

You are very warmly invited to join with other men from the Churches in Cooma for a time of fellowship and sharing

MEN'S BREAKFAST

A hearty breakfast of bacon and eggs, toast, juice, tea and coffee will be provided at a cost of

\$5 per head

When

Saturday 7th Mar 2020

Time

8.00am

Where

St Andrew's Uniting Church

Upper Hall

Soho Street COOMA

with Dr. John Williams

John retired in 2011 after nearly six years as Commissioner of the NSW Natural Resources Commission.

Other former roles include: Chief, CSIRO Land & Water

Please RSVP to **02-6416-0124**

or

www.cooma.mensbreakfast.com.au

(RSVP helps with the catering)

Dr John Williams, FTSE

John is a founding member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. In 2005, he was awarded the prestigious Farrer Memorial Medal for achievement and excellence in agricultural science.

As one of Australia's respected scientists, John has extensive experience in providing national and international thought leadership in natural-resource management, particularly related to agriculture and its environmental impact on water and land resources. He has published more than 140 papers on soil physics/hydrology and the nature of sustainable agriculture.

John is currently an Honorary Professor at ANU Crawford School of Public Policy and Adjunct Professor at CSU Institute for Land, Water and Society. He was formerly Chair of the Water Forum of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering.

John seeks to integrate his scientific research and teaching with his understanding of Christian faith where understanding and learning to care for and nurture the whole of Creation sits as a unity of purpose.

John is an active member of the Uniting Church in Australia and Kippax Uniting where he is a lay preacher. For the last three years John has held the position of Co-Chair of the Canberra Region Presbytery which seeks to provide love, care and nurture to approximately 30 congregations stretching across the southern tablelands and alpine regions to the south coast and the national capital.

John retired in 2011 after nearly six years as Commissioner of the NSW Natural Resources Commission. Other former roles include: Chief, CSIRO Land & Water; Chief Scientist, NSW Department of Natural Resources; member of the Steering Committee of the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems; inaugural Board member for the CRC for Irrigation Futures; member of the Ministerial Scientific Advisory Council for NSW Department of Primary Industry; member of the Commission for the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR); Chair of the Advisory Board to the Commonwealth Environmental Research Fund's Landscape Logic Hub; Chair of the Environmental Research Advisory Panel to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities; Chair of the Research Advisory Council to the Murray–Darling Freshwater Research Centre; Scientific Adviser to the Board of Landcare Australia; and a founding Director of the Peter Cullen Water & Environment Trust.

John Williams, FTSE.

As a farm boy I saw and was distressed by soil erosion, overgrazing and loss of habitat. My father worked hard on the Monaro to find ways to produce wool and beef yet not harm the land. He taught me how tricky and difficult that was, and encouraged me to study and see if we could learn how to do it better in Australia. My Dad loved the land and he would say how much it hurt him to see it harmed. He also said he felt it must also hurt God to see us harm His creation. So science and how God's creation might be better managed by us was a strong theme all my life. I could never understand how people would marvel of the beauty of the Murrumbidgee River landscape and say how good God was to have created such beauty – then do or think very little about how to make sure the way we grew our food, built our cities or extracted our water did as little harm as possible to the wonder that the God of creation gave us. So that why I am who I am.

I am strongly attracted to the person of Jesus. I love the way he challenged the status quo and turned things up-side down. My understanding of the gospel of Jesus is a key to my thinking and work. But Christian thinking and theology on how we should consider the care and use of the environment has been disappointing. It remains very low on the Christian agenda. Our focus on personal salvation has driven Christian perspectives to be very homocentric.

What about the rest of creation? Does the work of Jesus have a voice in the redemption, health and wholeness of the rest of creation? I think it will become of critical importance in the future. I see Paul telling us that Christ was about redeeming the whole of creation – that means to me a lot more than human beings. In that context I feel that God has called me to contribute to Christian thinking on the matter of how we care for and nurture our planet. I feel our profligate use of resources must be hurting God a great deal. We have a great need for Christian thinking, faith and action to help turn around what we are doing to this planet. It is long overdue. I do see green shoots emerging and grounds to be people of hope and courage when faced with the huge ecological and climate change issues as we seek to live in a safe operating place within our planet.

Our Land...sacred ...bountiful...bleeding...frightening yet friend

When we examine our thinking and feeling about Land as central to creation and our place and relationship to it I wonder if it can be characterized by at least five emotions.

Sacred



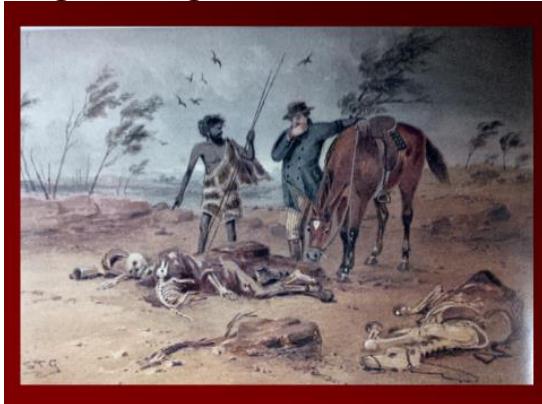
Bountiful



Bleeding

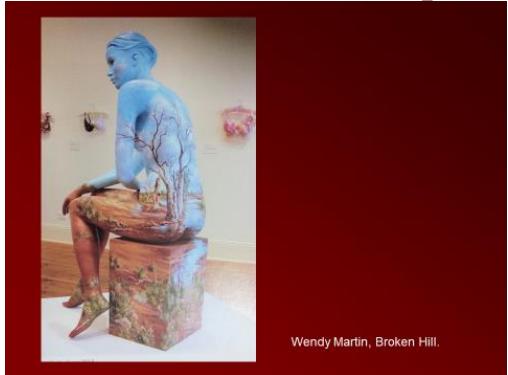


Frightening





Yet our Land is also companion and friend.



Given all the feeling and senses we have to our land...how should we live? We see the damage, the pressure of our presence, its central to creation, its sacred, its bountiful, its bleeding, its frightening yet we are learning to love it and see more...Land is both a sacred cow and a milking cow. It can harm us , it can feed us, it can nurture us, it can sustain us. But how as people of faith in Jesus the Christ do we see our calling?

I think we have a new story emerging

I see the big picture – that God is reconciling and restoring all creation. This is the story we can share with whoever will listen.

Creator God blessed the whole creation – which includes us...but not only us...

Creator God acts and speaks
both within and beyond creation....

God cared so deeply for humanity

to become flesh and dwell with us.

I am convinced that God cares deeply
for all that God has created and continues to create....

To make these re-connections...

to understand the epilogue in Revelations and the Hymn to Christ in Colossians chapter 1 – requires much work.



To see more clearly God's concern for the reconciliation and restoration of all creation is a fundamental part of the gospel.

It is not a side show, an add-on extra, but rather the gospel at its core.

Engaging this truth ensures that we do have a story to lead us into the future.

This is my passion –

That in the light of this deep gospel story we will need to re-discover, affirm and live out our new story... we need to develop our story...a story that leads us to understand our place and how might live in the ecosystems of the earth so that the whole of creation might be reconciled and renewed.

We need to pray, listen to God, ponder the scriptures and learn, grow our new story, a new song for the earth.

The hope and assurance that we can have is written in Col 1: 19-20

"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

Let's look at this painting by Arthur Boyd.

[Image of Arthur Boyd]



What is it trying to say about Christ and the Landscape?

Join me on a journey as I pose the question:

Has our focus on the historical Jesus been such that we have neglected the post-resurrection Jesus who is alive and with us?

By not giving spiritual attention to the Christ...the post-resurrection Jesus...the word... the logos...the cosmic Christ....have we missed what is so important in our time....**the renewal and healing of the ecology and life support systems of the planet**...the on-going work of our loving God and creator?

Well that's my best effort to tell my story.

...but it is very much a story that is unfinished.

Can we who have grown up in a Christian family where the gospel ended with personal salvation and a cry for social justice possibly grasp a much larger and grander view of **Jesus the Christ**?

My answer is yes we can!

In that case we can be a people of hope when faced with the huge ecological and climate change issues we face to live in a safe operating place on our planet.

If so we can be assured that the post-resurrection Jesus will be the wind under our wings. And join in the words of Norman Habel and say:

**Violet announces Christ in our cosmos,
Holding our Earth in all of its pain.
Christ now invites us: join in my mission!
Cov'nant with me to heal Earth again.**

Can you join the journey?

Amen

John Williams
8 November 2019