



**2025 Progressive Christianity services** will commence on **Wednesday, 15 January at 7.00 pm in the chapel.**  
Our **Guest Presenter** will be Rev Michael Dowling, retired Uniting Church Minister, speaking on

## The Lord's Prayer remix

### Synopsis of the Lord's Prayer remix presentation

#### *The Lord's Prayer - Unpacked and Remixed!*

Jesus was once asked by his disciples how they should pray. He taught them a prayer, which we know as the iconic Lord's Prayer.

This prayer is still used today, some 2,000 years later.

For some people, the prayer continues to have deep meaning. For others, however, some of the language employed can be challenging, or even a barrier between the person who is praying and God. Some of the words of the Lord's Prayer (e.g. Father, Heaven, Kingdom, and even the word sin) may, in 2025, literally get in the way of faith in God for some people. And this, I believe, is the antithesis of what Jesus sought in teaching the prayer.

This study explores the verses of the Lord's Prayer, examining the literal words, reflecting on what Jesus may have been getting at in using these words, and how that deep meaning might be "mapped" onto new words that better resonate with our modern-day understanding. The study ends by presenting, side-by-side with the Lord's Prayer, a Lord's Prayer "Remix Version" for your further reflection.

### **MICHAEL DOWLING – biographical information**

Retired as of March 2024...and loving it!

Prior to that:

Minister @ Blackwood Uniting Church (5 years)

Chaplain @ Eldercare aged care (6 years)

Scientific Instrument Sales, Service & Technical Support (25 years)

Analytical Chemist (5 years)

The life trajectory that brought me to church ministry is, well, strange. I was born to Irish parents and so was raised Catholic (you don't get a choice in the matter!). My childhood faith didn't 'stick' and, in my early twenties, I went absent without leave from the Christian faith, becoming for ten or more years a couldn't-care-less agnostic. During this time, I studied science at university and then worked initially as an analytical chemist, before moving into the field of scientific instrumentation sales, service and technical support. I married and had two beautiful sons, but my marriage did not last, with my then wife and I separating.

Some months after the split I had a life-changing experience that profoundly altered the trajectory of my life, both internal and external and, as a result, I embarked on a quest to discover or perhaps to rediscover this 'God' that I had rejected many years earlier. My quest

took me on many highways and byways, through an exploration of many religious faiths and belief systems before, finally, I was led back, full of surprise and wonder, into the Christian faith, only now within the Uniting Church.

At the beginning of this extraordinary period of exploration I met and married my darling Joy. Together, we formed a blended family, with my two little boys and Joy's three older children (two boys and a girl), one of whom had already left home. It has been a source of enduring delight for Joy and me that our kids have got on so well together, remaining close friends into adulthood. Joy and I also started our own self-employed business where we acted as the South Australian sales, service and technical support representatives for a number of scientific instrument firms, including Hewlett Packard. It was a wonderful, challenging, intellectually stimulating twelve years of working together. During that same period, our involvement with the Uniting Church continued to increase until one day I received a proverbial 'tap on the shoulder' about ordained ministry. "Who? Me? No way!" Hmmm... as it turned out, "Yes way!"

On my very non-linear journey into ministry, I discovered within myself a passion to make sense of this life that we live! I developed an almost insatiable curiosity about the intersection between our lived human experience; the workings of the natural world of which we humans form an integral part; the ever-changing scientific understanding of the same; and our understanding of and faith in the God who loves us.

Since Joy and I were a couple who never did anything by halves, not only did I commence a full-time Bachelor of Ministry degree, but Joy also simultaneously started a double degree in Social Work and Social Planning! It was brilliant, and we both loved it! Sadly, and before the completion of her studies, Joy suffered an acute health crisis in 2009 and, although she survived, she would be on oxygen 24/7 for the rest of her life, and with a greatly diminished capacity. Together, we began to come to terms with the new, ever-changing reality that would mark the remaining ten years of our life together. I completed my ministry degree, and commenced aged care chaplaincy with Eldercare, something which I continued for six years, and which I loved.

During this time, as well as being Joy's husband, I was also her carer, assisting her with those things she could no longer do. Joy exhibited tremendous courage and resilience during these ten years, making sure she did everything she was still capable of doing, including having fun! At the beginning of 2018, I left my chaplaincy work, in order to be home full-time with Joy. That decision was so right. Joy continued to decline during the year, but my being at home gave us the time and the space to reconnect at a very deep level. The last year we spent together was just the best! My darling Joy died on 16th November 2018, surrounded by those she loved. I continue to miss my beautiful Joy, but the overarching feeling I have now is not grief, but rather an immense sense of gratitude for the life and love we shared, fully and without regret, for 24 years.

Going to Blackwood Uniting Church in 2019 as minister was, for me, an absolute gift. It is a place of warmth and welcome, a place of hearts and minds, and a place for questions and curiosity. It is also the place where I met and married the beautiful, the magnificent, the wonderful Karen Collins. In this dual coming together, as the minister at Blackwood, and in my relationship with Karen, my life was transformed in ways beyond my imagining. Five years down the track, my delight continues now, with the many opportunities which retirement affords.

I am, quite simply, the luckiest of men.