

# Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

JUNE 2013

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19

## HOW TO USE YOUR JUNE SC

- Place on front doorstep
- Use to wipe dirty feet
- Read

## •NEWS•

- 4 Sydney
- 10 Mission
- 12 Australia
- 13 World

## •COMMUNITY•

- 14 Changes
- 16 Letters
- 17 Essay of the month
- 18 Archbishop writes

## •FEATURES•

- 19 Cover feature  
Do our churches welcome or drive away?
- 24 Moore feature  
Our reliable sovereign.
- 26 Euthanasia and disability  
Society's answers, or God's?

## •LIFE•

- 27 Positions vacant
- 28 Classifieds
- 29 Events

## •CULTURE•

- 30 Book review  
*The Insanity of God.*
- 32 Television  
*MasterChef* dives off the high board.

“In a youth-obsessed, death-denying culture, disability embarrasses

us.”

Dr Megan Best

26



8



10



13



29

## Southern CROSS JUNE 2013

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Our findings, results and other staff colleagues' views (provided and put for those who responded to us via email and phone).

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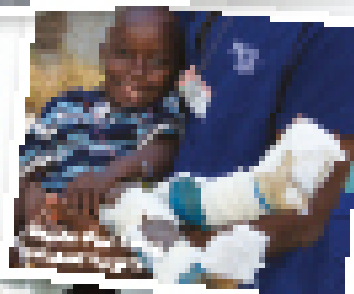
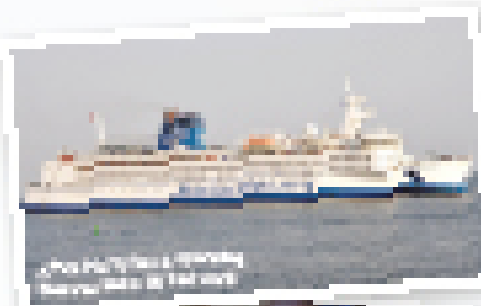
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# Cooks River celebrates

Historic moment: church members and friends gather to mark St Peter's 175th anniversary.

## RACHEL O'REGAN

ST PETER'S, COOKS RIVER IS A church of character. Celebrating its 175th anniversary, the small parish is the third oldest in Sydney – despite threats to its existence over the years.

For example, in 2009 the church was granted \$30,000 from the State Government to repair cracks in the walls that were so deep the then pastor Shane Rogerson was prompted to say the building had been "ill-fated from the beginning".

Today, the church's outlook is far brighter. Rector Andrew Bruce says, "The church falls on God

and his graciousness, and also the faithfulness of the people. It has stood for 175 years and the community of the church have sought to serve God throughout their time."

In celebration of its spirit and strength, an anniversary service was held on May 12 with about 200 guests and parishioners filling the old Gothic church, including Archbishop Jensen and Mrs Jensen – all of whom enjoyed a presentation by local history buffs Bob and Laurel Horton on the history of the church and community.

This history extends to every corner of the neighbourhood and beyond: the suburb is named after the church, and the local primary

school was also founded in its name. St Peter's also planted St Mark's, Darling Point, a fair way from its foundations in the inner west.

Hundreds of people visit the church each year to explore its heritage, particularly to find family members in the church's pre-Federation graveyard. Not to let a good opportunity go to waste, the church runs open days with history tours on the first Saturday of every month – which Mr Bruce considers a valuable advantage for evangelism.

"We're conscious of using the fact that we're an older church to make our heritage one of our strong points," he says. "I think in the past people have seen the building as a bit of a burden, but we've really tried

to change our view and see it as a real privilege that we have got this history and connection. That gives us a lot of opportunity to talk to people about Jesus."

With that in mind, the church is always moving forward. Its next mission, Mr Bruce says, is to build connections with young professionals who live locally as well as maintaining and developing its children's ministry.

"[Our first goal is that] the church would be well established and strengthened to do gospel ministry in the community," he says. "We're small in number, but we're growing. We just try and do church well and be welcoming, and make sure that it's clearly presenting Jesus."

**Anglican National Super  
online???**

**Almost. Just a few finishing touches...**

Meanwhile feel free to get in touch via the old-fashioned way. Call 1300 964 344 or email paul\_williams@anglican.org.au to be part of the picture.

Anglican National Super



# A taste of heaven

JUDY ADAMSON

AFTER THREE YEARS BASED AT ST Paul's, Canterbury the Islander ministry of Connect Church – supported by Evangelism and New Churches and run by Seti Latu – has become part of the parish of Arncliffe.

Latu says that while wanting to continue ministering to people from Islander backgrounds, for some time he has wanted to broaden the cultural base of the ministry.

"I've been saying that we can't be monocultural," he says. "We need to be multicultural – that's the future of Sydney – and a lot of Islanders are either married to or going out with non-Islanders."

This desire fitted in perfectly with the focus of the St David's Cross-culture Bible Church in Arncliffe, where rector Moussa Ghazal also



Working together: Seti Latu and Moussa Ghazal.

needed to find someone available part-time to help with evening church and youth ministry.

"We'd been getting a number of Islanders into our ministry over the past couple of years, and I thought it would be a really good fit to Seti," Ghazal says. "I thought if [his] church wanted to amalgamate that was fine, but if they wanted to do their own thing here that would be good as well. And it's turned out to

be more of a merger."

People from Connect Church moved over with Latu to Arncliffe in February, with some choosing to join the morning service and others attending in the evening.

In addition to his Arncliffe work Latu is also continuing to raise support for Islander-specific ministry, reaching out to those of Fijian, Samoan, Tongan and other backgrounds through

Islander community festivals, and networking through local Islander radio stations and high schools.

Until recently the Arncliffe parish had more of a Mediterranean feel with second-generation Greeks, Italians, Spanish and Lebanese. But families with Asian backgrounds are also beginning to join the congregation, and Ghazal is delighted to build on that further.

"We want to celebrate every new culture that comes in – it's a taste of heaven – and empower them to reach out to people who are like them as well as others," he says.

"Seti coming on board has been really good, because there were already some Islanders here so we can now look at how we reach out more to them. And the great thing is, one of the Islanders also brought along their Greek friends from work a few weeks ago, so it's great to see that multicultural dimension coming into it."

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# Harness racing takes on chaplaincy

RACHEL O'REGAN

A SYDNEY RECTOR HAS JUST added the title of "harness racing chaplain" to his CV.

Gary Bennetts, the senior minister at St Martin's, George's Hall, now also has in mind the personal and spiritual growth of Bankstown Paceway community – reputedly making him the first dedicated harness racing chaplain in the world.

Bennetts' father was heavily involved in the racing industry, and Bennetts himself worked for the Australian Jockey Club while studying at university.

While perhaps less glamorous than the spring or autumn racing carnivals at Randwick and Flemington, "sulky races" date back to the 19th century and more than 40 clubs in NSW hold licensed meetings every year. However, the harness racing community has never before had strong links with churches.

"The Rev Colin Watts [Australia's



Gary Bennetts (second from left) holds a Bankstown Paceway ribbon with Australian racing chaplain and Sydney Anglican Colin Watts, alongside paceway directors Megan Lavendar and Andrew Ho.

racing chaplain] said that for many people involved in racing, they may feel like they would not be welcome or accepted in the church community," Mr Bennetts says.

It was Mr Watts who introduced the idea of a paceway ministry when he partnered with Georges Hall parish to host a Harness Racing Spring Carnival church service last November. The event was the first

successful union of the Anglican and harness racing communities.

"People from the harness racing community were involved in the service, reading the Bible and praying," Mr Bennetts says. "I prayed for the safety of all involved in the upcoming racing series."

He now has plans to make the service an annual event. "I think it will grow in both its popularity and

the different ideas we bring to it."

The co-director of the paceway, Andrew Ho, officially announced the chaplaincy position in April, saying, "Bankstown Paceway is delighted to have, personified in Gary Bennetts, a man of both the cloth and the saddle cloth – and Gary's role as our new racecourse chaplain, his faith and his message of salvation, we believe, can and will bring new life and hope to everyone".

Mr Ho also acknowledged the "complex and diverse needs and issues [in the community] some of which can range from substance abuse and gambling problems to loneliness and financial hardship".

And while the needs of the community will certainly be supported over time, Mr Bennetts expressed his vision for developing relationships – with God and with each other.

"My goal is to be a more familiar presence around the track and to build bridges between the trotting and church community so that people will have the opportunity to hear the gospel," he says.

## New Moore ministry centre

A NEW CENTRE FOR MINISTRY Development (CMD) at Moore Theological College will help to assist ministry leaders across Sydney, equipping them in their own particular contexts.

The centre, designed to be a "one stop shop" for voluntary ministry development assessment, will direct those serving in ministry towards further training in particular areas.

The director of the centre, Moore College lecturer the Rev Archie Poulos, says that the early focus of the centre will be on offering support to people new to paid ministry, particularly those serving as assistant and student ministers.

"What often happens is that the way you learn to minister in the student ministry days and assistant ministry days shapes the way you minister for the rest of your life and that can be either for good or for ill,"

Mr Poulos says. "So we want to make sure that we're doing really well in helping people in those pinch point times to be honest, open and willing to develop and assess themselves."

The process that the CMD will use to do this is essentially a three-step system. First, a self-assessment tool will be used to see what ministers think their current strengths and weaknesses are. Second, the current ministry setting and required competencies for that minister will be assessed, to provide a handful of training and support opportunities. Third, the gifts of the person are assessed, and compared to other ministry settings to examine potential long-term ministry opportunities.

Mr Poulos says that the centre isn't designed to operate by itself, but instead builds networks with other organisations such as Evangelism

and New Churches (ENC), Effective Ministries (EM), Vinegrowers, and Ministry Training and Development (MTD), among others, to create clear avenues that people in ministry can be directed towards. Mr Poulos says he is also in the process of developing an adjunct faculty at Moore to support the work of the centre and these organisations.

"The way I describe us is a little bit like a general practitioner," he says. "If you go to the doctor, the doctor diagnoses and then sends you off to the appropriate specialists. That's what we will do, as well."

For example, and I'll give you a real-life example, somebody comes and says to me they have a parish where 14 per cent of the population is made up of people from the Subcontinent... I asked him where they hung out, where did they congregate, and he says

he actually hasn't seen these people. So someone like that, I might see about sending them off to Bruce Hall at ENC so they can learn more about cross-cultural ministry."

Mr Poulos says that for most of this year the centre will be focused on developing the internal structure and tools necessary to achieve its aims, with the program beginning in earnest early next year.

"By October we will have produced a curriculum and the tools we need for 2014," he says. "We will be launching February 2014 because all the new deacons will be in the program."

"What we must have before then is training internal mentors, that's the important step. While we can outsource much of this to other people we will also need to have some people internally, friends who are well trained as mentors."

# Effective aid

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE Compassion child sponsorship program has been given a tick of approval by a team of independent US researchers.

The team behind the report "Does international child sponsorship work – a six-country study of impacts on adult life outcomes" was headed by Dr Bruce Wydick, the professor of economics and international studies at the University of San Francisco.

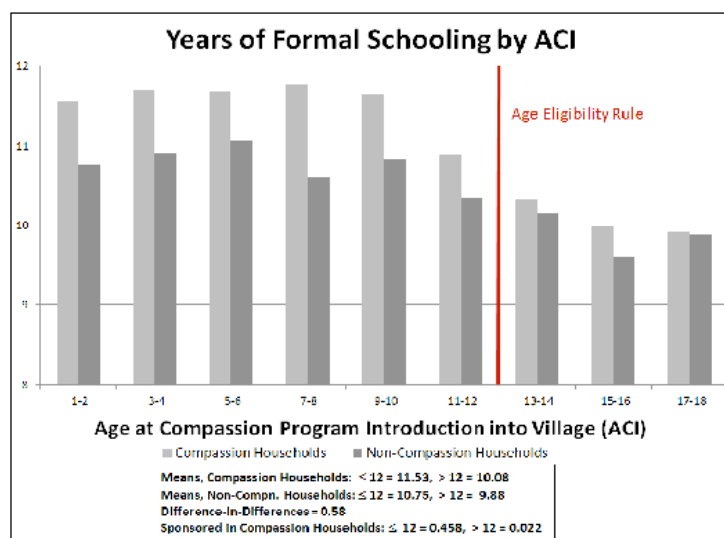
He and colleagues spent two years studying data collected on more than 10,000 adults in Bolivia, Guatemala, India, Kenya, the Philippines and Uganda – 1860 of whom took part in the Compassion program as children between 1980 and 1992.

The introduction to the report, which was published in April's *Journal of Political Economy*, said the Compassion program "significantly increased total years of schooling and completion rates across all levels of schooling. Impacts are

especially large for secondary school completion, which increased by 12-18 percentage points over an average baseline of 44.5 per cent. Education impacts are particularly strong in the two African countries. We also find positive and significant impacts on the probability of adult employment and movement into white-collar jobs".

While the report acknowledged that Compassion – which has the world's third-largest child sponsorship program after World Vision and Plan USA – had similarities to other programs that promoted education, it noted one distinguishing difference: the children involved spent "at least eight hours per week in an intensive after-school program that emphasises their spiritual, physical, and socio-emotional development".

Three follow-up studies on 1380 children now sponsored by Compassion in Bolivia, Kenya and Indonesia found that they



The Wydick report on child sponsorship shows Compassion program results.

showed a "significantly higher level of self-esteem, aspirations and self-expectations, and lower levels of hopelessness" than other un-sponsored local children. The report suggested more work should be done to check on a causal link between "aspirations during youth and adult life outcomes... [as this] may have important implications for the way in which practitioners

approach development work".

The CEO of Compassion Australia, Tim Hanna, said, "I'm very excited about the results of this research."

"We have known for many years that Compassion child sponsorship is making a deep and lasting difference in the lives of individual children. Now we have world-class independent research to support this."



## What do you think of IVF?

Christian researchers have a free online questionnaire for some research we are doing on the attitudes of Christians and non-Christians (the survey is open to anyone) about early human life and reproductive technologies such as in vitro fertilization (IVF).

This is not an opinion poll but an ethics committee-approved scholarly research study. The survey is being conducted online. It should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

If you are interested in participating in the study or want to know more please visit this website: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ARTquestions>

The link will close at the completion of the survey (end of June).

Please feel free to pass this information on to your family, friends, colleagues and any others who might be interested. If you want to learn the results of this poll, they will be published on the website of The Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity (<https://cbhd.org/ARTsurvey>) when available. We would love to know your views.

Dr Megan Best  
Lead investigator

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**JANE TOOHER**  
Lecturer at Moore College & Director of the Priscilla & Aquila Centre  
MTS Apprenticeship at St Matthias Anglican, Centennial Park & UNSW 1989-1991

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MTS Apprenticeship at UNSW, 1988-1989

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# Sixty-one churches receive government grants

Children at Albion Park Anglican playing tug-of-war at the site of the proposed community hub.

SYDNEY ANGLICAN PARISHES ARE among many not-for-profit and community organisations that have benefited from the latest round of Community Building Partnership (CBP) grants, with 61 parish projects successfully obtaining grants totalling over \$1.2 million.

The CBP, administered by the NSW Government, provides funds towards the purchase or maintenance of capital works that provide community services, including the work of many churches.

Albion Park church south of Sydney received \$24,000 toward the construction of a new community hub on its property, as well as a synthetic surface for the church-operated preschool.

The Rev Steve Roberts, senior minister at Albion Park, says it presents an opportunity for his church to develop its ministry of hospitality.

"It's off an existing hall and we love that we will be able to develop it as a place to sit, to eat, to really make it more of a gathering space," Mr Roberts says. "I think one of the key things is it would give a bigger safe area particularly for children... which would encourage families to stay on site."

Mr Roberts hopes it will offer more opportunities to connect and then share their beliefs with locals.

"It's a chance for them to see that it's a really nice area, and might draw them to sit down so we can get to know them better," he says. "The purpose is connecting with people to also engage them with the gospel. It's not just purely functional."

Minchinbury Anglican in Sydney's west also received a grant worth just over \$80,000 towards the construction of a new kitchen and other food preparation facilities, including new ovens and industrial

dishwashers. Senior minister the Rev David Mears says his church will now begin thinking of ways to extend current ministries and create new ones, including the possibility of hosting cooking classes.

"Especially in our area, it would be nice to do things like that," he says. "We run a pre-Christmas meal... for those who might be alone, or are unable financially to have a nice meal. So we might be able to do more of that, or do that better."

Apart from large-scale ministries, Mr Mears says the new assets will also mean less time needed to individually manage food handling regulations, so more time can be devoted to ministry.


"I want to see people who have become Christians in our church because of contacts they made when they got to sit down and have a good cappuccino, whereas a styrofoam cup and Nescafé

doesn't really turn a five-minute conversation into a half-hour one."

Mr Mears is grateful for the funding because it will enable the facilities to be constructed without having to divert money from day-to-day ministries.

"It's a very unexpected but very appreciated blessing that God has given," he says. "I remind our people that we love to whinge about our comforts but we are blessed to live in a place that has the rule of law, and where government is really trying its best to be generous and supportive of the community."

Minchinbury has been the beneficiary of grants before and Mr Mears says other churches in similar situations should also apply. "I encourage people to, if they are in a similar position to us, to make the effort," he says. "It's not like there's a snowball's chance that something might happen. It really could."



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# Gladesville tries “5M” approach to ministry

NICK GILBERT

Christ Church, Gladesville has adopted a structure for church life commonly known as the “5M” model of ministry.

The church planned and discussed the change for 18 months, with the new structures in place from the beginning of this year.

Each of the M’s – membership, maturity, magnification, ministry and mission – represents a part of the process of discipleship and, according to Gladesville’s senior minister the Rev Phil Wheeler, this ensures resources can be allocated to each of the parts.

“It’s about trying to resource the whole line [of ministry and

discipleship] by having a pastor concerned for that aspect of the ministry and enabling them to focus on that one area, especially in any given week,” he says.

This thinking particularly lends itself to meetings that run at different times, so that all the workers across each of the areas can minister to the congregation at the same time, instead of being spread out over separate meetings. It also gives clear and meaningful areas that lay people can involve themselves in.

“The invitation to each member is to consider their gifts and interests and where they could get involved,” Mr Wheeler says. “Do you want to be in the missions area, do you want to be in the magnification space helping church services bring

glory to God, do you want to be in the office behind the scenes and helping there? We wanted to invite them to grow in maturity and in partnership with us in reaching the area with the gospel.”

Stew Witt, of the Point Church plant in the Concord area, also uses the model in his ministry thinking. He says it can work in a small church as well as in a large one, because it provides a scaffolding structure to ministry that simply extends further out if the number of people in the church increases. However, he also says it should be tailored to fit different contexts.

“I’ve appointed two guys to mission and maturity, but I haven’t yet appointed a membership guy... We’re still working it out,” he says. “It’s not clean, and I think one of the

dangers with these sorts of things is that you can say that it’s awesome, and that it’s kicking serious goals for other churches like EV [on the Central Coast of NSW], and so you can try to make it fit in a way that isn’t helpful for your context. We’re a work in progress, in that way.”

For Mr Witt, the particular advantage of the system is that it helps to see how all the ministries and activities of the church interact and support each other.

“I think it helps to see the nexus of these portfolios working together,” he says. “So, for example, mission creates opportunities for membership, and membership creates opportunities for magnification. It’s that dynamic that helps you to see it’s more than the sum of its parts.”

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# Club for disabled expands

NICK GILBERT

A CHURCH GROUP FOR ADULTS with intellectual disabilities in Sydney has recently expanded, now running programs in a total of four different parishes.

The Jesus Club, originally begun at Christ Church, Gladesville in 2006, now also sports three more clubs in Turrumurra, Naremburn-Cammeray, and Jannali Anglican churches.

Mel Fung, co-ordinator of the Gladesville club and the person responsible for supporting and resourcing the other clubs, says the expansion came about because of the continuing success of the club in Gladesville, combined with interest from other parishes.

"[Gladesville Jesus Club] has been going really well," Ms Fung says, "and that then inspired us to start up the other clubs. Right now, we're just trying to find more people that might like to join the other clubs."

The Jesus Club model aims to focus on teaching and explaining the Bible to members while also creating ways for appropriate and relevant fellowship and fun.

Program nights typically consist of games, singing, Bible lessons and crafts.

Part of Ms Fung's work involves creating support and training materials and programs for use by the clubs and other interested groups. The next 12 months will see the Jesus Club focus on creating



The Jesus Club at Gladesville doing craft as part of the night's activities

a longer and more complete curriculum to support the groups.

"Our goal is to open up these Jesus clubs all over Sydney," Ms Fung says, "just to help people, really, and our emphasis is on teaching our members about God. I've been to other Christian programs where they'll do prayer, or a short segment

of Bible teaching, but for us most of the program is trying to teach the Bible in a fun way."

Ms Fung says members of the clubs are often really keen to be a part of the group, and that can make Jesus Club "a really encouraging ministry". The next step, in addition to growing the groups themselves, is

to also try and find ways to integrate members and their families into the wider church communities.

"Sometimes it's a struggle," she says. "At the moment [we see] the Sunday as being more them getting to know other people, and Wednesday is the time where they can learn at their own level."


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# Crusader days

RACHEL O'REGAN

CRUSADERS HAS BEGUN A NEW form of holiday camp, offering primary school kids another chance to know Jesus.

Cru Day Camps started in the April school holidays and are packed with adventure activities and insightful discussions in a day-only format that is accessible to families with smaller children.

"Cru Day Camps have been designed specifically to serve younger children – starting from kindergarten – and children who do not wish to stay away from home overnight," says Gary Hill, Crusaders' executive director. "This means that we can reach even more children, from more diverse ages and cultural backgrounds, with the gospel."

The 8am-6pm full-day program is part of the organisation's



Learning about God at a Cru Day Camp - Nicholas (Year 2) and Emily (Year 3)

assortment of 60 camps that serve more than 3000 participants every year.

And there's no shortage of variety on the day camps either, as they include everything from indoor rock climbing to singalongs and a daily Christian Discovery program.

Luke Willis, one of the volunteer camp leaders, says, "Lots of these kids... don't have a church background at all. Getting them along to a Cru Day Camp is important for setting a Christian foundation. They hear stories from the Bible and they get to see their leaders treating

them with God's love and respect."

The response of Emily, a girl in Year 3 who attended the first day camp, shows how much impact one week can have. Her response? "I have learnt that God is powerful."

The Crusader's vision is to work alongside local church and school communities, with the children invited to continue their experience in various children's clubs in their area once the camp is over.

"We're very excited about the opportunities Cru Day Camps present to support parents, grow churches and reach out to families in the community," Mr Hill says. "We hope to foster many more partnerships with local churches and Christian schools, working together to share the gospel with their community."

At this stage the day camps will all be held in the north-western suburbs of Sydney, with the next to be held in the July school holidays.

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# Missional sea change

JUDY ADAMSON

**NUMEROUS** SYDNEYSIDERS dream about a sea or tree change, and some of us even manage to do it – either at retirement or sooner. But one church planter on the mid-north coast is challenging people to move away from Sydney with a mission mindset.

Chris Ekins studied at Moore College in the mid-1990s and subsequently spent 12 years working at St Faith's, Narrabeen. But every time he and his wife Sharon went on holidays, something bothered him.

"We'd always come up the coast for holidays, and visiting churches I'd be discouraged either by the wacky teaching or lack of teaching, or the teaching might be solid but there were no younger people in the churches," he says.

"I also had some mates move up the coast and they hadn't found a church that they could slot into, so they just didn't go... and they've stopped following Jesus now. They don't go to church ever. That's been a bit of a burden."

Ekins was also struck by how resource-rich Sydney was – "You could drive within 10 minutes and go to any number of Bible-teaching churches" – so he and Sharon began to think about leaving Sydney with a view to planting a church, and started holidaying between Forster and Coffs Harbour to help choose the location.



Coast for Christ: Chris Ekins (left) chats with Dave Hayes.

They were encouraged by the openness of locals in Forster and that, coupled with family not too far away and a growing desire to serve the area, saw them move there in 2009 to establish Coast Evangelical Church. Five others from St Faith's who shared their vision joined the Ekins in the venture.

"It was full of the blessing of St Faith's but although the parish didn't plant the church we still send a prayer update every couple of months to everyone in the church who signed up for one," he says. "A lot of people still support us prayerfully and financially."

Coast EC now has 90-100 adults in its two congregations and 50 kids, and is part of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches – a number of which were founded

or are run by Moore-trained men of Anglican background such as Ekins.

But the church at Forster – as well as the evangelical churches elsewhere – need more mature Christians, he says.

"Forster is a very popular retirement destination, but people could come and not retire," he says with a laugh. "Mature Christians can have a better bang for their buck outside Sydney in terms of ministry impact."

Ekins' argument is a major part of the reasoning behind the Hayes family's move to Forster from Sydney 18 months ago. Dave Hayes and his wife Saima wanted to be closer to their parents, who live further north, and were looking anywhere from Port Macquarie southwards – with the church being the deciding factor

on where they would settle.

Dave Hayes says there were other churches that they could have attended, "but when we came to Coast I could see there was a really clear vision... and we went 'Right, that'll do'. One thing we really felt in leaving Maroubra was that we were leaving church family, so why move to the country and have a bad church? It didn't make sense. We were strongly motivated towards getting a good church that we could serve at and serve under.

"We were able to move here because my job [as a mechanical engineer] has a large internet content, so I could email and talk to people and still be here. Having an income in a place like Forster is usually the difficulty. The town's not rich with jobs, so being able to bring your job with you is a big component."

Ekins plans to start a Bible study group in nearby Taree, where 15-20 Coast EC members live, with a view to eventually planting a church up there – either independent or linked to Coast.

His message to Sydney Anglicans is simple: "Help us take the gospel to the rest of the nation. Sydney's been blessed with rich resources in terms of a great college and lots of great churches preaching the gospel. We want to see the nation saved. Come to Forster and help us. Go to Taree and help us. We need more Bible study leaders... we've got the people, we just don't have the leaders to disciple them well."

## Newcastle has new dean, bishop search continues

**NEWCASTLE'S** CATHEDRAL Chapter has elected the Rev Canon Stephen Williams (right) as its new Dean. A statement from the Chapter said it had "been meeting for some time to discern whether there is a priest well known to the Cathedral community with the gifts and talents to be called to minister as Dean of Newcastle".

Canon Williams has most recently served as the rector of Merewether in the Newcastle diocese, but is



also well known at the Cathedral having served on the Chapter, council and board of the Cathedral

as well as other Newcastle diocesan bodies. His previous appointments included incumbencies at Croydon in Melbourne, in Alice Springs and at Enmore in Sydney as well as being acting warden of New College at the University of UNSW.

He told local reporters that his election was a pleasant surprise and that he will have his "L-plates on as dean, so I'll be listening to people in the city and the Cathedral to hear things they want and trying to fulfil

that as much as I can".

The Newcastle diocese has also been searching for a bishop to succeed Dr Brian Farran, who retired at the end of last year. An election Synod in April failed to elect a candidate. Diocesan administrator Bishop Peter Stuart said, "The Synod resolved to begin the process afresh but has asked for the opportunity to amend the procedure before then".

The date of the new election synod is the weekend of September 13-15.



# Temple quarry found

RUSSELL POWELL

ARCHEOLOGISTS HAVE uncovered a quarry dating from the period of the Second Temple (538BC to 70AD), which is likely to be the source of stone used to construct Jerusalem's major buildings.



The quarry was in the same area as one discovered in 2007, where stone was quarried for the Second Temple, "Herod's Temple" on Temple Mount,

which stood during the earthly life of Jesus. Tools used by the quarrymen and a 2000-year-old key were also uncovered at the site.

"The key that was found, and which was probably used to open a door some 2000 years ago, is curved and has teeth," said excavation director Irina Zilberbod on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority. "What was it doing there? We can only surmise that it might have fallen from the pocket of one of the quarry men."

It's believed the northern neighbourhood of Jerusalem stands on an entire city of quarries, used to hew rock up to two metres in length for the temple and other buildings. The location is thought to have been chosen because of the formations of Meleke rock found there – a type of rock that is easily quarried and hardens immediately after it is hewn.

The region is also topographically higher than the city of Jerusalem in



Above: An aerial view of the excavations. PHOTO: Skyview Company. Left: The key found at the site. PHOTO: Clara Amit. Photos courtesy Israel Antiquities Authority.

the Second Temple period, making it easier to transport the huge stones – some which weighed tens if not hundreds of tons – downhill to the construction sites. An ancient road dating to the Second Temple period

was exposed next to the quarry and it was probably used to move the large stones.

The find was made during preparatory work for a highway through the area.

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## WORLD BRIEFS

## South America:



The first Asian missionary to become an Anglican bishop in the Spanish-speaking world, Archdeacon Raphael Samuel, has been consecrated as the diocesan Bishop of Bolivia. The presiding Bishop of the Southern Cone, the Right Rev Hector "Tito" Zavala, together with bishops from Peru, Uruguay and Paraguay, led the service. Bishop Raphael succeeds Bishop Frank Lyons who is now serving in the diocese of Pittsburgh. Bishop Samuel and his wife, Michelle, are the longest-serving missionaries in the Bolivian Anglican Church. He was originally a clergyman in

Singapore and was sent by that diocese to serve in Bolivia in 1994. He served as pastor of a congregation in Santa Cruz, and as Archdeacon, helping recruit and train leaders.

## Saudi Arabia:

Authorities in Saudi Arabia, named as being one of the top countries violating religious freedom, have jailed and whipped two men accused of helping a young woman flee the country after her conversion to Christianity. A Lebanese Christian man was sentenced to six years in prison and 300 lashes and a Saudi man was sentenced to two years and 200 lashes by a court in Khobar in eastern Saudi Arabia. It is believed the men worked with the young woman, known as Maryam. Her father lodged a complaint against them after his daughter renounced Islam, embraced Christianity and fled to Sweden. The *Saudi Gazette* carried a report of the sentencing, saying that the pair had "brainwashed" the woman, who had been "drawn into deep religious discussions by her Lebanese colleague" at the insurance company where she worked. The Saudi newspaper claimed the man "premeditated the woman's conversion to Christianity". International Christian Concern has called on the US government to intervene. "Religious freedom is non-existent in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, and conversion to Christianity is deemed an unforgivable offence that warrants the death sentence," said Aidan Clay, ICC's regional manager for the Middle East. "If not for the protection of local NGOs and Swedish officials, who have refused to return Maryam to Saudi Arabia, a terrifying punishment and possible execution would be imminent."



## United Kingdom:

New figures from the Church of England show the decline in Anglican churchgoing in the United Kingdom is levelling off. Although average weekly attendances overall fell by 0.3 per cent to about 1.1 million in 2011, a church spokesman said this represents a "stabilising" of attendance figures. Figures vary across the country, but the biggest attendance drop was in Canterbury, the seat of then Archbishop Rowan Williams. Best performers were Nottingham and Norwich, which both recorded growth in average weekly attendance of more than 9 per cent.

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## MOVES

## COX SAYS FAREWELL



At the end of this month Archdeacon Ian Cox officially farewells the region of Georges River, which he has served since 2008 (and on his own, without a bishop, since 2009). Archdeacon Cox will then take long service leave, retiring in late August.

"Bronwen and I have really enjoyed our time," he says. "It's been a very interesting experience and very different from being a local minister where you stay in the one church and serve the people there. Being the archdeacon you move around and see what is going on in various congregations. I know them and they know me so it's a very good working relationship."

"By the grace of God we were able to buy a house in Hurstville after I became archdeacon so we can continue to serve people in the Georges River region for some time yet."

Ordained in the Melbourne Diocese in 1972 after studying at Ridley College, Archdeacon Cox served as curate to the parish of Caulfield in Melbourne before spending four years as curate to Holy Trinity in Adelaide.

In 1977 he moved to Sydney as the rector of Lalor Park – spending seven years there and at his subsequent parish, St Paul's, Lithgow. Archdeacon Cox became rector and senior canon of St Michael's Cathedral, Wollongong in 1991, serving as area dean of the Wollongong region for most of that time.

He was rector of Brighton-Rockdale from 2003-2008 as well as the St George area dean, before spending five years as archbishop's ministry chaplain. It was during this time he became archdeacon of the then region of Liverpool. During his time in the now region of Georges River, he was also acting rector of the parishes of Campsie and Revesby.

Archbishop Jensen says Archdeacon Cox has "used the experience of a lifetime of service to offer strategic ministry to the region and he has done so with characteristic faithfulness, wisdom and courage".

Archdeacon Cox says he will miss "just ringing up guys and having a chat with them or having a coffee with them – having that pastoral role for the ministers in the area is one of the things I've really enjoyed. I suppose I can still do it but it would be in a different way. The other thing I'd miss is that every day brings new surprises. I will also miss the Monday Bible study with the Archbishop and other ministry staff. It was always enjoyable studying the Bible together."

"People have asked us what church we'll be going to. For a while we're just going to the churches of our children and grandchildren – just enjoy going to church and sitting with them. Also we have a daughter living in Gaborone [the capital of Botswana], so we'll go and visit her. And then who knows?"

## STANTON STEPS DOWN

After more than 13 years as principal of Youthworks College, the Rev Graham Stanton is stepping down on July 26 before



beginning a PhD next year in children's and youth ministry.

"The desire to study has been something I have had for a long time," he says.

"As we look ahead about what we think would be really useful for youth and children's ministry training in Sydney in five or 10 years' time, I think the ability to encourage research in this area would be pretty helpful."

"I don't think that academic reflection on this is the most critical thing for youth and children's ministry in the Diocese but I think it could help."

"There's a lot of excellent ministry and thought for how to minister to children and young people – and it's been going on for years – but we don't have a lot to show for it in terms of research and publications that could be made available to people training in other parts of the world."

"At Youthworks College or at a



theological college when people look for resources to guide study and reflection, we're looking at stuff from the UK and the US but there's not much done from our experience, our theology. So that's been something that has been on my mind for a long time."

Mr Stanton admits to being "pretty exhausted" after 13½ years as college principal, so decisions about where he will do his PhD, and whether or not it will be done with co-supervision by a theological college, are yet to be made. "That's for the second half of the year – I'm going to take a break first!" he says.

### DARLING POINT CHOOSES JENSEN



The Rev Dr Michael Jensen has been chosen as the new rector of St Mark's, Darling Point, and will begin his ministry in the parish in early October.

The offer was made to Dr Jensen, on the advice of the Nomination Panel, by Bishop Robert Forsyth, who acted as commissary for the Archbishop.

Dr Jensen has been a lecturer in theology at Moore College for the past 10 years, and said it would be "a wrench to leave the extraordinary community that [the college] is and the important gospel work that it does".

However, he added that "as a family we are very much looking forward to the challenges of parish ministry – especially as we join with others there in holding out the word of life to our city. Having worked under Boak Jobbins at the Cathedral, I feel blessed to be following him to St Mark's."

In making the announcement a fortnight ago to the parish of St Mark's, the nominators thanked the congregation for its "patience and understanding during these last few months since the untimely death of Boak. The process takes time but we are confident God has led us to the man of his choosing for us, at this time in our history".

Added Dr Jensen: "With its fine heritage of service to the community, St Mark's is uniquely placed to witness to the gospel in the eastern suburbs, and we are excited about the prospect of what God may have in store in the years ahead."

### VALE



**Deaconess Shirley Harris** died on April 28. Born in 1930, she trained at Deaconess House (now Mary Andrews College) in the mid-1950s and was set apart as a deaconess the following year. In 1958 she joined CMS, spending the next 34 years in Pakistan.

Deaconess Harris told *Southern Cross* that, in time, "the Lord began to show me what he had for me to do. I saw the need for young girls from outlying areas in Karachi to be able to live in while attending school because it wasn't safe for them to travel alone on local buses... This was a significant project... it didn't happen all at once but, bit by bit, the Lord sent in the funds as and when needed".

In 1974 she was appointed co-ordinator of women's work in the diocese of Karachi and, over time,

was also the CMS representative in Pakistan and ran a fellowship that encouraged local women to use their talents. She also co-ran girls' camps and supported the work of the Nurses' Christian Union.

After returning to Australia Deaconess Harris helped lead Victorious Ministry for Christ, which had helped revive and renew the church in Pakistan.

At her memorial service the chaplain to deaconesses, the Rev Jacinth Myles, said that in speaking well of Deaconess Harris and her service "we are also honouring our Lord... she would want us to acknowledge that".

### VACANT PARISHES

Parishes and provisional parishes, vacant or becoming vacant, as at May 22, 2013:

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SPEAKERS



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**MARK DEVER** – Senior pastor of Capital Hill Baptist in Washington DC.

Written: *Compromised Church* and *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*.

Pre-registration closing date 2 August 2013. Sponsored by Ministry Training & Development training for Gospel Proclamation in Sydney and beyond.

## Cathedral changes

Regarding the Dean's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary story and the subsequent letters about it (SC, April and May), there have been significant changes at St Andrew's Cathedral under the past two deans.

Dean Boak Jobbins supervised the reversal of its orientation to what it had been before 1941, and always should have been, resulting in more light and openness. The communion table became mobile, (perhaps too mobile) and that was both new and also not typical of most Anglican evangelical churches.

Dean Phillip Jensen restored a balance between Cathedral liturgical practice and typical parish forms of gathering, as was intended when the Cathedral was consecrated in 1868. Admittedly, what would become typical contemporary service style could not have been foreseen back then.



From 1884 Bishop Alfred Barry effectively abolished the distinction of styles and caused the services to become totally "cathedralesque". The flexibility that now exists is a benefit to ministry.

The Cathedral has always been evangelical. Even Bishop Barry wanted to see the Cathedral clergy serving "through[out] the diocese in evangelistic efforts", and the Cathedral School which he founded has been used in changing lives. Throughout its history the Cathedral has deliberately drawn on key evangelistic preachers, and

various deans have undertaken outreach ventures. For more than 50 years the healing service has also led to many lives being transformed by Christ.

Evangelicalism does not rightly own a particular culture and care is needed to avoid elitism in its external forms. It can shine through many cultures (including classical Anglican forms). Obviously, planned evangelism and discipling will be done in ways that are culturally relevant within the specific groups being targeted. This happens at St Andrew's.

Lindsay Johnstone

## New SC

I just wanted to say what a welcome change the new format of *Southern Cross* magazine has been. It's easier to read, lighter and more compact.

Thanks for a great publication.

Catherine Solano,  
Christ Church Inner West

## Seeking God

In his story titled "Revival?" (SC, April) David Pettett asks what it is that makes a person in prison seek God more.

Part of the answer is that prison makes it possible to get close to people who are virtual strangers. When that happens, it makes it easier to bring the kingdom of God to people and to share the gospel in a way that is relevant to them. It is often harder to get close to people where we work and where we live.

To experience this closeness without going to prison, try living for a week or more in a backpackers' hostel, where four or more people share one room.

Gordon Darnell  
Hornsby

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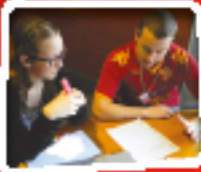

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# The financial divide in education

## RUTH EDWARDS

IN APRIL THE AUSTRALIAN Education Union published research about where students from high, medium and low-income families go to school (*The Social Make-Up of Schools* report).

Since 1986 there has been a steady trend whereby families with high incomes increasingly send their children to non-government schools, while an ever-increasing proportion of students in government schools come from low-income families. This trend is even stronger among secondary students. Only 20 per cent of high-income families are in government secondary schools, while twice as many low-income families are. Forty-nine per cent of high-income secondary students are in non-Catholic, non-government secondary schools.

This trend raises some serious questions for Anglican Christians in Australia. The Anglican Church is

## OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE POOR AND DISADVANTAGED

These young people are largely schooled by the government sector. These are kids whose parents often do not value education and who have little social capital. They are the young people with the poor literacy and numeracy having an impact on Australia's falling student achievements as measured on global test measures.



These kids have no reason to relish book learning and they frequently do not conform to conventional standards of good behaviour. Rather than individual achievement, they value their social group, which gives strength to the socially disadvantaged. Their values clash with those of their middle-class teachers who need social work skills much more than they need pedagogical ones, if they are to connect with their students.

Are we encouraging Christian people to see these schools as a ministry and to train for them? Are our local parishes providing any form of support or interest in their local government schools, their teachers and students? Are there practical ways church people can contribute to better outcomes for unmotivated and disadvantaged

school students? Should we consider offering individual coaching or out-of-school activities that might broaden their experience? How should we focus lobbying on their behalf to politicians?

Is the current mantra of more money to state schools an adequate response? What do we do to support teachers in these schools who often have morale-destroying experiences?

and perpetuating social inequality? Do we seek to actively counter propensities for self-indulgent materialism? Have we thought about whether upper middle-class values confirm or conflict with those of Christ? Can and should Anglican schools partner with state schools?

In addition, we need to

consider what professional and character attributes are desirable in our teachers, and whether or not we train them to respect Christian beliefs and model Christian values.

A sub-category of the report is indigenous disadvantage. Only 6 per cent of indigenous students attend non-Catholic, non-government schools. While there are a few outstanding examples of high-ranking non-government schools giving opportunities to indigenous people, should Anglicans be more proactive in including them in our schools? Or is this just another form of tokenism that devalues their different cultural background?

I know some educators are grappling with some of these questions. Perhaps you are exploring ways forward in your school or parish. If so please continue this dialogue with a response to this paper.

However, probably many of us are so caught up in meeting the demands of regulatory compliance, curriculum development and client expectations that there is little time for pondering the reasons why.

Nevertheless Anglican Christians are already caught up in education. Christ told us to love our neighbours and to be salt and light to all in our society. What answer will we give him if we avoid these critical questions?

*Dr Ruth Edwards is an educator who wrote her recent doctoral thesis on the culture of Anglican schools. She attends St Matthew's, Wanniasa in Canberra.*

identified with a significant percentage of non-government, non-Catholic schools, which is the fastest growing educational sector. A range of evidence suggests that, in general, Anglican schools are servicing the most well-off in our communities, while government schools attempt to educate the vast majority of socially disadvantaged students.

My own doctoral research into Anglican schools revealed there is strong pressure on them to be shaped by the values and aspirations of the socially elite rather than by Christian values.

How should socially concerned Anglicans respond to this situation? I would like to pose some questions in the hope of stimulating Christian thought and discussion.

There are two broad areas for consideration.

## THE APPROACH WE TAKE WITH OUR ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

Anglican schools are almost always catering for students whose parents value education and very often cater for students who are, at least relatively speaking, wealthy and have many life options.

Have we given Christian thought to the implications of this fact? How should it influence the pedagogy we use and the values we promote in Anglican schools? Should we be showing students how to question social norms, be critical thinkers and creative leaders or should we focus on the predictable skills needed to pass high-stakes exams?

How subservient should we be to the assumptions and demands of powerful client families? Do we seek to prepare students to be servant leaders or is this patronising

We encourage well-considered essays in response to issues raised by SC. Please email your (700-word maximum) submission to [newspaper@anglicanmedia.com.au](mailto:newspaper@anglicanmedia.com.au)

# Let God be true

DR PETER JENSEN



IN A VIVID PHRASE, THE APOSTLE PAUL tells us that the Jewish people were 'entrusted with the oracles of God' (Rom 3:2), almost certainly a description of the Scriptures. The English word 'oracles' rightly puts the emphasis on the divine origin of the Scriptures. Paul, Peter, Jesus himself, regarded the Scriptures as the very words of the living God.

It is no accident that God has chosen to use language as the primary means of relating to us. It is one of his choicest gifts to our race. From the very beginning of the Bible, words are associated with the power of God as he creates all things through his word. Words then come to signify his revelation of himself, culminating in the great Word who is the Son of God. On the other hand, his judgement is shown in the confusion of languages at Babel, a symbol of the way in which human beings continually misunderstand each other, accidentally and on purpose.

The Christian message itself depends upon the fact that there are words of God. Jesus is the Christ; that is to say, he is the fulfilment of the plans and purposes of God as set out in the law and the prophets. We know him as the Christ because he has fulfilled the word of God himself. If we were not confident of that, we could not be confident in him.

Our way of speaking of this truth is to say the Bible is 'inspired' – not meaning 'inspiring' or even inspired in the way that a great dramatist or batsman may be inspired. The inspiration of Scripture describes the way in which God is its author, God has 'breathed out' the word. Of course, his method of doing this is through human beings and he uses the different skills, education and personality of his prophets without doubt. But the final product is his, these are 'the oracles of God' and now we too have been 'entrusted with the oracles of God'.

From the inspiration of Scripture flow certain other key attributes. We rightly think of the Bible as **infallible** – that is, completely trustworthy in what it teaches. We think of it as **clear** – not that there are no obscurities or difficult sections, but that the message of the Bible is clear and that Scripture interprets Scripture as we allow the passages to explain each other. We think of the Bible as **sufficient** – that is, it has the message which saves and it teaches us how to live as a result. We do not have to add our own revelations or further corrections to scripture. We think of the Bible as **unique** – reason and experience and tradition all have a part to play in guiding us, but none of these is the equal to Scripture. All must be read through the lens of Scripture. Finally we think of the Bible as a **unity**. Despite the different authors, times, types of literature, the fact that God has inspired the whole gives us that unity which means that we can read it as a story and as a whole.

If God exercises his authority through Scripture, think of how we should respond. Clearly as individuals we have the privilege of constant personal study of Scripture. Likewise the reading of Scripture aloud should be the habit of every Christian home. One of the glories of the Reformation was the legacy of constant reading of Scripture in church. Indeed, the Book of Common Prayer, our liturgical standard, is more or less composed out of Scripture and it demands the reading of Old and New Testament as we gather for church. It practises the clarity of Scripture, expecting all to understand it. Today we are also blessed with the widespread habit of small groups meeting to hear God's word together.

But from what we know of the history of the world we should not be surprised at the challenges which we experience when we accept the authority of the word of God.

After all it was the word which the serpent challenged in the Garden of Eden and it was through defying the word that Adam and Eve defied God.

I think that our chief challenge today as Christians is to be worldly. That is, we so easily drink in the world's view of authority. In the way we think, we see authority as ultimately resting with our own thoughts and desires. We are the centre of the world rather than God. We will hear what the Bible says, but reserve the right to make our own final judgement as to whether we will trust it and obey it. We may call ourselves 'evangelical' all the time, but in fact we have abandoned the key to the evangelical position in favour of the method and the content of what the surrounding culture is saying.

If we are going to stay true to the 'oracles of God', we need to know now that the verdict of the world around us on important matters is going to be very different and there will be a price to pay for faithfulness. We will look different and behave differently and argue differently.

As the Apostle concludes, 'Let God be true though every one were a liar' (Rom 3:4).

SC

## MISSION PRAYER

### Almighty God,

We call upon you for such an outpouring of your Holy Spirit upon us that we as your people may be assured of your love through your word, seek to please the saviour in all things, manifest the godly life and be filled with prayerful and sacrificial compassion for the lost in all the world.

In the name of our saviour Jesus Christ,  
Amen.



# Warm welcome

Everyone wants to encourage people to come to their church – and to stay – but doing this well isn't always easy, writes **TARA SING**

**T**HE SEARCH FOR A NEW CONGREGATION WAS HARDER than Ana and Scott anticipated. They were familiar with the format of a church service, expecting Bible teaching, singing, communal prayer and a cup of tea afterwards. However, they always had one question before each service: would they feel welcome?

"That first visit usually left me feeling good," Ana says. "There often are people on the door to welcome you in. One church I went to was really great the first week or two, but by the third it was like I was expected to already have formed relationships... there was no longer anyone coming up to include me."

This experience is pretty common in our churches. Many think of their services as friendly and open gatherings. However, it seems we need to ask ourselves how effective we really are when it comes to welcoming guests and including them in our church family, and what we could be doing better.



Time to mingle: coffee before the service at Church by the Bridge.

“Sadly, the evidence seems to be that many churches are not as welcoming as they think they are,” says Raj Gupta, the senior minister at Toongabbie. “The statistics indicate that fewer than 50 per cent of visitors are spoken to and, at most, 30 per cent of people are followed up.”

Gupta is a member of the Effective Ministry Team, instigated in 2010 to examine the rationale behind apparent low growth rates in Sydney Anglican churches. The team identified welcoming as one of three key areas that needed urgent attention.

“Welcoming in our churches is so important because it is about welcoming people into the kingdom of heaven,” Gupta says. “God himself is a relational being who has endured great cost to bring us back to himself, through the sacrifice of sending Jesus to die on the cross... We are God’s face to the world, and the experience someone has as they enter our doors will either be a positive or negative testimony.”

Gupta has encountered many heartbreaking stories of excluded visitors. “Some people who were seeking a church recently told me they made a hasty exit from one church because of how awkward they felt,” he says. “Another regular visitor to different churches told me that, in the end, they decided to be late to churches they were visiting. They were tired of being discouraged from the regular experience of not being spoken to before church commenced.”

“It is worth reflecting on why this is the experience of so many. If we have a great God who wants to welcome people into his kingdom, why is it that so many people struggle to be welcoming when it comes to visitors at church?”

This is a hard-hitting question that makes many feel uncomfortable. One possible explanation comes from Archie Poulos. As the head of the ministry department and a lecturer in ministry at Moore College, he has thought hard about how churches currently include

“Some people who were seeking a church recently told me they made a hasty exit from one church because of how awkward they felt.”

Raj Gupta

guests in their family. “The congregation tries to be welcoming, but we forget to put ourselves in the shoes of the newcomer,” he says. “There are churches that have members with shared jokes and experiences that don’t notice... [that the] new person feels they are the outsider. If we don’t welcome these people well, there’s a chance they won’t stay in church. We need to love and care for people and help them be at ease in church so they can hear the difficult and beautiful message of the gospel.”

## THE GUESTS IN OUR MIDST

Steve Kryger, the executive pastor of Church by the Bridge in Kirribilli, recognises that understanding the needs and feelings of a guest – from the moment they *think* about visiting church – is vital to making them feel at ease.

“A big focus of ours has been to make the first impression a positive one,” he says. “People make up their minds very early on as to whether they want to come back, and so we’ve wanted to make the most of that time when they come onto church property.”

One simple way Church by the Bridge attempts to make church open and welcoming is through its outdoor posters. “Something we’ve been doing on our noticeboard is trying to answer questions people will have,” Kryger says. “‘Who is welcome to come to church? Anyone!’ ‘Can I come if I have kids? Yes! Here’s what we have on offer...’

“We’re trying to acknowledge that, more than ever, there are people who have never been to church and have no idea what happens inside the building. A lady once approached us out the front of our church and asked us how much tickets were. When I explained it didn’t cost anything to come to church, she then asked whether there was reserved seating. We want to remove obstacles by explaining and making clear what they can expect so they feel comfortable to join us.”

Kryger adds that while it’s important to make sure the church as a whole is looking out for new people, Kirribilli wants to make sure there are specific people gifted at greeting to make contact with newcomers. In addition, he says, “We try to make the outside of church really welcoming and engaging. We serve coffee before some of our services so that it’s a place people feel comfortable to mingle. New people come early to church so we want to provide a welcoming atmosphere for people to meet others before the service starts.”

He also advises that a church’s website should serve those who don’t attend church. “The website is often the very first step in welcoming ministry by providing newcomers [with] information that is helpful for them. We are trying to help and serve their needs before they arrive.”

Jim Crowther, the senior minister of St John’s, Maroubra, says that up until the





Forming relationships: mums and kids having fun at Glenmore Park's Junior Jivers group.

beginning of last year the parish had been focusing on the wrong end of church.

"We realised we had this whole stack of people doing things at church but only a few greeting new people," he says. "We had a lot of people at the front of church, but we had people walking in the back. We needed people off rosters and onto relating. We wanted a large team who were set aside from other rostered things to relate to people well. We needed people doing ministry from the front door rather than the front stage."

Over the past 18 months, St John's has pursued a change in the way it approaches welcoming. It enlarged its weekly welcomers from a team of two to eight by sacrificing people from other rosters such as crèche and Bible reading. Although Crosweller acknowledges that none of this is ground-breaking, he says the attitudes of many in the church have shifted.

"Instead of me knowing a bunch of fringe people and caring about them, there's a whole bunch of people who know and care," he says. "They're also praying for them. They

**“ We realised we had this whole stack of people doing things at church but only a few greeting new people. ”**

Jim Crosweller

pray before church each week and so they're expecting them to come again and are ready to care for them if they do.

"We tracked our newcomers last year and we had 156 new contacts [people with potential to become church members] across all congregations. We kept 33 per cent of them for most of the year and had 18 per cent in small groups. This was a great outcome." Crosweller says these statistics are a huge improvement on the previous year, where "we didn't have the numbers because we weren't paying attention".

"The key element has been one individual at St John's, Yvette Walker [see next page], who built a team and grew a culture with my support," he says. "You need a leader and that leader has to have a heart for new people. We're not a really big church – at 10am we have 70 people – so it's a question of where you want to invest. I think [welcoming] is the best place to invest. We don't need eight different people to read the Bible or pray, but we do need eight people ready to greet newcomers and build a relationship with them and connect them with others."

## SHIFTING CHURCH CULTURE



A team effort: Yvette Walker (second from left) and members of the welcome team at Maroubra.

**YVETTE** Walker of St John's, Maroubra, has worked hard over the past two years to change the welcoming culture at her church.

"The importance of people feeling connected and at home when they come to a new church is something that God's put on my heart," she says. "It takes such a long time to settle in depending on church culture and personality types. That was a big part of why I wanted to encourage welcoming to be more than just handing out [sermon] outlines and saying 'Hello'. I wanted to shift the focus from meet-and-greet to a deepening of relationships and giving opportunities for people to take more action."

The first step was to increase the size of the welcoming team at the 10am service. This meant extra people being trained and exercising their gifts. Walker was careful to value the variety of ways that people could serve.

"There are some people who want to do the more logistical side of welcoming – they're not naturally extroverted and comfortable with going up to people," she says. "It was about finding them a role where they could... serve in the ways that God has made them. But just

because we don't want to talk to someone doesn't mean we shouldn't. We are trying to get people out of their comfort zones while being inclusive."

Walker and the team are now encouraging the congregation to help newcomers take the next step. "We've shifted the focus to include follow-up, not looking to just care for people on Sunday but helping them to get involved." She recognises that it's within Bible study groups that people can be better cared for, as it's "a small group of people devoted to pastorally caring for one another".

Her advice to other churches wanting to shift the culture is simple. "Pray," she says. "It's only God that makes changes. Setting out a biblical framework of why we're doing welcoming and recognising the Bible's argument is very helpful in letting people see it."

She also mentions the impact statistics can have. "To know that every single week, in a church our size, there was one potential member visiting has helped me remind people that we're seeing new people. It's an ongoing thing that we need to care for them."

### ENGAGING THROUGH CHURCH ACTIVITIES

As a young mum looking for a playgroup, Cindy Partridge was nervous about her first visit to Junior Jivers at Glenmore Park. "I wanted somewhere with Christian content for [my son] Oskar and I wanted somewhere local to bring my non-Christian mum friends along," she says.

"I hoped that being a church-run group it would be friendly and welcoming, with church people getting on board and reaching out to those who aren't at church. As soon as I walked in someone made an instant connection with me. During morning tea, they gave us pamphlets and a term program. The next week I was on their email list and referred to their Facebook page."

Feeling involved gave Cindy the confidence to invite five other mums and bubs to participate. "I did initially have hesitations [inviting friends]," she says. "I thought 'Even

if they're not that friendly, I'll be with them.' There is always the question 'Are they going to acknowledge that my friend exists?' or even 'Will they be too friendly?' It was a good surprise to see welcoming done well and tastefully. Now that I've seen it, there is no issue to invite other mums."

Sharon Chamberlin, Glenmore Park's Junior Jivers co-ordinator, says they are simply in the business of "building bridges" between the outreach group and the church family.

"We're essentially all mums with young children," she says. "We work really hard to make newcomers welcome and to network with the mums, finding women who might get on with other women and being mindful not to leave women sitting on their own. Once someone feels part of the group, that's when we can invite them to an evangelistic coffee and dessert night. They wouldn't come on their own, so we're constantly building bridges."

### WELCOME PLUS

Poulos believes the focus of welcoming should never stop at making people feel comfortable. While insisting it is important for churches to carefully prepare for a visitor's first experience, he says the purpose is to help people make progress in their Christian life. Having systems and structures in place can simply assist the integration process.

"We need to put ourselves in the shoes of a person who is new and introduce them to people who will help them be loved," he says. "We want to try and help this person by working out where they are at and how we can get them involved in other ministries. For the person who has never been to church, we want to do *Investigating Christianity* with them; for the person who used to be an active Christian and is returning, perhaps it is about reading the Bible one-to-one with them.

"We want them to be welcomed but we



want them to take the next step in growing their faith."

Ana and Scott felt the impact of a lack of integration at the different churches they visited. "It can be hard to get involved when you are new," Ana says. "I would have felt more welcome if there was more information available about the church and things I could access, such as Bible studies. I was looking for an opportunity to get involved. I was always asked if I had been to a church before, but nothing was done with that information."

Hoping to avoid unfortunate situations like Ana and Scott's, Toongabbie has been intentional and prayerful in its efforts to integrate visitors.

"We did things like introduce sticky label name tags for the whole congregation," Gupta says. "The catalyst was making our church a place where visitors weren't alienated. When the follow-up cards got too much, scattered over my desk, we introduced a database tool to manage the process. It doesn't do the follow-up for you but it certainly helps keep track of where different people are up to. For us, a visitor very quickly receives a letter, then a visit, then is invited to lunch, then is invited to a Growth Group. These are key steps."

The "Next Step" cards at Church by the Bridge also aim to assist integration and growth. "The purpose is to help the new people and members make the next step in their relationship with God," Kryger says. "We hand these out at every service and encourage people to fill them out to find out what they need, and get people to think about the next step they need to take. We follow up people during the week and like to follow up everyone who is new."

"As part of the process we send out an email or a phone call and a first impressions survey, asking them how they found their time with us. We also ask how people heard about us, so we can get a sense of who is coming and where they are coming from so we can serve these people well."

Adds Crossweller: "You need a platform for

## HOW WELCOMING ARE WE?

"THERE is a great temptation for every church to think that they are welcoming," Raj Gupta says. "However, this conclusion can be drawn because we feel at home at church and we have friends – rather than from the perspective of someone who is genuinely new."

Gupta has observed three common difficulties churches have when it comes to welcoming a guest. "First, do the people who comprise a church want to welcome new people into their church community?" he asks. "If, over morning tea or supper, the regulars are all talking to each other while the visitor stands alone, what does that say about the desires of the regulars? Second, welcoming does not happen just at church on a Sunday. What is the ideal process your church has for welcoming people?"

"Third, it is helpful to be honest about our own fears. Many are reluctant to 'too actively' pursue visitors, but often this amounts to doing nothing. Someone who visits church has expressed interest just by virtue of their visit. Could it be that the average person interprets a lack of follow-up as a lack of interest?"

Gupta suggests a number of signs a church can look for that may indicate it is struggling to welcome and include newcomers:


- 1 Are visitors to church talked to on Sunday and in a genuine way?
- 2 How much jargon is used in church – both in the service and in conversations afterwards?
- 3 Is there a defined and intentional process that helps visitors to take the next step?
- 4 Does welcoming stop on Sunday? What happens during the week?
- 5 Are visitors asked for their details?
- 6 Do you wait for someone to return on his or her own accord, or are you in contact with them?



Raj Gupta (above) says churches can struggle to welcome people.

carrying those relationships forward beyond Sunday. We have people in our church do hospitality once a month. This means every four weeks there is an opportunity to invite someone to lunch with people. This is really good value. A couple of times a year we also run a new members' group, which helps deepen relationship and sorts people into small groups. I recognised that we had good outreach and a good culture of discipleship, but there was a culture of integration and welcoming that we hadn't thought about."

Poulos hopes that some day every person

who walks through the doors of a church will be identified as new, welcomed well and then "handed on in a loving, caring and appropriate way to the next step so they grow in Jesus and grow in our ministry together". As churches work towards this goal, he says members should be asking several questions of themselves: "Do you look around the congregation when you're in church for who might be new? Do you then go and talk with them? In your mind have the question: what is the best way to care for them, involve them in our ministry and draw them nearer to God?" 









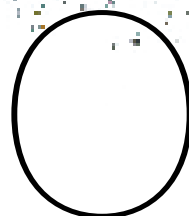


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# The reliable sovereign

How can we understand God's sovereignty in the midst of a suffering world? DAVID HÖHNE explores the Bible's response.



VER THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS IN *SOUTHERN CROSS* I have been exploring some of the implications of Paul's declaration to the Corinthians that "we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor. 2:2). In particular I have been following through on some of the Bible's own

questions about wisdom and the difference the cross makes to our understanding of life in the world before God.

The lifestyle gurus of the popular media are a loud voice ringing in our ears. Yet Paul's basic message to the Corinthians is that God's wisdom, understood through his actions in and for Jesus on the cross, has completely undermined all forms of worldly wisdom for life – Jewish or Gentile. This led us to ask Job's question, "Where then, can wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12). Last month, with Job's help, we saw that God's wisdom will not be found in simple descriptions of cause and effect – life in a world distorted by sin, death and evil is far too complex for that. The presence of evil and suffering in the world is a mystery and it is only when we understand the sovereignty of God in the cross that we find the truth shaped by hope that will equip us to live wisely.

## THE SUPERNATURAL SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

The mystery of suffering in a world created by a sovereign God is another key theme in the story of Job so let's go back to the dialogues between Job and his friends. After all the "back and forth" between Job and his comforters there is still more to be said, chiefly because Job's questions have gone unanswered.

The simple cause-and-effect wisdom could neither explain Job's predicament nor vindicate God's justice. Enter Elihu, a young man armed to the teeth with youthful confidence and self-evident truths to explain Job's situation on the one hand, and defend God's justice on the other (Job 33:12-13).

What follows in a rather repetitive manner is Elihu's attempt to set Job straight with



the basic proposition that he is suffering in order to teach him wisdom:

"A person may be disciplined on his bed with pain and constant distress in his bones, so that he detests bread, and his soul despises his favourite food. His flesh wastes away to nothing, and his unseen bones stick out. He draws near the Pit, and his life to the executioners... God certainly does all these things two or three times to a man in order to turn him back from the Pit, so he may shine with the light of life" (Job 33:19-22; 29-30, HCSB).

God makes people sick so that they will learn to love life or, similar to the message of the three friends, God uses afflictions to teach people the error of their ways. The thing that is so attractive about Elihu's speeches is the way in which he constantly reminds Job to consider the mighty works of God – surely if we are to find God's wisdom we should look there. The cost of Elihu's explanation is that we end up with a God who needs evil in order to show his goodness.

Elihu speaks at length about God's sovereign power over all things, rebuking Job for questioning God – but nowhere in the whole story does Job question God's sovereignty. It is true that when God finally speaks, his interaction with Job flows fairly seamlessly from Elihu's but God's only rebuke against Job is that as a creature he lacks the perspective to interpret God's mighty acts – to which Job gratefully submits. In fact, in the end of the story God rebukes Job's comforters (Job 42:7-8).

Beyond this, Job's question – What did I do to deserve this? – remains unanswered, even by God. Perhaps more importantly, despite all that Elihu says about God's sovereignty, which God confirms, Job may well ask, "What lesson did I need to learn that required the destruction of all my possessions and family?"

God's wisdom is not ultimately found in hard lessons because the more God's sovereign power over any and every circumstance is emphasised, the harder it is to speak of his goodness. For example, what lesson was there to be learnt for the mother who lost her three-year-old son when a tree fell on him during the Ipswich floods?

If God is the author of evil then it is not really evil – or God's commands to do good are diluted into a "do as I say, not as I do" form of morality. It is only right to be thankful for God's mercies in the face of suffering but it is something entirely different to call evil a gift from God.

From the very beginning of Job's story the author is extremely careful to maintain an appropriate distance between Job's miserable plight and God's sovereign rule. When Satan comes before God's heavenly council and they discuss Job it is the evil one who suggests that Job be struck down and that God do it.

"Satan answered the LORD, 'Does Job fear God for nothing?... But stretch out Your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse You to Your face'" (Job 1:9, 11).

The suggestion that God sends evil on Job comes from the evil one. God's response is not to stretch out his arm and afflict Job – which he could obviously do. Instead he permits Satan first to strike down Job's family and then to afflict Job's body. What Job's story puts before us is that God permits evil but he is not the author of it.

So where, then, shall wisdom be found?

If we come back to Paul's meditation on the cross at the beginning of 1 Corinthians as I mentioned last time, Paul tells the Corinthians in fairly startling terms that God's wisdom – and his justice too, for that matter – needs to be understood through the lens of the cross. What is more, it is at the cross that we are taught about the supernatural sovereignty of God.

It is easy to keep our understanding of the sovereignty of God at a natural level. We look up at the stars, hear the thunder of the rolling seas, feel the heat of the summer sun and rightly think our God is a great big God! Not surprisingly, therefore, we conform our understanding (wisdom) of God's sovereignty in the world to these natural things. When life goes well, when we grow and flourish and experience all the delights of creaturely success and prosperity, we rightly thank God for exercising his sovereign care for us. This is the god of our triumphant



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sporting heroes and successful celebrities – the god of the healthy, wealthy and wise. Of course, if things don't go according to nature we quickly begin to wonder whether this "god" is in control after all.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor. 1:27). The cross shows us that God is indeed supernaturally sovereign over all creation. Even when God's favourite creature leads all creation in an assault upon the prince of glory – even when the wicked tenants manage to get their hands on the beloved son and kill him – God permits this evil act to fulfil all his promises of salvation (Acts 2:23). Though the powers and principalities rise up against the Creator, turning the noon-day sky to darkness and making the earth quake, despite the fact that the Messiah is pierced and beaten almost beyond recognition, the Lord is never as sovereign as when he offers himself up on the cross for our forgiveness.

This is what makes the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ reliable in a world riddled with sin, death and evil. In addition it gave Paul confidence to say: "Christ was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him in our dealing with you" (2 Cor. 13:4). The good life for God's people is shaped by hope in the crucified Lord and guided by the wisdom of the cross.

SC



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# On the elimination of

With squabbling continuing over the National Disability Insurance Scheme in addition to parliamentary debates on euthanasia, DR MEGAN BEST considers society's role in helping those sick or in need.



**W**HY IS IT, AS SOON AS WE SEE SOMEONE suffering, that we so quickly think of eliminating the sufferer? Is it that we think their suffering is so bad they would be better off dead than to continue as they are? Or is it that we are fearful their suffering would only increase if they were to continue to live in a society that is unwilling to change so their needs will be met? Or are we concerned that we would suffer because of them?

Consider the case of the prospective euthanasia victim. There was a time when our attention was drawn to those in dreadful pain as the case in point. The growth of awareness regarding palliative care provided understanding that pain can be relieved if only the resources and the access are available.

Now it is the slow deterioration of the lonely disabled that is at the forefront of the debate. Isolated and ignored, they are left to endure remorseless reminders of their losses as we fail to care for those who cannot care for themselves. One current pro-euthanasia campaign recounts the situation of a woman who lives alone and, although physically disabled and eligible for full-time care, is still alone 17 hours a day, unable to lift a finger to help herself. And we are supposed to find this reason enough to allow doctors to help their patients kill themselves?

It is interesting to consider the terms we use to discuss disability. In the post-industrial era, disability in Western society has been regarded as an individual affliction described in medical terms. The person is disabled – he has the problem, not society, and he has to deal with it. In a youth-obsessed, death-denying culture, disability embarrasses us. The

“impaired” are different from us. Society does not adequately support their needs and so they become “handicapped” – not from the disability so much as the society that is unwilling to fully accommodate them. In which case surely there is an argument for us as a society to change rather than accept too quickly that there is nothing to be done for them.

The nationwide debate regarding the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme has encouraged me that perhaps we have not forgotten we share our humanity and that, but for the grace of God (as they say), it might have been us. Insurance schemes have always appealed to our common vulnerability – that we don't know who will be the one next in need of the funds in the kitty. And even if that were not the case, surely it is the role of a civilised society to help those who cannot help themselves.

The work of the World Health Organisation affirms this understanding. Its International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health casts new light on the notions of health and disability. It acknowledges that every human being can experience a decrease in health and thereby experience some degree of disability. Disability is not something that only happens to a minority of human beings. WHO makes the experience of disability mainstream and recognises it as a universal human experience.

Shifting the focus from what caused the disease to how it affects the way we live places all health conditions on an equal footing, allowing them to be compared using a common measure for both health and disability. It makes sense to make available the support that each needs, whether it be subsidised medication on the PBS or a wheelchair.

But what of the lonely, the unhappy, the neglected? What are we to



# suffering



do with these uncomfortable neighbours whose existence is so bereft of comfort that they can bear it no longer? There is no medicine that replaces the warmth of human touch. When we are lonely, it is human presence that comforts us. Are we so emotionally bankrupt as a society that we are unwilling to meet this need?

It is easy to say these lives are no longer worthwhile, agreeing with those who are burdened with such lives and so making our acquiescence with their plans to escape the misery seem like benevolent kindness. But is this the kind of society we want to become?

Legislation can have an educative effect. Many people in our community equate what is ethical with what is legal. We have a choice. We can affirm that suicide is an acceptable way to deal with suffering, see our suicide statistics rise yet again and avoid a further tax levy to cover the costs. Or we can embrace our humanity and rally as a society to help those less fortunate than ourselves and continue to seek ways to cure the problems that can potentially affect us all.

Which is it to be?

*Dr Megan Best is a bioethicist and palliative care practitioner. She also serves on the Social Issues Executive of the Diocese of Sydney.*

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## DIARY

Monday 10 June

### Queen's Birthday Convention – Spirit-Filled Life

Queen's Birthday Convention VI on "The Spirit-Filled Life" is the third in a trilogy of Cathedral conventions on true spirituality. At Australia Day Convention the focus was on the Sword of the Spirit; at Easter Convention, the Christian's union with Christ in His death and resurrection. The Queen's Birthday Convention VI should be a fitting conclusion to the series. For further information and detailed rates, please contact the Cathedral on 9265 1661 or [cathreception@sydney.anglican.asn.au](mailto:cathreception@sydney.anglican.asn.au)

\$35 at the door

LOCATION | St Andrew's Cathedral, Town Hall, Sydney | 10am to 5pm

Saturday, June 15

### Chronic fatigue & chronic pain workshop

This workshop, hosted by St Andrew's Cathedral, is for people suffering from chronic fatigue or chronic pain and for people who would like to know how to pray with, encourage and support people who are suffering in either of these areas. Speakers include the Rev Phil Colgan, Dr Phil Siddal, Leigh Hatcher (Sky News and Open House 103.2) and Canon Christopher Allan.

\$30 per person. To book and for more information contact Barbara on 0407 910 238 or email [brichards@sydney.anglican.asn.au](mailto:brichards@sydney.anglican.asn.au)

LOCATION | Golden Grove, 5 Forbes St, Newtown | 1.30pm to 5pm

Saturday, June 15

### Marriage enrichment course

This class, hosted at St Alban's MBM in Rooty Hill, is aimed at couples who have been married for one to 60 years (or even longer!) who want to keep growing together. The topics include: enjoying one another, working as a team and navigating through differences and disagreements.

David and Ann Rahtz have been married for more than 28 years and have three adult children. They are experienced presenters of parenting, relationship and life management courses and have worked as accredited professional counsellors.

\$80 per couple, including materials, lunch and refreshments. For details contact Leanne on 9677 0133 or [leanne@mbm.org.au](mailto:leanne@mbm.org.au)

LOCATION | St Alban's MBM, 20 Westminster Street, Rooy Hill | 10am to 4pm

Tuesday, Jun 18

### Menai annual women's dinner

Menai Anglican Church is hosting its annual women's dinner. Gill Davies is the guest speaker who will share about the International Christian Surfers movement (a Shire initiative) and how Jesus embraces the unexpected. Invite a non-Christian friend along, especially those with an interest in surfing.

\$30 per person. For more information please email Denise at [office@menaianglican.org](mailto:office@menaianglican.org)

LOCATION | Menai Anglican Church, Broughton Place, Barden Ridge | 6pm to 10pm

Tuesday, July 2 – Friday, July 6

### Kids' holiday club

Are you ready for a space adventure? St Mark's, Malabar is hosting a Space Adventure kids' club this July school holidays. Don't miss your chance to blast off into outer space and discover more about the God who made the universe.

\$30 per child or \$50 per family. \$10 per child per day. To register, phone 9311 0309.

LOCATION | St Mark's Anglican Church, corner Victoria and Franklin streets, Malabar

Sunday, July 7

### Archbishop Jensen's final sermon

This will be the final sermon given by the Most Rev Dr Peter Jensen before his retirement from the position of Anglican Archbishop of Sydney the following week.

LOCATION | St Andrew's Cathedral, cnr Bathurst and George sts, Sydney (near Town Hall) | 10.30am to 12pm

Saturday, July 13

### The Other 90% conference & seminar

This conference, run by Evangelism and New Churches, will explore new ways of evangelising our city

by asking the question, "What will our theology allow that our current practice inhibits?" Dr John Ridgway of Common Ground, who has spent the past 40 years working with the Navigators in South-East Asia, will be speaking. The conference is designed for vocational and lay practitioners.

\$40 per person, including lunch. For further details contact ENC via its website at [www.newchurches.org.au](http://www.newchurches.org.au)

LOCATION | St Anne's Anglican Church, 42 Church St, Ryde | 9am to 5pm

Monday, July 15 – Thursday, July 18

### Common Ground seminar

This four-day seminar is designed for Muslim ministry practitioners, and follows on from The Other 90% conference. The Common Ground trainers all have 12-30 years living and working in the Muslim world and aim to "train and equip labourers to effectively and lovingly communicate Jesus and his Kingdom to Muslims, by building bridges of trust that bear the weight of truth".

Price is \$90 per person, including lunch on each day. For further details contact ENC via its website at [www.newchurches.org.au](http://www.newchurches.org.au)

LOCATION | St Phillip's Anglican Church, 48 Auburn St, Ryde | 9am to 4pm

Wed, July 24 – Thurs, July 25

### Teknacon

Teknacon exists to promote children's ministry by resourcing, encouraging and challenging vocational or lay children's ministers. Tim Beilharz and Graham Stanton will be presenting papers on the doctrine of Scripture and the place of the imagination in children's ministry. Registrations open soon! For more information, please visit: <http://www.youthworks.net/events/teknacon>

LOCATION | Port Hacking conference centres, Rathane

For diary events, email [newspaper@anglicanmedia.com.au](mailto:newspaper@anglicanmedia.com.au)

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## FIRST OUTDOOR MINISTRY CONFERENCE

**YOUTHWORKS** recently ran its first ever Outdoor Ministry Conference, held at the Port Hacking conference centres.

The conference, aiming to teach youth leaders and other workers how to conduct ministries in outdoor and camp settings, focused particularly on how to create dynamics within small groups in the great outdoors.

"We do a lot of things [in small groups], whether you go out in a boat, you go bushwalking or whatever it is", says conference keynote speaker and director of Colorado's Wilderness Ministry Institute Dr Ashley Denton. "You can't do this in groups of 100 people so the small group element is very helpful, I think, in giving kids the opportunity to really get to know each other, break down barriers, to build trust with one another and to have an opportunity to hear God's word in the context of its creation, to rest, to have a place to be away from distractions."

The conference also included several workshops and other more focused times for training, covering topics such as



'Teachable moments', 'How to conduct excellent debriefs', and 'Responding to tough questions'.

Mohan Kumar was one of the long-distance travellers to the conference, hailing from Bangalore in India's south. He hopes he will be able to take what he has learnt about outdoor ministry and apply it to his own context.

"For India, Hindus, it's there in

our culture, experiential learning and outdoor learning is part of the way Hindus grow up," Mr Kumar says. "Yet missionaries and Christian workers do not see this and it saddens my heart... I'm convinced that with the outdoors and with the outdoor ministry we're breaking down a lot more barriers and it won't be as much of a struggle – it'll still be a struggle witnessing to people but at

least we'll have a neutral, non-offensive, non-aggressive way of demonstrating the love of God.

"It's not my ministry, it's the Lord's ministry and it's his headache – it's not my headache, and knowing it's something that he desires. Just trying to believe inside that it's much more than me. God is passionate about the outdoors and God is passionate about seeing this happen in India."

## CROSSWAY NORTH ROCKS TURNS TEN



**CROSSWAY** Anglican North Rocks recently celebrated its tenth anniversary as a church – a time that also saw it welcome its new senior minister.

The church, which began with 55 members from St Paul's, Carlingford under the leadership of Neil Fitzpatrick, now includes two services, both held in the North Rocks Public School hall. The church's new minister, the Rev David Keun, says he is pleased to be at the church and also to arrive in time for the celebrations.

"That was my first Sunday, so it was a big Sunday to walk into, but it was fabulous to be part of it and to preach on that day," he says. "Hearing the number of stories of people and their experiences at North Rocks, really, for everyone there who spoke, it was centred



around Jesus, and very much the whole morning was in praise of what he was done and what he will continue to do."

Mr Keun says the church has always made the gospel its focus, and looks forward to supporting its current ministries, including its unique ministry to the deaf community, that includes two full Auslan [Australian Sign Language] sermons a month and fully interpreted evening services.



"The deaf Auslan ministry now operates with the evening service at North Rocks... it's a unique ministry," he says. "I don't really know of any other place that does it, but in some ways it makes sense for here to be the place to do it with the Deaf and Blind School next to us. It's a joy to have those guys be a part of us here, and we look forward to continuing to support those guys and help their ministry to grow."

Over the next 10 years, Mr Keun says that he hopes the church,



which changed its name in 2012 along with the rest of the St Paul's Group to Crossway Anglican Churches, will continue to make Jesus known.

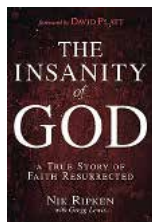
"We're seeking to do things on two levels," Mr Keun says. "We want to continue to grow and deepen people's knowledge of the gospel and to build up the saints, so that they are thoroughly equipped for every good work. And as we do that, the second thing that runs off that is to really engage our community with the gospel. We want to create and engage in opportunities to share the gospel with those who don't know Jesus and to be a real light to the community – for people to know that we are for the community and that we are driven by what Jesus has done for us."

# Stories of persecution

NICK GILBERT

## **The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected**

by Nik Ripken with Gregg Lewis



one curler of a theological question: where is God in the midst of extreme persecution, and how can his kingdom possibly grow in such places?

Each of Ripken's many stories, gleaned through personal interviews, offers a slightly different take on the

answer. For instance, early on he questions whether it's even possible for the Somali church to survive after six years of often tragic struggle. Later on, he finds that in other high-persecution situations the church has actually grown. Then, speaking of the church in Russia: "Under communism, the church had found a way to survive and often thrive. Scripture and holy song was its lifeblood. Now, in a much freer day for the church, Scripture and holy song did not seem nearly as important. This coda to the earlier story was sobering and sad."

Readers will probably find stories that stick with them. A personal standout was that of a Russian pastor, questioned as to why he had not collected his own stories of ministry in a book, who replied brusquely that his stories

were already part of God's story in Scripture, if one cared to read it.

However, there are plenty of stories left unresolved. Portions of the book see the author struggling to reconcile the Christian hope with what he sees in Somalia, where even today Christianity is essentially illegal, and where the number of Christians is at best a fraction of a per cent of the population. By the end, we're still left unsure as to how Ripken's later experiences fit with those earlier. Is God ignoring Somalia? Why have we not seen the same growth amid persecution there as elsewhere? This particular question is, perhaps deliberately, left untouched for another day.

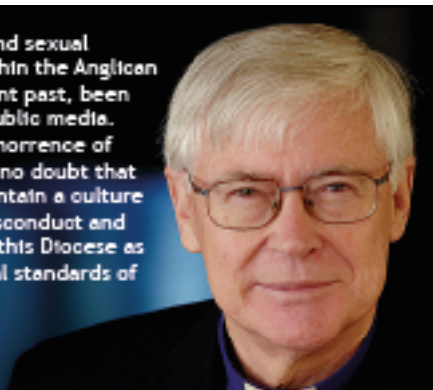
Another problem is that the book, in order to protect sources, is somewhat dated. Much of the material was gathered in the mid-90s and therefore misses much ongoing change, particularly in both Somalia and China.

But, like most stories, this one is as much about the experience of the narrative as anything else. Indeed, it is the energetic, yet honest and thoughtful timbre of this theological story that is in many ways the book's greatest strength.

SC

"...Issues of child abuse and sexual misconduct generally within the Anglican Church have, in the recent past, been widely reported in the public media. I want to reaffirm our abhorrence of such behaviour. There is no doubt that we must continue to maintain a culture of rejection of sexual misconduct and abuse of children within this Diocese as we remain true to biblical standards of morality."

Dr Peter Jensen  
Archbishop Of Sydney



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The Professional Standards Unit receives and deals with complaints of child abuse or sexual misconduct by members of the clergy and church workers.

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# Joining with God's people

DAVID PETTETT challenges the thought that the church we belong to should be filled with people "like us".

**D**AVE HAD BECOME A CHRISTIAN IN jail and was nervous about getting out. He had never known church on the outside and expressed some concern about fitting in. He was keen to join a church and continue his walk with Jesus. Since I had known him he had moved to another jail but I had encouraged him, when he got out, to find a church that faithfully taught the Bible. I also gave him my phone number so he could let me know how he was going.

I never got that phone call and wondered if he was still walking with the Lord. I continued to pray for him occasionally. Then one day I ran into him in the local shopping centre. He was glad to see me and we went and had coffee.

Things were going well for Dave. He had found a job that he had held down for the past 18 months. We socialised a bit and I finally asked him if he was still walking with Jesus. Almost offended by the question, Dave said, "Of course!" And church? "Of course!" The Lord was doing a mighty work in this man's life.

As Dave continued to talk about his church I was a little surprised. Dave is a young man (mid-20s), not well educated and works in a non-skilled job. The church he's going to has a high demographic of professionals with a tertiary education and Dave would be the youngest member by at least 20 years. He talked about his reasons for going to this church. "It's the nearest one to where I live," he said.

I asked why did he not go a little bit further to a church with people his own age and other things they might have in common. Dave said that when he was in jail there were some inmates who refused to come to chapel because they didn't like some of the others who were there. They saw them as hypocrites, pretending to be Christians on Sunday but getting involved in wrong stuff during the week.

Dave said he knew this about the inmates and struggled for a while with it. He finally realised that what he had in chapel was not the people he liked, but the people God wanted there. So he put up with their double standards. He prayed for them in the hope that the Holy Spirit would change their lives to be more like Jesus.

He told me that when he got out and started going to church he realised it was not about finding the place where he felt most comfortable. It was more about simply joining with God's people. Despite the fact there was no-one in this church close to his age and that he often didn't even understand some of the words his Christian brothers and sisters used, Dave had come to enjoy the fact that this bunch of people were God's chosen people. He began to enjoy the diversity of people God had called to himself.

This was more important for Dave than meeting with people more like him because it spoke loudly to him of the grace of God in bringing all sorts of people to himself. And he said, "If heaven's going to be full of all sorts of people from all nations, I'd better get used to meeting with people who aren't like me now."

Most of us look for a church where we feel comfortable. We like the music, we like the preaching, we like the liturgy or lack of liturgy. We like the people because they're like us. What a shame.

Yes, there are reasons we will choose one church over another. Yes, we do get hurt and move on. Yes, some churches do preach heresy. But Dave has hit on something I think we truly miss out on. Church is about the gathering of God's people. These are the people God has chosen. Who am I to say I don't like his choice and move on to find people more like me? **SC**

*The Rev David Pettett is assistant director, chaplaincy at Anglicare Sydney.*

from page 32

at a time and needing to stick to the barbecue, while the boys – surrounded by clichéd baby blues – stand at their barbecues(!), make cocktails, chop expertly or talk up their superior strength. And diss the girls because they aren't boys – who of course turn out to be the best chefs, right?

These 22 men and women have voluntarily signed up for the show, so presumably reinforcing every male-female stereotype in existence before the series started (and possibly continuing the "We're better" banter once it does) is part of the contract.

Will they stop all this rubbish and behave like grown-ups when they need to co-operate as housemates, or will this new style require the men and women to live in separate houses as well? I'm already tired just thinking about it.

One of the best things about *MasterChef* in previous years has been its encouraging nature – whether from judges to contestants or contestants to each other. The value of kindness, compassion and friendship has been clear. Efforts have been praised, skills honed, and good home cooks have grown enormously in confidence and style and produced extraordinary things, to the pleasure and amazement of viewers at home.

That's where the franchise is going off the rails in 2013. Already there's been the problematic *MasterChef: The Professionals* series, which was often hard to enjoy because of the egos involved and the fact these men and women were already working in the industry. Yes, they developed friendships as they went and there were some good moments, but as the average viewer I often felt removed. These cooks weren't like us, learning and discovering from an amateur base. And I regularly wondered if Marco Pierre White was going to eat someone for lunch.

Returning to the main game, the home cook, was always the best way for *MasterChef* to go. Except now we're apparently expected to divide along gender lines in our own homes as we watch. Hardly the most encouraging or supportive idea.

And while I'm sure Gary, George and Matt will be straight down the line in their dealings with the contestants, given that they're all blokes you can bet London to a brick that one of the contestants at some point is going to talk about bias (either too soft on the men, or not wanting to appear too hard on the women, which basically comes down to the same thing in the end). You can just hear it coming.

It's absurd. It's annoying. And I'd be very surprised if it doesn't cost the makers of *MasterChef Australia* in terms of ratings. There's only so much "refreshing" a format can take, after all, before someone realises it has to be thrown out and replaced with the Next Big Thing. Whatever that is. **SC**



# TV of the absurd



JUDY ADAMSON

SO HERE WE ARE, ALMOST halfway through 2013 and at risk of disappearing up our own jumpers from all the navel-gazing television on our screens.

I enjoy a good singing competition and I like new ideas with food, but I'm getting pretty tired of the manufactured drama, the tears, the catty remarks and the endless stream of new people I'm supposed to barrack for, tweet about or vote for. I don't think I could bear to sit through another series of *The Block* with its endless bleeps and room "reveals" – and don't get me started on the edification-free zone that is *Celebrity Apprentice* and was *Celebrity Splash*. Clearly, for most people, having had 15 minutes of fame on the telly qualifies to make you a celebrity. And as for those with real achievements under their belts, what on earth were they thinking?

But there never seems to be any shortage of people signing up for their big chance – whether that is through a desire for fame, a career, a reason to make their family proud etc.

Which brings me to this year's season of *MasterChef Australia*. Judge Gary Mehigan is touting it as "the world's most loved cooking show", and he could well be right – but we loved what it was, and I'm pretty suspicious

we aren't going to be as keen about what it is starting to become.

It's one thing to be instructed that you don't need fries when you can have fondant potato, that serving should be called "plating up", or that you should never forget to include the flavoursome jus or smear or whatever it is that will knit the whole dish together.

But one thing reality TV makers always persist in doing is "refreshing" their original idea. So this year *MasterChef* moves to Melbourne, which is fine by me, and decides to pit the male and female contestants against each other, which isn't.

Whose idea was this anyway? The new series, which kicks off this month, has been advertised with groups of girls swinging powder puff pink trolleys around in circles, dissing boys for only managing to do one thing

continued on page 31

TELEVISION