

New Order of Priests

Private members bill before Synod

Robert Doyle

The Sydney Morning Herald has reported an attempt by six members of the Sydney Synod to end controversy over women priests in the Diocese. It is proposed to bring an ordinance to Synod which would allow women to be ordained priests, but be barred from being appointed as rectors of parishes.

As Archbishop Harry Goodhew reminded the Synod last year, "This proposal has been rejected by Synod on a previous occasion."

The proposal is highly contentious and creates new problems while failing to solve old ones. It runs against the grain of the evangelical religion of the Book of Common Prayer, and against the hard work already done by Synod over many sessions. Five difficulties should lead the Synod to firmly reject the proposal: the novelty of an exclusively sacramental Anglican priesthood; the inappropriateness of the existing Ordinal for such ordinations; the damage done to the authority of the New Testament in our church; the widening of the ongoing controversy; and the perception that this move undermines the intention of the last Synod to find an evangelical way ahead which did not take us back into the same old debates again.

A sacramental priesthood

The only difference between the new order of women priests in the mooted proposal and women deacons is that the women priests would be permitted to

administer Holy Communion. It is their only new duty. Thus for the first time amongst the evangelical churches of the Reformation we are being asked to create a priesthood whose only distinctive is the right to administer a sacrament. In the context of Synod's repeated affirmation that the restriction of the administration of the Lord's Supper to priests is not justifiable on theological grounds, this novel move is an extraordinary backward step from the reformed understanding of ministry and sacraments.

A new 'ordination'

Following the understanding of the Apostle Paul in the pastoral epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy, the ordinal for priesting produced by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer stresses the oversight that the presbyter has over his flock, "the Lord's family". The repeated expressions are "the people committed to your care", "committed to your charge", etc. The qualities of character and ministry outlined by the Ordinal are those that the New Testament stresses as distinctive for congregational oversight.

If this proposal were to succeed, the new order of presbyter would be detached from its New Testament and Prayer Book foundation and re-attached to modern aspirations. The presbyterate would be redefined to solve problems associated with current limitations on the ministry of women. As seen in the last Synod's overwhelming endorsement of a five-year trial period for lay and diaconal administra-

tion of the Lord's Supper, there are less drastic ways forward. What we must not do is to make fuzzy or even overthrow the teaching of the New Testament. Because of the clear content of the present Ordinal, a new, special service of ordination would need to be created, which has had all the references to congregational oversight removed. For integrity's sake the promoters of the present bill must persuade Synod to ask for a new kind of ordination service in our Church.

Authority of the Bible

We must remember our Synod has repeatedly decided against ordaining women to the priesthood (as understood in our Anglican formularies) because of the teaching of the Bible. That teaching is not opposed to women's ministry, but does insist on a distinction between the roles of men and women in the family and in the church. In the New Testament "presbyters" are to be men. The role of a presbyter is oversight. In Anglicanism "priest" means "presbyter". To create a priest who is not to be a presbyter (i.e. who is not to exercise congregational oversight) is to abandon any sense that our church is ruled by the Bible in this matter.

More, not less controversy

As Archbishop Goodhew has pointed out, Sydney Synod has struggled long and hard to honour apostolic teaching on the matter of ministry. In 1996 the Synod rejected a **Continued page 3**

ACL Re-elects BBJ

Jan Berkely



On July 22, Canon Bruce Ballantine-Jones was re-elected President of the Anglican Church League, a position he has held since 1994. Bruce has been a member of the ACL, and a council member, since 1970. "Nearly 60% of Sydney clergy are members of the ACL which was formed in 1909. The ACL is the single most important reason why Sydney has remained evangelical", said Bruce.

When asked why he was so committed to the organisation, he replied, "My first commitment is to my parish and to evangelism, but I have always believed it is important to have one or two outside interests in the community and the wider church. The ACL is an organisation that has always sought to support biblical truth and Reformation principles and that is why I have been

proud to be a member."

In 1997, Bruce was honoured with the Order of Australia Medal "for services to the community and to the Anglican church". His service includes editorship of the Church Record (1974-1977); he was the last chairman of the CMS League of Youth, and was the CMS youth secretary (1963-65); in the past, Bruce has also rendered thirteen years of valuable service to Standing Committee; he has been a member of General Synod since 1985 and a member of the Glebe Board since 1993. In 1995, Archbishop Goodhew made him a Canon of St. Andrew's Cathedral.

As president of the NSW Council of Churches (1979-84), he successfully campaigned against the Wran government's proposal for the Sydney casino which has now proved to have disastrous consequences. During this time he worked with investigative journalist Bob Bottom against organised crime. Together they lobbied the then opposition in NSW to fight corruption and this came to fruition in the establishment of ICAC. Bob Bottom and Bruce Ballantine-Jones made representations concerning the need for a national approach

to organised crime to Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. Later, when the Federal Government set up the National Crime Authority, Canon Ballantine-Jones went on to serve on the ICAC Operations Review Committee, which has responsibility under the Act of reviewing all mat-

ters before the commission and has the statutory responsibility of closing off all matters brought before it.

During the disastrous bushfires in Jannali and Como on January 8, 1994 Bruce risked his own life as he went from house to house ensuring that the occupants had evacuated, giving assistance where necessary. For his bravery he was decorated by the NSW Fire Brigade.

Since September 1978 Bruce has been the rector of Jannali where the congregation has grown from 70 to 570 a Sunday. The youth and young adult ministries at Jannali are amongst the largest in the Diocese; there are more than 60 Home Bible Study groups with a membership of over 500. The same ACL ideals of biblical truth and Reformation principles have undergirded his parish ministry which has seen significant growth through conversion.

At age 17, while living with his father at Kings Cross, Bruce attended the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade and went forward. He joined St. John's Darlinghurst that very day. He became involved in open air preaching with the now Rev. Dr. Peter O'Brien, vice principal of Moore College. In 1963 at age 21 he was elected a lay Synod representative for St John's. Except for a period in which he served as a curate, Bruce has been a member of Synod ever since.

Many have described Bruce as a "rough diamond" and may not be surprised to learn that he is descended from First Fleet **Continued page 3**

What is the ACL? See p.10
ACL co-operates with
Blue Ticket. See p.10

The Australian CHURCH RECORD

September 1, 1999 Issue 1879

'The new *Church Record* was "definitely and uncompromisingly Evangelical", but its early style was optimistic and positive.'

S. Judd & K. Cable,
Sydney Anglicans, p.168; speaking of
the revamped *Record* of 1914.

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Clarifying Clarity

Mark Thompson



The clarity of Scripture is increasingly being challenged. Differences of opinion about what particular texts mean is cited as proof that the notion is meaningless.

The insistence that Scripture is clear does not mean that all parts of the Bible are necessarily easy to understand. Even Peter found “some things hard to understand” in Paul’s letters (2 Pet 3:16)! Some passages of the New Testament require a familiarity with elements of the Old Testament; others belong to types of writing that may be unfamiliar to modern readers (e.g. the apocalyptic writings in Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation). Often understanding only comes from thinking hard about its place in the chapter, book and testament in which it appears. Then there is the careful attention we must pay to the actual words that are used. The clarity of Scripture does not do away with the ‘study’ component of ‘Bible study’.

Nor does it mean denying that we bring our own pre-understandings, presuppositions, and personally-shaped questions to Bible reading. Sometimes, indeed, our presumption that we already know what a particular passage means can be an obstacle to understanding. Looking for the unex-

pected in a passage is a helpful strategy towards allowing our minds to be changed by the Bible.

The clarity of Scripture also does not mean that all Bible teachers are superfluous. Teachers are gifts of Christ to his church (Eph 4:11), those gifted with both the skills and the opportunity to study the Scriptures more extensively than others. They are able to point us to the context of a particular passage, point out the details we might have missed, and confront us with the challenges we might try to avoid.

Arguing that Scripture is clear, especially in the context in which the Reformers were arguing, means that we do not need to look for hidden, spiritual meanings. For centuries prior to the Reformation, Bible study involved digging ‘behind’ the actual words of the Scriptures to find ‘the real meaning’. Luther, Calvin and others insisted that the meaning is in *the actual words themselves*. There is no need to go beyond what the text of the Bible *says* (in its literary context and with due regard for the type of literature it is) to

The clarity of Scripture does not do away with the ‘study’ component of ‘Bible study’.

understand what the Bible *means*.

It also means that ordinary Bible readers are not dependent upon ecclesiastical authorities to tell them what the Scriptures mean. The medieval popes claimed to be the authorised interpreters of Scripture. The Reformers objected: all believers have direct access to the words of Scripture. A plain reading of the text by any Christian person can be as valuable as the pronouncements of bishops and popes. When this

is appreciated, the words of Scripture may begin to challenge the practice and policies of the churches.

Clarity also does away with the tyranny of the scholar, which can be every bit as demoralising as the tyranny of church decrees. The Bible is not the exclusive possession of the ‘religious authorities’, nor the exclusive possession of the ‘experts’. Scholarship is indeed valuable, and we have gained much from the endeavours of those who have devoted their lives to it, but in the end the simplest mind is still able to read and understand God’s Scriptures.

The notion of Scriptural clarity is meant to spur us on to think hard and investigate texts further. However, in the hands of some it is being used to avoid the meaning of texts. Some modern protests are merely masks for unbelief. They are excuses for doing what we deem right, rather than conforming ourselves to the teaching of the Bible. The deceitfulness of our human hearts may try to lay the blame at the door of Scripture, by repeating the ancient question ‘Did God really say ...?’, but rebellion is still rebellion.

Confidence in the clarity of the Scriptures arises from our conviction that they are the Word of God. Our heavenly Father does not dangle before us an unintelligible word in order to frustrate us. He is an effective communicator and a loving Father. When we ‘differ’ with the text, we ought to see it as our defect. Rather than implying that God has failed to speak his word clearly, we should admit that we may not have been listening carefully. Differences of opinion amongst interpreters are invitations to return to the Scriptures, not an excuse to abandon them. In the end, the real problem lies not in understanding what God has caused to be written for our learning, but in believing it and obeying it. ●

The heart of the Gospel

John Chapman



God tells us that at the heart of the gospel is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of sins (1 Cor 15:3–4). In his sin-bearing death, the Lord Jesus defeated Satan and so he is able to set us free from the bondage to sin and death (Col 3:13–15; Lk 11:21–22). Because Jesus has died for us, we are able to be right with God and to enjoy all the benefits which go with that (Rom 5:1–5). These are considerable and should not be forgotten.

Isn’t it true that what can be taken for granted needs to be said or else we will all forget it in time? Do you think it is possible to forget what God has done for us in Christ? I think that it is one of those things that is easily done. I need to be constantly reminded. The gospel is as good for me today as it was the first day I heard it. I am a man who has been wonderfully blessed by God. When I look back into my past and see how few of my school friends have come to Christ, I am overwhelmed by the kindness of God for choosing me and for loving me in Christ.

The God who loves the world and does not wish any to perish has set his love on us. It should be the source of thanksgiving and should issue in us worshipping God in love and obedience. I am aware that I haven’t said anything new. I am just saying it because it needs to be said.

Those people who have embraced the love of God and have responded to him in repentance and faith, now find that the gospel is at the heart of everything they try to do. They see God in a new light and set out to love him. They see their friends in a new light and set out to love them. Because the gospel governs their thinking they see everyone in a new light and long that they too will come to know and trust the Lord Jesus and enjoy him forever. This way of thinking will cause us to look for opportunities to share the gospel with our friends and neighbours. We will be in prayer for such opportunities.

However, when we forget about the gospel and think that we have been ‘hardly done by’ in life, we won’t be looking for ways to share the gospel with anyone.

It is as great a joy, and as great a privilege, to understand the heart of the gospel as it is to have the gospel at heart. I hope both are yours! ●

Donations needed and welcome!

This edition of ACR has been funded by interest from the trust funds the Australian Church Record administers and the donations of friends. We will produce two or three editions a year and supply them free of charge.

If you would like to help us financially, please send your donation to:

The Hon. Treasurer
Australian Church Record
P.O. Box 218, Camperdown NSW 1450.

This edition cost around \$5000, and except for layout, printing and postal distribution, was produced by voluntary labour.

The Australian Church Record

The Australian Church Record is an evangelical newspaper in the Reformed Anglican tradition of the historic creeds and the 39 Articles of Faith, and the standard of teaching and practice in the Book of Common Prayer. We accept the Scriptures as God’s word written, and as containing all things necessary for salvation and the final authority in all matters of faith and behaviour.

Publisher: Robert C. Doyle, Chairperson,
Australian Church Record ACN 000 071 438

Executive Editor: Peter G. Bolt

All enquiries: PO Box 218, Camperdown NSW 1450

“The single, most potent sign of [the Anglican Communion’s departure from the commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture] has been the ordination of women. There is far more in scripture about the subordination of women than there is about the theological status of gay and lesbian people, but we have come to terms with the ordination of women, and we know that they are not going to be sent out of the sanctuary, any more than children are going to be sent back up the chimney. That topic [like gay and lesbian rights in society at large] has expired, as well. So whatever is going on in the debate about homosexuality, it cannot be mainly about scripture, because we have already shown great versatility in our interpretative approaches.”

R. Holloway, ‘After Lambeth—an Address to the LGCM Anglican Forum, University of Derby, February 6, 1999. Bishop Holloway, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, decided not to resign as bishop in order to enter Parliament in 2000, because he felt the need to challenge the growing ‘fundamentalism’.

Editorial

Changing Church in a Changing World



More than twenty years ago Alvin Toffler warned of Future Shock: the shock people experience within their own culture when society moves too fast for them to cope.

The speed of societal change in the last generation has been difficult for most organisations to adjust to. Old and established organisations, like the Anglican Church, have found it particularly difficult.

Pragmatic knee jerk reactions to society's fashions can destroy organisations by leading them to depart from critically important values. On the other hand, fear, anxiety and established place can lead the same organisation to cling to outmoded peripheral values.

There are some core values that an organisation must not relinquish—for to depart from these will destroy the organisation. Yet retention of peripheral values in a time of rapid social change will leave the organisation out of touch with the community it is seeking to serve.

But what are the core and what are the peripheral values? This question plagues any old and large voluntary society. In the Anglican communion worldwide there is no longer agreement amongst members upon what constitutes the core and the peripheral values.

Anglicanism has always accepted the need and desirability for change. Article 34 speaks of changing traditions and ceremonies according to "diversities of countries, times and men's situations". This is qualified by three important core values: "so that nothing be ordained against God's Word"; "traditions and ceremonies... be ordained and approved by common order"; and "all things be done for edification".

Our diocese is faced with these kinds of issues especially in synodical debates. What are the core issues that we need in order to maintain evangelical integrity? What kind of issues

are really unimportant and must change to keep us in touch with the community?

Within Scripture there are some issues that the apostles saw as worthy of holding onto firmly. The person of Christ is mentioned by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 and John in 1 John 4. Justification by faith alone is the basis of the fight in Galatians. The acceptance of apostolic writings is also mentioned in 1 John 4. The resurrection of Jesus is a key issue in 1 Corinthians 15 and in 2 Timothy 2. In the Pastorals and 1 Corinthians 9, Paul both outlines the evangelical qualities necessary for a true ministry, and the pressing need to change so that our ministry gives a clear gospel sound. The present debate over lay administration of the Lord's Supper is a good case in point.

Synod is the place where edifying changes ought to be decided in the light of God's word. Yet synodical government is often bogged down by the political and bureaucratic strategies of those who would change the church in defiance of the Scriptures, and those who will accept no change to their traditions irrespective of how edifying they may be.

Political pressure to depart from biblical teaching comes from the liberal and catholic wings of our denomination. Issues such as the marriage of homosexuals, the ordination of homosexuals, the consecration of women bishops and the ordination of women priests are all expressions of this liberal catholic agenda. They refuse to accept the decision of Synod, and delay our business by continually revisiting the same issue.

On the other hand, changes which threaten those traditions of the church which have no biblical basis are held up in committees and often deflected into a bureaucratic, legislative labyrinth until their effects are neutralised. Where it is not possible to resist the logic of bib-

lical change all manner of convoluted reasoning is advanced as to why the delicate balance of the whole denomination will be upset. The matter is then referred to a series of committees, which will almost certainly ensure its burial!

In the current climate, there are several signs of positive change. While the theological colleges of the Anglican Church of Australia are contracting, and the average age of their students on entry is moving upwards into the 40s, the two evangelical colleges, Ridley and Moore, are exceptions. Behind the unprecedented growth in full-time students at Moore, and their thirst for and confidence in evangelical ministry, lies the very hard work and risk-taking by parishes who have reasserted evangelical ministry under modern conditions.

After the social confusion and the rapid Christian contraction of the 60s, we are now witnessing a resurgence in evangelical culture, which many thought would never be. Behind this is the sheer grace of God evident in the faithfulness, often under duress, of so many ministers and their parishioners. It has been hard work, but we must continue to pay the price for such change.

There are also opportunities opening up further afield. These are unprecedented in South-East-Asia, and especially in Africa. Evangelicals are wanted for the same reasons they have always been wanted: a clear evangelical vision of ministry, stability, biblical resilience, and hard work.

If Evangelicals do not fill these places, liberal Anglicans and Episcopalians will.

We must continue to work at enlarging people's missionary outlook both here in Australia and overseas. Continue to pray that we will hold to the central core, while changing the peripherals, and be prepared to bear the cost. ●

ACL Re-elects BBJ

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convicts. Bruce's great-great-grand-father, Edward Jones, who arrived in the "Alexander", married Martha Eaton (who had travelled on the "Lady Penrhyn") on March 23, 1788. Theirs was the 33rd marriage in Australia, but the first celebrated in a "building"—a marquee. All previous marriages at St Phillip's had been celebrated in the open air in the area of the park behind where Wynyard station now stands. At her death Martha was described as "much esteemed as an honest and industrious woman" in both the Sydney and Hobart newspapers.

When asked how he felt about being criticised by people in connection with his stand on controversial issues, Bruce explained, "I'm not afraid to stand up for what I think is right. I regret that some people sometimes misrepresent me, but I am willing to cop the flak for something I believe in." ●

Jan Berkely has been an active member of Jannali parish since 1969, is a Synod rep and a member of ACL.

New Order of Priests

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move to ordain women priests who would not have access to oversight of congregations. So why should this be debated again now? No subject has been debated so thoroughly in our Synod as women's ordination. But is the new proposal really new? The subtly different forms of the proposal ought not confuse us. Last time (1996), the ordinance rejected by the Synod "requested" the Archbishop not to license a woman as rector of a parish. This time the ordinance has a clause "requiring" that a woman not be licensed as rector of a parish.

Furthermore, last year the Archbishop invited Synod to a full day special sitting in which we were to look for a way forward. The hope was to ease tensions and get Synod away from an annual debate over women priests. That meeting did not indicate support for the non-overseeing priest model. The idea that did emerge was trying lay and diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper on a five year trial basis to allow women wider ministries. This was overwhelmingly supported by the last Synod. Standing Committee was

asked to bring legislation back to Synod this year. In fact during the 1998 Synod debate, Synod decisively rejected a proposal to bring some kind of women's ordination legislation to the 1999 Synod. The six members, of course, have the right to try to persuade Synod to change its mind. But Synod would be well advised to resist any proposal that will derail the carefully considered process that is now in place. To return to the old issue again will only mean more hours of debate, probably with the same outcome. Should the proposal succeed we will find future Synods debating its rescission on the one hand, and the deletion of "Clause 3", which stops women priests becoming rectors, on the other hand.

The basic issue is over the nature of Anglican priesthood. Ought it be essentially the ministry of oversight through preaching God's Word and administering the sacraments as the Book of Common Prayer clearly intends? Or ought we create a new Anglican order which is essentially sacramental? In expanding the ministry opportunities for women, lay and diaconal adminis-

tration is the evangelical way forward. Ordination of some women to a new kind of priesthood is a way back to pre-Reformation concepts. If successful, the present proposal for ordaining women priests will take away from the meaning of priesthood the biblical relationship of congregation and minister. All this in order to achieve an agenda that even our non-Christian society is abandoning, namely, that equality demands the abolition of distinctions and differences between men and women.

The false promise of peace

Even if the proposal does succeed, the minority who want women priests without any qualification will be joined by a greater number of traditional evangelicals who will not suffer in silence this distortion of both New Testament norms and Anglican models. The proposal cannot bring "peace". It will create even greater turmoil. At future Synods traditional evangelicals will move rescission motions. At the same Synods, others will move for the removal of the last barrier to the complete "sameness" of men's and women's ministries. ●

Looking out for Wolves

John Lavender

John Lavender is the Anglican minister at Glenmore Park.



Being involved with people coming to faith in Christ is an exciting thing, but it is not easy. In a new suburb there are also plenty of wolves looking to catch some sheep. These wolves proclaim another gospel; a gospel that Paul calls 'no gospel at all' (Gal 1:7). Paul knows how serious this is because to believe another gospel is to actually 'desert the one who called you by the grace of Christ' (Gal 1:6). To believe another

gospel is to turn your back on God!

How does this arise? Brand new Christians, hungry to learn about Jesus are sometimes not so sure of what to make of people who knock on their door, with their own version of why the world has gone wrong, and of a new heaven and earth. How do they know if what these people are teaching them is true or not? The visitors seem so genuine, so nice, so 'Christian'.

New Christians are not so sure of what to make of the wolves they meet who tell them they must leave a church which meets on a Sunday, because the Bible says to "keep the Sabbath Day" instead.

New Christians hungry to learn are not too sure of what to make of the medal they can buy at the Christian bookshop, promising protection when travelling; or the book offering the latest technique for prayer or how to defeat demons in your life.

Others keen to grow as Christians search the internet. There is so much 'Christian' information there, and it is more accessible than books. And yet, they are not too sure about the web site

offering the latest bizarre theory about the future, or Jesus' return.

New Christians eager to give their children a Christian education send them to schools where the children are taught to pray to Jesus' mother and other dead religious people. How can you tell one 'Christian' school from another?

We could say that it doesn't matter. But all these things take people away from the gospel, away from Christ.

And so it goes on. The wolves are unrelenting. Always seeming good, nice and Christian, but preaching a different gospel to what we find in the Bible. We could say that it doesn't matter, that we shouldn't be judgmental of other's beliefs, just loving. But all these things take people away from the

gospel, away from Christ. How important it is that people are able to discern the wolves and stand firm in the truth of God's gospel! It turns out that the ability to be discerning is no small matter. But how can we be discerning with so many wolves around—so many other 'nice' sounding gospels?

I am very thankful for churches in which people want to work out 'what does the Bible say?'. People who give a high priority to meeting together regularly to study and understand God's word. People who aren't tempted to believe the shouts of the wolves but who want to have Jesus' gospel shape their lives, their thinking, their understanding, their motives and their behaviour.

When you think about it, it is obvious: being discerning is not just something that new Christians need to be aware of, is it? All of us who love the gospel need to be in the discernment business. ●

Bangkok despatch

Stephen and Marion Gabbott



Life in Bangkok is stimulating and sometimes positively exciting. Cultural activities abound—a visit to the Grand Palace with its opulent architecture; the fun of the annual Ploenchit Fair; the sobering experience of two Commonwealth War Grave cemeteries at Kanchanaburi on the Kwai River, especially in the company of British ex-POWs on their annual pilgrimage. Parish life offers a parade of activities and people at the only English language Anglican Church in this sprawling city.

long hours, with little time for reflecting on what is happening to spouses and children here, or family members left behind at home. The workplace often raises puzzlement and frustration as genuine attempts to work alongside national colleagues are met with confusion and misunderstanding. This fertile ground for distrust and cynicism sometimes causes Christians dismay, as they recognise the ugliness of sin in parts of their lives where they had long thought it dealt with and eliminated.

Current economic conditions add to the uncertainty of life. Most often it is the wives who are left at home during the day. If the children are at school, there is a never ending round of social activities on offer but this soon palls for most. If the children are at home, it is often the case that a tug of war develops between an already fretful mother wondering what is happening to her husband and a Thai maid who is always ready to spend time indulging one or two expatriate toddlers.

In many cases, the insubstantial nature of the foundations feeding the Christian lives of these folk becomes

painfully obvious. Even disciplines of church attendance, Bible study, daily prayer and concern for others, easily maintained in a suburban parish context, suddenly become overwhelmingly difficult and soon degenerate into a sporadic sequence of unconnected activities for many. The effort to simply get to the Sunday service can prove so exhausting for some that there is nothing left for the rest of the week.

As we reflect on the situation here, we appreciate more than ever before the value placed upon laymen and laywomen in the life of the churches of Sydney Diocese. The contribution that committed, informed and dedicated lay people make every week of the year in nearly three hundred parishes across Sydney is incalculable.

There is something tremendously impressive about the unity created by ordinary men and women sharing a common commitment to Jesus as Saviour and Lord, a faith informed by the Scriptures and a dedication to holding out the word of life to a dead and dying world. This is our impressive heritage in Sydney, but, sadly, many

Christian men and women from other parts of the world do not share such a heritage. To borrow an expression from Paul to Timothy, it constitutes a pattern of sound teaching entrusted to reliable men and women who must not simply guard it but teach it to others.

What we received we now strive to pass on to others, but in another place. Pray for us, as we pray that you will be busy in the same task in Sydney. We have a gospel big enough for the whole world. By all means guard it in Sydney, but do all you can to give it the stage it deserves. ●

We appreciate more than ever before the value placed upon laymen and laywomen in the life of the churches of Sydney Diocese.

But it is also a city which is very demanding on the people to whom we are ministering. Much is expected from the expatriates who come here to work, in return for high salaries and lavish accommodation. They put in

Anglican Counselling Centre Report

Claire Smith

Many may have seen a recent report in the media concerning an enquiry into the Anglican Counselling Centre initiated by the Standing Committee of the Sydney Diocese. The media coverage focussed on the controversial issue of "recovered memory" therapy.

In May last year, the Standing Committee appointed a committee to enquire into the work of our counselling agency. The committee included two senior psychiatrists, an experienced psychologist, a social worker, a general practitioner and a QC.

The enquiry was prompted by the international controversy about various theories and practices of counselling. It is alleged by some in this debate that certain counselling techniques can do more harm than good to troubled people, especially in under-qualified hands. There is also a professional debate about the qualifications required to practise certain kinds of therapy. Importantly, the debate in the counselling world is not only about so-called "recovered memories". However this issue continues to evoke particular media interest.

Since counselling/psychotherapy is not regulated generally in the community, the responsibility for evaluation and regulation of practices falls to the counselling agencies themselves and to any parent body, in this case our church.

The committee produced a substantial 146-page report and made 22 recommendations. Many of these were for uncontroversial improvements. Some were more significant. Only one directly mentioned the "recovered memory" issue.

The committee recognised the considerable good work that has been done by the Anglican Counselling Centre over many years through the dedicated service of many people. An enormous number of distressed and troubled people, marriages and families, have been helped with Christian love, compassion, wisdom and skill.

The committee recommended, however, that it was time to take significant steps to guard against our counsellors unintentionally causing harm by practising techniques that are controversial or for which they lack sufficient training or experience.

The recommendations involve setting limits to the kind of counselling that the Centre will offer, and the formal recognition of the qualifications of counsellors who may engage in different levels of work. Where a person is in need of help beyond that available through the Centre, then referrals will be made to outside competent Christian professionals.

It was time to take significant steps to guard against our counsellors unintentionally causing harm.

The committee recommended these changes in order to ensure the reliability of the help that our church's counselling agency can continue to offer.

The Standing Committee has accepted the recommendations of the committee, and has asked the Council of the Anglican Counselling Centre to report on how and when these changes will be implemented.

These changes mean that the Centre will not engage in counselling involving "recovered memories", and more broadly will adopt a cautious and conservative position with regard to all therapies that are alleged to have potential to do substantial harm to people.

These changes will strengthen the considerable contribution the Anglican Counselling Centre makes to those among us who are confused, burdened and sad. ●

Being Conscientious

Colette Read



I'm having a conscience about arguments of conscience. In 1 Corinthians 8 Paul urges Christians to forgo certain activities that, whilst not wrong according to the Bible, would cause fellow brothers to sin should they engage in them. So, for example, imagine a Christian has a problem with chewing gum. She cannot find a verse in the Bible that talks about chewing gum but she feels in her heart of hearts that to chew gum would be really wrong and contrary to God's wishes. As her friend, I will not urge her to chew gum, nor will I even chew gum in front of her lest she be tempted to do the same and therefore sin.

I have heard this argument in many different forms and contexts ranging from the local parish to Synod. So, what is my problem? The difficulty lies in knowing how widely to apply such principles. I'm not asking, "who is the weaker brother?" but rather when is it appropriate to use an argument from conscience?

Let me illustrate further.

Suppose at a regional minister's conference the members decide that, as part of their evangelism, they should all dress up as clowns and give out gospel tracts. A few members in the region object to this strategy, maintaining that the office of minister is a position of dignity and that to engage in such activities would dishonour God. Is this the right forum for this argument? Should the region try this strategy for evangelism? Who should participate?

Here's an example from Synod. A couple of years ago we agreed to allow restaurants on church land to be licensed provided that the relevant parish council was satisfied. During the debate some members strenuously objected on the grounds of conscience. Others argued that matters of conscience were safeguarded by the condition that it had to have the approval of the parish council. Is this a viable application of 1 Corinthians 8?

There are a few principles to consider when it comes to arguments of conscience.

1. From this passage it is clear that arguments of conscience apply only to Christians. The fact that my Muslim friend thinks attending church is wrong does not mean that I will neither attend church nor refrain from explicitly inviting them along.
2. An argument of conscience understands that it is participation not observation that leads to sinning against one's conscience. If someone writes a blasphemous article in the paper, I do not sin by reading it. It is only when I too engage in such behaviour that I disobey God. As a general rule, participation results from a personal relationship with a libertarian fellow-Christian. To argue that "someone, somewhere may have a conscience about this" is really just hypothetical.
3. In applying 1 Corinthians 8 it is important to recognise that not liking something is not the same as sinning. Sometimes I think we confuse these categories. I may really dislike barn dancing and find participation in it unedifying not to mention exhausting. However, it does not follow that I believe I'm facing the judgement of God every time I do-se-do.

More recently I have heard arguments of conscience raised over the bill of lay administration. It is asserted that since the Bible is silent on the issue and some people believe that only the priest should administer communion, then we should not agree to the bill. Who are the "some people"? Why do they object?

This brings me to yet another proposition. There are times when the basis of someone's offence is contrary to the Bible. In this situation the Christian should not be prevented from engaging in the activity. For example, a Christian should not be prevented from marrying on the basis that someone thinks marriage is essentially sinful.

What if those who object to lay administration have an unbiblical concept of priesthood? What if they believe the priest is acting as a mediator between God and us? Do we actually need to take a stand on this issue?

I don't profess to have all the answers. I merely point out the difficulties with such arguments in contexts beyond our immediate friendships. So please let us be conscientious about arguments of conscience. ●

New Zealand

New Zealanders have increasingly turned away from God and to secularism, a trend that continues.

SOURCE:
P. Johnstone *Operation World*, 1993, p. 415.

Church Planting in Rural New Zealand

Ian Bayne

After considering the idea of planting a new Church in Ashburton (near Christchurch), New Zealand, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church began holding weekly meetings on Sunday morning in February 1992. In the previous year, when invitations were issued for people interested in beginning a new evangelical and reformed work, eight families were represented at two initial afternoon meetings. But only two of those families began with the new venture in February—those that had been praying

to the local community.

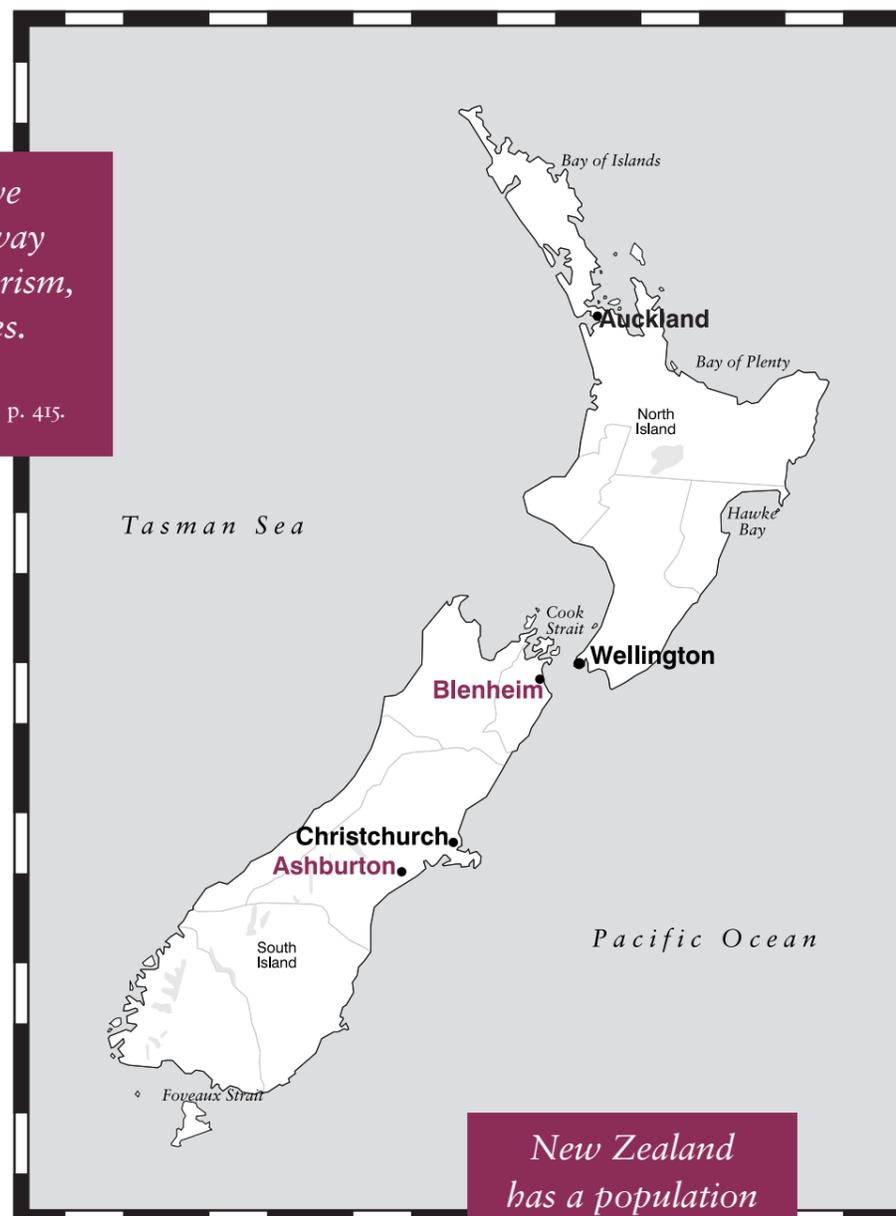
Seven years later we know that our Father has more than answered our prayers. Sunday mornings now bring around fifty of God's people together for worship and teaching. In this last year, with the emergence of suitable men to exercise leadership, we have considered it time to constitute an actual Church separate from our mother Church (EPC Christchurch). While we consider that the planting of the Church in Ashburton is by no means completed, we have also begun another new work in Fairlie, a small town about an hour south. As just five to six people meet together, the Lord's faithfulness to us encourages us to think that he will be faithful there as well.

Amongst the many valuable lessons learned during the last seven years, three stand out:

1. *Credibility for such a work does not come automatically*, especially it would seem among conservative rural New Zealanders. Credibility must be earned. Quite early in our mission, during a home visitation, we were abruptly informed that we would not last more than a year. Our informant made it quite plain that he thought we were not in possession of 'the full sandwich'. We have learned that to conservative Kiwis *new* is, more often than not, equivalent to *weird*. Overcoming

together more than a year before. But meet we did, even though many times it was just four adults and four children that rose to sing and sat to hear the word of God. Far from being discouraged we determined to carry on, believing that what we were doing was the will of God. Our continual prayer was then and still is today that our Lord would at least add one family a year to our fellowship, enabling us to grow not just in numbers but together as a family of God's people bringing honour to our heavenly Father, and a faithful witness

Far from being discouraged we determined to carry on, believing that what we were doing was the will of God.



New Zealand has a population of 3,507,000. 75% of the population lives on the North Island.

SOURCE: P. Johnstone
Operation World, 1993,
p. 414.

such a mindset takes time and a consistent witness.

2. *Growth rarely comes from where you expect it.* Of the families that we thought would be interested few have joined us. It has also been notable that the plans to reach others that we have considered our best have produced very little fruit. Yet the Lord of the harvest has added to us anyway, often through completely different ways, reminding us that the Church is Christ's and it is he who adds to it according to his own will.
3. *If Jesus gives you a task to do then he always gives the strength to do it.* I cannot remember one time of hopelessness or of considering giving up even though at times, particularly in the first years, progress seemed very slow. ●

Correction

The last issue of ACR reported the comment made in Synod that Rev. E. Chau was the first Chinese minister from Sydney Diocese to address the Synod. We are grateful to Malcolm Purvis for pointing out that Joseph Thiem, curate-in-charge of Lidcombe with Berala, had given the seconder's speech to a motion at the 1997 Synod.

*In New Zealand
the Anglican church
has 807 congregations
with 102,000
members and
732,048 affiliated.*

SOURCE:
P. Johnstone *Operation World*,
1993, p. 414.

*Sydney has had
previous contact with
Nelson Diocese.
Bishop Hulme-Moir
was Bishop of Nelson
before coming to
Sydney, where he served
as a Coadjutor Bishop
from 1965 to 1982.*

Opportunities for ministry in the Anglican Church in New Zealand — a case study

Renée Santich

Early in 1998, two bright-eyed, young adults, and a bouncing baby boy, left sunny Sydney for the shores of the long white cloud, the All Blacks and bad cappuccinos. Was this just a good excuse for a holiday? Were they keen to live with magnificent scenery or were they just sick of the Wallabies and wanted to back a winner?

The real winners in NZ can only be those who hear the gospel and respond in faith and obedience.

None of the above. Peter, Sybil and Oliver Judge-Mears left these shores to work in the Nelson Diocese (northern part of the South Island of NZ). Peter had finished his Bachelor of Theology at Moore College in 1997 and had

obtained an unpaid 'probationary' position (housing provided) as a youth worker. If things worked out he would be ordained in the Anglican Church of New Zealand. As things worked out, Peter was ordained as a deacon on February 16th 1999; later this year he will be ordained as a vicar.

Derek Eaton is the bishop of the only evangelical diocese in NZ, and describes himself as an 'evangelical with renewal overtones'. Bishop Derek is very keen to promote expository preaching in his diocese and to this end has ordained a number of like-minded clergy, of whom Peter Judge-Mears is one example.

There is a GREAT need for Bible teachers all over New Zealand and there are opportunities for ministry in this diocese (other dioceses are hostile to Bible teaching on the whole). Peter has been involved in Blenheim with preaching, establishing training for lay preachers, organising combined youth outreach events with other Anglican churches, men's breakfasts and running



Peter and Sybil Judge-Mears.

the youth group.

The Judge-Mears plan to teach the Bible in the Anglican Church in New Zealand for quite some time. They didn't go there to follow the All Blacks. They went to preach Jesus, and him crucified. The real winners in NZ can only be those who hear the gospel and respond in faith and obedience. Let us pray that God would send more workers out into the harvest. ●

Renée is married to Mark and is the mother of two active boys. They currently back the Wallabies but are praying for gospel work in New Zealand.

A Land in Need of New Churches

Ian Bayne

Christ's 'Great Commission' (Mth 28:19-20) urges us to make disciples from amongst the nations. This requires the initial work of evangelism, as well as teaching, so that believers mature and grow in the faith. If Christians are to be most effective in performing these two duties of service to the Lord then they should be part of a biblically functioning local church, for it is in this context that individual believers are trained and sent out to be witnesses to Jesus, and it is within this context that we grow and mature in the things of the Lord (Eph. 4:11-16). The big trouble in New Zealand is that in the majority of places, and particularly in the more rural areas, it is difficult to find a biblically functioning local church.

Generally speaking there are two types of churches in New Zealand. Firstly there is the 'post-liberal variety'. These are the churches which have survived the onslaught of over a century of rationalism (in outward form anyway).

But because of their previous exposure to the doctrines of liberalism, they have had the guts ripped out of them in many ways. Christians who are members of churches like this may be likened to someone trying to ride an almost dead dinosaur. While their personal intentions are good (for their desire surely is the for the work of the kingdom) they are continually frustrated by the lack of progress the gospel is making. It seems that no matter how hard they kick the dinosaur to urge it on, it doesn't have the power to make any real progress as all its energy is consumed with debating whether homosexuality is a sin or not, or whether women and men are equal.

The second type of churches which are much in evidence are what I would term the 'new generation of churches'. Mainly Charismatic in theology and fiercely independent, they are often led by strong individuals seeking to build an empire for Jesus. Their methodology of reaching the unsaved is to try to make

unbelievers feel as comfortable and good as they can. This they achieve by adapting specific styles of worship with an emphasis on contemporary music.

The trouble with this, of course, is not the music itself; it is that if we dress the gospel up so well, the risk is that people will trust the method rather than the person of Jesus for their salvation, whom the method is designed to convey. Some of these churches that do well at this seem to be prospering. But you are left wondering sometimes what would happen to them if their music was taken away. The object of our faith must be Jesus, and nothing else—music or otherwise.

The challenge which lies before Christianity today in NZ is to plant new churches that will conform again to a biblical model rather than a current cultural model. Both the above types of church fall into this current cultural model trap—the former because it slots nicely into the new relativism which pervades our society; the second

because it appeals to the emotionalism which is promoted through the secular media as being the main method of determining truth and error. Biblically functioning churches will return to God's Word in its exposition and in its patterns of life and ministry.

The challenge which lies before Christianity today in NZ is to plant new churches that will conform again to a biblical model.

Around the country there are a few churches who have committed themselves to work together in establishing such fellowships throughout New Zealand that will grow and equip believers to fulfil the Great Commission. It is our collective desire to have biblically functioning churches within easy driving distance of every person in the country. ●

American Anglicans Petition for International Assistance. An Opportunity for Sydney?

Peter Hayward

The following petition was dispatched in mid-January by the Association of Anglican Congregations on Mission (AACOM). Enclosed with the petition was an extensive file of supporting materials.



Peter Hayward is the minister of an Episcopal Church in USA.

"The Association of Anglican Congregations on Mission ("Petitioner") hereby respectfully petitions that the Primates' Meeting of the Anglican Communion, and its members in their individual capacities as Archbishops and/or Primates of the Church, take action to resolve a case of exceptional emergency in The Episcopal Church of the United States of America ("ECUSA").

"As will be more fully set forth below, the exceptional emergency consists of members of ECUSA being led astray from the true Gospel, and deterred from bringing people to Christ, by unorthodox ("revisionist") bishops and other leaders of ECUSA who have rejected the sovereign authority of Scripture. The revisionists have supplanted Scripture with human experience to fashion a new religion and code of moral standards that are irreconcilably contrary to historic, orthodox Anglican faith and practice. They are imposing their new religion and morals throughout ECUSA, all in violation of Resolutions I.10, II.8, III.1, III.5 and III.6 adopted by

the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops.

"The emergency cannot be resolved within ECUSA itself. The revisionists control ECUSA's national governing bodies and most of its major dioceses. They cannot be persuaded to change their teachings or be dislodged from their positions of power by the orthodox minority within ECUSA. The emergency can be resolved only by the Primates' Meeting, or its individual members, causing the reformation of ECUSA or the replacement of it with a continuing Episcopal Church as the province of the Anglican Communion in the United States.

"Petitioner prays that the Primates' Meeting take the actions asked of it by the 1998 Lambeth Resolution III.6, as well as any other actions necessary or appropriate to commence the reformation of ECUSA by, inter alia, causing:

- (1) ECUSA's revisionist bishops and other leaders to immediately cease violating 1998 Lambeth Resolutions I.10, II.8, III.1, III.5 and III.6; and

- (2) ECUSA's national legislative body, General Convention, at the meeting thereof to be held in July, 2000, to adopt such resolutions and canons and take such other action as will bring ECUSA into compliance with those Lambeth Resolutions.

Petitioner also prays that if ECUSA, its General Convention, and its bishops and other leaders do not heed the actions of the Primates' Meeting, but continue to violate Resolutions I.10, II.8, III.1, III.5 and III.6, the Primates' Meeting assist in the formation of a continuing Episcopal Church that submits to the sovereign authority of Scripture and is loyal to our Anglican tradition and formularies, and recognize it to replace ECUSA as the province of the Anglican Communion in the United States. Petitioner further prays that, if the Primates' Meeting fails to cause ECUSA to be so reformed or replaced, the individual Primates exercise their individual powers to that end."

Earlier in the year, two petitions were distributed to the approximately 800 Anglican Bishops throughout the world, demonstrating that a large number of dioceses of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA) are in direct violation of resolutions passed by the worldwide Anglican Communion at the 1998 Lambeth Conference. These two documents are endorsed by a broad coalition of Anglicans in the United States, including leaders of First Promise, Episcopalians United and the Episcopal Synod of America.

The resolutions of Lambeth have

galvanized the resolve of revisionists within ECUSA with the result that evangelical Anglicans in the United States are increasingly marginalized, harassed and openly attacked. The petitions have supporting documentation that marshals the evidence to show that ECUSA, though claiming to represent the Anglican Faith, is deeply divided and increasingly distorts true Anglicanism in its policies and practices, blatantly rejects Scriptural teaching and, since Lambeth, ignores or, more often, vigorously opposes the resolutions adopted there.

In Australia, Bishop Spong is the best known representative of this ten-

dency, but his views are shared by many other bishops within ECUSA, and the supporting documentation painstakingly exposes the extent of this fact. The reality is that ECUSA is increasingly characterized by unbiblical and historically un-Christian standards.

AACOM started as a loose fellowship of Anglican Congregations in the United States that were forced by circumstances to move towards independence, but has grown as congregations in dispute with ECUSA have joined. Now AACOM is asking the bishops of the Anglican Communion to put into action their own resolutions: that

orthodox congregations within ECUSA and other congregations outside ECUSA be given protection and care from revisionist dioceses.

Maybe it is time for Sydney to show some commitment to its convictions and provide some leadership in this situation. Or does non-compliance with resolutions passed by Anglican Bishops show that you can never be out of communion with the Anglican Communion? If Sydney is truly concerned about a strong biblical Anglicanism in a wider sphere, an opportunity would seem to be before it. ●

What Do We Want From a Bishop?

Barry Newman

Barry Newman is a retired lecturer in education and a member of Synod.



- not addicted to drink, not violent and not quarrelsome—not too much to ask;
- not fond of dishonest gain, not a lover of money—hopefully, rare;
- not arrogant—hmmm;
- hospitable—let's not overdo it;
- temperate, discrete, respectable, gentle, just, lover of good, pure and self-controlled—a tall order;
- held in good repute with non-Christians—in so far as possible;
- in summary: blameless!
(with apologies to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1)

Of course, a bishop can't achieve anything significant for God unless he is substantially such a person!

However, what is it he is supposed to do? Being an able teacher with a firm grasp of the trustworthy word of God, he will thereby feed, comfort, encourage the flock of God with sound teaching, refuting those who contradict it (Titus 1). Being alert to error and those who would mislead and dismem-

ber God's people, he will guard all the saints, warning them of and protecting them from false teachers (Acts 20). He must also keep watch over himself.

A bishop can't help the weak if he doesn't read and diligently study the Scriptures—that trustworthy teaching. He can't really encourage if he doesn't spend time in earnest, face to face conversation with others. He can't be concerned for the 'whole' flock if he doesn't seek to serve both clergy and laity. He can't exhort if he can't distinguish truth from error, because he himself is so befuddled. He can't rebuke if he doesn't proclaim the truth boldly both privately and publicly. He can't save us from the false teachers unless he teaches us well and challenges them plainly. He can't be involved in the building of the church if he doesn't preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep.

Woe to those who are false bishops, those who appear to serve the people of God but who use them for their own status, power and privilege, leading

them into profound error and teaching as the truth of God the precepts of men, whether they are the irrelevant and unhelpful outmoded practices of another age, or the latest fashionable ideas and the respectable religious mouthings of their age, culture and inclination. Great is their judgment (Ezekiel 34). God have mercy on and redirect those bishops who concentrate on the minuscule, the 'precepts of men', the affairs of church politics, and in so doing miss the more weightier matters of the gospel.

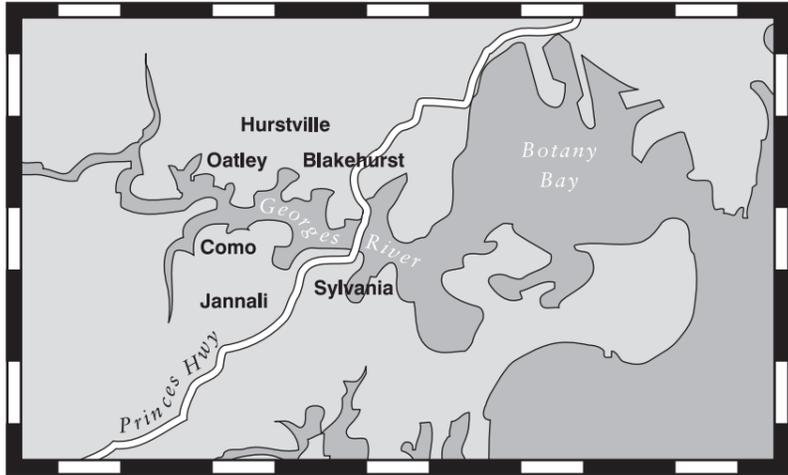
Finally, one doesn't have to be a bishop to be a 'bishop'. Those amongst us who have any pastoral oversight, whether of the clergy or the laity, are to be godly instructors in the faith and examples to all, and let each of us take great care that we in no way abandon or abuse God's sheep. A person who yearns for the business of a bishop desires a good work. ●

We are probably all familiar with what a bishop-elder-overser-guardian should be like, according to the New Testament.

- Husband of one wife—easy;
- able to manage his household with no unruly, debauched, or unbelieving children—not so easy;
- not a recent convert—no problem at all;

Regionalisation – one perspective

Chris Moroney



I can still remember back to the meetings of the Synod in the Chapter House. Just the thought makes me feel terribly old. One of the most significant debates and votes that ever took place was over the issue of a separate diocese. There were some parts of Sydney who thought it best to break away and form a new diocese. We had lots of meetings and extensive debates. When we finally came to take the vote, we were teetering on the brink of a new chapter in the history of the church.

As we all know the vote was lost, but it was only by a handful of votes. It could so easily have gone the other way. As a result of that decision by the Synod of that day we are still one rather large diocese, with all the benefits and drawbacks.

For the last three years we have embarked on the new adventure of Regionalisation. As it was in the beginning so it is now. There are still a range of points of view about the benefits of this new way of looking after the diocese. In my opinion the changes have

worked quite well. More and more responsibility and choice has been given to the Regional Councils. At the same time they have been given more money to allocate in line with their local knowledge of the parishes within their Region.

From my perspective on the Standing Committee, it has been very encouraging to see the way in which so many new members have enthusiastically launched themselves into the work. Regionalisation has certainly given this group an injection of fresh new blood, from many different areas.

It has been interesting for me to observe that we now very often hear that people from the different regions have a distinct or flavoured view on the issues we discuss. It was a concern of some that regionally electing people to Standing Committee would fragment the debate along geographical lines. This has not been the case. We tend to debate matters of principle in ways that will be relevant to God's people and God's work throughout the diocese.

Apart from the fresh influx of new members, what else is new?

With the development of the role of the Regional Councils, it is now more common to hear: What about Regional

Councils? Is this an issue for the Regional Councils? Should we ask the Regional Council for a report? Should this request for funding be passed on to the Regional Council? Should this allocation of funding be looked after by the Regional Council?

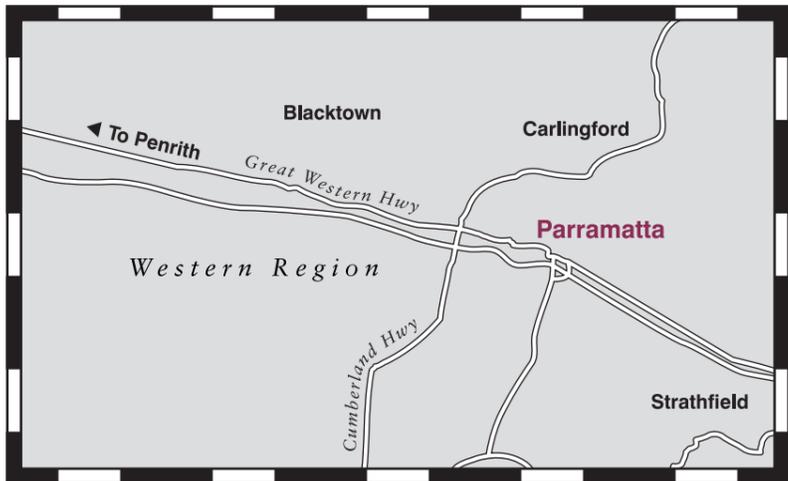
In my opinion the changes have worked quite well.

These questions are good questions, even if they are not always easy to answer. They show that the Standing Committee and the people of the Diocese are becoming used to the idea that we do have five regions which each have some distinctives amongst their many similarities. ●

Chris has represented the Georges River region on Standing Committee since 1993.

Western Regionalisation – Now But Not Yet

Stephen Semenchuk



In November 1996, after 27 years of practice, the Western Region was finally given the keys to the regional 'car'. Now after the first 3 years of 'radical regionalisation' I believe it is too early to judge whether such a move has been a success. Since 1969 a Western Area Committee (soon renamed the Parramatta Area Regional Council) has been meeting. Until regionalisation swept across the diocese, the Parramatta Area Regional Council operated with limited funds and very limited responsibilities.

The new regionalisation of 1996 increased the budget and invested significant ministry planning, review and support functions within the council. However the image of 'toothless tiger' has been difficult to shed. The council has not gained a ground swell of recognition or support amongst the regular parishioners of the region, if in fact

they understand its function or have ever heard of its existence.

The vision statement of the Western Region Council is to 'Support and Encourage Evangelism and Discipleship'. Particularly it aims to achieve this vision through the parishes. This emphasis pervades its guidelines for grant applications and the analyses of new ministry initiatives.

The council has worked hard to enhance ministry and not to be another cog in an institutionalised bureaucracy. The Parish Review and Support Committee endeavours to get alongside struggling parishes. Through consultation they aim to provide assistance which goes beyond financial injection. The Ministry Committee has formulated a strategic planning process for parishes and is seeking to promote lay leadership training. The concepts are exciting, but generating enthusiasm for the ideas amongst the clergy and in the

parishes is proving difficult. The Communications Committee has been producing a regional newspaper (now an insert in *Southern Cross*) for many years, to disseminate information and create a unified regional identity. We are still waiting to see a widespread regional character develop.

In reflecting on regionalisation in the West, a major achievement must be the relative ease of pioneering new projects and responding to opportunities for the gospel. The appointment and financial support of a chaplain to TAFE has seen evangelism and Bible ministry occur in a previously unreached yet significant segment of the Western Sydney community. Once the council embraced the project, it was straightforward and fairly immediate to allocate appropriate resources. The Regional Council has had the ability to provide timely support to new church plants such as Glenmore Park, and to cross-cultural work like the Chinese congregation at Auburn. The more localised decision-making has allowed for quicker response times and less administrative angst.

A further by-product of regionalisation is that a greater cross-section of people in our diocese have become involved in shaping the ministry of our diocese. We have uncovered many gifted and ministry-minded men and women who are making contributions in their regions and beyond.

The down side is that the Western Regional Council struggles with manpower resources to investigate and implement its many good ideas. Its members are often drawn from hectic

parish situations while the Regional office appears understaffed for an area that boasts a population larger than the Northern Territory, Canberra and Tasmania combined. If the Synod is serious about regionalisation more people resources need to be allocated to assist the councils in their work.

This raises significant unresolved tensions. Is it strategic to allocate scarce ministry resources into another level of diocesan organisation? The benefits of localised decision making need to be balanced against the cost of providing the infrastructure to make

We have uncovered many gifted and ministry-minded men and women.

these informed decisions.

I believe regionalisation in the West has achieved enough significant ministry outcomes to warrant the responsibility placed in it. Looking to the future, Regional Councils definitely have a greater propensity to encourage, discuss and develop local ministry initiatives than does a diocesan group like Synod or its Standing Committee. As the Sydney basin witnesses a continuing urban spread and sprawl, there are encouraging signs that the experiment is working. Yet significant challenges must be addressed for regionalisation to have a future. ●

Stephen Semenchuk has served on Standing Committee for three years.

Life Begins at...!

Allison Blake

Allison Blake



Birthdays. How does your family approach them? In the lead-up to their special day, our children spend weeks pouring over the birthday cake cookbook before putting in this year's order. For them, the ideal birthday celebration includes special food and special people, like friends and grandparents.

As we age, birthdays can become just another annual event on the calendar—like renewing my nurse's registration or paying the school service fee. However, there are still some special birthdays. This year I am approaching

a milestone birthday, and I find my thoughts, normally those of a busily occupied and forward-looking wife and mother, straying into reflective and nostalgic dreaming. Now, this doesn't particularly bother me. In fact, these reflections have been largely stimulated by studying Ephesians with a group of women in our church.

As I began to read the opening verses, I was taken aback by the cascading waterfall of spiritual blessings that are mine, in Christ. I don't deserve them. I'll never be worthy of them. Nevertheless, God has blessed me, and every Christian, with every spiritual blessing in Christ. He chose us to belong to him. He planned from the beginning to adopt us, buying us back from slavery to sin, richly and graciously forgiving us (1:3–8, 11–13). But our God, not one to be stingy, doesn't stop there—He shares with us his plans for his world and gives us his Spirit, as a guarantee that we have a place with him in heaven (1:9–10, 13–14).

In the midst of an emotionally and spiritually demanding year, and at this milestone stage of my life, the reminder of these blessings refreshed and re-invigorated me. I can't help but conclude that I've already received the ultimate in

birthday gifts. In fact, I started receiving them before I was born! And, not surprisingly, my Heavenly Father hasn't stopped giving to me since!

And that's not all! God bothers to tell plain, ordinary me (and you!) his plans—to bring all things in creation under Jesus' authority. Why does God share his awesome plans with us? Could it be that, having done his

I can't help but conclude that I've already received the ultimate in birthday gifts.

work of salvation in us, the Master Craftsman now wants us to get involved with him in his work, carrying out those good works He has already prepared for us (2:10)? It would seem He is inviting us to join him, as Paul did, in the momentous task of helping people of all ages hear the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation (1:13). There He goes again, blessing us

by inviting us to share his passion for his glory and the salvation of people.

In my experience, working with our Lord is sometimes exciting and satisfying, frequently a drain on my energies, inevitably time-consuming and sometimes painful. One day we will "rest from our labours" but now is the time for using our energies and time, talents and skills, to do the good works that God has prepared for those who have already been showered with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

As I approach this year's birthday, it's immensely exciting, encouraging and humbling to remember those 'pre-prepared' good works God has already appointed to me. So I thank God for the opportunities He's given me to share his gospel with women and children, to help them understand who God is, to encourage them to respond rightly to what Jesus has done for them, to help women confidently handle God's word and be comforted, challenged and convicted by it. What an honour it is to help people better understand the things of God! It's a thrill to stand alongside people as they read and study their Bibles and then struggle to put it into practice in their life. ●

What is the ACL?

For all new synodspeople, Robert Tong has written a *Survival Guide for Synod*. It is available from the ACL.

The Anglican Church League was formed around 1909 as an association of evangelical Anglican Christians wishing to promote Bible-based churches in Sydney and further afield. The ACL is proud to rank evangelical leaders such as T.C. Hammond and Broughton Knox among its former Presidents.

The ACL's "Policy Objectives" (adopted in 1997) reflect the League's 90 year-long commitment to "Defending gospel truth and supporting gospel growth":

"As an evangelical fellowship the Anglican Church League is committed to these policy objectives:

- To defend and advance the Protestant and Reformed principles of the Anglican Church based on Holy Scripture and as set out in the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty Nine Articles.
- To uphold and promote the local church as the fundamental sphere of Christian ministry, teaching and fellowship.
- To promote the ministry of lay men and women to strengthen the outreach of the gospel within the churches and the community.
- To support the training of godly, competent and biblically committed pastors and teachers to equip the churches to serve Christ through loving obedience to his Word.
- To uphold the supremacy of the Synod in the governing of the Diocese, subject to the Scriptures,

and to affirm the need for diocesan committees and organisations to be accountable to the Synod which established them.

- To reform the structures and practices of the Diocese to increase their effectiveness in assisting local church-based evangelism and ministry."

As an evangelical, Protestant and Reformed body, the ACL represents the mainstream of diocesan opinion. A majority of Sydney rectors are members, as are a growing number of lay people. The League has almost doubled in size during the 1990s.

Activities

- ACL publishes a newsletter several times a year as well as occasional Issues Papers.
- Because the evangelical nature of Sydney Diocese is influenced by the Synod and its committees, the ACL offers advice to Synod members on elections.
- The ACL Council has a policy of extensive consultation to find the best people to recommend for the many committees of the Diocese. As this year's important triennial elections approach, the ACL has held meetings of members across Sydney to facilitate the process of consultation.

The ACL seeks to serve Synod members by:

- Organising conferences for Synod members and others to help think through important matters affecting

church life. (In recent years, the topics have been *A Prayer Book for Australia*, encouraging women's ministry and lay administration at the Lord's Supper. This year's focus is on "Parishes without Property".) (9am to 1pm, Sept 4th, at Moore College)

- Running the Speak Up public speaking seminars for women. A conference in July was directed at better equipping evangelical women to speak in Synod.

- Publishing helpful literature. ACL Chairman Robert Tong wrote *A Survival Guide to Synod* in 1996. The ACL is making this invaluable guide to the mysteries of Synod available to new members of Synod.
- Organising an annual dinner for Synod members on the opening night of Synod.

Many of the ACL's resources are available on the ACL's website at www.acl.asn.au ●

Synod Election Agreement

Agreement has been reached between the Anglican Church League and what has become known as the Blue Ticket to co-operate on their recommendations for the coming Synod elections.

Over the last six years the two essentially evangelical groups have been contesting a number of positions on key Synod committees. At times this has led to significant tension and unnecessary expense and effort. A number of experienced figures were casualties in the situation and the work of many committees is said to have suffered.

Following discussions between the ACL and the Blue Ticket, it has been agreed that the ACL in its letter of recommendations to Synod members will include key Blue Ticket leaders. This has led the Blue Ticket deciding not to publish a separate letter.

President of the ACL, Canon Bruce Ballantine-Jones has welcomed this development as opening up the possibility of a new era of co-operation in the Diocese. "As we come to the beginning of a new century and the election of a new Archbishop it would be very good that the Standing Committee and the Synod generally could focus on the major issues relating to taking the gospel to the people who live in the Diocese. This development is a welcome step in that direction", he said.

Mr Warwick Olson, speaking on behalf of the Blue Ticket, said, "Those of us in the Blue Ticket Group have wanted over the last 6 years for the Standing Committee in particular to reflect a broad range of evangelicals in a way that represents the Diocese as a whole. We think this agreement brings this about on this occasion and we are glad for the co-operation."

The Rhetoric of Pain

Peter Bolt

The object of the game used to be that you argued towards the Truth. The rules of the game dictated that you argued using good logic, provided good justification for your arguments, and avoided logical fallacies, as well as such low tactics as arguing *ad hominem*, that is, against the person rather than the person's argument.

In the postmodern world, the game has changed. There is no 'big T' Truth out there to be discovered, merely our own personal truths. So what is the object of our game now? To preserve the person and their integrity, unscathed.

The tongue has the power of life and of death; words are well able to cause others pain.

So, what rules now govern the 'argument'? One major rule is concerned with the minimisation of pain. This rhetorical strategy consists in pointing out that your opponent's position has caused you

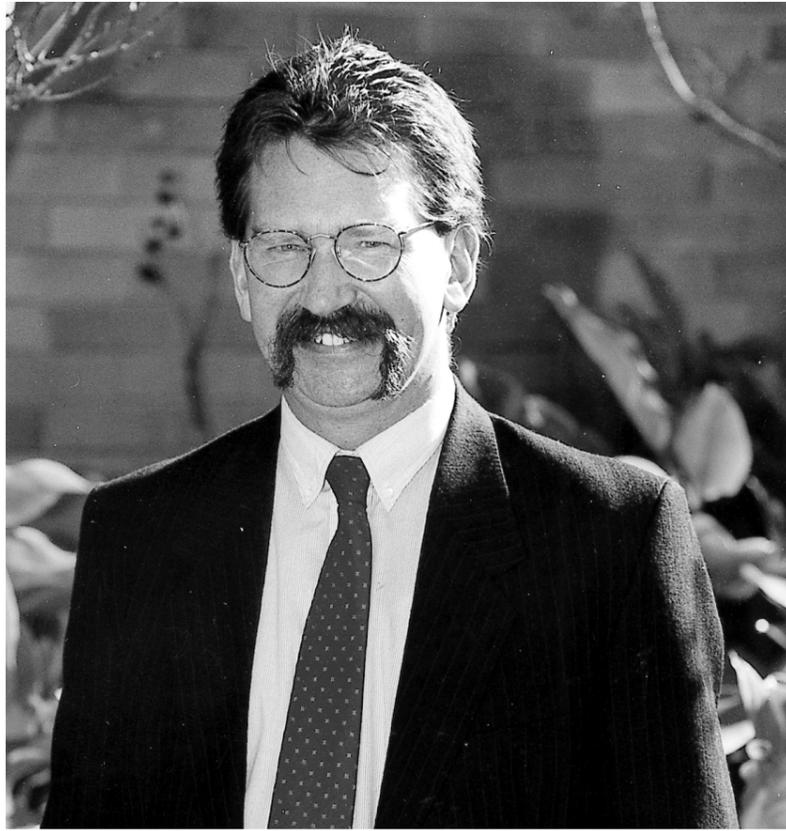
and your friends a great deal of pain.

Thus the old *ad hominem* argument is alive and well, although it now exists with a strange new twist. By accusing your opponent of causing great pain, on the surface it appears to be an accusation that he/she has fallen for the old attack on the person rather than the argument. But, in actual fact, the one wielding this rhetorical strategy is seriously attacking their opponent, for, by accusing them of causing pain, you have charged them with inhumanity. Your opponent has proved to be no respecter of persons; in short, they are a monster.

But painful words of opposition are not always wrong.

There is no doubt that our world is full of pain. There is no doubt that the tongue has the power of life and of death; words are well able to cause others pain. The 'rhetoric of pain' is certainly a reminder of the need to 'speak in love'—but it is still the Truth that must be spoken.

Much, if not all, of the pain of the world is ultimately due to sin. Sinners are in pain. Not only that, wilful sin only breeds more pain. And, as sinners get to work on other sinners, this results in even more pain. All this pain



Peter Bolt

ought to be avoided and minimised.

But there is an even greater pain worth avoiding, for it is still a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

And this means that there is a pain that is still worth causing. There is the sorrow that leads to repentance. The pain of a person under conviction of

sin is worthwhile, for it is this pain that may lead to their salvation. In this context, rather than a timely rebuke being an attack on another person's integrity, it is one of the greatest acts of love to risk the pain that is involved in such rebukes, in order to 'snatch them from the flames'. ●

A new Fellowship for the Laity

'Laity for Biblical Leadership' is a newly established fellowship of lay people who want to encourage biblical patterns of ministry in our diocese.

Andrew Mitchell, a spokesman for the group, said "We want to see relationships between men and women in our homes and churches that reflect the teaching of Scripture. The principle of male headship is something we cannot ignore. The persistent push to have women ordained to the priesthood has encouraged the promotion of novel and ingenious ways of reading the Bible that avoid the plain meaning of the text. This has had the effect of eroding some people's confidence in the Scriptures. We want to encourage lay people, in particular, to study the Scriptures that impinge on the issue and to have confidence in them. We also hope to promote a considered biblical and prayerful response by the lay members of Synod as such issues are debated in the years to come."

If you would like information about the group contact Andrew Mitchell on 9809-7248 or email: <Andrewid@msn.com.au>

Bring Back Reformation Rallies!

Through our increasingly Americanised society many Christian families are faced with the tensions created by celebrations of Halloween in our schools and community generally. Witchcraft and the occult are domesticated in a way which conceals the very serious dangers the Scriptures speak about. It is a celebration, complete with children's activities, ancient stories to tell, and activities for families to share. Are Christian families simply helpless in the face of this media and commercial onslaught at the end of October each year? Is there really nothing we can do?

Perhaps there is something that can be done. In the past, a feature of the evangelical character of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney was the annual Reformation Rally held around the date on which Martin Luther is supposed to have nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg. It was an opportunity for the churches of the diocese to gather and celebrate the rich heritage that is ours, given by the grace of God through the courage and personal sacrifice of men like Luther, Calvin, Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer.

Why couldn't the Diocese of Sydney reinstitute these rallies, complete with the celebratory atmosphere that often only appears in our nation's secular festivals and 'holy days'? Couldn't we ensure that another generation of men and women hear of the sacrifices made

so that we might hear again with clarity the wonderful truth of the gospel? Why don't we celebrate the great reformation doctrines, remember the great reformation events, rejoice in the great reformation victories? Couldn't we show movies, feast together, and produce our own commercial counters to the witches hats and brooms and pumpkin shells? Why not banners and posters and the thrill of being part of long and precious Christian tradition?

The stories of these men, their successes and failures, and the great truths they rediscovered are our stories.

So often we are told that in our post-modern world the best means of communication, and the best means of generating a sense of community, is to tell our stories. The stories of these men, their successes and failures, and the great truths they rediscovered are our stories. We could even revive the great slogans of Bible alone, Christ alone, Faith alone.

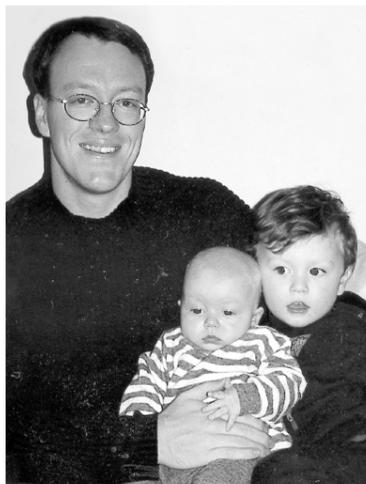
Best of all, such a celebration would provide another exciting way of simply proclaiming the gospel to each other and our children. Here is something worthwhile that our diocese could bequeath to the next generation of Sydney Anglicans. ●

All those motions: can the internet help?

Greg Clarke



"If you are in favour of the motion to move the entire Synod into cyberspace, press return now"



Greg Clarke is currently undertaking a PhD in English literature.

The invention of the microphone must have revolutionised the Synod. Before it, surely those with deeper, more resonant, more preacherly voices always had an unfair advantage. Nowadays, the meek and mild get a say too. This is a good thing but it has done little to achieve a voice for all in the arena of church decision-making. The sheer number of motions listed for debate in today's Synods makes a mockery of the right for each member to speak. Time and space make it impossible for all to get a turn at the mic.

The fast-growing new technology of the internet may be a way to address

this problem. Here people can interact with others through typing into their computers from wherever that computer happens to be, and at any time of day or night. People trade shares while sitting in their kitchens. They search the great libraries of the world from their desks. They gaze upon brilliant works of art while in their pyjamas. (Actually, most of the time they are simply downloading games.)

They could just as easily be voting on motions before the Synod.

The Anglican church already has quite decent websites (the word for a collection of files which someone has put together and which can be accessed through the internet). Much diocesan information is already available in this way. It would only require some technical boffins to set up the right kind of environment so that Synod members could all log on and debate motions that couldn't be dealt with in the days set aside for actual face-to-face discussion. A period of time could be allocated for debate (say two weeks), during which Synod members could look up all of the opinions, arguments and counter-arguments of other members, before a vote is taken.

It's the face-to-face bit that raises the most interesting problems. Having Synod on the net would radically alter the nature of the event. The internet, like death, is a great leveller. The people with whom you are having computer dialogue don't have faces, can't use their persuasive voices, and have surrendered the power of timing. They may be brilliant preachers or mutes—in cyberspace no one can hear you scream, they can only read about it. In short, they have to be able to express themselves in writing. Some may con-

sider this an aid to coming to biblical, fair and sane judgements; others would feel that it de-humanizes the process.

However, this problem may be short-lived, as technology makes it increasingly viable to download voices and video images. Home computers are already powerful enough to have Synod members' speeches piping through your computer speakers. You could even add the background music of your choice.

The real question is the one of fellowship. There's a lot to be said for sitting in the same row of seats as people you are disagreeing with. It helps you to remember your common bond in Christ. You can see that kind of thing in people's faces; it's harder to detect it in their typed words. That's why email has its own set of symbols to convey emotions (such as :-)) to indicate that a criticism is intended in a friendly manner). I can imagine people's sinful partisanship being heightened by the personal distancing of the internet. Then again, the hothouse environment of Synod can skew people's reactions and make them do and say things that they regret—and would never type on to a computer screen. The fellowship question cuts both ways: might the internet enhance genuine Christian love for a brother?

My ruminations have developed into a proposal for a new way of doing Synod. See what you think of this.

At Synod, no debating or voting takes place. Instead, motions are simply put and commended by the mover in a short speech. Members can take notes, but no discussion is entered into. Everyone gets to have a say, and everyone gets to listen, face-to-face. After the allotted days have passed peacefully (if a little lacking in dramatic

conflict!), the Synod moves on to the internet where all the mover's speeches are reproduced. For a specified period (say two weeks), people can type responses, amendments and objections

The internet, like death, is a great leveller.

and debate the matter on the net. They simply log on whenever they have the time and the whole discussion is there waiting for them. At the end of the period, all Synod members vote and every motion is dealt with.

Some might complain that this means Synod actually takes longer. Not so, since the machinations and consultations of pre-Synod weeks are no longer necessary. Those discussions can take place after motions have been put, since the pressure of a vote has been removed. What's more, in the weeks following Synod, members need only log on a few times to check out the debate and contribute. Just to list a few other positives: consider the reductions in the cost of printed materials, administration (since all voting is by computer it ought to be simpler to deal with) and media misrepresentation (the media are the real losers in all of this!). We just couldn't promise to provide every Synod member with a laptop and internet account!

Sure, there would be creases to iron out, and a difficult settling-in period, but the opportunity to carry on debate without having physically to assemble the Synod means that the entire agenda could be dealt with. Perhaps someone could set up a committee to look into it. Better still, set up a website. ●

Re-Bigging God

David Höhne



David Höhne serves on the pastoral team at St Clement's, Jannali.

A cafe somewhere. Two urbane bohemians sip lattes and discuss the broader issues of life. One of them is busily engaged with his lap-top on an article for a prominent evangelical broadsheet.

BEN: Haven't you finished that article yet? What's the problem?

BILL: I'm trying to write about the greatness and mystery of God.

BEN: Sounds like a lot for a short article.

BILL: I know, but I was reading an interview with George Lucas' in TIME magazine, and he was going on about the need to get people to think about the mystery of God. It's got me thinking that we often ignore the bigness of God.

BEN: So an all-powerful and impersonal Force is the answer? Star Wars is not a true story you know.

BILL: Thanks for the tip. I know Lucas' approach is not the solution and so does he, but at least he wants people to con-

sider something bigger than themselves. Far too many Christians I know have so rationalised God that he fits on the back of a Cornflakes packet. There's no majesty or even mystery at all.

BEN: Ah, is this a call for vaulted ceilings and incense?

BILL: Well would you prefer the stadium experience with marching bands, flashing lights and video screens? Both extremes illustrate the point. Regardless of what kind of gathering we attend we are always thinking about ourselves. Why is God the last person invited to church? Why is there no bigness left? Everything is so mundane to the point of being profane.

BEN: But isn't the 'mystery' of God revealed in Christ, as Paul says, "Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, etc. etc." Calvin wrote that God,

in his great mercy, accommodated himself to us by becoming flesh. Otherwise we would be consumed by his holiness.

BILL: Yes, but this God-revealed-in-Christ is still Yahweh, the train of whose robe filled the temple; the one who made the heavens and the earth! The gospel shows the majestic mystery of the God who is three persons in one. Why have evangelicals become so blasé about this? Why do we treat the most significantly peculiar aspect of the Christian faith as an embarrassing add-on for the interested?

BEN: Probably because it is peculiar. Have you ever tried explaining to someone how God can exist in three persons and there still be only one God? It not exactly seeker service stuff is it? Then there's all those ridiculous metaphors about water, uncles and what have you, all of which is heresy.

BILL: Have you ever thought of using the gospel then? Peter writes to God's elect, "who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ

and sprinkling by his blood." Here are all three persons at work at once as the One God reconciles sinners to himself.

BEN: So what you're saying is that we should be more Trinitarian in our Christianity. It sounds mysterious, but how will that make things any different?

BILL: It actually makes a great deal of difference to how we speak about God, how he relates to us and who we are before him. For example, for church to be more than cultural idolatry, we must see it as a trinitarian event. God the Father speaks to his people through his Word that is empowered by his Spirit (2 Tim 3:16). They respond in the Spirit of sonship that comes through Christ when they pray to their Abba, Father (Rom 8:15-17).

BEN: Perhaps you should put some of that in your article.

(BEN's mobile rings)

BEN: It's the editor after your article, what should I tell him?

BILL: Tell him it's in the mail.

BEN: He says, so is your cheque. ●