July 2011

Southern CROSS

Connecting Sydney Anglicans for 50 years!

Breaking the spell

Has Harry Potter led people astray?

› What's really happening in China

› Reaching Gen Y for Jesus

Look inside!

A magazine for women

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Cover

As the world bids farewell to the Harry Potter franchise, we consider whether it really has lured readers into the occult.

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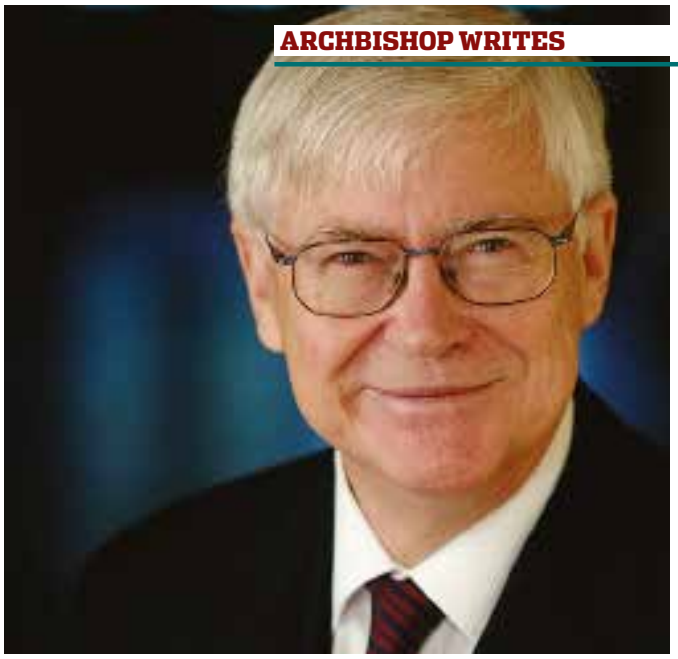

Why do I believe in God?

Dr Peter Jensen

I WAS asked recently about the reasons for belief and, even more to the point, why I believe in God. I'm sure there are more but here are 10 of the factors which have created my belief in God.

First, the fact that he believes in me. That is, I have not found God at the end of a stringent enquiry into the nature of the universe. He found me, wandering as I was, and he revealed himself to me. It was his revelation, not my interrogation.

Second, the fact that his revelation was a public one. That is, it is not my private possession. When God revealed himself it was like the sun shining. As Jesus said, "I am the light of the world". Looking for God without looking at Jesus is like playing football without a ball — like seeing without insight.

> **Looking for God without looking at Jesus is like playing football without a ball — like seeing without insight.**

Third, the fact that his revelation was a personal one. I do not believe in God because I have a superior intellect or am a better person. It is because God illumined my understanding by his Spirit as I looked at the person and work of Jesus Christ. God has to be God in the way in which I come to know him.

Fourth, I found that his revelation makes sense of the Bible. Overall, the Bible contains God's preparation for Jesus and then his fulfilment in Jesus. His preparation was more than sufficient to create a God-believing people. The God they believed in was a God who made and then kept his promises; made promises and kept promises of an extraordinary nature. The most extraordinary, God-like keeping of promises is in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Fifth, I see that the worship of Jesus is a reality in the world. Everywhere there are people who treat him as God and seek to obey him. From that point of view it is no use asking is there a God — clearly there is. His kingdom is in the world. The actual question is, what sort of God? Is he a God whom I should worship?

Sixth, I judge that the worship of God makes best sense of the world. The standard human belief that there are many gods makes no sense of the unity of the world. The recently popular belief that there is no God makes no sense of the morality and beauty of the world. The belief that there is one remote God who cannot enter his own world makes no sense of the love in the world. The belief that Jesus Christ bore the burden of the sins of the world makes best sense, especially of a world of pain and suffering.

Seventh, I judge that believing in this God makes the best sense of history. I do not believe that history is circular, infinitely repeating itself. I do not believe that history is meaningless. I do not believe that history has ceased. I do not believe that history will have no end. Believing in the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ explains the nature of the human experience of living in time and enables us to have the hope which gives meaning.

Eighth, I judge that belief in God makes best sense of what I see in the community. The will of God expressed in the law of God is a tremendous positive force for good. The will of God followed by men and women is wholesome and life-giving. It creates generosity and public virtue. It frees people from such crippling vices as gambling and substance abuse.

Ninth, because I know that belief in God makes the best sense of what I experience in my own life. I learned long ago that I am a weak and faulty creature, prone to error and vulnerable to pain. God and belief in God spare me some things because his law guards me against things which are harmful. I am not spared from the ordinary conditions of life in a world such as this. But I have found that in the midst of the trials of the world, the love of God is manifested in ways which assure and reassure.

Tenth, because I know God. The way we have asked the question skews it a little. Our belief is intellectual but it is not merely intellectual; it is personal. To quote the old proverb, God is not a problem to be solved but a person to be known. **SC**

Mission Prayer

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

Deliberate planning is vital to ensure churches grow and adapt to their changing communities.

CHURCH STRATEGIES

Planning for the future

Andrew Buerger

LAST month *Southern Cross* celebrated its 50th birthday. This celebration gave us an opportunity to look back over the past 50 years of ministry in the Sydney Diocese. One of the observations made was that the cultural make-up of our city has changed dramatically. In 1961, churches were welcoming English migrants into their congregations. In 2011, churches must be welcoming to a vast array of people and cultures.

The Connecto9 campaign was a way for Sydney churches to start thinking deliberately about reaching their local communities. It forced churches to consider how best to meet and share the gospel with the people around them.

As our communities become more and more multicultural, our churches need to grow and change to continue to be relevant to the people they are seeking to reach.

David O'Mara is the senior minister at Sadleir Anglican Church in Sydney's south-west. He is well aware that the area his church is in has changed a great deal over the past 20 years.

"This area is very multicultural," he said. "Particularly there are a lot of Muslims and Buddhists around us."

The problem that Mr O'Mara sees is that the churches in the area have not changed with the community.

"A lot of churches in this region are very Anglo-Saxon," he said. "We need to change our profile to reach other cultures."

In order to grow into a church which will one day more accurately represent the people of the area, Sadleir is in the process of putting together a strategic plan for the next few years.

"We want to grow a viable multicultural Anglican community by 2015," Mr O'Mara said.

The strategic plan sets down how the church seeks to grow, and this includes a new congregation that has recently been planted in nearby Green Valley.

"We are trying to make this service more accessible to non-native English speakers," Mr O'Mara said. "We offer services in simple English… We also run an ESL Bible study."

One of the key aspects of the Sadleir strategic plan is the way the church hopes to grow its partnership with Anglicare.

"We need to make genuine connections," Mr O'Mara said. "Anglicare has a wealth of skills in ministering to the community. They also have a vast number of community contacts."

Another Sydney church that has embraced a strategic plan is St Andrew's, Roseville. Its 2020 vision is: 'We pray to be a community of Jesus Christ offering a centre of community for Roseville and beyond'.

"[A strategy] helps a church be deliberate about its plan for the future," said senior minister the Rev Dr John Dickson. "It helps us move from just having a theological and theoretical understanding of what church is."

One of the key goals in Roseville's strategic plan is, like Sadleir, to have a greater involvement and connection with the community around them.

"I think that we have lost our heritage of helping others," Dr Dickson said. "Community service is a big part of our plan… We want to have a much greater practical involvement in the wider community. One of the models that we are trying to follow is the Redeemer Presbyterian Church [Tim Keller's church in New York]."

The people at St Andrew's hope that the church's vision to be more community aware might encourage other churches to follow, and eventually lead to all churches in the Diocese being much more active in their local area.

"We do think that there are some elements missing [in some Sydney Anglican churches]," Dr Dickson said. "We want to model something that has the best of evangelical tradition but that makes some changes."

One of the first steps for St Andrew's as it works towards its 2020 vision is to undertake a site redevelopment, which will allow the church to realise its vision to be a centre for community.

Dr Dickson believes that strategic plans such as the ones at Roseville and Sadleir help churches to grow and move into the future along with the communities that surround them.

"Every church has a plan for its future, whether it is written down or not," he said. "A strategic plan encourages you to ask questions like: 'What makes the healthiest type of church?' and 'How do we set a new direction?'."

JESUS ON BILLBOARDS

A super-sized conversation

MOST people will be aware of the 'battling billboards' that appeared in Sydney last month.

The conversation started when Muslim group MyPeace put up a number of billboards across the city with slogans such as 'Jesus: A prophet of Islam'. These signs received huge publicity and prompted the Bishop of South Sydney, Robert Forsyth, to respond in the media.

"[It's] complete nonsense," he told *The Sydney Morning Herald*. "Jesus was not the prophet of a religion that came into being 600 years later."

A group named Aussie Christians decided the billboards needed a response and so erected their reply on the M4 (pictured).

"If we don't say anything, the Islamic community will think we have nothing to say," said Aussie Christians' spokesman, the Rev Ian Powell. "We are being responsive – there's a great tradition of that in the New Testament. We need to talk about these important issues and get a dialogue going."

The billboard encourages Aussie Muslims to talk about Jesus and, according to Mr Powell, there have been more than 4000 responses on the group's website.

"A lot of them have been inflammatory," he said. "[But] there are some people who want to have a conversation."

According to Mr Powell, the MyPeace billboards are part of a longer advertising campaign. "We raised about $25,000 for the website and the first billboard," he said. "We hope to be able to continue the conversation."

As the two groups continue to respond to each other, Mr Powell acknowledges the importance of not being too provocative.

"In the future people won't remember what we've said but they will remember the tone we used," he said.

Aussie Christians hopes to stage a public debate to discuss the issues raised on the billboards.

NEW ANGLICAN SCHOOL

College begins construction in south-west

New growth: SASC principal Ross Whelan (left), with the Mayor of Camden, Chris Patterson, Deputy Mayor Lara Symkowiak, and the children of South Creek minister, Jono Squire: Rachel Squire 10, Daniel Squire, 7, and Mathew Squire, 9.

ANDREW BUERGER

A tree-planting ceremony was held last month to mark the start of construction of a new Anglican school in Sydney's south-west.

Oran Park Anglican College is the first of five schools to be built by various education providers in Oran Park Town. It is set to open to students in January 2011. The school is being constructed next to the Oran Park Town Centre.

The college will be a staged development and it is envisaged that Stage 1 will cater for students from prep to Year 4. As it grows it will eventually expand to include students up to Year 12. By the time the school is completed, it will cater for more than 900 students in state-of-the-art facilities.

Oran Park Anglican College will be the newest school of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation (SASC), which currently runs 16 schools throughout Sydney, offering a Christian education to more than 10,000 students.

"This is an exciting time for the corporation as we work to provide Anglican education in Oran Park," said SASC chairman Mr Tony Willis.

"The school will be part of an Anglican precinct which will include Chesalon and a church complex. This is a great opportunity to have a co-ordinated ministry from the cradle to mature age in one location."

Oran Park Town is a new development in Sydney's south-western suburbs, located about 20 minutes north of Camden. When completed it will be home to up to 35,000 people, with the population of the greater south-west projected to grow by about 300,000 over the next 30 years.

Enrolments for Oran Park Anglican College are already open. The school expects to attract students from the rapidly growing area around it, including Harrington Park, Harrington Grove and Gregory Hills.

ST GEORGE EVANGELISM COLLABORATION

Mission events will reach 4000

IN October this year, Anglican churches in part of the Georges River region will join with other Protestant churches to host the biggest evangelistic series of events the region has seen.

The St George Mission will see up to 50 churches from the area come together to share the gospel with the communities of the Georges River region.

The Rev Matt Yeo, rector of Hurstville Grove and mission area leader for Hurstville-Kogarah, is part of the organising committee and believes that collaborations like this are vital for gospel growth.

"This endeavour is all about gospel partnership," he said. "Partnering has given us the confidence to try something large that no one church would have done on its own."

Four events will be held over two weekends at the end of October at the Hurstville Entertainment Centre, which holds 1000 people.

The first event, on October 21, will be specifically for youth with a talk from Dave Miers. The following three events will feature addresses from John Dickson.

The theme of the events is 'Jesus and Life'. The three talks given by John Dickson will encourage people to consider Jesus' place in 'the good life', 'the painful life' and 'the afterlife'.

To promote the events, each church involved will be responsible for advertising in its own community.

Mr Yeo believes that while the events will be a great opportunity for local churches to share the gospel, the weeks and months leading up to the events will also prove advantageous.

"We also hope, by each church having banners out the front of church, by having ads in the local paper, we can make a lot of noise in the community and put local church back on the radar," he said. "There will be benefits for all churches involved on that level."

Mr Yeo hopes these relationships will continue long after the October events.

"This will deepen already existing good relationships and I hope partnership in the future will become more common."

AWARDS LIST

Anderson leads Anglicans honoured

FORMER Deputy Prime Minister and National Party leader John Anderson leads a list of Anglicans and other Christians in NSW who received awards in 2011 Queen's birthday honours list.

Mr Anderson, who attends Tambar Springs Anglican Church in the New England area, was made an officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for service during a distinguished political career and his contribution to rural Australia. ABC boss Mark Scott, whose wife Briony was until recently principal of the Anglican school Roseville College, also was given an AO for distinguished service to media and communications and to the community through advisory and governance roles with a range of social justice and educational bodies.

Those awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) include David Barnsdall of Killara, for service to the community through the Hamlin Fistula Australia organisation. Mr Barnsdall has been honorary chairman of Hamlin Fistula Australia since 2009 but has had formal links with the organisation for more than a decade. He is also a member of Anglicare's investment committee and has served on various diocesan boards, with prisons ministry and Scripture Union.

Mrs Cheryl Webster of Lane Cove was given an OAM for service to the community through the provision of assistance to refugees from Africa. Mrs Webster has been a community development worker and African refugee advocate with Anglicare since 1985, working with all refugees but particularly refugees from African countries. Apart from involvement in St Andrew's, Lane Cove, and St Thomas', North Sydney, Mrs Webster has served on the Scripture Union Missions committee, on beach missions and with the Girls' Friendly Society for 30 years.

Lady Suzanne Martin was awarded an OAM for service to youth through the Sir David Martin Foundation. Professor Peter Wolnizer of Cherrybrook was given an OAM for service to higher education in business and economics as an academic and administrator. He was also member of the Moore College council from 2000-2004.

DIOCESAN REFORM

Synod briefings announced

Archbishop Jensen in conference with members of the commission: (from left) Bishop Glenn Davies, Dr Jensen, Mr Robert Freeman and Dr Laurie Scandrett.

STANDING Committee is due to consider the report of the Archbishop's Strategic Commission on Structure, Funding and Governance at the end of July, less than one month after it was handed to Dr Jensen.

The committee had been given the task of recommending steps to maximise funding for the Endowment of the See, 'consistent with prudent management'. The Archbishop also asked the group, chaired by Peter Kell, to examine the operations and governance of major bodies such as the Glebe Administration Board, Sydney Diocesan Secretariat, St Andrew's House Corporation and Anglican Church Property Trust. Assisting in the task were property consultant Robert Freeman, tax expert Tony Clemens and businessman Simon Pillar.

In early June, Mr Kell and the commission briefed the Archbishop on its main conclusions and once the full report is considered by Dr Jensen, it will go to the Standing Committee. It is anticipated that some recommendations could come before Synod this year. Pre-Synod briefings on the report and Diocesan budget issues will be held in September.

Synod representatives will be notified of the two briefing sessions, one of which will be held in Sydney city and the other at Campbelltown for Illawarra and outer suburban delegates.

ONGOING LEADERSHIP

Cox to continue in Georges River region

ARCHDEACON Ian Cox (right) will stay in his position as 'acting bishop' in Georges River until a ministry review in 2013.

In a letter to local churches Archbishop Peter Jensen said, "I have been thinking and praying constantly about the future and number of our regions in the light of our financial situation. I firmly believe that we should have at least five regions and that Georges River should be one of them."

Dr Jensen said the financial situation is still unclear, although funding has been committed for the five regions until December 2013. There has been no bishop in Georges River since the retirement of Peter Tasker in 2009.

Dr Jensen said it would be unfair to appoint a new bishop whose tenure may be uncertain but at the same time, he was glad for the leadership exercised by Archdeacon Cox. "He has my full confidence and in this capacity he meets with the bishops and shares their ministry."

Bishop Tasker and other retired bishops will continue to be available for confirmations and ordinations in the region.

SUPER, SUPER! WHERE ART THOU?

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Support Gambling?

You may not play poker machines, but do you invest in the companies that profit from them?

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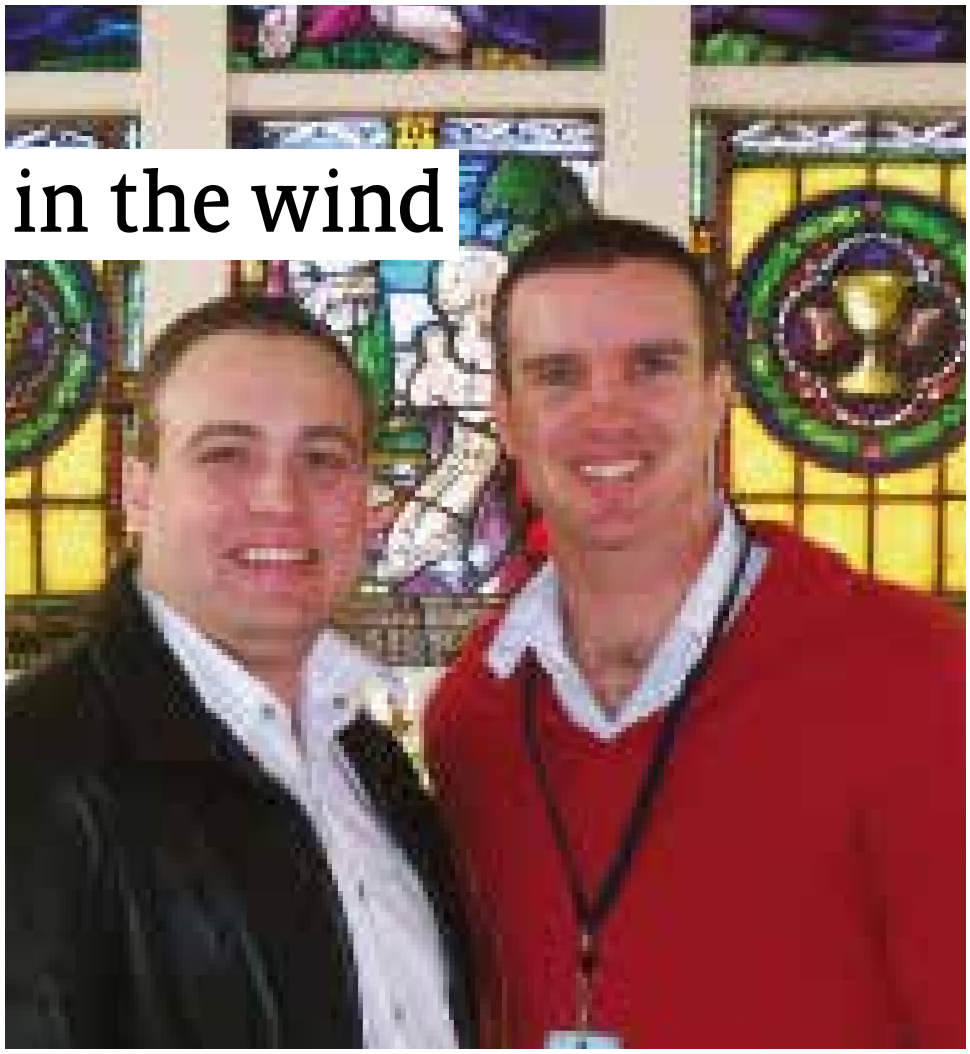
Anglican National Super

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

His answer was blowin' in the wind



New life: Glenn Halloran (left) at church with Ed Loane.

JUDY ADAMSON

GOD meant nothing to Glenn Halloran. A self-professed atheist, he had been baptised in an Anglican Church as a baby but hadn't had a thing to do with God since. Even when he was given a New Testament on his graduation from the police academy, he couldn't give it his attention.

"I read a few pages and thought, 'This doesn't do anything for me'," he recalls. "I put it away and never thought much about it again."

Fast forward six years and Glenn, now a working police officer, still had no interest in God but he was now thinking deeply about big issues such as the purpose of life and why he was here. As he contemplated these, he also began to ask what he calls "questions to the sky" in the hope that if something or someone was there, this would become clear to him.

"From that point on I had an intense yearning to read about God, to find out about who God is, and who believers were saying God is," he says. "So I started to read up on God and different faiths."

Glenn bought a Koran, read about Islam and even fasted for part of Ramadan. And although the Muslim idea that Jesus was a prophet rather than the Son of God made sense to him at the time, he still wasn't content. "I was thinking Islam was probably the truth but I started reading up on Christianity as well," he says.

Then, on October 27 last year, Glenn found himself spending the greater part of his shift at the Lakemba mosque and a local church. So, given that he was in places of worship he took the opportunity to pray. "I said, 'God, I know you're there – I want to devote my life to you, I want to know the truth'," he recalls.

To his amazement, two days later when he got home from work his father pulled a folded page of the Bible from his wallet, saying that on the Wednesday — the day Glenn had prayed — it had blown into the front garden. Knowing his son was reading up on all things religious, his dad had kept it to give to him.

The page contained the parable of the sower from Mark's gospel. Glenn says reading it "just blew me away".

"For that to be a coincidence, if I were a betting man the odds were pretty high against it happening that the day you ask for a bit of guidance a page of the Bible blows into your front yard," he says. "God worked within that to get his message to me. Before then I couldn't read the Bible but after that it just resonated in my soul and now I can't get enough of it."

Not long after, as he read and pondered the sacrifice of Christ, the Old Testament and sin offerings required under the law, Glenn realised that the death of Jesus was for the forgiveness of his sins.

He contacted the church where he had been baptised — St Thomas's, Moorebank — and came to a service, where he was stunned by the welcome he received from people he'd never met. The former rector, Steve Young, put him in touch with assistant minister Ed Loane, who has spent an hour with Glenn most Fridays since then taking a "talk walk".

"It's never long enough," Glenn says with a laugh. "I really give thanks for his guidance and support — he's been fantastic."

Now, Glenn attends the parish's branch church in Hammondville and spends every spare minute poring over the Scriptures. "Over the past six months I've studied and studied and studied," he says. "If I come across something that doesn't make sense I'll study it until I come to an answer!

"I'll keep reading the word of the Lord and just hope to use my story and my experience to tell the good message to others… because God doesn't always use the person you would expect. I can also talk to atheists knowing how they think and their rationale, so that gives me an extra tool.

"I've had some really uncanny opportunities to spread the gospel — things that happen when people come up to me and I don't instigate it but suddenly we're talking about Christ."

MISSION IDEA OF THE MONTH: SOUP SUNDAYS

Winter warmers at Roseville East

HERE'S a good thing for churches to think about when the weather's cold: one Sunday each year at Roseville East parish is nominated as "Hot Soup Sunday", where as many people as possible are encouraged to either be hosts or guests of a simple soup meal after church.

"Nothing deepens the quality of relationships in a church as much as eating together," says rector Michael Kellahan. "Meals are how you welcome newcomers, care for the lonely and get past the post church coffee conversations. We eat with family and friends, and with people we value.

"People in Roseville and Castle Cove long for authentic deep relationships like this. At the same time many are apathetic about church. There are countless people who say they believe some form of the Christian faith without feeling any need to belong to a church. We challenge that from the pulpit and in conversations, of course. But eating together also speaks against apathy. By practising hospitality and sharing in each other's lives, church is not just another event in a busy weekend but a community where you belong and enjoy life."

Mr Kellahan says that for some people opening up their homes as an expression of their faith is natural and easy – they love inviting people in and do it on a weekly basis. For others, hospitality is difficult – even scary. But this was why Hot Soup Sunday worked so well.

"It's simple," he says. "Soup isn't intimidating to prepare but good cooks can still razzle dazzle. It doesn't take hours to make. It won't break the budget. Everyone loves soup… Now in our third year, we are swapping recipes with people who've hosted before."

He says the involvement has been "great" each year, adding that "somehow the number cooking has matched the number eating. My hope is that having organised meals like this helps us eat together more often. Time will tell."

Seeking true gospel growth

It's one thing to have a growing church but there's a lot more to mission areas than this, writes IVAN LEE.

IT is exciting to be part of a growing church and somewhat discouraging if numbers are barely holding steady. But neither scenario tells us nearly enough about true gospel growth, which is what mission areas are all about.

It may be that the growing church is contacting unbelievers and connecting them to Jesus Christ but it may be that all of its new members are believers on the move from other churches (for both good and bad reasons). The church with little growth may be inwardly focused and not mission-minded, or it may have sent its best into Bible college and the mission field, or it may be in an area where people move out as soon as they get their lives in order. So, one church's loss is another's gain (transfers).

However, mission areas step back and ask if there has been overall growth and souls being added to the kingdom. Or to put it another way, are we reaching a greater percentage of the Sydney Diocese?

The role of the senior minister is critical and so, in the past year since mission area leaders have been appointed, the priority has been building partnership and trust between rectors. This was always going to be a huge challenge because of many factors, including our system of parish rights (a very good thing but it can lead to isolationism), Western individualism and the normal human tendency towards competition.

Although these are still early days, I am extremely encouraged to see a real sense of partnership emerging. Ministers are sharing resources, ideas and strategies. They are looking together at their mission field of 10 to 20 suburbs, identifying opportunities and doing something about them.

In one area, several churches are working together to provide Scripture teaching in a school that had none. In another, the Scripture co-ordinators meet together to share materials. Churches are working together to reach youth. Training for lay people is happening across parishes in pastoral care, theology and life skills. Churches are co-operating to plant a new congregation.

This and more is happening and it requires a level of trust and a commitment to kingdom growth from all of us, even if our own church may not benefit directly or immediately.

Research and planning is also a major task of mission areas. This happens at the local mission area level and customised strategies are the outcome. In addition there is Diocese-wide research by Anglicare and consultants, and we are identifying priority areas that need attention and developing diagnostic tools and ways forward.

Our small groups and the quality of our common life need refreshment. Although many of us think our churches are welcoming, we manage to hold very few of the hundreds and thousands that visit us. We need to find ways to truly include and integrate people into our fellowship (members of churches in one mission area are busy visiting one another in the form of "mystery worshippers").

Research shows that past youth and children's ministry has been a key factor in the strength of our Diocese, yet these ministries are now very weak in the majority of our churches. Cross-cultural and ethnic ministries remain real challenges.

These reality checks should not serve to discourage us but help us identify priorities which, God willing, will result in greater gospel growth as we become much more intentional and focused, learn to work together and become more prayerful and passionate for the lost.

Ivan Lee is Bishop of Western Sydney and Mission Areas. See events (p25) for more mission area news.

CANADIAN APPEAL DENIED

Congregations evicted

FOUR churches in Vancouver have been forced to vacate their buildings because they realigned with another Anglican province. They are St John's, Shaughnessy, St

Matthew's, Abbotsford, St Matthias & St Luke's and the Church of the Good Shepherd. St John's was the largest Anglican Church in Canada and is led by Rev David Short (pictured), originally from Sydney.

The parishes had asked the Supreme Court of Canada to overturn a lower court decision to award their church properties to the local Diocese of New Westminister. In 2008 the churches voted to affiliate with the Anglican Network in Canada because of the liberal theology of the Diocese and the bishop's support for same-sex blessings. They sought the episcopal authority of the Primate of the Southern Cone in South America and joined the newly established Anglican Church of North America (ACNA). In mid-June, the Supreme Court refused to overturn the earlier ruling.

Cheryl Chang, a former trustee of St John's, Shaughnessy and special counsel to the Anglican Network in Canada, said, "Obviously this decision is extremely disappointing and should be of great concern to all Christian denominations. While these congregations have remained steadfast in their faith, and have not changed the traditional teaching of the Christian church, they have now been called to sacrifice all their assets, including their church properties, for the sake of their faith".

Mr Short said the decision marks the end of the legal process. "We are still God's family, and he has placed us in Vancouver to spread his glory," he said. "We are in an uncomfortable place and the words of Romans 12 encourage us to "rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer".

LEADERSHIP CHANGE

New BCA boss announced

THE Bush Church Aid Society will welcome the Venerable Dr Mark Short as its new national director in September this year.

Dr Short (pictured) is currently serving as rector at St Paul's Anglican Church, Turvey Park in Wagga Wagga. He studied theology at Moore College before being ordained in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Dr Short will replace the Rev Canon Brian Roberts, who served in the position for 18 years.

Dr Short and his wife Monica are excited to be a part of the work that BCA does in reaching regional and rural communities. "For a long time we have been passionate about proclaiming the gospel in rural areas," he says. "There are wonderful opportunities for ministry in Australia. Under God we want to support and encourage ministry and see people come to Christ."

He acknowledges that BCA faces many challenges: "Fly-in, fly-out workers in mining communities is a big one… It's not always easy to make connections

with these people and make Christ known to them. I hope that in the future our ministries in these communities as well as other parts of rural and regional Australia will grow."

COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

Adam resigns from Ridley

CANON Dr Peter Adam will resign as principal of Ridley Melbourne in January 2012.

"I thank God for the great privilege of serving as principal of Ridley over the past 10 years," he said. "It has been a great pleasure to work with faculty, staff, students, supporters and the board to grow and develop this vital and strategic ministry. I pray that God will provide for Ridley and continue his rich blessing on the training of men and women for gospel ministry throughout the world."

The Ridley board acknowledged the great asset Dr Adam had been to the college. Chairwoman Claire Rogers said that "while tirelessly teaching, preaching, mentoring and writing for a decade of students, he has also been instrumental in helping Ridley achieve financial stability, a skilful leadership team, strategic focus and an academic faculty of great strength." She also noted that Dr Adam had "exercised significant biblical and theological leadership across Australia and

internationally".

Ridley's director of theological education and formation, the Rev Dr Tim Foster, will serve as acting principal while the board undertakes an international search for a new principal.

Prayer call as violence threatens South Sudan

Border clashes are threatening to overshadow the birth of an independent South Sudan and have raised fears of another humanitarian emergency like the Darfur crisis from the past decade.

The worst violence has occurred along the oil-rich border between the north and south. Most of Sudan's oil deposits are in the south, although the pipelines and refineries are in the north. An agreement on oil production is still pending.

The northern government has ordered air strikes against targets in South Kordofan that have caused significant suffering among the civilian population. The new Anglican cathedral in Kadugli has been damaged by fire and nearby villages have been shelled. Already more than 50,000 people have fled the fighting in South Kordofan and the neighbouring Abyei region.

Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul of the Episcopal Church of Sudan has accused the northern forces of ethnic cleansing through "a deliberate strategy to rid Kadugli of its indigenous African and Christian population… the calculated damage to our church buildings and the threats to, and arrest and torture of, pastors and known Christians because of their faith are indisputable".

Archbishop Deng has appealed to worldwide members of the Anglican Communion, as well as Christians of other denominations, to "intercede on our behalf to Almighty God so that the people of Southern Kordofan and Abyei may be delivered from this trauma and distress".

SOUTH AFRICA

Anglican leader honoured

BISHOP Frank Retief, one of the most significant figures in the Church of England in South Africa (CESA), has been awarded an honorary theology doctorate by South Africa's North-West University.

Bishop Retief, who has recently retired as presiding bishop of CESA, was honoured for "exceptional and unselfish service in the ecclesiastical educational, societal and cultural spheres" and for his role in peace and reconciliation in South Africa following the St James' Massacre. Bishop Retief was senior minister at St James' Church Kenilworth in Cape Town when gunmen killed 11 people and injured more than 50 in an attack during a Sunday service in 1993. The citation also noted his work in basic education in poor communities and his role in building the partnership between North-West University and George Whitefield College, the theological college of CESA.

At the same ceremony in Potchefstroom, a PhD was awarded to a member of George Whitefield College, the Rev Ben Shikwati Keya. He is the first to receive his doctorate for work done entirely within the college's Evangelical Research Fellowship. Dr Shikwati paid tribute to the quality of the college library, which has long been supported by many in the Sydney Diocese.

North-West University was created by the amalgamation of three apartheid-era universities and the theology faculty has a strong Reformed Christian character.

Taking the gospel to a new nation

The Rev Peter Deng and Ajang Biar by the Nile River in Juba, South Sudan.

As the mainly Christian region of South Sudan prepares to become a nation in its own right it is struggling with poverty and a lack of theological training for pastors, writes TOM HENDERSON-BROOKS.

I'M sitting under a mango tree on the bank of the Nile in South Sudan in the company of Ajang Biar from St Philip's, Caringbah and the Rev Peter Deng, Dean of Trinity Cathedral in the region's Diocese of Tuuic East. I'm about to order chicken wings with chips — after yesterday's experiment with goat's intestines. On a nearby roundabout near the centre of the capital Juba, a red digital clock counts down the days, hours, minutes and seconds until July 9, when the world will welcome Africa's newest nation: the Republic of South Sudan.

Today we've spent time with various government officials and have ended by praying with the Secretary General of South Sudan.

The people here were known even in Isaiah's time (see Is.18). In 1906, the first British missionaries entered the 'Sudd' and the first convert was John é Thor in 1916. Much prayer and evangelistic effort followed and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ gave birth to a new pilgrim church.

It is often said that the church in Africa is miles wide but only inches deep. There is no shortage of evangelists but well-trained pastors are thin on the ground. The first theological college in South Sudan was built in 1947 and called Bishop Gwynne College. However, after the British handed independence over to Sudan in 1956, there were increasing tensions between the Arabic-Muslim north and the African-Christian south. Missionaries were expelled in 1963. Gwynne College was destroyed in 1965. South Sudan has had precious little respite from war since then.

Our Diocese is blessed with well-trained clergy and laity. Almost any Christian in our churches has more resources on their bookshelf than any pastor in Sudan. We believe the greatest gift we could give our brethren in this new nation would be their own resourced Bible college, which could train their pastors and people in God's word.

Many parts of South Sudan are very poor. In Bishop Ezekiel Diing's Diocese of Tuuic East, there are no rural schools, health clinics or church buildings. Mortality from childbirth is very high. Ninety per cent of the pastors have had no training before their ordination.

South Sudan's capital, Juba — like many cities in Africa — is a Third World city where rural poverty meets the wealthy West. Four-wheel drives abound alongside thatched mud houses and wandering goats. Yet the city is changing and growing fast. In the space of a few years hotels have sprung up everywhere. Shanty-town homes of sticks and corrugated iron are making way for concrete businesses and homes. I buy a new SIM card for less than $2. A few similarly priced recharge cards and I'm calling home from my mobile at a price that puts Telstra to shame.

Yet as we go from meeting to meeting, I find something very familiar in Juba. I'm discovering I share dual citizenship with many that I meet, from businessmen to senior politicians. We are not only citizens of a heavenly kingdom; we are also Australian citizens.

Many of the 32,000 Sudanese refugees that Australia received in the past are back in South Sudan, helping to launch their new nation.

They've been equipped with our Australian training and education, they've received hospitality and welcome from Australian people, they've had their eyes opened to the possibilities for their new country and now they are holding the door open for those who will take the gospel of Jesus to Isaiah's "tall and smooth-skinned people, a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers".

It is our hope and prayer that many individuals and parishes will join us in partnering with the Episcopal Church of Sudan to equip, strengthen and train the Southern Sudanese people with the word of God.

Tom Henderson-Brooks is senior minister at St Philip's, South Turramurra. He met Ajang Biar, one of the first Sudanese refugees to arrive in Australia, in 1997. Mr Biar, along with other Sudanese Australians, was invited to give input to the 'Constitution Committee' of the new nation.

Letters

On marriage

THE response of the Sydney media to Archbishop Jensen's column on marriage in June *SC* reflects a concerted campaign for same-gender marriage that began during the last Federal election.

Somehow supporters of heterosexual marriage seem to have fallen silent in the face of this well-orchestrated campaign. One writer to the *Herald* suggested the Archbishop's slippery slope theory didn't hold up.

I, on the other hand, found Peter Jensen's argument logical, especially in the face of the church's past dealing with adultery and divorce. We feel for those who are hurt in relationships and in marriage break-ups and, recognising that this is a consequence of sin, the church has come to allow the remarriage of divorced people. In so doing, we have ignored Jesus' teaching that divorce was only given because of our hardness of heart (Mark 10:5) and normalised divorce to the point where the definition of marriage as a lifelong union of a man and a woman no longer holds true.

Does this mean that we should abandon the truth of marriage being between a male and a female? 'By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?' (Romans 6:2).

Philip Cooney
Wentworth Falls

I wish to thank the *Southern Cross* and Archbishop Jensen for the brilliant and clearly put article on marriage. I personally feel it is the best article I have ever read from Dr Jensen and I hope that placing this article in the mainstream media will have woken Australians up to the agendas some have to water down marriage.

I would also like to hear Dr Jensen's views on the carbon tax, as it seems a financial impost on families for no genuine gain when volcanoes can emit 10 years' carbon savings in a day.

Warwick Medway
via email

Poetry in the psalms

I read with interest the article by Dr Shead on the psalms ("Sing to the Lord a new song") in the June issue.

As one who appreciates good poetry I, too, enjoy the slower pace and the need to ponder deeply on the meaning. The distilled language of poetry encapsulates the rich meaning and the rhythm and music of the words make it more memorable. The more we repeat the words the more we love the content.

It is no accident that the Scriptures were rendered in poetry — the better to memorise them before books were available.

I would welcome the inclusion of the psalms in our services.

June Harrison
Thornleigh

I remember it well

PHILLIP Jensen's article on Bible memorisation (*SC*, May) made me think of my childhood.

At Sunday school I learnt a weekly memory verse, and, as a Presbyterian, an answer, or part of an answer, to a question in the Shorter Catechism. During church services I learnt biblical theology set to music and verse in the form of hymns.

Did I understand the old English of the King James Version of the Bible? I caught the general idea and the poetic language made the verses easy to learn. Did I understand the Shorter Catechism? I didn't have a clue what the questions were talking about.

Did I understand the hymns? I understood the weekly children's hymn but I didn't understand many of the other hymns. However, the melodies were simple and the tunes rhythmical so I soon knew them off by heart.

It wasn't all theory. Children's addresses in church were illustrated with stories of unselfishness, with people performing acts of kindness with honesty and integrity. My father took me with him to visit frail, elderly people who could no longer make it to church. My mother cared for a constant stream of visitors who had no money for food, or were ill, had emotional problems or were lonely.

Was it all a waste of time? Definitely not! I thank God for my childhood learning.

Was I bribed? Yes, to a degree. There were weekly stickers for memory verses, and also for church attendance, with prizes awarded at the end of the year. However, like school and homework, Sunday school and memory verses weren't optional extras.

My grandfather, an evangelist, used to say, "If you start singing a hymn, God is speaking to you — go look it up". Bible verses and hymns constantly come to my mind when I am pondering weighty problems and praying. I haven't read the KJV Bible since I was 20 but relevant Bible verses come to my mind in KJV English. When I start singing hymns to myself I find they understand my problems and provide biblical consolation and encouragement.

Rewa Bate
Tea Gardens

Today's Australian Version?

I agree with Dr Peter Carroll (*SC*, May) that Bible translations should be in accessible language. Referring for the moment to the New Testament, translations must also be faithful to the original documents and try to keep what they can of the original flavour, including figures of speech. It is a fact that the style, vocabulary and complexity of the text differ markedly among the different inspired authors and we have to very careful not to "dumb down" the language instead of lifting people up to it.

The "language" spoken by ordinary Australians does not exist as such. There is here, as in the ancient Greek world, a wide variety of complexity and flexibility in the spoken and written tongue of Australians. John wrote fairly "simple" Greek and Luke wrote in a more complex literary style, often moving from Koine to Classical Greek. Even if it were possible I can't imagine the authors sitting down to produce a New Living New Testament in Today's Greek.

David Morrison
Springwood

Mystery liturgy

THANK you for the two relevant articles "Service, Schmervice" and "Build or Bust" (*SC*, April). Sad to say they will fall on deaf ears with the current batch of clergy who apparently have never seen the liturgy used effectively. Consequently they don't have a clue... so they don't use it!

Sue Turnbull
Cremorne Point

Letters should be less than 200 words

Email: **newspaper@anglicanmedia.com.au**

Editorial

IT'S a common thing to hear parents or grandparents say, with reference to youth and children, that things were different when they were young. They believe the music was better, the discipline stricter, the books worth reading and the technology easier to understand. And families did more together.

To that, of course, we could add that there were fewer blended families, mum usually didn't have a paid job and stayed home to run the house, and you didn't live in constant anxiety that your children/grandchildren could be exposed to porn or cruising pedophiles with the click of a button.

Youth of the 21st century have a lot to live up to, and a lot to deal with. It's easy for those from different generations to misunderstand or treat them with derision. Can we remember what it was like to be their age? If we can't, we should try. And can we really understand what it's like to be young in such a super-fast era — with such high expectations placed upon you?

Work to find a window into the lives and hearts of younger people. Go to the latest Harry Potter with your kids or grandkids (if they'll let you); read books such as *The 5 Love Languages of Teenagers* by Gary Chapman and have your eyes opened to the possibilities, as well as the pits you can fall into. You can also consider how to love and engage with Gen Y and teens by having a look at our reader's essay below and Jenni Stoddart's story on page 27.

A social researcher told a recent conference for Sydney Anglicans that generational difference was the biggest cause of conflict in the office. I hope that will not be the case in our families or churches.

Reader's essay of the month

Generation Y for Jesus

The latest clothes, the hottest gadget, the newest film — word is out on the networking sites, so waiting for them is out of the question. TIM HAWKINS asks how we can get Gen Y to be just as excited about the gospel.

WHO are these "Gen Y" people anyway? How come they are different? How can we engage them for the cause of Christ?

Gen Y describes people born from about 1980 to the mid-1990s — in other words, people aged from about 16 to 31. They are different from the generations before them (Gen X and the Baby Boomers) in that they were born into far more prosperous times, have had a plethora of digital gadgets available to them from an early age and generally come from family backgrounds where they are more likely to have been indulged, rather than ignored. The word that describes their world is "instant" and their motto for life is "lifestyle matters more then everything else".

Many leaders and employers have dismissed Gen Y as lazy, uncommitted, disloyal and incapable of planning. Many church leaders have found their tried and trusted methods have failed to engage this emerging generation. And yet many of us who have worked with them for the past 15 years find them to be a beautiful generation who are capable of achieving magnificent things!

Here are three things that Gen Ys *will* respond to:

1. INSTANT RESULTS

We might have learnt that patience is a virtue but patience is a learnt behaviour. Babies are not born as patient people! We learn patience by having to wait.

Gen Ys have grown up in a world where they have never had to wait for anything. Instant photos, instant downloads, instant messaging, instant purchases… this has led to two key questions for Gen Y:

Why should I wait?

Why should I plan?

The world is changing so rapidly. Gen Ys have no idea where they'll be in five years' time. So why plan when things change so fast? Most Gen Ys don't even know where they'll be this weekend! In addition, 80 per cent of jobs that will be available in 2020 don't exist yet because the technology has not yet been invented. How do you plan for that?

We can engage Gen Y by:

- Setting short-term goals. Many of our goals are way too long-term!
- Most Gen Ys expect to achieve things quickly. We need to structure things to help them see some immediate results.
- God's kingdom is essentially a long-term deal. As we teach this truth, we also need to show its immediate and tangible benefits.

2. AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Gen Ys won't believe you or trust you because of your position in the hierarchy. It's your relationship that matters! For Gen Ys, respect is not automatic. It has to be earned — and is always reciprocal.

The older generations are often very loyal to institutions — many will stay with the same bank, the same employer and the same church denomination for life. Gen Ys are incredibly loyal but not to organisations — they are intensely loyal to people.

If you want to engage Gen Ys with authentic relationships, then go with the things they love:

Social connectedness They need to know that they belong — and that they matter.

Working in teams They are far less individualistic than the preceding generations. They are very collaborative and co-operative. We need to adjust our learning environments to reflect this.

Fun environments Is your church — or your ministry — a fun place to learn and grow?

3. A CAUSE TO COMMIT TO

How do you motivate Gen Ys to give passionate and wholehearted support to their work or ministry? Simple: they are passionate about having a cause to commit to. Volunteerism amongst Gen Ys is now the highest it has been since "The Builders" generation (those now aged 65 plus).

Gen Ys have grown up with recycling, fair trade and multiculturalism — they are the least racist and most accepting of any generation. If you give them a cause that they can commit to, you will have a willing worker who will sacrifice everything for that cause.

The kingdom of God is the greatest cause ever — a cause worth living and dying for. So don't just put Gen Ys on a roster. Sit down with them and enlist their support for the greatest cause ever.

I keep finding Gen Ys to be a beautiful generation. They have huge potential and hearts of gold. They have much to teach the older generations about life and relationships. The challenge for us is: are we ready to sit down with them — and listen?

Tim Hawkins has been a full-time youth pastor in local churches for more than 33 years. He is currently youth pastor emeritus at St Paul's, Castle Hill.

READERS'ESSAYS

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

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

Voldemort and lightning
(very, very frightening)

Harry Potter has been weaving his magic for 14 years — amid much hand-wringing and pronouncements of spiritual doom in some Christian circles. With the release this month of the final film in the series, SCOTT MONK considers whether these worries have been justified.

WHEN his cows gave bad milk, his dairy suffered mishaps and even his dairymaid fell ill, young Thomas Charlesworth was convinced his farm was bewitched. To lift the curse, he employed one James Tunnicliff — "the champion of society against the dealings of the Devil".

Upon arrival at the British farm, witch doctor Tunnicliff pronounced that not only were 27 cows hexed but so were two horses, the dairymaid, Mr Charlesworth, his wife and the cheese-kettle. He charged three shillings and sixpence to cure each cow, and five shillings apiece for the others. The wife, only partially bewitched, was cured for a bargain by only "taking one bit out of her dress".

However, soon the Stafford County farm's 50 sheep, 12 stirks, 11 calves and 12 pigs also found themselves bewitched — again curable, for a price. To protect them, the witch doctor spent 10 months living out of the Charlesworths' pockets until February 1857, when Mr Charlesworth realised he'd been fooled. Tunnicliff was tried before a courtroom containing a "considerable number of witches", reported *The Times*, and sentenced to 12 months' hard labour.

Nineteenth-century readers' contempt for the story of the bewitched dairy farm was no different to ours today. Fears about black cats, upside-down horseshoes and flying broomsticks went out of fashion with the rise of science — or the invention of the vacuum cleaner, at least.

So why is it that each time witchcraft seems happily dunked underwater once and for all, it eventually floats back into the public mindset?

Today's most famous incarnation is, of course, the contentious Harry Potter. Fourteen years after the boy wizard was discovered under the stairs at 4 Privet Drive, the global literary and cinematic phenomenon bids farewell this month with the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*. During this time, young Potter has earned a bankful of Gringotts gold for his author, J.K. Rowling, with more than 400 million books sold and $US5.56 billion at the worldwide box office.

For Harry's detractors, the long overdue goodbye to Platform 9¾ cannot come quickly enough. In the decade to 2009, the series of books was collectively the most banned and challenged in the US, according to the American Library Association.

While fears that the Harry Potter books would seduce children into the occult haven't eventuated, the debate has had a far-reaching impact across the Christian community. It's exposed tensions about censorship in faith-based schools, parental control over class texts, the rise of supernaturalism in popular culture and the misleading views of the spirit world by some charismatic churches.

Ground-breaking Australian research to be released later this year has found that the number one issue troubling Christian schools is the occult.

"The surprising finding for me is the level

Despite whatever crazy, scary thing is happening overhead, Ron takes a moment to think deeply about his life after Potter.

of worry that Christian schools have about the occult in school texts or the level of complaints that they attract in the Christian schooling movement — much more than sex or violence," says researcher David Hastie.

Bearing the brunt of those complaints are the Harry Potter books, which are "right across the research", Mr Hastie says.

"There's a narrative around Harry Potter that it's bad, that it's been banned from libraries and there are text sets sitting in textbook rooms that aren't allowed to be used."

Mr Hastie, an English teacher with St Paul's Grammar School in Penrith and a 15-year veteran of the Christian school classroom, is researching a PhD on the faith effects of Christian schools on education. He is specifically focusing on the study of English, conducting 50 in-depth interviews and surveying 250 teachers from Protestant and independent Christian schools across Australia, in all socio-economic groups.

"Many people have a firm view of the occult and they are worried about it being depicted in Christian schools in any way," he says.

"In my own experience in Christian schools as a teacher and a head of English, there was a strong sense of the potential risk to students through spiritual forces. There was this idea that fiction would act as some sort of conduit between dark spiritual forces and innocent children.

"There's this idea of purity and danger, and the literature being the portal that would allow the danger to infect the purity."

This point is voiced by several Christian authors, such as US journalist Richard Abanes in his book *Harry Potter and the Bible: The Menace Behind the Magick*. Abanes is highly critical of the series, saying occult imagery pervades the storylines. This is despite Rowling in July 2000 telling Associated Press that: "I am truly bemused that anyone who has read the books could think that I am a proponent of the occult in any serious way. I don't believe in witchcraft, in the sense that they're talking about, at all."

In his own writings, Abanes' objections to the Potter books include:

- fears that they disassociate magic from supernatural evil, instead of being one and the same;
- the belief there is not enough separation between reality and fantasy, leading to the possibility children will become enthralled and seek out paganism or dabble in the occult;
- concerns J.K. Rowling has "pulled a great deal of material from actual occult legends, beliefs and history" that still play significant roles in modern paganism and witchcraft;
- character names having links to pagan gods, heretics and astrology (such as Minerva McGonagall, Nicholas Flamel and the centaurs Bane and Firenze);
- unbiblical spiritual involvement in fortune-telling, possession and "familiars"/demons (ie Peter Pettigrew the rat shape-shifter);
- that Rowling whether she "realises it or not, is promoting witchcraft/occultism/wicca in the form of ethical and moral subjectivism";
- concerns that heroic characters get drunk, swear, seek revenge, lack remorse and discover hormones;
- how the forces of good use one set of sinful behaviours to defeat another set of sinful behaviours;
- increasingly dark storylines as the series progresses.

Abanes exonerates Christian literary giants J.R.R. Tolkien (*The Lord of the Rings*) and C.S. Lewis (*The Narnia Chronicles*), whose books also use magic. He says these have no links to any modern-day religion, while the world of Harry Potter has a direct link to paganism and witchcraft. Of course, he does overlook scenes such as one in *The Fellowship of the Ring* where the elven Lady Galadriel uses a mirror for scrying — or divination.

He is concerned that the Potter books, while categorised as children's fantasy, fit "very well into the current atmosphere of 'spirituality' where occult-related ideas and values not only are accepted, but also often are viewed far more positively than Christian-based beliefs and concepts of morality". To prove his point he lists programs from the past two decades such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Charmed* and *The X-Files* — to which can now be added *Medium*, *The Ghost Whisperer*, *Merlin* and a slew of vampire TV series, not to mention Stephanie Meyer's Twilight novels.

"There's this idea of purity and danger, and the literature being the portal that would allow the danger to infect the purity."

David Hastie

Many young — and indeed adult — Christian fans may be left a little uneasy by such claims. So should they be worried, considering that witches are also found in *Macbeth*, *Hansel and Gretel* and Roald Dahl's *The Witches*? Are they in danger of running down to a Miss Shop to buy robes or planting whomping willows in their front yards to keep away the Jehovah's Witnesses?

"To read about witches doesn't mean you're going to become a witch," Mr Hastie says. "I haven't seen my students being engaged in the occult as a result of reading [Potter]. We don't have a widespread occult problem in our schools. I haven't been aware of any extra demonic possession in our schools, or people forming witchcraft clubs or getting into wicca."

The head of New Testament at Moore College, Dr Peter Bolt, knows the subject of supernaturalism well, having authored *Living with the Underworld*. He understands the weight of the argument by Harry Potter's detractors and says one of the ways into the occult is usually through gentle means. However, he has never met anyone who has done so via the books.

"I also believe fantasy is good for human life," Dr Bolt says.

"We tell each other stories, we imagine and we dream, and within our fantasies and fairy stories we draw upon elements of reality and tell new stories about them. It's one of the delightful parts of life. Because the world does have a supernatural aspect, and I know that from my Scriptures, then a good fantasy should draw upon all the elements of the world."

He says Christians should be wiser and more gospel-centred when talking about the occult because some Pentecostal churches are falling into the trap of dualism — equating the power of the devil with God's and giving expanded roles to Satan and demons that are "unbiblical, wrong, misleading and damaging". Instead of sins such as lust and lying being acts of humanity, they've been imparted to humans by supernatural spirits of lust and lying.

"They are no longer sins of the flesh but demons that are troubling them," Dr Bolt says. "It rouses more fear. I've talked to people who are struggling with depression. They're told they've got a 'demon' of depression. Not only are they trying to cope with their depression but some demon that's clung to their soul — and that's a scary thing.

"The whole ministry, in a sense, raises fear in Christian people. The gospel is something that's supposed to cast out fear, so right from the beginning that ministry doesn't sound particularly Christian."

Fear has always been the wellspring of

Harry confronts the 'dark side' Skywalker style — on a narrow suspended footbridge.

PHOTO: Daniel Ogren

Rowling on faith

The hate towards J.K. Rowling (below) and the scrutiny of her religious beliefs comes second only to the hatred for Salman Rushdie. The condemnation of witchcraft in the Bible has some Christians believing they have the right to condemn her.

In 2000, when *The Vancouver Sun* asked if she was a Christian, Rowling replied: "Yes I am. Which seems to offend the religious right far worse than if I said I thought there was no God."

Seven years later she told the Dutch newspaper, *The Volkskrant*, that when she was growing up she went to church alone from the age of 13 or 14 because her family wasn't particularly religious. Her faith drifted during university when she got more "annoyed with the smugness of religious people" but she now attends a Protestant church in Edinburgh, Scotland.

So yes, she says, "I believe. And yes, I go to the church."

The question then is: what does she believe?

When asked by the same newspaper if she thought death was the end of everything, Rowling replied: "No. I lead an intensely spiritual life and even though I don't have a terribly clear and structured idea about it, I do believe that after you die some part of you stays alive some way or other. I believe in something as the indestructible soul."

It's the lack of God in the Potterverse that rankles plenty of Christians.

"I did not set out to convert anyone to Christianity," she told *Time* magazine in 2007. "I wasn't trying to do what C.S. Lewis did. It is perfectly possible to live a very moral life without a belief in God and I think it's perfectly possible to live a life peppered with ill-doing and believe in God."

magic, he says. In ancient times, metal curse tablets were thrown in graves with instructions for the dead person's spirit to be their instrument of vengeance.

"Magic usually arises when someone feels powerless — like a rival lover who's got all the good qualities and the other has none, or an opposing business is going well," Dr Bolt says. "It's used by people normally in the underclass — the people not in positions of power. The governments of the ancient world used to pass laws against them because they were afraid the magic might actually work."

Yet he explains that the Bible's condemnation of witchcraft is far more than just a warning against such practices.

"What it says instead is that there are all these kinds of practises that your pagan neighbours are operating with and you know them very well. You shouldn't have anything to do with them because you've got a God who's spoken to you.

"Revelation is the answer, rather than finding answers in divination, necromancy, witchcraft, astrology and the other things the Scriptures forbid."

Astrology (horoscopes), divination (tarot cards, dice, tea leaves) and necromancy (TV medium John Edwards) are just as prevalent today, he adds. "These things have been around for centuries and it's basically trying to gain insight into life from means other than the word of God."

One Sydney Christian father has tackled the Harry Potter phenomenon by embracing the age-old tradition of regularly reading to his three children aged 10 to 14, despite their being independent readers. But, like many Christian parents, Dr Andrew Shead has been more vigilant with the films, which he likens to "a frog in boiling water" with their increasingly dark scenes.

"The issues I found in Harry Potter weren't related to witchcraft or the occult," says Dr Shead, head of Old Testament at Moore College. "With my children the things that might have made me cautious about the right time to introduce Harry Potter into their diet would be the dark themes of death and suffering, rather than anything to do with witches.

"I think children are well able to separate fantasy from reality. I personally found admirable traits in the characters in the books — and I guess it was also things like their distrust of adults and their moments of rebellion that were more interesting to talk about than other issues."

> **"The issues I found in Harry Potter weren't related to witchcraft or the occult."**
>
> Dr Andrew Shead

By reading to his children, Dr Shead has introduced worthier books into the imagination of his daughters and son, including classics by Arthur Conan Doyle, George MacDonald and Mark Twain as well as forgotten titles such as Patricia St John's *Treasures of the Snow*, Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*, Elizabeth George Speare's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* and Violet Needham's *The Black Riders*.

"I think there are books that are simply beautifully written and I want to cultivate in my children a taste for good writing," he says.

So after 14 years of controversy, are the Harry Potter books actually worthy literature?

David Hastie says, "I've never met an English teacher who thinks it's great writing — not one. The main complaints are the characters — they're not rich enough.

"My wife, who is the head of English at St Paul's, describes it as 'boys' own adventure' dressed up with magic. It's filling the Biggles-shaped space in the children's book market. What's being sold is not occult, but adventure and quest." SC

Scott Monk is a journalist, Moore College student and author of five books, including Raw *and* Beyond the Knock-Knock Door.

Burden or beacon?

Does the Law of Moses have any relevance for modern Christians? BRIAN ROSNER explores what the apostle Paul had to say.

WHAT are believers in Christ supposed to do with the Law of Moses? Are Christians supposed to keep the law? When you read the Ten Commandments and the other laws in the first five books of the Bible, what are you supposed to do with them? Are they just ancient history, or do we fall under their jurisdiction?

What does the apostle Paul think?

On the one hand, Paul speaks of the law as an enslaving power that is used by sin to bring death. For Paul, while Jews are under the law Christians are not. We have been released from the law. On the other hand, Paul describes the law as holy and good and quotes the law approvingly when he offers moral instruction to Christians.

What is the answer to this puzzle? Are we under some parts of the law and not others? Is Paul just opposed to the legalistic abuse of the law? Was Paul confused?

The subject of Paul and the law has been central to Christian thought for 2000 years. It is enmeshed with our understanding of sin, justification by faith, salvation history and Christian ethics.

Yet to talk about Paul and the law is to invite a barrage of accusations ranging from unthinking conservatism to complete eccentricity, from advocating licence to imposing legalism, from cheapening grace to ignoring the demands of God. As one scholar put it, "Paul's understanding of the law is currently the most debated topic among Pauline scholars".

The problem is that major positions of interpretation are entrenched. Lutheran, Reformed, New Perspective, Mennonite, Dispensationalist, Wesleyan, Catholic and so on. Yet none of them seems to know what to do with all the pieces of the puzzle. The only thing they all agree on is that "Paul's views on the law are complex".

In recent years a new solution to the puzzle has begun to emerge among a range of scholars. It takes seriously that Paul was a Jew and that his response to the law is part of his wrestling with his Jewish heritage in light of the fact that the Christ had come. It uses categories of thought that can be found in his letters. It affirms justification by grace alone. It aligns with what most preachers do intuitively when preaching from the Law of Moses. And it taps into what ordinary Christians think about the place of the law in the Christian life.

When Paul says something about "the law", what is he referring to? Most interpreters assume he is talking about the legal material in the Pentateuch. But to limit "the law" to these laws is inaccurate. Like other Jews of his day, Paul customarily refers to "the law" as a unity. In Paul's letters "the law" most often denotes the first five books of the sacred Scriptures attributed to Moses, often labelled the Torah. For example, Paul can write of "the law [= the Pentateuch] and the prophets", as in Romans 3:2.

With this in mind, it is a false step to ask *which bits* of the law Paul has in mind when he says positive and negative things about the law. More attention should be paid to the point of view from which Paul is reading the law. A better question to ask than "Which bits of the law?" is "The law *as what*?". There are three perspectives from which Paul views the law that make sense of his many and varied interactions with the law: the law as legal code, the law as prophecy and the law as wisdom.

Christians are not under the law as *legal code*. As Don Carson puts it, Paul does not uphold the law for Christians "as *lex*, as ongoing legal demand". According to Paul, while Jews are to keep, observe, obey, do and not transgress the law, Christians are not. While Jews have the law as "letter", "commandment", "decree" and "book", Christians do not relate to the law as such.

FOCUS QUESTION:

What difference does it make to read the Law as prophecy and wisdom rather than as a legal code?

As 1 Timothy 1:8-9 states, the law used lawfully is not for Christians but for the lawless.

Christians are not under the law in the sense that we are not bound by the demands of the Mosaic law code and subject to its sanctions. God does not throw the book at us or judge us according to the letter of the law. Christ has fulfilled the law. We are not justified by works of the law — by doing the law — but by faith in Christ. Yet it would be a mistake to leave matters there. On the contrary, Paul upholds the law.

To quote Carson again, for Paul the law's continuity is sustained in that it points to and anticipates the "new 'righteousness from God' that has come in Christ Jesus". Despite playing no part in justification, Paul affirms a positive role for the law in relation to Christians. In the language of Romans 3:21, the law is a witness to the gospel. Paul's exposition of the gospel in Romans frequently draws on the law. This includes references to the sacrifices, to Abraham and Isaac, to the Song of Moses and so on.

As Christians we instinctively read the law *as prophecy* of the gospel. It is no surprise that this is how Paul is depicted at the end of Acts: "From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets".

But there is another angle from which Paul reads the law in a positive way for Christians: the law *as wisdom* for Christian living. We are to read the law as instruction or admonition for a life pleasing to God. There are, of course, many areas of morality that the law treats that have not changed: everything from stealing and sexuality to care for the poor, murder and coveting. Indeed, Paul sometimes quotes laws from the law when dealing with questions of conduct but not, I would argue, as law.

Instead, Paul reads the law in the same way that we might read a proverb, a psalm or some other biblical wisdom. Reading the law as wisdom informs us about the moral reality which is our worldview and guides our moral deliberations. After all, the laws in the Law of Moses are grounded in the moral order established at creation and reflect the character of the unchanging God who is our creator and redeemer.

Take stealing, for example. Paul mentions the subject three times. In Romans 2:21, he challenges his Jewish opponents as to whether they transgress the commandment not to steal. For Jews, the law remains a legal code. In Romans 13:8-10 he cites the commandment not to steal in a discussion for Christians of how love fulfills the law. And in Ephesians 4:28 he addresses Christians and instructs them not to steal, going deeper than just the law itself by reflecting on the responsibility to work in order to be able to share with the needy. The law against stealing is not cited as law but it is still the basis of his moral instruction.

Tithing is another case in point. The practice of giving 10 per cent of your income is found in the Law of Moses (eg Lev. 27:30-33) and is still taken by many Christians to be an obligation. Does Paul enforce it? Despite having numerous opportunities to do so in his many discussions of giving Paul gives no endorsement of tithing. He is consistent — Christians are not under the law. In passages like 2 Corinthians 9:7 Paul talks against any form of compulsion when it comes to giving: "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver".

But that does not mean that he considers the laws relating to tithing to be irrelevant to Christian living. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 he recommends giving that is deliberate and proportional to your income: "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income". And in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 he appeals to the generous character of God in creation as a motivation to give, commanding "those who are rich in this world" to be generous and keen to share with others, "not to put their hope in wealth, but in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment".

MOORE COLLEGE

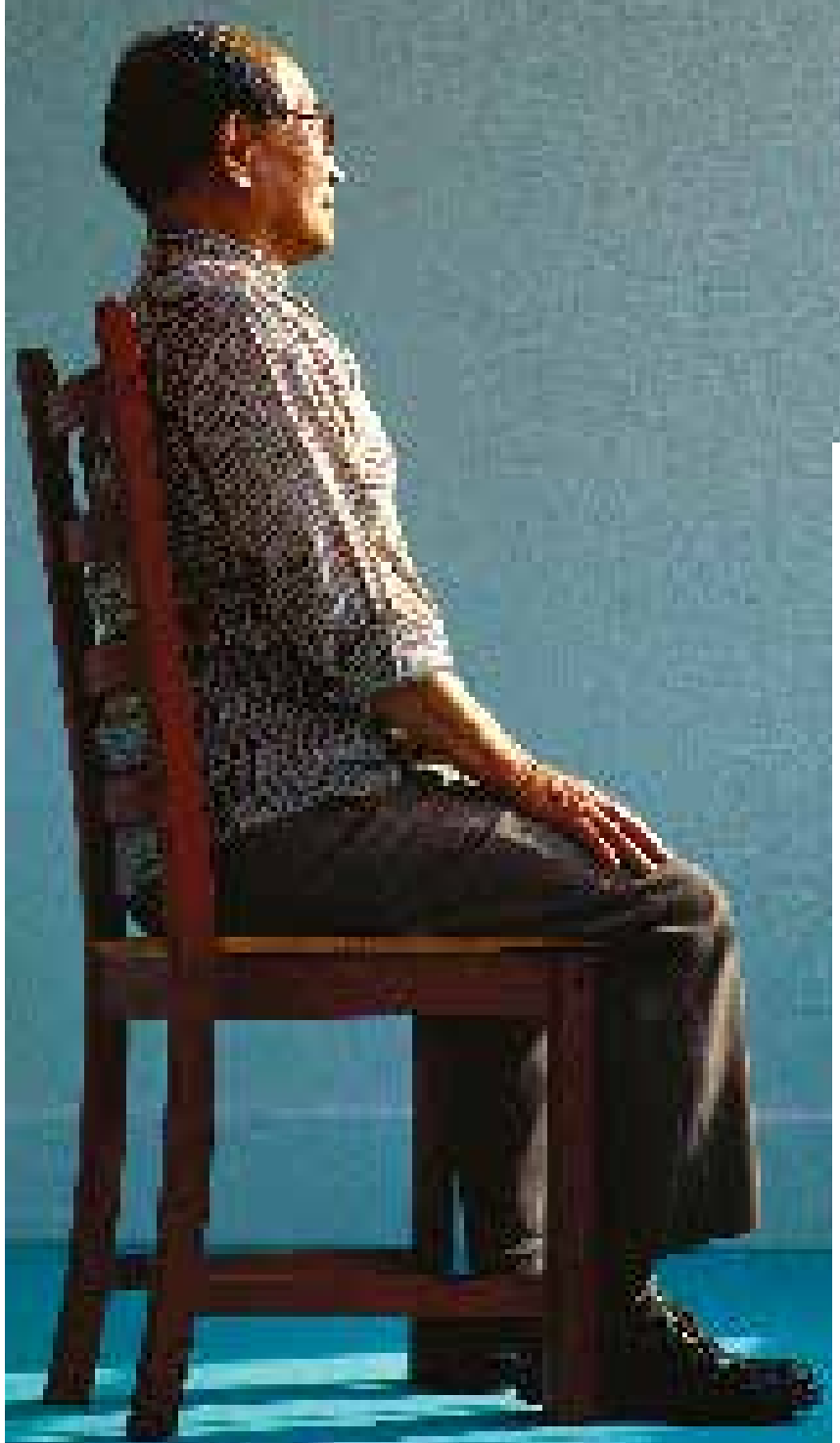
Dr Brian Rosner teaches New Testament and Ethics at Moore College. He is the author of a number of books, including (with Roy Ciampa) the Pillar commentary on 1 Corinthians.

It should not surprise us that Paul's understanding of how Christians relate to the Law of Moses is not one-dimensional. The question of the law played a big role in how the early Christians distinguished themselves from Jews.

Torah, temple and election were the three defining pillars of ancient Judaism. Paul recognised that the coming of the Christ spelt the end of each one of them. The sacrifice of Christ replaces the sacrifices of the temple. Election in Christ replaces the election of Israel according to the flesh. And believers in Christ are under the law of Christ, not under the Law of Moses.

But in each case, Paul takes a further step. It is not that the temple, election and the law are of no relevance to believers in Christ. The church becomes the temple. Believers are chosen by God in Christ. And the Law of Moses, though no longer a legal code governing our lives, continues as prophecy, a witness to the gospel, and as wisdom in instruction for Christian living. **SC**

Take off the Western glasses



While it's true that Christians are persecuted in China, cultural misunderstandings do not help Australians understand the full picture, argues JOHN MENEAR.

IT was interesting to view the recent ABC *Foreign Correspondent* program commenting on China's spiritual renaissance. I found it entertaining, but I don't believe it portrays a clear picture of what is going on in China today for the Christians who live there.

The difficulty with trying to interpret what is happening in China is that whatever you think is happening, probably is — somewhere in China, and probably not elsewhere. But when it comes to persecution of Christians, let me tell you why I think it is not, in fact, increasing. Instead we ought to have good cause for thanks that China and its authorities are giving increasing freedom for churches to multiply and grow.

The reason why we often think Christian persecution is on the increase is because the rate of change in China is so rapid that our perceptions are often out of date. The starting point for misunderstanding what is going on in China is good old prejudice. Many of us have a cultural mindset that assumes our Western ways of doing things are intrinsically right, while China's way, being different, is therefore wrong. Witness the oft-quoted "fact" that the only legal churches in China are ones registered under the Three Self Patriotic Movement and conform to TSPM theological standards.

The truth is that China requires any association of people to be registered legally, irrespective of the reason for meeting. In the case of Protestant Christian groups, it is the China Christian Council (CCC) that is the body tasked with managing registrations, not the TSPM. The Amity website gives a reasonable overview of how things work.

Federal and state governments in Australia have been doing the same sort of thing in the past 15 years. In about the year 2000, the Church Missionary Society had to incorporate as an association and conform to Australian Securities Commission requirements, like most associations did. Last year CMS was required to go further and incorporate as a company, with even higher levels of compliance.

Why is it persecution or inappropriate control in China to require groups that own property, raise funds and conduct public ministry to be registered in some way, yet in Australia we call it good governance?

Understanding 'underground'

It is true that the TSPM has a muddied history from a theological point of view. And it's true that in the past the TSPM adopted restrictions on what should not be preached on, such as the return of Christ. But without wanting to defend everything the TSPM stands for, Western Christians might spare a thought for the maxim, 'Walk a while in their shoes'. Just like the Eastern

European Orthodox churches in the cold war era, Christians in China have endured some fearsome times and it would be a harsh critic who would say the TSPM has done more harm than good! There are many fine Christian leaders in the TSPM today who owe their faith to the TSPM leaders of the past, who have borne the heat and burden of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and protected churches and Christians from attack as best they could.

Another misunderstanding is the use of the term 'underground' churches. This usually describes churches that have not registered with the CCC and the assumption we have is that underground churches are the good ones and the registered or TSPM churches are the bad ones. But in fact, by definition, 'underground' churches want to be independent and many operate like sects, resisting any interference, and are quite secretive about what they do. There are thousands of formerly underground churches that are now registered and yet not under any supervision from or with accountability to the TSPM. In fact, registered churches enjoy legal protection in law from harassment and other forms of persecution.

Across the landscape TSPM churches, CCC churches, registered independent churches and many unregistered churches operate openly and freely. This is not to say that persecution doesn't happen in some places and it is not to say that in some parts of China different applications of the law (or illegal acts) are practised.

The key to understanding how China functions at a social and political level is to understand what some commentators have called the "social contract" that exists between the people and the Communist Party. One of the foundation principles for this contract is the promotion of social harmony and order. The people co-operate by accepting that the welfare and rights of the individual are subordinate to the welfare and rights of the many — or society. In turn, the government promotes and manages the growth of China and the social and economic welfare of the people.

That's not to say everyone likes this arrangement but it would be foolish for anyone to suggest that the vast majority of people in China don't look to the government to care for them; and care for them they have in recent decades.

Uncharted waters

Any person or group who threatens that harmony and the welfare of the nation will be targeted by the security services tasked to keep order. In the *Foreign Correspondent* program, the group of Christians who wanted to meet in the open square were from an unregistered church that has repeatedly resisted attempts to be registered according to the law. Just from the interview with the pastor it seems the church is refusing to accept the registration requirements on principle. The evidence from many churches in the same province is that registration will not require impositions on good theology and preaching.

But we have to be fair and understand that China is moving rapidly into new and uncharted waters economically, socially and politically. In Chairman Deng's time, China accepted that market capitalism would be necessary for China's welfare and growth but they wanted a Chinese form of market capitalism to curb the excesses we have seen evident in the West in the past three years. So, too, China understands the need for democracy but it must be democracy with a Chinese face, not like the US, the former USSR or some Middle Eastern countries.

Such a change will require evolution, not revolution. If China allows groups of people to meet whenever they like for whatever purpose in public squares, without permission, they could lose control of matters quickly. So what we see does not have to be religious persecution but a simple application of logic and public order.

Perspective on growth

The growth of Christianity in China is both complex and spectacular. Many Christians have suffered grievously for their faith: some because of it, others in spite of it. Today one cannot say a lot of things about China and be right everywhere. But I recall reading a book a few years ago entitled *Jesus in Beijing* by David Aickman. He noted, with good cause to know, that increasingly a majority of underground churches seemed to be groups of Christians fiercely resistant to any outside influence whose theological underpinnings tended to be heretical and sect-like (my summary). Conversely he believes the strength of evangelical faith may well be now found in TSPM, CCC and registered churches that have become open to good teaching, sharing across churches and adopting a vision for building China and contributing to its welfare for the future.

Many of us have a cultural mindset that assumes our Western ways of doing things are intrinsically right, while China's way, being different, is therefore wrong.

As may be expected, a short program piece by the ABC or anyone else is likely to miss that. But it is time for Christians to take a new look at China and challenge our assumptions born out of the 'bamboo curtain' era. The debacle last year with respect to mainstream Chinese Christian leaders not being invited to the Lausanne Convention — and ones who were invited not being allowed to go — is the direct result of this old cold war warrior thinking that still prevails in Western Christian circles.

We should make a new effort to understand the great good news stories from China that tell a different story. And we should pray for China, and for those Christians who as yet still suffer unjustly, that God will honour their faith and enable them yet to participate in the freedoms that grow every day in China.

I recall Michael Cassidy speaking in Sydney in 1980 about the future of South Africa, calling for Christians to pray God would give that country time to navigate a peaceful path to a new South Africa of racial unity and freedom where the gospel might go forward unhindered by war and strife. Praise God such prayers seem answered in that case.

Now China needs those same prayers for its future. It needs time, and its leaders need time, to lead China to a new place. We can believe that, even without faith in God, these leaders are directed by him. Above all we must hear the voices and testimony of the mainstream Christian churches in China who tell a different, albeit less newsworthy story of gospel growth and blessing. The media do not know how to report that and are probably not interested. So we would have to agree at least on that point that China really is no different to Australia. SC

The Rev John Menear is the vicar of St Andrew's, Kowloon in Hong Kong.

MBM
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MATURITY AND MINISTRY PASTOR

St. Albans Anglican Church Rooty Hill – Multicultural Bible Ministry

WHO WE ARE

We are an Evangelical Reformed Anglican Church with over 150 adults and children from 40 different cultures.

Our vision is to see lives transformed through Jesus Christ to the glory of God in the Multicultural West of Sydney and Rooty Hill in particular.

We have entered a new phase of growth with the move to our new church building and 5 services each Sunday. We have a specialised ministry model with staff serving across congregations.

Our goal under God is to grow to 1000 by 2012.

WHO WE ARE LOOKING FOR

We are searching for a pastor who has an infectious love for Jesus, his family and is clear on purpose (1Timothy 3).

We are looking for a minister who is ordained (or prepared to consider ordination), has demonstrated an ability to be a leader of leaders and who can identify new initiatives and make them happen.

We are looking for a pastor who is excited and gifted in discipling, training and nurturing God's people. They will be part of the senior staff and have specific oversight of how ministry across all our congregations:

- Maturity: growing disciples in their love and knowledge of God to be more like Jesus
- Ministry: identifying, equipping and encouraging God's people for works of service

This includes oversight of our small group and one-to-one discipling ministries, our preaching program, theological development, gift discovery and training.

We are also searching for someone who relates well to a range of people but especially to young adults and families and a broad range of cultural backgrounds.

To apply or get more information, please contact:
Ray Galea or Bruce Winters
admin@stalbans.org.au
9677 0133
Applications close: 30 July 2011 Commencement date: Mostly November 2011

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SUNDAY GATHERINGS PASTOR

St. Albans Anglican Church Rooty Hill – Multicultural Bible Ministry

WHO WE ARE

We are an Evangelical Reformed Anglican Church with over 150 adults and children from 40 cultures.

Our vision is to see lives transformed through Jesus Christ to the glory of God in the Multicultural West of Sydney and Rooty Hill in particular.

We have entered a new phase of growth with the move to our new church building and 5 services each Sunday. We have a specialised ministry model with staff serving across congregations.

Our goal under God is to grow to 1000 by 2012.

WHO WE ARE LOOKING FOR

We are searching for a man who has an infectious love for Jesus and his people, and is clear on purpose (1Timothy 3). They will be part of the senior staff, passionately gifted and ideally theologically trained.

The aim of this position is to encourage and develop the MBM community to glorify God in all we do and to love and delight in Him.

This person will have oversight and direction of;

- fostering joy and fruitfulness in the lives of God's people.
- the morning of all our gatherings.
- a music ministry that points to, supports and enhances the proclamation of God's word.
- producing Christ-centered, gospel driven, culturally appropriate words and music that edified those great new Lord is and who we are.
- all audio/visual/multimedia components of ministry at MBM.

This person will be excited about creating gatherings where;

- God's people worship Him as they meet Him in His word.
- people are challenged and excited by the truth of the gospel.
- each of the purposes of the Christian life are addressed and incorporated.
- the culture of the multicultural world is appropriately expressed in look, feel and content.

We are also searching for someone who relates well to a range of people but especially to young adults and families and a broad range of cultural backgrounds.

This position will initially be 3-4 days per week with the possibility of another 2 days if the applicant is willing and able to do High School Scripture in local schools.

To apply or get more information, please contact:
Rowan Hinton
admin@stalbans.org.au
9677 0133
Applications close: 30 July 2011 Commencement date: Mostly December 2011

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- Development of Christian Ministries to students, staff and families.

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Email Applications to
principal@stlukes.nsw.edu.au

Or send Applications to
The Principal, Mrs Jane Robinson
St Luke's Grammar School
310 Hawthorn Road, Dee Why NSW 2099

For a full job description please see the School website:
www.stlukes.nsw.edu.au

For any additional enquiries, please contact Mrs Elizabeth Little on 9959-6237.

Full Working with Children check required.

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Applicants should be excellent team leaders and trainers with theological training and preaching and teaching experience.

For more information or to apply please contact
Greg Lee greg@hunterbiblechurch.org
or call Dave Moore 0402 026 842

Summer Hill Church

seek · share · strengthen · serve

Summer Hill Church, an Anglican church in the Inner West, has the following opportunities to add to our staff team...

Children's Minister (1 day)

We are looking for someone to help us as Bible teaching Years 3 to help coordinate and teach Scripture and lead the small team who look after our after school kids' club. The applicant must have prior Scripture teaching experience and love ministering to primary aged children.

Wedding Minister (1.5 days +)

We are looking for an ordained minister who can help grow our ministry to people seeking to get married at our church. The applicant must be socially connected and have a high level of initiative. They would join our eight congregation, Summer Hill, and must be available to work on Saturday afternoons. A flexible schedule is available.

Wedding Verger (casual)

To assist in the preparation of the building for weddings and special services (including sound desk), must be available on Saturday afternoons.

Application close 25 July - www.summerhillchurch.org/opportunities - 9716 5208

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DIARY

VARIOUS dates in July

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FOR more information and to register visit www.youthworks.net/events
LOCATION | Shoalhaven, July 2-8; Port Hacking 1, July 4-10; Port Hacking 2, July 11-17; Port Hacking — Rathane (Asian Australian study conference) July 11-16

THURSDAY, July 7

Improve Preaching

CORNHILL Sydney presents a talk and workshop: "Changing my preaching (to go deeper and further)" with Ray Galea, followed by a small group discussion on hearing and helping our preaching. Bring an audio file of a sermon.
FOR registration call (02) 8908 4802
LOCATION | St Thomas's Anglican Church, cnr Church & McLaren Streets, North Sydney | 9.30am-12.30pm

VARIOUS dates from July-September

The Book that Changed the World

BIBLE Society Australia invites you to an exhibition that highlights the enormous impact the KJV has had on both Western and Australian culture.
LOCATIONS | Village Church Annandale: July 1-31; Sydney (Venue TBA): August 4-28; University of Wollongong Library: September 1-28

WEDNESDAY, August 17

Hamlin Fistula Relief and Aid Fund

SPEND the evening with Mark and Annette Bennett from the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia.
RESERVATIONS are essential on (02) 8007 7435 or www.hamlinfistula.org.au
LOCATION | St Thomas's Anglican Church, cnr Church & McLaren Streets, North Sydney | 7.30pm-9.30pm

SATURDAY, August 20

First Fruits Conference

BRING your team and hear Colin Marshall apply insights to playgroup ministries from *The Trellis and the Vine*, the bestselling book he co-wrote with Tony Payne. Discover how to effectively use and grow your ministry to under fives. Morning tea and lunch will be provided.
FOR more information visit www.kidzlink.com.au/firstfruits or call (02) 9265 1538
LOCATION | St Andrew's Cathedral, Chapter House, Sydney | 9am-4pm

THURSDAY, August 25 – Friday, August 26

Theology of Children's Ministry

A conference for people working in, and thinking theologically about, children's ministry. The focus of the conference will be on the role that stories can play in shaping the lives of children.
FOR more details about the conference visit www.youthworks.net/events or call (02) 8268 3355
LOCATION | Panania Anglican Church, 4-6 Lambeth St, Panania

SATURDAY, August 27

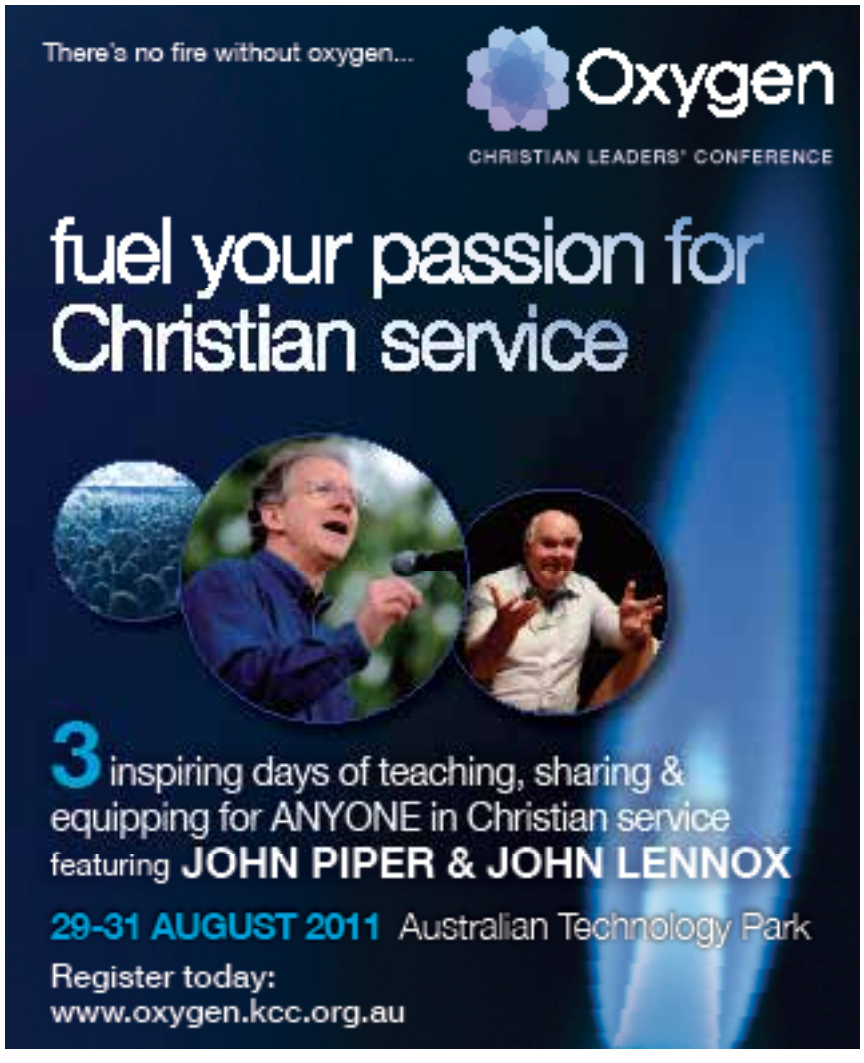
Growing Faith Conference

JOIN us for the first Growing Faith Conference! Enhance your family life with parenting seminars on a range of topics by experienced local speakers and international guest speaker, Sally Lloyd-Jones. Your children will enjoy the family session, plus the age-appropriate kids' program and lunchtime concert.
$20 adults; $12 children; $60 families. Price includes morning tea and lunch.
FOR more information and to register visit growingfaith.com.au/conference or call Doreen Liew on (02) 8268 3388
LOCATION | Thomas Hassall Anglican College, 125 Kingsford Smith Ave, Middleton Grange | 8:30am-2pm

SATURDAY, September 10

Youthworks Info Day

FIND out about Year 13 Gap Year and Youthworks College (Adv.) Diploma of Theology study options.
VISIT www.youthworks.net/events or call (02) 8093 3400
LOCATION | Wanawong, 11 Fifth Ave, Loftus | 10am-2pm



Park church has permanent home

IN outer western Sydney, the community of Ropes Crossing is flourishing and, since making the decision to plant a church there, the Rev Pete Wood and his family have not looked back. For the past 18 months, Pete has been leading a growing number of people — from meeting in a park, to the Ropes Crossing Public School hall and now to the church's official launch in May, which saw 52 people turn up to listen to God's word.

Inspired by Mark Driscoll, Pete joined the Rev David Clarke, senior minister at the Anglican church in nearby St Marys, and together they saw the opportunity to spread the word to the 5000 new residents who will make Ropes Crossing their home.

"In the past 12 months or so we've worked hard to get out into the suburb and connect with the people," Pete says. "So far we've met over 600 people who live here."

People from the fledgling church have doorknocked, taught Scripture in the local school, run a group at the retirement village and Pete has undertaken many baptisms and weddings, giving them a real connection to many locals. Their efforts to spread the gospel have seen large numbers of people attending their Easter and Christmas events and school holiday program.

Pete says that when the church met in the park there were about 20 regulars. Since the launch, that number has doubled: "New people have come every week since and in all cases returned".

Richards ready to serve

LATE last month a special service was held at St Andrew's Cathedral with returned missionaries Malcolm and Elizabeth Richards to commission Malcolm as the new general secretary of the NSW and ACT branch of the Church Missionary Society.

Malcolm, who began in the role two months ago, says he is loving the opportunity to "mentor people who are interested in gospel ministry overseas — and for those who God is leading in that direction, to get them onto the field".

"It's exciting to talk to potential missionaries who are excited about whether they're cut out for cross-cultural mission and ministry… just helping them to talk through issues and see if that's what God is calling them to do," he says.

Malcolm and Elizabeth Richards spent the previous six years in the Democratic Republic of Congo, establishing the Berea Bible School in the Diocese of Kindu and working in trauma recovery with some of the millions whose lives were turned upside down by nationwide genocide from 1997-2003. The couple also lived and worked for six years in Goma with their children from 1988-1994.

Dr Jensen with the Richards at the commissioning service.

For Malcolm, as God continues to do his work in DR Congo, the challenge he now faces is getting people to respond to the need to take the gospel out. "It's a biblical imperative and Australians have a responsibility to share the gospel with the world," he says. "When people are excited about sharing the gospel locally they are usually excited about mission work, too."

In addition to inspiring and encouraging partnership with CMS, Malcolm has a key role in pastoral care. As he oversees the work of the NSW and ACT branch, he will be mentoring the missionaries of tomorrow and caring for missionaries already serving with the society.

Equipped to care

WE all want to care for others when we see them hurting but for a lot of people it is difficult to know what to do.

On May 28, Mittagong Anglican Church held a seminar called 'To talk or not to talk'. Run by Mary Andrews College (MAC), it was designed to assist people in learning how to care pastorally for others.

Locals came from across the Highlands for the seminar.

Organised with the mission area in mind, the event was attended by about 80 people from churches across the Southern Highlands.

Margery Mills, one of the organisers, said this type of training was important because "people have a desire to care for others and want to be helpful but they don't feel equipped to do that. [They] are not sure what to say or do in these situations".

Jackie Stoneman and Jennie Everist from MAC ran sessions giving people advice on how to respond in a variety of situations including: when someone is chronically ill, suffering from depression, grieving and dealing with relationship breakdown.

Mrs Mills believed that the seminar was a great way to empower people to feel they could handle a range of difficult situations.

"People were really encouraged that they could do something," she said. "It helped us to think through our own motives and agendas and why we help people; is it for the good of others."

The event also gave the opportunity for churches to come together and learn from one another.

"In the Southern Highlands everyone knows everyone," Mrs Mills said. "But they don't necessarily know what ministries they are involved in. This gave us the opportunity to get together and talk with each other."

MAC will also run 'To talk or not to talk' in Nowra on August 13. For information call (02) 9284 1470.

A hard day's walk

ON June 11 more than 120 women walked up to 50 kilometres as part of the Walk for Women, seeking to raise money for the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia.

Rebecca Abbott from St James', Turramurra organised the event, which saw women from a number of Sydney churches join in the walkathon.

"The walkathon began with a small group of women from St James', who wanted to use our walking group for a greater cause," she said.

The walkers started in the morning at Coogee Beach and finished about 10 hours later in Turramurra.

Marianne Mallison was one of the walkers. She has a personal connection with the hospital in Ethiopia and was trying to find the motivation to get fit before she heard about the walk.

"It was a fantastic day but it was really hard yakka," she said. "[Our group] really wanted everyone to finish… Even if we had to carry someone across the line, we were all going to finish."

"The last leg into Turramurra was really hard," she said. "It was dark, rainy and there were no footpaths… It was hard for us but it is nothing compared to the hardship Ethiopian women endure."

Melissa Dusan and 13 other women aged 11-70 from St Alban's in Frenchs Forest also took part in the walk.

"To spur ourselves on we imagined that we were women in Ethiopia who have to walk miles to the hospital," she said. "The discomfort we felt is nothing like the women in Africa face."

So far the walk has raised more than $83,000 for the Hamlin Fistula Relief and Aid Fund.

MOVES

On Loane to Cambridge

THE **Rev Ed Loane** will leave his role as assistant minister of Moorebank parish in August after being awarded a three-year scholarship to Cambridge University. He will be researching a PhD on a former Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, and his thinking about church unity.

"We're all sad about leaving our friends here and our church but at the same time there's an excitement about going, making this change and meeting new Christians on the other side of the world," he says. "Plus snow in winter!"

Unexpectedly, the Loanes' search for a church close to the university also provided them with a place to live. The Anglican church in the nearby village of Little Shelford was suggested to Mr Loane but he wasn't sure if the family would be living close by — until the minister, Simon Scott, mentioned that the former assistant minister's house was available to rent.

"It was providential the way it worked out… a remarkable turn of events," Mr Loane says. "We'll be involved in that church there on a voluntary basis — Simon's putting me on the preaching program and all that sort of thing. Even the women's Bible study and toddler group are on the same days as here. We're really looking forward to it."

New head for Roseville

MRS Megan Krimmer has been appointed principal of Roseville College, following the departure of Dr Briony Scott to become principal of Wenona school in North Sydney.

Now the director of curriculum at Abbotsleigh in Wahroonga, Mrs Krimmer has more than 20 years' experience as an educator. She has a Masters of Education from the University of Sydney (awarded for research into pastoral care systems and curriculum in independent girls' schools) and spent several years at Roseville College as a class teacher, year advisor and head of the history department.

The chairman of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation, Tony Willis, described Mrs Krimmer as "a dynamic educational leader with the ability to lead, inspire and motivate both staff and students. She brings the skills and passion to lead Roseville College in its next phase of development as a vibrant, caring and academically robust Christian learning community. On behalf of the corporation, we congratulate Megan on her appointment."

Mrs Krimmer takes up her new role at the beginning of Term 4.

Mostyn off to jail

AFTER four years as Anglican chaplain for the Macquarie Hospital in North Ryde, the **Rev Paul Mostyn** has been appointed chaplain to the Lithgow Correctional Centre.

"I'd planned and prayed and thought about moving to 'corrections' at some point, and seeing that I live in the Blue Mountains it made a lot of sense," Mr Mostyn says.

"It combines everything that I've done to this point, including the mental health elements. There are a number of people in jail with mental health issues and because of my time in mental health [at Macquarie] I'm in a position to understand how the treatment for those guys goes and how to relate to them as a chaplain."

IN BRIEF

THE **Rev Graeme Howells**, senior assistant minister of St Luke's, Miranda will become curate-in-charge at Rouse Hill this month.

MR Stuart Wood has been appointed as Anglican chaplain to the Parramatta Correctional Centre.

Vacant Parishes

LIST OF PARISHES AND PROVISIONAL PARISHES, VACANT OR BECOMING VACANT AS AT JUNE 10, 2011

- Auburn (St Philip's)
- Croydon
- Doonside*
- Hoxton Park
- Lalor Park and Kings Langley
- Lithgow
- Merrylands
- Moorebank
- Newtown with Erskineville
- Sutherland

*Provisional Parishes or Archbishop's appointments

VALE

An education "champion"

One of the leading figures in Sydney Anglican education in the 20th century, Canon Alan Langdon, died last month at the age of 87.

Born in 1924, Canon Langdon joined the staff at St Andrew's Cathedral School in 1942 — creating a connection that was to last more than 50 years. He taught French and Latin before leaving to serve in the Australian Air Force. After the war he studied at Moore College and held a variety of positions in the Diocese. He was a lecturer at Moore and later an assistant minister at St Andrew's Cathedral, where he was made Canon in 1965. He was the Diocese's director of education from 1955-1977, then spent another 12 years as executive chairman of the Education Commission. He was also chairman of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation. After he retired, Canon Langdon was honorary assistant minister at Lithgow and Portland and contributed to seniors ministry.

Canon Langdon played a significant role in the development of Special Religious Education in NSW, helped found St Andrew's Cathedral School's council and served on it for many years. The school opened the Langdon Archive Centre in his honour in 2009.

He was awarded an AM in the Queen's Birthday honours list in 1990 for services to education, particularly in the field of Christian education.

The CEO of Anglican Youthworks, Zac Veron, was among those to pay tribute to Canon Langdon: "We have lost a great champion for the cause of religious education. His experience, passion and focus for SRE advocacy and ministry remain unsurpassed and will be deeply missed".

Ian Mears, who gave the address at Canon Langdon's thanksgiving service, observed that, "The danger in giving thanks for Alan's contribution is to emphasise the exact opposite of what he stood for. Alan believed in the Lord Jesus Christ… all that he did, he did that the Lord might be glorified".

Smells like toddler spirit

With so much entertainment out there for kids, JENNI STODDART considers how we can disciple children most effectively.

THERE were four brothers and sisters in my family and one TV (that ages me!). The rules were strict: one hour of television a week plus Saturday morning cartoons, and the hour had to be agreed on by all of us and watched together. Negotiations were brutal but short – after all, there wasn't that much choice. Now, ABC3 provides all-day programming for our kids. Nirvana's song lyrics for *Smells Like Teen Spirit* have been pushed down a notch to toddlers: 'Here we are now, entertain us'.

Children's entertainment in Australia is thoughtful, creative and often highly educational. However, it makes me ask how we should make our children's ministries stand out from this. To answer, we need to be clear about our purpose in ministry. It is the only way we can ensure we are more than entertainers.

In a world where children are seen as a market through which to gain access to their parents' dollars, Christians value them differently. Children are valuable to us as members of God's people. In Matthew 19 Jesus calls us to recognise them as a model of what dependent faith looks like and, in so doing, recognises the validity of their faith. Children belong to the kingdom and though they will express their faith differently, it is no less real.

So, infotainment does not cut it. If you think ABC3 is impressive, take the time to sit in on some children's ministry. Our youth and children's ministers do amazing cross-cultural work and are masters of sharing Bible truths in engaging ways. Yet still this is not enough! Unless we keep our main ministry goal clear, then it can become a form of infotainment. It's based on the Bible, it's creative and engaging but there is something missing and it's pretty crucial. Growing disciples.

Our chief purpose is to bring God glory through growing disciples. We do this by gathering with God's word at the centre and living this out as a community. Recognising this purpose is going to push us beyond the infotainment model, beyond even an education model.

Ministry with this goal knows Christian parents are the key disciplers of their children and makes it its business to engage with them. Ministry with this goal calls adult church members to let children have opportunities to live as disciples within the life of the church.

So are we really engaging with kids in ways that give them opportunities to work out how to be a disciple? Do we recognise leaders at different ages and allow them to lead? Are we giving children opportunities to serve? One of the best PowerPoint operators I know is in primary school!

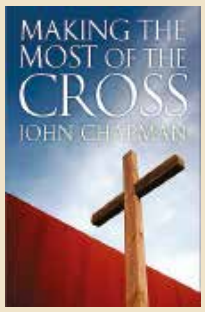
Children will often respond to Bible truths shared in engaging ways but I do observe the "Jesus, God, Bible" phenomenon. They are hounds at working out what we want them to say. So, have a discussion around a text where kids are allowed to think aloud what it might mean. There will be wrong answers, wrong directions and this needs gentle and clear guidance. However, my experience of this is to see children take Bible truths to heart and apply them to life in ways an adult would not think of.

Have we actually asked what it means to be a disciple when you are 10, eight or three? Are we demeaning kids by not respecting that they can be reflective and thoughtful and contribute to their own growing faith?

Infotainment is impressive, often neat and tidy and very rarely offensive but ultimately counterproductive to our purpose of growing disciples. Give me children's ministry that is messy, deep and real. That gives me hope for courageous disciples in a digital TV age. SC

Jenni Stoddart is Youthworks children's ministry advisor for the Wollongong region.

The cross or naught



Making The Most Of The Cross
John Chapman

Reviewed by Andrew Nixon

One of the great joys of my time with the Connect09 campaign was the chance to rub shoulders with John Chapman. He is an inspiration, an extraordinary blessing from God. I have heard Evangelism Ministries (where John served for 25 years) described as a platform created to accommodate John and his extraordinary gifts and energies as an evangelistic preacher (and if that is not true, it ought to be!).

John stepped down from EM more than 15 years ago. Retirement? No fear. He was just getting warmed up! Since then he has continued to speak, write, train and mentor new generations (yes, plural) of evangelistic speakers. The gospel of the Lord Jesus is his passion and there is just no stopping him.

And now, at 80, a new book! From the very first page, there is no doubt that John's heart and mind are going strong. He dedicates the book to his friends in the Bible study group at Donald Robinson Village — whom he calls his "fellow travellers".

So what especially has motivated John to write as he enters his ninth decade? I hope you can guess. It is the single most important event in human history: the death of Jesus of Nazareth and his resurrection to God's right hand.

If you are reading this, John, I apologise. I do realise it is not about you — it is, of course, all about Jesus. And the Lord Jesus is precisely where John takes us with direct and refreshing simplicity: eight facets of Jesus' death and six of Jesus' resurrection, with a few brief — but profound — pages on each. There are fewer than 100 pages all up. I love the way John uses precisely 10 words (not 25) where only 10 are required.

Making The Most Of The Cross is perfect for daily meditation and prayer, or for leading a family devotion time. It is a tonic to read alone one afternoon and even better to read with a friend and discuss. And it should come as no surprise that the book is as accessible to unbelievers as it is stimulating for believers.

I first heard Chappo speak at Katoomba Youth Convention as a 16-year-old kid. I remember it still. Twenty-five years on, I hear the same man in the pages of this book — even better than ever. What a joy.

If you are like me, you will have a shelf full of Christian books you have started and are yet to finish. This won't be one of them.

The Rev Andrew Nixon is the director of the Year 13 program at Youthworks.

A rare sequel of awesomeness

KUNG FU PANDA 2
PG

JUDY ADAMSON

AS media interviewed stars at the glitzy Australian premiere of *Kung Fu Panda 2* I rolled my eyes when one reporter announced that Jack Black, the voice of Po the portly panda, told him he wouldn't have done this sequel if he hadn't thought it was better than the original film. Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?

So, naturally, I approached this with deep suspicion. I'd enjoyed the first film very much and moneyspinning just-in-time-for-the-holidays sequels tend to leave me cold. Yet preview snippets offered some hope — as long as we didn't see all the good bits in the ads.

We didn't. Within the first five minutes of *Kung Fu Panda 2* I had laughed out loud, and the rollicking ride continued until the final moments of the film (but more of that later).

To the story: Po is now revered in China as the Dragon Warrior and is an accepted and loved addition to the equally revered kung fu band, the Furious Five. It makes me laugh at the mere thought of a praying mantis engaging in kung fu, but that's part of the fun.

The troupe works and plays well together but their biggest test is looming. Shen, the evil son of a kindly lord and lady peacock, has returned from exile to take over his ancestral home and city, with plans to conquer the whole country. What is more, Shen hunted down the country's pandas years before when he heard a prophecy that he would be "defeated by a warrior of black and white". When all other good guys fall before Shen's weaponry, our band of martial arts experts is sent to stop him. And so the stage is set.

In fighting members of Shen's wolf guard, Po begins to have strange flashbacks from his childhood. He wants answers about where he came from — and discovers that his dad, Mr Ping the noodle restaurant owner, isn't his real father. Amid the hilarity of such an obvious discovery when you're a panda and your dad is a goose is a tremendously poignant backstory. I won't spoil it other than to say it's a lovely example of choosing love and acceptance over rejection, and it's a theme that runs through the whole film.

Mr Ping is filled with pride for Po (and happy to turn his fame into a business opportunity) but is also anxious every time he goes to fight. And is Po getting too skinny? Does he need his favourite tofu snack? It's gorgeous.

In the meantime, Shen (voiced with tremendous effect by Gary Oldman) has thrown his father's old throne out the window of the family pagoda — the interior of which is a feast of animated decoration — and is busy making more weapons for his conquest.

When the team arrives they find the city filled with wolf guards, with two of the heroes of kung fu in prison and unwilling to be rescued in case Shen unleashes more havoc on the locals.

It sounds pretty serious and dark, and truth to tell there are a number of fight scenes and scary moments that would probably be too much for smaller kids, but the one-liners and funny set pieces come so fast that the rest of us will have a ball.

How can you not love moments such as Po's teacher sending the group on its way with the sobering news that Shen's weapons could spell the end of kung fu: "But I just got kung fu," Po complains, adding "How can kung fu stop something that stops kung fu?" Then there's the creation of the word "awesomeness", for which I'm sure many will be forever grateful.

Yet amid the wonderful artwork, the excellently planned (and enthusiastically over-the-top) fight scenes and surprisingly strong elements about the power of love to heal — and the choices we make to accept or reject this — there is one thing about this film that really irks me. The ending.

I don't mean the penultimate scene, which is truly lovely. I mean the last few moments and the final line, which make it clear that *Kung Fu Panda 3* is already on the drawing board. And given the usual odds with sequels, you can bet your bottom dollar we won't get lucky again. SC