

Following Jesus Today



The number of Christians who worship together each Sunday has changed over the past decades. It is a little like our fixed phones. Once they were part of our lives but today mobile phones have taken over. Religion and God are still valued by many people, but less people attend Sunday services.

Many years ago I went to Perth to test the calling I had from God to be a Sister in the Anglican Community of the Sisters of the Church. Then there were about 30 Sisters of our Community in Australia, today there are only 3 of us.

Since 1978, when we Sisters came to live in the parish of Kempsey, the life of our local church has changed. I remember when All Saints, Kempsey, had a thriving Sunday School, but now there is no Sunday School. An article in a local newspaper, the Argus of 9.5.26, entitled, "Old churches are finding new purpose", highlighted the closure of church buildings in our area in recent years, including the Anglican churches at Bellbrook, Frederickton and East Kempsey. I suggest that this change also applies to many other church buildings in Australia. I am not sure how we are to increase the attendance at Sunday Church services, but it can be linked to following Jesus who we are told in Luke 4:16, "went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom".

In the article, "From monks to ministers, politics of broken promises," in The

Weekend Australian, 16.5.26, situation ethics is used to decide what is right or wrong, by drawing on the influence of the circumstances of each situation. This allows people to be free to choose what is right, and not be told what to do by a religious edict. "Rather than following fixed rules, the goal was to choose the most loving or beneficial action for everyone." Do we *need* religion, we might ask?

All Anglicans, all Christians, and all people are members of God's loved creation. As human beings we belong to one another as brothers and sisters, children of God, whether we believe it or not. Therefore, we should be responsible for one another, love one another and be willing to give our lives for others, as did Jesus. So, how might we do this as groups and individuals praying and working in our world today?

In Christian groups, whether of one denomination or combined denominations, how we behave towards one another can witness to others of Christ's love. Further, in our relationships with Christians of other denominations, I believe respect and appreciation has been growing, not shrinking, over the past few years. This is seen in the way Anglican and Catholic world leaders have recently come together to pray.

In October 2025 King Charles III, an Anglican, and Pope Leo XIV, a Catholic, led a joint public act of worship in the Sistine Chapel, in Rome. The first such joint worship since 1534. Since then, in April 2026, Pope Leo and the new Anglican Archbishop Sarah Mullally of Canterbury, the first woman, also met and prayed together in Rome. The Pope declared they both were called to proclaim Christ to all people in the world.

These acts of worship can encourage groups of Christians of varying denominations to come together, not only to pray, but also to serve others in need, such as in times of floods, and today in Australia, perhaps to respond to the many acts of domestic violence. We could do this as a group of Christians, a group of Christians and non-Christians, or as individuals. As fellow children of God, we can share in the pain of those involved, and as Christians we may take it in prayer into Christ's Body where it can be healed and transfigured.

Following Jesus as individuals, can mean listening to someone who is grieving or stressed, offering a friend or stranger a meal or a lift in our car, and so on. It should be done in love, and can often become for those involved, an act of both giving *and* receiving love, as can the acts performed by groups.

Our loving relationships, of course, are not limited to humans, but also apply to all God's creation in our world. Not only pet dogs and cats matter, but also the rats and mice we might trap! We also know we must care for trees and plants. Loving relationships with God, other people and nature are important if God's kingdom is to come, and God's will is to be done in our world, as we pray in the Lord's Prayer.

In all our ministry and mission, we are to remember God's presence in ourselves and received at Holy Communion in the body and blood of Christ, and allow God's love to work through us as members of Christ's Body, to others. This can be difficult when what seems God's will for us is not what we would prefer, but if we put aside our will to do God's will, we are following Jesus and loving others as Jesus loves them.

I have noticed in the Gospels that neither Jesus nor the risen Christ punished anyone for doing wrong, except perhaps when Jesus drove out those buying and selling in the temple (Mark 11:15), but accepted and loved all. Such behaviour is not just based on situation ethics, but on God's love which I believe directs how we Christians are to follow Jesus today. Also, I have found that being present at Sunday services, gives me guidance and support for prayer and ministry to others, both Christians and non-Christians.

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