



SMBCNEWS

SYDNEY MISSIONARY & BIBLE COLLEGE

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Autumn 2025 | Issue 58

GOING UNDERGROUND!



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GOING UNDERGROUND!

We recently caught up with SMBC alumni, Dave and Margie Wood...

If you asked me three years ago what I would be doing in the near future, I would have answered: "I don't really know, but I guess since I am enrolled at SMBC, it will be something to do with serving God and being Jesus' hands and feet..."

Did I really believe this three years ago? Well, sort of, but probably more my version or image of what serving God looks like. It may have been less full-on or less independent or less remote... I am not really sure. But God, knowing me better than I do, had other plans. Bigger and wider plans. He led me along a path that has ended up in the Central Australian desert community of Coober Pedy since early March 2024.

Both Margie and I can see clearly this is where God wants us and we really enjoy being here!

The path that I mentioned began many years ago.

I'm a mining engineer so our family has lived and worked in the bush for some 30 years. We enjoyed our time in mining towns and being part of (at many times) the only church in town. We didn't know it then, but God was growing our affection for the bush and bush churches. After a while I sensed God was pushing me to serve him more intentionally. This took the form of Christian camping ministry for seven years. Then God again prodded me to step in even closer, which led to Margie and me enrolling at SMBC in 2021 for the Associate Degree of Ministry. (We were in our late 50s with four adult children and six grandchildren living in NSW and the ACT at that time. So, we're keen to let you know that it's not too late to come to SMBC and prepare for ministry! And amazingly, one of our (adult) kids also enrolled at College in the same year – she was a much better scholar than we were!)

It was such fun to be in community at SMBC and study God's word 24/7... how wide and deep it is!

As we progressed through study, we were asking ourselves what do we do after College? Long story short, we had an opportunity through the Diocese of Armidale in regional NSW (thanks, Rod), to minister to a church in a small rural community north of Inverell for six months during 2022. God blessed our time hugely and we were hooked on rural ministry. We returned to SMBC for our second year in 2023.

But again, the question was where to go after College. One of the great community practices of SMBC is the weekly 'Principal's Hour' (chapel service) and 'Ministry Matters' (where missionaries present workshops, run discussion groups and explore a range of current urban, regional and overseas missions topics). On one of these occasions, we had visits from the inland mission agency called Bush Church Aid (BCA). This connection with BCA and the way God was forming us in community alongside the lecturers (who had both ministered and missioned in many parts of this world), was a key process for our next steps.

So with the 100% support of BCA and the generous provision of God's people, we are now serving in Coober Pedy ('Coobs'), South Australia. Our Church is The Catacomb Anglican Church in the Diocese of Willochra. Following a recent break over January and February, we were encouraged to be back in the community again. We went down to our local supermarket and bumped into the 'drive-in' movie theatre committee chairperson where we spoke about volunteering (it's the last drive-in movie theatre in South Australia); then we also ran into a church member at a 'Second Chance Animals' stall, and then we caught up with the chairman of the Umoona Aboriginal art collective. All this is to say, we are keen to spend our time being a



part of the community and interacting wherever we see an opening for deeper relationships with people.

Other ways we are getting involved here is through the 'Dusty' radio (community radio); the school (Coober Pedy Area School); the SES/CFS emergency service; the South Australian Ambulance Service (SAAS) as volunteer chaplains) and so on. Our vision and desire is to develop relationships with people and hopefully have deeper chats when God softens hearts.

Our weeks can be hard as well. When we first started in 2024, the town was deeply affected by two youth suicides. This sad and difficult time put us in the place to show and be God's love to people who needed support during such terrible grief.

There is no way we can do any of this work alone. We're so thankful God's Spirit is with us and we have

the support of BCA and people who prayerfully and financially get alongside us.

We'd greatly value your prayers as we serve here by praying for:

- the youth here to reconnect with the church and with us. We have some programs in place and others will start soon; and,
- for the adults who might be lonely, weary or sad to reach out and find our church and us;
- for any pride holding people back from coming to church on Sundays and becoming part of God's family.

Dave and Margie Wood

Editor's note: To learn more about the Associate Degree of Ministry that Dave and Margie studied, head to: smbc.edu.au/study/course/associate-degree-of-ministry

PRAY FOR SMBC

To assist you in praying for the SMBC community – its alumni, its students, staff, events and community life – we encourage you to use our monthly prayer diary where we provide a few short prayer points for each day of the month. To view and download, head to: smbc.edu.au/resources/prayer-diary

Alternatively, our prayer points are also available through the PrayerMate App. PrayerMate is a free app that sends daily prayer points to your mobile device. Once you have downloaded the app, simply look for Sydney Missionary & Bible College under 'Theological Colleges'.

And for people who would prefer to receive the prayer points through Australia Post, please contact the SMBC Service Centre on 02 9747 4780.

VALE AMY VINK

We are sad to announce Amy Vink, a much-loved SMBC graduate, has died. Amy and her husband Jono graduated from SMBC and served with CMS in Tanzania, where Amy established a number of projects among local people. Returning to Australia the couple served as missionaries in residence on campus, and Jono served as Director of The Bridge. Our thoughts and prayers are with Jono and Amy's family as they grieve, and thank God for her life.





FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Picture the following scene:

Moses has just led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. But as they

head towards the Red Sea, it becomes apparent that Pharaoh, who previously agreed to let them go, has changed his mind. He is now leading a huge Egyptian army in pursuit of the vulnerable and poorly-armed Israelites. The Israelites are terrified—so much so that they turn on Moses, saying, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? (Exodus 14:11). In reply, Moses says: “Fear not, **stand firm**, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today.” (Exodus 14:13)

Now let's fast forward around 1400 years, and picture another scene:

The apostle Peter is writing to a group of Christians who are facing difficulties of their own. They don't have an army bearing down on them, but they are experiencing trouble and trials because of their faith in Jesus. Peter writes his letter (which we now call 1 Peter) to address this situation. And his message to these scared and troubled Christians is remarkably similar to Moses' message to Israel. A good summary of his message comes in the closing verses of the letter: “I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. **Stand firm** in it.” (1 Peter 5:12)

Both Moses and Peter called God's people to stand firm in the gracious message of salvation that they had already committed themselves to. In these twin exhortations, we have a profound insight into the dynamics of the Christian life. We, the people of God, *are a people that need to stand firm* in the grace that has already been lavished on us.

This gracious salvation is not something we need to earn. It is not something we need to achieve by our effort. Like the Israelites standing by the edge of the Red Sea, we have already experienced God's miraculous and gracious rescue. And, like them, we await, in faith, a future salvation. But, also like them, we face difficult situations that threaten our confidence that this future salvation will indeed take place. There is a danger we will lose our nerve. There is a danger we will give in to fear, and place our trust elsewhere.

What we need, then, is to stand firm, taking our God who promises salvation at his word. For the Israelites, this meant standing firm even in the face of an advancing army. For the Christians of Peter's day, and

for us as well, it means standing firm in the face of persecution, opposition, troubles and trials.

All this means that a vital need for Christians today is to be equipped and resourced to stand firm. And for this reason, the letter of 1 Peter is a gift to be treasured, since that is exactly what God is doing through this letter.

In Principal's Hour this semester, we are working through 1 Peter. Would you pray that as we do so, God would indeed be equipping the SMBC community to stand firm in the grace of God, and that we might be better prepared to be a light for Christ wherever he places us in the future, no matter the trials we face?

We'd love you to join us on this journey. Principal's Hour is available online to listen to or watch.

Thank you for your partnership with SMBC. It is truly meaningful, and a joy.

Yours in Christ,
Derek Brotherson

P.S THE (NEW BUT OLD) AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE-UNIVERSITY OF THEOLOGY!

You may be interested to know that earlier this year our consortium, the Australian College of Theology, became registered as the Australian University of Theology (AUT). The re-classification is a recognition that the AUT and its member colleges (including SMBC as one of its largest) have been providing tertiary education at the highest level for many years.

SMBCs teaching and learning, resources, student support, and research culture meet and exceed industry standards.

Because SMBC and the AUT have been operating at this level for many years, little will change day-to-day for our students. However, there may be some reduced costs for undergraduate students and there is a possibility of increased funding for post-graduate research.

Receiving the designation of university honours the skill and commitment of the AUT/SMBC faculty and staff. It also rightly acknowledges the significant accomplishments of SMBC graduates who have completed studies in this context.

And, while this university classification is a very welcome recognition, it's important to know that it doesn't deviate from our vision (nor that of SMBC's founder Rev Benson Barnett in 1916) to prepare thousands of loving, skilled graduates bringing to light of Christ to a dark and needy world.



SMBC
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PRINCIPAL'S HOUR



Principal's Hour is held each Wednesday at SMBC during semester time. The recordings are available for you, your church or Bible study group, and include prayers, readings and interviews as well as the main Bible talk. Alternatively, you can just listen to the Bible talk.

To access Principal's Hour head to: smbc.edu.au/resources/bibletalks



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gap year for 18-21s

**THURSDAY
17TH JULY**

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the bridge



MEET SOME CURRENT STUDENTS!

Introducing Kohei!



Kohei is a residential student along with his family and he's now in second year of the Bachelor of Theology. We asked him these quick questions!

What's one of your favourite subjects at the moment?

It's tough to pick one as I enjoy all the studies of God and ourselves, including the original languages of Greek and Hebrew!

However, the cross-cultural communication unit has been helpful when I examine my culture (Japanese) from outside and gospel contextualisation in their context.

What do you find challenging about studying at SMBC?

As I am from a very strong honour-shame culture, it's been challenging to parent our two young sons while living in such close quarters with many other people who are also residential students. Mistakes and failures as a new dad happen. But making them in front of others I find can be quite stressful for me. But also, I believe God has been training me in this environment.

How can you see God shaping you through your time at SMBC?

Through the new and deep things about God I learn from the class. And also through discipleship-like relationships with other students and lecturers.

I've met and seen many of Jesus' disciples here who desire to live like him and

live his words out. And they wrestle with him too in the class discussion or prayers. The spiritual formation has been both very encouraging and challenging and has had an impact on my Christian living.

What have you been surprised about?

One thing is God's absolute sovereignty, which is beyond the best human thinking and imaginations. And the fact that it is so big that sometimes it is overwhelming.

Reading and having lectures on OT Writings and Prophets (particularly Psalms and Job) taught me the true fear of God but also awe that He is still close to us.

Where are you heading for College Mission this year?

By the time you ready this, we will have been to Woolgoolga Anglican church. We're looking forward to the opportunities we have to serve and observe the local community. I'll be giving my testimony, leading a men's Bible study and joining in the kids' ministry.

What do you like about residential living at SMBC?

Definitely, the blessing from the amazing catering team who cooks for us every day!

But also, it's been great to learn and see godly parenting and its challenges from other residential families.

Have you any plans for after College at this point?

Yes, we'll be moving to Japan and will be a part of God's mission there. We're still not sure of all the where and how details as yet, but we're keen to serve God's people there.

But we are hoping to be involved in church ministry and do the training of local leaders and discipleship.

How can we be praying for you?

We thank God that he has blessed our life here at SMBC in every way, and particularly that our kids have been experiencing the love of our Father through the beautiful community.

The personal prayer point is that God would sustain me in a lot of juggling at the moment of family, study, church, and preparation for Katoomba Easter Convention (God gave me this great chance to preach to year 7-10 students!).

My family prayer point is that God would bless us with wisdom and guidance as we need to grow financial partnership and consider the various factors, such as financial need, ministry need, and family need.

Meet Jacqui



What course are you studying?

How blessed I am to be entering my second, full-time year studying the Master of Ministry at SMBC.

What do you like about being a day (non-residential) student at SMBC?

It teaches me the essential ministry skill of multitasking – mastering deep study time while also squeezing in a weekly grocery run!

What's one of your favourite subjects at the moment?

I have been so wonderfully surprised to love Theology subjects, especially beginning with Christian Foundational Beliefs in my first semester. Knowledge of God is deep and rich and to be guided by our wise lecturers through an overview of key doctrinal debates is a gift that engaged my faith in ways I hadn't thoughtfully considered before.

What do you find challenging about studying at SMBC?

It can be a challenge to protect the time to be transformed by what we learn, rather than viewing it as simply completing tasks. I constantly catch myself prioritising productivity over formation amidst the deadlines of assignments, readings and balancing other life commitments. I never want to take this opportunity to study God's word for granted as an academic exercise.

How can you see God shaping you through your time at SMBC?

God has been growing me through the genuine fellowship in our diverse, interdenominational community. Sometimes I seem to learn just as much at lunch time as I do in class time! Since coming to faith through university ministry eight years ago, I have largely been shaped in one church context, so the SMBC community has truly opened my eyes and love for God's wider church.

What have you been surprised about at SMBC?

It feels a bit surprising to reflect on, but spending extended time in God's Word has profoundly impacted my life. It's deepened my trust in the Lord and given me the courage to engage more directly and graciously with my non-believing family and friends. I didn't expect to see how powerfully our lives can witness to others, but that's been a beautiful change.

Where will you have been (Lord willing) for the annual College Mission this year?

Our team of ten is off to MBM Rooty Hill under the leadership of Kristen Young and Kirk Patston. We're especially excited to learn from the ministry team and the congregation alike about multicultural ministry in this context. I had the opportunity to visit a Western Sydney church on college mission last year too and have felt quite compelled by the great gospel work and need in this area.

Have you any plans for after College at this point?

Ah, the dreaded question! And I still don't have an answer yet, but my prayers are focussed on simply choosing the next right thing to follow Jesus and make disciples of all nations in my goings. The local opportunities are greater than I ever knew before College – but then so are the needs of the world!

How can we be praying for you?

Please pray for wisdom as I discern what may be next after college and for my non-Christian family who have begun engaging with my faith more and seem curious to learn more. I'd also appreciate prayer for my local church as they church plant later this year with a team whose heart is to reach the lost in an affluent, comfortable and secular region of Sydney.

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THE BRIDGE PROGRAM TURNED 10 IN 2024



The Bridge students 2024

Developed to provide a gap year program for 18- to 21-year-old Christians centred on the Bible and missions focussed, The Bridge has equipped over 300 students for a lifetime of following Jesus.

2024 marked the tenth anniversary of the program at SMBC, and praise God, our largest cohort over that period.

Yet, as society's understanding of God and their response to Jesus continues to shift, the need for young adults to have a firm foundation in God's word, a community that will encourage them to maturity, and skills to confidently engage in the world as followers of Jesus, remains. So, we press on at The Bridge, eager to refine, and deliver the most relevant and robust program we can for each new cohort.

With excitement, beginning this year, an all-new Diploma of Christian Foundations, registered under the Australian University of Theology, will serve these core purposes of The Bridge program.

The Diploma of Christian Foundations, developed over two years by The Bridge and SMBC faculty, represents the best of SMBC's biblical studies, missions, ministry, and wisdom for spiritual

formation, integrated into a young adults' program that provides a foundation for following Christ with confidence now, and through all of life. It's our commitment at The Bridge to be ready for another ten years of providing a gap-year program with purpose; a foundation on Christ and his word, that will equip our students to participate in God's plan with confidence—faithfully serving his church, as they enter university, professions, trades, small businesses, and more.

We thank God for the fruit of The Bridge program seen in our graduates today, and we expectantly look forward to that still to come.

Ben Powell
Director of The Bridge

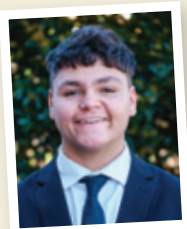
P.S.

- For all the details about the new Diploma of Christian Foundations, head to: thebridge.smbc.edu.au/program/study-levels and
- On the next page meet a couple of our 2025 student body and read about a graduate who completed The Bridge.



HEAR FROM LARS, OLIVIA AND VIN

We interviewed a student from our 2024 cohort and two students from our current cohort to hear how The Bridge has and continues to benefit young people from all walks of life.



Lars is a 2024 Bridge graduate who was also awarded the SMBC Julie Kirkland Award (awarded to a diploma student who has made the most overall progress taking into account academic development and growth in Christian maturity).

What's something you learnt from being at The Bridge?

One of the main things I learnt at The Bridge last year was the importance of mission. As a relatively new Christian I thought that mission was a secondary goal but through our biblical and mission lectures and the overseas Cultural Study Tour, I learnt that mission really is a central part of the Christian lifestyle.

What are you doing this year and how has The Bridge impacted this?

The Bridge really helped me learn the foundations of what the Christian faith is based on and that mission is needed in all communities, whether people don't know God or even know just a little.

This year I have started a role with Crusaders, a Christian organisation, as a camp leader. The Bridge program has equipped me with the resources I need to put what I learnt into action, and I am now teaching students of all ages the love and care that God has for them.

Meet Olivia, a current Bridge student, who after studying at university has decided to spend a year completing The Bridge program:



What's an area you're excited to grow in this year?

I'm excited to be deepening my understanding of my identity in Christ as part of the spiritual formation foundations subject. I look forward to knowing God more—not just with head knowledge, but in a way that truly transforms my heart, strengthens my love for Him, and shapes me to live more like Jesus.

Tell us about something you've already learned The Bridge this year?

I'm learning about how God is faithful to His promises. Seeing His work throughout Scripture—from the promises in the Old Testament to their fulfilment in the New Testament—has shown me that God never fails.

Hear from Vin who completed school last year and is keen to be spending a year at The Bridge this year before heading to university next year:



What's an area in your life you're looking forward to growing in this year?

I've been excited to learn about mission my whole life. I feel blessed that I have this opportunity to learn more about it through our lectures and the overseas Cultural Study Tour in August – which I am really looking forward to!

What's something you've already learned at The Bridge this year?

After our great time away together at camps and getting to know each other more, I've learnt that although we may all be different, we are all beautifully created by God and we are all gifted in different ways to expand God's kingdom.

Editor's note: To follow along with The Bridge activities in 2025 follow them on Instagram

 [Instagram/TheBridgeGapYear](https://www.instagram.com/TheBridgeGapYear)

 [Facebook/TheBridgeGapYear](https://www.facebook.com/TheBridgeGapYear)



Christians love to hear God speak. When we do this in groups, someone takes the lead—small group leaders, preachers, ministers, pastors and chaplains. We might even recognise some with gifts like prophets or wisdom teachers. Bringing the word to God's people can draw on many skills and roles.

It's worth acknowledging this because each of us has ways of communicating Scripture that feel most natural. But times change, people change and Scripture itself comes in a variety of genres, one moment offering us raw lament then meticulous case law, enigmatic proverb, epic narrative, closely argued theology, warm, personal correspondence and dizzying apocalyptic. We do well to be adaptable.

As we work in ministry, a number of roles, functions and metaphors are available to help us name and assess what we are doing. Rev. Richard Osmer suggests ministry involves discerning what is happening, why, and what should be happening and how we will get there. He associates these, respectively, with the roles of a priest, sage, prophet and servant. Rev. David Johnson identifies the preacher as a teacher, herald, and liturgical artist. Dr Kyle Strobel describes the preacher as a

THE ART AND CRAFT OF WORD MINISTRY

shepherd guiding people into God's presence, or a tour guide pointing out his marvellous works. In light of proposals such as these, we can begin to build a catalogue of roles for the minister of the word:

Student A minister of the Word first studies diligently, exploring the biblical text within the grand narrative of God's plan. Deep engagement ensures the message is truthful and profound.

Teacher The Apostle Paul emphasised entrusting the gospel to those who can teach. Christian faith relies on clear articulation of divine truths and the skills of teaching are vital.

Pastor Like a detective or counsellor, the pastor listens attentively to people's experiences, seeking connections between their lives and Scripture. Humility, kindness, and curiosity shape this role.

Sage A sage applies wisdom by drawing from theology, social sciences, and the arts. They eagerly study the world, history, and human behaviour to better understand God's creation.

Herald A herald faithfully delivers a message not of their own making. This role carries the weight of declaring God's Word with confidence because the message is no mere personal opinion.

Prophet Prophets speak truth courageously, even when uncomfortable. They interpret the times, confront injustice, and call people toward God's vision. They may use poetry, prose, or even symbolic actions.

Literary Artist Like Jesus and Nathan, literary artists use parables and imagery to engage hearts and minds. Beyond concepts and propositions, they move emotions and challenge perspectives.

Servant A servant prioritises others, ensuring sermons serve people rather than seek their admiration. Considerations of amplification, visuals, sermon length, and language stem from a heart of service.

Tour Guide A tour guide reveals God's work in history and Scripture, helping people see the coherence between His Word and the world around them.

Fellow Worshipper A preacher stands among the congregation as one who also receives the Word. Preaching invites communal worship, responding in praise, confession, and longing before God.

What role do you naturally take on when you preach? Your church background, personality and tradition will likely shape your practice. It would be good to ask what role each genre of Scripture invites you to take. It would be good to know what roles different people in your congregation find most effective as they seek to take hold of God's truth and be transformed deeply by it. It might be time for you to try something new as an expression of God's multi-faceted revelation and as an act of love for the people who hear.

Rev Dr Kirk Patston

Director of the SMBC Centre for Preaching and Pastoral Ministry, Lecturer in Old Testament and Practical Theology

Editor's note: *If you'd like to continue to develop your preachings skills, join Kirk commencing in July this year (on campus and online) for his Advanced Preaching Skills unit on Thursdays from 2.20pm to 5.00pm. For all the details, head to smbc.edu.au/study/unit/advanced-preaching-skills.*

ASK GREG!



Greg Swanton is our Supporter Relationships Manager. In this Ask Greg! edition he answers a question he often gets asked about the SMBC General Fund. (If you have any questions about supporting SMBC, please don't hesitate to Ask Greg a question too! He can be contacted at gswanton@smbc.edu.au)

Why is my gift to the SMBC General Fund so helpful for SMBC's ministry?

Support for the SMBC General Fund undergirds the values and graduate outcomes of the College.

Our six core values remain at the heart of SMBC and the way we do everything under our Lord – being centred on the Bible, passionate about God's mission, growing spiritually, strongly community oriented, rich in diversity, and focused on ministry outcomes.

Support of the SMBC General Fund facilitates the permeation of these values right into the heart of College life. Commencing this year, through your support, we have been able to fund two new part-time student support staff – Corinne H (former missionaries in the Middle-East) and Ray Notley (formerly with Pioneers mission organisation). Corinne and Ray are both SMBC alumni who have a deep experience in cross-cultural ministry and mission which they

now share in guiding and mentoring our student community.

Your gifts to the SMBC General Fund will help us to continue funding these workers and potentially increase the days we are able to resource for valued, proactive, caring, pastoral input with our students.

Being an interdenominational College (and the strength that brings), also means we don't receive large or significant injections of funds as do many of the other theological and Bible colleges in Australia. We rely upon our individual supporters, to be our enablers in plugging that financial gap we have each year, as we have done for well over a century!

This is not a tax-deductible destination but is so significant in enabling us to prepare thousands of loving, skilled graduates bringing the light of Christ to a dark and needy world.

General funds are also used, for example, to:

- help cover initiatives like our Missionary in Residence program,
- fund our Missionary of the Week and Ministry Matters program (see page 2!), and
- support many other aspects of community life like retreats, training, support and pastoral care initiatives that aren't covered or only partially covered by student fees.

Please prayerfully consider supporting the general fund in the 2025 Appeal – A Heart for SMBC. (However, should a tax-deductible destination for your gift be helpful for you, please consider the SMBC Foundation Library Trust as the other great need for SMBC).

With every blessing,

Greg Swanton

2025 APPEAL



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For the sake of his holy name

OUR GREATEST FINANCIAL NEEDS... CAN YOU HELP ENABLE SMBC (UNDER GOD)?

When you support SMBC, you're directly enabling our work and ministry to continue, so that together we can prepare students to be loving, skilled graduates bringing the light of Christ to a dark and needy world.

Please make a gift to SMBC today!

OUR TWO 'MOST NEEDED' FUNDING AREAS:

1. **SMBC General Fund** (non-tax deductible)



2. **SMBC Foundation Library Trust** (for those seeking a tax-deductible option)



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For the convenience of donating (one-off or to set up regular gifts) via our online platform, or for gifts to all other SMBC funds, please visit smbc.edu.au/donate for further details.

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We very much give thanks to God for your partnership in the gospel and can't thank you enough for your prayer and financial support.

Privacy Note: SMBC is committed to ensuring personal information is managed in an open and transparent way in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles. Our Privacy Policy, including further details of our information handling practices, is available at smbc.edu.au

