David Campbell Prize
Winner: Charlotte Clutterbuck (ACT) – ‘Why I still go to church’.

Why I still go to church

This moment
which doesn’t drift away.

John Foulcher
‘Why I go to church’

never for the flat parish choirs
sometimes for tea-towelled shepherds
and tinselled sleepy angels

possibly for the story of St Martin de Porres
who promised the rats he’d feed them
if they stopped annoying the prior

certainly not for the sermon that never asks
can Neanderthal men be saved?
can a single death two thousand years ago
redeem the hypothetical populations
of 55 Cancri’s planets, 41 light years away?

partly because even if no one is there
sometimes in the vaster spaces
of St Kit’s, I feel a charged stillness

always because of the kneeling, the touch
of fingers on forehead, the taste of the host
the red, green, purple rhythms of seasons
wisdom of parables, music of psalms

now because of you kneeling
beside me, thumbing the scarred leather
of the little mass-book your grandmother
hid at the back of her Protestant linen-press

and perhaps because driving up Canberra Avenue
when the spire of St Stephen’s briefly aligns
with the national flagpole soaring
like Lucifer above Parliament House, the Big Syringe
of modern communication on Black Mountain
the stone steeple has human dimensions.