THE WAY

TERM 3 | THE WAY NEWSLETTER | FRIDAY 21 AUGUST 2026



FROM THE CHAPLAIN

Book Week 2026: A Symphony of Stories

The theme for Book Week 2026 is A Symphony of Stories, inspired by Briony Stewart's recently published book. Reflecting on the theme, Stewart writes:

"I decided to try and show what stepping into a symphony of stories might be like. A huge colourful collection of characters bursting out of a book, representing their different stories with weird and wonderful instruments."
– Briony Stewart

As I read those words, I couldn't help but think of the Bible.

Take the book of Esther, for example. It is a remarkable symphony of stories, where the lives of very different people intertwine to create a story far greater than any one individual could imagine.

There is Esther, a young Jewish woman taken from her home and placed in the court of a powerful king. She is powerless, yet her courage helps shape the future of an entire nation.

There is Haman, a proud and ambitious official whose arrogance drives him to plot the destruction of God's people.

There is Mordecai, Esther's guardian, a shrewd and courageous man who refuses to compromise his convictions, even when doing so puts him at great personal risk.

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And there is King Xerxes, an impulsive ruler with immense authority whose decisions affect the lives of countless people.

Each person contributes a different note to the story. Courage meets pride. Faithfulness confronts selfish ambition. Power collides with humility. Together, their lives create a dramatic and unforgettable symphony.

What makes the book of Esther fascinating is that God's name is never explicitly mentioned in the book. Yet God's presence can be seen throughout. He is like the conductor of the orchestra, unseen yet directing every movement. Through human choices, both good and bad, through moments of influence and moments of weakness, God works out His purposes.

Esther is only one movement in the much larger symphony of Scripture. Throughout the Bible, God works through ordinary people in all circumstances to accomplish His plan of salvation. Ultimately, that plan is centred on Jesus, whom God sent to rescue us through His love.

And God has not stopped conducting.

People of faith are still part of His symphony today. Sometimes the music of our lives feels beautiful and harmonious. Sometimes it sounds harsh and dissonant. Sometimes we struggle to hear any music at all. Yet God remains at work, faithfully weaving our stories into His greater story of redemption.

One day, when Jesus returns, we will hear the symphony in its fullness and rejoice in the wisdom, goodness, and grace of the Conductor who has been guiding it all along.

Reverend Denis Oliver
College Chaplain

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