

Southern CROSS

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THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

Gone bush

REGIONAL MINISTRY IN TOUGH TIMES

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Towards 2020: CMS vision update



Real New Year resolutions



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Missed December SC?

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“To not change the way we do mission is not an option. Old paradigms of mission no longer fit into our global, complex world.”

Peter Rodgers

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Plant and grow... a church



Tangible support: commissioning prayer for Macarthur Mission Area church planters.

PLANS TO ESTABLISH MORE NEW congregations in Sydney's south-west mark a growing trend in Australian church planting.

"I've got a trades background and I'm really passionate about reaching tradies for Christ," church planter the Rev Gavin Oram says, even as he contemplates the tough soil in front of him.

Mr Oram is the assistant minister at Harrington Park, and has spent the past six months planning to break new ground in the nearby greenfields suburb of Gregory Hills in late 2015. Key to the preparation for this church plant has been linking up with a professional ministry coach.

Geneva Push, Australia's largest church-planting network, has supported Mr Oram by matching him with church-planting coach the Rev Clayton Fopp from Trinity Mount Barker in the outer suburbs of Adelaide.

"We have similar personalities and click really well," Mr Oram says. "He's given me a step-by-step process of what I need to do prelaunch to be as well prepared as I possibly can. I wouldn't have really known where to start with those things and it's been really helpful to have a leg-up."

The Diocese's Macarthur Mission Area recently held a support night at which Mr Oram spoke, as did Adam Richards – who is preparing church plants at the Campbelltown campus of the University of Western Sydney

and the new suburb of Macarthur Heights.

Those that attended the event at St Peter's, Campbelltown were challenged to support such churches with "prayer, people and plastic". Many indicated they would do one or more of these things and local Mission Area leader the Rev Nigel Fortescue encourages others to do the same.

"It's great to support these new works as they reach new groups of people," he says.

Beyond the prayer, people and plastic, however, is ongoing coaching. Geneva Push's director of coaching Craig Tucker says planters who are coached are statistically more likely to grow more resilient, evangelistically focused congregations – and Geneva is working with Evangelism and New Churches and other organisations to lift the bar on Australian coaching.

"If we are going to do church planting well in Australia we need coaches who understand and connect with Australian culture," he says.

Adds Mr Oram: "The whole genius of church planting is you get to think about 'How do I reach people in this particular cultural context in this quarter of the city, state or this part of Australia?'"


He says Mr Fopp's direct insight into his local context has helped him a lot. "Australians are different to the English and different to

Americans and so it's been handy to have an Aussie to do things really well... Clayton gives me tips about how to best move forward [and] throws ideas my way that I hadn't thought of."

Geneva is holding a training clinic

on February 25 at Church by the Bridge in Kirribilli. Issues to be covered include the theology of gospel coaching, applying this to ministry issues and the review and practice of core coaching skills. See www.genevapush.com/events

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Fit for anything

ANGLICARE SYDNEY AND THE Lighthouse Youth program have joined forces to give eight young people at risk of homelessness an opportunity to set goals, push personal boundaries and achieve things they never thought possible.

Helping them through this transformation is Simone Campbell, an Air Force sergeant and mother of three who attends Figtree Anglican Church. In her 17 years in the military, Campbell has served in Afghanistan and East Timor and was a combat survival instructor. Now part-time in the Air Force and a part-time fitness trainer, she has been working with her young charges for months to prepare for Wollongong's annual Australia Day Aquathon.

"Summit Fitness Studio (SFS) is exceptionally proud to be partnered with Anglicare for the provision of health and fitness services to youths in need," Campbell says.

"It has been exciting to help our current young people chase down their Aquathon goal. Each of them is on their own journey. They are stepping outside their comfort zone to challenge their fitness, their fear of open water, their fear of failure.

"What inspires me most about this program is the overwhelming success rate and positive change in each of our participants. Watching our youths set and achieve their



Training for life: Simone Campbell with one of the young people she trains. PHOTO: Christopher Chan, Illawarra Mercury

goals is a rewarding experience. Challenging them to make considered decisions and to express their emotions is a key training element. Equipping them to take these learning outcomes and apply them to all aspects of their life is a powerful thing."

She adds that some of the youths

have also started attending church as a result of relationships built at the training sessions.

The Aquathon caters for all ages and fitness levels and, since it began in 1999, has grown to become what organisers believe is the nation's largest swim-and-run event. It has also raised more than \$250,000 for

charities and not-for-profit groups.

Says organiser Rob Battocchio: "To witness first-timers, hundreds of children, seniors and people with a disability all enjoying themselves is the real win of the day. And it's great to see donations raised through the Aquathon making a real difference to local charities."

Youthworks campaigns on SRE

ANGLICAN YOUTHWORKS HAS begun a major campaign to reinforce the value of SRE for children, families, schools and the community, coinciding with a government review.

The State Government has commissioned an independent review of the implementation of both Special Religious Education (SRE) and Special Education in Ethics (SEE) in NSW schools. The review was recommended when the Education Act was amended in 2011

to allow for ethics classes.

The areas for review include the nature and extent of SRE and SEE classes, parent choices through the enrolment process and opting out; the development of complaints procedures as well as curriculum matters – such as relevance and age appropriateness of teaching and learning across all primary grades in a variety of demographics. Also under scrutiny will be the level of supervision for students who do not attend SRE or SEE.

"Youthworks has been working extremely hard over the past few years at creating a quality training and accreditation program for SRE teachers," says Youthworks CEO Zac Veron. "We are hopeful that the results of the review will allow us to get even better at helping school students understand God's word."

The review should be completed by the end of the year and there is expected to be an opportunity for public input towards the end of the process. Mr Veron says SRE in

NSW is "at a critical point", and adds that the review is "an opportunity for Christians to stand up for SRE and the important role it plays in NSW public education. I encourage people to sign a statement of support and affirm the positive value of SRE at www.youthworks.net/sre-underreview."

Youthworks has also launched a renewed effort to train teachers and improve curriculum through the newly formed SRE Office housed within Youthworks.

Educator farewelled

RUSSELL POWELL

HUNDREDS HAVE FAREWELLED Sydney layman John Lambert – the architect of a resurgence in Anglican schools and a pioneer of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation.

Mr Lambert (right), who lived in the Blue Mountains, died in December at the age of 78.

He was the inaugural president of the NSW Board of Studies, serving from its outset in 1990 until 1994. Previously he had a distinguished career with the NSW Department of School Education, where his roles included history inspector, regional director and finally deputy director-general. He was instrumental in the creation of the Board of Studies, having been a member of the Committee of Review of NSW Schools which recommended its creation in 1989.

From 1994-2009 Mr Lambert was the Director of Schools Development at the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation, during which he contributed significantly to the establishment of 12 new Anglican schools within the Diocese. He also guided the opening of 12 Anglican schools in other dioceses in NSW.

His contribution to Christian education was lauded in a tribute from Archbishop Glenn Davies, read at Mr Lambert's funeral at Christ Church, Springwood: "After almost a century of not establishing anything other than grammar schools John Lambert, almost single-handedly, persuaded the Sydney Anglican archbishop of the day that the Church should take advantage of new Federal Government funding and establish low-fee Anglican schools in areas of significant population growth," Dr Davies said.

"It was John Lambert's insight, innovation and tenacity that



brought together financial expertise, government funding knowledge, real estate experience, understanding of the building industry and his own wealth of educational wisdom and experience to establish low-fee Anglican schools with a distinctive Christian ethos.

"He was passionate. He was

intelligent. He had extensive contacts in the key areas of establishing schools. He was a big-picture person while being meticulous with details. He was persistent. He refused to give up when obstacles were put in his way... John Lambert was a great champion for Christian education, a remarkable servant of Christ, and one who knew where he was going after death."

The diocesan Standing Committee also passed a motion of condolence to Mr Lambert's family and thanksgiving for him. In moving the motion Dr Laurie Scandrett, the CEO of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation, described Mr Lambert's contribution to Anglican education in Sydney as "a revolution".

"I've rarely met a man who knew he was going to glory as much as John Lambert," Dr Scandrett added. "A great servant of the Diocese has passed."

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Blue-collar growth

TARA SING

WHEN ANDREW BEDDOE FIRST developed a theology course for blue-collar workers as part of the Ministry Training Strategy he hoped to see as many people trained for ministry as possible. Four years on, this dream is becoming a reality.

In 2011 the Blue-Collar Ministry Apprenticeship started with a handful of full-time ministry apprentices studying and working alongside Sydney pastors. Now there is a part-time evening course for workers and the first rural training centre in the central western NSW town of Orange.

"The vision has always been to see training expand to churches across Australia," Mr Beddoe says. "Since 2011, I have been encouraging those outside Sydney who were interested in the training to consider... a



Training country people for the country: Bruce Bennett.

training centre in their local church. Orange Evangelical Church is the first to grab the bull by the horns."

The senior minister at Orange, Bruce Bennett, sees potential for this kind of training in regional centres. "For country people [ministry training] has always meant leaving home and moving to

the city for several years," he says. "While some of us have done it, it is the exception more than the rule for rural workers and tradespeople to go and do a degree in theology. Many don't go simply because it is so far beyond their personal experience, but it is not because they don't have the 'smarts' or the dedication required."

Mr Bennett believes the apprenticeship is a possible game-changer for getting tradespeople seriously engaged with ministry and theological training in the country.

Mr Beddoe agrees, convinced

this mode of training is vital for the future of the church. "This is not a dumbed-down version of equivalent higher education qualifications but a different style of training that better suits the practical 'hands-on' person," he says. "I hope to see blue-collar Christians equipped to serve their church, families and workplaces. I want to see blue-collar gospel workers working alongside white-collar gospel workers in every church in Australia."

Since starting the Blue-Collar Ministry Apprenticeship six students have been awarded a Certificate IV, one a diploma in Christian Ministry & Theology and a further 10 are enrolled part-time in evening classes.

Although there is still much to be done, Orange Evangelical Church is hoping to begin this form of training in partnership with MTS this year.

"I want to train up country people in the country for the country," Mr Bennett says. "We are taking an exciting first step. Under God, I foresee Orange Evangelical Church not just training ourselves but being a centre for training, reseeding and regrowing gospel ministry in Orange and beyond."

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LIBBY
LIBBY (surname withheld) is coming to Australia to speak of God's grace at work from over thirty years serving in a war-torn part of Central Asia. Her husband, Tom, was tragically killed along with nine others while returning from an overland trip to minister to people living in remote mountain villages. Tom worked in an eye clinic and Libby taught primary school. Together they raised their three girls and sought to make God's love tangible to the people in their community.

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Honesty on sexuality

ALL CHURCHES NEED TO RESPOND well to issues surrounding homosexuality rather than just "standing on the sidelines", says US author Dr Wesley Hill – who will fly to Australia next month to speak at seminars on same-sex attraction.

"As someone who upholds a traditional Christian view of marriage and sexuality, I'm not at all convinced we're handling this the right way," Dr Hill says. "Many times our churches only give a negative word to gay people: 'You must say no to gay sex', we say to them. But we've neglected to talk about the positive call to love that the gospel gives to all of us, whether gay or straight or anywhere in between."

Dr Hill, who teaches New Testament at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Pennsylvania and has written a key book on sexuality, *Washed and waiting: Reflections on Christian faithfulness and homosexuality*, believes the

issue is very significant. "In my context in the United States, this is a really important matter," he says. "Churches and denominations are being torn apart over this and many people feel that the credibility of the faith hangs on how we respond to this issue."

He encourages Australian churches to grapple with strategies for those with same-sex attraction. "I want to see our churches holding firm to what the New Testament teaches but also speaking more specifically and hopefully about the forms of love and community that gay people may embrace when they become disciples of Jesus," he says. "I want to see us grappling honestly and humanely with what a life of Christian obedience and Christian flourishing looks like for people who are living with same-sex desire."

Organised by Liberty Ministries, which has conducted a long-running ministry to people with same-sex



Dr Wesley Hill. PHOTO: Biola University

attraction, the seminar also aims to open up the issues to all Christians.

"Some people fear that they're being asked to surrender their faith in the Bible in the name of a more 'progressive' agenda," Dr Hill says. "Others fear that they're being asked to hate themselves or their gay and lesbian family members and friends in the name of a more

'conservative' agenda. In light of these fears, it's really important that we in the church be able to have honest conversations about all this, listening to and submitting ourselves to the authority of the Scriptures and also listening to and caring about the stories and experiences of those who have been hurt or ignored by the church."

The seminars will run on March 11 and March 14 at the Village Church in Annandale, and Dr Hill hopes they can provide a rallying point for Christians to learn together.

"I want to encourage people who come to the events... to be asking themselves what a faithful, hope-filled Christian life would look like for someone who is gay," he says. "Yes, a life of Christian holiness means that we all have to make sacrifices. But it also means that we should be prepared to encourage and help one another so that the life of sacrificial obedience isn't a solo effort."

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BCP, old and new

JUDY ADAMSON

WHILE EVANGELICAL CHURCHES across the globe look for ways to be contemporary while maintaining the gospel, three Sydney Anglicans are taking a slightly different tack.

The Rev Justin Moffatt, the Rev Dr Michael Jensen and the Rev Dr John Dickson – the rectors at York Street, Darling Point and Roseville respectively – are seeking to bring the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* to what Mr Moffatt calls “new Sydney”. That is, a Sydney that grew up without the BCP and, often, without the kind of Scripture-laden prayers you find in the old book’s pages.

“Some clergy who have been retired for 20 years look at the loss of the use of the *Book of Common Prayer* (pictured above) and they wonder if it’s the loss of the gospel,” Mr Moffatt says. “I’ve spoken to



them and that’s the way they view it.

“It’s an important voice to hear, and I guess what they were thinking was that the prayer book outlined the gospel in its prayer and its readings, in the call to confession, the confession and then assurance of forgiveness leading to praise, etc. So there was an arc to the worship that was shaped around the gospel.”

A meeting over coffee between the three clergy late in 2013, at which Dr Dickson spoke of the deep

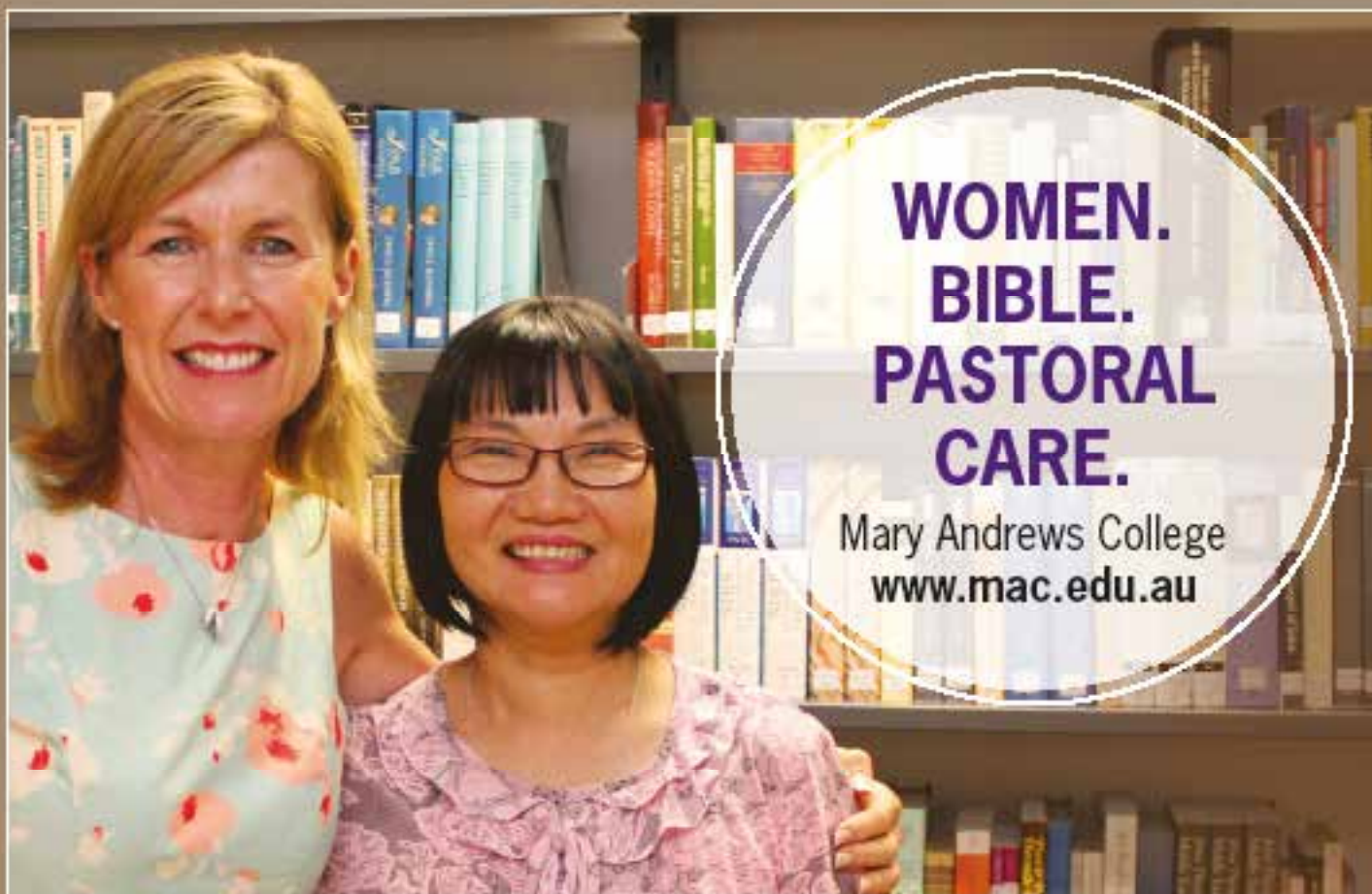
personal impact the BCP’s readings and Morning Prayer had had on his own quiet times, led to the three running weekly services at St Phillip’s, York Street during Lent and Advent last year using the old book.

“We all agreed that the *Book of Common Prayer* needed to be protected and therefore needed to be used,” Mr Moffatt says. “The three of us wanted to gather even if no one else gathered with us. The idea was simple – we were praying

through Morning Prayer, and if two or three gathered with us, then that was a bonus. But there were between 40-50 coming each week, with a core each time, and some interesting dialogue on Facebook.”

That being the case, the BCP series is on again during Lent 2015, with 7.30am services at York Street on Wednesdays from February 18, and sermons that will focus on one aspect of Morning Prayer: confession, absolution, praise, lessons, creed, collects and grace.

“In the end the services are about the gospel,” Mr Moffatt says. “It’s about the gospel being preached – with the chance to pray prayers and preach sermons that city workers could come to, and perhaps bring a friend to – but also protected in the sense that 50 years ago or more ago, the *Book of Common Prayer* was used, utilised and discussed in order to protect the evangelical character of the Diocese.”



Back in the saddle

THREE OF THE CMS NSW & ACT'S best known missionary couples are heading back to the field in 2015.

David and Georgina Newmarch, Graham and Wendy Toulmin and Peter and Terry Blowes are heading to opposite ends of the earth but, in a sense, they never really left the mission field.

"We came back in 2004 for Peter to take up the position of mission personnel secretary at CMS Australia," says Terry Blowes, "but we stayed connected with friends we made in our work in student ministry in Latin America.

"We have visited every couple of years doing pastoral visits and mentoring leadership there and have constantly been reminded of the great opportunities, the great shortage of people available and trained to lead student movements there, and the need for care and support for those who are leading."

The Newmarches describe their



Back to the Congo: Graham and Wendy Toulmin talk to CMS NSW & ACT general secretary Malcolm Richards at Summer School 2015.

return to Pakistan to care for Christian workers as the fulfilment of a long-held dream. They served at Murree Christian School from 1989-2003, went back to Pakistan in 2012 and are about to return for a further two-year stint as hosts of a missionary "rest house".

"Georgina had a desire for many years to run a retreat centre for missionaries but never really

thought it was possible," David Newmarch says. "So to be invited to do this kind of job was very exciting.

"As well as providing a comfortable place for our guests to get rest and be refreshed, we seek to encourage them by listening, talking and praying with them. As the only Westerners who live in this suburban street on the outskirts of Islamabad we pray God will make us lights in the wider

community as we meet people in our daily lives."

Graham and Wendy Toulmin, well known for dental work in the Democratic Republic of Congo, are returning to oversee the development of a dental training facility in Aru in Eastern Congo in a joint project with Anglican Aid.

"I really thought I was finished with the Congo after 26 years of fundraising and going back and forth," Graham Toulmin says. "One last fundraising letter brought an amazing response... I also started getting offers of second-hand equipment. Our loungeroom, garage and a container [at] Springwood church are now full to overflowing. Never in my wildest dreams had I expected such a reaction."

So, like the other couples, the Toulmins are heading back out because the need and opportunities are, in Graham's words, "just staring us in the face".

“I totally support the stand that our Diocese and leaders have taken in stating our total abhorrence of sexual misconduct and any abuse of children. I am committed to strengthening our culture of 'safe ministry' through education and professional development of our clergy and lay people, as we seek to maintain the standards of Christian ministry which are grounded in the teaching of the Bible.”

Archbishop Glenn Davies

ZERO TOLERANCE for Misconduct and Abuse

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

A pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme is available to provide counselling and other support to victims of misconduct or abuse.

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Mission longevity

BEN MCEACHEN

AT LAST MONTH'S CMS SUMMER School, a constraint refrain was heard: long-term support, and long-term missionary placements. These maximise the prospect of cross-cultural ministry, according to the Church Missionary Society.

"We're talking about significant periods of time in a ministry situation so that you can become effective and see definite kingdom advancement," says the Rev Malcolm Richards, general secretary of CMS NSW & ACT. "Committing to a reasonably long term so that people can form good relationships and actually see people grow."

For a long time the missionary organisation has "unofficially" championed long-term stays. But in 2012 CMS formalised this core value within its vision statement.



Part of a "bigger team": long-term missionaries Sandra and Paul King in France.

The society encourages prospective missionaries to see placement in terms of a decade or more, rather than a few years. "The absolute minimum time we want people to commit to is six years," Mr Richards says. While

CMS has a short-term program with placements of up to two years, best relational results are achieved over more extended periods.

"Any ministry is relational [but particularly] cross-cultural ministry," says Mr Richards, who spent a combined 13 years in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a missionary. "It means learning a new language, usually, and a whole new cultural context."

He adds that this learning dominates the first term (three years) for most CMS missionaries. "When you go back for your second term, you're actually ready to do ministry. Our experience is [long term] gives best gospel outcomes. Because we believe that, the way we think about selection, training, pastoral care, how we support people financially and in prayer – everything we do is trying to back up that we want to enable missionaries to be there long term."

Every CMS missionary completes a pastoral care plan detailing how they will be sustained spiritually, pastorally and personally throughout their placement. CMS checks these plans are being enacted, also providing each missionary family with one pastoral visit a year from a CMS staff member.

Mr Richards also points to the encouragement provided by CMS members and friends at home as a vital cog in the missionary support system.

"The way CMS thinks about mission is that the task of reaching the nations with the gospel of Jesus is not just the job of the people that go – it's the job of the whole church," he says. "In the whole body of Christ, different people have different roles. Some people will actually go but others will support them by encouraging; praying; giving sacrificially."

"If people are convinced that long-term gospel results will be had by missionaries staying on location long-term, then that not only requires missionaries to commit to long-term... long-term mission actually means long-term supporters."

Mr Richards is reluctant to raise any CMS missionary as an example of the long-term model it endorses. But stressing their humility and desire to not be in the spotlight, Mr Richards mentions Paul and Sandra King, who attended Summer School this year. Having spent 23 years in France, he says the Kings are grateful to the "bigger team" they know they are part of.

"Without really committed people praying for them and supporting them, they could never have done the ministry they've done," he says. "They see it as a team effort – those who are being sent, and those who are doing the sending."

For an update on CMS's Towards 2020 vision, see page 25.

adm
anglican deaconess ministries

Expressions of interest are being sought from women, parishes and para-church organisations for the Anglican Deaconess Ministries Training Program.

This program is designed to raise up lay women into church and para-church ministry through a combination of theological training at Mary Andrews College and a paid ministry placement, funded by ADM.

We are seeking to mobilise the laity as neighbourhood chaplains with a distinct outreach focus into the community.

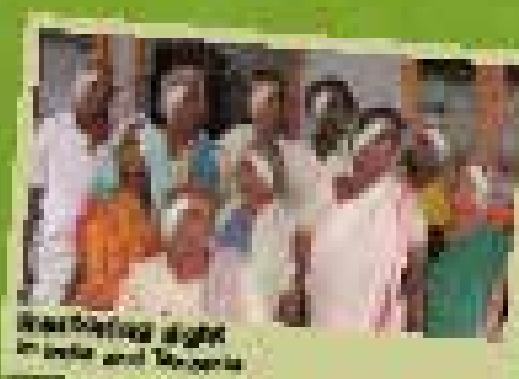
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Goldsworthy
for Gippsland

Bathurst's long road



PERTH ASSISTANT BISHOP KAY Goldsworthy returns to her home state of Victoria next month to become the Bishop of Gippsland.

She will become Gippsland's 12th bishop, replacing Bishop John McIntyre who died suddenly in June last year after a short illness.

Bishop Goldsworthy (above), who is 58, became the first female bishop in an Anglican Diocese in Australia when she was appointed an assistant Bishop of Perth in 2008.

She was born in Melbourne and trained at Trinity College before a series of clerical appointments in Victoria and WA. The Gippsland Diocese covers an area from the south-eastern edge of Melbourne through the Latrobe Valley to the NSW border near Mallacoota.

"I am deeply aware of the responsibility and privilege being given to me and look forward to working alongside the clergy and lay people of Gippsland in the mission entrusted to us all in Christ," she said.

Bishop Goldsworthy will be installed on March 21 in St Paul's Cathedral, Sale.

THE BISHOP OF BATHURST, IAN Palmer, is walking from Bathurst to Dubbo to take up his position as rector of Dubbo – the latest in a series of emergency measures because of his diocese's money woes.

"Because of the financial state of the diocese I cannot continue as your full-time bishop," Bishop Palmer wrote to all parishes in December. "For years the capital of the Endowment of the See has been spent so my future is now like that of every parish priest in the diocese: I rely not upon the generosity of past parishioners but the goodwill of people giving to the [newly-launched] Episcopal Ministry Fund."

He will combine his duties as rector of Dubbo with his episcopal responsibilities.

Bathurst has been the seat of the Bishop for the past 150 years. Although the 2015 budget for the diocese includes no increase in parish assessments and a small surplus, four registry staff had to be retrenched.

After moving out of Bishops Court in Bathurst, Bishop Palmer and his wife Liz will walk the 217 kilometres to Dubbo to spiritually prepare for the long road ahead the diocese is facing.

"We are using this walk to reflect on what the new look for the diocese might be," he told the *Western Advocate* newspaper. "We are going through a period of big change and we need to be able to look at it in a different way."



On the road: Bathurst Bishop Ian Palmer and his wife Liz walk to Dubbo.

PHOTO: Chris Seabrook, *Western Advocate*

It is not the first time the couple have undertaken such a task – they had previously walked 800 kilometres in Spain. The diocese is also familiar with long walks. In 1971, the then Bishop Kenneth Leslie walked from Dubbo to Bathurst to raise funds needed to complete All Saints' Cathedral.

Last year the Commonwealth Bank

launched legal action to recover \$24 million it says it is owed by the diocese. "These are huge changes," Bishop Palmer said in a pastoral letter, "but they are to ensure not only the survival of our diocese but to advance the worship, mission and ministry of the work of our Lord here. I ask for your goodwill, prayers and patience."


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On Christmas Day...

DAVID PETTETT

AS THE WORLD CELEBRATED THE birth of Jesus in 1814, the Rev Samuel Marsden preached the first Christian sermon on New Zealand soil as he, together with John King, William Hall, Thomas Kendall and their families, began the CMS mission to Aotearoa. They were invited by the local Māori chief, Ruatara, who had been living with Marsden at Parramatta for the previous three years.

Christmas Day 2014 marked the bicentenary of the arrival of these missionaries from NSW, who were also the first Europeans to establish a permanent settlement in New Zealand. About 1000 people gathered in the same location as Marsden and his colleagues – Rangihoua in the Bay of Islands, about 3½ hours' drive north of Auckland – to celebrate the Christmas that brought the gospel to their country.

They were welcomed in Māori by the Bishop of Aotearoa, William Brown Turei, with the words, "I greet you all, who have come along to raise your voice and spirits to the Lord above". The regional Māori bishop, Kito Pikaahu, led the service, noting that "two hundred years ago the seed of the gospel was planted and we are still proclaiming it today".

The truth of this was highlighted by the fact that direct descendants of both Marsden and Ruatara were present. Ruatara's descendants at the service still hold a lively Christian faith – ongoing fruit of that Christmas sermon – and Marsden's descendants are still in ministry.

The Rev Samuel Marsden – great-great-great-grandson of his more famous namesake, who has ministered in the Bathurst and Grafton dioceses – was in Rangihoua 50 years ago when his father preached at the 150th anniversary. This time it was he who was out the front and, after introducing himself to the crowd in Māori, said to cheers that, "two hundred years ago my great-great-great-grandfather stood on this spot to proclaim the good

news of Jesus Christ".

The celebration service included a traditional New Zealand Christmas carol, "Not on a Snowy Night", which recounts Marsden's mission as well as highlighting the text of that first sermon from Luke 2:10: "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'"

...on a summer day
Within a quiet bay
The Maori people heard

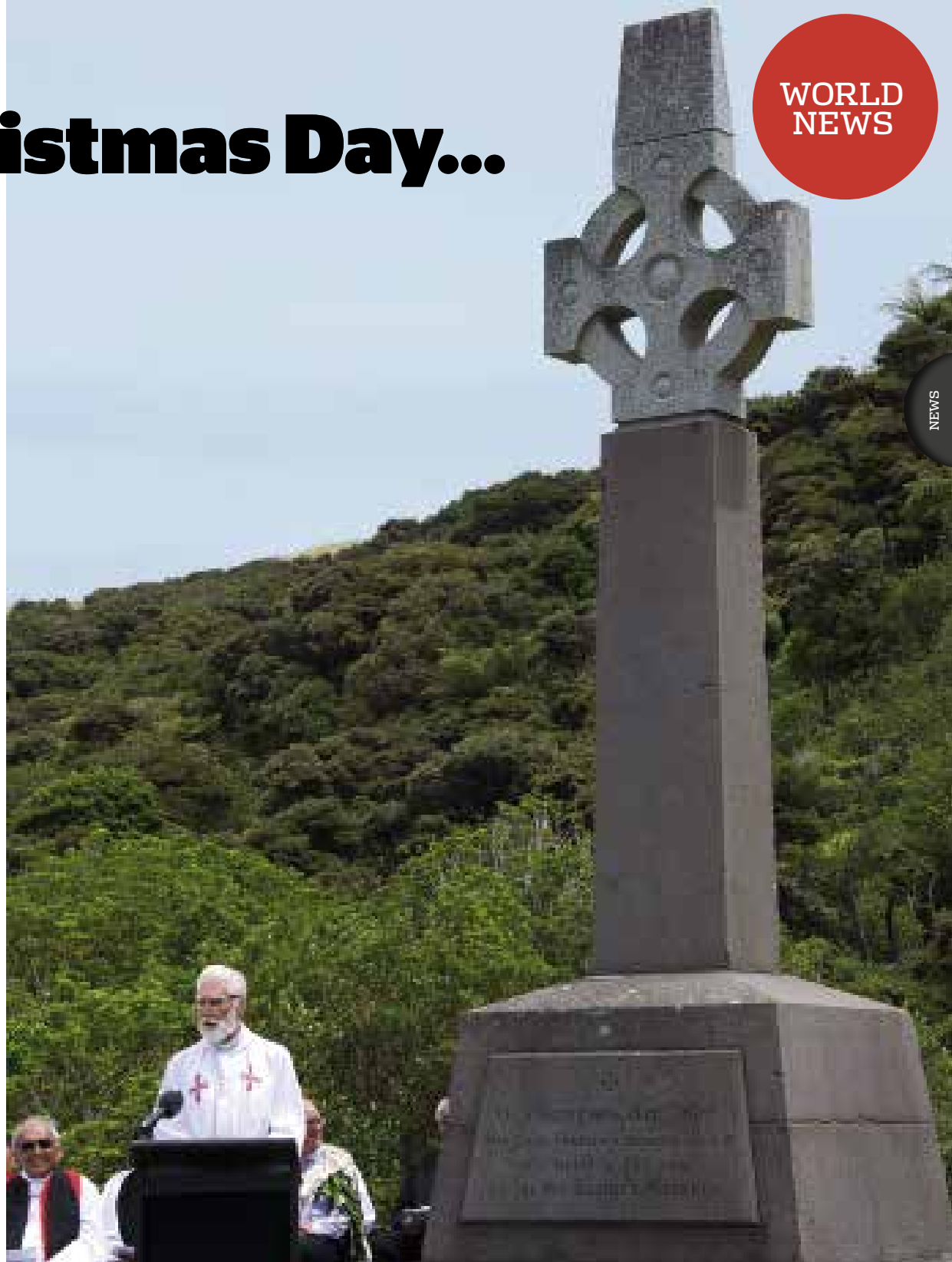
The great and glorious word
Te Harinui, Te Harinui Te Harinui,
Glad tidings of great joy.

Marsden had learned the Māori language from Ruatara, so it is likely he made an attempt to preach his sermon in Māori, with Ruatara explaining whatever his people didn't understand.

We don't know what Marsden said in his sermon but on three other known occasions he preached on Luke 2:10 he made the point that the

birth of Christ is the most important event the world has ever seen. It is good tidings of great joy for all people because this Messiah was not born in a palace but a stable, making him accessible to all people.

While Marsden may have a somewhat tarnished reputation in NSW as the "flogging parson", the people of New Zealand celebrate the European beginnings of their country with thanks to God for the man who brought them the gospel.



Generational celebration: the Rev Samuel Marsden in front of the Marsden Cross in Rangihoua.

Last one out...



"Own your global significance": John Yates talks to an Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion meeting at Katoomba.

PAINFUL EXPERIENCES OF THE Anglican Church in the USA informed a talk given during last month's CMS Summer School by its main speaker, the Rev Dr John Yates III.

Dr Yates, who is rector of Holy Trinity Anglican in Raleigh, North Carolina, gave his speech the title "Last one out, vacuum the office". He said that having been asked to speak about the state of Anglicanism in North America, the best way to do so was through the story of a single church – The Falls Church Anglican in Virginia, where he grew up under the ministry of his father, the Rev Dr John Yates, Jr.

Dr Yates' father had been rector of The Falls Church (TFC) since 1979, but is now rector of The Falls Church

Anglican – as distinct from The Falls Church Episcopal – after his thriving congregation voted overwhelmingly to leave the Episcopal Church of the USA a decade ago.

Dr Yates described TFC as an "evangelical flagship", adding that it had been part of a strong campaign in the years prior to 2003 to reform the teaching and practices of the Episcopal Church. However, after the election as bishop in 2003 of a practising gay clergyman, Gene Robinson, TFC voted – after a "season of discernment" – to leave the Episcopal Church.

In 2006 TFC was sued by the Diocese of Virginia, its clergy were "deposed" and the church's assets were seized. After a six-year battle,

the court's decision against TFC meant it had to leave its historic church and surrender all its assets.

However painful the decision, Dr Yates, Jr described it at the time to CBN News as "an outcome of our desire to be faithful to the person and teachings of Jesus Christ".

In his Summer School talk, Dr Yates spoke of it as "a season of pain and persecution; a season of dependence on [other] evangelicals in the Communion," talking of depositions and court appearances, decades of lost pensions by the clergy and lost property for the church.

"After the ruling came down all hands were on deck to clean and move out of the church building," he

added, recalling a photo taken of his father vacuuming the office. "This is how we wanted to leave – with grace and integrity."

He spoke of the past decade being divided into three periods for North American evangelicals: exile, reunion and coming of age.

After separation from the Episcopal Church and the subsequent fallout, Dr Yates said, in 2008 the Global Anglican Future Conference began a shift "from deep uncertainty to cautious hope" for The Falls Church Anglican and other evangelical congregations.

"I cannot overstate the significance of this gathering and the subsequent Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GFCA) movement for us," he said.

Now, six years after the creation of the Anglican Church of North America brought evangelical churches and dioceses back under one umbrella, Dr Yates talked of a future with an ongoing emphasis on church planting, global partnerships, maturing, mentoring and training, finishing his talk with a special plea to Sydney Anglicans.

"Own your global significance," he said. "You have a heritage to share. Support the GFCA movement. We need it, many of your peers globally depend on it, and you will increasingly need it. Let your bishops, theological faculty and lay leaders go abroad to help the rest of us. This will be costly but it is necessary and your brothers in the States will be grateful."

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MOVES

MACBETH SHIFTS GEAR



After almost seven years as rector of Drummoyne, the **Rev James Macbeth** became an assistant minister in the parish of St Ives on January 4. He says the move was about "shifting gear" in terms of the ministry he and his wife Michelle were doing.

"We're convinced about parish ministry, we love it – the mix of ages and doing gospel work – but at Drummoyne I've been the sole full-time minister," he says. "We loved the people and loved the work, but we realised that we were getting weary and needed to be very careful about our levels of strength. We know our limits!"

That being the case, he and Michelle began to pray and look for a role that might suit their skills, "casting bread on the waters under God's sovereign hand". The job at St Ives enthused them from the beginning: "We were really impressed with the calibre of the interview," he says. "The questions asked were serious ones about us and the move, and we loved that."

Mr Macbeth will run a nine-year-old congregational plant in a local primary school. "While I'm part of a large team, this congregation is relatively independent," he says. "It's a very weighty responsibility, but I'm most looking forward to shouldering that within in a team context." The Macbeths' three children will attend the school where the congregation meets, which will "put us into the thick of the community pretty quickly".

"It's a highly energetic congregation with a huge kids' ministry," he says. "There are 70 adults and 70 kids... there will be all sorts of challenges for how to keep reaching into that school community and the broader community, and take advantage of the relatively small size of the congregation compared to the much larger Christ Church.

"It's a patient work for us, a wait-and-see work... They're keen for us to be there, and they've been very well taught. I'm stepping into very good shoes."

MORONEY TO MENANGLE

After 11 years as senior assistant minister at St Andrew's Cathedral – the last four in an honorary capacity while he worked for Ministry Training and Development – the **Rev Chris Moroney** has become minister of St James', Menangle.

"My work [at MT&D] involved running the ministry development program and looking after the deacons who wanted to become presbyters," he says. "I interviewed everybody who wanted to become an Anglican candidate. It was a great privilege to be able to talk to people who were interested in becoming ministers and those interested

in moving on from deacon to presbyter, so there was a lot of personal work with ministers in training."

Mr Moroney wants to continue this personal work with the locals at Menangle – inside and outside the church building.

"I want to care for the people who come to church there and reach out to the people in the community with the word of God," he says. "At the moment it's a small congregation but I really hope to build the congregation up and prepare for the housing development that will come in the next few years."

HENRY-EDWARDS RETIRES

The **Rev Gwilym Henry-Edwards** retired from the parish of Enmore-Stanmore on January 31, 11 years to the day after he began in 2004.

"It's been a wonderful experience," he says. "Peter Jensen as Archbishop was welcoming, friendly and supportive. The senior clergy of the Diocese went out of their way to welcome us into the Diocese – and although my churchmanship differs from the dominant churchmanship in the Diocese, I have always felt accepted and supported."

Mr Henry-Edwards is from Adelaide and worked for many years as a surveyor in places as diverse as central Australia and Papua New Guinea before training for ministry. "During our time in PNG we became involved with the Anglican Church in Port Moresby in a place called Gerehu," he says. "It was the faith of the people in that particular parish that led me to consider my own vocation."

After four years at St Barnabas' College in Adelaide Mr Henry-Edwards was ordained in 1989, serving in the parishes of



Hawthorn, Parafield Gardens and Henley Beach before being approached about a move to Sydney. "I felt with my ministry at Henley Beach that I'd done as much as I could and it was time to move on... so after prayer and consideration I accepted the invitation to come," he says.

"I am going to miss St Luke's dreadfully. It's been such a lovely place – vibrant worship, enthusiastic people of all ages and every nationality. It's been a wonderful parish. In moving back to Adelaide we will be closer to our son who is married with two children... but I have no doubt the Archbishop will want me to do locums... I will never lack for work!"

VALE



The **Rev Arthur Deane** died on January 2 at the age of 92.

Arthur Davidson Deane was born in 1923 and trained at Moore College from 1946-1948, serving after that at St Paul's, Castle Hill and as youth director for the Diocese.

In 1959 Mr Deane took up the position of vice-principal at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, becoming principal in 1965 – a position he held for the next nine years. He and his wife Phyllis then moved to London where he worked as international

director of the Africa Evangelical Fellowship.

Returning to Australia in 1980, Mr Deane was invited to present the 6am Bible studies on 2CBA (now Hope 103.2), which proved very popular, and which he continued to do for nearly 20 years.

Stephen Deane said of his father that he was "a gifted Bible teacher, preacher and leader here and internationally. His driving goal, right to his final days, was to share the saving message of Jesus as effectively and with as many people as possible".

VACANT PARISHES

Parishes and provisional parishes, vacant or becoming vacant, as at January 22, 2014:

- Balmain
- Carlingbah
- Darling St
- Drummoyne
- Enmore-Stanmore
- Fairfield with Bossley Park
- Hunters Hill
- Leichhardt*
- Leura
- Narellan
- St Marys
- West Pymble

*Provisional parish or Archbishop's appointment

WHAT CHOIR?

I had a bit of a chuckle when I read about the busy schedule of the choir of St Andrew's Cathedral over the Christmas period (SC, December).

Over the past decade or so several people have told me that Phillip Jensen abolished the choir when he took office. It must have been very frustrating for the Dean over those years to see the non-existent choir popping up on most



Sundays and even during the week as well!

The fact is, of course, that the media saw Mr Jensen's two greatest faults as being the Archbishop's brother (heaven forbid!) and having a penchant for preaching the Bible directly and unashamedly. Adding to that such crimes as the use of a communion table that could be moved... there was no stopping some journalists from adding whatever false information suited them.

The Dean has given fine gospel service at the Cathedral and the organist and choirmaster continues to do so. And yes, folks, there really is a choir.

David Morrison
Springwood

Letters should be less than 200 words.
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COMMUNITY

ESSAY
OF THE
MONTH

The new full stop?

FRANCIS CHALWELL

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE full stop? Once upon a time when a person made a statement of conviction, they ended with one. Full stop: period. But now, Christians are telling me there is a new period or full stop. It is to "Get over it".

According to one Central Coast minister all Christians have been told this by God. At one stage in 2013 the Rev Rod Bower at Gosford Anglican posted on social media a photo of his church's sign, which read: "Dear Christians, some people are gay, get over it, Love, God". This was then quoted some months later in the *Herald*.

Do I object to the observation because I didn't receive this direct revelation from God, or because I have never achieved 100,000 hits in 24 hours, or because I feel uncomfortable being told to "Get over it"?

Mr Bower could have stated: "Dear Christians, some people are gay.

Love, God". Point made (although I won't go into the presumptuousness and blasphemy of the statement). But why tell me to get over it? Is this the new full stop in Christian discourse?

Maybe the omission of "get over it" would have shocked the conservatives less, as well as being less of a cuddle to the cultural revisionists. It would also have led to fewer hits. But sometimes it's more than that. There must be a personal satisfaction in telling someone to "get over it". It makes the teller feel BIG: big cause, big cultural mandate, big period, big hit.

It makes the receiver feel marginalised, humiliated and bullied. Marginalised because it is code for "end of issue". Humiliated because it implies that you must be pretty slow in the race to "get over" whatever everybody else seems to have got over. Plus, of course, if you are not over something, you are definitely under it. Bullied because you are being told what to do.

And what do you do when told to get over it? Do you remain (quietly



Big hits: The 2013 sign seen by many on social media.

in the corner you have been sent to) "behind it", "under it"? Do you reply – deluding yourself that somehow the dialogue continues? Or do you join with the happy and hip people who have got "over it"?

I wonder if, when we say, "Get over it", it's because we haven't understood the gospel. In the gospel we are secure through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is unnecessary for us to feel superior by marginalising, humiliating or bullying others. Our joy doesn't come from feeling superior to others but realising what Jesus has done for us – and for our opponents, too.

Also, in the Bible, we have great models for dealing with those with whom we disagree. Jesus kept dialogue open with those who were slow in "getting over" things, such as when he told his confused disciples "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12). He left no aftertaste of marginalisation, humiliation and bullying.

The apostle Paul describes how we are all "under it" (that is, sin – Rom 3:9), yet "when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). In fact, the apostle Peter tells us that God has been delaying the day of judgement (surely the most definitive full stop of all) for the sake of those who are not yet "over it" – that is, the need to repent and believe in Jesus (2 Peter 3:9).

While resting in the love of God in Christ, Christians can boldly state their convictions, finish them with a full stop, and continue to listen.

Well-considered essays (700-word maximum) in response to issues raised by SC can be emailed to: newspaper@anglicanmedia.com.au

News shared

DR GLENN DAVIES



COMMUNITY

WHEN THE APOSTLE Paul wrote to the saints at Colosse he told them that he regularly thanked God for them in his prayers. Although Paul had not visited Colosse when he wrote his letter, he knew of the growth of the church through his faithful co-worker, Epaphras. His letter of encouragement to these new Christians therefore began with thanksgiving to God for the work of grace in each of their lives.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints – the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you.

Colossians 1:3-6

Here the familiar triad of faith, hope and love are knitted together in Paul's prayer. Faith and love spring from hope, according to the apostle, which is a way of saying that they spring from God's promises to us in the gospel.

Our hope is the joy of heaven secured for those whose lives are bound to Jesus Christ. He is our righteousness and through him, God freely forgives us, since we would otherwise be condemned.

Faith and love are therefore our response to God's grace and the hope that is "stored up for us in heaven". Faith highlights our trust in God, not just for our salvation but for every aspect of our lives, expressed in humble dependence upon his word.

Love highlights our obedience to God in all that we do, honouring God by our lives in

the power of the Holy Spirit (Colossians 1:8) in accordance with his word. This, as Paul declares elsewhere (Romans 1:5), is the "obedience of faith": not an obedience that is dependent upon our own efforts, nor a faith that is barren, but "faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:6).

“ **Paul expected every Christian to be a partner in the gospel.** ”

Epaphras brought this good news to the city of Colosse.

Who was your Epaphras? Who first shared with you the hope of heaven, the joy of sins forgiven and the liberating declaration that you were righteous in God's sight solely through the work of Christ? Perhaps it was your parents, your minister, your Scripture teacher, a relative, friend or neighbour.

Whoever, it was, I trust you thank God for them in having shared this news with you. Perhaps another more interesting question is: who would say that you were their Epaphras? Who could thank God that you shared the hope of heaven with them?


Paul expected every Christian to be a partner in the gospel. He expected every believer to "redeem the time" (Ephesians 5:16), or as he says to the Colossians:

Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders, make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everybody.

Colossians 4:5-6

The gospel was growing among the citizens of Colosse, for they shared in the joy of seeing gospel growth among them (Colossians 1:6). Their activity was a delight to the apostle and a cause of much joy and thanksgiving to God.

As we commence a new year in 2015, we all have a part to play in God's great mission to the world.

May we be as earnest and as prayerful as Epaphras and those early Colossians, making the most of our time with those who do not know God, so that Christ might be honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community. 

A PRAYER FOR MISSION 2020

Our heavenly Father, fill our lives with the fruit of your Spirit, so that we may walk in joyful obedience, share your love by word and deed, and see Christ honoured in every community as Lord and Saviour.

Amen



Harsh harvest

You think ministry in Sydney is tough? Try regional and rural NSW, where droughts and flooding rains – not to mention fewer people to serve – make it harder to offer effective outreach and support, writes **NICK GILBERT**.

IT'S STILL THE MOST ICONIC IMAGE OF AUSTRALIA, BOTH IN the minds of many Australians and in the view of the world: the outback – harsh, yet, on its day, serene. Farmers battling the elements on our own frontier. Where would we be without the bush, the sweeping plains, the fields of wheat?

This image, as ingrained as it is, is also one increasingly crowded out by other pictures. There is cosmopolitan Australia, the Australia of beaches and a bustling nightlife, of slowly creeping skyscrapers, of big business. Our country is arguably becoming as known for its pop musicians, tourist traps and flat whites as it is for wildlife, agriculture and Ugg boots.

It has not helped that the agricultural industry is in transition, dealing with influences economical, political and environmental. Australia and its inhabitants have always known drought but since the turn of the century the outback has seen some of the driest and most unpredictable seasons since records began.

The impact has been notable. While many locations, particularly NSW regional centres, continue to grow, more isolated communities away from the east coast have felt the pinch. Poor conditions mean smaller margins for primary industries meaning tighter belts and lighter

commerce. Towns of a few thousand people at most can change drastically in a short time when the livelihoods of the inhabitants are under threat.

What of the church in all this? In many instances, the churches are battling the same problems as secular institutions and groups – struggling populations, isolated congregants, harsh conditions. Yet by its nature the church can and does work in rural communities in ways few other organisations can, and is even finding new ways to take the good news of Christ to people in regional Australia who need to hear it.

CHANGING STATES

"In some towns, churches are one of the few remaining places where different groups in the community gather together," says the Rev Dr Mark Short, director of the Sydney-based Bush Church Aid Society. "It's the church, alongside perhaps the Rural Fire Service, schools if there are any, and the pub. Just by remaining embedded in a community and showing they are there for the long haul, churches can make powerful statements."

The state of affairs in NSW inland regions is mixed. Some regional centres such as Tamworth, Bathurst and Orange have continued to grow, although more slowly in net terms than metropolitan and outer-metro areas. Other traditional population centres such as the Wagga Wagga region, Deniliquin and Parkes have all seen declines. But where the changes can be seen most strikingly is in agriculture, particularly in the small-to-medium sectors. Farm debt increased by 75 per cent in the past decade to an estimated \$70 billion in 2014 – in many cases compounded by severely below average harvests, often in successive seasons.

For Andrew McClenaghan that number is not simply a statistic, but a reality.

McClenaghan is a farmer who owns a relatively small property in the Tambar Springs area about 70 kilometres southwest of Gunnedah in NSW. Growing up on the land, he and his family have been on their current property for about 10 years, mostly growing grains for human and animal consumption as well as producing cotton. While the property had been productive for much of that time, a combination of drought and then unexpectedly intense rainfalls over the past 18 months have wreaked havoc.

The lack of even an average harvest over that period created financial stress on the property to the point where McClenaghan was called by a credit-structuring risk manager from his bank. The result was that the property was put up for auction late last year – an auction at which no bids were received, and after which only relatively low offers were made. McClenaghan says he has been most struck by the fact that,



No minister: Tambar Springs Anglican Church.

“In some towns, churches are one of the few remaining places where different groups in the community gather together.”

even till the end, the margin between retaining and losing the property was incredibly thin.

"It was really when we got the phone call from the bank manager that things got really tough," he says. "Even at that stage, if we could have had an average or better run of season for the last couple of years, we might still have been viable. But that didn't happen, so here we are."

McClenaghan is also a Christian and serves as the lay preacher at Tambar Springs Anglican Church, a parish where there is currently no clergy. He preaches regularly at the church and has also spoken at men's breakfasts in other towns on his recent experiences, the uncertainty he now faces and what the Christian faith has to say about it.

"The initial talks came about because I'd gone to high school with the minister at Narrabri," he says. "He'd been pestering me to do a men's breakfast or something similar up there for a while. I was talking to him about mid-last year and was telling him what was going on with my own property and how I thought about it, and he just said 'You know, there are a lot of blokes up here who need to hear that'."

A LOOK INSIDE

McClenaghan has also been conscious of the need to discuss his state of mind at this time, a period he calls "the darkest year of his life".

There has been much discussion about the prevalence of depression among agricultural workers. Some statistics, such as one analysis by the University of Melbourne, places the suicide rate for agricultural workers at 1.6 times higher than the average for other employed people. Other studies have found an even higher rate, while a separate project headed by the University of Melbourne, the Royal Women's Hospital, Swinburne and the Bendigo Health Care Group, has said there is no discernible difference in rates of depression among farmers compared to non-farmers.

The statistics are fraught for a number of reasons, but what is underscored by all the research is that regardless of the rate of psychological stress, the problems that do exist are typically compounded by the absence, or reduction, of mental health services; the increasing isolation of the smaller communities; a much more integrated social community with a reduced sense of confidentiality; and continuing stigmas surrounding mental health issues.

McClenaghan says he was initially wary of talking about the pressures of his property sale but in retrospect he is glad to have spoken about it, as well as about how to view the events from a Christian perspective.

"Looking back, I can see that those three talks... did actually have an impact on people," he says. "Something I've been particularly

trying to encourage people in is to remind them to have a knowledge of Scripture, or rather particular Scriptures, so they have something fresh in their minds for the down days, to remind ourselves that God is far more powerful and in control than we are. It's easy to say that I don't have to know what God's doing – that he's better in control than I am – but it's harder to live when it's real, so we have to remind ourselves of that and keep it fresh."

He says for some people the psalms have proved a particular spring of encouragement and reflection when dealing with life-changing events beyond their control.

"I think many of the psalms often start out in a bleak place but end on a high point," McClenaghan says. "But in something like Psalm 88, the writer finishes still feeling distant and maybe even angry with God. A friend of mine had, at one stage, been in a similar type of situation for a few years, and I think it was one psalm that was a comfort to him in that situation: that the writer finished that psalm in the same tone that he began it, that he hadn't resolved it in one go."

"Our job isn't to resolve the whole thing in one go. I still have no real idea what God's doing some 18 months on, but I guess we don't always have to have it nicely sorted... it's okay for us to be there [in the unknown]."

In smaller towns where there can be few other avenues for dealing with a stressful life on a regional property, this kind of personable, concerned, listening ministry can be especially powerful.

Says Mark Short: "I think a lot of Christian workers in the bush have become, almost by necessity, quite expert at working out what services there are to use to support people and to work in partnership when appropriate. Having said that, it's not as straightforward as in the cities, where services of all kinds are close by and relatively easy to access. There's inevitably more of that frontline work that has to be done by lay or clerical workers and by Christian agencies in the bush."

NEW CONNECTIONS

The Rev David Piper is the BCA-supported vicar of Lightning Ridge Community Church in far northern NSW and says the impact of the drought, while hurting some of his congregation members and other residents of Lightning Ridge, has also opened up opportunities for outreach in his parish.

“There’s inevitably more of that frontline work that has to be done by lay or clerical workers and by Christian agencies in the bush.”

"The drought has actually helped us connect with farmers," he says. "Through BCA supporters, people here have been organising food hampers and things like that as gifts, visiting farmers when we can. They're all small things, of course; some of these farmers are spending thousands a day on feed and hay for their stock, and in a sense a hamper doesn't make or break their business. But it's something we can contribute to the families themselves that can give them some relief from the everyday stress of keeping the farm running and keeping food on the table."

Of course, some features of regional ministry make it hard to run events and programs on a regular basis, or in a way that seems familiar to city-based Christians.

Lindsay Whybrow, a BCA-supported lay worker in the parish of Hillston in the Riverina Diocese, says, "There are seven school buses that come into school from outlying areas, and I think the one that has the longest trip travels about an hour and a half."

"Kids who live further than that probably can't get to school, and probably learn by distance. People are generally pretty unwilling to travel into town unless they have to... which affects a lot of family and church things like, say, a youth group. It means a lot of what we do program-wise has to be town-based and focused, or otherwise based on individual contact. The farmers will often spend as much time as they possibly can on their farms, and the town itself is mostly people who were



Country fun: Lightning Ridge children take a ride on a tractor-drawn trailer

doing that and retired and came to live in Hillston itself."

The often tight-knit and familiar network of relationships in small- to medium-sized towns also has its own unique influences on ministry.

"You see people at the shops, you see people at the pub – community inside the church often looks like community outside the church as well," Mr Piper says. "That can have its ups and its downs. On the one hand, I think sometimes it's difficult to work out how you create a

particularly 'church' or Christian community when people are always meeting each other in other contexts all the time, the rest of the time. When it comes to outreach, as well, sometimes I do wonder whether people look at church as just another club because it's the same people they see at other places. Having said that, some of your best conversations can happen just in the street or shops, because people know you and who you are, and you have constant opportunities to meet the people who live in town."

BACK TO THE OUTBACK

The Diocese of Armidale, of which Tambar Springs is a part, encompasses a mix of small towns and large, growing regional centres, totalling 32 parishes. One of the unique aspects of regional dioceses like Armidale is the way a township can shift in terms of its growth and role depending on business priorities, demand and environmental conditions, and this has historically had an impact on churches within the diocese.

"Wee Waa used to be a very strong cotton town," says the Bishop of Armidale, the Rt Rev Rick Lewers. "A whole range of the industry moved to Narrabri, so Wee Waa has quieted down as a centre while Narrabri has grown."

"As these centres grow and the previous centres decline, that can mean we have to try and adapt where people are. Sometimes we can struggle to get people to go to those declining centres. At the moment we have, off the top of my head, at least five places that don't have clergy and couldn't afford anyone full-time."

Some of the issues are simply to do with isolation and population density, but there is also the issue of continuing declining conditions – for agricultural workers in particular – and the run-on effect that has on regional business. The result is that many people, particularly among the young adult population, are moving to other regional centres or towards Sydney itself.

Bonnie, aged 24, lives with her partner on a property more than an hour's drive north of Hillston. She is one of those people bucking the

trend: someone who grew up in the country, was educated at university but returned to the land rather than moving elsewhere.

"It's just a great way of life out here," she says. "I'd never really done anything else and I couldn't imagine doing anything else apart from working stock, managing seasons. I couldn't do a desk job, being inside for long periods of time. Even at uni and boarding school I was always a little restless. Being outside, doing hard work, I've always enjoyed that."

Bonnie is one of a relatively low number of young people who make the return journey, at least in their early twenties. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, used in a 2013 analysis by the University of Canberra, shows there are large movements out of non-state capital cities and towns by people typically in the 15-30 age bracket, and a near-reciprocal influx within the same age bands into the capitals.

Part of the issue with a loss of younger people is that it is often these people who are at once the most familiar with rural life but also the most able to acquire new skills that might be useful in regional settings.

"Professionals are often seen as those who come and go, particularly doctors and the like, but one committed person makes a huge difference in a small church," Mr Piper says.

INDIGENOUS MINISTRY

ACCORDING to the 2011 Census, just over 9 per cent of the population of northern inland NSW is Aboriginal (the state average is 2.5 per cent). About 9 per cent of the total indigenous population of NSW also lives in this area – a figure similar to statistics taken from other regional areas around the nation. As such, ministry working for and with Aboriginal people can be hugely valuable in regional NSW, but is also subject to the same difficulties of regional ministry generally.

"It's hard to find people who have a heart and passion for Aboriginal ministry and who know what they're doing," Bishop Rick Lewers says. "One area of work we've been doing in this area has been slow, painstaking and also in some ways heartbreaking, so it requires a very particular kind of person. That's hard to find anywhere but also particularly hard to find here. The trouble is, Sydney attracts those kinds of people. Brisbane attracts those people."

"The difference can often be, frankly, Sunday school or no Sunday school. We've one young lady here who is a speech therapist by training, who is committed, who has time and makes a difference.

"Somewhere in Sydney, and I suppose particularly in larger churches, that kind of person might just be sitting in a pew but out here they could make a huge difference in just one particular way. If they have professional skills, they can also have an impact just by being in the community, particularly people like teachers and doctors."

THE NUMBERS

134,000 FARMING BUSINESSES IN AUSTRALIA

PERCENTAGE OF BUSINESSES OWNED BY FAMILIES **99**

49 MINIMUM HOURS WORKED BY
HALF OF ALL FARMERS A WEEK

PERCENTAGE OF AGRICULTURAL
WORKERS AGED 65 OR OVER **23**

40 PERCENTAGE DECLINE IN
AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES SINCE 1981

PERCENTAGE DECLINE IN
EMPLOYEES DURING DROUGHT OF 2002-03 **14**

Sources:

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), Agricultural Census; Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), Australian National Accounts, State Accounts 2010-11; PMSEIC (2010); NSW Parliamentary Research Service (2012), Agriculture in NSW Statistical Indicators; Productivity Commission (2005), Trends in Australian Agriculture; Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (2011), Agricultural commodity statistics.

Wherever there is someone who does not know and love the Lord Jesus, wherever there is someone who cannot hear the gospel, ministry is important."

HARVEST WORK

For the Diocese of Armidale and other regional dioceses such as the Riverina, the focus is on attracting early retirees who can serve in a church while living off housing rentals back in Sydney for a few years, as well as young professionals who can work in a country town while also supporting a local congregation.

"I think there's a world of over 55-year-olds in Sydney who are not being used in ministry," Bishop Lewers says. "They're not gainfully employed in their church but are nonetheless able and could do a very good little job looking after a country church, even just for one or two years, self-funded. Or, if you're a professional, someone like a young doctor in a rural town is a gift. A Christian doctor, in addition, can create enormous opportunities for ministry, especially in towns without a church, or in churches without clergy.

"In a sense, there is almost an opportunity to be bi-vocational in approach in a way that you can't in the cities. Taking something like the PTC [Preliminary Theological Certificate, a qualification offered by Moore College] can give you the baseline theological training to be involved in that kind of way as well."

Adds Dr Short: "We've come to realise we need to be involved with people at all stages of life. Whether they're from the bush or from the city, ministry in the bush can be hugely rewarding and valuable for all Christians. We've been looking to encourage younger people as well as older people in that, and to support people who look to take on that work."

Ministry in the bush might appear less glamorous or less strategic, but the challenges of drought, of relative isolation, of the unique make-up of rural Australia, are in many ways the same as the challenges of overseas mission – obstacles initially but, in their own way,

DRY LAND

However, according to Mr Piper it can sometimes be difficult to find Christians who wish to move out to regional areas – let alone clergy.

"We previously advertised for a youth worker, targeting Sydney in particular, and I thought that would go okay," he says. "It was full-time, we had most of the funding ready, parts of it included doing chaplaincy in one of the schools and so we were able to make use of some government funding, but in the end it just didn't happen. No one wanted to come out.

"The opportunity's now gone because the chaplaincy position has disappeared and we can't support it as a full-time position into the future, which we could have done at the time. Even my own position had, I think, been advertised for a good two years before I took it up. Sometimes it can be frustrating. I can't blame anyone for not wanting to go bush but it can make it difficult to plan long-term ministry because of that."

It's also a difficulty noted by Bishop Lewers.

"I'll speak on behalf of two other particular bishop friends of mine, Gary Nelson [the Bishop of North West Australia] and Greg Anderson [the Bishop of the Northern Territory], when I see that all three of us struggle to get clergy to move from places like Sydney to rural dioceses," he says.

"I think it's partially viewed as a strategic thing. I came from Engadine, for instance, with a population of about 23,000 people. Who would leave something like that in Sydney for a regional parish of maybe 2000 people? And Sydney has its own needs, but I do want to say that one of the reasons rural ministry is important is because people are important.


“ I can't blame anyone for not wanting to go bush but it can make it difficult to plan long-term ministry. ”

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Vacant parishes in Armidale Diocese

- Ashford-Delunga
- Baradine
- Boggabri
- Emmaville-Deerpwater
- Tambar Springs
- Uralla
- Walcha

potential new avenues for different kinds of ministry and different ways of seeing God at work.

"We can't relax while people are in danger of hell," Bishop Lewers says. "There is a massive mission ahead in rural NSW and we just have to get on and do it the best way we can." 



The Rev Dr David Höhne is Dean of Part-Time Studies. He lectures in theology, philosophy and church history.



or snap-back (for those who know and/or care). Nevertheless, subjecting one's lifestyle to this kind of scrutiny has a number of advantages.

The first advantage is that considering what the Lord Jesus deserves from us is a great way to keep our lives in perspective. Sydney Christians are, in general, almost belligerently informal when it comes to discipleship. For example, it seems one of the things that gets Sydney Anglicans most uptight about their weekly gathering is whether or not it is "relaxed" enough. It is hardly surprising, then, when we face daily responsibilities we wonder what Jesus would do, almost as if he was one of our preferred lifestyle gurus with "100 handy hints for what to do with that shady spot in the backyard" or "How to turn what's left in the bottom of the fridge into a Heston Blumenthal-esque feast for eight".

I am exaggerating, of course, but only a little bit when we realise that we worship the Lord Jesus for *what he has done* – his life, death and resurrection – for the fulfilment of all God's saving promises.

There is a vast gap in importance between what Western, (largely) middle-class citizens of a prosperous and peaceful metropolis like Sydney get up to in comparison to the words and actions of Christ Jesus, the royal and eternal Son of God.

But my choices are very important to me, I hear you say. No doubt, but in truth nothing you (or I) do this year or any other will be as significant to you, or for you, as what the Lord Jesus has *already done*.

As Paul told the Colossians "He has now reconciled [you] in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him" (1:22).

These words are, or should be, exceedingly good news since it means that before God we are free to make choices as to how we shall live, confident that through Jesus and in his Spirit we have favour with our great God and heavenly Father. Hence as the Apostle John said, "if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

Once we have our lives in the perspective of what only the Lord Jesus could have done – he knew no sin, and became sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21) – we are then free to consider the manner in which Jesus did the things he did as an example of how to relate to God in the first instance, and to each other in the second. The Lord Jesus, who had the Spirit without limit (John 3:34), was loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, gentle, faithful and self-controlled (Cf. Gal. 5:23). Therefore, should we have any concern as to what to do or the manner in which to do it, we need only consider "What does the Lord Jesus deserve here?" Obviously one thing he deserves in every situation is that we act graciously.

The second advantage of considering what the Lord Jesus deserves from our lives is that the Bible is full of what God the Father thinks his Son deserves. Consider just a couple of purple passages:

"God made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to sum up all things in him, the Christ" (Eph. 1:9-10, author's translation).

"God highly exalted him and gave him the Name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:9-11).

If you have ever wondered what was God's (frequently mysterious) will for your life, then the first verse will certainly help you to find your place in the universe. In the letter to the Ephesians Paul tells us that from before there was a creation (1:4) God the Father intended to "sum everything up" in Jesus the Christ. That is, everything that has happened, is happening and will happen is directed towards our heavenly Father's desire (or will) to make the reign of Jesus the goal of creation.

"All things have been created through him and for him" (Col. 1:17). The universe and everything in it exists to be the place where the Lord Jesus reigns. In case that is not quite concrete enough for you, Paul also points out that when the universe has reached its ultimate goal, everything in it will be directed towards worshipping Jesus as Lord. John has an even more graphic picture (complete with song words) in Revelation 5:

"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing... To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!"

Once again, the question of what Jesus deserves puts our lives into perspective, only this time it is a universal one. If you are part of the universe then whatever you do this year or, more likely, all the things you have to do this year, are being directed by God towards the universal and everlasting acclamation of the Lord Jesus. This is the concrete way the Bible refers to "the glory of God the Father".

So, if nothing else, as you consider your various responsibilities for this year and even the things you'd like to do just because our generous God has blessed us with peace and prosperity, consider how you might give your small part of the universe a preview of what God the Father has in store. Another way of asking what Jesus deserves of our lives is to say, "How can I make the Lord Jesus look good when I'm at church, or where I live or work, or wherever I learn or study?"

SC

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CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING MOORE COLLEGE



Mission: world

Hearing the word: students in Japan.

As the task of taking the gospel to the nations evolves ever more quickly, how does a missionary organisation keep up with the changes? **PETER RODGERS** explains.

DON'T WE LIVE AT AN AMAZING TIME IN WORLD history? We live at a time of unprecedented rapid change.

Just think of the rate of information generation. We're told the amount of new technical information is doubling every two years, which means that in a technical degree half of what you learned in first year will be out of date by third year.

This year more information will be generated than all previous years combined. We struggle to imagine what sort of world we will be living in even five years from now, let alone the world that our children will grow up in. And this speed of change can be very scary. How do you keep up with change? We can easily feel that we will be left behind.

In the midst of exponential and unforeseeable change, where is God? For Christians the reassuring truth is that God is in control. He is not taken by surprise. We are not learning anything, discovering anything, that God does not already know and we are only discovering a small fraction of all that God knows. And his purposes laid down at the beginning of eternity will still find their completion at the end of time.

In the light of technological change where is the face of humanity? That is already a big question when, with social media, a friend is

someone you will never, ever meet. And what will be the shape of community in this new world?

The fact that the world is going through unprecedented and exponential change must mean that the context in which we do mission has changed and is changing. The way we did mission 30, 20, even 10 years ago no longer fits. To not change the way we do mission is not an option. Old paradigms of mission no longer fit into our global, complex world. And the way we do mission in five years will change again. In fact, how we do mission *must* change. The question will be, how do we keep up with change?

But amid the most rapid change in human history we have a task and message that never changes.

Jesus' words 2000 years ago are still true: "go and make disciples of all nations, baptising



When the unreached people live: a slum in the Philippines.

• them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you". The mission is the same.

And the gospel that was preached by the early Christians is still the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes. That truth, the gospel, never changes.

Many will be familiar with the CMS vision Towards 2020. For you, this is a catch-up on the progress we have made, while for others it's an introduction.

At CMS we work with churches to set apart long-term workers who cross cultures to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our vision has three parts: to reach gospel-poor peoples for Christ, to equip Christian leaders for church and society and to engage churches in cross-cultural mission.

More than 200 long-term CMS Australia missionaries now serve in 41 countries across the world and, praise God, our numbers are increasing. I have been bold enough to say that this is the highest number of missionaries we have had in our long history.

Years ago CMS missionaries worked primarily in East Africa and the Northern Territory. Without shrinking back from those commitments CMS has spread. Our numbers have risen sharpest in our near neighbour region, South East Asia, in line with our vision. The three nations where we had the largest number of missionaries as of December 2014 were, in order, Tanzania, then Indonesia and thirdly Japan.

Let's consider each of the three parts of our vision.

1. REACHING GOSPEL-POOR PEOPLES FOR CHRIST

We have a particular focus here on our near neighbours in South East Asia and the Pacific. We do this through serving in partnership with

“
Research is
telling us that
86 per cent of
all non-Christians
in our world
do not know
a Christian.”

churches and organisations in evangelism and church planting among people of different faiths and philosophies, and providing professional workers who witness for Christ through word and action.

Research is telling us that 86 per cent of all non-Christians in our world *do not know a Christian*. Even if you tell all your friends the gospel, and every other Christian does the same, 86 per cent of the world's non-Christians will still never hear. We know that there are about two billion people in our world who

not only don't know a Christian but belong to people groups where the church is so small there is little chance they will ever hear the gospel. Yet, alarmingly, globally most missionaries are still found in countries with majority Christian populations.

Also, in the past we may have thought most unreached people lived in remote jungles or rural villages, but the world now is different. Most of the unreached are living in the slums of cities that you and I have never even heard of. According to the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (IBMR) one in six people globally live in slums; one in 500 Christian missionaries work in slums. Urban slums may represent the great challenge of our time.

Another reason for our commitment to gospel-poor peoples is a clear trend across the Western world showing long-term mission numbers in sharp decline, along with a massive surge in people offering for short-term mission (usually for just a matter of weeks).

When I was talking with an overseas mission leader and I told him our numbers of long-term missionaries were going up he was staggered – amazed to find a mission agency that had maintained its emphasis on long-term mission and continued to grow. Praise God. We have held to our values of long-term mission, good training, good pastoral care and the Lord continues to bless us.

Many evangelical mission agencies today are no longer committed to gospel proclamation. Let our actions do the talking, they say. That is all that's needed. In so doing they redefine mission. You won't find the term "gospel-poor peoples" in Google. It does appear in some mission literature. But it is, in a sense, our term. It refers to people groups who have limited or no opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, in their own language and cultural context, without outside help.

There are about 13,000 people groups in the world. A useful marker of gospel poverty in a country is where the percentage of evangelical Christians is less than 2 per cent. Without outside help, these gospel-poor peoples will never hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Gospel-poor peoples are in South East Asia – where there are about 800 gospel-poor people groups comprising more than 500 million people – and also in East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East.

Yet we also include Europe under this part of our vision. Why? Because research was done to show which countries were the most resistant to being evangelised – in other words, the least responsive to the gospel. And the countries with the stoniest ground were Sweden, Belorussia, Lithuania, Poland, Georgia, Yugoslavia, France, Ireland, the Czech Republic and Italy. This helps us see that gospel poverty and material poverty don't go hand in hand. In fact, many of the wealthiest parts of the

world are desperately in need of the gospel and have almost no Bible-believing churches in their midst. In the face of rampant secularism, Europeans are among the most resistant to being evangelised. It is not surprising that we have as many workers in Europe as we do.

Opportunities exist in many countries and some have open doors for those with Masters degrees and PhDs to teach in their university faculties. Other countries have thriving Bible colleges that teach students church-planting methods – in some colleges, to complete a BTh students have to have actually planted a congregation of 15 new members in a non-Christian village.

It is impossible to enter some countries as a religious worker but there are many other genuine platforms that would enable people to live and serve in these countries. We need people with entrepreneurial spirits who are willing to go with uncertainty, learn the language and wait on the Lord.

2. EQUIPPING CHRISTIAN LEADERS FOR CHURCH AND SOCIETY

With the second part of our vision we move our attention away from those parts of the world where there are very few Christians to where the growth of the church has been phenomenal, in particular Africa and Latin America. These are no longer gospel-poor peoples. These are

“ Other countries have thriving Bible colleges that teach students church-planting methods. ”



Learning: Bible students in Cambodia.

places where there are now large indigenous churches – in fact, some of the largest churches in the world. These places, which once were mission fields, have now become the centre of the Christian faith. In this part of the vision we also include here our ongoing ministry with the indigenous church in North Australia.

Where the church has grown in these places the great need is Christian leadership.

Take Africa, for example. In 1900 there were fewer than 10 million Christians on the entire continent of Africa. Today there are over 367 million! My maths tells me that 10,000 African people, on average, were added to the church every day throughout the 20th century. That is phenomenal. The IBMR says that in 1970, 38 per cent of Africa was Christian. By 2020 that



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Excelsia College will continue to be an academic community that produces graduates and research embodying exemplary scholarship consistent with a Christian world view, thus providing leadership in a range of professions to benefit the world in which we live.



Africa growth: college students in Tanzania.

figure is expected to be almost 50 per cent. We have seen similar growth rates in Latin America and China, and also hear smaller stories that are extraordinary in countries such as Nepal and Iran.

With the unprecedented growth the centre of Christianity has shifted. By 2020, 65 per cent of all Christians worldwide will live in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

If the church grows that fast where do the leaders come from? Picture the African church alone growing at 10,000 people a day. Now imagine the number of leaders needed to pastor new churches! Can you feel the need? The church keeps growing every day, but it takes years to grow leadership.

Where are the models of good leadership, and what are the right structures and models to train leaders? The way we train leaders in the West is almost certainly not the best way to do it in the non-Western world. Many pastors get little opportunity to study God's word before they enter ministry. This leaves them without the training and skills to apply the Bible to complex issues of life. Sometimes the results have been disastrous.

CMS remains committed to ministry in these parts of the world but our role has changed. Our partners in Africa and similar places are not asking us to come and do evangelism and church planting. They can do that better than we can. What they are crying out for is help in equipping Christian leaders for the church and for the wider society. Asking us to help them develop leaders within the church who know the word of God and how to teach the word faithfully (particularly in the face of false teaching), and Christian leaders in society who have integrated their profession with their faith, who think biblically and can apply biblical principles in the work they do. Good Christian leadership in the church and society can bring deep and lasting change to whole communities.

How do we do this well? Where should we place our missionaries so they can provide the best help possible in leadership development? These are questions that we are currently looking at. Our strategy is to train and mentor Christian leaders for church and society through Bible teachers, theological educators and university student workers, as well as professionals skilled in other disciplines.

3. ENGAGING CHURCHES IN CROSS-CULTURAL MISSION

We want to continue to do the work that we have always done – to encourage churches in Australia to set apart and support people for cross-cultural mission. Mission was not a job given by the Lord to CMS. It is the job of his church. And CMS exists to enable and assist churches in setting apart missionaries to serve.

But notice we also want to encourage churches we work with around the world to be engaged in cross-cultural mission. This is new ground for us. How do we support these churches not just to grow but, in turn, become mission bases? How do we support the growing movement of indigenous mission? For mission today truly is from everywhere to everywhere.

We are also aware more than ever of the growing need for cross-cultural mission here in Australia and the challenge of cross-cultural mission in our own context.

is to develop resources and provide training courses that churches can make use of, offering apprenticeship programs to train and mentor Australian Christians in cross-cultural ministry. We set apart missionaries and short-term workers and we are also raising up cross-cultural apprentices.

The main way we are doing this is through our MENTAC program. MENTAC (mentoring across cultures) is specifically designed to equip and train Australian Christians to reach out across cultures. In a similar way to MTS that mentors people for general church ministry, MENTAC mentors people for cross-cultural ministry.

The program typically runs for 18 months to two years to help people grow in their understanding and practice of cross-cultural ministry, particularly among Muslim people, and to learn more about their own gifts, skills and personality. MENTAC offers participants training and practical experience in a



Local mission: people from a range of backgrounds in Parramatta.

In writing this vision CMS sought to address its role in the face of large-scale migration of people from unreached groups into our country. The whole world has come to us. We want to see churches develop their skills in reaching Buddhist and Muslim peoples. You don't have to travel far to find Vietnamese communities within our major cities! There are also many Islamic peoples that call Australia home.

Put aside your own political views on migration and refugees. The Lord has provided us with an unparalleled opportunity to reach the nations without leaving home. Our vision needs to respond to this opportunity.

We don't believe CMS is called to send missionaries to the various people groups that live in our major cities. That, we believe, is the work of the local church. But we can have a role. Our returned missionaries are an amazing resource. They have the cross-cultural experience, language and cultural understanding that our churches lack. One goal

supervised and structured environment. And it will help participants answer the question of whether long-term cross-cultural ministry as a CMS missionary is the right place for them to be serving the Lord Jesus.

Presently MENTAC operates in Victoria, NSW and Queensland, and we would love to see it happen elsewhere in Australia. MENTAC is growing and is very exciting. We are currently looking to establish and run jointly with AsiaCMS a one-year MENTAC program to train people in reaching Buddhists for Christ.

Our great passion, to see a world that knows Jesus, is a passion that comes from God himself. We read in 1 Timothy 2:3-4 that "This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth".

SC

The Rev Peter Rodgers is the Federal Secretary of the Church Missionary Society Australia. This is an edited version of a talk he gave at Summer School in Katoomba last month.

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DIARY

Monday, February 9 - Monday, February 23

Emotion Coaching

Anglicare is hosting a three-week program designed to assist parents and caregivers of children aged 2-12, particularly through teaching about behaviour management and methods to lessen frustration. There is an evening version of the course in March.

The cost is based on a sliding scale relative to attendee income. For information or to register, contact Anglicare on 02 9895 8144 or education@anglicare.org.au

LOCATION | Anglicare, Level 3, 16 Parkes Street, Parramatta | 10.30am-1pm

Tuesday, February 10

Compassion International Supporters' Evening

Join Compassion International president emeritus Dr Wess Stafford as he shares about God's love for children living in poverty. Dr Stafford grew up as the son of Ivory Coast missionaries and has worked with Compassion International since 1977.

This is a free event but attendees must reserve a ticket. For more details and to book, visit is.gd/compassionaustraliaevents.

LOCATION | Village Church, 122 Johnston Street, Annandale | 7pm

Wednesday, February 11

SMBC Hot Topics

Sydney Missionary and Bible College is again running its annual set of Hot Topics lectures, looking at different theological, moral and social issues through a Christian lens.

This year begins with David McDonald speaking on the topic of Cancer: hope beyond cure? Other topics include mental illness, Zoe's

Bill, Islam, refugees and a gender-variant society. The talks will run each week on Wednesday evenings until June and can be used as credit toward an SMBC Introductory Certificate.

The cost is \$10 per lecture if pre-booked, or \$15 at the door. For more information visit smbc.com.au/events.

LOCATION | SMBC, 43 Badminton Rd, Croydon | 7-9pm

Thursday, February 19

Advance your Preaching Workshop

This is the first workshop for 2015, at which our former principal and Archbishop Dr Peter Jensen (Moore College 1985-2001) will help us improve our skills in proclaiming God's word, particularly looking at preaching on the work of the Spirit.

Cost is \$45, including morning tea and lunch. For more information and to register, visit moore.edu.au/preaching.

LOCATION | Golden Grove, 5 Forbes Street, Newtown | 9.30am - 3.30pm

Saturday, February 21

MOW Public Lecture

The Rev Dr Keith Mascord will present a public lecture sponsored by the Movement for the Ordination of Women. His topic, "Breaking the Stained Glass Ceiling: A Risky But Rewarding Renovation", will discuss the theological impasse on this issue.

A donation is requested if you wish to attend the 12.30pm light lunch before the lecture.

For further enquiries or to RSVP, contact Lu on 9953 6828, or Elaine on 9747 3276, or email committee.sydneymow@mowatch.com.au

LOCATION | All Saints', Hunters Hill, corner Ferry and Ambrose streets, Hunters Hill | 2pm

For diary events email
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SUFM Teams expand



This year's set of Scripture Union Family Missions has seen a mix of old and new, including a renewed push to revitalise SU mission in the area where it all began, Sydney. Last year a Summerlife program, targeted at youth and young adults, was run at Narrabeen but this year saw the team expanded to a full mission.

"They ran as a three-day family mission this year as a prelude to next year's plan, which is to run as a full 10-day mission," says SUFM missions director Steve Windsor. "From what I hear it was

a raging success. They had lots of kids involved. They essentially run as two distinct teams – one as the family mission and the other essentially continuing the Summerlife concept from last year. It's been really good to see that expand and we're obviously still looking at doing something in Manly again, which is where the whole thing basically started."

The first SU mission, called a Children's Special Service Mission, was run at Manly Beach in 1888. Since then teams have stretched up and down the coast, but until recently SU summer missions in

the Sydney metropolitan area were a thing of the past.

"The reason missions moved out of Sydney... is because we got kicked out of the caravan parks that used to exist," Mr Windsor says. "There used to be a caravan park down here in Freshwater; Manly Beach used to be a caravan park. It's far from that now, it's all be beautified and the last thing they'd have there is a caravan park. We didn't reinvent ourselves to look different, so we left."

Many teams in recent years have had to negotiate with local

councils and park managers regarding use of land and kinds of activities. The Lake Tabourie team was, at a late stage, refused use of their usual site by the local council and the mission was cancelled. Mr Windsor says SU plans to apply for a DA permit early this year so the mission can recommence in 2015-16.

This year also saw missions such as Shoalhaven Heads restart after several years' hiatus. Fairy Meadow in Wollongong ran for only the second time, while Tanilba Bay, on the Central Coast, was a new mission begun this year.

CHOIR ON EUROPEAN TOUR



The Christ Church St Laurence choir recently embarked on a tour of European churches, including a period as choir-in-residence at St Paul's Cathedral in London.

Beginning before the new year in London, the choir spent a week at St Paul's, singing daily at Evensong and other services.

The itinerary also consisted of concerts in Belgium and France, including a performance at the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

The group consists of choristers

both young and old, and was led on its tour by Associate Professor Dr Neil McEwan of the University of Sydney.

The choir also sang at St Alban's Cathedral in Hertfordshire (above), one of the oldest Christian sites in Britain. The first British Christian martyr, Alban, is traditionally believed to have been executed on the site in Roman-era Britain. Parts of the building itself date back to the Norman period in the 11th century.

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At the Scottish end, it's not exactly peaceful either, as Gordy has cancer and knows he is not long for this world. A crusty, cheeky old scamp, he just wants his birthday to be a low-key celebration with the people he loves rather than the grand, posh event his obsessive older son Gavin (Ben Miller) has arranged down to the last, exhaustive detail.

Connolly more or less plays himself as Gordy – but charmingly, and without most of the usual bad language. He is particularly close to Lottie (an excellent performance by 12-year-old Emilia Jones), who soon lets out all the secrets she and the other kids had been told to keep quiet from Grandad. He, in turn, tells her about his cancer, and she is furious her parents not only kept it from her but lied about it.

On his birthday, Gordy tells event-minded Gavin that all he wants is to take his grandkids out for the day at the lake. Which he duly does. He gleefully teaches them rude songs, lets an alarmed Lottie drive the car and tells her she needs to “do more and think less”.

Despite their wonderful day together the holiday is careering towards a major crisis – one none of them could have imagined, which finally gets everyone's secrets and issues out in the open. It's not pretty, and the children are beside themselves. How are they supposed to respond? And why won't the adults around



them behave like grown-ups so they can be relied upon?

There is plenty of good humour in *What We Did on Our Holiday* and a liberal dash of swearing, along with unexpected drama and moments of reflection. The film also contains strong messages about love and family with direct commentary to all parents – together or apart – about the effect disagreements, lack of attention or selfishness have on their children.

Lottie, Mickey and Jess are ridiculously well read and skilled for their age (how many primary schoolers do you know who avidly watch documentaries and the news?) but if

you can run with the construct provided by the filmmakers, it's pretty telling stuff. Amid all the smart lines the kids simply want to be loved, they want to feel secure, they want their views to be understood and respected and they don't want to be treated like fools just because they're children. It's Relationships 101, and a good thing to be reminded about.

Gordy, with the clarity provided by cancer, puts his finger on it by saying that all of them are ridiculous in one way or another, and in the end none of that matters. You may not agree with everything the film says *does* matter, but you'll have an enjoyable time nonetheless. **SC**

SRE


UNDER
REVIEW

WHAT WILL IT
MEAN FOR YOUR
CHILDREN AND
GRANDCHILDREN?

For the first time since 1960, an independent review will survey the quality of learning outcomes and teaching practices surrounding SRE. While we hope the review will uphold the place of SRE in NSW schools, it's not without its dangers.

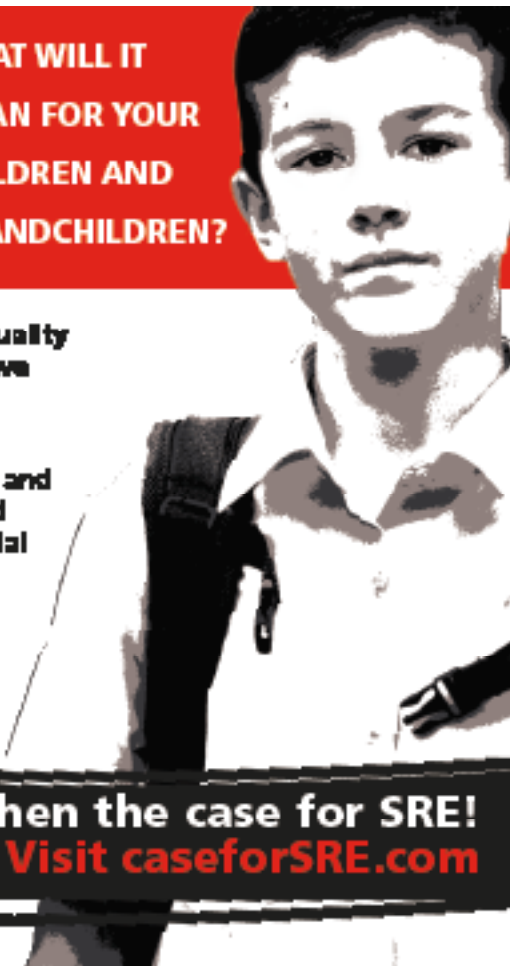
Opponents of SRE may use the review to promote an anti-SRE agenda and undermine the place of SRE in NSW public schools. That's why we need your support to ensure this review affirms the positive value that Special Religious Education brings for students and our community!

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Family chaos



MOVIE
REVIEW

JUDY ADAMSON

What We Did On Our Holiday

Rated PG

OFF-THE-WALL comedies seem to work particularly well when they're set in Scotland. The recipe is hard to explain but the good ones never just rely on laughs. There's always a delicate balance of drama, eccentric characters and a dash of the fantastic – with the landscape often as important a character as the people in it.

What We Did On Our Holiday doesn't gel as completely as memorable films like *Local Hero*, which had so many well-defined characters in its little seaside Scottish village that you wanted to ring up their one telephone for a chat once the credits rolled.

It's possible that the slight disconnect in *What We Did On Our Holiday* may be because its co-writers and directors, Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin (known for TV shows such as the family comedy *Outnumbered* and political satire *Drop the Dead Donkey*) are English. Little Scots nuances and stylistic self-deprecation will always be harder to grasp from the outside.

In addition Hamilton and Jenkin put much of the sharpest dialogue into the mouths of the children, which doesn't always work. And they are, to a certain extent, recreating the (English) dysfunctional family from *Outnumbered*, expanding their crises and transferring it all to the big screen.

Having said all that, I happily suspended

disbelief and enjoyed this film very much. Doug McLeod (David Tennant) and his estranged wife Abi (Rosamund Pike) attempt to call a truce in order to drive their three kids Lottie, Mickey and Jess from London to rural Scotland for the 75th birthday celebrations of Doug's father Gordy (Billy Connolly). It's a long enough drive when you're all at peace with each other, but the kids are stressed at their parents' break-up and dealing with it in quirkily different ways, while Doug and Abi can't do anything without fighting about it. Abi is also planning to move away from London and take the children, which is a relational bomb waiting to explode at just the wrong moment.

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