



Joint Adelaide Research Seminar

hosted by
Australian Lutheran College



Monday 27 October 2025; 11:00 am (ACDT)

In person (please RSVP):

ALC library, Level 1, 22 Pulteney Street, Adelaide

For access and parking information, see the [library location flyer](#).

Via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81347125024?pwd=oALsgZBTRqo3ajgUps4nldHrc6cazm.1>

Meeting ID: 813 4712 5024 Passcode: 861126

Program

11:00 am	Anna Nuernberger (ALC) Allegory, Pleasure, and the Serpent within Philo's Hermeneutical Landscape
11:30 am	<i>Break</i>
11:40 am	Bart Bruehler (UCLT) Afraid, Amazed, and Astonished: Emotion at the Limits of Appraisal in the Synoptic Gospels
12:10 pm	<i>Break</i>
12:30 pm	Damian Szepessy (SBC) Citizenship as Motif of Conversion at Philippi

All welcome

Refreshments & Nibbles Provided

Please feel free to let others know

RSVP by Fri 24 Oct to research@alc.edu.au

Allegory, Pleasure, and the Serpent within Philo's Hermeneutical Landscape

Dr Anna Nuernberger

Abstract: Philo of Alexandria's reception of the serpent in Genesis 3 reveals his distinctive way of engaging this enigmatic figure. He assumes both a literal and an allegorical sense of scripture, with the latter uncovering deeper meaning. Notably, he interprets the serpent as a symbol of human pleasure, adopting a term familiar from Hellenistic moral discourse and making his exegesis more accessible to his contemporaries. The study explores how Philo handles the serpent's ambiguity—whether he resolves it or allows it to persist—shedding light on his approach to the ambiguity of scripture itself.

Anna is Lecturer in Biblical Studies and Co-Director of Research at ALC. Before joining ALC, she taught in secondary schools in both Germany and Australia and also lectured at Hamburg University. Her research interests, alongside hermeneutics, lie in Early Christianity and Second Temple Judaism. She is particularly fascinated by what people in these periods believed and doubted, and by how emotions intersect with both belief and doubt.

Afraid, Amazed, and Astonished: Emotion at the Limits of Appraisal in the Synoptic Gospels

Rev'd Professor Bart Bruehler

Abstract: The Synoptic Gospels identify "surprise" with a variety of terms (e.g., φοβέομαι, θαυμάζω, and ἐξίστημι). This particular emotion network appears to occur at the limits of cognitive appraisal in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus and the crowds are amazed when they have "never" seen anything like their recent experience (Matt 9:33; Mark 2:12; Luke 7:9). The crowds are amazed and afraid due to the exceptional authority of Jesus in word and deed (Mark 10:32; Matt 22:33; Luke 4:32). In their state of astonishment, people ask questions that try to make sense of unexpected events (Mark 4:41; Matt 21:20; Luke 8:25). This range of "surprise" terminology both increases the emotional engagement of the audience and creates cognitive space for new understandings of the person of Jesus.

Bart is the Director of Biblical Studies at the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology. He and his family moved to South Australia from America where he worked with schools and churches in the Wesleyan tradition. He is the author of *A Public and Political Christ* and *Holding Hands with Pascal* as well as several articles. His research interests include sociorhetorical interpretation, spatiality in biblical narrative, and affect/emotion in communication. He is married to Anne, and they have three children. They love it when he bakes bread, and they tolerate it when he practices his trombone.

Citizenship as motif of Conversion at Philippi

Dr Damian Szepessy

Abstract: The Christ believers at Philippi lived in a complex and diverse socio-political environment. In Philippians 1:27, Paul strategically used the socio-political institution of citizenship—a salient socio-political construct within the Greco-Roman world—to facilitate the formation of a social identity among the Philippians. Employing Social Identity Theory (SIT) alongside the Common Group Identity Model in relation to Phil 1:27 can be interpreted as a framework through which the believers were encouraged to transition from their existing social identities to a new social identity as citizens of heaven.

Damian is the Academic Dean at St Barnabas College. He also teaches in the New Testament. His area of interest is researching how Paul sought to form Christian identity amongst his first converts.