



# EXPLORING OPEN CHRISTIANITY

Presented by the Progressive Christian Network of Victoria Inc.

*A series of DVDs for study groups and individual reflection exploring Christianity open to contemporary scholarship and new ways of understanding Christianity in our time*

## Exploring the future of a faith community with Peter Kennedy

- From Prison to Table Fellowship – The cry for justice
- From Action to Contemplation – Toward the mystic path
- From Duality to Oneness – The shape of the new consciousness

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### THE DVD

After a brief introduction to the series and to Peter Kennedy, the DVD provides three interviews of approximately 10 minutes each. The DVD could be used in one session of approximately an hour and a half, providing time for discussion after each of the three interviews. Alternatively it could be used over two or more sessions to provide increased discussion time. In either case, select the questions that are most appropriate for your group.

### PREPARATION

The venue should be arranged so that everyone can see and hear the DVD interview and then easily move to discussion – sometimes in small groups of 3 or 4 people.

Allow time for introductions, getting to know names of participants, and to describe procedures and times.

Some of the questions are about personal experiences and life journeys. They are best discussed in groups of three, or at most four, people. Trying to discuss them in larger groups will exclude some people from an opportunity to reflect on and talk about what is important to them. In the following discussion guide, these questions for groups of three or four people are marked with the symbol ✚

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AFTER ANY INTERVIEW

There are three questions that can be used after each viewing of an interview. Each recognises and affirms the different points people are at in their faith journey.

- What stands out for you from that interview? Was there something the speaker said that is particularly important for you?
- Was there something in the interview that raises questions for you or that you would like clarified?
- What would you like to follow up?

These questions are likely to result in a number of different responses. You can say, “Let’s hear from a number of people and then discuss some of the ideas”. Invite a flow of brief responses from as many in the group as would like to comment before moving to discussion. Having someone list key words on a whiteboard to note the responses will give you a topic list for the following discussion.

Following are some additional specific questions that may focus discussion after each of the interviews.

### **DISCUSSION AFTER “The cry for justice”**

PETER KENNEDY said that through his experience as a prison chaplain he found himself identified with the marginalised. He changed and his homilies (sermons) changed. What he did in the church service focussed on areas of injustice – the poor and marginalised. He came to see that the ministry of Jesus was inviting outsiders in.

- What would be some implications of applying this understanding to what happens in your church?

### **DISCUSSION AFTER “Toward the mystic path”**

PETER KENNEDY spoke with passion about the importance of contemplation and meditation to him. He said that when Christians move away from the doctrines and dogmas of the Christian church what will take their place is the mystical path which is about experiencing direct access to the divine.

- ✠ In what ways has the mystical path been a part of your experience?
- ✠ Would like to discover more about contemplation and meditation as aspects of Christian experience?
- Kennedy said that the institutional church has condemned mystics because there is no place for the traditional church. In what ways could the church encourage people who want to explore the mystical path?

### **DISCUSSION AFTER “The shape of the new consciousness”**

PETER KENNEDY see signs of hope in the return to the Christianity of early centuries when small groups of Christians gathered around their faith. He said that it is not about belief. “All you can do is point to what is non-conceptual and ineffable. When you see the nature of reality, you will change.” He describes this as a shift in consciousness. We will have to unlearn most of what we have learned.

- What signs of hope do you see for Christianity, for your own faith future?
- Peter Kennedy said, “There has to be something there to nourish our life and our journey”. What nourishes your faith and journey? What more could your church do to help that nourishment?

## CONCLUSION

- ✦ Peter Kennedy's story is a deeply moving account of one man's journey to a new awareness of the needs of people around him, the injustice that affects them, and his own spiritual journey. What is your response to his story? Are there implications for your faith journey?
- After seeing this interview, what are some of the ways it has encouraged you to be open to new ways of understanding Christianity in our time?

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1. Exploring doubt and faith with Dr Val Webb
2. Exploring the future of religion with Sir Lloyd Geering
3. Exploring the future of a faith community with Peter Kennedy
4. Exploring Jesus and Paul with John Dominic Crossan
5. Exploring the future of the Bible with Dr Greg Jenks