

**THE PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN NETWORK OF VICTORIA
IN COLLABORATION WITH COMMON DREAMS ON THE ROAD
PRESENTS**

**“JUSTICE WITH OR WITHOUT GOD: THE PRIORITIES OF
PROGRESSIVE THEOLOGY”**

A LECTURE SERIES BY DISTINGUISHED US THEOLOGIAN & WRITER

PROFESSOR JOE BESSLER



**AT THE EWING MEMORIAL CENTRE, CNR BURKE RD & COPPIN ST,
EAST MALVERN**

7.00PM FRIDAY, 20 JULY & 10.00AM – 4.00PM SATURDAY, 21 JULY

An introductory address (Friday evening) & four lectures with a light lunch & morning & afternoon refreshments (Saturday) on how creative shifts in biblical studies, philosophy & Christian thought have launched a new age of progressive theologies through which to reimagine the contours of faith & faithful practice. PTO for more details.

Registration Essential: On Line at <https://joebessler.eventbrite.com.au> or by Mail on the Attached Registration Form.

Professor Joe Bessler

Joseph A. Bessler is the Robert Travis Peake Professor of Theology at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Bessler specializes in the discipline of Constructive Theology. Co-Author of *Law and Theology: Cases and Readings* (Carolina Academic Press, 2005) and author of *A Scandalous Jesus: How Three Historic Quests Changed Theology for the Better* (Polebridge Press, 2013), he enjoys cross-disciplinary conversations that open up theological questions in new ways. In a new book project, *Moving Words: How Theology Proposes to Lead Beyond God* (Polebridge/Wipf and Stock), Bessler looks at the overlapping, rhetorical character of political and theological discourse, arguing that theology's *proposal structure* enables the discipline to expand and grow in new and unexpected directions. He has worked closely with the Westar Institute, both in the latter years of the Jesus Seminar and in the beginnings of the God Seminar.

"Justice With Or Without God: The Priorities Of Progressive Theology"

In the mid-to-late twentieth century there were several creative shifts in biblical studies, philosophy, and Christian thought that launched a new age of progressive theologies to encourage individuals & Christian institutions to reimagine the contours of faith and faithful practice.

In this challenging series of lectures & conversations by Professor Joe Bessler we will examine these shifts, what are the emerging theologies that flow from them, how are constructive works of theology put together & why, & what are the progressive theological proposals that we want to offer our world?

Friday evening's lecture, "The Many Ways This World Matters: Constructing Progressive Theologies," will explore how quests for the historical Jesus, the turn to language in philosophy and theology, and the residual impact of the death-of-God theologies of the 1960s led to innovations in theology that would definitively challenge Christian theology's preoccupation with other-worldliness. On Saturday morning, we'll start with basic questions: how are constructive works of theology put together and why? And then we'll dig in for a closer look that will challenge what we mean by the word theology itself. On Saturday afternoon, we'll be ready to work together on the progressive theological proposals that we want to offer our world. Come join us for a progressively provocative weekend.

Friday Evening: "The Many Ways This World Matters: Constructing Progressive Theologies"

Our evening lecture will trace how mid-and-late 20th century quests for the historical Jesus, the turn to language in philosophy and theology, and the death-of-God theologies of the 1960s led the way in turning theology "to the world" as evident in the development of liberation, ecological, and post-colonial theologies, as well as challenges to the doctrine of God itself.

Saturday Morning, First Session: Connecting the Dots, Learning the Map.

If progressives are going to reimagine the task of theology, we first need to understand how and why the basic topics of theology fit together the way they do. Because many of us grew up with a more traditional Christian theology, we'll first review how classical theology works, but we'll immediately contrast it with more contemporary models.

Saturday Morning Second Session: What if God is not the Primary Topic of Theology?

In this session, we pick up our work where we left off, but go deeper. When we pay close attention to how the dots—the topics—are connected, we will see a public, even political structure of *proposal*—how the concerns that are on our minds and hearts as progressives—at the heart of constructive theologies. We'll then see how and why progressive theologies give priority to that proposal structure, while re-imagining or setting aside the topic of God.

Saturday Afternoon, First Session: From Parables to Power: Imagining *Our* Theological Proposals

With the work from the morning in place, we're now ready to imagine how *our* theological proposals take on words and structure, strengthening our capacity for reading and writing in this area of theology. Large and small-group conversation.

Saturday Afternoon, Second Session: Like Scales Falling From My Eyes: Learning to See Differently

In this final session, we'll look briefly at a famous sermon from process theologian, John Cobb. He was 90 when I heard him preach it. In the sermon he spoke not of his significant achievements but spoke confessionally of moments in his own professional life where, using the image from Acts 9:1-19, the scales fell from his eyes. In those moments, he was turned around; he saw the reality of Christian anti-Jewishness, Christian misogyny, Christian participation in the abuse of the earth, and Christian oppression of GLBTQI persons. And we see him coming to terms with that blindness. What scales have fallen from our eyes? With what issues do we need to come to terms?

REGISTRATION

Registration is essential (as this is a catered event). The easiest way to register is on line at <https://joebessler.eventbrite.com.au> or alternatively by mail by completing & mailing the form below to The Progressive Christian Network of Victoria (address below).

You may register for the full series or, if you are unable to attend on Saturday, only for the Friday evening lecture.

Admission Costs (per person):

FULL PROGRAM (FRIDAY & SATURDAY)	Earlybird (Before 2 July)	Regular (From 2 July)
Member of PCNV	\$50	\$60
Non-member	\$55	\$65
Student	\$20	\$20

FRIDAY EVENING ONLY	Earlybird (Before 2 July)	Regular (From 2 July)
Member of PCNV	\$25	\$30
Non-member	\$30	\$35
Student	\$10	\$10

Full program cost includes light lunch plus morning & afternoon refreshments on Saturday. Gluten free & vegetarian options available

REGISTRATION BY MAIL (Tickets will be mailed)

NAME: -----

ADDRESS: ----- POST CODE: -----

EMAIL: ----- PHONE (in case of queries): -----

PLEASE SUPPLY THESE TICKETS (insert number required, identify ticket types & cost):

- Full Program Member Earlybird/Regular (circle your choice) @ \$..... = \$.....
 - Full Program Non-member Earlybird/Regular (circle choice) @ \$..... = \$.....
 - Full Program Student @ \$..... = \$.....
 - Friday Evening Member Earlybird/Regular (circle choice) @ \$..... = \$.....
 - Friday Evening Non-member Earlybird/Regular (circle choice) @ \$..... = \$.....
 - Friday Evening Student @ \$..... = \$.....
- TOTAL COST: \$.....

PAY: BY CHEQUE ENCLOSED BY CREDIT CARD

CREDIT CARD TYPE: VISA or MASTERCARD (circle one)

CARD NUMBER: _____ EXPIRY: ____/____ RECEIPT REQ'D

MAIL TO: PCNV, 76 COPPIN ST, MALVERN EAST, VIC, 3145