

December 2012

Southern CROSS

SYDNEY ANGLICANS CONNECTING

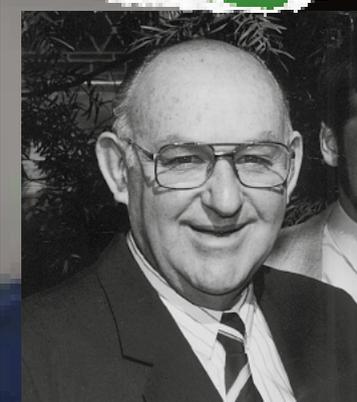
Jesus who?



Christmas
in the age of ignorance



our Christmas magazine



**CHAPPO
REMEMBERED**

› PAGES 2 & 5



COVER

It's been looking a lot like Christmas for weeks – it's just a pity most people are confused about what the season actually means.

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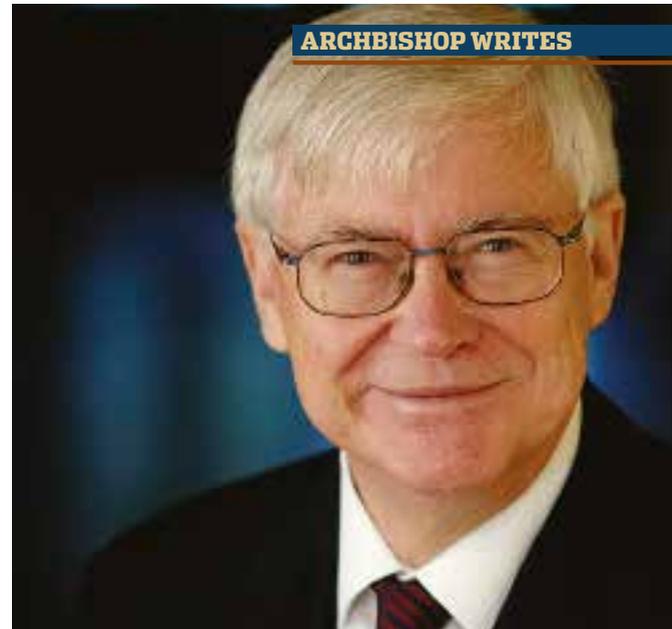
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Chappo remembered

DR PETER JENSEN

I HAVE CONSULTED TWO OF THE BOOKS published in the past decade which profess to tell people all about our Diocese. Neither contains an entry in the index under the name of John Charles Chapman. You may as well throw both of them in the bin for all that you could understand of our story without what God has done through John.

God uses human personality, especially when that personality is consecrated to his service. We are so glad that from his earliest days as a Christian John had consecrated his life to the service of the Lord. I do not mean that he therefore had to become a preacher: in his case that was true, but the Lord takes and uses those who offer him their hearts and lives whatever their calling. I mean rather that there was about him a self-discipline, a commitment to the truth which led to a rock-like integrity. But this self-discipline was always accompanied by a passionate love for God revealed in his Son Jesus, and hence for others. I think we warmed to that love.

John was blessed with an extraordinary intelligence. If there was any lack in his formal education, he simply transcended it. In the Lord's providence it meant that his preaching of the word of God was simple enough to be accessible but profound enough to persuade the sceptic. Always its appeal was both to heart and mind and it matched the integrity of his character, the self-discipline controlled by love – both fruit, of course, of the Holy Spirit.

What did the Lord give us through him?

Above all, he gave us confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Spirit used him to increase our faith.

He showed an unwavering commitment to the authority of Scripture; a Christ-centred biblical evangelism; a belief in the efficacy of preaching; a love of the local church; an apologetic which sought to answer real questions; a remarkable confidence in the reality of the Lord and his ways for and in us; a care for the individual; pastoral work through prayer; wisdom in advice and counsel; a healthy balance between denominational and evangelical Christianity.

His ministry was universal; it was deeply rooted in Sydney Anglicanism and yet it far transcended Sydney and he became a beloved preacher and teacher in many other parts of the world. He was a man whose confidence in the living God, worked out in life, inspired and encouraged your own confidence in the living God.

By his determination to be true to Christ and to share the gospel John had a massive and permanent

influence, first in Armidale, then in Sydney and then nationally and internationally. Whether as the youth director in Armidale, the chief of the Department of Evangelism in Sydney, a lecturer at Moore and SMBC, an active member of Synod and Standing Committee, a preacher on the platforms all over the world or an author he changed lives, shaped institutions, multiplied ministries, moved mountains of doubt and despair.

But now he has gone. Even our vibrant, valiant Chappo has been brought low by death, the last enemy. The truth is that he was every bit a sinner as you are and I am. He was an extraordinary human being; but he was merely human. The death that claimed him and the death that awaits you and me is both a sign and an experience of the judgement we deserve. We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ to give an account of ourselves and before that tribunal even the best of us will be found wanting.

If you want to know what we are on about, what he was on about, it will not be by exchanging Chappo stories (good though they are and I have a few myself), but by telling that old, old story which he so loved and so loved to tell: the story of sin and death, of guilt and judgement, of the Saviour and his cross, of grace and forgiveness and eternal life.

For me his death is like the removal of a great and solid rock. When I saw him on his last day I wept, for he was brought so low. When I announced his death to others, I wept and could not go on, because grief possessed me. He who has shaped us and advised us and prayed for us and exhorted us and inspired us has gone. Those hateful allies, sin and death, seem to have beaten him.

Seem to have beaten him: but not so, in fact. Like the rest of us, he was a great sinner. But he had a great Saviour, and if John were here now he would still be urging us to look to Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the world!

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.

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Click go the shears: Narrabeen's schoolies group of 2011 get ready for a backyard blitz.

YOUTH GROUP MISSION

Schoolies: Christian style

ANDREW BUERGER

SCHOOLIES IS A RITE of passage for many school leavers. Heading to the Gold Coast and a variety of other beach cities, young people celebrate the end of school by drinking and partying but, for a group of Year 12 students from St Faith's Anglican Church, Narrabeen, another sort of schoolies trip was more appealing.

From December 3, a group of 10 students and leaders from the youth group Soulies, went to Forster on the NSW

north coast for a short-term mission.

"In contrast to most schoolies trips, we want to be a blessing on the town, rather than a burden," said youth minister Dave Miers.

The group worked alongside the Coast Evangelical Church, assisting the community in a variety of ways.

"Last year we did a kind of backyard blitz for a lady who was in need," Mr Miers said. "We also did some baking for the local indigenous community."

Students also assisted the community by running kids programs

during school time and after school.

Another aim of the trip is for students to spend time thinking about their faith and their lives after school and how those things might meet.

"We want to help the kids to think about living their lives intentionally and for Jesus," Mr Miers said. "We'll be looking at Ephesians through a series of studies around the topic of 'Don't waste your life'."

The idea for mission-coated schoolies trips is not a new one. Mr Miers got the idea after attending a similar trip while at Christ Church,

St Ives. Scripture Union and Crusaders also run schoolies camps for Christian teenagers.

"I think it's attractive to go away on a trip with your peers who are part of the same family, share similar convictions and genuinely love each other," Mr Miers said.

While the focus of the trip is to show love to the local community, the Narrabeen students will also get plenty of opportunity to wind down after their exams.

"There will most certainly be time for them to relax and enjoy the beach," Mr Miers said.

HISTORY WITH INNOVATION

ADM revamps in 'Deaconess tradition'

THROUGHOUT THE 20th century Sydney Anglican deaconesses were involved in schools, children's homes, theological education, hospitals – even a women's holiday lodge.

A new century has brought new challenges and a new name: CEO Dr Karin Sowada says moving from the wordy Anglican Deaconess Institution Sydney Limited (ADISL) to Anglican Deaconess Ministries (ADM) is a milestone.

"It was time to... give it a new name which both reflects the historical role of deaconesses in Sydney – something that we feel is a very important part of our heritage – but also reshape the organisation going forward," she says.

The Deaconess health organisation Hope Healthcare was sold to Hammond in 2008 and then Deaconess House and the degree-based training of women were passed to Moore College. ADM still retains an active interest and helps fund training.

Dr Sowada says flexibility has always been crucial. "One of the things about the deaconesses is that they responded to the ministry environment in which they were

operating by starting works and stopping them as social conditions changed and as the government stepped in with funding."

The work of training women has not changed but Dr Sowada says the Mary Andrews College focus is now lay training in pastoral care. "We are seeking to train women up to do even better what they've always been doing – that is, caring for people at the front line and in that way helping churches to be more effective in their mission."

ADM also provides grants for ministry, particularly indigenous ministry where deaconesses have had an historic work alongside Aboriginal people.

Dr Sowada says funding innovative projects, such as a ministry to senior corporate women, is part of responding to the changing societal landscape. ADM distributed more than \$700,000 during the past financial year in funding for ministry projects, scholarships and bursaries to support women in theological education and lay training in pastoral care.

ADM has just launched its new website deaconessministries.org.au

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JOHN CHARLES CHAPMAN, 1930-2012

Chappo called home

RUSSELL POWELL

SYDNEY'S LEADING evangelist for more than 50 years, John Chapman, has passed away in hospital at the age of 82.

"Chappo", as he was affectionately known, was converted in his teens and immediately active in youth ministry. Following a stint as a manual arts teacher, he spent a year in Moore College and was ordained in the Diocese of Armidale in 1957, and appointed youth director there in 1960. Chappo travelled widely around the parishes teaching, evangelising and training future leaders – also taking up the role of Director of Christian Education until 1968.

He then moved to

Sydney and joined the Department of Evangelism, where he was director for almost 25 years. Among his assistants there was a young Phillip Jensen, with whom he would later conduct university missions, particularly during the 1970s and '80s. His preaching, teaching and writing ministry saw him speaking to groups throughout Sydney, Australia and overseas, especially in England.

The Rev Dick Lucas, retired rector of St Helen's, Bishopsgate, called him "a dear friend, a marvellously stimulating brother in Christ, a shrewd fellow worker and, of course, a superbly gifted evangelist and teacher." He points particularly to Chappo's

gifts of encouragement, especially with deadpan humour. "When it was reported that Chapman was on the horizon, morale soared and requests for his services poured in – this man was a tonic to have around."

Chappo's books, including *A Fresh Start* and *Know and Tell the Gospel*, helped many Sydney Anglicans with personal evangelism and sharing their faith. In later years he passed on his wisdom to generations of ministry trainees and college students. He never married but was at home in many churches across the Diocese, and the single quarters at Moore Theological College were named John Chapman House in his honour.

David Mansfield,

who followed Chappo as director of the Department of Evangelism, first met the evangelist at a youth rally when he was 17. "Even at that age, I remember the way he explained the Bible in such a simple and helpful way and how he was able to apply the Bible to our lives. He did that with people of all ages... He had that common touch that people could relate to."

His last months saw the establishment of a project close to his heart, the John Chapman Foundation, to raise money for recruiting and training evangelists.

Although he had been ill for some time, Chappo received a stream of visitors from around the world during his retirement. On



"Like Joshua of old": Chappo in retirement.

November 16 several close friends visited him in hospital to read the Bible, pray and say their farewells. His god-daughter, Ruth Barry, recalls a nurse remarking "Wow, he certainly has a large family" to which she replied "Not bad for an 82-year-old bachelor!" He succumbed to multiple organ failure that night.

Archbishop Peter Jensen immediately paid tribute to his long-time friend and colleague:

"Chappo represented the very essence of what our Diocese has always stood for... A strong affirmation of the authority of the Bible, the importance of preaching and an approach to evangelism which made it central while at the same time respecting the intelligence and integrity of the listeners. He was a man of faith like Joshua of old, and lived out his faith with clear godliness of life."

STUART BARTON BABBAGE, 1916-2012

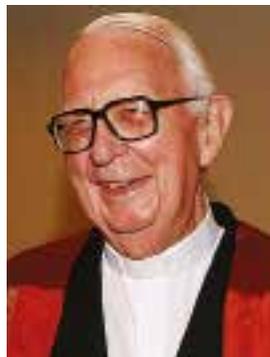
Farewell to Dean of two cities

CANON STUART Barton Babbage AM, one of the last of a generation that included Sir Marcus Loane and Broughton Knox, has died aged 96.

Born in New Zealand he was converted in his school years and led the Evangelical Union at university. Dr Babbage went to England to study theology and, after serving a curacy while the Battle of Britain raged overhead, enlisted as an RAF chaplain. A friendship with C.S. Lewis led him to invite the author and apologist to preach to airmen.

Post-war he received his first Sydney post as diocesan missionary from Archbishop Mowll and was soon a youthful Dean of Sydney (1947-53). Later Dr Babbage became principal of Ridley College and Dean of Melbourne (1953-62).

While in Melbourne



he was a leader in preparations for the 1959 Billy Graham crusade. From there he took up significant US ministry and participated in the founding of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

In 1973 Dr Babbage became master of New College at the University of NSW, a position he held for a decade. "Dr Babbage was a remarkable man who had a great influence on the shaping of New College," said the current master, Dr Trevor Cairney. "His

deep faith in Christ and zeal for the gospel, as well as his human kindness and a remarkable gift for hospitality, helped to shape the community. He continued till his last days serving and honouring his God in a multitude of ways."

Apart from several scholarly works Dr Babbage wrote *Memoirs of a Loose Canon*, which included anecdotes from Graham crusades and his RAF ministry. In 1995 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia.

Archbishop Jensen said his death marked the passing of "one of the most gifted and remarkable witnesses to Jesus Christ of his generation... He was very much his own man but at the same time gave sacrificial leadership to the people of God in a series of fruitful ministries."

MOORE COLLEGE

Moore Theological College welcomes all Christians into a partnership in the future of the gospel. You are invited to participate in College life by praying or attending upcoming events.

February

- 2 For prayer: Moore College Big Day In for incoming first years
- 4 Moore College Priscilla and Aquila Conference: Titus – Teaching Truth Together – James de Costobades [Moore Info: paa.moore.edu.au](http://paa.moore.edu.au)
- 11 For prayer: Moore College Semester 1, Term 1 commences

March

- 12 7:30pm — Moore College Graduation, City Recital Hall, Angel Place Sydney [Moore Info: moore.edu.au](http://moore.edu.au)
- 17-24 For prayer: Moore College Missions held. College students partner with churches to engage in mission and ministry to their local communities.

April

- 22 Moore College Term 2 Commences

May

- 27 Moore College Open Night
- 27-31 Moore College Open Week

2013

Pray for Moore College Missions

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CENSUS OF NEW CHURCHES

Church planting a tricky business

MARK A HADLEY

NEW RESEARCH IS revealing just how daunting the task of church planting has become for Australian denominations.

This month the National Church Life Survey and Australian church-planting network Geneva Push will release the results of the nation's first Church Planting Census.

"We've become increasingly aware that there have been no in-depth studies looking at the what, how and who of new churches and congregations," says Scott Sanders, Geneva's general manager.

The census draws on in-depth interviews with 65

leaders in 20 Australian denominations, several of whom have confided that early attempts at church planting have been a "disaster", leaving congregations struggling to recover. Others say indecision over the compatibility of overseas movements with Australian culture has undermined confidence in church planting.

Sydney Anglican church planter the Rev Stuart Starr is not surprised by the findings. He is working to establish the New Life Anglican Church at Oran Park in Sydney's south-west and says "most Christians are daunted by church planting. Denominations are naturally wary of past mistakes, especially since missteps are par for the course whenever

ground-breaking activities are attempted."

The Church Planting Census suggests some denominations have created a church planting culture while others have languished. Yet success seems to have little to do with commitment: NCLS data shows a rising willingness in 23 denominations to attempt new things to arrest a national decline in numbers, and church planting figures high on the list.

It's early days at New Life Anglican so Mr Starr will be taking his team to the National In The Chute conference this month where the bulk of the research will be released.

"The challenge of starting new churches in Australia is a



New Life activities: Stuart Starr at the barbecue.

significant one, so it's right that those who embark on such an endeavour do so with the best discernment, the best resources and the best support available," he says. "Since discerning, equipping and connecting church planters are at the heart of NITC I'll be there."

The conference will hear from international speaker Don Carson, who will reflect on

the challenges church planters will face, practically and culturally, in the decade to come.

Mr Starr believes co-operation between the Diocese's Department of Evangelism and New Churches and the Geneva Push is the sort of combination needed to get the best from the census findings.

"Geneva [has] a national vision and its assessment tools are

used by New Churches to assist the Diocese's own work," he says. "I'm praying God will help Christians in Sydney and across Australia to move beyond the uncertainty and doubt which often surround church planting. I look forward to a time when beginning something new might be embraced by our churches and many, many people will find new life in Jesus."



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CROSS-CULTURAL WORK

Ministering to Muslims

ANDREW BUERGER

MINISTRY TO cultures other than our own can sometimes seem a bit daunting. A resource from the UK has recently become available to help churches and individuals to minister more effectively to the Muslim community.

Friendship First is a six-week DVD course produced by Interserve, a Christian missionary organisation.

The Rev John Bales, senior minister at Greenacre, has years of experience working with Muslims in Pakistan and understands the complexities.

"Islam has been in opposition to

Christianity since the beginning," he said. "There are lots of things we agree on but it is the important things we disagree on. We can sometimes have a fear of Muslims... but we can't be afraid of them. We need to get over that hurdle to share the gospel with them."

As the title suggests, the DVD course puts a very strong emphasis on befriending our Muslim neighbours and colleagues, a crucial step in ministering to them.

"Muslims who come to Australia have generally left some terrible parts of the world," Mr Bales said. "Often they find Australians unwelcoming. This moves them to find their identity in Islam and they can become much

more Islamic here than they were back home."

According to the 2011 census figures, about 4.7 per cent of Sydney's population identify as Muslim. As with other races and religions, it is important for Christians to be able to present the gospel with relevance.

"All people are important," Mr Bales said. "Part of the great commission is to reach out to them. Thinking through ways of reaching them effectively is important."

Members of both Greenacre and Yagoona churches have used *Friendship First* which, among other things, encourages people to befriend a Muslim during the course.

"Our Bible study group found it very helpful," Mr

Bales said. "They found it helped them to be much more friendly to their Muslim neighbours."

Instead of focusing on understanding Islam, *Friendship First* puts the emphasis on relationships.

"Relating to people is the most important thing," Mr Bales said.

There are a variety of other resources available to help people minister to Muslims including MentAC, an apprenticeship program which mentors people into Muslim ministry and *Cross and Crescent*, a series which focuses on Islam and can be done online.

More information on *Friendship First* can be found at: <http://www.interserve.org.au/#pid=333>

Call for informed debate

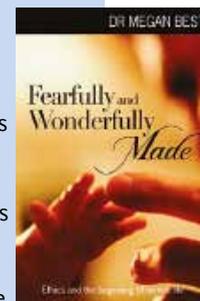
Former Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson has launched a book on ethics and life's beginnings and joined the author's call for informed, civilised debate.

The book, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: Ethics and the Beginning of Human Life*, was written by Dr Megan Best, a member of the Diocese's Social Issues Executive and a long-time contributor to debate on subjects such as euthanasia, abortion and medical ethics.

Mr Anderson said debate in Western society was often superficial and vindictive. "If there's one thing I can say with absolute certainty after 19 years in public life, it's that there is no such thing as a good public policy outcome that's derived from a substandard, inadequate, or misinformed public debate," he said. "It doesn't happen. And the West is deep in crisis, frankly, because it no longer knows what an honest debate is."

Dr Best, who spent several years researching and writing the book, said many people would be surprised at "the eugenics agenda of the reproductive business and the commodification of the unborn, which is currently underway".

She offered the book as a way of informing debate and bringing issues into the public arena. "I do not expect that everyone will agree with my take on issues like antenatal screening and abortion, but I would like to see an informed public debate on these issues to make sure that this is something we all, as a community, are comfortable with. It is not just a matter between a doctor and a patient. We are at a point where we are deciding what we require of a child before they are granted full membership to our society."



CHRISTMAS AT THE CATHEDRAL

Hark! The Heral Angels Sing... born to give them second birth.



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Seniors' Christmas | 18/12 11am
Colin Buchanan Concert | 19/12
Healing Service Carols | 19/12 6pm
Police Band Concert | 20/12 1pm
Lessons & Carols | 20/12 7pm
Community Carols | 21/12 7pm
Cathedral Carols | 23/11 7pm

Christmas Eve

Family Christmas | 4pm
Christmas Celebration
6pm | 8pm | 11pm

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COMMUNITY MINISTRY

Norwest cooks up a storm

ANDREW BUERGER

NORWEST ANGLICAN Church has been cooking pancakes to raise their profile in the community.

The church realised that many people didn't know about them, so at the start of the year they decided to try to change that.

"We want to be a church that is known to care about the community around us," said assistant minister, the Rev Dave Keun. "We also want to raise awareness of our presence and to let people know that Jesus has something to say to them."

Since Term 1, five volunteers have been cooking 300 pancakes for students at Crestwood High School every Friday morning.

"We are geographically very close to the high school, so we wanted to take advantage of that," Mr Keun said. "We want to let the kids know that we are there and it is also a great opportunity to have conversations and build relationships with them."

Since the church has started the weekly breakfast, their lunchtime Christian group at the school has grown from three to 33.

"The school has come to love it and appreciate it," Mr Keun said. "The kids are totally confused



Dave Keun (left) celebrates Pancake Friday with Crestwood High School students Rhys Scott (centre) and Jack Starkey.

about why we do it. There are some who still don't come along because they think they have to pay. The reason we do it is because we care about the community and let them know that Jesus loves them."

Last year a student at the high school lost her life in tragic circumstances and the church noticed the students didn't have a place to grieve, or an outlet for their grief.

"We thought it was important for us to have

a positive influence in that environment," Mr Keun said.

The church is also seeking to engage with the young families that make up a large proportion of their parish. "Coming up to Christmas we offer

our community a gift through 'A week on the green,'" Mr Keun said. "It is a series of three free outdoor events including a carols concert. We invite them to come along and experience the community that is here at our church."

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CMS IN CHILE

Chilean Bible school to mark 10 years

IN 2013 CEP CHILE, A Bible school established through the work of CMS missionaries, will celebrate its tenth anniversary.

CEP has not only been vital in ensuring the longevity of the Anglican Church in Chile, it has doubled the number of ordained clergy.

"Ministers well trained in teaching the word of

God are important to any church," said CMS missionary Tim Swan. "In Chile educational standards are rising fast so training for ministry needs to keep pace. Before CEP began there were very few people being trained for ministry in the Anglican Church."

However as CEP looks to the future, there is

a concern that it may struggle to remain a sustainable ministry.

"[One of the] major challenges is the ongoing viability of CEP," Mr Swan said. "Although we now have better trained ministers... we are critically short of Chilean lecturers with further training."

"We need continued outside support."

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CASTLE HILL'S COMPASSION PARTNERSHIP

Building homes in Kenya

ST PAUL'S, CASTLE HILL has partnered with child development organisation Compassion Australia to implement a life-saving venture: building homes for 25 families in poverty-stricken regions of Kenya.

The church will raise funds to build new, permanent homes for families in Kenya through, among other things, the sale of Malacci's Fair Trade coffee. Malacci's is St Paul's own blend and profits will go towards the project until all the houses are completed.

Together Compassion and the church will be improving the living conditions of 25 families, providing secure home environments and giving their children the continuing opportunity to regularly attend Compassion's child development programs and classes at local schools.

The 25 Kenyan families now live in temporary shelters and dilapidated homes on marginal land, and are vulnerable to natural events such as landslides, fires and floods. While the most pronounced effect of inadequate housing is on children's physical health – children in

inadequate housing are more likely to have respiratory problems and be at risk of infection – it can also threaten their mental health, social interactions and development, their ongoing education and ability to learn.

"Because of St Paul's support each of these families will soon have a safe, robust home, able to withstand the wet season's torrential rains and the dry season's baking sun," said Paul Beeston, Compassion's church and partner relations manager. "As well as providing for their physical safety, the homes will also help to restore the dignity and emotional wellbeing of these families. And with a better home environment, these children will be better able to learn, study and grow in their relationships."

Through Compassion, St Paul's is supporting children living in poverty in other ways as well. Recently, the parish's help allowed a well to be built to provide the Masai community at Olontoto, Kenya, with clean water. In addition, hundreds of church members sponsor children, providing them with education,



St Paul's parish member, Jenny Van Rees, visits the Kenyan community of the child she sponsors through Compassion.

nutrition, health care, safe places to play and, most importantly, the chance to know Jesus as their Saviour.

Mr Beeston said that, "through Compassion's child sponsorship program children are embraced by the local church, given the chance to escape the cycle of

poverty and despair, and the opportunity to step into a future filled with hope. All of which helps local churches introduce people to Christ and disciple them."

In the years to come, St Paul's aims to sponsor more than 1000 children in Kenya and to continue to show God's abundant

love to children and families living in poverty around the world.

The senior minister of the church, John Gray, said that as part of its global mission, St Paul's hopes to "grow and deepen our commitment to the poor and respond to the injustice of poverty on a personal

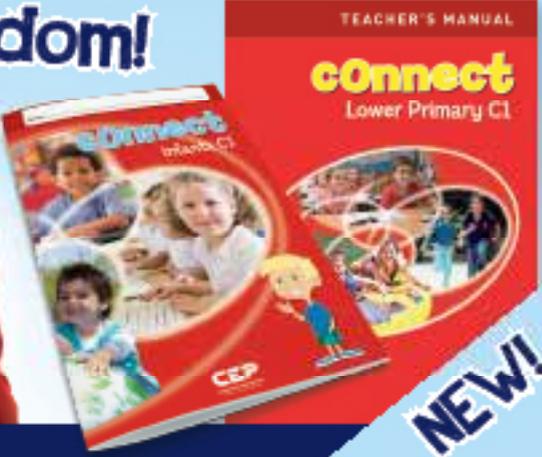
and corporate level, praying and working together, not only for the physical and emotional wellbeing of people, but also in the hope of seeing them become disciples of Christ".

INFO: For Compassion Australia's child development programs, visit www.compassion.com.au

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KINGLAKE APPEAL

Burnt church asks for help

JUDY ADAMSON

IT SEEMS LIKE A LONG time ago for most Australians, but to the people of the Victorian town of Kinglake the Black Saturday bushfires of 2009 are ever present – not just in their memories, but in the buildings and locals that are no longer with them.

One of the buildings razed to the ground in February 2009 was St Peter's Memorial Anglican Church, built in 1922 to honour those lost in World War I.

But despite being the oldest building in the district before the fire, almost four years later the construction of a new church is yet to begin because the parish

doesn't have the full cost of a replacement. While it received no money from the Red Cross bushfire appeal it has managed to raise 85 per cent of its \$850,000 goal with a combination of insurance money, donations, gifts in kind and a grant from the Diocese of Melbourne with Anglican Aid.

However, as the rector of the Whittlesea-Kinglake parish the Rev Stephen Holmes explains, building requirements are a little trickier 90 years down the track.

"When the first church was built there was no car park, but now the council has said there needs to be a car park for 15 cars, which is another \$85,000 – not to mention that the old church only had a 'thunderbox'," he says. "They're the



Afterburn: Kinglake rector Stephen Holmes at the church site with Melbourne Archbishop Philip Freier after the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

extra kind of costs that come in. Also the new building will be larger, with a kitchen, because it's a community centre church. It's there to draw people in, not to just sit there on the mountain and be a museum."

When Mr Holmes sent emails to businesses asking for help he was frustrated to get a return email from one

large company asking, "Is the community not supporting you?". He observes drily that "It's a bit hard for the community to dig into their pockets when they're trying to rebuild their own homes".

Everyone who could has already given, so late in October Mr Holmes sent out letters to every Anglican parish in

Australia – 1322, he says – to ask if they would be partners with Kinglake in rebuilding its church.

"We're brothers and sisters together in Christ and we're appealing to our brothers and sisters to help us across the line," he says.

"We [the local Anglican Church] could easily have cleared out and not rebuilt but I believe if we

had deserted the people after that fire it would have taken generations to get that respect back.

Spiritually we needed to be there, and we were. You need people on the ground to care for other people, and while the building is not people it's our toolbox from which we will launch our ministry to spread the love of God."



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BISHOP INSTALLED

New Singapore bishop to head down under

Bishop Ponniah with singers, including two of his family members, sing a song written for the occasion: "Not my will but yours".

THE RIGHT REVEREND Rennis Ponniah has been installed as the ninth Bishop of Singapore in a ceremony attended by Anglican leaders from across Asia. Bishop Peter Tasker, Sydney's Bishop for International Relations, represented Archbishop Jensen at a packed service in St Andrew's Cathedral in Singapore.

Fifty-seven-year-old Bishop Ponniah, who has a degree in social science, succeeds Bishop John Chew. He was ordained in 1990 and spent much of his ministry as vicar of one

of Singapore's largest Anglican parishes, St John's-St Margaret's Church.

After the service one of the visiting leaders, Bishop Albert Vun of Sabah, said Bishop Ponniah was "godly with a deep spiritual life. He will bring a freshness to the provincial leadership and the Diocese of Singapore for I see every new change as a renewal, a great responsibility and the potential for growth."

Bishop Ponniah has accepted an invitation to present the Bible studies at the Sydney election Synod next August.

with his sustained involvement in business and finance, will enable him to articulate the lordship of Christ to a watching world as well as to a Communion in continuing disorder... [but] it would be unfair and misleading to suggest that one man can resolve the crisis which has beset the Anglican Communion in recent years."

The GAFCON/FCA statement ended with the promise of the prayers of the global fellowship for Bishop Welby, and Dr Wabukala said he eagerly looked forward to working with him "as a partner in the gospel to restore much-needed conviction, confidence and unity to the deeply fractured Anglican family".

WELCOME FOR NEW ARCHBISHOP

Welby for Canterbury

RUSSELL POWELL

THE BISHOP OF Durham, Justin Welby (right), has been named the next Archbishop of Canterbury. The British Government announced the appointment after months of deliberation by the Crown Nominations Commission. He will replace Archbishop Rowan Williams, who has been in the position for a decade.

Bishop Welby, 56, was an oil industry executive before entering the ministry in 1992. He studied at Eton, then Cambridge University and, before becoming Bishop of Durham 12 months ago, served as the Dean of Liverpool. He is said to have



evangelical convictions and is not in favour of gay marriage, but he is on record as a supporter of women bishops in the Church of England.

The Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Peter Jensen, said, "We welcome the appointment of Bishop Welby to the ministry of Archbishop of Canterbury. It remains an important role, though obviously the events of the last decade have diminished

its significance in the worldwide Anglican Communion. Bishop Welby has our prayerful support. We look forward to him speaking with clarity from the word of God about the gospel and its impact on the issues confronting the Church in England and the West."

The chairman of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans and the GAFCON Primates Council, the Most Rev Dr Eliud Wabukala, also welcomed the appointment, saying he knew Bishop Welby to be "a deeply committed servant of Jesus Christ who honours the Scriptures as the word of God, and as a courageous peacemaker".

"I am confident that these qualities, together

FCA MEETING

Primates speak of blessing and struggle

THE PRIMATES' Council of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans has issued a pastoral letter after a recent meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

The letter talks about progress in the work of the Fellowship, including plans for a second Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in October 2013. While the venue is yet to be confirmed, it is understood the aim is to hold the meeting in Athens.

Joining the council at the meeting was its newest member, the Most Reverend Henri Isingoma, Primate of the Anglican Church of the Congo, who, along with the other primates in the letter, wrote with joy of witnessing "the blessing of God in a number of key areas:

in the increase of our numbers; through the achievements of our April meeting [the FCA leaders' meeting in London]; by the testimonies of those who are joining with us; in the new funding provided for our communication efforts; through our decision to meet again in a global assembly; and by the recognition that we are not alone in this spiritual battle".

At the same time, the primates noted that during their meeting they had been "vividly reminded of the costly struggles of so many of our fellow Christians, whether facing violent persecution, natural disaster or spiritual conflict with competing ideologies".

The group also expressed support for

the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina and its bishop, Mark Lawrence, who recently broke with the Episcopal Church in the United States because of the actions of its liberal leadership.

In a separate letter of support to Bishop Lawrence the council's chairman, Archbishop Eliud Wabukala of Kenya, and the general secretary, Sydney's Archbishop Dr Peter Jensen, said, "We are grieved... by the attitude and actions of the leadership of the Episcopal Church and their efforts to demand canonical obedience through unjust means to their ungodly agenda.

"As we have made clear in the Jerusalem Declaration we reject their authority and call on them to repent and return to the Lord".

Letters

With thanks

MAY I add my own thanks to God for the way that Peter Jensen has led our Diocese (SC, November)? His heart for the gospel and his ability to speak the truth of the gospel to our city and country with grace, humility and love have been used by God to commend that

message to those who might otherwise have been quick to dismiss it. May our pastors, teachers and leaders continue to place the gospel first in their preaching and decision making and as we pray for the Lord to raise up our next Archbishop.

Philip Cooney
Wentworth Falls

Do Scripture justice

THE article "One Scripture, two testaments" (SC, November) portends in its title a truth of potent relevance for the understanding of the Christian faith. As the author says, "we want to do justice to all of Scripture".

But has such justice been done? The author says, for example, that: "the Law served as a guardian or tutor... the Law, therefore,

has served its purpose". Although some explanation of these words is offered, one is left with the impression that the Law is now obsolete. In what sense has the Law served its purpose? In conclusively demonstrating that salvation cannot come through obedience to the Law, and therefore pointing us towards the grace of Christ's atonement.

Yet the Law, as fulfilled in Christ, remains 'good'. It is the goal for godliness which is the necessary corollary of Christ's atoning work – a work in progress until he returns, but a work to which we must constantly apply our serious attention (eg Matt 7:21; Heb 12:14-15; 1 Cor 9:24f and 10:23).

While we are not saved by obedience to the Law, we will not be saved without it either! It is also not enough to say we are to "frame our words and practices faithfully". Such vague phrases are little or no defence against concupiscence, which under such phrases will run wild.

To deal with so serious and sensitive a topic as the Law, under so significant a title, is hardly to do justice to Scripture and is, for this reader, disappointing, disturbing and dangerous.

Rev Jerryl Lowe (retired)

Pymble ministry

IN response to "Decades of ministry remembered" (SC, November), just for the

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record St Swithun's, Pymble celebrated the centenary of its first church service in 2001. The current centenary celebrates the erection of the first church building on the site. This building was burnt down in 1947. The present stone church was opened in 1940.

M.H. Cameron

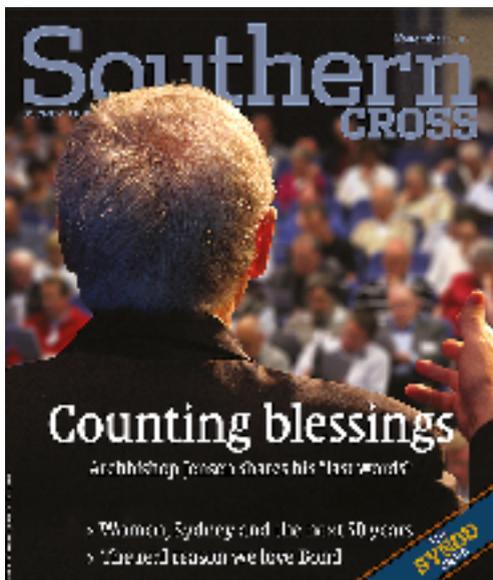
Author of *Living Stones: St Swithun's Pymble 1901-2001*

A multicultural thought

IN the article on page 5 of the October issue did you mean to head it "Vietnamese church hires an Aussie"? Or an "Anglo"? As a reader, given his appointment, I assume the Rev Huynh is an Aussie by choice, if not by birth.

To me the great news is that an Anglo Aussie is working with English-speaking second-generation Vietnamese! You have used Canley Heights in earlier articles and I look forward to reading about other aspects of multicultural ministry.

Helen Wilson



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Essay of
the month

The return of the lapsed Anglican

JODIE MCNEILL wonders how we can respond to those who come back to church and find they no longer feel at home.

RECENTLY I POSTED A BLOG encouraging us to carefully consider how we might change the substance of our Sunday gatherings in order to accommodate outsiders who may find our formalities to be a barrier to their joining the congregation.

In the midst of the debate that unfolded, one of the commenters drew our attention to an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* a few months ago entitled “Our father”? More like oh, brother”. In this article in the ‘Heckler’ section (which regularly publishes rants and tongue-in-cheek contributions from readers), author Louise George told her candid, outsider’s perspective on how she visited an Anglican church that had become far more informal than what she had experienced when she attended as a child.

In her entertaining, and often raw-nerve-hitting piece, she gives a voice to many of the silent visitors who lament the loss of the traditional forms of worship she found familiar and comfortable. In essence, her main objection is that by removing the form and structure of the traditional Anglican service we have lost the sense of importance and occasion.

In other words, she felt like the people at church didn’t really care about what was happening because it looked like the whole event was not properly planned and presented.

THERE’S NO EXCUSE TO BE SLOPPY

In my own experience of visiting a variety of church gatherings over many years, Ms George’s comments resonate strongly. Too often our gatherings just seem to be thrown together with little or no regard to the aesthetic or emotional dynamics, nor the theological flow of the meeting.

Maybe this comes from an attempt to communicate a “She’ll be right, mate” informality, so that those who choke on traditional liturgy will feel right at home in our laid-back churches. Instead, we often communicate an “I don’t really care for anything except the sermon” attitude, which means that all of the rich ways in which the word of God might dwell among us (cf. Colossians 3:16) are marginalised or disregarded.

It’s fine to look relaxed but it doesn’t mean we have an excuse to be sloppy in what we say and what we do – whether it’s the music or the Bible readings, the words of welcome or any prayers we might say together.

WE ARE NOT CALLED TO BE A MUSEUM

The objections in the *Herald* article also give us a valuable insight into the way that many ‘lapsed’ Anglicans feel about what we have done to the divine services they remember from their childhood. They feel the Church of England they grew up with should still be just the same as it was when they were young, almost like a museum or a time capsule.

Despite these objections, we have every reason to make changes in order to keep current with our ‘customers’, just as most organisations will regularly refresh their branding and their customer interface in order to maintain and increase market share.

If we don’t keep changing, then we will become a heritage artefact in a religious museum.

RESPONDING TO LAPSED ANGLICANS

How should we respond to those who, like Ms George, find they have returned to a church where they no longer feel at home?

In one sense, we should be pleased that the return to the church has caused a sense of disequilibrium which, if handled well, might lead such lapsed Anglicans to peel back the layers of style and structure to engage directly with Jesus in his word.

Indeed, a church that no longer speaks to modern people with a 1662 English accent might cut through the religious packaging to the heart of the matter. However, in another sense, we would be very wise to hear the legitimate objections raised about our sloppy, careless gatherings that, to quote Ms George, do “a disservice to everyone, particularly the young”.

Our church gatherings should be the highlight of the week – and whether or not we put on our ‘Sunday best’, we and everyone involved should at very least treat them as a slice of heaven, as we join to meet Jesus in his word, by his Spirit, to the glory of the Father.

If we act like we don’t care about the gathering, then what does this tell the world about how we care about Jesus?

As I see it, church is a gathering of people around Jesus, present in his word by his Spirit. It will be for people who want to be with Jesus. This will mostly be those who have already believed in him but will also include those interested to hear from him so they might possibly follow him – especially as they experience this in the company of others who are keen to listen to and obey him.

I’m not talking about changing the substance of the gospel, only its style. If we really love the outsider then we should be prepared to make sacrifices in order to accommodate them within our church gatherings. It should be easier for those of us inside the “club” to acclimatise ourselves to change, especially if this means it makes it easier for others to join us.

SC

READERS’ESSAYS

We would like to encourage readers to submit well-considered essays in response to issues raised by *Southern Cross*.

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Dr Bryan Cowling
CEO, Anglican Education Commission

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'Tis the season
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IGNORANT

Sydneysiders could be forgiven for thinking Christmas had nothing to do with Jesus, given he's all but disappeared from most celebrations.

JUDY ADAMSON considers how we can re-educate people about the reason for the season.

CHRISTMAS WAS HOTLY anticipated at the child care centre. The weather was warm, the decorations were up and the kids were excited. And then, while a teacher was telling the kids a Santa story, one of the three-year-olds piped up and said that Santa wasn't real.

"Who told you that?" the teacher asked.

"My mum!" she replied confidently.

The teacher, drawing me aside later when I came to pick my daughter up, insisted I tell her how important it was *not* to say Santa wasn't real in front of the other kids. Not easy to do in practice with a small child, but I said I would try. Yet when I observed it might be nice to tell the kids the *real* story of Christmas as well as having Santa fun, she was nonplussed. A nominal believer, she couldn't see any problem in only talking about Santa, because the truth of the Christmas story really hadn't registered. It made no difference to her to leave it out.

This was more than 10 years ago and, if anything, Sydneysiders know even less about the real Christmas now than they did then. It's all become so muddled, dumbed down or wishy-washy in society that even when Christians and their churches try to present the truth of the season people often don't get it, or they aren't listening.

"In our world there is an inability for people to take in what we're saying," says

the head of the ministry department at Moore College, Archie Poulos. "They're not uninformed but they *are* uninformed about the truth, so this is confusing for them.

"At shopping centres now you might have the baby in the manger, the wise men and the angels, but what do you *do* with that? [People] know roughly what happened but they can't figure out where Santa, chocolate, the manger, presents and department stores and family time all fit into Christmas – with heightened emotions all around.

"What we want to say is that it is about Jesus but we need to give people a framework to understand that because, for them, Jesus has just become one of the bits of stories you have."

This is something schoolteacher Kristy Griggs can really identify with. Griggs teaches music in a Sydney primary school and this year decided to spend some class time singing traditional Christmas carols. To her amazement, the carols were completely unknown to her students.

"I was teaching them 'Silent Night', 'Away in a Manger', 'O Holy Night'... and actually the kids were saying, 'What's 'Away in a Manger'?'. We sing 'Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer'," she says. "I'm only 28 and I grew up with all the traditional Christmas carols in a non-Christian family and community – yet they don't know them."

It's a story that's also familiar to the senior

minister at St Luke's, Miranda, Stephen Gibson. A couple of years ago the church invited a choir from one of the local primary schools to prepare a traditional Christmas carol for the church's carols event. The teacher was happy to oblige but, on the night, the kids fronted up and sang "Santa is Bringing me a Dinosaur".

"I think that the teacher thought she was fulfilling our request," Gibson says, "but her inability to understand what constitutes a traditional Christmas carol tells a great deal about how far our culture has moved from a Christian and biblical understanding of Christmas."

Yet this ignorance isn't just in our classrooms – it's everywhere: in our families and friends, on our TVs and in our cinemas. Simon Smart, a director of the Centre for Public Christianity, recalls a famous scene in the 2003 film *Love Actually* [see below] where "a little girl comes home and announces that she has a role in the school nativity play, and that she will be playing the part of the lobster. It's a good laugh that highlights the deeper problem – that Christmas has, in many ways, been stripped of its meaning. Christmas can be whatever you want it to be."

"Mostly that won't be of much importance beyond the challenges of family dinners and last-minute shopping and a sentimentalised story for the kids. But somehow Christians need to find a way to communicate the Christmas story so that we recapture the utterly profound nature of what is being described. The maker of the universe coming to dwell among us as a human being is no frivolous tale. It ought to be the most confronting and hopeful message we ever hear – something that brings us to our knees. But you won't get that from an elaborate shop front display."

"Christmas has, in many ways, been stripped of its meaning. Christmas can be whatever you want it to be."

Simon Smart

Seafood at the manger



Love Actually (2003) is a sharply observed English comedy that considers love in many forms as Christmas approaches – although it skips Christianity almost entirely. The only mention of the original Christmas events in the film comes in this telling early scene with mum Karen and her daughter Daisy.

Karen: So what's this big news, then?

Daisy: We've been given our parts in the nativity play... and I'm the lobster.

Karen: The lobster?

Daisy: Yeah!

Karen: In the nativity play?

Daisy: Yeah – first lobster.

Karen: There was more than one lobster present at the birth of Jesus?

Daisy: Derrr...

CHRISTMAS AT SCHOOL

Ignorance at Christmas isn't confined to the non-Christian population. Christian parents can also be unsure of what is or isn't allowed in terms of teaching about, or celebration of, Christmas in our public schools.

The executive director of the Anglican Education Commission, Dr Bryan Cowling, says "Kids in primary schools learn about religion/s through a number of subjects... in that context one can say schools are not precluded from assisting kids to understand Christmas. In a school where there are multiple religions represented, a good teacher will ensure all the religions are treated respectfully".

Here are some recent educational Christmas myths:

MYTH 1: The separation of church and state prevents teaching about Christmas

This mistake comes from too many American shows on our TVs: Australia has never had a US-style separation of church and state. Historically, through our parliament, general religious education was described as "non-denominational Christianity" – although it now includes multiple religions. This means Christmas can be legitimately included in public schools as long as it's done in a non-denominational way.

MYTH 2: Public schools can't teach Christmas carols

Again, traditional Christmas carols can quite happily fit under the banner of general religious instruction. However Dr Cowling says that "if in a school situation you inserted a Colin Buchanan song at Christmas you could be accused of using it for proselytising purposes".

MYTH 3: Schools can only have Christmas services as part of SRE

A school can organise its own non-denominational Christmas service – and it can even have religious content. The school can also ask SRE teachers to take part. However, if the SRE teachers organise the service it becomes an SRE event and all SRE-related restrictions and rules apply in terms of who can attend etc.

MYTH 4: Nativity plays and nativity scenes are not allowed

Students are able to take part in activities that help them learn about the traditional story of Christmas as part of their general curriculum. Dr Cowling says that whatever is done, there needs to be sensitivity shown towards children from families of a different religion, but adds that "the school cannot say it's not allowed because it is Christian and it might offend somebody".

RECLAIMING CHRISTMAS

How churches, Christian groups or organisations go about presenting the true message of Christmas depends to some extent on where they are and who they're ministering to. The central message of new life and salvation breaking into the world in the person of Jesus is always the same but it's a matter for consideration and prayer as to how that can be communicated most effectively.

"We've got to win back the territory that this is what Christmas is about – that this event changed the world and every other event draws meaning from it," Poulos says. "We have to reclaim that."

This year St James', Croydon is hosting its second kids Christmas puppet show presented by Christian group Quizworx. The group has done a spot on Christmas morning for about a decade, but in 2011 St James' decided to run a full show in a Sunday afternoon service before Christmas to have the truths of the story presented simply – and hopefully to a wider audience.

"Last year we had 60 kids come and only 15 of them were our regular kids," says assistant minister Jon Guyer. "Everyone invited their mothers' group mums, and our playgroup... it was mostly outside families.

"The feedback we had was the parents were very happy for something specifically

aimed at their kids to do with Christmas. A lot of them would say they're not particularly interested for themselves but they're very interested for the kids to know the Christmas story and understand it. They feel like there's



Quizworx in action: Scruff and his friend Ros discuss Christmas.

something their kids need to be educated about in relation to Christmas, even though they don't know what that is for themselves."

Guyer says that the big turnout for the Quizworx show last year flowed through to Christmas services and the parish's January kids' mission, and church members will be seeking to take that a step further this year by finding ways to encourage people to join the church.

continued next page »



Colin Buchanan performs at Figtree Community Carols and, right, a youngster gets into the spirit of the event.

The Quizworx Christmas show changes every year and one of the organisation's founders, Matt Gorton, says this year's theme is Santa V Jesus. Scruff the puppet and his friend are discussing what the best thing is about Christmas – Scruff thinks it's Santa and his friend thinks it's Jesus, so a game show begins to decide who rules. Scruff eventually discovers, among other things, that Christmas actually began with Jesus and – unlike Santa – Jesus will give the present of eternal life “whether you've been good or bad”.

“We say that Santa is good but Jesus is the best, so we don't bag Santa too much but we do show that he's got nothing on Jesus,” Gorton says. “Santa is everywhere – the kids are going to see lots of Santa – so when they see him we want them to think ‘Santa's good, but Jesus is the best’... so make sure you get to know this Jesus.”

In the Wollongong suburbs, Figtree Anglican Church is gearing up for its annual carols night. With 6000 people to cater for it's not only the biggest outreach event in the church's calendar but also the biggest carols

“We only sing traditional Christmas carols... and for many people, this is their Christmas service.”

Karen Dixon

event in the area – anticipated, not just by locals, but by people across the Illawarra.

Yet while many carols nights focus on seasonal songs and Santa, Figtree's community carols is solidly Christian in content. They may have carnival rides, an ice-cream vendor and a free jumping castle for afternoon fun but there are also 160 church volunteers running a low-cost barbecue, handing out church “sample bags” and helping backstage – and when the real action kicks off in the evening the focus is squarely on Jesus. Colin Buchanan sings a set of his Christian songs with some help from the kids, and some Christmas carols as well. Once it's properly dark, it's carols all the way.

“We want to serve and bless our local community with an event that is all about what Christmas is about,” says Figtree's executive manager of community relations, Karen Dixon. “We only sing traditional Christmas carols... and for many people, this is their Christmas service. This is their event. We get stories of people who say they used to come to carols, then something happened in their lives that brought them to church.

“When they sing [at carols] they're lifting their voices in praise to our mighty God, and if we can provide that place, the words may spark something – that's our goal. That they may see... that the Holy Spirit would work within them to respond at this time of year.”

Figtree holds its event on the public high school oval next to the church and, while many parishes do similar things and seek to

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present the gospel as they do it, others are choosing to go back into the church.

Out at Windsor “every man and his dog is doing carols by candlelight”, says the parish’s senior minister, Aleks Pinter. So the church decided it was time to do something different: this year, they will hold a traditional Bible lessons and carols service, supported by a local orchestra and vocal group, in their historic church.

“We have done carols by candlelight events here and they’ve been reasonably successful in terms of attracting a crowd but... no-one comes to church on a regular basis following carols by candlelight,” Pinter says. “We’re not necessarily thinking they will after lessons and carols either, but we need to be open to trying all kinds of different things to get a hearing from people and present something different to them – and it might be through this that they do hear the gospel.”

At Maroubra, senior minister Jim Crossweller has also brought his carols event back into the church, believing it was an important move to reclaim the real nature of Christmas. He notes that, in past years, churches have often responded to declining biblical and hymnal literacy in the community with “a simplification of Christmas services – especially carols services”. He adds that he has “a document folder full of cutely titled carols sermons and, when I think about it, I would not be happy to preach any one of them on any other given Sunday”.

What changed his mind about how he

“We need to be open to trying all kinds of different things to get a hearing from people.”

Aleks Pinter



approached Christmas at church was hearing how a number of parents from his local school had been invited to share Hanukkah with a Jewish family. “They did not ‘dumb’ everything down for the Gentiles and the Gentiles were fascinated,” he says.

“So last year we turned from the pop-carols approach to something much more recognisably ‘us’. We moved from outside to in. We came home, so to speak. We decided not everything complicated needed explanation – and we put up with a number of complicated things. We were not afraid of ‘weird’ carols like ‘O Come, O Come Emmanuel’ with its antique-sounding biblical theology. What is more, we didn’t even explain it!

“The response from our visitors was overwhelming. From comments after, I believe they recognised we were meeting for God first and for his church second, and they felt privileged to be welcomed into what was a significant time for us. They didn’t understand everything but the impression that Christianity could be wrapped up in a five-minute kids’ talk left them with a worse understanding.”

Archie Poulos says it’s important for Christians to stop thinking that everyone in the community understands the meaning of Christmas.

“If you asked a group of people in their 20s or 30s what Christmas was about there’d be a religious element to it, but exactly what it is doesn’t matter because it’s about a ‘vibe’, not truth,” he says.

In exactly the same way, he adds, people with no faith at all can cry at a carols service because they’re not responding to “the truth of God become man, they’re responding to a notion – a vibe of something”.

“For them [Jesus is] a part of a story like Santa is part of a story – like the emotion I feel when I get together with my family is part of the story. So what our task has got to be is not to mock and dismiss these other elements but to shine the light on the part of the story that actually *makes* the story. Put the spotlight on that, show why that’s the most important thing and give people a framework through which they can understand more of what’s happening.” **SC**

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Amid the crush of people and shiny new things vying for our attention at Christmas, we can rejoice in the carols being played and the messages they convey, writes BILL SALIER.

MANY OF US WALK AROUND with a song in our heads. It changes through the day. Sometimes it's just the latest earworm, so you might find yourself humming along or even dancing in gangnam, gangnam style. It is better, though, when they are songs from the past evoked by moments, words, sounds, smells.

Some songs can take you back to a time and place. Usually our songs date us terribly: for example, a song called "Boys of Summer" takes me back to a terrific holiday I had with friends in 1984, though I think it's fair to say most of the good music comes from the '80s. Some of the more musically gifted among us are lucky enough to hear songs from the future... new songs and tunes just waiting to be played and recorded.

Perhaps you've been listening to the radio, something has come on and you have thought, "They're playing our song". The Honeydrippers' version of "Sea of Love" is one of those for me: a bridal dance song.

They're playing our song...

Christmas is a bit like that for Christian people. They are playing our songs and they are playing them everywhere and *will* be playing them everywhere for the next month or so. They are playing our songs in shops; they are playing our songs in the streets; they are playing our songs on TV; at big public gatherings; even in some lifts. Everywhere they are playing our songs... though maybe they are not playing them quite as much as they used to. Perhaps this, too, is a barometer of our times.

Nevertheless, many still know the most

famous of these songs, or at least snatches of them – "Silent Night"; "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing"; "O Little Town of Bethlehem"; "Once in Royal David's City"; "While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night"; "Joy to the World"; "O Come All Ye Faithful"... retelling the greatest story ever told.

They echo and allude to the material contained in the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke, particularly the great 'songs' recorded for us in Luke's Gospel. Strictly speaking, of course, these are more like hymns, poems, proclamations and prophecies but they are important in that they give so much direction as to what is about to happen in Luke's Gospel. They help us look backwards and forwards and locate the event of Jesus' birth within the grand sweep of God's redemptive purposes.

In Luke 1 we hear of the angel's words to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist (Lk 1:13-17). Quite appropriately a note of rejoicing is struck. The parents are old and had most likely given up on any prospect of a child. So, it's good news. But then the portentous words concerning the role of this child are pronounced: he will be like Elijah, turning many people of Israel back to their God in repentance; preparing them for the coming Lord.

We also hear the angel's words to Mary in the context of another unexpected pregnancy (Lk 1:30-33). This pregnancy is not a reason for shame but a sign of favour. The child is to be named Jesus and Matthew helps us to see that this means 'God saves' (Matt 1:21). This is a royal child destined to reign over God's house forever in fulfilment of the great promises made to King David. At this point the title 'Son of God' is most likely messianic but it is difficult not to draw a further conclusion when the divine agency of the Spirit is mentioned in respect of the conception.

A little further on Mary and Elizabeth meet and Mary proclaims the greatness of her Lord in words reminiscent of Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2 (Lk 1:46-55). Mary exalts in the humble circumstances of this birth and reflects upon the fact that the Lord she serves is the great reverser of circumstances, who can lift up the lowly, bring down the proud and mighty; who can satisfy the hungry and send the rich away empty. Mary then takes the note of fulfilment already struck, beyond the promises to David, all the way back to promises made to Abraham.

Further still and, at the birth of John, we hear from John's father Zechariah (Lk 1:67-79). Once again ideas of fulfilment of promises are in mind as Zechariah reflects on God's wonderful mercy and good memory as he ponders the implications of his son's birth. The promises to both David and Abraham are mentioned this time. The explicit language of salvation and redemption is added as Zechariah speaks of how both of these will come about through the forgiveness of sins. In some wonderful words Zechariah reflects on the significance of all of this: it will be like the welcome light of dawn breaking on those who lived in darkness all their lives, a darkness brought about by the shadow of death; peace will be the glorious result.

Eventually the birth of Jesus himself is greeted by a multitude of angels who can only ascribe glory to God, announcing once more the possibility of peace for those upon whom the Lord's favour rests (Lk 2:14).

The final 'song' in the sequence Luke records broadens the scope of the promised salvation explicitly, lest it might be thought that this was simply a local Jewish affair. In line with the hints already given about the promises to Abraham, Simeon talks about a salvation for all peoples, a revelation that will reach even to Gentiles (Lk 2:29-32).

Quite a program is outlined for us as readers of the Gospel and we go forward

primed by these songs with great expectations as to how this story will unfold. The promises of God to Abraham and David will be fulfilled. The forgiveness of sins will be made possible and, as a result, salvation and redemption might be enjoyed by anyone whose heart is turned to understand. A King will be born who will reign over an everlasting kingdom. It only remains to see how all of this works out.

I am a reader who enjoys the story and sometimes find, when I come to sections of the Bible formatted like poetry or song, or even a speech, that I am tempted to skip or skim. This can be a serious mistake, especially in Luke's writing when so much of

Pray for the many who will hear only muzak, a backing track to Christmas shopping [or] a nuisance busker.

the back story and commentary on the main story is given in speech, poem and song. They can feel frustrating because they sort of slow things down. But that is the point...

to slow us down to ponder the significance of what is going on in the narrative as it hurtles forward. To help us look beyond the events to their significance.

Christmas can be a confusing time: lots of different messages as to what it is all about that are good, bad and downright ugly. We will be assailed by varying versions of what constitutes the Spirit of Christmas and so on. Far be it from us to focus on the events and miss the significance, but I guess it can happen. The songs can help us to stay on track – if only we will listen. The trouble is that they are so often around and so familiar that they tend to recede into the background as wallpaper music – that goes for both the carols around us as well as Luke's 'songs'.

There is abundant good news here: good news to be reminded of and good news to bring to the attention of others.

There is good news to give thanks for: Christian people serve a God who makes and keeps promises over the long haul; there is the offer of salvation from God's judgement through the forgiveness of sins; there is the relief of dawn breaking following the darkness



The Rev Dr Bill Salier is vice principal of Moore Theological College. He lectures in New Testament and Ministry.



of a long night; the birth of the forever king of God's kingdom, our Lord Jesus Christ. The carols around us are hints and signs pointing us to the rich fullness of the biblical narratives and their accompanying songs.

There is good news to pray about – to pray for the many who will hear only muzak, a backing track to Christmas shopping, a nuisance busker, or a sweet, sentimental contribution to the Christmas spirit. So many can be so near and yet so far when these songs are sung. Perhaps we may have an opportunity with friends and neighbours to move from the songs to the story, using Luke's songs to guide us as to how to understand what is going on

They might be playing our songs but there are no turf wars here. I am happy our songs are still being played with their hints and whispers of the great story recorded there for us in Scripture. And our great hope is that, in the merciful compassion of our God, many more will hear the carols and eventually think, "They're playing our song".

SC

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Empty tables



Anglicare's new research dishes up the cold, hard facts about the lack of food in many Australian homes.

EMERGENCY FOOD SUPPLIES FOR those in need have never been more important.

The reason is made clear in the recent national report *When there's not enough to eat*, led by Anglicare Sydney, which identified that 96 per cent of Australian adults accessing the organisation's Emergency Relief (ER) across Australia were food "insecure" – and, as a result, Anglicare estimates that 45,000 adults did not have access to readily available, safe and nutritious food. Of this group, 22,000 were severely food insecure, with some people skipping meals and some regularly not eating for a whole day.

"Nationally, Anglicare agencies have been increasingly concerned at the levels of hardship experienced by the people accessing their emergency relief," said Sue



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King, Anglicare's director of advocacy and partnerships. "As a result, the Anglicare Australia network collaborated to achieve Anglicare Sydney's vision for a national food insecurity research project."

Anglicare in Sydney developed training materials to equip staff to work intensively with clients for six weeks across 63 Anglicare sites around Australia. *When there's not enough to eat* reports on the findings of these interviews.

"Our research clearly indicates that parents try to protect their children by deliberately missing meals themselves and sometimes going without food for a whole day," Ms King said. "It's shocking that among households with children that are severely food insecure, almost one in 10 reported that children did not eat for a whole day on a regular basis."

Going hungry affects people's ability to function in everyday life. They become depressed, socially isolated and experience poorer health. Adults find it harder to get a job. Parents indicated that going hungry affected their children's behaviour, led to poorer school attendance and impacted their ability to learn.

The most vulnerable households were those living on an income of less than \$1000 a fortnight. In these households, a family member was either receiving a disability support pension, a single parenting payment or the Newstart allowance. Some households did not have anyone in paid employment.

The report showed that, among food insecure households that rented privately, 94 per cent experienced rental stress and spent more than 30 per cent of their income in rent. People living in insecure housing, such as boarding houses, caravans or 'couch surfing' at friends' homes, were more likely to be food insecure.

Unexpected expenses such as a high power bill, a rent increase or car repairs can make people food insecure because food is often the only discretionary item in the weekly budget.

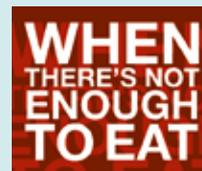
"Among food insecure respondents, 72 per cent said they should eat more fresh foods but these were too expensive," Ms King said. "Not having a refrigerator or workable stove, transport costs, or not having another person with whom to share food costs were other factors that exacerbate the situation."

Food insecurity is not a simple problem with a simple solution. Anglicare's report probably represents the tip of the iceberg, as it only surveyed people currently using its ER services. However, *When there's not enough to eat* also examined what could be done and made several recommendations. First among these was that the Federal Government's National Food Plan needed to better recognise the connection between inadequate income and food insecurity. Food policies for disadvantaged communities also needed to be implemented Australia-wide, across state and local governments, using a co-ordinated and integrated framework.

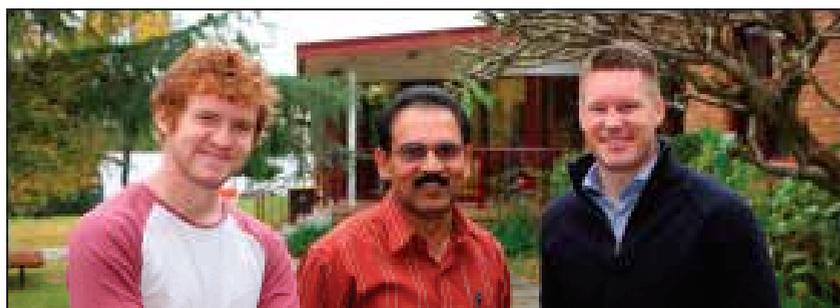


The report recommended establishing an independent body to regularly review the adequacy of all government payments and advised increasing Newstart and other allowance payments by \$50 a week. Another recommendation was that the Government should invest further in rent assistance, affordable housing and homelessness services. Increasing national funding of all emergency relief services would also assist in the critical role of relieving temporary food shortage.

SC



For the full *When there's not enough to eat* report or more ideas about how to help support Anglicare's services, see www.anglicare.org.au. Contribute to discussion about the report on Anglicare Sydney's Facebook page or on Twitter at #NotEnoughToEat



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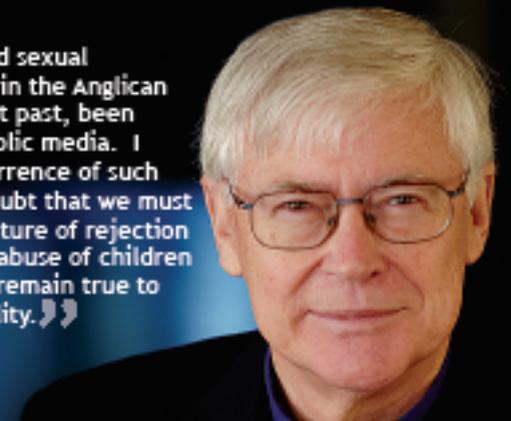
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"...issues of child abuse and sexual misconduct generally within the Anglican Church have, in the recent past, been widely reported in the public media. I want to reaffirm our abhorrence of such behaviour. There is no doubt that we must continue to 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



ZERO TOLERANCE for Misconduct and Abuse

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

A pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme is available to provide counselling and

other support to victims of misconduct or abuse.

The Safe Ministry Board formulates and monitors policy and practice and advises on child protection and safe ministry for the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney.

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CHARITIES COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Sydney Diocesan Secretariat (SDS) provides a range of valued services to a number of organisations and parishes in the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney.

This is a new role being created to assist diocesan organisations and parishes understand and comply with their obligations in an increasingly regulated not-for-profit sector. The focus of the role will be on compliance with the requirements of the recently established charities regulator, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

The successful applicant will have a university level qualification in the law or a related discipline and a number of years of experience in a legal environment. You will preferably also have experience in compliance/internal audit work. An understanding of a complex multi-entity institution such as the Anglican Church would be an advantage.

This role is for an initial period of 12 months. Although the role is likely to require a full-time commitment, consideration will be given to converting the position to part-time for applicants with the right skills and experience.

Consistent with the ethos and values of SDS, applicants for the position should have a demonstrated Christian commitment, preferably as a member of an Anglican church in the Diocese.

Your enquiries are welcome to Sarah Watson on (02) 9265 1559 or by email snw@sydney.anglican.asn.au

For more information visit - <http://sydneyanglicans.net/jobs/charities-compliance-officer-sds>



Artarmon Community Church EXECUTIVE PASTOR

We are looking to appoint an Executive Pastor to lead ACC, an independent church on Sydney's lower North Shore. ACC is also the church base for ENTER (The Entertainment Bible Ministry), which seeks to equip and evangelise those in entertainment. We are looking for a theological graduate, with strong organisational and team leading skills, and a gifted preacher.

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We envisage that you are already recognised as a progressive marketing executive. Ideally, your experience includes large, multi-faceted organisations and you possess tertiary qualifications with relevant professional memberships. A remuneration package based on industry standards reflect the value of this pivotal role.

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DIARY

Saturday, December 1

MOORE COLLEGE EXTERNAL STUDIES

Moore College Preliminary Theological Certificate (PTC) course Term 4 commences.

For more information visit <http://external.moore.edu.au>.

LOCATION | Churches and homes across Sydney

Saturday, December 8

CMS EASTERN SUBURBS REGIONAL PRAYER MEETING

LOCATION | St Matthias, Centennial Park, 10am-12pm

Monday, December 10 – Friday, December 14

THE REFORMATION IN EUROPE AND BRITAIN

The School of Christian Studies at Robert Menzies College will offer this new intensive unit for the summer semester 2012-13. A survey of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, it will place particular emphasis on the British Reformation and its continuing impact on contemporary evangelicalism. The unit will be taught by Dr Jonathan Harris, and can be paired with a Reformation Study Tour in June-July 2013. It is being offered at both the degree and masters level, and both the unit and the study tour are eligible for FEE-HELP.

For more information visit socs.org.au or call (02) 9936 6020

Saturday, January 5 – Friday, January 11

CMS SUMMER SCHOOL 2013

Be refreshed in January 2013! CMS Summer School is a vibrant, week-long

Bible and mission conference. Come along and be uplifted by God's mighty word, be encouraged by God's global mission and be refreshed with other believers.

Speakers include: Vaughan Roberts (Proclamation Trust), Archbishop Stephen Than Myint Oo (Myanmar), David Seccombe (George Whitefield College), and CMS missionaries.

Register online at www.nswsummerschool.org.au

LOCATION | Katoomba

Sunday, January 6 – Saturday, January 12

YOUTHWORKS JAM CAMP

JAM camp is going to be BIG in 2013! It's our 10th birthday and we plan to celebrate in style. As well as all of the usual room group activities (such as archery, caving, abseiling, canoeing, low ropes, craft and swimming) we will be looking at "The Big Picture" of the Bible and seeing what God is saying to us and doing for us.

Open to all in years 5-7 (in 2013) (NB. not years 3-5 as stated in a previous edition) for \$399 (subsidies available). For more information visit www.youthworks.net/events

LOCATION | Koloona Conference Centre, near Nowra

Sunday, January 6 – Saturday, January 12

YOUTHWORKS PERFORMING ARTS CAMP

Super heroes unite for Performing Arts Camp 2013. Throughout the week we will be putting together a performance which will happen on the final night of camp with your folks as the audience. We plan to run classes in three dance styles plus singing, drawing and video production – and you can use any instruments you wish to bring along. We'll also be having heaps of fun making new friends and learning more about the role of Jesus – the greatest

super hero.

Open to all in years 7-12 (in 2013) for \$459 (subsidies available)

For more information on visit www.youthworks.net/events

LOCATION | Rathane Conference Centre, near Sutherland

Wednesday, January 23 – Sunday, January 27

LEADERS IN TRAINING (LiT)

LiT is a conference for the youth of Sydney who are keen and committed to Jesus to come and learn what God says about leadership in their schools, youth groups, churches and communities, and to encourage them to go and be leaders – not just in the future, but NOW!

For more info, visit <http://www.lit.youthworks.net/>

LOCATION | Rathane Conference Centre, near Sutherland

Saturday, January 26

SPLASH DASH 'N' WALK FOR ANGLICARE

Time to lace up your runners, find some goggles and get training for the 2013 Australia Day Illawarra Aquathon. Join thousands of others in the Splash, Dash 'n' Walk around Wollongong Harbour to raise money for Anglicare, or the charity of your choice.

Whether you're six or 60 there's an event for you with three swim and run events and individual and team events. There's also a new walking event for those of us who prefer a more leisurely pace!

All funds raised will support Anglicare

services in the Illawarra which help more than 4000 families and individuals every year.

Register online at www.aquathon.com.au and make a donation to Anglicare, or follow the links to start your own fundraising.

Various dates in January & February

SCHOOLS MINISTRY CONFERENCE

Come join hundreds of SRE teachers as we kick off the new school year and think through 'Mission in our Backyard' and how to strengthen the connections between SRE, your local congregation and the schools.

Please visit <http://www.youthworks.net/events/smc-2013> for location and pricing information. Places fill fast!

LOCATIONS and DATES | January 31, West; February 2, North; February 5, Wollongong; February 9, City

Monday, February 4

MOORE COLLEGE PRISCILLA & AQUILA CENTRE CONFERENCE

Teaching Truth Together: Titus 2. The 2013 conference will help delegates think more seriously and creatively about how men and women can work better together in ministry. The main speaker is James de Costobadie (the vicar of St John's Latimer Square, Christchurch, New Zealand).

For more information visit <http://paa.moore.edu.au/Pages/Events.aspx>

LOCATION | Moore College, 15 King St, Newtown

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Sunday 2 December
7:30pm Advent Carols

Wednesday 19 December
8:00pm Lessons and Carols
8:30pm Candlelight Carol Service

Thursday 26 December
8:00pm Candlelight Carol Service

Sunday 23 December
7:00pm Nine Lessons and Carols

Monday 24 December
8:00pm Children's Christmas Service
10:00pm Midnight Eucharist

Tuesday 25 December
7:45am @ 10:00am Eucharists

ORCHESTRAL MASSES IN JANUARY

Sun 13 Jan, 10:00am
Hilary Mass, Sancti Eucharist

Sun 20 Jan, 11:00am
Foster – Missa Festiva
(from mid 1990s)

Sun 27 Jan, 11:00am
Requiem – Missa in C, Op.86

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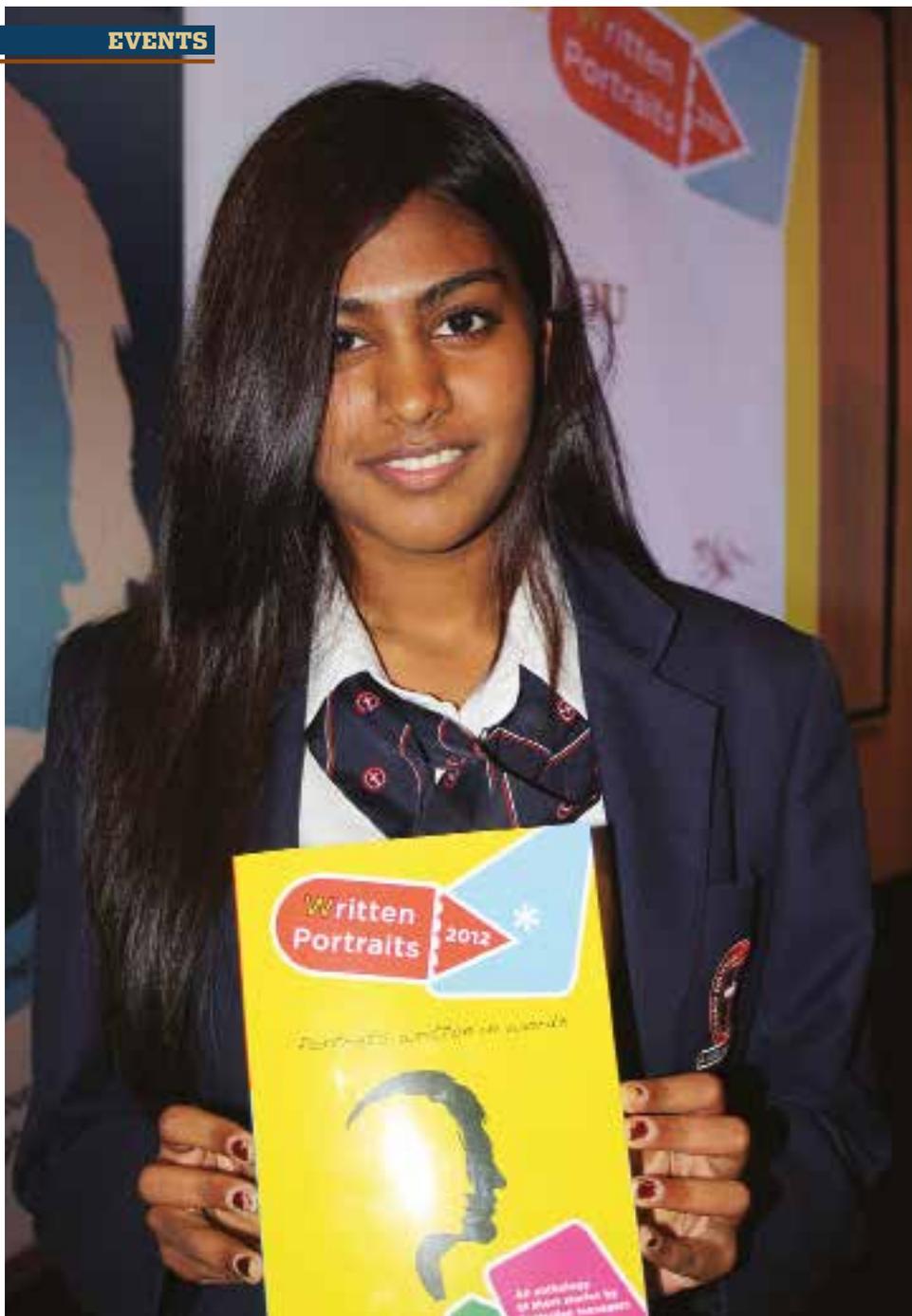


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Creativity blossoms at Thomas Hassall

STUDENTS FROM THOMAS HASSALL Anglican College near Hoxton Park were among a select group of high school students whose creative writing was chosen to be included in an anthology, through a new writing competition.

Written Portraits is a state-wide competition which aims to “showcase young Australian writing talent and provide a creative platform for expression of inner feelings and emotions associated with being a teenager”.

Roma Kumar (above), a Year 12 student from Thomas Hassall, won the 16-18 years category and, along with winners of two other categories, received \$500 as well as a further \$5000 for their schools to use to improve literacy programs.

School captain Peter O’Mara was one of eight students who received a Highly Commended for their stories – his was titled “Murder on the Greyhound Express”.

Along with Roma and Peter, the work of six other Thomas Hassall students was selected from a field of 150 to be included in the anthology *Written Portraits 2012: Portraits Written in Words*, which was released in October.

“Good storytelling takes us outside ourselves and brings us into other times or places where we find out about other people’s stories,” said English teacher Mr Jon Seccombe. “It allows us to enter into a world which is different from ours and so gives us an opportunity to reflect with an independent eye on our own experiences.”

Graduation day for 2012’s Year 13 group



Class of 2012: Year 13 students celebrate the completion of their discipleship training.

STUDENTS FROM ANGLICAN Youthworks’ gap year program, Year 13, recently celebrated their graduation at a ceremony held at Danebank Anglican School on November 14.

This year 83 students graduated from the program, more than double the number from 2011.

“We are really thankful to God for how the well the year went,” said director, the Rev Andrew Nixon. “There was a little bit of trepidation with such a large number of students, but God was very gracious. We saw great maturity, growth and transformation in all the kids.”

Almost 700 people attended the graduation, where they heard Archbishop Peter Jensen speak on Romans 12.

“The challenge that Peter gave was that the students would all be thinking about what they’re going to be doing next year,” Mr Nixon said. “But that isn’t what matters. What matters is who you’re going to be.”

Applications are now open for the 2013 intake and, while more applications have been received than at the same time last year, Mr Nixon expects numbers to remain similar to 2012.

Students can complete the program in one of two ways, either through continuous mode or intensive mode. The intensive mode is offered for students not from Sydney and, in 2012, students from as far away as Wickham and Karratha in north-west WA were



among those who completed the program.

“It’s really great to see students and churches from around the country recognising the ministry of Year 13,” Mr Nixon said.

In a bid to strengthen its ties with Year 13, Wickham Anglican Church, which is supported by Bush Church Aid, is offering two \$10,000 scholarships for one guy and one girl to undertake the program in 2013 in partnership with their church, ‘for a year of mission to the local population’.

Students wishing to apply for the scholarships are being asked to submit their applications before Christmas this year.

For more information on the program see www.youthworks.net/year13

MOVES

CONNECTIONS MADE



The **Rev Alistair Seabrook** has become the new rector of Dundas-Teloepa after four years as assistant minister and then senior assistant minister in the parish of Gladesville.

Mr Seabrook says he and his wife Sarah were open to a move but were “really surprised by how God worked in the process”. Part of Gladesville’s congregation plant to Canada Bay in the past two years, they were busy and loved the work they were doing, but when Dundas-Teloepa became vacant it kept coming up in conversation.

“A number of people said that from

what they knew of the parish it would be a good fit for us,” he says. “I didn’t really know much about Dundas so it was one of those real surprises, when we sat down and looked at the profile, that we thought we could be a good fit as well.

“We met the nominators and felt a real connection with the people and a common purpose in what they were looking to do and felt we could be part of that. Our hearts were warmed to the people and the work and we thought, ‘This could be what God has in store for us’ – after that we realised that we were going to be really upset if they *didn’t* invite us!

“It marks a new chapter for the church here and for us as a family.”

NEW START FOR CAMPSIE

After almost six years as the assistant minister of the parish of Campsie (with a regional bishop or archdeacon as acting rector for a good portion of that time) the **Rev Omar Anheluk** was inducted last month as rector of the parish.

He and his family came to the parish straight from college but he jokes that it took “at least five years before the long-timers at church were convinced that we really did want to stay”.

Mr Anheluk says that being made

rector in Campsie is “great on so many levels. As I talk to the oldies it seems to be acting as a confirmation of their commitment and loving service over many years, as well as showing us that the Lord will provide in his own time and in his own way – all we need to do is to trust him and act.”

He can see the Lord’s provision for them – not only through the teaching and support of former rector David Gilmour and former acting rectors Bishop Peter Tasker and Archdeacon Ian Cox – but through the capacities of the people within the church itself.

“[This] has really taught me that we truly are one body in the Lord with many parts – each part exercising for the common good,” Mr Anheluk says. “And that is our challenge and privilege from now: to pray, teach, lead and live as God’s people in this multi-ethnic suburb to the glory of God, experiencing his gentle hand of care along the way.”

HALL FULL-TIME AT ENC

After almost 30 years as rector of Crossway Anglican Churches (formerly Carlingford and North Rocks parish) the **Rev Bruce Hall** is stepping down to focus on his other job as director of the Department of Evangelism and New Churches (ENC).

“Crossway needs a full-time rector and not a part-time rector and so this is the outworking of the seed of my taking on the directorship of ENC at the beginning of this year,” Mr Hall says. “Raising up evangelists and developing church planting in the Diocese requires a lot of time and effort – more time and effort than being part-time enabled. I’ve also become the acting rector of St Philip’s, Auburn where I’m trying to put into practice some of the ideas I’ve been thinking about.”

Mr Hall will finish up at Crossway at the end of December.

IN BRIEF

The **Rev David Cole** has finished as curate-in-charge of the parish of Jamberoo where he was the senior minister from May 2009. The parish has made the decision to move to a part-time ministry arrangement. Mr Cole still retains the Archbishop’s authority to officiate.

The **Rev Lachlan Edwards** is moving from Exmouth Anglican Community Church in Western Australia to take up the role of senior assistant minister at Figtree Anglican Church in 2013. Mr Edwards will have a particular responsibility for outreach.

VALE



The **Rev Arthur Horrex** died on July 11, 2012. Born in 1938, Mr Horrex was from a farming family in North Richmond. He left school early to work on the farm but felt the calling to ministry. He did a leaving certificate through TAFE while working as a builder’s labourer then began his studies at Moore College in the early 1960s.

After graduating, Mr Horrex took on a number of curacies: Dapto, All Saint’s, Parramatta, and Rozelle with St Mary’s, Balmain. He then became the rector of St Mary’s, Balmain before moving in 1969 to the parish of Robertson.

Mr Horrex spent the mid-1970s working in the Perth Diocese before being called back to Sydney in 1977 as

rector of Rockdale, where he served until becoming rector of Punchbowl with Greenacre five years later. He had a general licence from 1986.

During his time in Western Australia Mr Horrex was involved in a car accident that caused him ongoing pain from then onwards. A brain hemorrhage in 2001 meant he subsequently focused more on a ministry of prayer, although he continued to run a Bible study until his final year. His wife Anne said her husband “encouraged people to a greater trust in the Lord and God’s word” and, as he battled through his own suffering with God’s help, “he looked forward to seeing the Lord in glory”.

Judge Peter Grogan,

a former Chancellor of the Diocese of Sydney, died on November 11, aged 77. Born in 1934, Mr Grogan attended North Sydney Boys’ High School where he was made captain in 1951. An excellent swimmer, he took part in State championships while studying



law at the University of Sydney, and continued to win medals in freestyle until well into his 70s.

Mr Grogan was called to the bar in 1961 and served as a barrister in NSW for 28 years before his appointment as a judge of the District Court in 1989. In 2000 he undertook the one-year Diploma of Bible and Missions at Moore College to be better equipped to serve God in his parish (St Swithun’s, Pymble) and beyond. He became Chancellor of the Diocese in 2005 but resigned in mid-2008 due to ill health.

Archbishop Jensen described Mr Grogan as “a distinguished servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and of our church. I was particularly thankful for his time as Chancellor of the Diocese. He made a significant contribution in advice and leadership in that role.

“We express our deepest sympathy to Mrs Grogan and the family but rejoice in his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, our resurrected King.”

The **Rev John Holle** died on November 22, 2011. Born in 1926, Mr Holle studied at Moore College in the mid-1950s. He became curate of Epping in 1958, then travelled to Queensland in 1960 to become chaplain and superintendent of St George’s Homes for Children in the Diocese of Rockhampton.

Mr Holle returned to Sydney in 1964 as chaplain and candidate’s secretary of the Anglican Board of Mission’s training college in Stanmore, with his wife Moya as the college matron, and in 1970 he became warden of the college.

In 1975 he took up the post of curate in the parish of Hunters Hill and two years later was called to St Paul’s, Burwood as rector – a position he held until his retirement in 1993.

Burwood’s present rector, the Rev James Collins, said Mr Holle “was a very faithful and loving priest here”, with “complete dedication to serving God and God’s people”.

He developed close links between the parish and the Anglican Board of Mission, teaching the congregation that “the kingdom of God is bigger than what happens in just one parish”, Mr Collins said.

“There was always the sense of serving and building God’s kingdom by reaching out into the community.”

Vacant Parishes

LIST OF PARISHES AND PROVISIONAL PARISHES, VACANT OR BECOMING VACANT, AS AT NOVEMBER 21, 2012

- Crossway
- Darling Point
- Dural District
- Glenquarie
- Northmead & Winston Hills
- South Hurstville

MUSIC

Christmas is coming...

Advent Silver & Gold
Various artists Sufjan Stevens

It's appropriate that, with Christmas only a few weeks away, we should begin to turn our thoughts from busyness to prepare, once again, to celebrate Jesus' birth. How you do that depends entirely on you, but there's a lot to enjoy in these two releases.



Advent is the latest offering from Emu Music and features songs by Rob Smith, Philip Percival and Simone Richardson, Nicky Chiswell and Trevor Hodge.

It's not a Christmas album as such, as the tracks cover a number of elements in our spiritual walk (such as God's plan through history in "See The Man", or the desire for Jesus' return in "Eternal King"). However, about half focus on the coming of Jesus – including the spot-on Advent song "Immanuel – God Has Come", plus the gentle "Did You Know?" that looks at Jesus' birth through the eyes of Mary, the shepherds and Simeon.

Not all songs would work as congregational numbers but it's always good to have new music to consider for church at Christmas.



In an entirely different vein, American folk-indie singer-songwriter Sufjan Stevens has released his second Christmas collection, *Silver & Gold*. This is a five-disc set combining traditional carols, Christmas songs and Stevens' own music and highlights the

confusion of the season for many.

Stevens' quirky style isn't for everyone – and not everything he tries works – but he's clearly crafted each CD with a great deal of thought. Sometimes you get a whole song, sometimes just a snippet, and the styles vary wildly from choral singing to mountain folk to electronic pop to family singalong. It is, on occasion, completely weird.

Yet it's not hard to admire his inventiveness – and only he could get away with a song called "Ding-a-ling-a-ring-a-ling" (including the lyrics "Baby Jesus he's the king-a-ling-a-ling") and plonk right next to it a dead straight version of "How Shall I Fitly Meet Thee" from Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.

Judy Adamson

When saying "no" can be the best thing

ARCHIE POULOS

IT IS NOT THE USUAL ADVICE THAT YOU get, but saying "No" to Christian activities grows the size of ministry.

In Christian ministry it has been assumed that it is best to promote and do anything that has a gospel edge to it. This assumption is now being challenged.

There is much research being conducted on two fronts. The first examines churches that have a policy of only doing a narrow list of preapproved activities and saying "No" to any others with churches that say "Yes" to anything. The results (entirely from the American setting) conclusively say churches that say "No" grow much faster than those that say "Yes".

Some of our brilliant students at Moore College have been doing research into areas such as this and they found similar results in Sydney as well. One piece of research established that, in growing churches, 74 per cent of ministers said "No" to a Christian activity in the past six months, while in churches that were declining or stable "No" was only said 56 per cent of the time.

The second area of research is in the area of the minister's ability to say "No" to personal things he is asked to do. Again, the American literature indicates those who say "No" exhibit better ability to analyse and make good decisions. The reason often given is that such people are better "differentiated" and can make more objective choices. Our students conducted surveys of ministers on this issue, too, and found similar results to the American data.

What does it mean?

There is an endless list of good things Christians can do. Because of this, we so often get overwhelmed and end up doing nothing. Saying "No", surprisingly, *increases* the engagement of Christians in ministry. I have done a little research into mission

societies supported by churches.

When churches support only a select number of mission societies congregations generally feel more committed and give more support than in churches that support any and many societies. It is part of our responsibility to focus attention and call for commitment to that focus.

Most ministry is best conducted by groups of people.

To have numerous activities often leads to individuals who have a vision doing the task by themselves. It would be good in our churches to have people working side by side in ministry.

Having said that, it worries me that to always say "No" means that new avenues that could bear great gospel fruit are not explored, and so we must beware of the weaknesses of a blanket rule.

And what about so many of our leaders who are unable to say "No"? Well, they must take control of their diaries, but congregations also need to give them the space and grace to say "No". I have noticed that when this happens, congregational members tend to become more willing to take up ministry opportunities.

Saying "No" is counterintuitive, but there is nothing wrong with it and it is very helpful for Christian ministry.

SC



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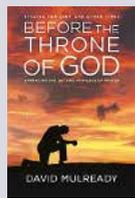
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BOOKS

Prayer stimulus

Before the Throne of God: Embracing the Joy and Privilege of Prayer by David Mulready

For many years Anglican Press Australia, a subsidiary of Youthworks, has been publishing Lenten study books. Written by evangelical authors, they have consistently provided good quality studies for the 40 days of Lent.



The newly published group of studies on prayer by Bishop David Mulready is another gem for the series. The title of the series is now 'Studies for Lent and other times', so for those who are not persuaded of the importance of ecclesiastical calendars there is no reason not to

purchase this book and be edified by its contents at any time of the year.

The book is divided equally between Old Testament prayers and New Testament prayers. Each chapter is short and easily digestible, expounding a selection of the biblical text.

I found the Old Testament chapters particularly encouraging as saints of old engaged the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from a position of partial knowledge and limited revelation, yet their prayers are no less instructive for us as those of the apostle Paul.

While readers will find numerous references to life in North West Australia, where David served for seven years as bishop, the writing is easily accessible and, in fulfilment of its subtitle, enables the reader to embrace the joy and privilege of prayer. Also included are questions for group discussion as well as some stimulating sermon outlines.

Whether as a resource for personal study or group study, this publication will serve as an excellent stimulus to your prayers as well as your Bible reading.

Glenn N. Davies

Grommets, warts and all

GROUNDSWELL
BY BRETT DAVIS

KARA MARTIN

BOOKS THAT ARE HISTORIES OF Christian organisations can be incredibly inspiring or mind-numbingly boring, in spite of the best intentions. It is particularly a risk if the writer is the person who began the organisation, as they can be blinded by their own involvement. They often romanticise the past, gloss over mistakes and get bogged down in detail of interest only to those closely involved. So it was with some trepidation that I picked up *Groundswell: The Christian Surfers Story*, written by the organisation's founder, Brett Davis. However, it was a pleasant and encouraging read by a reluctant leader who writes with humility.

Davis was wise to take this on as a writing project and invite contributions from members of the organisation. Substantial quotes from others help to diversify and illuminate the story.

Christian Surfers was one of the pioneers of sports ministry and seems to have almost happened by accident: Davis and a mate decided to meet together and run Bible studies with invitations to other Christians who surfed.

The idea caught on, with the group helping to provide an alternative to a subculture in southern Sydney that was rife with drugs, alcohol, sex and antisocial behaviour. The recent TV series *Puberty Blues* captures the atmosphere and lifestyle very accurately.

Fast-forward 45 years to today and Brett

Davis is leader of a global movement that has successfully reached hundreds of thousands of people, including successfully bringing the story of Jesus to countries where gospel work has been difficult, such as Japan and Indonesia.

One of the particularly useful features of the book is a collection of core values that have undergirded the movement's success:

- **Surfing!** Any sport or vocational ministry should actually value the activity that people gather around, with the proviso that the activity is submitted to Jesus and performed for his glory.
- **Partnering** with the local church, building a bridge between the group and the church.
- **Evangelising** in culturally relevant ways.
- **Serving** others, building relationships and nurturing trust.
- **Empowering** members and helping them fulfil their potential.
- Praying for individual and cultural **transformation**.
- Gathering as an **international** family of missions.

Davis writes with great honesty and simplicity, recording difficult moments – such as the time they endorsed the work of a couple in Central America without providing much support and the couple's marriage broke down, the husband took up with a local woman and the cause of the gospel was very

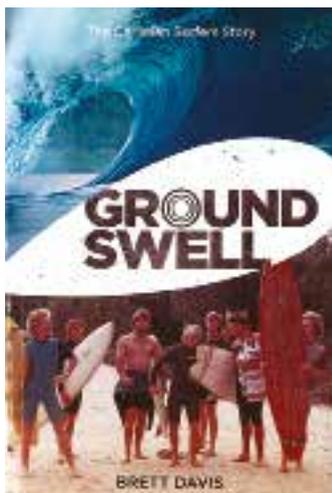
much undermined.

On the whole, though, Christian Surfers experienced rapid growth and success. There are many testimonies of the impact of the group with lives transformed by the gospel. Of particular note is the impact of the *Surfers Bible*, which has been translated into many languages. It is simply a copy of the New Testament with testimonies of surfers, boogie board riders and shapers, as well as cartoons and tips for reading God's word, all in surfer-friendly lingo.

A recent development is the invitation to provide chaplains for the professional surfing circuit. The opportunity to do that resulted from years of commitment to voluntary acts of service at professional events: video replays, providing free food and refreshments and being available for conversation and counselling.

The success of Christian Surfers is all the more remarkable because it is a story of ordinary people, many of them unknown, with most of them never in formal full-time "ministry", or studying at Bible college, or going overseas to evangelise. It is simply people taking their passion for an activity to God and seeing how he can use it for his glory. **SC**

Kara Martin is a lecturer with School of Christian Studies and Wesley Institute and is an avid reader and book group attendee. Kara does book reviews for Hope 103.2's Open House.



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Rt Rev Ross Nicholson



Vintage style

QUARTET
RATED M

JUDY ADAMSON

NO-ONE SAID THAT GETTING OLD was easy, but at least in this film it's something done with style, grace and good humour.

The setting is Beecham House, grandly subtitled as a "home for retired musicians". All of them are ageing with their artistic temperaments well intact, which makes life pretty entertaining for the staff. How many retirement homes could you visit, after all, where residents scurry off into corners and practise a trio, or a piece of Gilbert and Sullivan, or a big Verdi opera chorus for the opening number of their annual fundraiser?

Even better, the fundraiser is being directed by the imperious Cedric (Michael Gambon). "Call me *Ceedric*," he says

pompously, grumping at this duo or that group because what they're planning to perform is too lowbrow for his tastes.

Amid this eccentric daily routine we find Reg (Tom Courtenay), Wilf (Billy Connolly) and Cissy (Pauline Collins) – three of Britain's greatest operatic stars of a former era – all friends, now enjoying a more or less quiet retirement. Cissy is the happiest, living blissfully in a world of memories that only she doesn't realise are fading more each day. Reg is genteel and uncomplaining (except about the lack of breakfast marmalade), while Wilf is wicked, full of senior testosterone and frustrated at his body's increasing inability to keep up. Why is it, he grumbles, that he can detail every aspect of a recording he made 40 years ago but can't remember what he had for breakfast?

Then retired diva Jean (Maggie Smith) comes to live at Beecham, dropping into their calm, ordered world like a bomb. Cedric (sorry, *Ceedric*) is beside himself with excitement. He knows the public would flock to hear Jean sing with the other three as they used to do in years past – a winning combination that will, in theatrical parlance, put bums on seats for the fundraiser and help ensure Beecham House's financial future for another year.

Reg, as Jean's former husband, is still smarting about previous betrayals and doesn't want to perform with her, while Jean doesn't want to sing at all – too fearful of the imperfections of age.

Cissy is fond of repeating the Bette Davis quote that "old age is not for sissies" – and she's right. Their bodies aren't what they were, their future is much shorter than their past and mistakes have been made that have caused profound hurt and regret. But are they willing to confront the truth of all this

with their eyes open? And are they willing to take hold of their future, however short it is?

Jean struggles with the concept of embracing life, commenting sorrowfully that, "I was someone once". But she is tellingly answered by Cissy: "I thought I still *was* someone". Cissy might be losing her marbles but she has grasped the truth that life is for living and that regret and unforgiveness are leaden shoes that will bury your capacity for joy.

Ronald Harwood has created the screenplay from his own four-person stage play and the film cannot help but be an improvement. You can almost sense his relief in being able to show the artistic verve of Beecham House through a brilliant and experienced ensemble cast (we get to see just how experienced in the end credits, but I'll let you discover those for yourself).

As a former actor himself, Harwood has written a number of his works about stage people, and captures their style and eccentricities with wit and affection. Some of his ideas are more successful than others (the scene with youthful visitors learning about opera via rap from Reg is a little clumsy, though well-intentioned), but on the whole the story rips along at a smart pace.

All the major performers are at least 70 ("vintage wine", as Wilf would put it), as is their director Dustin Hoffman – who makes his debut behind the camera with a keen eye for theatrical business and the pleasures of classical music. He's telling a tale of his generation, and while the story makes it clear everyone knows they're slowly disintegrating physically and/or mentally, the nuanced and skilled performances of the actors (and musicians) are one of the chief pleasures of *Quartet*. It's a delight – a real Christmas bon bon amid the rush of Boxing Day blockbusters. **SC**

Other Boxing Day releases

Les Misérables



This is a cinematic version of the musical that turned Victor Hugo's novel of revolution, redemption and love into a worldwide stage hit, so audiences can be pretty confident of what they're going to get here. Maybe it won't be as exciting as a night of live theatre, but Hugh Jackman is doing the honours as Valjean so that's good enough for me. Other major roles are played by Russell Crowe, Anne Hathaway (pictured), Helena Bonham Carter and Amanda Seyfried, so prepare to go to the barricades – and don't forget the tissues.

Wreck-It Ralph

Disney's big release for Christmas, *Wreck-It Ralph* is set in a video arcade where the game characters come to life after closing time and "visit" each other (in a *Night in the Museum* and *Toy Story* kind of way). Ralph is typecast by his game, so is not befriended by the other characters. However, he is sick of being the bad guy and looks through the games for friendship and acceptance. With the voices of John C. Reilly and Jane Lynch, the film is an interesting take on challenging preconceived notions of who people are – and who they might potentially become.



See a preview of *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* in *Connect for Life*.