

MANNA GUM

Enough for all

COMING SOON!

MANNA GUM RELAUNCH 2024

Manna Gum was launched in 2009. It was a bit of a moonshot, but fifteen years later it is still ticking along.

In the coming months Manna Gum will unveil a new website, a new look, and new themes. We're calling it a relaunch! This is a good opportunity to restate what Manna Gum's ministry is all about, and to discuss some of the key themes for the next decade. Stay tuned.

We are still needing to raise extra money (on top of our normal income) to pay for the website development. Please give your consideration to the enclosed appeal.

The screenshot shows the Manna Gum website layout. At the top is the logo 'MANNA GUM' with the tagline 'Enough for all'. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links: 'ABOUT MANNA GUM', 'BECOME A SUPPORTER', and 'CONTACT US'. A secondary navigation bar includes 'HOME', 'FAITH & ECONOMY', 'ECONOMICS & US', 'MANNA MATTERS', and 'PUBLICATIONS'. The main content area features a 'What's on?' section with links to 'LATEST BOOK: Coming Home', 'New podcast: Technology', and 'New video: Towards a Downshifting Economy'. Below this are three columns of content: 'FAITH & ECONOMY' with an image of a person working in a field, 'ECONOMICS & US' with an image of two children, and 'MANNA matters' with a 'Latest edition' section. The 'MANNA matters' section includes links for 'News from Long Gully', 'Understanding the Times', 'Manna Gum Gallery', 'Everyday People', 'Bible & Economy', and 'Download'.

A new website is on its way ...

Manna Gum's current website has been running since 2009 without an upgrade! Designed by Shelley Knoll-Miller and built by Josh Curtis, both *gratis*, it has performed fine service for fifteen years. Almost every piece of writing and recorded talk over the last 15 years can be found here.

In November last year it finally stopped working. You can still access the material, but we cannot add any new material.

www.mannagum.org.au

OUR WORK FOR 2023

2023 was a bit of a watershed year. The year began with a joyful birth at the end of a very long labour ... when I submitted my Ph.D thesis, 'Christian Witness in the Midst of Capitalism' (see below). The completion of the thesis freed up more time to begin work on all the things that had been patiently waiting in the pipeline. The first of which was beginning thinking about renovating Manna Gum's website and visual identity, both of which are starting to get a bit tired after fifteen years. In November the need for a new website became critical when the old website finally refused to go any further. You can still access all the material that is up there, we just can't add anything new. The November edition of *Manna Matters*, and this mailing were posted to a hastily prepared Wordpress site, while we still await the coming liberation!

2023 finished on a high note with the wedding of Jacob Garrett and Andi Fiddock. As the speeches all underlined, they make an impressive couple, full of passion, purpose and good heart. The wedding suited Jacob's inclinations to wilderness primitivism well—outdoors in the pouring rain! However, precipitation did not dampen the fun. Congratulations to the happy couple!

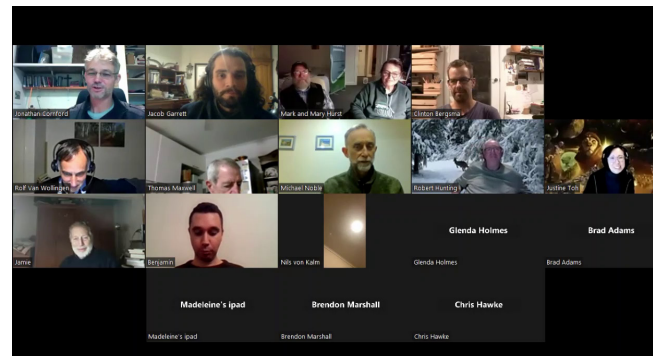


Christian Witness in the Midst of Capitalism

Capitalism is the economic system that rules the world, and it doesn't look like that will change anytime soon. What does faithful witness to Christ look like for Australian Christians within the context of world capitalism? What is capitalism anyway?

In this thesis I engage in an Australian conversation with three important, but very different, Christian thinkers: R.H. Tawney, John Howard Yoder and Oliver O'Donovan. I ask them, "How can everyday Christians and local churches respond to the leviathan of global capitalism?" The ideas explored along this journey will be central to the ongoing work of Manna Gum.

In May I ran a webinar giving an outline of the thesis which, surprisingly, and very gratifyingly, attracted 100 registrations. However, it also made clear what a big subject it is, and how impossible to cover in one webinar! In 2024 we will run a webinar series on capitalism for those wanting a deep-dive.



May Webinar: Christian Witness in the Midst of Capitalism

Manna Matters and MannaCast

The flagship of Manna Gum's ministry is *Manna Matters*, and increasingly also the podcast, MannaCast. Jacob is doing sterling work anchoring both of these productions, which frees me to extend my energies in other directions. The audience of each of these is steadily growing. Over the last decade-and-a-half *Manna Matters* has evolved from a twelve page 'newsletter'—albeit one that was neither a letter nor contained much news—into a twenty page 'quarterly'—albeit one that comes out three times a year (the fourth mailing is this annual letter and appeal). That evolution will continue with a new look come our 2024 relaunch...

A significant challenge in 2023 was sourcing recycled paper for the print edition of *Manna Matters*. Seemingly out of nowhere, the recycled copy paper industry in Australia collapsed—or more precisely, the *availability* of A3 recycled paper in Australia collapsed. This happened just as we had begun a push to sign more people up to the print version of *Manna Matters*, rather than online—extraordinarily bad timing. The trigger for the crisis was a court decision banning logging of old-growth forest in Gippsland, long overdue, prompting Opal Australia, the primary source of recycled paper products in Australia, to shut down its paper mill. The deeper causes lie in the

MannaCast Episodes 2024

1. Catholic Social Teaching
2. Christian Socialism
3. Church and Climate Change
4. Technology
5. Towards a Downshifting Economy
6. Christianity and the Rise of Capitalism
7. Christian Vocation (Pt 1)
8. Christian Vocation (Pt 2)
9. Sabbath Economics

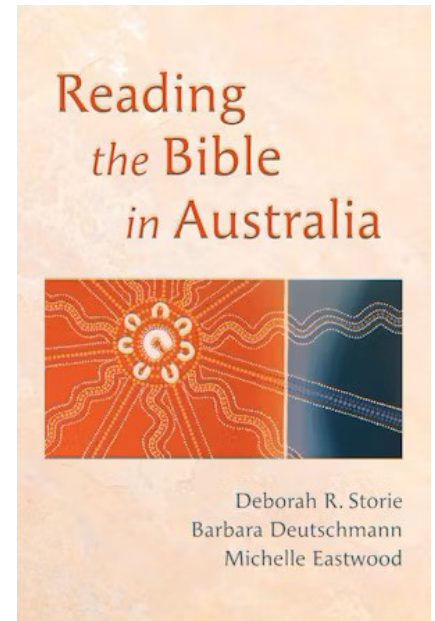
moribund state of the recycling industry in Australia and the failure of governments to address problems that have been well-known for years. If you are wondering why stopping logging old-growth forest also leads to an end to recycled paper production, then you are half way to seeing the problem.

It looks like we have solved our recycled paper supply problem for the time being, however the circular economy in Australia still has a long way to go ...

Other writing

As well as submitting my thesis, in 2023 I completed two other significant pieces of academic writing. The first was a provocative theological-economic-ecological history of Australia, called “Money Made Us: Reading Australia Through Jesus’ Teachings on Money”. This has been included as a chapter in *Reading the Bible in Australia* (published by Wipf and Stock), edited by Deb Storie, Barbara Deutschmann and Michelle Eastwood. The book also includes some significant contributions from a number of Indigenous Australian authors.

The second was a long paper on the subject of “Eschatology and Economics” which I was invited to write for a roundtable of economists and theologians that gathers in Canberra each February. What does the “end of history” have to do with the “progress of opulence” (as Adam Smith described economic growth)? Everything, it turns out. This will likely be published in an academic journal, but in the unlikely event that you are interested, let me know and I am happy to share.



Speaking

A highlight in 2023 was a public lecture I gave in Eltham in June, hosted by the Southern Cross Community Church. The lecture was entitled ‘Towards a Downshifting Economy’ and provided an opportunity to expand the range of ideas I have been discussing. For over a decade, Manna Gum material has focussed on reclaiming a Christian practice of everyday economics. In this lecture, I was able to begin outlining how the outlook that underpins such practices can be extrapolated into a larger political and economic vision, a hint of one theme for the coming decade... The lecture was recorded and is now available as MannaCast episode 18.

Other speaking & teaching

- Gippsland Anglicans webinar: “Food Systems in a Changing Climate”, (Feb)
- Thesis Webinar: “Christian Witness in the Midst of Capitalism” (June)
- Westgate Baptist Church: “Living on a lower income” (Aug)
- United Theological College Conference, Sydney: “Ecological Ethics in the Anthropocene” (Sept)
- Melbourne School of Theology, Masters of Transformational Development lecture: “Rights-Based Development” (Sept)
- New Economy Network of Australia Conference, Canberra: “The Post-Capitalist Vision of R.H. Tawney” (Nov)

Jonathan Cornford

Pro-Bono help for Manna gum

For the most part, Manna Gum runs on our own in-house amateur skills, trying get by in graphic design, data management, accounting and web management. But from time to time, we could use the help or advice of someone trained in their field, however our finances do not extend to paying for it.

We would love to build up a list of people who are prepared to offer services for small, once-off jobs, or bits of advice. The key areas we could use help in are:

- Database design and management
- Social media advice
- Graphic design
- General IT support
- Event organising

If you are able to help in any of these areas (or something else you can think of) please let us know.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The balance sheet for 2023 looks a little alarming, with a \$29 k. shortfall. This is not quite as bad as it sounds—it includes some big ticket once-off expenditures (website design, thesis proofreading) which were intentionally spending down the Covid windfall from government—however, it does also reflect the fact that we have not yet grown our annual income to match rising costs. These rising costs include an expansion of our work (an extra 1.5 days/wk for Jacob's position), CPI adjustment of the stipend, and a big jump in the cost of the printed edition of *Manna Matters* due to a relative scarcity of recycled paper stock. We also have to pay more fees to rentier capitalists (Mailchimp, Xero, Paypal, Dropbox etc) in order to maintain a decent online presence. Our base of monthly supporters held strong in 2023, however ad hoc donations were significantly down.

As mentioned above, we still have a bit more work to do for the new website, so this will be dependent on raising some extra funds. Please give your consideration to the enclosed appeal.

TRADING INCOME	\$
Supporters*	43,824
Donations	12,147
Book Sales	479
Morningstar Royalties	35
Other Revenue	658
Interest Income	2
TOTAL TRADING INCOME	57,145
ASSETS (Books held)	780
LIABILITIES	0
ASSOCIATION'S EQUITY	0

*62 monthly supporters at 31 Dec 2023

OPERATING EXPENSES	\$
Wages	63,107
Superannuation & Workcover	6,575
Printing, Stationery & Postage	2,694
Computer & Equipment	1,020
IT, software & web	555
Morningstar Publishing	898
Conferences & Webinars	765
Travel	484
Resources	154
New website design	7,400
Phone & Electricity	336
Editing/proof reading	2,305
Hospitality	80
Bank Fees	244
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	86,616
Net Profit	-29,471



Burning Down the House

A striking artwork by Hannah Tingman from the November edition of *Manna Matters*. (It is not a representation of the state of Manna Gum's finances ...)

For more of Hannah's work, you can find her on Instagram (@hrt_art) or visit her website (<https://hannahrtingman.wixsite.com/hrtart>).