oversight of St Mark's National Memorial Library, which has undergone significant changes in facilities and staffing over the last few years. Our current librarians, Sylvia Young and Thyme Hansson, offered this tribute to Jane along with a graphic "library" tribute created by St Mark's Marketing and Communications Manager Chevelle Hibberd, which can be found after Andrew Cameron's article (and which quotes from the concluding paragraph of *Reclaiming Humility*):

On behalf of St Mark's Library we thank Jane for her support, dedication, and advocacy. Jane has a caring and kind spirit, generously giving of her time. We wish Jane every happiness as she continues on her life journey with family and friends.

In this number of *St Mark's Review* Jane's academic colleagues have responded to the theme of humility that has emerged from Jane's own writings, reflecting from the point of view of our own theological sub-disciplines. We are

glad to include two of Australia's leading poets (another theological sub-discipline perhaps?) among those offering tribute to Jane, alongside articles working within systematic theology, practical theology, church history, and biblical studies.

With an abiding interest in spirituality, it is significant that, following retirement, Jane and John intend to reside in their restored church near Braidwood. They speak of St Bernard's as a retreat centre: a place to continue reflecting and writing and living lives marked by humanity, confidence, compassion, and, of course, humility.

Jeanette Mathews, David Neville, and Michael Gladwin