

August 2012

Southern Cross

SYDNEY ANGLICANS CONNECTING

Drive it forward

What it takes to rev up ministry to men

- › Making a joyful noise in our churches
- › Zombies in Bethlehem



COVER

Rouse Hill's billycart derby: one way churches can drive men's ministry more effectively.

PHOTO: David Marshall/Newspix

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Our buildings

DR PETER JENSEN

AS CHRISTIANITY HAS DEVELOPED IN history it has become a religion identified with buildings. Needless to say, some of the world's greatest architectural glories are churches and cathedrals. Christianised cities are also studded with many small and often undistinguished suburban churches. Christians have found it important to have buildings both to meet in and to proclaim their local presence.

It is perfectly true, of course, that Christianity does not need buildings to survive and prosper.

The old cliché is right – the church is the gathering of people, not the building. The first Christians did not have specially dedicated church buildings but more likely met in larger homes and other gathering places, perhaps in the open air. There are many churches in the world which have no property and, as our church-planting efforts have shown, it is sometimes better to use a secular venue such as a school. We could certainly argue that specific buildings are not necessary. But it is also certainly true that we have found the provision of church buildings practically useful.

Yet we must be careful to ensure that what we build reflects theological principles and serves the nature of the gospel. Thus, we do not have a temple since we are no longer under the law. Our temple is a heavenly one. Jesus is our great High Priest. We have a heavenly altar and sanctuary. Our sacrifice was made once for all upon the cross. We must not model our buildings on the temple of the Old Testament any more than we replicate Old Testament worship.

Of course church buildings should be shaped by theological presuppositions. I suppose the key theological question is how and where we encounter God when we gather together.

That is the primary aim of our meeting. We assemble in order to encounter God in the way he has appointed, in the presence of one another. The New Testament points to such principles as edification, good order and loving service which ought to mark the experience of the Christian congregation.

For those who believe that we encounter God chiefly through numinous experience, the building must express the transcendence of God – what people call the beauty of holiness. For those who emphasise the sacramental encounter with God the building will assume a temple-like shape, with the focus on an altar and the sanctuary. For those who believe that the presence of God is mediated through music, the building may well take on

aspects of a performance space with the attendant lighting and audio set-up. For those who emphasise the word as the point of contact with God, the pulpit and lectern will be central and the building will facilitate faithful listening.

Of course virtually all biblical Christians believe in the sacraments and in experience and in music and in preaching. But the building will reflect the priority, the focus of what people do when they meet. For that reason Protestant evangelical Christians have typically erected churches and furnished them in ways which will facilitate preaching. Those who have (say) a sacramental view will find such buildings uninspiring.

With the proper emphasis on the local congregation as the body of Christ which developed strongly in the 20th century, modern churches also explicitly cater for the task of strengthening relationships between Christians. This has sometimes meant quite radical changes to the interior and use of our buildings, as too has the revolution in what may be called the technology of music and sound. These revolutions can cause a great deal of ill-will or be resisted for a long time.

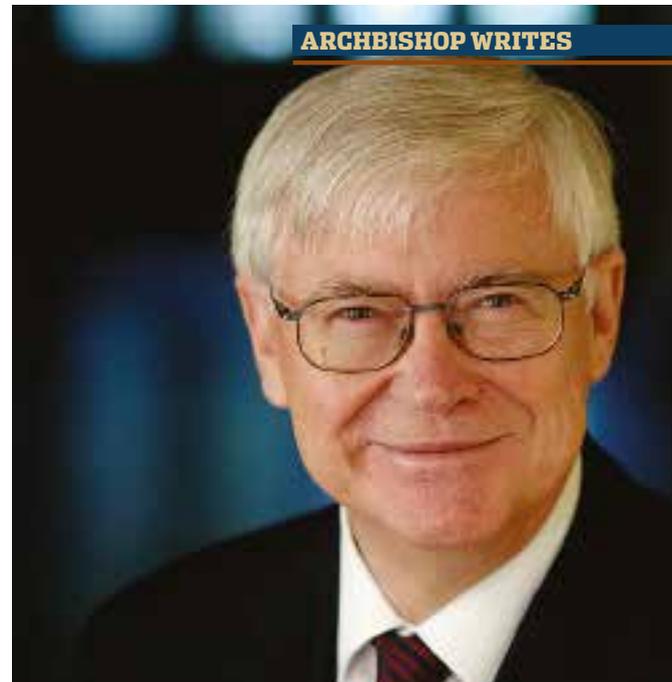
This is understandable.

As embodied persons our buildings matter to us, especially when we are connected to them over time. The memories of marriages and baptisms, confirmations and funerals linger on. We may point to where we were sitting when we were especially challenged by the word of God.

For all sorts of reasons buildings grow on us. Others may not see this at all but the invisible tug of memory is strong. The buildings become, in time, more than merely useful. They shape our appreciation of the faith.

But resistance to change can be stifling and unhelpful. In some places our buildings are so strongly endowed with personal memories, often expressed in memorials, that they become like darkened mausoleums and actually deaden spiritual life and repel outsiders. Likewise we persevere with buildings which ought to be modernised or rebuilt simply because they are old. History can be oppressive.

Whether creating a new building or living in an old one, we need constantly to ask ourselves how the building is serving the church that meets in it and how it can better reflect the gospel principles which are, after all, the reason for having such edifices to start with.



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ARCHITECTURE AWARD

Dapto wins Blacket prize



Drawcard: the multi-function auditorium at Dapto is becoming a community hub.

emerging architect of the year. We had already appeared on the cover of *Architectural Review Asia Pacific*.”

Despite the accolades Mr Semenchuk says the functionality of the building is the real highlight for the parish.

“It has aided our ministry in many ways,” he says. “The foyer and public spaces, including the café, see a steady array of people meeting and gathering. It provides a great way for us to ‘slow people down’ who are visiting or using our preschool and programs.

“The auditorium has provided room to grow and average Sunday attendance has increased 20 per cent since September. The spaces work and perform in the way we envisaged. It has created great interest in the community and it is fast becoming a significant community hub.”

A SYDNEY ANGLICAN building project has won a major NSW architectural prize.

Silvester Fuller, the designers of the new auditorium at Dapto Anglican Church,

have been awarded the Blacket Prize for Regional Architecture.

The prize is named after the 19th century architect Edmund Blacket who designed Sydney University, St

Andrew’s Cathedral and a host of other Anglican buildings.

The jury of the Australian Institute of Architects NSW Architecture Awards said Silvester Fuller’s

‘contemporary, confident, bare and unexpected’ architecture presented an ‘uncompromising approach that has been embraced by this regional community’.

The rector of Dapto, the Rev Stephen Semenchuk, describes the prize as exciting. “The building won a prize in the public space category as well, and one of the architects was the



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Olivia's wedding day was a joyous occasion for the whole family. Photo: © iStockphoto.com

Olivia's wedding day should have been a fulfilment of her mother Margot's dreams. But it was becoming a crisis for the whole family.

When Margot was diagnosed with advanced cancer the wedding was approaching, they feared that she might not live long enough to share the day. Margot was admitted to Greenwich Hospital Palliative Care. She was frail, had lost a lot of weight and was facing her last days.

Our Pastoral Care Worker, Dee Howe, worked with the family and the staff at Greenwich Hospital to move the wedding – and the reception – to the hospital so that Margot could attend. It was a difficult decision but in the end, the day was a great success. Dee commented "the wedding had a great sense of celebration about it."

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GLENHAVEN BUYS BLOCK NEXT DOOR

Opportunity knocks



Too small: John Hooton (right) with Trevor Ratcliff, warden and member of the property task force, outside the church.

RUSSELL POWELL

THE PARISH OF Glenhaven has jumped at a "once-in-a-generation" chance to expand its small church site.

The Emmanuel Church on Glenhaven Road occupies just 0.2 of a hectare and is already bursting at the seams. In February this year the adjoining two-hectare property came onto the market and Glenhaven's minister, the Rev John

Hooton, and the parish council knew they'd have to act quickly.

"When this property came up our first response was 'If this happens, it's going to be a work of God'... and it has been all the way along," he says. Congregational meetings were held and a five-stage plan was developed, with the help of a consultant, to ensure the property would fit future ministry needs.

"There was incredible support from the

longer-term members of the church saying, "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity," Mr Hooton says. "The purchase has been a huge stretch financially for the parish. People have given so generously, while the funds the parish raised were matched two for one by another generous donor." The balance came from a \$700,000 loan.

While the parish had "just run out of space" on its current site, with the purchase of 10 times

as much land next door God has just enlarged their borders.

"The property gives us new opportunities to minister to children and youth," Mr Hooton says. "There are also three retirement villages in the area, including the ARV's Glenhaven Green where we have a partnership, so we can... develop additional ministry to retired adults."

The new property already contains a house and a hall currently used as a dance studio.

COMMUNITY CHAPLAINCY

Pastoral care at home

THE GROWTH IN interest and need for community chaplaincy is booming, with Anglican organisations already seeing fruit from opportunities created.

ARV, which provides home-based aged care to more than 1100 people across the Diocese, began offering pastoral visits last year in the Sutherland, St George and eastern suburbs areas. This has since been extended and will encompass the rest of the Diocese by the end of 2012.

"God is opening up so many ministry opportunities," says ARV's manager of community pastoral care, the Rev Allen Cook.

"One of our chaplains visited a client last week... she told a little

of her life history and personal beliefs before admitting she hadn't been to church in years, even though she has lunch opposite her local church regularly. She decided she didn't have an excuse for not going and that our chaplain's coming should be the catalyst for returning.

"She asked our chaplain to check if she had been the next time she visited. It was just amazing that she brought it up and came to that conclusion herself, without any prompting by us."

Anglicare in Sydney is

also taking the first steps towards deciding on the community care model it should develop.

Archdeacon Ken Allen, previously Anglicare's director of pastoral care, is now dividing his time between Anglicare's community care centres in Mt Druitt and Penrith, offering pastoral support to staff and community members.

"When your job is to assess someone's material needs in a time of crisis and attend to a line of others waiting to see you, there is little opportunity to take time for a deeper conversation," he says. "For those who are in a very hard place their hearts are often heavy and social connection is precious."

Anglicare hopes that community chaplaincy will not only help connect people with a local church but help churches build awareness of what is happening in their community.

Says Archdeacon Allen: "I have a vision for chaplaincy being integrated with services, where community members and staff seek chaplaincy because they know it is a safe place to delve into the hard places of life. The joy for me is to help people see that even in the darkness, Christ is with them."

SCRIPTURE IN SCHOOLS

Ethics to stay, but review recommended

RUSSELL POWELL

ETHICS CLASSES ARE to stay in NSW but a State Government inquiry has agreed with several important points made in a submission from the Anglican

Education Commission.

The inquiry was called after a bid by NSW Upper House MP Fred Nile to have the classes closed down. The Diocese of Sydney argued in its submission that it would be too disruptive to end the classes but wanted a

broader inquiry into their delivery by 2014.

The executive director of the AEC, Dr Bryan Cowling, appeared before the inquiry committee to argue that, like religious providers, primary school ethics classes should not receive money from the

Government and there should be safeguards to ensure Special Religious Education (Scripture) classes were not disadvantaged by the promotion of the ethics option.

The inquiry committee made more than a dozen recommendations,

including the establishment of a review procedure in 2014 and an examination of the age-appropriateness of the material taught in the ethics classes.

Further, the committee called for templates to be developed so that local schools could send

letters home about the availability of SRE as well as Special Education in Ethics (SEE).

There is no change to the system that SEE classes should only be offered to parents after they have decided to 'opt out' of SRE for their child.

SERVICE MERGE SEES CHURCH GROW

Brighton-Rockdale comes together

ANDREW BUERGER

HAVING NOT SEEN ANY growth at its services, Brighton-Rockdale Anglican Church had to make a big decision.

"It wasn't dying," senior minister at BRAC, the Rev Steve Bryan said of the Rockdale International Church, the Brighton afternoon congregation and the Brighton morning congregation. "There was some fruit, people coming to Christ, but we hadn't seen any growth in numbers."

The solution – and it was a big change to make – was to combine these three services into one morning service at Rockdale.

"It was a hard decision and it took a long time to come to [it]," Mr Bryan said. "It was particularly hard because two of the congregations had only been planted recently. They both had a committed core and a committed pastor... But it wasn't working. We needed to start again and grow to a size where we could start planting other services."

When the new morning service began on February 19 there were 40-50 people coming along each week – a drop of about 30 people from the combined total of the three former services.

"People only came along because they were committed to the work of the gospel in the

parish," Mr Bryan said. "That wasn't uniformly present before; it is now. We're all heading in the same direction."

Since its inception, the single service has seen 180 people come through the doors, and there are now about 70 people who attend regularly.

While the church is still coming to terms with its new identity, there are already tentative plans afoot to consider ways it can connect with a greater portion of the local community, which Mr Bryan believes is one of the keys to future growth.

"We are going to continue with our ESL ministry, which has brought people into the church," he said. "We would also like



The Rev Steve Bryan with his family.

to start working with refugees and migrants as well as to work closely with a local welfare organisation in order to meet the community."

For other ministers facing similar tough choices – and decisions

that may be unpopular with some parishioners – Mr Bryan shared these thoughts:

"The needs of the gospel are great," he said. "Unless we take drastic steps for the sake of mission we're not going

to get the gospel out there.

"Our congregations were never meant to be permanent. Churches should be transitory.

There is only one permanent church – the heavenly gathering."

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CHURCH

Hearts opened in Keiraville

WHEN THE REV THAYIL John emigrated to Australia from India in 2009, starting a church was the last thing on his mind.

Having spent 30 years in northern India planting, pastoring and building churches, Mr John was grateful for how God had blessed his ministry but he was also weary. He and his wife had moved to Australia planning to focus on the education of their two sons and, moreover, the culture was foreign – he felt he would be unable to contribute much.

But, as is often the case, the Lord had other plans. When Mr John took his son Sam to the University of Wollongong to ask about enrolment, he was astounded at the proportion of foreign students. And as he

visited churches in the area, he could see these student numbers were not replicated in local pews.

So, four months after arriving in Australia, Mr John began a Bible study group in the living room of an Indian PhD student couple. Three weeks later, he had started two more Bible studies – and within a few months, three students had accepted Jesus as their Lord.

"I think that the people coming here are very hungry," Mr John says. "They're really searching and they want to know more about what real religion in the world is. Many of them come from closed countries for the gospel and when they come here they have the freedom to make the search for it."

A number of Wollongong locals, such as university lecturers and former students, had the same vision to reach out to the international student population. So in May 2010, a little over a year after Mr John's Bible study ministry began, the Keiraville International Church – or KIC – was born as a partnership church-planting ministry of Figtree Anglican Church (where Mr John is a member of staff) and St John's, Keiraville.

The congregation is based at St John's, a short walk from the university campus. Initially attendance was between 40 and 60 people each week but, just over two years later, 20 more regulars have been added to their number.

KIC members come



Learning: a Bible study group at Keiraville International Church.

from about 15 countries and fellowship is encouraged through regular social and sporting events, as well as Bible studies – some of which are tailored to those without a solid grasp of English. Students who become Christian are also mentored and trained, and already one has plans to study at Moore College.

While a few students are Christian before they arrive at the university,

the vast majority are not and have no idea about the church, the Bible or who Jesus is. Yet Mr John says that since the congregation was planted 39 people have committed their lives to Christ.

"All the activities of KIC are family- and community-oriented with Christ's love in action," he says, adding that the church's strategy is the same as that of Paul in Acts 19, having "an impact on the world

with the love of Jesus by concentrating it on just one particular place".

"We receive students from various countries and we help them to know Jesus in their lives, and sending them back to their home with this love is our mission and purpose. So far we have sent back over 40 students either fully or partially trained to different parts of the world. Many of them are truly fired up for the Lord."

The real godfather

A chance request from a friend resulted in a search that led a man to Christ, writes JUDY ADAMSON.

WHEN DUC TRUONG was asked by a friend to be godfather to his son, he was stumped. As the son of Vietnamese Buddhists – one a refugee, the other an immigrant – he had no idea about Christianity or things such as godparents.

“I didn’t know what it meant so I asked another workmate who was a Christian,” he says. “She told me that on top of [a godparent] being there for the child they had to encourage them to grow up knowing Jesus and the faith. Then I went away and looked it up on Wikipedia and that didn’t help at all,

so I kept talking to my friend.”

As they talked Duc opened his heart to her about troubles with university study and other issues and, he says, as they talked she commented that he seemed to be missing something in his life.

“She said that it was Jesus,” he recalls. “A couple of months later she asked me to come to an evangelistic event at her church [St John’s Cathedral, Parramatta] and the minister was giving a talk from Luke 19 on how Jesus reaches out to those who don’t seem to deserve forgiveness. I talked to



New life: Duc Truong is baptised by Tom Harricks at St John’s Cathedral, Parramatta.

the minister afterwards, he gave me *The Essential Jesus* and I read that and came back the next week to an actual service.”

The day after going to that service, Duc says, he realised he had made the step of faith into God’s

kingdom. “It sounds as though it was fast but it was over a few months... after talking to my friend and thinking about it over that time. I think I was ready to hear it and God prepared my way through all the life experience beforehand.”

Duc felt great joy at the change he saw within himself. He grew apart from friends whose influence had drawn him into late nights and problem gambling. He felt transformed – but at the same time, “it also meant that I had to catch up with how to live this way and how to make sense of the Scripture and what it means for me”.

“That first moment is very joyful and happy but there is this time when you really slump and I fell into that slump after a couple of months – into not knowing, a feeling of doubt, and whether God’s actually with me in times when I don’t feel happy. It was a huge time of learning and meeting up with people and making sure my faith was actually solid.”

This was helped by regular meetings in those first few months with St

John’s senior associate minister, Tom Harricks – and Duc was baptised by Tom in early 2011.

Despite his enthusiasm and gratitude to God for his new faith, Duc found it difficult to tell his family about it. His parents were initially concerned, not knowing what he was doing – and although they now understand he has become a Christian they remain solidly Buddhist.

He says that when he first told his sister, her initial reaction was to ask whether he was now going to try and convert her. After a while, she began to come to him and ask his opinion on issues from a Christian perspective – although there have been times when he has given his opinion “and she told me to stop being preachy to her”.

Duc’s family has noticed changes in him but, given he has been indecisive about important things in the past – including dropping out of university twice – “they possibly think this is another stage I’m going through. I am hoping that finishing this degree [science, majoring in psychology] and seeing

the positive influence of other Christians in my life would eventually bring them to know Christ, and I continually pray for my family’s salvation.”

Duc chose psychology for his studies this time around as he is determined to use his gifts to serve others, and plans to become a counsellor.

He says that when he reflects on the past few years he feels “how amazing it is that God worked in my life to prepare my heart for his message. It’s nothing I could have done. I was basically like Zacchaeus and I felt really not worth it... I felt as though I was bad, and I didn’t deserve his grace and mercy at all.

“That’s why the message really struck me. I don’t deserve any of this but Jesus comes and he wants sinners who really do need help and are lost. Through the gospel and his love and grace, God has changed me and given me knowledge and the will to work for him – helping spread the message he’s given me to share with others: the story that changes people’s lives.”



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BROOME HELPING HAND

Community celebrated at fundraiser

IN A DISPLAY OF community and as an act of gospel support, the members of All Saints', North Epping raised \$14,000 at a recent fundraising dinner and silent auction for Broome Anglican Church in Western Australia.

Last year a small team from All Saints' spent a week in Broome organising a mission to the local community. The church had previously supported the work of the Rev Tim Mildenhall when he was involved with AFES at Curtin University in Perth and continued to support him and his family when they moved to Broome. This year All Saints' was unable to send a team to Broome, however the funds raised will help with ministry

in that region.

More than 140 church members enjoyed dinner, spirited bidding on the silent auctions and entertainment from music groups. The idea of the silent auctions was to have mainly items that were donations of a service or an item that had been produced/crafted by a church member. As more ideas were added to the list each week, members became more aware of what talents or blessings they could share with others.

Says event organiser Bev Collis-Bird: "To help people with auction ideas a sheet was created for people to list what they needed in way of help. Through that avenue someone came forward to offer clothing

alterations and paver cleaning, however we couldn't find anyone to offer 'boy advice'!"

There was also a live Skype link to Broome so Tim Mildenhall could witness the support from All Saints' and so members could also catch up on what was happening in Broome.

As a result of the silent auctions, some upcoming parties will either have music groups performing, food such as decorated birthday cakes or cupcakes, or even kitchen hands. Many people donated items from their businesses such as cleaning products, graphic design packages or Zumba passes. People also offered services such as babysitting, ironing, gardening, car washing,



Community: more than 140 members of All Saint's, North Epping took part in the Broome dinner.

singing lessons or tutoring, while the fruit of their talents, such as photography, artwork, cardmaking, quilting and knitting, were on display.

"The whole evening highlighted the

scriptural concept of the church as being many parts of one body, not only with the auction donations but with the organisation of such a large event," says parish rector the Rev Roger Green. "This

recent fundraising activity was a wonderful demonstration of All Saints' being a community and, through service to one another, raising funds to impact another part of Australia with God's love."

deputy head of school

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BLESSED TO BLESS SCHOOL

From Sydney to Zambia

KIM MUKUKA FIRST visited Chingola, Zambia in 2005, to meet the family of her new husband Ralph.

She had been planning a mission trip to Zambia before meeting him but, once she saw the orphaned and destitute children in the streets with no family or home, and little hope of an education or future she began to form plans to help them – a community school, offering free education to local orphaned children.

“Having taught in Christian schools I firmly believe in the importance of Christian education,” she says.

“By this I mean not only demonstrating the love of Christ to the children we are teaching, but also teaching everything in the

framework of biblical authority. The aim is to raise strong Christian leaders who will pass on their knowledge and skills and help to break the cycle of poverty.”

With the school in mind Mukuka and her mother Ros Philips founded the charity Blessed to Bless, which has been raising funds since 2007 and has secured a location just outside Chingola to build the Ipalo Christian Community School.

Plans have been laid, first-stage building is under way, and this month Mukuka and her family will move to Zambia to project manage the building of classrooms prior to the school’s opening next year.

Blessed to Bless has been built up through



Kim Mukuka (sixth from left) in 2007 with Blessed to Bless members as well as staff at Manyando Youth Action Community School and Zambian gospel singers.

family members, friends, Sydney churches such as St Peter’s, East Lindfield (which Mukuka’s mother attends) and people on the ground in Zambia.

The charity has already helped the Manyando Youth Action Community School in the same region as Chingola, providing

basic educational resources for 300 children as well as arranging sponsorship for students who move on to high school, help with teachers’ salaries and emergency provisions for students and families in crisis.

Mukuka says the parishioners at East Lindfield “have been

really supportive of what we’re doing, and as a church they’ve been supporting us in prayer”. The family joined the parish a few months ago so they and the congregation could spend time getting to know each other before the Mukukas leave for Zambia.

In addition, the

director of Anglican Aid, David Mansfield, says the organisation is “exploring a potential partnership [with Blessed to Bless] after the family is settled in Zambia and a local governance structure has been set in place”.

For more information about Blessed to Bless see www.blessedtobless.com.au

SALES FORESHADOWED

Bathurst Diocese under financial oversight

THE BATHURST Anglican Diocese is receiving advice from an independent oversight committee as it seeks to recover from financial problems.

Diocesan schools such as Macquarie Anglican Grammar in Dubbo, Orange Anglican Grammar and All Saints’ at Bathurst have debts totalling \$38 million. The future of the schools has been guaranteed but parishes have been told that some assets will have to be sold.

Local newspapers have carried reports about proposed sales including the historic old rectory in Dubbo, as well as speculation that the bluestone hall of Holy Trinity in Orange might also be on the market.

Bishop Richard Hurford will not speculate on the asset sales but told the *Western Advocate* in Bathurst that the committee’s plan would see the Diocese shore up its financial future in the years ahead.

In March this year, Bishop Hurford wrote an open letter to churches which said diocesan debt expanded rapidly after 2008 as schools needed to borrow money to meet debt servicing costs that could not be entirely covered from normal trading surpluses. It said efforts to solve the debt problem by integration with other school systems were not successful, which meant the sale or diversion of diocesan assets was inevitable.

WORLD BRIEFS

Thailand



Leaders of the Global South meeting in Bangkok have noted ‘with great sadness’ the passing of Resolution A049 at the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, which authorised a liturgy for blessing same-sex unions. A communique from the meeting said, ‘This action confirms our disappointment that the Episcopal Church has no regard for the concerns and convictions of the vast majority of Anglicans worldwide’. Global South leaders pledged to stand in solidarity with others in the Anglican Communion who have dissented from the action. At least 12 bishops within the Episcopal Church also objected, including the Diocese of South Carolina, where the canon theologian, the Rev Canon Dr Kendall Harmon, called it “unbiblical, unChristian, unAnglican and unseemly”.

Uganda



The Rt Rev Stanley Ntagali has been elected the new Primate of the Church of Uganda. He takes over from outgoing Archbishop Henry Luke Orombi, who retires in December. The 57-year-old Ntagali has held various positions in the Anglican Church including time as a youth worker and missionary. Archbishop Orombi, a member of the GAFCON/FCA Primates Council, will now embark on a farewell tour across Uganda’s 34 dioceses.

New Zealand



Christchurch City Council has refused to help build a cardboard cathedral to replace the one destroyed in the earthquake. The council was to have donated almost \$250,000 toward the project but councillors say they believe the money should go into a permanent cathedral rather than a temporary structure.

Singapore



The Rt Rev Rennis Ponniah has been appointed the ninth bishop of the Diocese of Singapore, replacing Dr John Chew. Bishop Ponniah, who is 56, has been the vicar of one of Singapore’s largest Anglican parishes, St John’s-St Margaret’s, since 1993.

Nigeria



Church bombings and attacks on congregations continue in Nigeria with 50 members of the Church of Christ burned to death. In the village of Maseh in Plateau state, dozens of Christians fled their homes and took refuge with their pastor and his wife and children. Gunmen attacked the house, opening fire and then burning the building, killing all inside.

ANNUAL FIJI MISSION TRIP

Year 13 goes to prison

RUSSELL POWELL

THE YEAR 13 MISSION team to Fiji has landed in prison – on purpose.

A team from the Youthworks course has visited the island nation for the fifth time, with the month-long mission now a fixture in the students' calendar. This year's contingent has increased dramatically from the 34 students who attended Year 13 last year to 83 this year.

As a result, the team had to be split in two for a visit to the First Offenders Prison at Nasinu. The students were guests of Peter Schultz, the man behind Operation Foundation who, along with his wife Jill, ministers to the



The team listens as one of the inmates shares his testimony.

inmates of prisons in the capital, Suva.

Unlike previous years when students had the opportunity to share a program with the prisoners, this year they were able to hear the stories of the inmates from the prisoners

themselves. "There were incredible stories – but the one that stuck with me the most was from an older man who is married with children," said Trinette Armitt, the assistant director of Year 13. In his words he made 'a lot of small

compromises' and before he knew it, he ended up behind bars.

But even through the language barrier and his broken English, he was very clear that prison has been the greatest chapter of his life – not because prison is a wonderful

place to be... it's not. But because it is here that he met Jesus, personally and intimately for the first time. He grew up in the church, like many in Fiji do, but until he had the opportunity spend time in the word and be ministered to in

prison, Jesus was never his personal saviour. Now he is getting ready and looking forward to getting out of prison and being able to go into full-time ministry to prisoners himself."

The mission trip was from June 21 to July 20.

South Sudan had its first birthday last month.



We can all be partners in building a new nation.

The Anglican Aid CMMF (Community Managed Microfinance) project is helping to equip the rural South Sudanese communities in economic empowerment geared towards self reliance.

Our local partner has been training groups of mainly women in adult literacy and business skills to develop the ability to manage and invest their savings in income generating activities.

Jenty says "Joining a CMMF group has helped me start my own small business of selling fish. I am now able to pay my children's school fees and give them a better future."

This community owned and managed microfinance project helps creating a savings, loans and investment culture which is crucial to build the economy of this young nation of South Sudan.

Anglican Aid also provides bursaries to train and equip South Sudanese pastors in evangelism and bible teaching.

Please give generously to Anglican Aid's projects in South Sudan.



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Letters

No offence

BRAVO Colin Watson ('The Woolworths option', SC, June). You are right. I am offended.

1. I am offended that you were concerned I would be offended!
2. I am offended how little we use our valuable traditional church buildings – 4-8 hours a week?
3. I am offended that we tried this some time ago and it foundered – the journey is not easy.

Happy to help with anything that gets this conversation started and then actioned.

Niall Henderson
Pymble

COLIN Watson should be commended for being prepared to challenge our ideals and goals of what church is. Asking "What would Woolworths do?" is a great way to begin thinking about what we should do as a church, but we should also keep fundamental differences between the church and Woolworths in mind.

Woolworths makes profit-based decisions. The Church's aim is to increase "market share" by reaching people with the gospel, as Colin points out. We need to consider whether our decisions about church are based on what is best for us or are in the interests of new "customers", the lost, which may involve inconvenience and sacrifice on our part.

Will having meetings other than on Sunday benefit those whose weekends are full? Do we have the courage to ask if we even need a "church building"? Is emotional attachment to something that will serve no purpose when Christ returns a hindrance to the spread of the gospel? Jesus never asked us to build buildings.

At the heart of this issue is prayer. Are we committing everything to God in prayer, asking for God to work his will through us, or do we rely on our plans, money and wisdom to achieve God's purposes? Are we really committed to eternal qualities?

Craig McAllister

FIRST let me reassure Colin Watson that he will not get any hate mail from Christians. By definition we will love you Colin, though we may disagree with your ideas.

First you suggest that the Church should operate like a successful retailer and dispose of unprofitable branches. Your second idea seems to be consolidation of smaller parishes into larger retail outlets for religion.

There are practical problems in doing this. People without cars will not be able to travel to drive-in megachurches and, unless we move them to outer regions of Sydney, there will be inadequate space for parking.

You do not suggest what should be done

with the pile of money generated by the sale of traditional small churches. Might I suggest giving it to the poor?

Marshall Smither
Manly

To worry, or not to worry

I enjoyed reading Dr Cameron's article ('The modern marriage ideology', SC, June). I imagined in this debate Christians running a gauntlet, deflecting the accusations hurled against those who disagree, before we can even say what we want to say. I was left pondering two thoughts.

First, are Christians being too accommodating? We don't want the image that we are hurtful bigots to be a stumbling block to the gospel. But I doubt we can change an opinion that wasn't formed because of our actions. I suspect not many Australians have met a true Christian bigot, yet many hold this view in this discussion.

Second, I worried about the final encouragement *not* to worry. The outcome is determined by God but surely our goal at this pivotal time in history is more than to think to ourselves, "They'll see we were right". Because what if in that time one Christian brother or sister, tempted by this sin, found the pull of the world too strong? In love, and in God's sovereignty, would we not try our best to (intelligently, graciously and sensitively) provide for them a society that makes it easy to live God's way?

Lisa Yew
Engadine

Women's involvement

AS one who has been privileged to work in both lay and ordained ministry over many years, may I comment briefly on letters by Jennie Pakula and Bruce Harris in July *Southern Cross*?

Over time I have personally come to an egalitarian view of ministry but I do not feel that I have, in any sense, "capitulated". Also, I continue to respect and to work with many colleagues who have not adopted such a view.

I am from Melbourne and have worked in four dioceses including, currently, Sydney. It has not been my experience that an egalitarian view has been a weakening force in the church. Rather, I have often seen ministries strengthened and enriched by the involvement of women in all areas.

Nor should an egalitarian interpretation of Scripture be dismissed as a "liberal hermeneutic". Bruce Harris rightly points out that many distinguished evangelicals have come to hold such a view; to his list of scholars may I add Michael Green and Leon Morris.

May I also add my voice to that of Bruce Harris asking that we continue to study this subject with due humility? The approach advocated by Jennie Pakula, in labelling egalitarian views as a "cancer", is destructive

and makes any form of meaningful dialogue difficult, if not impossible.

Lloyd H. George
Newtown

REGARDING the letters in July SC concerning Claire Smith's book *God's Good Design*, I am curious. As an evangelical woman working under godly male headship may I ask what do the words "egalitarianism" and "complementarian" actually *mean* when interpreting and/or applying biblical issues to ministry teams? What is the potential for these (secular) concepts to be understood differently, by different people? Even to promote a particular agenda or bias?

Surely, when interpreting/applying any part of God's word, the real questions need to be: "What does this verse/sentence/word say in the context in which it was written, its immediate context, the whole passage plus its wider context in the whole of the Bible?" Surely only then can we ask how this applies to God's church today.

Is this not good exegesis? Does not allowing a single verse, passage, sentence and/or word, interpreted literally and standing alone (eg. a "plain reading of Scripture"), take it out of its true biblical context and call for a potentially flawed interpretation or application of what God is saying?

And even then, won't differences of opinion (both egalitarian and complementarian!) always exist in well-meaning but sinful hearts this side of heaven?

Gillian Jones
Tamworth

Killing, or sacrifice?

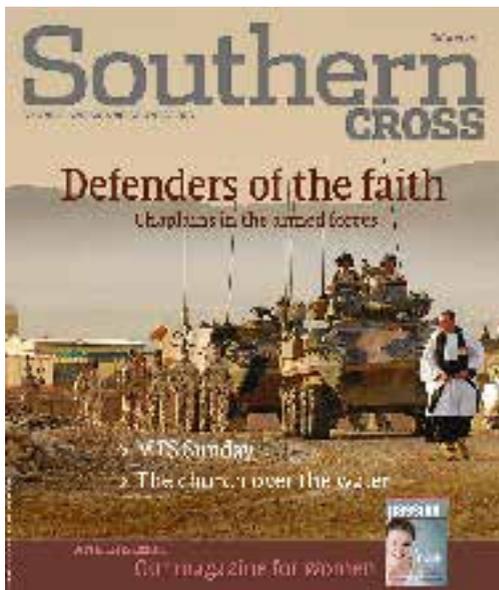
I BELIEVE the article about euthanasia (SC, June) misses a very important right Christians have been given by Jesus. That right is to show love by laying down our lives for our fellow human beings. At issue is the resource-intensive nature of medical care that results in long waiting lists for surgery. Care of people in pain and for whom no hope for cure exists consumes resources that could be used to perform operations that would save lives.

On Robert Scott's Antarctic expedition of 1912, Captain Lawrence Oates was ill on the return journey and seriously slowed their progress. He chose to walk out of the tent to his death in a blizzard to give his companions a better chance of survival. His act of self-sacrifice has been hailed and respected ever since.

We also should have the right to sacrifice ourselves when suffering the extreme pain of a terminal illness. We should be able to give instruction while still in sound mind that if we contract a terminal mental illness to similarly sacrifice ourselves. There should be protocols in place for this to be carried out in accordance with a patient's wishes.

Rather than euthanasia, which has a tone of involuntary killing, we should look at it as sacrificing our lives that others may live.

Peter Jones
Toongabbie



Letters should be less than 200 words

Email: newspaper@anglicanmedia.com.au

Essay of
the month

Faith in action

At a time when most of our leaders are unwilling to be open about their faith, Queen Elizabeth II is an admirable Christian example, writes PHILIP COONEY.

I AM AN UNASHAMED FAN OF QUEEN Elizabeth II. This is not an expression of monarchist leanings – even though I do think Australia would be crazy to adopt the same executive presidency model as the USA. I am a fan of the Queen because I admire her Christian leadership.

Elected politicians often avoid professions of faith or exercising faith-based decisions in the political arena, wary of alienating voters or accusations of the undue influence of faith in secular society.

The Queen has no such reservations. Her Christmas messages demonstrate how she is able to fulfil her role as head of state and head of the Commonwealth, with its diversity of faiths and people groups, with the gospel at the heart of her text and vocation.

This endorses multiculturalism and community in a genuine way that eludes some politicians whose decisions, however well intentioned, are not laid on “the best and surest foundations”. Of all the criticism that is made of the Queen, her faith and her genuine concern for people are rarely, if ever, questioned.

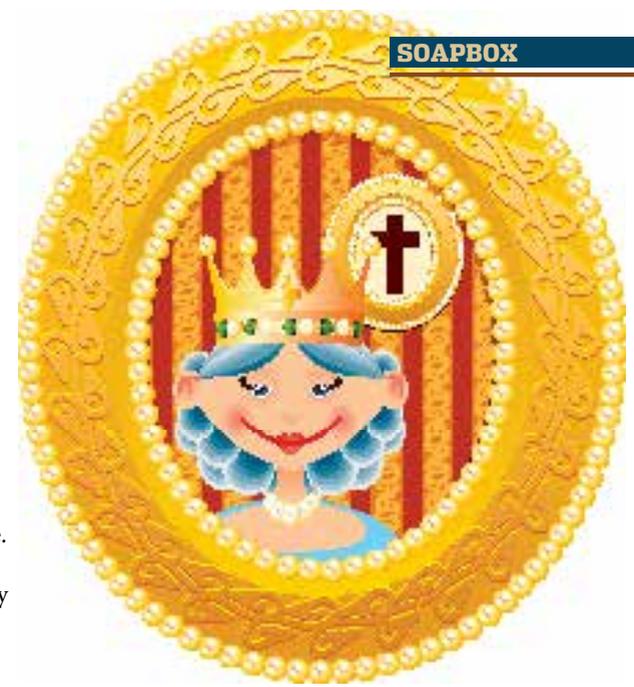
The inclusion of the Christian message in the Queen’s address, usually accompanied by a quote from Scripture, is not the product of a sense of duty as the head of the Church of England. Rather, it is the fruit of a life of humble faith. The significant events of her life have been marked by public declarations of a life lived prayerfully under the will of God. These include the anointing during her coronation and the central part that

the service at St Paul’s played in the recent jubilee celebrations.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, spoke on Romans 12 at the service. This familiar passage was most appropriate with its exhortation to sacrifice (v1), humility (v3 and v16), service and leadership (v7) and right living (v17). How often has she had occasion to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn (v15)? These are all attributes of character the Queen aspires to exemplify, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Archbishop Williams identified the exercise of these gifts in the Queen’s life of service beyond the Church to the wider community.

These reflections are based only on a distant viewing of the monarch but the Queen’s personal faith was a point frequently observed in the documentaries and telecasts that accompanied her Jubilee. The serenity, with which she is often associated is a further expression of the hope, patience and faithfulness in prayer that Paul commends. Whatever the private expression of that faith it is the public display that provides an example to all Christian leaders and, indeed, all of us who profess trust in the saving death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

In her Christmas broadcasts, the Queen is able to quote the Bible and gently apply its wisdom to the reality of the world today. The lack of artifice suggests familiarity with the word and with its application to daily life on every level. It is an example of how we also should be familiar with the Bible



and ready and willing to share its truth with those in our community; putting into practice Peter’s exhortation in 1 Peter 3:25: ‘Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect’.

In past generations, the royal family was seen as setting the standard of right living – of moral behaviour. We now know (if we didn’t before) that they are subject to the same temptations, weaknesses and imprudence as the rest of us. Sadly, in the same decades that we have become more aware of their sinful failings, we have also become less inclined to pray for the Queen and the royal family. Yet God has been faithful to his servant, replenishing her with the grace of the Holy Spirit, imbuing her with the spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12 and granting her health and long life.

This Diamond Jubilee year is a time of thanksgiving. As Christian Australians we can give thanks for our monarch’s Christian witness. May we continue to give thanks for this faithful servant, that she may attain everlasting joy and happiness. **SC**

READERS'ESSAYS

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

Please email your (700-word maximum) submission to: newspaper@anglicanmedia.com.au

Editorial

Ministry by men, for men

WE’VE ALL SEEN IT IN OUR CHURCHES – the struggle to establish and grow an effective ministry to men, by men. This month *Southern Cross* is considering what men’s ministry in 2012 should look like, what is already working in some places and what goes down like a lead balloon.

Obviously not all men are the same but what “works” for blokes, in general ministry and relationship terms, is clearly different to what works for women. And, over time, what works for blokes has also changed.

At Men’s Katoomba Convention, for example, the core content of solid biblical teaching is the same but the style has changed quite significantly since the first men’s convention in 1997. The current chairman of MKC, Luke Tattersall, explains that not only is the convention promoted differently now (think videos and social

media as opposed to brochures), but the convention committee is now pitching the event more as a place to gather ministry ideas, develop friendships and be encouraged in faith.

“It’s not simply a convention you can come along to,” he says. “You want men to hear the Bible talks and have them be clear, but also go away with ideas and resources to use in ministry and in their Christian lives. So I think that’s probably been the big shift in our thinking – we want churches and ministers to see Men’s Convention as a great resource and a great way to kick off men’s ministry at your church for the year. After all, there are another 363 days in the year when they’re not at Men’s Convention, and that’s when the most effective men’s ministry is going to be happening.

“When Men’s Convention started it was just

going to be heading up the mountain to hear good Bible talks. But we’ve realised that with online stuff now you can hear loads of good Bible talks anywhere... so we’re making sure we have sessions that are really practical, that the bookshop is stocked with good resources to put into people’s hands... and also that we have interviews to get people thinking.”

Any men who are fired up for ministry to other men are looking to find what works in terms of teaching, outreach, ways to build up Christian guys and help non-Christian blokes feel comfortable. And whether that takes the form of interest-based get-togethers, events focused on guys in a certain area – like Men for Christ ministries in the western suburbs – hosting a speaker in the local pub or something else it is simply, as Tattersall puts it, “using all the resources that are available to us”... for Jesus’ sake. **SC**

Take the wheel

It can be difficult to be a man in our society as well as in our churches, so Christian men need to encourage those around them to be genuine blokes for Jesus.

SCOTT MONK reports.

OUT IN SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST the locals could only ever recall seeing billycart races in black-and-white footage. But here they stood, gawking in full colour at father-and-son teams racing against teenage boys with their little brothers in bilycarts built with wheels salvaged from prams and lawn mowers. For one Sunday, helicopter parenting was off limits as a bunch of young and old blokes enjoyed what they're best at: having a laugh.

As each of the 48 teams steered across the finish line with their bony backsides jackhammering against their seats and the odd knee bloodied and scraped, it was clear this race was more than just about winning. It was about boys being boys, and men being – well, men filling a hole in their lives.

Modern society has virtually banned boys from skylarking, climbing trees, kicking footballs and all that plain-crazy Tom Sawyer adventure stuff because Mr Imaginary Somebody might be hurt. Masculinity has been neutered. Or worse – it's been repackaged as an X-Box.

Christian men aren't immune. Even though the faith has produced King David, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Job, Paul and ultimately Jesus himself, today's men still need real-life role models to mentor and encourage them. Already ostracised in a feminised, under-fathered and hyper-sexualised secular society, the last place they want to feel lost in is church.

Ironically, the old billycart race is an example of the new face of men's ministry across Sydney's churches. The traditional quarterly breakfast or dinner with a 25-minute talk still occurs but it is facing competition from beer-tasting nights, State of Origin get-togethers, backyard blitzes, men's sheds and deep water fishing. Christian blokes are finding ways of creating fellowship free of church structure.

And the end results are showing not only

in their spiritual lives but in marriages as well.

Even mentioning "men's ministry" is like poking a stick down an ants' nest: plenty of guys get riled. Many good leaders have been left burnt by a less-than-enthusiastic response from their parishioners to such a ministry. Likewise, many parishioners have been burnt by less-than-enthusiastic church leaders running such ministries. Added to this is an underlying cynicism that many men's ministries are just sermons-in-disguise or another hose-down about sexual purity.

The billycart race was driven by a simple idea. A local Baptist church wanted to bring Christian blokes and men from the Rouse Hill-Kellyville community together to allow them to build fellowship naturally. If those interactions led to conversations about Jesus, then so be it. No pressure.

"What we try and show is that you can be a Christian and use what you are passionate about – use the things you're interested in – as your mission field," says Tim Sheaves of Men In Action, which organises such events.

"You don't have to be a pastor. You don't have to be good at reading the Bible aloud. You don't have to be good at taking communion with the church. But you have the opportunity to build relationships with Christians and non-Christians."

Tim Sheaves and his wife Kerrie, who attend Rouse Hill Anglican Church, founded Men In Action (MIA), which brought together 15 churches (Anglican, Baptist, Uniting and non-denominational) in Sydney's north-west whose traditional men's ministries were floundering. From this group eight churches agreed to pool resources and try something new. The plan was to bring men together in interest groups such as golf, photography, mountain biking or cycling to foster close relationships more regularly than the quarterly men's outreach event. Four years later as part of their "Bring A Mate" program, MIA has up to 500 guys across

Sydney on its books, with a 50-50 split of Christian and non-Christian men of all ages.

"It's Christian men spending time with non-Christian men in a simple, low-budget, easy, self-sustaining situation that doesn't require the church to do much apart from encouraging," Kerrie says.

"The guys don't have to give three-point sermons or try to evangelise somebody. Most men in the church are thoroughly afraid of evangelising their friends, or standing on the corner and proclaiming Jesus to people. They don't want to break friendships by coming across so strong.

"What we've taught them is you don't have to do that... through the natural things that you enjoy doing is how you show Christ. It opens up opportunities to explain who you are. It has come naturally for a lot of our guys. They're quite excited about it."

This pre-evangelism is best exemplified by MIA's cycling group. Originally it met once a week but now up to 30 lycra-clad blokes hit the streets every morning. Because Christian and non-Christian guys love the camaraderie, the group has continually been refreshed as members invite their mates. On Sundays, it's a given that half the group peel off and go to church.

"We're seeing non-Christian guys joining [who are] as rough as guts – swearing and all that sort of thing," Tim says. "But within three months, they're changed. Apart from us wanting them to know Christ, they're already starting to display Christ-like behaviour because they see it in action."

Likewise, the Christian men are transformed by mentoring younger men, being mentored themselves, sharing their lives, making genuine friendships and learning evangelism skills that have an impact on their faith at church and at home. "Once we've introduced some of these guys into these interest groups, to see them come alive is quite exciting," Tim says. "We've had wives come up to us and say, 'Thank you!'"



Get set: dads and kids line up for one of the races on the Bilycart Derby and Family Day at Rouse Hill Town Centre in June.

The Sheaves know firsthand how such male empowerment benefits families. Before they founded MIA, their own marriage went into meltdown even though they appeared to be the traditional Australian Christian couple. “We were going to church and not going to church, but we didn’t have a purpose for our lives in regard to what Jesus wanted us to do,” Tim says. And because he didn’t feel any genuine connection with the men in his church, he never felt comfortable sharing his feelings in his Bible study group.

Kerrie says that church, as a whole, doesn’t challenge Christian men “to be real about their life. They can be superficial, they can spout on about godly things but they don’t have to actually share anything real about the struggles of their life. You can happily go to church for 10 years and nobody at that church really knows what’s going on. That’s evidenced by the number of Christian marriages that are falling apart.

“Without men understanding who they are in Christ they cannot provide the love and the respect and the leadership that I as a woman need. Just as Christ is the head of the church, it’s biblical that the man is the head of his family.

“Now he can’t be that unless I let him,

that I honour him in that position and that I understand what he needs to be able to do that. And he needs good men to show him to be a good man. I can’t show him how to be a man – I’m a woman. I have no idea how to be a man. Iron sharpens iron. Only other good Christian men can show him [how] to be a good, godly man. Only other good, godly women can show me [how] to be a good, godly woman.”

The importance of men’s ministry to personal and congregational health is echoed by Chris Fitzgibbon from Church by the Bridge in Kirribilli who, along with fellow parishioner Brad Emery, founded a men’s group three years ago.

“Men need to build relationships with other men, and that’s one of the biggest things that gets neglected,” Chris says. “As a friend of mine said, we live in a homophobic society and guys can’t distinguish the difference between building meaningful, brotherly relationships and questioning their sexuality.

“We’re brothers. It’s through being closer and sharing the truth of our lives that we can really help each other, understand things that are holding us back and solve issues.”

Creating a men’s ministry from scratch

meant they had to think carefully about how to bring guys together in a manner that would encourage relationship.

“We started looking at men’s ministry at Church by the Bridge and because there was nothing, our first step was developing open friendships among the guys,” Chris says. “This was achieved through quarterly events such as lawn bowls, deep water fishing and men-only prayer nights. Then we started introducing teaching events, which we hoped the guys were more comfortable attending because they knew other guys there. And rather than just encouraging them to evangelise, we ran an event like Men and Meat to invite their friends.”

This worked for Church by the Bridge but Chris says, “I don’t think there’s a single formula that works. You have to know where those particular guys are at and where their major need is and address that”.

Should evangelising be a central factor in men’s ministry?

“My view of the world is we’re soldiers and church is our training ground,” he says. “I don’t think it’s essential we bring non-Christian guys to a church to evangelise. We are missionaries in the mission field every

continued next page »

Blokes and shed time



Stuart Woods (right) helps a mate build planter boxes in the Mac Fields men's shed at Glenquarie Anglican Church.

As the guys in the men's shed at Glenquarie Anglican Church work away on their latest project everyone is busy, productive and enjoying being with "the guys". It's a lot better than sitting at home miserable because they don't or can't get work, they lack skills to apply for a job or they have a disability. At the shed, it doesn't matter who you are or how much you know, as long as you come ready to be involved.

"You've got to deal with the person's need first," says the shed's co-ordinator, Stuart Woods. "A hurting heart has no ears – so if you can help with that hurt in some way... help them reconnect and show them that people do care, sooner or later they'll say, 'Why do you do this job?'. And my hope is that God will be praised in those circumstances."

There's only enough funding to employ Woods at the Macquarie Fields church one day a week. The social, emotional and pastoral needs in the south-western Sydney suburb are tremendous and he wishes he could be there more often in order to build relationships

further and reach out more effectively, but already new men are walking through the door almost every week. "You can see the relationships that are starting, just as they work or as we chat over the barbecue at lunch-time," he says. "The shed is not ministry from their point of view but it's a great service to the community, and if you've got Christian people in the community engaging men in the community it will create opportunities for the gospel."

Across the Diocese more and more sheds are springing up to help support men, give them new skills, connect them to each other and hopefully, over time, to God. One of the newer sheds is on the grounds of Albion Park Anglican Church in the Illawarra. It opened in February after five years of planning and funding applications by its co-ordinator, Ron Dryburgh. He knew there were several hundred men above retirement age in Albion Park and was confident a shed could be beneficial to them, as well as others.

He was right. Six months after it opened the shed has

55 members, is an established part of a supportive community and is already so busy with local projects three days a week that there are plans to extend.

We've got chaps here who've been in the trade and we've got other chaps here who wouldn't have a clue, so we pair them up and they're learning how to use the wood lathe and things – they're gaining skills and interests and being around other blokes," Dryburgh says.

"These fellows were just sitting at home and twiddling their thumbs. We have a couple of guys who were suffering from depression – their families rang us... They always had the problem of being alone but once they get among other guys they're at their ease.

"We pray every morning tea time but we're not heavy on pushing them towards Christianity. They see how we live and operate and a couple of them are coming to our church now. We're caring for one another – that's what we're all about. God works in marvellous ways and we're just being guided by him."

Judy Adamson

« from previous page

day at work, at sport and with our families.

"What formal ministries can do is to train guys up in how to minister in those environments, how to have a comfortable and normal conversation about what they believe, how to answer the difficult questions and what to do if you don't have the answers. If we become too reliant on inviting people to church or the evangelistic event that occurs two or three times a year we're limiting what

we can do."

On the surface, it appears he is echoing the Sheaves at MIA but Chris makes the further point that "I don't think evangelism needs to be events-orientated. If you've got a mate you can invite to this or that, then you've got a mate you can chat with [about] the gospel over a beer. There's value in showing that Christian men have common interests – but we have to remember that we're not normal, that we are different to the world in ways

such as not swearing our heads off or getting drunk."

Chris is also passionate about why men's ministry is important. "One of the unique values of men's ministry is to teach men to really be leaders, to be servant-hearted rather than being waited upon.

"Different people have different gifts. Some will be called to take on leadership roles in the church, run various ministries, be senior in their jobs and some won't. But all men will

have some kind of leadership responsibility in their life, whether it be to the women in their lives, or their children. Very few guys will go through life without being called to some kind of leadership.”

By actively taking on his own leadership role, Chris has also been further encouraged to found ChristianSocialScene.com. Just like its name, it's an open network for single and married Christians of all denominations to come together in fellowship outside their normal social circles for events such as movies, dinners and Friday night drinks.

People already do these on their own, he says, but Christian Social Scene helps create a network to facilitate fellowship – just like men's ministry.

A leading Christian bloke who has talked, preached and written about men's ministry is City Bible Forum's Al Stewart, former bishop of Wollongong and author of *Men: Firing Through All of Life*. He is candid about why men are under-represented at church and why evangelism to the unreached is difficult.

“Some men like some churches. Most men don't like churches,” Al says. “Men are sinful. The natural man runs from God and feels guilty before Jesus.

“Churches are so predominately for, by and with the feel of the feminine, and blokes feel out of place. What I have seen is where there is a strong male leadership, the numbers are 50-50 male-female – maybe more men.

“The best quote I've ever heard on preaching was from a Christian farmer from Nyngan who said: ‘Y'know, when I hear most ministers preach, they preach like they're preaching to women and kids'. And when I look around, they are.

“You build your audience by how you preach. A church led by a man who preaches strongly will draw men.

“Now I'm not saying you only preach to men. The difference with preaching to men is that men want to know what difference it makes. How does this affect me on Monday morning? How does this affect me on weekends? How can I be a better father? How can I be a better son? How can I be a better husband?

“For some reason, in our tribe giving concrete applications seems to be below us theologically. Men don't respond well

to aircraft safety talks – if you're not fair dinkum, no-one listens.”

After years of ministry in Wollongong as well as Sydney's western and eastern suburbs, Al says he's learnt a basic rule when it comes to men's ministry: blokes like to do things.

“Women sit and talk face-to-face. Men do stuff side-by-side,” he says. That's why making gingerbread houses at Christmas works for women's outreach and open dinners don't always work for men.

During his ministry at Mount Druitt in 1990, Al recalls how the church asked its male parishioners to invite along their mates. The non-Christians turned up in a church hall that they found foreign, were handed cups of apple juice then told to make small talk with the other uncomfortable men – “which they never did”.

The penny dropped when Al visited people's homes to discuss baptisms and realised that the family television was always on as background noise. At the next men's outreach, the church killed the uncomfortable silence in a similar way.

“We hired the biggest screen television we could and showed Mike Tyson's greatest hits, fishing videos or sporting bloopers and we just kept that rolling. Blokes could stand side-by-side, watch the screen and talk to each other and it wasn't weird. The only time we turned the TV off was when the speaker actually stood up and gave his talk.

“There are still lots of strong capable men in our churches. We've just got to work on running our churches so that they feel comfortable. If you tweak what we do in our churches by five per cent, it'll make a big difference in how comfortable men feel and outsiders feel.”

Church by the Bridge's Chris Fitzgibbon says persistence is the single biggest challenge to men's ministry because leaders do get burnt out.

“It needs to be part of the DNA of the church,” he says. “You do that by proactively finding guys to run it and make sure you have a succession plan, just as you do with Bible study leaders. If it's not part of the church DNA then it will always be a second-rate ministry with second-rate results.”

Scott Monk is a Sydney-based journalist and the author of five books.

On the buses



In his own words Peter Tibbs is “passionate about men's ministry” – which is why he organises a 3000-kilometre bus trip each year to Men's Katoomba Convention from Rockhampton in Queensland.

“We just get in and drive and it takes 21 hours door to door – although one guy travels for four hours to get to us first,” he says. “We leave at 6pm on Thursday night, stop for a few pick-ups on the way, share the driving and get to the convention site through Bathurst. We always do a lap of Mount Panorama while we're there – we've got it down to 6 minutes and 50 seconds.”

Tibbs lived in the Blue Mountains before he moved to Rockhampton about 10 years ago. He was a regular at Men's Convention and wanted to keep going for the teaching he knew he would receive there. So seven or eight years ago he raised the idea among the Christian men he knew and the first Rockhampton-to-Katoomba bus trip was held. The men range in age from 20s to 60s, and each year they enjoy the uninterrupted “bloke time” on top of the challenge to live in a more effective way for Christ. The date they will go the following year is decided on the drive back, Tibbs says, and there are always plenty willing to sign up.

“[The talks] get you thinking,” he says. They're definitely challenging – if it was airy-fairy there'd be no draw to bring you back. It grows you and makes you stronger.”

Tibbs says a big issue with ministering to a man is working out how to “be there for him and show him you care in a Christian way without him thinking you're gay”. It is also a struggle to know what men are thinking, he says, “because blokes want to keep appearances up. We don't wear make-up – we cover up in other ways.”

So even though the drive home after the convention is long and tiring, “that's when the conversations really crank up and you can dwell on the things you've heard. That's when you really appreciate that you're shut up in a bus together!”

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Supernatural

Amid the arguments about Christianity, one thing is certain – the resurrection isn't a 'natural' event, writes MARK D THOMPSON.

EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON THE resurrection, the apostle Paul declared to the Corinthians. Not just any resurrection, though – the resurrection of the crucified Christ.

In the death, resurrection and ascension to heaven of this particular figure, sin and all its consequences are dealt with forever. Others had been raised from death, both in the Old Testament and in the New. During just the years of Jesus' earthly ministry, Lazarus, the son of the widow of Nain and Jairus' daughter had all been raised. But when *he* rose from the dead, the one who had made such claims about himself and his mission, the one who had demonstrated his lordship over creation and even the spiritual realm, the one who had died in such a way – innocent of all sin yet executed as an insurrectionist while a real insurrectionist was set free in his place – it was far more than just an extraordinary event. Here was the centrepiece of God's eternal purpose.

All of this is the common confession of Christians over the past 2000 years. We

know how significant the resurrection is.

Without Jesus' resurrection we would be, in Paul's words, 'of all people most to be pitied' (1 Cor. 15:19). But Jesus' resurrection carries other implications as well – implications which challenge the scepticism of our own time. The resurrection is most certainly not a natural event. People who have been dead for three days do not suddenly get up, walk, talk and eat breakfast with their friends.

The resurrection cannot be explained by anything in our ordinary experience. Any attempt to explain it as the result of natural processes fails to take seriously what happened. He didn't just swoon. The experts in death made sure he was dead before they released the body. The women did not just visit the wrong tomb. He appeared to more than 500 witnesses over the course of the next 40 days. Belief in his resurrection was not just an example of mass hallucination. Even those who weren't hoping for his return were confronted at different times and in different places. It was not just a visionary or spiritual experience. He could be seen, heard,

touched and he ate with his disciples. There is no 'natural' explanation. The resurrection makes clear that Christian faith and the focus of Christian faith are both profoundly supernatural.

It is this supernaturalism at the heart of our faith that is all too easily forgotten by some. Of course God is intimately involved in the world that he has made. He uses human beings and ordinary decisions, events and processes to accomplish his purposes. He does not have to step into the world, as if most of the time he is strangely absent. He is already in, always at work, lovingly moving all things towards the conclusion he has prepared, when all the distortion and pain that we have brought into our world is wiped away and there will be no more mourning or crying or pain (Rev. 21:4). The 'laws of nature' are his servants like everything else. But that doesn't mean that everything can be explained in terms of our everyday experience of the world. The resurrection is the seal on that. God's presence in the world can be disruptive. He can decisively intervene just as freely as he can move history through the internal processes of nature and human interaction.

The challenge can be seen in the way we approach the miracles in the gospels. Through the centuries there have been attempts to explain the miracles of Jesus in terms of the regularities we observe in our world. Some suggest that the miracles weren't really miracles at all. Others insist that it is only as the miracles are explained in terms of the world as we normally experience it that they become believable. So the miracles are only believable once they cease to be miracles. In the most notorious example, the feeding of the 5000 was possible because one little boy's generosity shamed everyone else into bringing out the food they had been hoarding. But these naturalist explanations do more than explain away the miracles. They drastically alter their meaning as well. No longer are we told of Jesus who, like God at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 16), and in David's most famous psalm (Ps. 23), provides for those who come to him. Instead we are told about the motivating power of human selflessness.

The examples could be multiplied just like the loaves. Yet once we accept the argument that an event, a series of events or an idea can only be believed if it can be explained in terms that we dictate we have, consciously or not, raised questions about the supernatural dimension of the Christian faith. We've actually accepted one of the fundamental tenets of today's scepticism. It is not just that human reason has become the ultimate determiner of what is acceptable and what is not (an attitude strangely reminiscent of the Garden of Eden), but today's consensus on how the world works becomes the standard that our reason uses. Claiming to stand in the heritage of Galileo, we become more like those who opposed him because they were wedded to a view of the cosmos they had inherited from Ptolemy. The supernatural

doesn't easily fit into a view of the universe we have embraced and so it is dismissed without further consideration.

Does this mean that Christian faith is irrational? Far from it. The Bible itself is a testimony to the importance of the mind and the right use of reason. Moses' appeal to the Israelites just prior to his death was based on a consideration of what God had already done, what this said about his character as well as his power, and the consequences of deciding either to obey or disobey (Deut. 29-30). Through the prophet Isaiah, God challenged the wayward Israelites with the words "Come let us reason together" (Is. 1:18). Jesus regularly taught his disciples and the crowds how to think through

The supernatural doesn't easily fit into a view of the universe we have embraced.

the implications of the Old Testament's teaching and its fulfilment in his own ministry (Jn 5:39-40). The apostle Paul customarily 'reasoned from the Scriptures' in the synagogues around the eastern Mediterranean (Acts 17:2). The letters of all the apostles were and are exercises in sanctified reason, explaining life now in the light of God's promise fulfilled in Christ.

The right use of reason is an important part of our response to the gospel. The capacity to think is a good gift from God with which we can serve each other and him. The difficulty arises from the fact that every part of us, including our reason, is affected by the consequences of the Fall. Our reason can become self-centred and self-serving. We can also make our reason the arbiter of truth and error, of good and evil. We can forget that we view everything around us from a limited point of view. We cannot escape our location in history, in a particular community, or in a 'tradition' of one kind or another (even if that tradition is simply a repudiation of all tradition). Yet God suffers no such limitations and his words never prove mistaken.

If the supernatural dimension of the Christian faith exceeds our capacity to reason that should not surprise us. We may not be able to fathom how a man could rise from the dead after three days. The creation of all things from nothing by the word of God might boggle our minds. The mechanics of



The Rev Dr Mark Thompson heads the department of theology, philosophy and ethics at Moore College and lectures in theology and church history.

the flood or the Exodus or the miracles or the resurrection of all to judgement might elude us. Yet we cannot be satisfied with what we can explain in terms of our experience of things. We cannot afford to dismiss the testimony of Scripture because we can't figure out how this or that was done. Instead we need to trust the one who gives us these words in order to understand who he is, what he has done for us and how we ought to respond to him.

The God who ordered the world has never abandoned it. He is involved at every point, sustaining all things and moving them towards the end he has designed. He can use natural processes that we can investigate and understand but he is just as capable of intervening in a miraculous way that exceeds our understanding. He can do the impossible and unexpected, as he did at the resurrection. Sceptics and naturalists might not understand this. But precisely because of the resurrection, we Christians are unashamedly supernaturalists. SC




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A joyful noise



What are we doing when we sing in church? In the first of a two-part series on the role songs play in church life, ROB SMITH considers singing as praise.

IF THERE'S ONE THING THAT Christians are renowned for, both historically and universally, it's making music and singing songs. But why? What is the purpose of our singing? Scripture reveals three main reasons why God has given us this ability and called us to engage in this activity: to help us praise, to help us pray and to help us proclaim. This month I'll consider the first of these.

SINGING IS A VITAL FORM OF PRAISE

How should we think about praise? The first thing Scripture reveals is that praising God normally has two faces or aspects: we can praise God *to God* and we can praise God *to others*. In this sense, a parallel exists in the way we can praise one another. For example, I can praise my wife by telling *her* how wonderful she is or I can praise her by telling *you* how wonderful she is.

Of course, praising God doesn't always

have to take the form of singing for, biblically speaking, praise is much more than singing. Indeed, everything we do should be for the glory and praise of God (1 Cor 10:31). But there's no escaping the fact that singing is a vital form of praise. Many Scriptures (particularly many of the psalms) bear this out. Not only do they link praise directly with singing but they frequently speak of the two faces of praise in virtually the same breath. Look, for example, at the opening verses of Psalm 96:

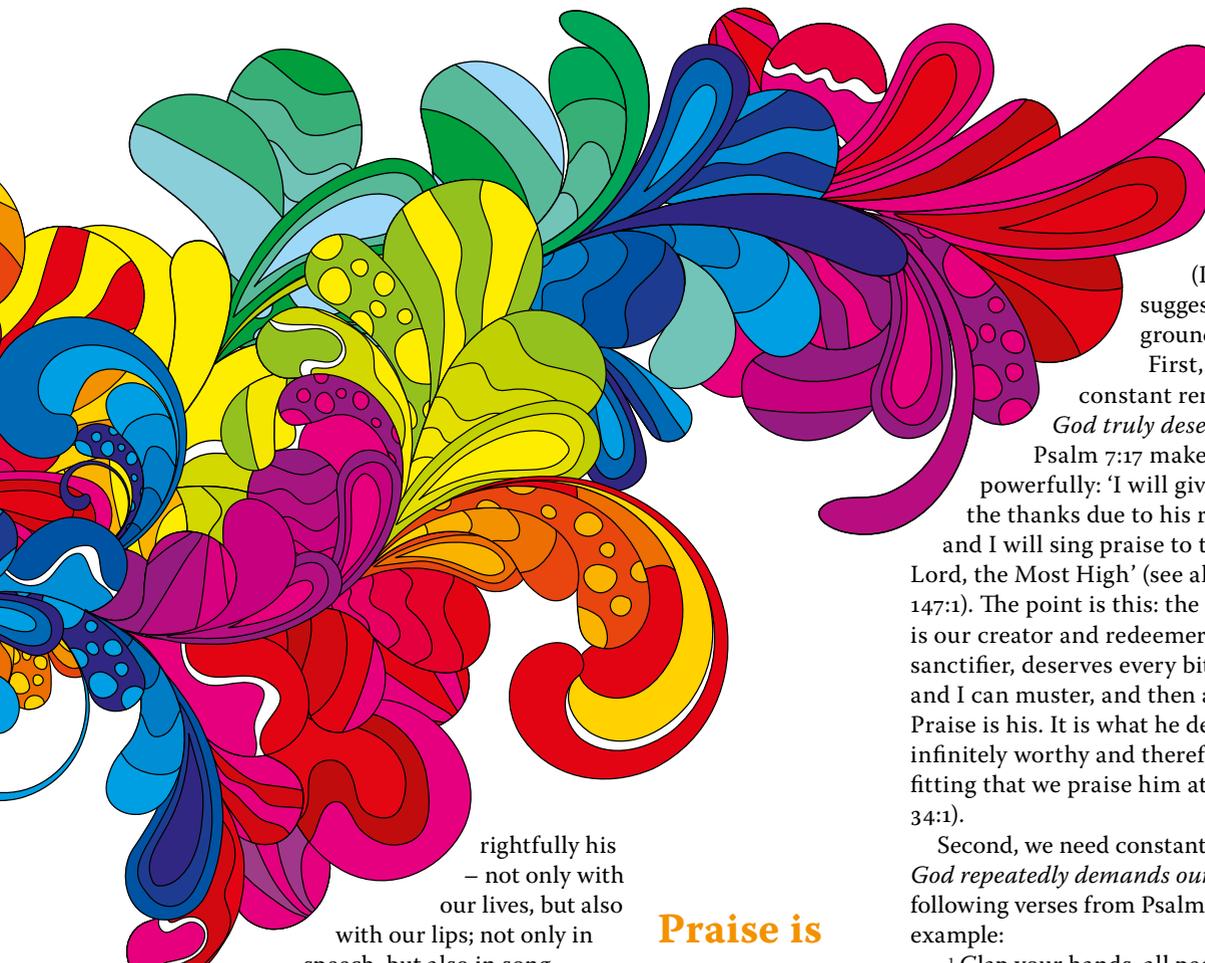
- ¹ Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!
- ² Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
- ³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous works among all the peoples!

The point could not be clearer: we sing *to* the Lord, blessing his name, and we sing *of* the Lord, declaring his glory. And, of course, we often (if not always) do both at once.

OUR CONSTANT BATTLE WITH PRAISE

The importance of singing the praises of God is evident from the dozens of times it is commanded in Scripture (eg. 1 Chr 16:9; Pss 9:11, 33:1, 95:1-2, 100:2; Jam 5:13). Admittedly most of these exhortations are found in the Old Testament, particularly the book of Psalms. But given that the apostle Paul expects and exhorts Christians to sing the psalms (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16), the abiding relevance of these commands is clear.

Therefore, it shouldn't surprise us that praise, like all other aspects of Christian obedience, is a constant battlefield on which God's people have to fight to be faithful. For it is God's purpose that his children should praise him (as we should serve him) 'with a whole heart' (eg. Pss 9:1, 86:12, 111:1, 138:1; Eph 5:19). Consequently, an array of forces are pitted against us (celestial and terrestrial, external and internal) which seek to deflect us from giving God the praise that is



natural (fallen) reluctance to praise, honour and give thanks to God (Rom 1:21)? Let me suggest three biblically grounded strategies.

First, we need constant reminding that *God truly deserves our praise.*

Psalm 7:17 makes the point powerfully: 'I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High' (see also Pss 18:3 and 147:1). The point is this: the triune God who is our creator and redeemer, our saviour and sanctifier, deserves every bit of praise you and I can muster, and then a whole lot more! Praise is his. It is what he deserves: for he is infinitely worthy and therefore it is entirely fitting that we praise him at all times (Ps 34:1).

Second, we need constant reminding that *God repeatedly demands our praise.* The following verses from Psalm 47 offer but one example:

- ¹ Clap your hands, all peoples!
Shout to God with loud songs of joy!
- ⁶ Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
- ⁷ For God is the King of all the earth;
sing praises with a psalm!

These are not mere suggestions; they are commands! But what beautiful, liberating commands they are. This is what we were made for, saved for. They are also invigorating commands requiring sustained, energetic performance; singing, clapping, shouting. Indeed we are to 'Shout to God with loud songs of joy' (v1).

Third, we need constant reminding that *God deeply desires our praise.* That's why he described the ancient people of Israel as 'the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise' (Isa 43:21). That's why he describes the church of Jesus Christ as those who have been chosen 'for the praise of his glory' (Eph 1:12, 14). Praise is God's purpose because praise is God's desire. And he desires our praise not only because it is good for us but also because it pleases him.

rightfully his – not only with our lives, but also with our lips; not only in speech, but also in song.

Sadly, it's all too easy to rob God of his praise simply because we fear looking foolish, or we fear what others might think of us, or think of our voice, or how they may label us. So we 'play it cool', muzzle our gratitude, curb our enthusiasm and (perhaps) not even connect with the words we're singing! Of course, the antidote to this is not to be impervious to those around us, or unconcerned about the impact we might have on them. To the contrary, it is God's will that we should look out for others and endeavour to worship him only in ways that build them up (1 Cor 14:19). But a Christ-like concern for my neighbour is a million miles away from a slavish fear of man – a fear that is ultimately idolatrous and self-serving, not God-honouring.

Praise is his due... he is infinitely worthy and therefore it is entirely fitting that we praise him at all times.

BIBLICAL STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING IN THE BATTLE

Given that we all battle such temptations and fears (albeit in different ways), how should we engage in the battle? How do we redress our

HOW, THEN, SHALL WE SING PRAISE?

The clear implication of all this is that we need to heed the call of the Scriptures to be people and churches that give ourselves to praise. We also need to see that as the people of Israel dishonoured the Lord by offering him defective animal sacrifices (Mal 1:6-8), we can dishonour the Lord by offering paltry, half-hearted sacrifices of praise. This should not be!

In short, the God who has held back nothing from us, not even his only Son, deserves far more than the dregs of our energies and the leftovers of our affections. John Wesley, ever sensitive to these dangers, offered the following exhortation as part of his instructions in the preface to *Sacred Melody* (1761): 'Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan'. For similar reasons, Martin Luther used to call his whole congregation together mid-week so that they could learn new hymns and practise their singing for Sunday.

Of course, Sunday itself is also practice – practice for heaven, a rehearsal for the resurrection life of the world to come. More than that, it's also a reflection of what is even now taking place in the heavenly realms (Rev 4-5). Listen to how Jonathan Edwards once expressed these important truths: 'So far therefore as we sing this song on earth, so much shall we have the prelibations of heaven... And this will make our public assemblies some image of heaven, and will make our sabbath days and thanksgiving days some resemblance of that eternal sabbath and thanksgiving that is solemnised by that innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect'.

What greater incentive do we need to learn to sing the praises of God here on this earth? Not only are we praising God to God and also to one another, we are simultaneously joining our voices with those of the hosts of heaven and preparing ourselves for that day when we will see the Lord face to face (Rev 22:3) and sing his praises for ever as we serve him on the new earth.

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- Must have own indemnity insurance

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Email: admin@merrylandscounselling.com.au

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For further information, please contact Rainey Kerr (0410 629 400).

Applications to be submitted in writing to
rainey.kerr@merrylandscg.org

Merrylands Anglican Church — 4 Bennett Street, Merrylands
Phone: (02) 8637 2022



DIARY

Saturday, August 4

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA WOMEN'S MINISTRY SEMINAR

Mary O'Brien on 'Being a fearless woman in life and ministry'. The \$10 charge includes morning tea from 9.30am.

For more information visit www.paa.moore.edu.au/events

LOCATION | Moore College, 15 King St Newtown | 10am-12pm (coffee from 9.30am)

Sunday, August 5

BRING A MATE – MEN'S MINISTRY WORKSHOP

Learn how to build great men's ministry and how to identify and use your interests as your natural mission field.

Register at www.meninaction.com.au

LOCATION | Rouse Hill Town Centre, Room A-1-1, opposite the library | 3.30pm-5pm

Sunday, August 12

ST PAUL'S REUNION

This month Gymea Anglican Church celebrates 60 years of ministry and witness at St Paul's, which was planted in an old garage in 1952. We hope many former associates and members, young and old, will join us for fellowship and lots of shared memories.

The reunion starts at midday with lunch. The Rev Stephen Bainbridge (who grew up at Gymea) will speak at the main meeting from 1pm. This will be followed by the placement of a time capsule, an old-fashioned "favourites" sing-a-long and afternoon tea. Contact the church office on 9524 6225 for more information.

LOCATION | 131 Gymea Bay Road, Gymea | midday

Tuesday, August 14

MOORE COLLEGE LECTURES

'The point of the sword: applying the Bible to applying the Bible'. Public evening lecture. Daily morning lectures to continue on August 20-24. For more information visit www.moore.edu.au/amcl/

LOCATION | Moore College, 15 King St Newtown | 7.45pm-9.15pm

Wednesday, August 15

MOORE COLLEGE EXTERNAL STUDIES

Moore College Preliminary Theological Certificate (PTC) registrations due.

PTC course Term 3 starts September 1. For more information visit www.external.moore.edu.au.

LOCATION | Churches and homes across Sydney

Saturday August 18

CMS HIGHLANDS MISSION DAY

St Stephen's, Mittagong, 3.30-8.30pm
Speakers: Malcolm Richards (General Secretary, CMS NSW & ACT) and new and serving CMS missionaries. Dinner ticket: \$15 adult, \$40 family. FOR info email nswact@cms.org.au

Sunday, August 19

MOORE COLLEGE SUNDAY

Moore College Sunday is a day when we partner with churches to encourage people to come to Moore College to be trained and equipped for Christian mission and ministry, pray for the college and partner with us financially.

LOCATION | Churches across Sydney

Saturday, August 25

MEN IN ACTION MEN'S GOLF DAY

Join us for the monthly golf day, all welcome. 9am for 9.15am tee-off. BYO \$25 (includes BBQ lunch and green fees) and a mate or two. RSVP preferred by Friday, August 24, but not required. Register at www.meninaction.com.au

LOCATION | Marsden Park Golf Academy, Richmond Rd, Marsden Park | 9am for 9.15am

Saturday, August 25

DEPRESSION WORKSHOP

Lost ambition, emotional numbness, fear and withdrawal and fatigue are marks of depression. This workshop, hosted by St Andrew's Cathedral, is for people suffering depression and for people who would like to know how to pray with, encourage and support people who are suffering depression. Speakers are the Rev Andrew Cameron, Professor Phil Mitchell and Canon Christopher Allan. Cost is \$30. To book and for more information contact Barbara on 0407 910 238 or email brichards@sydney.anglican.asn.au

LOCATION | Golden Grove, 5 Forbes Street, Newtown | 1.30pm-5pm

Sunday, August 26

350TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BCP

Join the Prayer Book Society NSW's celebration of the first post-Reformation use in English parishes of

continued next page »

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« from previous page

the Book of Common Prayer.

2pm: Arrival of the Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir. Speaker will be the Rev Dr Craig D'Alton.

3pm: Choral Evening Prayer from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, celebrated by the Rev Andrew Sempell.

4pm: High Tea in the crypt, \$10 (RSVP with payment by August 15 to PBS NSW, 9/63 O'Sullivan Road, Rose Bay NSW 2029). For more information phone (02) 9371 6953.

LOCATION | St James', King Street, Sydney

Monday, August 27 – Friday, August 31

MOORE COLLEGE OPEN WEEK

Come and visit our Newtown campus, sample a lecture and meet faculty and students. For more information or to arrange a visit email openevents@moore.edu.au.

LOCATION | Moore College, 15 King St, Newtown |

Wednesday, August 29

CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING OPEN NIGHT

Christopher Ash will tackle the issue of God, sex and marriage. Open nights are a chance to consider a question about life and the world we live in from a Christian point of view.

Cost \$8, with supper included. For more information visit www.ccl.moore.edu.au.

LOCATION | Moore College, 15 King St, Newtown | 7.30pm

Friday, August 31

ANGLICANS TOGETHER DINNER

Geraldine Doogue AO will be guest speaker at this year's annual dinner. Tickets are \$50 for adults or \$45 for pensioners. For more details please phone 02 9817 2167.

LOCATION | Moore College, 15 King St Newtown | 7.30pm

Thinking beyond the square

LADIES AT ST PAUL'S, COBBITTY HAVE been busy knitting blankets and sewing clothes for Mission Aid Group (MAG).

At CMS Summer School last year church members felt challenged to support the ministry of MAG to the people of Tanzania. A few months later MAG chairman Rod James and his wife Carol spoke at a fellowship breakfast and, says congregation member Joan Hodge, "it was the first time that we'd really been told about all the things that MAG needed, and the particular things they needed each month".

It didn't take long for the church to respond – in the past 12 months several car boot loads of tools, stationery and toiletry items have been donated and delivered.

When MAG then needed help from those good with knitting and sewing needles, the women in the Cobbitty congregation put up their hands straight away. Huge bags of woollen pieces and squares were knitted into blankets, and fabric was turned into skirts and bags for children. So far 15 hand-knitted blankets, more than 50



The women of St Paul's, Cobbitty with some of their handiwork.

girl's skirts and a large number of tote bags have been sewn and delivered.

Says Joan Hodge: "A lot of people were saying 'I've never done this before' but they soon learned – and they had fun, too! Some people wanted to help but couldn't sew, so I asked for cotton fabrics [for the skirts] and we were given some wonderful fabrics – and

I've still got some left over that we'll use next year. One lady bought all this elastic; someone else bought overlocking threads. It all helps.

"We are quite proud of what we've achieved... but I'd love to be there and see the children receive the skirts and the drawstring bags – just to see their faces light up."

Music in Marrickville



ST CLEMENT'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, Marrickville recently held a concert in a bid to raise some much-needed funds and to welcome the community into their church.



The concert, held on June 24, featured professional musicians playing jazz and classical music to the 100 people who gathered for the event.

"The musicians were all non-Christians," said parishioner Emma Taylor. "But it was a lovely situation. They were able to help us out and we were able to witness to them."

Some of the musicians who performed were: Ambre Hammond (pianist), the John Harkins Trio and Kristin Beradi (vocalist).

According to Ms Taylor the concert, entitled 'New Beginnings', was an opportunity for the church to re-establish itself in the community.

"For too long the [church] building has been neglected and thought of as being 'all boarded up' by the local community," she said. "We want to change this perception and this concert heralds the beginning of this

new chapter."

With the more than \$2000 raised from the concert the church plans to restore an old Steinway piano that it inherited.

"It was once played to accompany Dame Nellie Melba," Ms Taylor said. "But it desperately needs work [to make it playable again]."

Due to the success of the concert, the church plans to run similar events in the future, raising funds to purchase a projector and screen as well as more suitable chairs.

"It's also about inviting the community into the church," Ms Taylor said. "We want the community to see that they are welcome here."

"We're really looking forward to running it again. The musicians were really positive about it as well and they think that as the word gets out it is going to grow."

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Discover Lectio Divina, a practice of prayer and scriptural reading intended to lead to deeper communion with God.

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: 350TH ANNIVERSARY

Sunday 26 August, 2:00-4:30pm (\$10 for high tea)

A special event in conjunction with the Prayer Book Society, comprising services, BCP evening and high tea. RSVP to (02) 4736 1592 or (02) 9571 6853.

ST JAMES' ANNUAL RETREAT

Friday 7 Sept (5:00pm) – Sunday 9 Sept (2:00pm)

Join Bishop Genevieve Ruthford to explore ways of sustaining our passion for God and keeping spiritually fit over the long haul of life. Call for transport and cost info.



Visit our website at www.stjames.org.au or call 8227 1300 for all details of ministries at St James'.



Yee-haa for Figtree kids club



Figtree Kids Church co-ordinator Stephen Smith gets into the spirit – wild west style.

MANY CHURCHES ACROSS THE Diocese capitalised on the recent school holidays by holding holiday kids clubs. One of those churches was Figtree Anglican Church, near Wollongong.

Their four-day holiday 'Kids Day Camp' saw more than 200 children and their parents being taught from the Bible.

"I may be biased," said children's minister Yvonne Gunning, "but from my perspective this is the most strategic thing our church does. It brings solid relationships with kids and their parents."

Many of the children from the local Housing Commission areas can't afford to come to the holiday club, so are sponsored by the church. One of the local schools also supports the program by sending at least 10 socially disadvantaged children each year.

"We had a western theme throughout the week," Mrs Gunning said. "We also carefully worked out how to talk more about following Jesus and kids could go and chat with a leader, in [their] corral, who shared the gospel."

Throughout the week the children were taught from the book of John about how Jesus offers life to the full. They were given copies of John's gospel

to read for themselves and taught how to look up stories on their own.

The camp was not only fun for all but a great success in gospel terms, with 31 children asking Jesus to be their Lord.

"The response was excellent," Mrs Gunning said. "We will follow these children up through Scripture and visitation. We will also visit every non-church family and invite all the children along to events we have later in the year."

However kids clubs are not just for children. Figtree sees 'Kids Day Camp' as a great opportunity to minister to parents.

"The aim for our church is reaching families and connecting with our community," Mrs Gunning said. "We run a high-quality café for parents in the morning that's all free and we have people from pastoral care as well as evangelists sitting at the tables loving them and talking about life. One afternoon we run a Q & A for the parents at the café."

There were about 200 volunteers involved over the four days, including leaders, cooks and security.

"It isn't just a kids thing, it is a church-wide mission," Mrs Gunning said. "It's a great way to have the whole church community involved."

www.youthweek.net.au/year13

Year 13
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Saved from the brink of hell

Sometimes it's worth getting a phone call at three in the morning, writes DAVID PETTETT.

IT'S AN OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD FOR the hospital chaplain. The phone rang at 3am. The nurse on the other end was telling me 84-year-old Mr Smith had been told he did not have long to live and he wanted to talk to the chaplain. At 3am?! Would he be dead by the morning? Couldn't I see him at 9 o'clock?

Yet experience had taught me that if Mr Smith wanted to talk about life and death issues, now was the time to talk. While he might be still alive in the morning he may be unconscious, there may be other distractions or, simply, the opportunity would be lost.

I walked into the four-bed ward at 3.30am. Three people were sound asleep. A light was on over Mr Smith's bed. I approached and, conscious of the sleepers, quietly introduced myself. He had not heard me so, somewhat more loudly than I was comfortable with, I introduced myself again. Others began to stir as Mr Smith said he had been told he did not have long to live and that he was afraid.

He started telling me about his life. He had been a good man. He had served his country with distinction. He had been honest in business. He had even taught Sunday school.

I talked with Mr Smith about the all-sufficiency of Christ. We cannot put our trust in our own goodness or our achievements. We need to acknowledge that we have failed to live up to God's standards and we need to put our trust in Christ who has done for us what we can't do for ourselves and has paid the price for our wrongdoing.

As I was talking I noticed tears welling up in Mr Smith's eyes. I stopped speaking. He looked at me and, through his tears said, "I feel so much at peace".

Somewhere in that conversation, in the wee hours of the morning, Mr Smith had given up trusting in his own goodness and had begun to trust in the all-sufficiency of Christ. He died a few days later.

As I reflect on these events years later, I praise God for saving Mr Smith just hours before he entered eternity. I praise God for the privilege of joining in the work of Christ to save a man on the brink of hell. I praise God for training in ministry that does not proceed from a psychotherapeutic model but a Christ-centred one.

I learned long ago in chaplaincy that a model of pastoral care that takes its cue from modern psychology, while



having a lot of good stuff to offer in understanding human behaviour, has lost its roots in biblical pastoral care.

Pastoral care arises out of the activity of God who became man and who, in that man, relates back to God on behalf of humanity. Too many pastoral care models make the mistake of asking, "Where is God for this person?". That question shapes God to fit into the hard places we find it difficult to make sense of. It means we try to understand God by first understanding man's situation. This is a wrong-headed approach because it ignores the God who has revealed

himself in the person and work of his son, Jesus.

A better question is, "How? How is God in this?". The Christian chaplain brings an understanding of the God who has revealed himself in Christ and seeks to understand, and help the patient understand, how this God is with them in this hard place.

Mr Smith didn't really know where God was – let alone how God could be with him in death. Bringing a Christ-centred focus to Mr Smith's question brought him God's peace in the last hours of his life on earth and for eternity.

VALE

THE REV CANON KELVIN TUTT DIED on May 23.

Born in 1928, Canon Tutt studied at Moore College from 1950-52 before becoming curate at West Manly as well as curate-in-charge of a local mobile church. In 1954 he went to Norfolk Island as chaplain, moving in 1956 to the Nelson diocese in New Zealand to become vicar of Stoke, followed by the parish of Cobden-Runanga.

In 1963 Canon Tutt returned to Sydney as curate-in-charge of the then combined provisional parish of Peakhurst with Lugarno, where he remained for 10 years before becoming rector of Balgowlah. In the same year he also became an Army chaplain – a post he held until 1983.

Canon Tutt was made a canon of St John's Cathedral in Parramatta in 1987 and became curate-in-charge of Sadleir in 1985, planting the congregation of Hoxton Park in the nine years he spent at the church before his retirement in 1994.



THE REV KEITH SANDARS DIED ON May 26.

Born in 1927 in North Sydney, Mr Sandars (above) won a scholarship in 1940 to Trinity Grammar School – a defining moment in his future life. He was boarded at Trinity until 1945 and became school captain in addition to his captaincy of the rugby, athletics and debating teams.

After finishing school Mr Sandars spent two years as a junior house

master at Scots College, then the following three years as a master at Scots Preparatory School (with evenings spent working for an arts degree at the University of Sydney).

In 1948 Mr Sandars began his studies at Moore College, graduating with honours before his first curacy, at St Andrew's, Summer Hill, saw him become assistant chaplain at Trinity. He was appointed chaplain of the school in 1953 – a position he held for 11 years while also a chaplain to the Army. In 1965 he was appointed master of Trinity Preparatory School, where he served until his retirement in 1986.

During his years as Trinity chaplain Mr Sandars was instrumental in organising the fundraising and construction of the school chapel. He also gained a diploma of religious education from Melbourne University and was involved in the early years of religious TV programming and presenting on the ABC and Channel 9.

Mr Sandars was busy after retirement on a number of school councils, and was involved in pastoral work at Frensham School and Tudor House

near his Southern Highlands home.

After his death, tributes flowed online from some of the many people whose lives he touched at Trinity. One was from Dick Humfrey, an old boy from 1957, who called Mr Sandars a "great man" who "had me so inspired I wanted to be a missionary. Never achieved that. But he gave me a very strong faith that has stood the test of time and carried me through life's problems".

At Mr Sandars' funeral, his son Chris spoke of his father's "endless love, care, respect, support, leadership, inspiration and counsel to all whom he came in touch with". He added that even as his father became physically frail, he was "Keith Lindsay Sandars to the end and a shepherd to his flock".

Vacant Parishes

LIST OF PARISHES AND PROVISIONAL PARISHES, VACANT OR BECOMING VACANT, AS AT JULY 25, 2012

- Auburn (St Philip's)*
- Christ Church St Laurence
- Dundas-Telopea
- Glenquarie
- Macquarie
- Philadelphia Anglican Church*

* Denotes provisional parishes or Archbishop's appointments

BOOK REVIEW

The vision of a new self

TRANSFORMED
BY GOD: NEW
COVENANT LIFE
AND MINISTRY
BY DAVID G.
PETERSON

ANDREW
CAMERON

“I HAVE TO BE TRUE TO MYSELF.”
“I follow my heart.”
“I’m pursuing my passion.”
I hear these statements on reality television. But is it the language of everyday life? I asked a class of my students, most in their early 20s to 30s. They nodded as one. “Just check Facebook,” they said.

If you’re a Christian over 40, it’s hard to grasp the enormity of what has shifted here. For younger people, pretty much the sole criterion of what matters is whether it *feels* true. Older measures of truth – like consistency, or verifiability – are just not very interesting any more. What matters is whether it thrills me, or seems beautiful, or calls me to a more fulfilled self. It’s a movement against the mechanistic ideologies that produced, say, 80-hour weeks at the expense of a life well lived. The young are as half-right and half-wrong as the old.

So when the gospel is presented like a dose of salts or a cold shower to snap us out of selfish desire the young resist, and not simply because they are selfish. Rather, they feel they are being robbed of the only thing they can really trust: their immediate hunches about what’s best for them. In our context, any gospel that asks people to believe against their feelings can simply make no sense. Too bad if we wish people were different.

But what if the gospel offered a transformed heart, renewed passions and a new self? David Peterson’s new book *Transformed by God* puts the case for how the Bible is threaded with this kind of vision for humanity. If I’m someone who tries to follow her heart or to live true to himself, then perhaps *now* we have a conversation.

There are dangers, of course, in offering a Christianity that attends to people’s inner world. We might simply pander to inflated self-importance couched in the language of passions, ‘dreams’ and ‘true self’. This is where Peterson’s book is of utmost importance. He shows how God

transforms hearts, passions and selves – but not according to any conventional human wisdom.

It begins with an astonishing turn of events buried deep within the Old Testament. In the dark days of the Jewish exile, with humanity at its greatest distance from God since Adam, Jeremiah suddenly announces that, ‘the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour... saying, “Know the LORD”, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more’ (Jeremiah 31:31-34, ESV).

Imagine such a world, where *everyone* just gets it. Evangelists and pastors have gone the way of the dodo. You pursue your passions in orbit around God. You carry his law within the ‘self’ you’re true to. You have a heart worth following.

Peterson tracks how this matter fascinates the New Testament authors and directly affects us today. Christ’s mediating work on the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit becomes the royally appointed road to a new heart. Peterson revels in finding this theme wherever he can in Scripture.

But it took me a long time to ‘get’ this book. To paraphrase Dale Kerrigan from *The Castle* I don’t know what’s the opposite of poetry, but this book is the opposite. The opening sentences give the vibe:

‘Jeremiah’s promise of “a new covenant” can be found in his ‘Book of Comfort’ (30-31). This is a collection of oracles, mostly poetical in form, offering hope to Israel and Judah in the seventh and sixth centuries BC. In earlier chapters the theme of judgment predominates...’ (p.17)

That’s it. Straight into biblical-scholar-speak, which never lets up. No easing you



in with chatty personal stories. No cultural reflections along the way. No engagement with the usual psychological take on things. We just dive into Jeremiah first, then Luke-Acts, Hebrews, 1 Corinthians, Romans and John’s writings. Then it ends, as abruptly as it began.

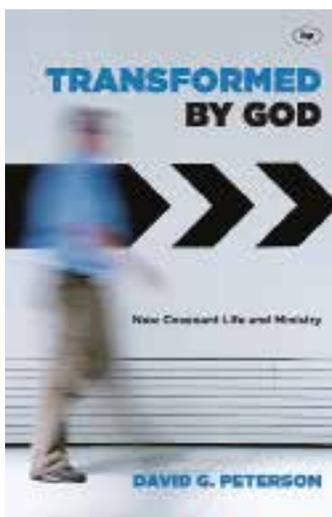
The book works if you read it alongside the Bible. If you try reading it on its own, you’ll be intimidated and lost. But if you read each main passage Peterson covers and *then* his take on it, the Bible springs to life in fascinating new ways. For example, he argues (pp.139-144) that in Romans 2:15, the law ‘written’ on Gentiles’ hearts refers to Gentile Christians who’ve received the Holy Spirit (that’s 99 per cent of us, dear readers). Peterson outlines a big argument about this verse but his take on it now seems obvious to me.

More signposts would be kinder to the reader (like ‘read this passage next’ or ‘now we’ll consider...’). Some critical engagement with modern thought about motivation would lift it out of its intensely detailed engagements with the biblical text, and magnify its impact.

The book will probably be more useful for people with some theological training who would repackage it for a wider audience.

Transformed by God is a lot harder than any self-help book. But for those who can cope with the style, it’s infinitely more satisfying.

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Applying the Bible to applying the Bible

Moore College Lectures 2012

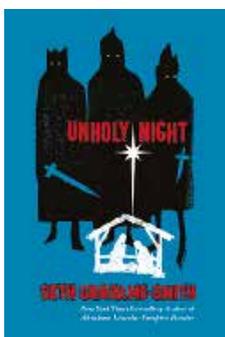
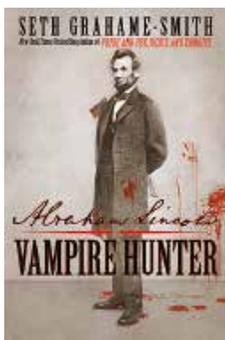
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Vampires, zombies, Bethlehem...

Book teaser: a still from Seth Grahame-Smith's *Unholy Night* trailer.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN:
VAMPIRE HUNTER
AND
UNHOLY NIGHT
BY SETH GRAHAME-SMITH

JUDY ADAMSON



AS IF IT WEREN'T ENOUGH HAVING almost every book available in the youth section of the average bookshop devoted to me-too vampire novels (thanks so much, Stephenie Meyer), now we have Abraham Lincoln getting in on the act.

This month – not long before the blood-sucking genre reinvigorated by the *Twilight* series (or “saga”, as the filmmakers like to call it) finally comes to an end – cinema audiences around the globe will be invited to believe the 16th president of the United States was fighting the Confederate army over more issues than slavery. He was, of course, keen to win the Civil War because vampires were fighting for the South. Welcome to the world of *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*.

We can thank American writer Seth Grahame-Smith for the curious idea of linking Lincoln and vampirism. He has been called ‘the master of dark historical revisionism’ – which is fitting, given that he’s also just mined the Bible for his newest novel. But more of that later.

Whatever negative message vampires in the South might send to the US states that lost the Civil War anyway (no need to rub it in!), we also have our hero learning to fight vampires from a young age after one of them kills his mother. Fighting for truth, justice, and the American way with his trusty axe, in a manner the real Abraham Lincoln probably never dreamed possible.

While it might appear as though the plot for such a film must have been randomly generated by computer *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* is based on Grahame-Smith’s 2010 novel of the same name. Reportedly the plot of the film doesn’t bear

much resemblance to the book, which fans adored for its characters and historical detail (as well as the gory bits).

In any case this is historical and/or literary “mash-up” territory, so if someone else mashes Grahame-Smith’s writings further for the big screen, I guess he can’t really complain. To put his work in context he is also co-writer of the best-selling novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (seriously), and wrote a book of “letters” to former US president George W. Bush. As a big fan of Stephen King and the horror genre, he has also written a helpfully instructive guide for how to survive situations that arise in your average horror film.

Now Grahame-Smith has moved on to reworking part of the New Testament and has already sold the film rights for his new book, *Unholy Night*, which delves into the early chapters of the gospels.

In an attempt not to offend Christians he has chosen to leave Jesus and his parents alone – sort of – but has no such qualms about other characters. Most specifically, his attention is focused on the wise men. He recasts them as thieves who escape from Herod only to stumble across “the infant” and his family in Bethlehem and help them escape to Egypt. And yes, Balthazar and his mates even become heroes of sorts by helping Jesus’ family to fight off zombies and more along the way.

Talking to *The Hollywood Reporter*, Grahame-Smith admits he was initially hesitant to run with his idea of reimagining the story of the wise men as he wondered if he was trampling on what was “literally sacred ground”. His solution was not to use Jesus’ name in the book (or even have him speak a word) and ensure that Joseph and

Mary were “upholders of virtue”.

“Basically the approach I took was, ‘Let’s assume everything that the Bible says is true without pandering,’” he said. “This isn’t a Christian book but it is a pro-faith book in the sense that if you look at Balthazar he goes from non-believer to believer and in the process he heals himself and begins to understand the power of faith. That was very important.”

Of course, Grahame-Smith has a clear lack of understanding of the biblical narrative and the nature of salvation if he thinks that changing the nature and purpose of the wise men, and having them essentially save Jesus and his family, doesn’t step on any elements of the Christian faith. But it’s helpful to remember that he is not seeking to be disrespectful in *Unholy Night*. He just doesn’t understand the core of Christianity and his focus is on creating a rip-snorting pop culture read (highlighted by his delight at the description of his book as “great shlock”).

Unholy Night is likely to have a very specific readership but zombies and vampires are also a “fun” part of pop culture, whether others agree with/like it or not. The very fact that a film of *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* has been made shows the ongoing level of interest.

It is useful for Christians to be aware of the enthusiasm for stories about the undead, and to be prepared and well read so we can relate to friends and youth who engage with them.

Also, putting aside any personal preferences about this kind of material, we need to be flexible and good-humoured where we can, but clear about the difference between fiction and truth. **SC**