May 2011

Southern CROSS

Sydney Anglicans Connecting

O-spirituality

What Oprah really thinks about God

- The KJV turns 400
- Uncovering the real Christian comic

WITH THIS ISSUE:

Your guide to schools and study

PRINT POST APPROVED 255003101838 ISN 1445-0089

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We distentangle fact from fiction in the faith life of small screen icon Oprah Winfrey.

PHOTO: AFP / Robyn Beck

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Southern Cross
May 2011
volume 17 number 4

PUBLISHER: Anglican Media Sydney
PO Box W185, Parramatta Westfield 2150
PHONE: 02 8860 8860 FAX: 02 8860 8899
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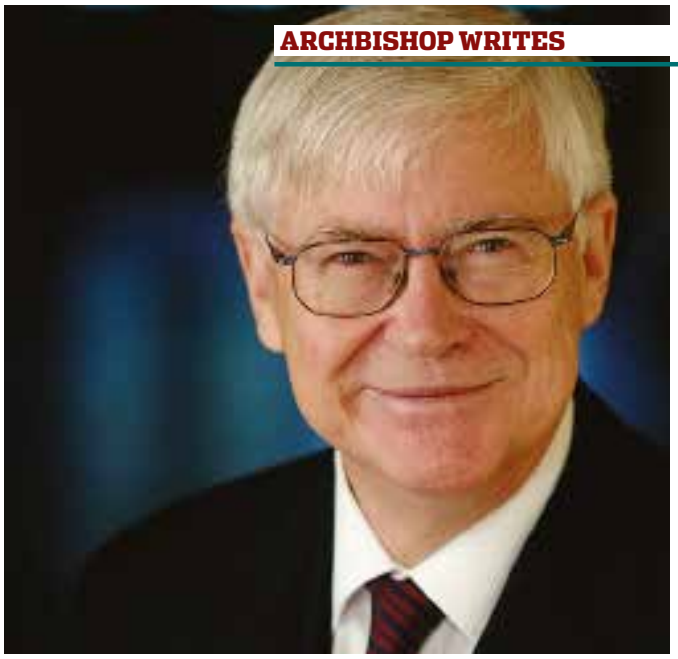
Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement. Inclusion of advertising material is at the discretion of the publisher.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Garry Joy
PHONE: 02 8860 8861 EMAIL: subs@anglicanmedia.com.au
$44.00 (incl. GST) per annum (Australia)

PRINTED BY: Torch Publishing Company, Bankstown, NSW

ARCHBISHOP WRITES



Expecting Glory

Dr Peter Jensen

I THINK we know glory when we see it. It takes our breath away and we cry out in wonder and delight and amazement.

Above all, God is glorious.

In the Bible the word for glory has overtones of blinding light and heavy weight. It is the glory, say, of a golden gown, heavy on the shoulders and dazzling to the eyes. Even earthly glory is the sort of thing for which crowds gather in excitement and expectation. What God's glory is like must be beyond description or imagining.

And yet that is not quite true either. John's gospel reminds us that the glory of Jesus is seen at his cross, where the Son of God was exposed to the view of the world. But to those with eyes to see, the glory of God was never more manifest. It was a righteous glory, the glory of his saving and holy power by which he redeemed the world, overcoming evil and sin. When we hear the gospel of Christ crucified and our eyes are opened by the power of God's Spirit, we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Here the glory of God can be best seen even by sinful creatures, because God has graciously revealed his glory to us in a way in which we may see it.

God's glory... must be beyond description or imagining.

But more than that.

We ourselves can receive and partake of his glory. We, too, can be glorified.

The Bible has a strange but true way of describing where we are in God's timetable. Because the decisive battle in world history has already been won in the death of Jesus, we can say truly that the future has already arrived. For that reason the Bible tells us that we are already resurrected, that we are already the sons of God, that we already have eternal life, that we are already new creatures, that we are already sanctified, that we are already in the age to come. But in each of these cases, it also tells us that we are waiting — that the future has not yet fully arrived — that we will be resurrected, will have eternal life, will be new creatures, will be sanctified, will inherit the age to come. We are in a time which is 'between the ages', part the old age and part the new.

Thus the Bible says that we are already glorified — we have already what the future of God has planned for us. But we are being glorified — we are in process, being changed from one degree of glory to another by the Lord who is the Spirit. Like sanctification, glory is a complete gift (so certain is it) and a process. The process of glorification is the process of our becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

We sometimes say of a Christian brother or sister who has died that they have 'gone to glory'. It is an evocative phrase. We may dwell with great profit and delight on the pictures of God's future which are spread out before us in the Book of Revelation. In particular the description of the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, with its streets paved with gold and having the glory of God in its midst is one which has always helped sustain Christian hope and joy. So, too, is the knowledge that the New Testament regards this future as being so sure that it speaks of us as having already been glorified.

But at the heart of the Christian hope is this: real glory is found in the presence and likeness of Christ. As we contemplate the future, it is his coming — his coming in glory — which must dominate our thoughts. And our hope may be summarised by saying that it is to be with him forever, it is to be in his service for ever, and finally and even more wonderfully, it is to be like him for ever. We will bear his image, be transformed into his likeness, we will share his goodness and be the sort of men and women we were always designed to be. That is glory!

How is it that we are Christians? How is it that we are saved? How is it that we may have confidence that God will share his glory with us? It is nothing in ourselves. We have nothing to boast of except God himself. It is all of God. It is not only that God saves us through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus, leaving us to turn to him in our own strength, so to speak. It requires also that he should elect us from all eternity, call us through his word, regenerate us through his Spirit, convert us through faith and repentance, justify us, sanctify us and finally glorify us. For all this, may his holy name be praised. 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.

Make a lasting gift. Improve life for the dying…like Will and his family.

How can we as Christians make a lasting mark, sharing the burden of others? One of the most loving gifts you can make is to support Hammond Care's major 'At Home' refurbishment of Wentworth Palliative Care Hospital Wahroonga.

This landmark being constructed expansion will be home to twenty providing high quality palliative care in hospitable Christian facilities.

Now Hammond Care plans to rebuild contemporary and should be responsive to provide new levels of physical, spiritual, emotional comfort, entertainment, good communication as well as comfort, including providing the final stages of those said in the Bethanie's place.

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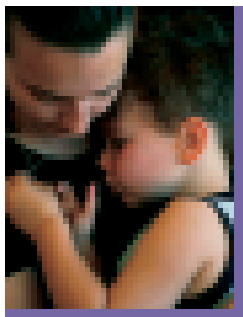

When Jane's husband Will was given only 3 months to live, she wanted Will to be at home with her and baby Josh as long as possible. So we did everything we could. We made adjustments to the home that took pressure off Jane. We visited regularly to help with pain and to support them. We helped them tie up loose ends. When the end came, William was at home with Jane, and we had done everything we could to support Jane through a most difficult and tragic time.

The renovation will bestow dozens of beds, two new TV – watch and help the cost of will create balconies. Overall, the common rooms and reception area benefits upgraded facilities and improve.

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ON THE RADIO

Hatcher hosts Open House

TV news presenter Leigh Hatcher (right) has become host of *Open House* on Sydney Christian radio station Hope 103.2. The 8-11pm Sunday program features in-depth interviews and commentary on life, faith and culture.

Mr Hatcher has had an extensive career in radio and television, including as a senior correspondent for Channel 7 and has been a presenter at Sky News Australia for the past 10 years. In 2005, he wrote a book about his battle with chronic fatigue syndrome, titled *I'm Not Crazy, I'm Just A Little Unwell.*

"Though most of my career has been in television, radio has always been my first love and so much of my life, faith and work for nearly four decades will culminate in this amazing opportunity," Mr Hatcher said. He will remain as morning news presenter at Sky News.

The appointment means Mr Hatcher and fellow Sydney Anglican Kel Richards will both be on the radio on Sundays. *Sunday Night with Kel Richards* airs on 2CH.

Commission report imminent

The Archbishop's Strategic Commission on Structure, Funding and Governance is on track to deliver its report to the Archbishop in the first half of June 2011.

The commission has now met 13 times.

In addition to receiving submissions from Synod members, the commission has also met on separate occasions with the Property Trust and the Mission Board Strategy Committee.

The chairman of the commission, Peter Kell, has met with the chairman of GAB/SDS and the commission has arranged to meet with the board of GAB/SDS early this month.

After delivering its report in June, it is anticipated the Archbishop may authorise the commission to have further discussions about its recommendations with a number of diocesan organisations.

CREATING COMMUNITY

Granville reaches out with new Chinese services

MAKING a Western church service accessible to Chinese immigrants is not easy. St Mark's, Granville noticed a distinct lack of services catering to the people of its community so have started three new Sunday ministries.

David Wong came to Granville last year and noticed that what St Mark's offered wasn't catering to the large community of Chinese immigrants in Granville and the surrounding suburbs.

"There was only one service on Sunday, a choral Eucharist," Mr Wong said. "We needed to offer something different to reach out to the Chinese people around us."

The church has started two new services, one conducted in Mandarin and one in Cantonese. According to Mr Wong, it is traditionally very difficult to minister to Mandarin speakers.

"They come from an atheistic heritage," he said. "And it can be very hard to change that and to get them to come to church. They also move churches very often which is hard."

However the service, which started late last year, has seen both numerical and spiritual growth. There is now a regular attendance of between 20 and 30 people and a number of new members have become Christians.

The church also recently started a Cantonese service that is being well supported by the local community.

The other new venture for the church, which started in March, is Granville Youth Ministry (GYM), which is run by volunteer youth leaders each Sunday afternoon.

Mr Wong believes that this ministry is vital to encourage and build up the youth of the church.

"There are young people at all the congregations but we needed a fellowship just for them," he said. "To begin with we want them to get to know each other. In the future I hope that many youth leaders will come from this ministry."

Currently in its early stages, GYM has about 15 regular members. As the group becomes more coherent it plans to start evangelism in the local area.

BELTS TO TIGHTEN FURTHER

The GAB recommends lower distributions

THE Glebe Administration Board has recommended a lower distribution from the Diocesan Endowment for Synod ministry grants to bodies such as Moore College, Youthworks and Anglican Media.

Before the Global Financial Crisis, annual distributions were more than $10 million. After the losses of 2008, Synod agreed to an immediate cut in distributions to $5.4 million for 2010 and $5.25 million for 2011.

The GAB has now recommended the maximum sustainable level, to allow real value of the Endowment to be maintained, is $3.6 million. The Mission Board will bring recommendations to Standing Committee on the allocation of the money and a budget will be voted on in October.

Income distributions from St Andrew's House have had to be suspended to fund refurbishment work and leasing costs after a major tenant vacates later this year. This has significantly reduced the income of the Endowment of the See, which pays the costs of the Archbishop and the regional bishops, and led to this year's special levy on parishes.

A report to Standing Committee in March said the effects of the levy had varied. Some parishes were philosophical about the need to bridge the funding gap through the one-off assessment, while others were upset that local ministry had suffered as a result.

ANGLICARE

The chaplain's chaplain

David Pettett at home with his dog Jack.

THE Rev David Pettett has been chosen as the new assistant director, chaplaincy for Anglicare Sydney, replacing the Rev Graham McKay.

Anglicare's director of community care, Ian Jackson, said "It's great to have David on board... with his many years of experience and expertise, he will be a great leader of our chaplaincy team".

Mr Pettett served as a missionary with OMF in Japan and as a curate and rector across the Diocese before taking up the first of his chaplaincy appointments — with the Royal Australian Navy Reserve in 1992.

Mr Pettett became a chaplain to the Prince of Wales Hospital campus in 1998, gaining an MA in pastoral care and counselling in 2003. He moved to prison chaplaincy at Silverwater in 2004 and to Lithgow Correctional Centre four years later.

"I think chaplaincy is the coalface of ministry," Mr Pettett says. "Certainly for me prison chaplaincy has been the best ministry I've ever done because you're dealing directly with people in hard places... they approach the chaplain to ask questions: 'Where is God?'; 'How is God in this crisis I'm in?'

"I'm very keen to see chaplaincy develop and for Anglicare Sydney to be a strong evangelical voice within the chaplaincy community, so that the way we do chaplaincy becomes a model for how Christians ought to be doing chaplaincy.

"I also think we've got a great opportunity with the partnership we have with parishes and the interest people in the parishes are showing in chaplaincy — knowing it's a real area of need that we can reach out and touch people's lives, introduce Christ to them and help them work through whatever they have to deal with at that point."

DISASTER RELIEF

Learning to excel in the grace of giving

JUDY ADAMSON

AS many Sydneysiders sat in safety and watched homes, towns and lives destroyed across Australia and overseas in flood, earthquake and tsunami, many churches felt challenged to take action.

Parishes have run everything from dinner events to art shows and car washes to raise money for Christchurch, Japan or flood-affected Australia, while others sought for extra ways to provide help and support.

The parish of St John's, Maroubra decided to find a church and community to support in Queensland after the floods and linked up with St George's, Theodore, 3½ hours south-west of Gladstone in the Diocese of Rockhampton.

"[After the floods] I knew a large number of our people would respond by 'giving to charity' but I think Christian giving has a fuller shape to it than that," says St John's rector, Jim Crosweller. "I wanted to take the opportunity to disciple people in 2 Corinthians 8 [and] be urgent about the need to be sacrificial in their giving."

Over a three-month period church members prayed for the Queensland community, made donations and then took part in a big election day event in March — asking voters for donations, selling homemade treats, sausages and Devonshire teas and also making connections with the community through conversations and prayers in the church.

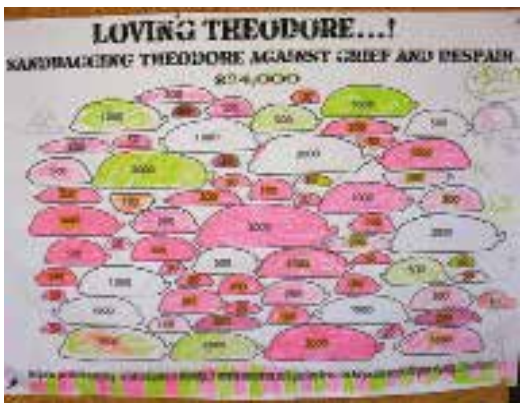
Almost $28,000 was raised, 10 per cent of which will go directly to the church in Theodore, while the rest is being given to the town's rebuilding board.

"I was really excited that people from Sunday school to our senior fellowship all responded in some way," Mr Crosweller says. "And, as is always the way with the kingdom, great generosity came from unexpected quarters."

Over at the North Rocks church plant of St Paul's, Carlingford, Fiona Denton, a clinical psychologist in the congregation, was contacted by St John's Latimer Square in Christchurch to ask if she could fly over and help give church leaders guidance in how to reach out to people amid their trauma.

The minister at North Rocks, Adrian Russell, thought it was important they send Fiona to New Zealand, so a one-off offering was asked for. "We wanted to love and support the people of Christchurch… and that was a practical way in which we could help," he says. Members gave enough money to cover Fiona's airfares and various other expenses of her visit.

At St Paul's, Castle Hill the leadership team sought a partnership with a church in Queensland, similar to what they had done with a Victorian church after the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. A special offering was arranged but then — after seeking an Anglican church to work with and coming up empty-handed — they rang a parishioner's contact at a Baptist church in Gatton, 45 minutes' drive east of Toowoomba.



The "sandbag" chart tracking funds raised for Theodore in Queensland by members of St John's, Maroubra.

The rector of St Paul's, John Gray, says he told Gatton leaders that, "We see the need to care for people physically as well as winning people for Jesus and we really do want to partner with you. I explained we would serve wherever they would like us to serve and go wherever they would have us."

With the donation from Castle Hill the Gatton church will now be able to help locals pay for everything from car registrations to new washing machines to fencing wire. A preacher from St Paul's will also fill in at Gatton at the end of this month so the pastor can take a holiday, and plans are under way to run a family camp later in the year.

"There will be no cost to Gatton in any of this — any costs are borne by us," Mr Gray explains. "We're in for the long haul. We just want to serve them and bless them in whatever way they want us to."

WORKSHOP HELP

Dealing with depression boosts Cathedral seminars

IT may seem incongruous that an afternoon on the 'black dog' of depression could boost the spirits of anyone, but for Canon Christopher Allan, it was a highlight.

"It's one of the best ministry seminars I've ever been involved in," says Canon Allan, who leads the healing ministry at St Andrew's Cathedral.

"Dealing with Depression" began a series of workshops the ministry is running at the Healing Centre, Golden Grove, at Newtown. "The object is to make the workshops practical," Canon Allan said. "They're not like Katoomba conferences which are more directed toward teaching. These events aim to encourage and equip — to give people the skills of what to say and how to do it."

The depression seminar took place in March and featured Bible teaching on the issue, a session by a psychologist and sufferers of depression describing their lives.


Christopher Allan leads the seminar.

"So much of the information out there is not Christian. People had no idea what it was like. We had people who had children with depression. They didn't know how to get beyond really brief, unthinking answers that can be just hurtful. The stuff that we say, that ministers say, that Bible study groups say. Things like, 'Well, just pray about it'."

Extensive positive feedback makes Canon Allan and his team think they are on the right track. Already two other churches in Sydney have asked to replicate the workshops in their own areas. In April, a seminar on "Dealing with Difficult Relationships" was addressed by the Rev Justin Moffatt and family therapist Jenny Brown and more than 95 people attended.

Canon Allan leads a segment in all seminars showing people how to pray for and with people who are suffering.

Other workshops this year will focus on addiction, divorce, anxiety, grieving and work burnout.

more info:
www.sydneyheal.com

PHOTO: Brian Tran

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Oxygen

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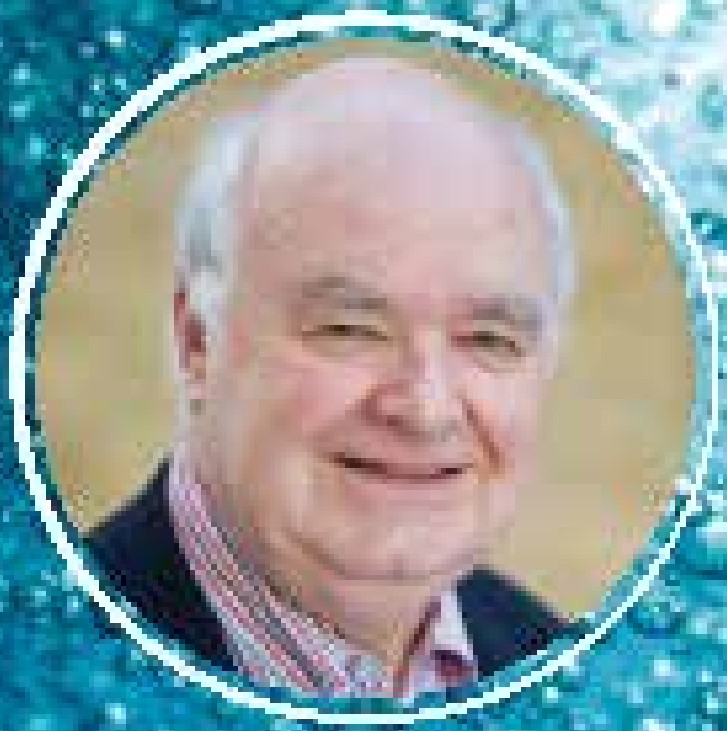
WITH JOHN PIPER



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Be refreshed, inspired and invigorated from the scriptures
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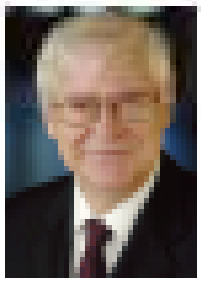


'The Oxygen Conference is fortunate to have two men with such a world-wide reputation as its speakers. I regard Professor Lennox and Dr Piper very highly and trust that the conference will be a time of great blessing to all who attend.'

Peter Jensen
Archbishop of Sydney

Oxygen 11: The National Pastors' & Leaders' Conference

For all those engaged in gospel ministry – pastors, leaders, preachers, chaplains, youth and children's workers, teachers and students. Bring your spouse. Bring your team.

Monday August 29 – Wednesday August 31, 2011
Australian Technology Park, Sydney, NSW
oxygen.kcc.org.au

KYCK FUNDRAISER

Scripture's sausage support

Youth group kids tuck in to some fundraising snags up at KYCK.

TARA FARRUGIA

THE smell of sausages was in the air during the KYCK convention at Katoomba last month. For the first time, KYCK teamed up with Scripture teaching boards across Sydney to host three big barbecues over each weekend of KYCK. Volunteers and youth groups worked together to cook, buy and eat,

raising more than $8000 for Scripture teachers and high school ministry.

When Mabel Park, KYCK's event co-ordinator, first heard the suggestion to raise funds for special religious education (SRE) teachers, she thought it was a great idea. "Initially what we were going to do was provide a barbecue for everyone," she explains. "But Andy Stevenson [a KYCK committee member] thought, 'Let's make it a fundraiser and get SRE involved'."

Crowds and campers at KYCK responded with enthusiasm. "Lots of people signed up for it," Mabel says. "We've had over 500 people each weekend join in. They're supporting a ministry they're involved in, whether they are in youth ministry or in high school."

Past fundraising efforts have involved selling hoodies to bring in interstate delegates and setting up a trailer to help youth on the streets in the Blue Mountains but this is the first time KYCK has raised funds to support SRE.

Jason Moss from the Campbelltown area's high school ministry board travelled up the mountain with a carload of volunteers to run the barbecue on KYCK's first weekend. He was greatly encouraged by those who supported the fundraising, as the money raised will have a huge impact on his ministry.

"It's a huge help," he says. "Scripture teachers have to raise their income every year. This takes the pressure off worrying about funds and it means that we can focus on teaching people about Jesus."

CHURCH RECONSTRUCTION

Barneys build 'racing forward'

PHOTOS: Allan Pidgeon

Main photo: builders construct formwork on the recently poured slab. Inset: (from left) Mike Paget (rector), Robert Tong (chairman of the Property Trust), John Creelman and Trevor Ratcliff (Mission Property Committee) inspect the site.

DONNING a hard hat to oversee building progress on the new St Barnabas', Broadway, Barneys' rector the Rev Mike Paget was equally hard-headed about what's needed to finish the project. "We've got $3.3 million still to raise" Mr Paget says about the $16.5 million construction. "We're tremendously pleased by what has been achieved but we still have our eyes on that final amount," he told *Southern Cross*.

The new church, replacing the one that burned down in 2006, is substantially bigger than any other building project in the Diocese in the past decade. It is also the first city church built in more than a century.

A 'demolition service' was held at the site in February, 151 years to the day after the first service was held in the old building. Clearing began immediately. During the work, a time capsule was discovered under the old hall, prompting congregation members to think about the messages or objects they would like to leave for future generations when the new Barneys opens.

Mr Paget and the churchwardens toured the site last month with members of the Property Trust and Bishop Robert Forsyth. Because of access issues heavy equipment has had to be lifted in by crane but the area has now been fully excavated. The concrete pour for the base and ramp has been completed and construction has begun on other formwork.

Mr Paget says it's a big achievement for a relatively poor parish with a significant number of students — "it's amazing to see it happen so quickly" — and is optimistic about a completion date in early 2012: "I'd love to be back in our own building in time for the start of the university year".

Progress is being tracked at www.barneys.org.au, where donations can be made to the 'Raise the roof' fund and web visitors can also have a virtual tour of the new Barneys.

MISSION IDEA OF THE MONTH

Fair Trade Fortnight

From May 7-22 a Fair Trade Fortnight will run in Australia and New Zealand encouraging people and organisations to 'show off your swap'.

'Show off your swap' is designed to highlight how the change to fair trade products can make a huge difference to the people and the economies of developing countries.

The Rev Michael Robinson, rector at Christ Church, Blacktown, moved a resolution at the 2010 Synod which encourages churches to use fair trade products wherever possible.

The El Guabo Association in Ecuador has democratically decided to spend 80 per cent of the fair trade premium on education, health care, environmental and other social programs. The remaining 20 per cent is spent on infrastructure improvements such as packing stations and warehouses.

The fair trade principle is to source suppliers from places where the local producer gets a fair return on his work," he explains. "It is also about using suppliers who don't exploit children."

Mr Robinson believes it is vital for churches to support fair trade organisations wherever possible.

"If we are to love our neighbours, we need to do the right thing by them," he says. "It might cost a bit more to buy fair trade products but that is OK. Love is meant to be costly."

By supporting fair trade Mr Robinson believes churches can help developing countries escape a cycle of poverty.

"When children are forced into slave labour in countries like Ghana, they don't get an education," he says. "However, if children aren't forced into work and get an education the country can slowly be released from poverty."

Kuapa Kokoo in Ghana, a farmer-run co-operative representing 50,000 small-scale cocoa producers, has invested in a range of business and community projects such as schools and day-care centres, health, water and banks.

While the support of fair trade is growing, Mr Robinson understands it can sometimes be difficult to find fair trade products.

"It's not always easy," he says. "Sometimes you have to look in a few different places. I do encourage churches to consider [the Synod resolution] and do what they can, where practical."

TEARS TURN TO JOY

Suprised by God at work conference

Liane and her daughter Poppy, around the time they began attending church at St Stephen's, Normanhurst.

JUDY ADAMSON

WHEN Liane Clout took a seat at the non-denominational Sunday church service her work convention was offering, she didn't have the least interest in hearing about God.

"I just went there because I wanted good seats for the main session [later]," she says with a laugh.

God had other ideas. Much to her surprise, Liane found the service oddly comforting; it reduced her to tears. She made a point of attending church services at subsequent conventions — and was always in tears afterwards.

"I couldn't even work out why I was crying," she says. "But at one of these [services] someone down the front said, 'If anyone would like to find out more information but doesn't know where to start, we can direct you to a local church'. So I went down the front when I thought no-one was watching me."

Liane was still in tears and the lady she spoke to suggested what she needed most was a church that offered regular Bible reading — somewhere where she could "hear God's word and listen to the truth of it".

"I literally went home and googled 'Bible-reading church'," Liane says. Among the options that came up was St Stephen's, Normanhurst, which had a 5pm family service — a perfect time for her daughter Poppy, who was only five at the time — and they have been attending there for the past two years.

Liane also began attending Bible study run by Allison, the wife of rector Colin Watson, and is always full of questions after studies as well as church. "I don't always understand [what's being said] but I understand the message behind it and after church Colin directs me to parts of the Bible to help me understand that better," she says.

"I just feel like a big hole's been filled. I've learned to pray. I've learned to hand over things... I'm a pretty strong chick and I can do everything — I fill my days and night with stuff that I need to do in order to make our family work — but I've learned to hand a lot of that over and let go of control."

A single parent since Poppy was 11 months old, Liane worked hard to create her own business and earn enough to keep their heads above water. She admits now that she found the struggle and effort to "get ahead" very empty and the workload and effort caused her a good deal of stress. Not so now.

"I still have a very full life but we have a more loving life because it's more faith-based," she says. "I have a joy in my life because I don't have a big 'Why am I doing it?' — I have a purpose. It wasn't that long ago I felt like I was handing it over and allowing a lot of my life to be directed rather than trying to push it uphill. It's hugely warming and comforting... and it's made a whole lot of difference to how I get through my day. I feel that I'm not just verbalising being a child of God — it really feels like I am now.

"And my daughter, if I put her to bed and go to walk out without praying she says, 'Mum, Mum, we've got to pray'. She really values it — it's made a huge difference to her life. She talks about God all the time, refers to him in things that she's done and I just love that."

Liane knows God will be with her always and is still blown away by the thought. "I always had the feeling there was something missing from my life and that things weren't quite right, even when everything was alright," she says. "I don't get that feeling any more."

Fair trade: what can churches do?

The main area where churches can make the swap to fair trade products is with the tea and coffee they use.

Products sourced from fair trade suppliers will feature a prominent logo and endorsement from a fair trade company such as Fairtrade Association or Rainforest Alliance. Oxfam also sells fair trade products.

Tribesandnations.com.au is an online store which sells a selection of fair trade products from consumables to homewares and stationery.

Jinta Sports (www.jintasports.com.au) sells a variety of sports balls certified by the Fairtrade Assocation and guaranteed to be made without child labour.

To assist churches in making the swap, here is a list of fair trade products that can be bought in your local supermarket.

- Tea: Coles and Aldi own brands, Nerada, Nature's Cuppa, QI, Scarborough Fair
- Chocolate: Aldi, Cadbury (milk chocolate Dairy Milk products only), Chocolatier
- Coffee: Coles and Aldi own brands, Bean Ground & Drunk, Global Café Direct, Jasper, Republica, Robert Timms (Earth Blend only), Scarborough Fair
- Drinking Chocolate: Jasper

KJV 400

Anniversary assumes biblical proportions

CELEBRATION services, books and marathon public readings have culminated this month as Christians celebrate the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Version of the Bible.

May 2, 2011 marked 400 years since the KJV appeared in 1611, seven years after it was commissioned during the reign of King James I.

Across Britain churches have been staging public readings. The BBC ran one reading live on air and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London staged a cover-to-cover reading in the lead-up to Easter.

It took 20 actors 69 hours to read all 1189 chapters — a total of 788,280 words read aloud — within the Globe auditorium.

The leaders of the new atheist movement, Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens paid tribute to the KJV, albeit as literature.

"Though I am sometimes reluctant to admit it, there really is something 'timeless' in the Tyndale/King James synthesis," Hitchens said in his commentary featured in *Vanity Fair*.

"For generations, it provided a common stock of references and allusions, rivalled only by Shakespeare in this respect. It resounded in the minds and memories of literate people, as well as of those who acquired it only by listening."

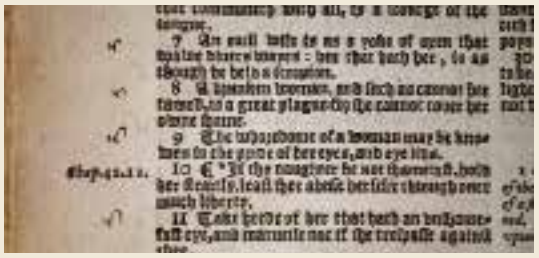
British TV presenter Melvyn Bragg wrote a book to commemorate the anniversary, saying the KJV "has a fair claim to be the greatest single force in shaping the English-speaking world".

Also released is a film *KJB: The Book That Changed the World*, hosted by British actor John Rhys-Davies, tracing the origin, history and significance of the King James translation.

Historic bibles on show

An original King James 1611 Bible is part of an exhibition at Parliament House, Canberra in May-June and Sydney's Annandale Village Church in July-August.

"The Book That Changed The World" exhibition has been organised by the Bible Society and will also display other historic bibles.



Included in the exhibition is a forerunner of the King James Bible, a 1607 Geneva Bible (above), with notes in the margin penned by William Shakespeare. Of particular interest to Australians will be the embellished Bible presented in 1901 to Lord Hopetoun, Australia's first Governor-General, to mark the inauguration of the new nation.

Governor Hunter's Bible (right), a 1775 King James edition, is the one Hunter brought to Australia with the First Fleet. The elaborate leather cover was carved by a convict.

Moore College is planning a special KJV celebration conference in July (see p21).

www.kjv11.com.au

Pittsburgh Anglicans still talking property

The Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh has lost a court appeal over its property but is still in negotiations with the Episcopal Church.

In 2008, after increasing liberal influence in the national church, the majority of the original Episcopal dioceses voted to leave and formed the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh.

However, a year later the Pennsylvania court awarded the property assets to the Episcopal Diocese, meaning those congregations could not use the buildings they had built and paid for while a part of the Episcopal Church.

In April the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania denied the Anglican Diocese a rehearing of the original decision. A spokesman for the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh, David Trautman, said that its leaders intend to appeal the latest decision but that property negotiations will continue.

Already two parishes that left the Episcopal Church have reached agreements with the Episcopal Diocese for property rights. "What we are really looking for is a settlement or settlements which allow our parishes not only to survive but to thrive," Mr Trautman said.

MONTAGNARD STRUGGLE

Vietnamese Christians harshly persecuted

PHOTO: Jeremy Weate

Montagnard children near Sapa in north-western Vietnam.

RUSSELL POWELL

THE Vietnamese Government has intensified repression of indigenous minority Christians known as the Montagnards.

Human Rights Watch reports that systematic persecution of Montagnards has intensified, particularly those belonging to unregistered house churches.

Such churches are outside the control of the official Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam and their members are labelled "Dega Protestants," which authorities allege is not a legitimate religious group but a cover for a Montagnard independence movement.

Human Rights Watch says it has evidence that government officials have forced hundreds of Montagnard Catholics and Protestants to renounce their religion in public criticism sessions, violating internationally protected rights to freedom of religion and conscience. Those who resist and insist on their right to independent worship face beatings, arrest and imprisonment.

"The Vietnamese Government has been steadily tightening the screws on independent Montagnard religious groups, claiming they are using religion to incite unrest," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch.

More than 250 Montagnards are in prison or awaiting trial charged with national security crimes such as "undermining national solidarity". According to Open Doors, Vietnam is ranked 18th on the list of countries with the worst Christian persecution.

In neighbouring Laos, persecution of Christians is also rising. Last month Laotian and Vietnamese troops killed four Christian Hmong women after confiscating their Bible.

The American Centre for Public Policy Analysis reports that Vietnamese troops and secret police from Hanoi have been deployed in key provinces in Laos to boost Communist Party efforts to persecute Christian believers who seek to worship outside of strict state monitoring and control.

The CPAA claims two of the women were raped by soldiers before all four were shot at point blank range in full view of their husbands and 26 children. The families have now disappeared.

Letters

Sydney's weak liturgical baby

A QUESTION in your recent issue asked, "Are some churches in danger of throwing the spiritual baby out with the liturgical bathwater?" (*SC*, April). The answer is "No". We have retained the baby but instead of a lusty infant nurtured on weekly use of the prayer book it is emaciated, unaware of its deepest needs and of how to meet them.

A few years ago, when the "white prayer book" was foisted on the congregation where I was a member I wrote to your paper saying that over a period of time psalms would no longer have the prominent position in our services they had enjoyed since the Reformation. I was wrong: they disappeared almost overnight. I cannot recall joining with others in reading psalms aloud in an Anglican service over the past eight years or so. Yet such usage ensured Presbyterians and Anglicans retained (perhaps unconsciously) a strong concept of God's sovereignty.

In the introduction to his book *Confess Your Sins* John Stott quotes a correspondent to *The Times* who "found it disconcerting whenever he attended a Church of England service to be reminded of his sins". To which Stott wisely commented, "We do so for the simple reason that we are realists". We need the reminder once more.

Today we hear young people refuse to use the prayer book. Have they ever been taught how? As far as I know there are only two directions to youth in the Scriptures: "Remember your creator" and "Submit to your elders". The first man to confess Christ in a housing area where I was a student minister was illiterate but in a short time he came to follow the prayer book, join in the responses and feel a true member of the congregation. If he could do it then, so can many today.

The prayer book can be made as relevant and beneficial today as when Cranmer drew it up. Let's nourish that baby!

Donald Howard
Elderslie

THE article entitled *Service, Schmervice: getting liturgy right* is a timely reminder that formal liturgy has a vital role to play in sustaining authentic and orthodox worship. My experience is too often that when I visit churches with informal liturgies there may be two observable problems: the format of the service is idiosyncratically at the mercy of the leader and so vital matters such as confession, corporate acknowledgement of belief and prayers for something more substantial than Aunt Madge's ingrown toenail may be missing; the congregation spectates rather than participates in the service.

The traditional liturgies and modern liturgical formats can guard against these deficiencies as well as being powerful teaching tools of orthodox theology and faith. I learnt how to pray and what to pray for from my boyhood with the collects of the prayer book.

All service formats need good planning and dynamic leadership, coupled with opportunities for the congregation to be personally engaged.

Dr Timothy Wright
North Sydney

BISHOP Forsyth is a little quick to call the time of reaction to liturgy as coming to an end.

My universal experience at a grassroots level is that, to anyone in the baby boomer generation or younger, liturgy is still a dirty word. Thoroughgoing evangelical churches and parishes that have never abandoned written liturgies are described pejoratively as being "Anglo-Catholic" and presbyters who seek to redress the excesses of reaction are vilified or even run out of their parishes. And so many of our churches have abandoned the congregational confession in favour of the priestly intercession of the all-powerful service leader, or nothing at all and the saying of creeds is excluded. Those seeking to temper the spirit of reaction are called "too Anglican", as if that is a crime, or "seeking to return us to Rome".

Meanwhile, chaos theory reigns in our congregations and our reaction against written forms is leading more and more churches into lowest common denominator vacuums free of good theology and pedagogy.

Reaction to liturgy, prayer books and the use of extracts from the same is alive and well in every corner of this Diocese and everywhere in between.

Rev Glenn Farrell
Katoomba

Our generous readers

Readers may have noticed a letter in last month's *SC* from an inmate at the Kirkconell Correctional Centre in Bathurst — one who had received back copies of the paper from his minister and found them a great blessing.

Of even greater blessing to us here was the news that, within a week of April's *SC* being published, someone had contacted us to pay for a subscription to be sent to the Bathurst jail. We are delighted by the gracious gift a member of our Diocese has chosen to make and it is also a great encouragement to know that the stories and ideas within the pages of *Southern Cross* can make a difference in people's lives.

It is also important to thank the parishes and individuals who cover the cost of delivery of *Southern Cross* to parishes and centres who cannot afford the annual charge. It's a great act of partnership in the gospel.

We hope to continue as an encouragement to readers this year, just as you — in so many ways — are a source of encouragement to us.

God's goodness amid disaster

I CERTAINLY agreed with everything Michael Jensen wrote about what to say to people regarding natural disasters (*SC*, April). Having recently been in the midst of one (I was in our vicarage over the road from the collapsed CTV building in Christchurch), with people from our congregation affected at every level by the earthquake, I can confirm Michael's words are indeed wise and helpful.

However I did wonder if Tip 4 was a little defensive: 'Say that God is in control but don't charge him with evil'. Instead I would say, 'Comfort people with the reassurance that God is in control and is good'. I have found the doctrine of God's sovereignty to indeed be one of sweet comfort at this time. And I am not alone. As I drove a man to see the Pyne Gould building where his wife and the mother of his 4-year-old son had been killed he said, "I find it strangely comforting to know this wasn't just some random or out-of-control series of events but there is a good God who has some good purpose in this which I don't understand".

It is a strange but nevertheless a true and genuine comfort that works in the darkest hour. Calvin's *Institutes* Book I, chapter 17, sections 10-11 spell this out with a pastoral sensitivity we might not expect from a book of systematic theology. In contrast, comments I and many other Bible believers found most discouraging were Christian people who declared this was not 'an act of God'. Paradoxically they thanked him when no-one was found to have died in the cathedral.

When Christians deny God's sovereignty in the face of disaster yet thank him when good things happen it is no wonder people like Peter FitzSimons mock us, and God. They might hesitate to do so if we asked, along with Amos, "When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?"

Rev Peter Collier
Assistant Minister
St John's Latimer Square
Christchurch NZ

MICHAEL Jensen's article "The God of Natural Disasters" (*SC*, April) raises all the usual questions we agonise over when natural events within the control of an omnipotent and loving God wreak terrible suffering and death on innocents.

It is unfortunate that he has not been able to construct any coherent theodicy or to give any explanation other than a list of "Tips for talking to non-Christians" that sounds like the advice given to a politician by his spin doctor before an awkward press conference.

Marshall Smither
Manly

Gospel beyond parish

GIVEN the effort expended on fostering the clergy attitudes essential for a Mission Area to be effective, it was encouraging to read on the mission page of March's *SC* that "Aleks [Pinter, the rector] said we could also come to church at Windsor but given we were going to be living in Emu Plains it made more sense to attend church there — and he recommended that as a good thing to do".

Good on you Aleks for having a view of gospel growth bigger than the parish of Windsor.

Terry Bowers,
St Mark's, Freshwater

Keep translation simple

DR Philip McKerrow (*SC*, April) is correct in stating that the language being translated into should be the language spoken by the intended readers. This was also Martin Luther's approach. He said, "We must ask the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common person in the market about this. We must be guided by their tongue, their manner of their speech and do our translating accordingly. Then they will understand it and recognise that we are speaking German to them."

The New Living Translation is a good version for Australia as it uses the English spoken by ordinary Australians.

Dr Peter Carroll
Linguist and Bible translator

Politicised foster care

THE Johns foster case (*SC*, April) is symptomatic of political groups using legal proceedings to further a political agenda and then releasing press releases that say a lot more than the judgment.

Any person who actually read the judgment in the context of previous English legal decisions (which were binding on the High Court) would have found the most exceptional part of the decision the fact that the case ever made it into court. In its judgment the High Court, which is a relatively low court in the English system (unlike here where it is the pinnacle), struggles to understand why the matter is before it, as the Johns had not had their application to be foster carers rejected.

The court even asked the parties to agree on some questions for it to decide and the parties could not even agree why they were there. In the end, the court decision probably stands for nothing more than the proposition that authorities, in deciding on the appropriateness of foster carers, can take into account the proposed carers' attitudes to sexuality. Hardly earth-shattering news.

Ironically in NSW a homosexual couple attempted similar "stunt" litigation by going to a Christian foster agency. Not surprisingly they were rejected by the foster agency and litigation for discrimination ensued. That couple could have gone to a number of other agencies and become foster carers without their sexuality being an issue. But they went to a Christian one, no doubt because they wanted to make a political statement through the court process. They were ultimately unsuccessful but not before they caused the foster agency in question significant expense, including the need to take the case to the NSW Court of Appeal.

Steven Nicholson
Solicitor

Letters should be less than 200 words

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

Reader's essay of the month

Don't make God a lolly dispenser

While we might long for a relationship SCOTT MONK considers the love of God when some of our prayers are answered with a 'no'.

GUMBALL machines were great fun as a kid, especially broken ones. While the shopkeeper wasn't watching, you could twist the coin slot and get handfuls of free lollies to stuff into your gob until your guts fizzed and foamed and swelled, as you turned spearmint green.

Sometimes we treat God like a gumball machine. We insert a prayer and immediately expect our heartfelt desires to pop out.

So what happens when we're left empty-handed, especially when searching for a spouse?

This struggle is shared by many single Christians across Sydney, as broached in February's *Southern Cross*. They grow disheartened as they watch people who bed-hop, disobey and blaspheme God's holy name easily find a partner while they have their own prayers for marriage seemingly overlooked.

February's article rightly says that nowhere in the Bible are Christians promised they will find a wife or a husband — foremost we're to submit our lives to God. But the notion of the Bible lacking guidance on how to find one's life partner needs debating.

God never authored a *Dummy's Guide to Finding a Spouse* because romance would be reduced to a mere scone recipe: add one cup of man to one cup of woman, melt both hearts, throw in one tablespoon of sugary moments and let their mates stir. Thankfully, he makes each coupling unique.

For single Christians, the vital rule in finding a spouse is fully trusting God's sovereignty. Marriage — and hence finding one's partner — is not a random act, just as one's birth, salvation and death are not random.

As Jeremiah 29:11 states, "I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

That's the promise of an active, intimate and wise God. The Lord doesn't just sit on his throne reading the comedy, *The God Delusion*, only to glance up when we knock over a vase of sin. He's always in control.

The Bible's go-get-'em-girl Ruth is a perfect example. She's poor, a widow and an immigrant from a pagan nation. She's not exactly going to be the first picked on *The Hebrew Farmer Wants a Wife*.

Led by God's hand through death and famine to Israel, she puts her trust in the Lord, who continues to steer her unknowingly, day by day, towards the faithful Boaz. She not only gets her fella, she finds a predetermined spot in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, we need to accept God's perfect timing in our lives without anxiety (Philippians 4:4-7) or worry (Luke 12:22-31).

Joseph knew faithful suffering (Genesis 39-41). Thrown in prison for at least two years for fleeing adultery, doubt would have constantly dripped on his mind but again God's plan was bigger than those walls.

During these periods of longing, we singles need to reflect: are we ready for marriage *spiritually*? Too often, we overlook passages about the responsibilities of husbands and wives, without applying them first to our lives.

For single men, are they ready to obey Ephesians 5:25-33, 1 Peter 3:7 and 1 Corinthians 6:18-20? Do single women honestly accept the requirements of 1 Peter 3:1-6 and Ephesians 5:22-24?

Also, does our concept of love towards a future spouse, other people and God reflect 1 Corinthians 13:4-8? Is it patient and kind? Protecting, trusting, persevering and hopeful? Does it reject pride, rudeness, selfishness, anger and wickedness?

Loneliness is acidic. Doubts are the worms of hell. And yes, believers and non-believers will be blessed with marriage at different times of their lives — that's God's will. But he may delay our dreams because he's planned a greater, later blessing.

Ultimately, his loving power is shown when he answers some prayers with a firm "no". Just as God won't give his children a snake when they ask for a fish (Matthew 7:10), he won't allow us to court or marry our desired beau if he knows they'll be disastrous for our future self and especially our salvation.

Besides, the opposite is frightening — a god who always says yes. Love, and hence marriage, would be like gumballs: easily dispensed and equally replaceable. SC

Scott Monk is a journalist, novelist, Moore College student and reformed lolly thief.

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**

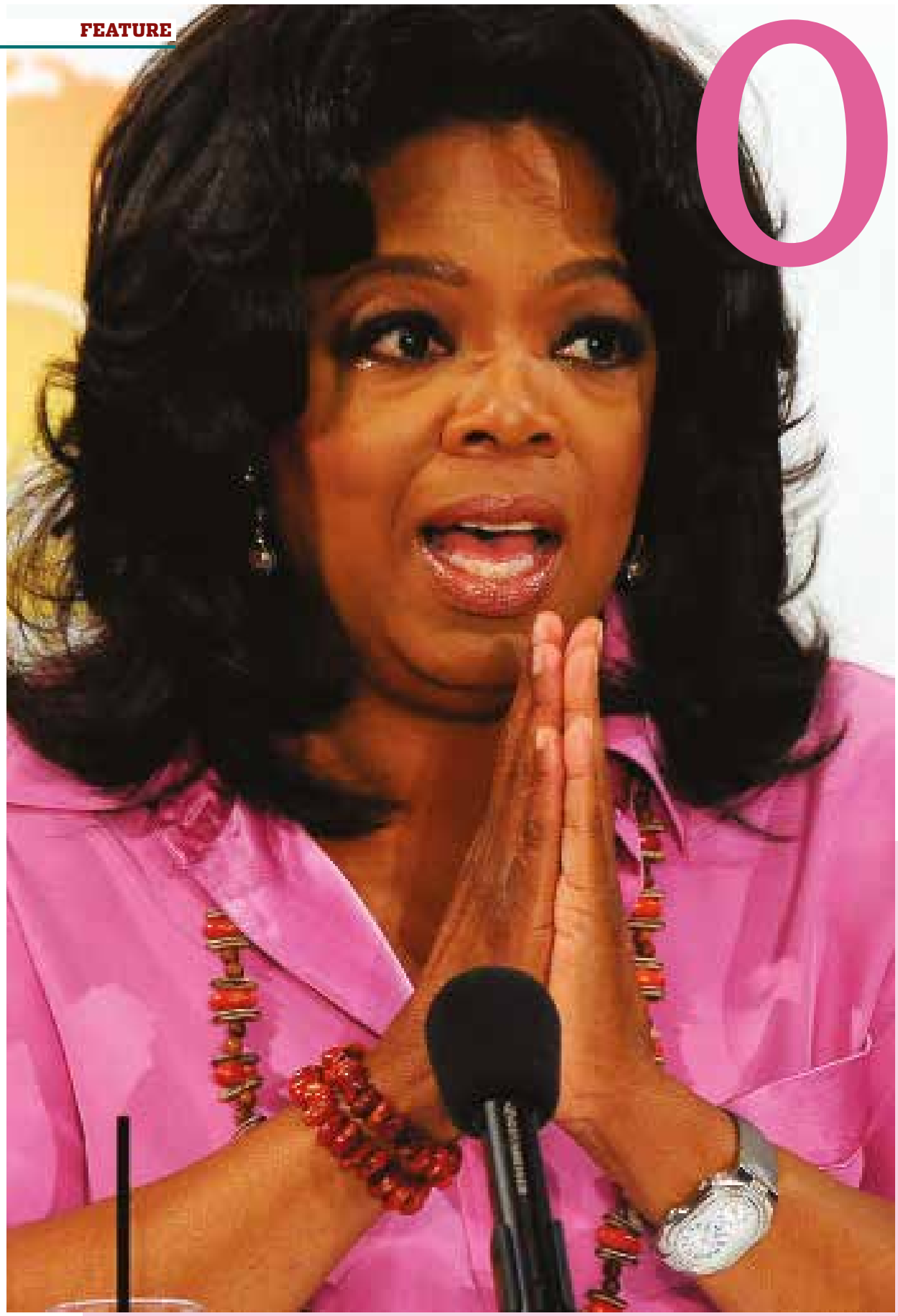


PHOTO: AFP / Torsten Blackwood

Oprah's God out of the box

When Oprah Winfrey speaks, the world listens — including the crowds of besotted fans on her recent Australian tour. She describes her TV show as her "ministry" but who is her God? LEA CARSWELL investigates.

THE *Oprah Winfrey Show*, which first broadcast nationally in the US on September 8, 1986, is set to film its final original episode later this month after 25 seasons on air (reruns will keep it on screen until September this year at least). The show's success has been all the more remarkable given the fickle US television industry's reputation for overlooking mature, opinionated, African-American females of rounded proportions in favour of less complex Barbie-doll lookalikes.

Oprah's talk show is the highest rating in American television history, with an estimated 67 million viewers a week in 146 countries. Beginning with a sensationalised daytime format (e.g. 'My husband ain't the daddy'), Oprah gradually transformed it into a more uplifting program featuring self-improvement, social empowerment, global philanthropy, celebrity interviews and, famously, book and product endorsements that made millions for everyone, Oprah included.

But what does Oprah Winfrey actually believe? Does she follow the God we meet in the Bible or do we have to look elsewhere to find the object of her worship?

Speaking about a moment in her late 20s when she was in church hearing a rousing sermon about God's power, Oprah recalled, "I was thinking 'God is all, God is omnipresent and then God is also jealous. God is jealous of me.' And something about that didn't feel right in my spirit… and so that's when the search for something more than doctrine started to stir within me."

The Power of O

Oprah introduced the 'Remembering Your Spirit' segment on her show in 1998, emphasising spirituality as a form of self-help. Oprah often refers to her show as "my ministry" and regularly exhorts people to "live your best life". Her website, oprah.com, and magazine, *O*, reinforce these messages on every page.

The talk show queen's philanthropy comes out of this mindset and she has inspired millions to think creatively and generously about how they can improve life for others. Her demonstration of practical generosity (albeit on her own terms) has led to millions of dollars being raised, assistance for disempowered people around the world, a significant housing project following Hurricane Katrina and a school for young women in Johannesburg.

Oprah is now revered — and feared — as a social, spiritual, economic and political phenomenon (would Barack Obama have been elected in 2008 without her public support? We'll never know).

Her ability to affect bottom-line sales of her 'favourite' things is known as 'the Oprah Effect', a term coined by CNBC in late 2008. A word of criticism from her is enough to damage an industry. (Her negative comments in 1996 about eating hamburgers, during a program about mad cow disease, led to her being sued by Texas cattlemen in 1998. Winfrey's defence was assisted by Dr Phil McGraw. She won the case and Dr Phil became a regular guest on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. He had his own show by 2002.)

Her ability to affect bottom-line sales of her 'favourite things' is known as 'the Oprah Effect'.

In 2002 *Christianity Today* reported that the net of Oprah's spiritual influences was much wider than the mainstream Baptist tradition she was part of while living with her father in Nashville: "Through a succession of guests with eclectic religious ties, including Gary Zukav, Carolyn Myss, Marianne Williamson, Iyanla Vanzant, and Deepak Chopra, Oprah's show has normalised a generic spirituality that perceives all religions as equally valid paths to God. The show also presents an á la carte blend of religious concepts, from karmic destiny (Zen Buddhism) to reincarnation (Hinduism)".

Dinner in the New Athens

The Rev Ian Powell, of the City Bible Forum, recently spoke in Brisbane's CBD on the topic, "What would Jesus say to Oprah?" and has spent some time considering her beliefs and attitudes.

"I think Oprah is emblematic of a good-hearted person who knows there is more to life and genuinely wants to find it," he says. "She seems to be real, speaking from the brokenness of her past with a credibility that people find very compelling."

While not sure what words Jesus would choose to say, Powell observes that, "Oprah is one of the many people who claim, in principle, a deep respect for Jesus but who demonstrate, in practice, an absolute contempt for him.

"I'm intrigued that such a powerful woman seems to have failed to achieve the things she claims to have really wanted: a successful film career and a stable family of her own. Her open battle with low self-esteem and with her weight has been played out in the media for a quarter of a century. [Yet] when she says she has found the answer, people sit up and listen."

One could call Oprah's spiritual home New Athens, and her show a modern Areopagus. In Acts 17 Paul put a name to the one known as the unknown god. It seems that message is still needed as much as ever, with powerful people setting themselves as spiritual messengers and holding to the idea of a DIY god who takes on any shape we like (and makes demands on us that are easy to fulfil).

A Feeling Thing

Oprah's life shifted into a new spiritual gear in 2000 with the wide promotion of author and self-styled spiritual thinker Eckhart Tolle. Oprah first encountered him when, according to her website, actress Meg Ryan urged her to read Tolle's first book, *The Power of Now — A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*. Sales of the book surged after Oprah endorsed it in her magazine.

Speaking of it the way Christians speak of the Bible, Oprah said, "It's one of the most transformative books I've ever read; I keep a copy with me wherever I go, flipping through its highlighted pages time and time again."

In 2008 Oprah selected Tolle's *A New Earth — Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* for the Oprah Book Club (the first in the genre of religion). First published in 2005, the book's popularity soared following the book club selection and, by 2009, had sold 5 million copies in North America.

Tolle and Winfrey then collaborated on a 10-week 'webinar' series further promoting the book — this marked the first time Oprah had chosen an author as a business partner. During a webinar episode, Oprah interpreted Tolle's message thus: "God isn't a believing thing, it's a feeling thing. If your religion is still about believing then it's not really God."

Oprah has spoken of her journey towards the decision to "let God out of the box"

continued next page »

PHOTO: Bill Ebbesen

When an audience member spoke of Jesus as [the] one way, Oprah said, "But there couldn't possibly be only one way to God!".

« from previous page

of her Baptist upbringing, freeing herself to experience a greater consciousness in which she sees herself as an instrument of God, guiding others seeking enlightenment.

Based on Tolle's material, Christian author Kurt Bruner summarised Tolle's answers to core questions such as who or what is God this way: "What we call God is [to Tolle] an all-encompassing life energy that has no distinct form or identity. Each of us is a small part of this overarching, collective consciousness."

A spiritual smorgasbord

Those who assumed Oprah's Christian belief heard alarm bells in 2008 during a televised discussion about spiritual issues. With regular guest Marianne Williamson, Oprah spoke of the mistake people make when they think there is only one way to live, one way to God. When an audience member spoke of Jesus as that one way, Oprah said, "But there couldn't possibly be only one way to God!".

In his book *Oprah's Jesus*, Kurt Bruner identifies three 'spiritual adventurers' favoured by Oprah these days, with messages that significantly overlap, in what she calls "her preferred genre of spirituality". This new-age trinity includes Tolle, Elizabeth Lesser and Michael Bernard Beckwith but could widen to include anyone embracing a 'many paths' view of spirituality. Secular critics of these writers observe that there really isn't anything new in their work but that it is couched in slightly different terms, depending on their experience.

However, they all teach that God is not a person. They regard Jesus as one of many 'messengers' or 'mystics' who has brought spiritual guidance throughout history. They are dismissive of doctrine and structured belief systems, emphasising that we must overcome 'the illusion of "ego" causing us to find identity in rigid beliefs and fixed forms'.

Tolle suggests one can achieve this by remembering our essential identity as part of "God", more accurately called "consciousness".

Oprah responded to a viewer question via Skype about how she could reconcile her Christian belief with the philosophy of Tolle's books. Grasping for superlatives (and time to construct her answer) Oprah said, "I reconciled it because I was able to open my mind about the absolute, indescribable hugeness of that which we call God".

Which turns her god into a nameless, formless mass of spirit, of which she is an integral part and in which she has her value.

Time will tell how this type of god works for Oprah — in terms of satisfaction, fulfilment and confidence — in the TV-show free years to come. **SC**

Total recall

If our unbelieving Prime Minister can remember Bible verses by heart, so can we. PHILLIP JENSEN considers the options.

RECENTLY in discussing her childhood, the Prime Minister raised the practice of memorising parts of the Bible. She even joked about challenging the Leader of the Opposition to "go head-to-head on our ability to recite sections of the Bible by rote".

Many of us as children were taught, encouraged, challenged, bribed and coerced into memorising Bible texts. As with teaching grammar and other old-fashioned views of education it was an activity that has been dropped by the wayside. The argument was simple: just as it is more important that we use English than analyse its components, it is more important that we understand what the Scripture says than reciting it off by heart.

There are some courses, such as the evangelism course *Two Ways to Live*, which require participants to commit some texts to memory. But the surprise with which course members meet the task indicates that memory work is not normally part of their Christian learning pattern.

Two of the aids to memory are music and repetition. These are well used by advertisers with their constant repetition of what used to be called jingles. Certainly the repetition of choruses or hymns cements certain words into the Christian mind — but they're not the words of Scripture and sadly sometimes they're not even the theology of Scripture.

One good modern development is the text of Scriptures on mobile phones. People are finding it easier to have the Bible with them all the time and to read it in spare moments.

So does it matter that we do not have the scriptures committed to memory?

Clearly Jesus memorised scriptures for he was able to freely quote the Old Testament when teaching or in confrontation with opponents. Yet he doesn't tell us to commit the Scriptures to memory — just to read and to recall what has been said and taught in Scripture. Learning the Scriptures by heart is not a matter of obedience or godliness but of education and improved facility with the Scriptures, just as using 10 fingers and looking at the screen is much more efficient than typing with two fingers while looking at the keyboard. All the minor prophets are in the Bible's table of contents but finding one is quicker if you remember the order they are in the Bible.

However learning the Scriptures is more than a matter of speed. It is also a matter of accuracy, depth of reflection and integration. In Bible study groups people often manifest confusion between what they think the Bible says and what it actually says. Often when the leader asks a question, people start answering from their own thinking, as if it is what the Bible says, rather than from the passage under review. Learning what the text of Scripture actually says by committing the words to memory gives us time to think with greater depth and detail about God's word than simply reading it. Furthermore, choosing the key texts to remember gives an overall theological and Biblical framework in which to think.

Choosing which verses to learn is important. Not all verses of the Bible are of equal value. Some are more significant than others (Matt 23:23), some better summarise important truths than others and some are more meaningful extracted from their context than others. There really is not a great point remembering, "My brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man" — though in its context it is an important part of Jacob's deceit. But John 3:16 is worth remembering on any and every criterion you may mention.

Memorising is not an end in itself. God's word is written to put into action (James 1:22). It's easy to *remember* the Scriptures without understanding, belief or obedience — just as it's possible to *read* the Bible without understanding (Acts 13:27) or with a veil over your heart (2 Corinthians 3:14-15). And having the Scriptures on your lips is not as important as honouring God with your heart (Mark 7:6). The word of God transforms a person, bringing them to repentance toward God and trust in the Lord Jesus, through regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

It would be fun to see our Prime Minister competing with the Opposition Leader in recalling large slabs of the Bible from memory. It would not be a demonstration of anything religious but purely of the mental ability of recall. It could be Shakespeare — it happens to be the Bible. But yet there is within her memory the seed of God's word that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, may yet germinate into repentance toward God and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ so she may find forgiveness of sins and a place in God's kingdom. **SC**

ILLUSTRATION: Stephen Mason

This article originally appeared in the 'From the Dean' series from St Andrew's Cathedral on sydneyanglicans.net. Web readers suggested several different Scripture memory systems, now available electronically. Among those mentioned were Verseminder by Navpress that uses the 'Topical Memory System' (Mac, PC and iPhone) and 'Fighter Verses' from Desiring God (iPhone and Android).

Be prepared

Getting the balance right in preparation for ministry is a crucial element of Moore College's training role. Archie Poulos explains how it's done — and suggests ways in which others can provide support.

MOORE College trains men and women for a huge variety of ministries in an astounding number of settings. But it also has the task of training church pastors for the Sydney Diocese.

Everyone, it seems, has a view on how students should be prepared and where the areas of weakness are. The problem is that there seems to be little consensus.

Since I teach in the ministry department at Moore College, I thought I'd add my comments to the mix.

Preparation

How we operate and teach at Moore is determined by our mission — a mission that I think is fantastic.

Under God's good hand our mission is 'enabling men and women to deepen their knowledge of God through higher education in the field of theology. This is so that they might faithfully and effectively live exemplary Christian lives, proclaim and teach the word of God and care for others in the name of Jesus Christ in all the world, to the glory of God.'

What Moore has traditionally done is help students to know God better (or more accurately, to be better known by God, as only he can initiate the relationship). This is done through the study of the Bible, Christian thought and pastoral ministry. These disciplines, though, are never ends in themselves. We do this so as to grow more like our Saviour and be better equipped to proclaim his glory.

In fact the college, as well as the diocesan 'ministry development' program, is committed to helping students grow in their convictions about God so their characters might be shaped in conformity to what they know of God, while their competency as ministers grows.

I must say that in my experience much of the hard work has occurred in our students before they even join us: that is, especially in the area of conviction and character. You can see this in that many have turned their backs on secure, lucrative careers and subjected themselves and their families to dislocation so as to be better equipped to proclaim Christ. As I observe our students I see generous, servant-hearted people, keen to learn and be shaped by the Scriptures. For this we must thank our God.

Underdone, or blind spots?

Every so often the college asks parish councillors and churchwardens to 'rate' our graduates. The responses are universally positive but there are areas that commonly show up in need of improvement. So we have to explore these areas and what to do about them.

It seems congregations think their pastors are committed to God and his people, are capable in understanding the Scriptures and live lives of holiness. This is no small thing and again we should thank God for this.

As I have said, college graduates rate well in every area but the areas that need work are in understanding the issues that congregation members are going through, working with congregation members as opposed to merely giving direction, unleashing the gifts that God has given to every congregation member and displaying care rather than merely vision.

Part of the solution to each of these matters is the natural process of maturing. Most people in their early 30s find it difficult to understand another's position. For those who are used to running secular organisations of employees rather than volunteers an adjustment period is required.

FOCUS QUESTION:

Is a deeper knowledge of God from study of the Scriptures adequate training for ministry?

But there still remains an issue. I wonder whether, humanly speaking, we can do better in ensuring that growth and deepening of convictions can better translate to development of godly character, which can better lead to greater pastoral competency? This is an issue for all of us, not just those who lead our churches.

Matching belief to action

In secular writing on leadership and management much time is spent discussing the disconnection between espoused beliefs and mental models. By that is meant that people hold one idea as true but the way they operate is shaped by past experiences or deeply held prejudices that do not match their espoused belief.

This discussion would be only of passing interest if it were not that the Bible often makes the same kind of comment. The Lord Jesus, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, confronts the expert in the law who espouses the correct answer about how to inherit eternal life. Having exposed the corrupt mental model of the expert Jesus concludes by calling him to go and do like the Samaritan (Lk 10). The apostle Paul in the famous introductory paragraph of Philippians 2 calls those who know unity in Christ to live it out by eliminating selfish ambition. And Peter, as he closes his second letter, reminds his readers of what they know and calls them to live it out. This is behind the old Christian exhortation to "become what you are".

A way for us all to mature in matching espoused belief to action is to expose to scrutiny the mental models that we often subconsciously hold. If we are to make any progress, the fundamental thing is humility. We need to not operate in order to preserve reputation or status but accept that we are in the process of being changed from one degree of glory into another. This will allow us to confront rather than defend our mental models.

There are many tools that help but no 'silver bullet'. It is about growing in self-awareness: awareness of our personal relationship with God; awareness of how we interact and operate with those close to us and awareness of how we operate in the wider society and world.

Growth in self-awareness can be assisted by such things as:

- learning to observe situations and reflect on how you felt and why you responded as you did. This then enables the action to be examined against Scripture;
- being in an unfamiliar situation where action resulting from mental models is challenged because the action is less than appropriate, and
- learning to think that every interaction is not merely an interaction involving two people — there is a whole history and set of relationships that shape and are affected by the interaction between two individuals.

Self-awareness

The growth in self-awareness that we must all seek is hindered for college students. Full-time students (in any discipline) spend their time talking with one another and so have diminished influence and challenge from people unlike them. Sunday student ministry puts college students in a category that is unique, as there are no or very few other theology students and this can diminish self-awareness.

The college is doing as much as it is able to help in growth in self-awareness but real growth occurs through relationships, so the time students spend in their parish ministry is crucial for their growth. I want churches to take on students as their 'projects'. I want churches to support students as they face the challenges of theological studies. I want church members to share their struggles and growth as they strive to live the life of faith and to ask students for their experiences. I want churches to help students to grow in conviction, character and competency by calling us to share side by side in slavery to Christ and service of each other.

Here are some quick statements on ways of thinking that can help us all grow in this area:

- We are all 'works in progress'. We are not yet what we will be and, under God, we have the privilege of shaping each other's growth.
- We never merely minister to people. We minister with people. Students and congregation members need to work shoulder to shoulder in ministry.
- Every one of us needs to think about and be engaged in helping others to maturity and seeking help in growing in our own maturity.
- In our times of failure, remember that we are held and cared for by a sovereign, good God who calls us to change now and yet gives us time to change.

Conviction, character and competency are three areas where we are called to lifelong change. Growth in the knowledge of God must affect all three. The most important of these are conviction and character. We must see these in our leaders and allow time for the competency to develop. **SC**

MOORE COLLEGE

Archie Poulos is head of the college's Ministry Department and lectures in ministry. His research is into the nature of Sydney's microcultures. His passion is to see Sydney come under the sound of the gospel.

SMBC
Sydney Missionary & Bible College

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
PRINCIPAL

Sydney Missionary and Bible College (SMBC) is the oldest interdenominational Bible College in Australia and enjoys a reputation for sound biblical and theological education. The key focus of the College is to train students for Christian ministry within multicultural Australia and overseas.

The College was established in April 1915 by a returned missionary of the China Inland Mission, Reverend C. Bowen Barrett.

Located in Sydney's inner-west, SMBC offers students a flexible approach by teaching a wide range of accredited degrees and diplomas with full-time and part-time study options. Approximately half the student body live on campus.

Expressions of interest are sought for the position of Principal, effective 2012.

The Principal will be able to demonstrate, and model a lifestyle consistent with Christian standards of holiness, be an outstanding Christian leader and be held in high esteem for preaching and teaching across the Christian community.

Primary Objective

The Principal is responsible for the effective preparation of men and women for Christian service in local, cross-cultural and international vocational and non-vocational ministries through:-

1. oversight of all SMBC courses and programmes ensuring Bible-centredness, theological depth and educational rigour;
2. fostering the strong missional focus that underpins all aspects of the students' learning and college life;
3. pastoral leadership of the SMBC community (faculty, staff and students) in their worship of God and encouragement of one another;
4. the determination to maintain the interdenominational character of the College;
5. strategic and visionary planning for growth (in conjunction with the Board) with the effective use of human and other resources in managing and promoting the College.

This is a challenging and unique role for a servant-hearted and mission-minded Christian leader.

For a full position description including the SMBC doctrinal statement, please contact:
Greg Sheridan, SMBC General Manager at gsheridan@smbc.com.au

www.smbc.com.au

Liberty Christian Ministries Incorporated

PASTORAL WORKER

Liberty wants to employ a part-time Pastoral Worker, who is keen to help Christians struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction, to speak in churches, colleges and other contexts about this ministry, to supervise and resource volunteers who share in the work, and to liaise with the various counsellors and groups to whom we refer people.

Phone (02) 9451 7572 or
email david@libertyproclaim.com
for further information

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MBM
st albans anglican

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 above reproach (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 motivating God's people. They will be part of the senior staff and have specific oversight of two main areas across all our congregations:

- Maturity: growing disciples in their love and knowledge of God to be more like Jesus
- Ministry: identifying, equipping and motivating 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 discovement and training.

We are other someone who ministers 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
9627 8133
Applications close: 31st May 2011 Commencement date: Mostly November 2011

Jesuits Street Centre

Child Care

Bachelor of Teaching in Early Childhood and Diploma in Children's Services

Full time, part time, qualified or non qualified positions are available in Tamworth, NSW. The 72-place Jesuits Street Long Day Child Care / Preschool is a ministry of Tamworth Baptist Church. It is anticipated that successful applicants will demonstrate Christian faith through active local church involvement.

Detailed position description contact Director ph 02 6762 8452

Holiday Letting

ALPINE RETREAT WENTWORTH FALLS: On golf course for groups & individuals. 3 bathrooms, 2 large communal rooms, central heating and fire. Extensive gardens, bbq area, chapel & prayer garden. Contact: 9960 1510, maryjones11@aol.com

BEAUTIFUL HOLIDAY HOUSE: Divided into 2 flats at Gerroa (near Kiama). Continuous ocean & beach views. 500m to beach. 02 4233 1331; if unanswered 0407 912 169

BLUE MOUNTAINS: "Kelvin Grove" Medlow Bath. Cosy quiet retreat. Magnificent view over Megalong Valley. Only 5 min drive from Katoomba. Fully sc, sleeps 6, 3 b/r. Contact Richardson & Wrench, 0247572222, see photos,prices at www.bluemts.com.au/rwwentworthfalls/viewLetting2.asp?ID=10735

CURRARONG & CULBURRA BEACH HOLIDAY ACCOMM: Both houses fully self-contained with 3 br. Sleeps 8, less than 2 hours south of Sydney. Short stroll to beaches. Ph 02 9548 0567, send email to info@putyourfeetup.com.au or visit www.putyourfeetup.com.au

KIAMA HOLIDAYS: Beautiful new 2 bdrm unit, secure parking, faces main surf beach & park, 5-10 min easy walk to harbour, blowhole & shops. 02 4233 1331 or 0407 912 169

LONDON B & B: In lovely home, self-catering facilities, easy city access, reasonable rates. Email: rachel@brockleybandb.fsnet.co.uk Telephone: 001144 2086946538

NOOSA: Stylish 2 bdrm unit by river, R/C A/C, htd pool/spa, tennis crt, bbq, lcd tv, mod cons, linen. Ph for brochure 07 3289 7178

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www.southerncross.youthworks.net

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Miscellaneous

SYDNEY CHRISTIAN BUSHWALKERS: Experience the great outdoors on one of our regular Sat. bushwalks with friendly like-minded people. Beginners welcome. Anne 0409 549 206.

THE ST JOHN'S CENTRE is located in the heart of Glebe. It is a place and a network of relationships seeking to bring about lasting change in people's lives. The Centre has both hall and office space available for individuals and organisations to use and rent. If you would like a brochure about the Centre's values and purpose or would like more information please email: office@glebechurch.org.au

Notice to all intended job applicants

It is an offence under the NSW Child Protection (prohibited Employment) Act 1998 for a person convicted of a serious sexual offence to apply for a position which involves contact with children or young adult people. Relevant checks of criminal history, apprehended violence orders and previous disciplinary proceedings will be conducted on recommended applicants to such positions.

St Paul's Castle Hill

Student Ministries Director / Young Adults Minister

St Paul's Anglican Church Castle Hill is located in North West Sydney with weekly average attendance of 1000 over 4 services. Student Ministries (Children's, Youth and Young Adults) form a large part of our ministry strategy and activity from week to week.

We are currently looking for a leader to direct our great Student Ministries team and to further grow the hearts of the Young Adults community for Jesus and for the lost. The successful candidate will be a passionate follower of Jesus. They will be able to discover, develop and deploy leaders for ministry, lead and develop a staff team as well as serve on a team, and translate vision into strategy and action. A formal theological qualification is preferred.

For further information, please contact Keith Baker (Associate Minister) on 02 8858 1111 or keith.baker@spch.org.au.

DIARY

VARIOUS dates in May

Youthworks SRE Accreditation

SRE accreditation is about making the most of the wonderful opportunity to invest in the state of our children's spiritual future. It also helps protect SRE by making sure every teacher is fully equipped for the task.
FOR details of courses, dates and locations, visit youthworks.net/events or call (02) 8268 3355
LOCATIONS | Corrimal and West Pymble

MONDAY, May 9–Thursday, May 12

CMS May Days 2011

BIBLE and missions conference for retirees
SPEAKER Noel Clarke
REGISTER online at www.cms.org.au/nsw
LOCATION | CMS Conference Centre, Katoomba

SATURDAY, May 14

CMS Commissioning Services

MARTIN and Julie Field
LOCATION | Christ Church Anglican Church, 4 Jordan St, Gladesville | 3pm

SIMON and Margie Gillham
LOCATION | The Lakes Evangelical Church, Berkeley Vale High School, Berkeley Rd, Berkeley Vale | 2pm

SUNDAY, May 15

CMS Commissioning Service

STEVEN and Sandra Parsons
NARRABEEN Baptist Church, 13 Grenfell Ave, Narrabeen | 10am

FRIDAY, May 27

CMS Canberra-Goulburn Fellowship Dinner

$35. Online registration at www.cms.org.au/nsw
LOCATION | Orion Room, Southern Cross Club, 92-96 Corinna Street, Phillip, ACT | 7pm

FRIDAY, May 27

CMS Friday Fellowship

SPEAKERS Geoff and Robyn Cuschieri
LOCATION | Level 5, 51 Druitt St, Sydney | 10.30am-12pm

FRIDAY, May 27

Moore College External Studies Graduation

THIS is a great night of celebration at Moore College when many people graduate after finishing their external course. All are welcome.
LOCATION | 1 King St, Newtown | 7.30pm

FRIDAY, June 3

Sydney Prayer Breakfast

THE Sydney Prayer Breakfast is an annual event for Christians to pray for the city of Sydney. The breakfast will include entertainment by Christian singer Daniel Kay and features ABC CEO Mark Scott as the guest speaker. $55 a person or $500 for 10.
FOR further information and to register your seat please visit www.sydneyprayerbreakfast.com.au or call (02) 9232 8700.
LOCATION | Westin Hotel, 1 Martin Place, Sydney | 6.30am-8.30am

SATURDAY, June 25

Safe Ministry Training Day

THIS training is for anyone involved in ministry to children and youth who need to do Safe Ministry Training for the first time or need to update their training.
FOR details of courses, locations and times, visit youthworks.net/events or call (02) 8268 3355
LOCATIONS | Ingleburn and Summer Hill

SATURDAY, July 2

Ministry to other faiths

COME along and be encouraged by the wonderful sharing of the faith that is being done in many places around the world.
LOCATION | 1 King St, Newtown | 2pm

THURSDAY, July 7

KJV 400th Anniversary

MOORE College is holding a day-long conference to celebrate the 400th anniversary this year of the publication of the King James Version of the Bible.
SPEAKERS include Professor Mark Strauss (Bethel Seminary, San Diego, Committee on Bible translation), Professor Diane Speed (Sydney College of Divinity), Dr Greg Clarke (Bible Society), Dr Michael Jensen and Dr Greg Anderson (Moore Theological College).
The $40 cost includes all lectures plus morning tea and lunch (the charge is reduced to $25 for students and non-workers)
FOR more information and to book visit www.library.moore.edu.au or call (02) 9577 9897
LOCATION | 2-16 Carillion Ave, Newtown | 9.30am-4pm

Cabramatta embraces food revolution

AFTER struggling to reach its local community Cabramatta Anglican Church decided to hold a multicultural food fair on April 2.

"We tried doorknocking, but it wasn't very successful," explained assistant minister the Rev Eddy Wee. "We came up with the fair idea and encouraged the congregation to invite people along."

There was plenty of food for people to try, with dishes from Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Mexico, England, Italy and many more. This was a way to embrace the multiculturalism of the area and expose people to foods from other cultures.

While the event had no evangelistic content, it was designed to introduce people to the church and to start relationships with the local community.

"It was a pre-evangelistic event," Mr Wee said. "We wanted to get to know people and we will stay in touch with them and invite them to an evangelistic event later in the year."

According to Mr Wee almost 60 people came along to the event, which also tried to teach people about health and nutrition through a quiz on food and healthy eating.

"We wanted to be more active and creative in how we reached the community," he said. "We found the old ways weren't working for us so we have tried to change what we do."

Dapto hosts biggest LAN party

PHOTOS: Rowen Atkinson

ON Saturday, April 16, Dapto Anglican Church hosted the biggest LAN (local area network) party in the Wollongong/Illawarra region.

DACLAN, as it's known, has been held once a term since 2006 and can see up to 80 computer gamers come together for 12 hours of gaming.

Attendees bring their own gaming console — whether that be a computer, an Xbox or a Playstation — and join with others playing a variety of games.

IT manager and trainee youth minister at Dapto, Paul Seville, has been involved in the DACLAN for a number of years.

"We get people who have no connection to the church whatsoever coming along," he says. "But they come along for the LAN party. We try to link them up with guys from the church and invite them to come to youth group or young adults ministry. We have seen some of the guys start coming to the young adults contemporary service."

The guys and girls who come along to the DACLAN range from about 13 to 30 and they play a plethora of games. However, according to Mr Seville, Minecraft is the current favourite.

In the past LAN parties have been the domain of the nerds and the geeks but Mr Seville says that now is changing.

"Computer games are now mainstream, all the cool kids play them now," he says.

The evenings generally don't include any evangelical content but the leaders do pray with the group and in the past guest speakers have spoken to gamers about the gospel.

The event has become quite popular, with a 'clan' travelling down from Sydney. It is also sponsored by The Gamesmen in Wollongong who provide prizes for gamers.

PHOTOS: Chase Kuhn

St Ives raises $130K for missionaries

ON April 2 Christ Church, St Ives held a special dinner with the aim of raising $140,000 to support their seven link missionary families.

Called the '140K Challenge' the dinner was a way of encouraging the parish to be more deliberate in its giving to missionaries.

"In the past we had taken 10 per cent of weekly offerings to give to our link missionaries," said assistant minister the Rev Gavin Perkins. "By doing this we wanted to bring our giving to missionaries out into the open."

Mike Raiter spoke to the 240 people, made up from the three onsite congregations, about how the world's greatest need is missionaries.

Over the course of the dinner, church members were encouraged to make a donation or pledge to contribute to the $140,000 goal. "We raised nearly $130,000," Mr Perkins said. "It was a great encouragement and we expect to go into surplus soon."

If the church does raise more money than expected, Mr Perkins said it will carefully consider the best way to use the extra money.

"We have to decide whether we find another missionary family to support or whether we do something different," he said. "We have strong links with George Whitfield College in South Africa so we could use the money to support them. We just need to prayerfully consider how this money can be best used."

MOVES

Harding retires — sort of

AFTER nearly 40 years of ordained ministry the **Rev Rod Harding** will retire as rector of St John the Baptist in Sutherland on June 30.

Mr Harding began his ministry to the Sutherland parish in 1983 and, as a "nice little demonstration of the years passing", notes that a woman in the church now pregnant with her first baby "was one of the first kids I baptised when I walked in 28 years ago".

"Little kids that were my kids' mates at school at now churchwardens and ministry leaders," he adds. "It's been fun to see people grow up and mature and take on leadership roles — people I've known since they were just kids in the Sunday school.

"It's been one of the really heartening things about staying in one place for a long time, to see the development of individuals and the growth in the faith community."

Mr Harding plans to continue working in ministry, and hopes to find a role to suit his gifts and skills that he can fulfil for some years to come. "The future is in God's hands," he says.

Keiraville opportunity

AT Easter the **Rev John Reed** began work as the new rector of the Wollongong parish of Keiraville, after more than six years as chaplain to The Illawarra Grammar School.

"I love this place [the school] and I've loved working here and will be sad to leave but I felt God was calling me back to parish ministry," Mr Reed says. "I've been reflecting on that for a little while and when this came up it just seemed like the right thing."

He says Keiraville is a small parish "of God's faithful people" and that "there are opportunities to consider what the future direction of the church will be, how to care for those who are there now and how to reach out to an area where there are increasing numbers of students [at the University of Wollongong]".

There is already a partnership between Keiraville and the nearby parish of Figtree, which in the past two years has utilised the church building to successfully plant the Keiraville International Church for overseas students. Among other options, Mr Reed hopes the parish will consider what further possibilities there might be to develop relationships with the students and staff at the university.

"There are some challenges but it's also a great opportunity," he says.

Adelaide calling

THE **Rev Ken Noakes** has moved to Adelaide at the invitation of Holy Trinity Church on North Terrace in the city's CBD, taking on a new role as associate minster of the parish.

Prior to his move Mr Noakes was pastor of fixchurch at St Andrew's Cathedral and was also responsible for training and placements with Ministry Training & Development.

"It was a privilege working with the new assistants who were coming out of theological college and entering into full-time ministry," he says.

"I will also miss the congregations at St Andrew's Cathedral, especially fixchurch [but] I will remain the chair of the India Gospel League Australian Training Association [based in Sydney] which helps send teams from Australia to India to train pastors and key leaders in Bible correspondence courses."

Mr Noakes says his ministry goal is "'by God's grace [to] make disciples and equip disciple makers' and the role I am doing in Adelaide allows me to do just that while pastoring a church and training people for ministry. My hope is that… I will be able to help raise up the next generation of ministers of the gospel in Adelaide."

South Coast move

LAST month the **Rev Ray Beckman** began a new position as the first Anglican chaplain to the recently opened South Coast Correctional Centre in South Nowra.

Mr Beckman spent last year as chaplain at Parklea Correctional Centre, following 15 years at the Long Bay complex in Malabar.

In addition to enjoying the move to the South Coast, Mr Beckman sees many possibilities for the ministry.

"There is a good opportunity with local Anglicare people and churches to get involved with the guys [in the prison] before they get out," he says. "There's a big Aboriginal ministry down here and they're really fired up and keen because there are a lot of local boys in here.

"More people attend church per head of population in jail than they do on the outside — we far exceed the Archbishop's 10 per cent; we always have. Prison is a [faith] challenge for them because everything's been stripped away."

Mr Beckman's replacement at Parklea, **Mr Walter Pospelyj**, has been serving for the past eight years as Anglican chaplain to inmates at the Parramatta Correctional Centre — and before that was part-time chaplain at the Cobham Juvenile Justice Centre.

"When I was working in parishes while I went through college the kids on the fringes of church were getting into trouble and they were the ones I was most able to connect with," he says.

"I'm fairly easygoing and flexible, which you need to be to work in jails… you're working with people from housing commission areas, people with a lot of social issues and dysfunction."

IN BRIEF

THE assistant minister at South Carlton, the **Rev Andrew Price**, is moving to the Diocese of Melbourne to take up an assistant minister's position at Holy Trinity, Doncaster.

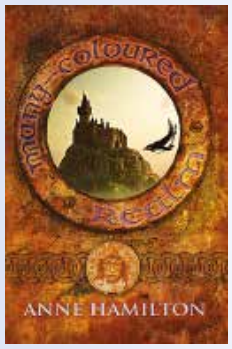
Vacant Parishes

LIST OF PARISHES AND PROVISIONAL PARISHES, VACANT OR BECOMING VACANT AS AT APRIL 14, 2011:

- Auburn (St Philip's)
- Earlwood
- Helensburgh and Stanwell Park
- Hoxton Park
- Lalor Park and Kings Langley
- Merrylands
- Moorebank
- Rouse Hill
- Sutherland

Fantastic fantasy

Kara Martin



Many-Coloured Realm
by Anne Hamilton

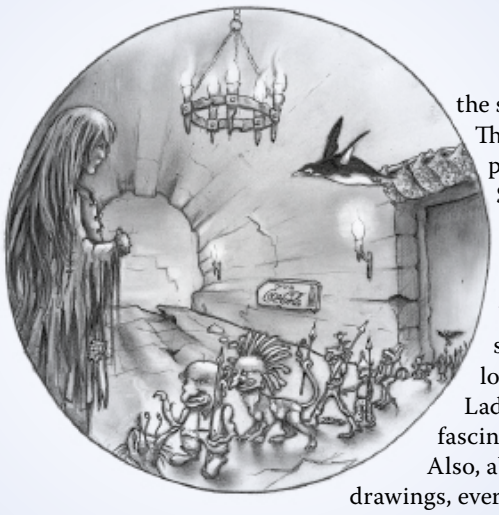


Illustration: © Anne Hamilton from *Many-Coloured Realm*

ONE nice girl, two bad boys, three tortuous tasks, four strange ambassadors…after that, it's hard to keep count. Anne Hamilton's book is a work of considerable breadth and depth, with possibly the largest cast of characters since *The Lord Of The Rings* (the whole trilogy).

It references C.S. Lewis (his fantasy and sci-fi novels), as well as Lewis Carroll (rabbits, young girls, dark passageways, bizarre creatures), as well as including almost every form of medieval mythical creature, with not a witch or wizard or vampire in sight!

Robby is a schoolgirl who, while searching for Neil and Stephen, stumbles across an entryway to a mysterious place and tumbles into an adventure that crosses many worlds and time zones.

She befriends goblins, elves, the Queen of the Sprites and a talking penguin. All this is under the pressure of the growing presence of the malevolent Zzael.

What delighted me about this book is the sense of humour. The Goblin King promises to release Stephen if Robby can tell him his true name. "No it's not Rumplestiltzskin… Why does everyone say that?" I particularly loved the wonderful Lady Peddy who has a fascination with tautology. Also, absolutely gorgeous drawings, every four pages or so, really help to lock in the characters and to keep track of the plot development.

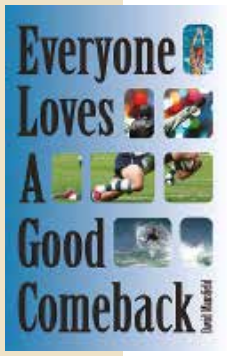
This is definitely a book written by an author with a Christian worldview but Hamilton does not use a sledgehammer to get her message across. It is more the Madeleine L'Engle technique of subtlely emphasising the power of love, the importance of choices and awareness of the ongoing struggle between good and evil. One of the pithy comments is about the human condition: "Humans are a great paradox. They are noble and they are monstrous."

This is a very intelligent book, with many layers of imagination and wisdom. It has been picked up by primary schools across Australia, meaning that potentially hundreds of thousands of children may also become intrigued by these characters, have their hearts warmed by their example, and have seeds for the Gospel planted. SC

This is an extract. Kara's full review can be found at www.sydneyanglicans.net

Stories lead to Christ

Greg Peisley



Everyone Loves A Good Comeback
by David Mansfield

I read a lot. I usually have a novel and a couple of other books on the run. Lately I have been in the habit of skim reading theological books to get the general thrust, then I slow down and read carefully the main arguments or anything I need to take my time with to help me digest the central ideas. This method usually works for me.

Not in this case. I had skim read this book, had a general feel for it and was happy with that impression. I thought I had it pegged.

When I was asked to review it, I then read it more carefully and found my method had let me down. I had read it and understood it but missed the power of the stories. There is great power in stories – especially when they are used to back up Bible truths and not overshadow them.

As I read it again I was again touched by God's goodness to me and to others in the Lord Jesus. I read the stated purpose of loving good stories, especially good comeback stories and especially the true story of Jesus and the stories of people who have come back to him. Here is an evangelistic book based around those stories that we can give to our friends to help them find life in Jesus. It's a great resource for us to use.

The book comes in three parts. The first deals with stories of great comebacks. It moves through verbal comebacks, performance comebacks and then to relational comebacks. There is a lovely mix of laughter and seriousness among the examples.

The second part brings us directly to the Bible. It moves through comeback stories in the Bible, through the power of the prodigal son and then to our invitation to come back.

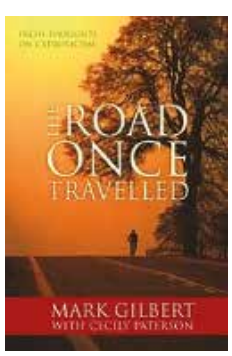
The third part deals with personal stories of people who have come back to Jesus. This includes the author's story and finishes with an invitation *to*, and reasons *for*, making the best comeback of all.

It is a good, clear explanation of the gospel that will be particularly useful to give to men, and that we should have on hand to give away. I have given it to a friend I have been talking to about Jesus because I knew it would back up what we were learning together. I hope and pray that God will use it.

Greg Peisley is the curate-in-charge of Pitt Town parish.

Keeping the Bible central

Andrew Moore



The Road Once Travelled
by Mark Gilbert
with Cecily Paterson

MARK Gilbert has written a book and I want to urge you to get a few copies, keep them handy and give them out to friends who might read them. It's a book written for Catholics with the help of Cecily Paterson, a colleague from Gilbert's time at Moore College.

It's a terrific little book for a number of reasons, the main one being it seeks to urge Catholic people to read the Bible for themselves. It points out that the Bible is where God unequivocally speaks today. The Bible is authoritative for salvation, relevant to life and accessible to us now. It's where we get to know Jesus. We all need to get it off the shelf and we need to read it.

Gilbert makes it crystal clear that the Bible is a book we can understand and challenges his readers with the fact that in the Bible we find Jesus who travelled the road we couldn't travel. He died for our sin so we could stop our religious quests and rely on his journey — not our own.

There are other books that say this. The special value of this book is that Gilbert is an Australian and an ex-Catholic who speaks the truth in love and sensitively and humorously engages his audience well.

Gilbert used to be a "good Catholic": trying to live by the moral code of the church, one of the 14 per cent of Catholics who went to church. And yet he hadn't found grace or the truth. He hadn't found Jesus our Lord. And so, years later, with some reflection on his life and conversion, Gilbert has written this book in a very deliberate way to reach Catholic people.

It is a relational book, rather than one that says, 'Here are all the Bible's evidences for justification by faith and why the Catholic Church is wrong'. Gilbert writes to a friend.

The book is also helpful because he urges people to join a church — one that teaches the Bible. Gilbert is positive about church (God's people, in fellowship around the word of God) and sees it as vital and good.

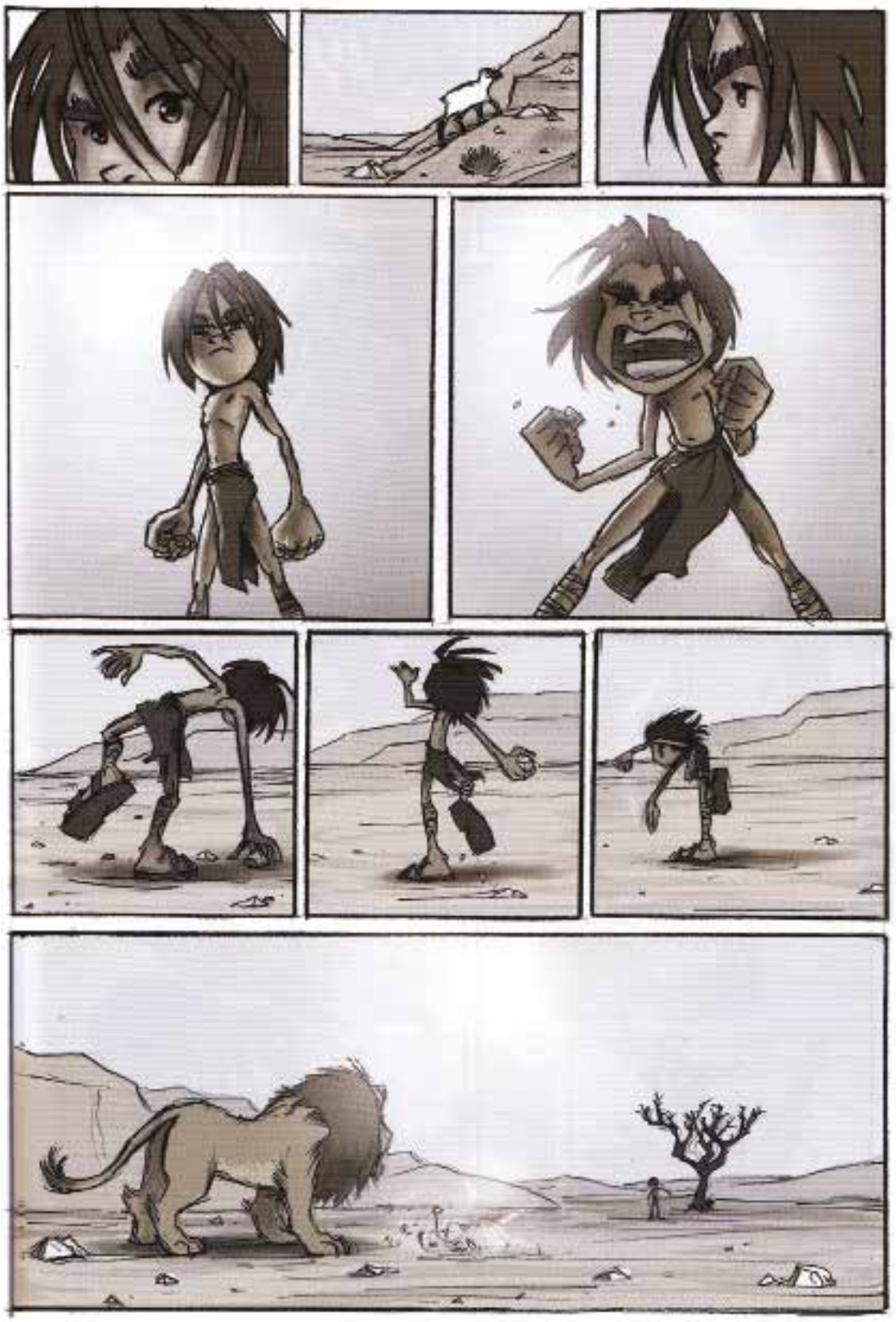
There are Catholic people who really want to hear the word of God. There are many wanting to read the Bible. And we need to have that 'salt-seasoned' conversation which can help them get on the right path — understanding the road Jesus travelled.

Could this be the book to give your neighbour, friend, or sparring partner? It is personal and interesting. It is revealing and shocking. It is a book for Catholics, particularly Catholics who are a bit disillusioned.

And most of all, it's a book to get people reading the best book — the Bible. SC

Andrew Moore is the immediate past rector of St Mark's, Malabar.

In search of the Christian comic



There are plenty of comics utilising stories and characters from the Bible but they don't all cut it when it comes to content. JOEL A. MORONEY takes a look at what's available.

SUPERMAN #132 was the gateway drug that got me into comics. Little did I know when I purchased that comic at a railway station newsagency it would lead to an addictive love affair. That first comic in my possession was by no means the greatest comic ever written but it inspired me to know more. To buy more. These days I'm a committed comic fan, as the wall of comics in my house will attest.

Every collector has that much sought-after prize. That rare and elusive item that consumes the collector. For me, that prize is the Christian comic book.

It's not that Christian comic books don't exist. The number of Christian comic books available for sale appears to be growing each day. The problem with these comics is that I have two criteria that must be met. Firstly, they must be good. Substandard art and storytelling won't make the cut. Secondly, they must be in line with God's word and not contradict or distort the Bible. Sadly, many Christian comic books fail one or both of these criteria.

Christian comic books fall into two categories: comics that retell Bible stories and comics that tell stories with a Christian theme or message.

Comics retelling Bible stories are popular for obvious reasons. We recognise the Bible is important and we want people to read it. However, which Bible stories are chosen for adaptation into comic book form can be frustrating. The focus of the Christian faith is the person of Jesus and his fulfilling of God's plan of salvation. So naturally the four gospels have prominence in our church teaching and reading. If the world of Christian comics was our guide, then the most important person in the Bible is King David. Followed closely by Samson. Then Jesus. Seems to me that there is something wrong here.

The problem is that comics are a visually dynamic medium. Jesus never killed a giant with a rock or tore a lion apart with his bare hands. So he's not going to be as popular with comics trying to prove to young boys that the Bible is exciting.

It's not that comics about David can't be good. *David: The Shepherd's Song* has some really impressive art, using a loose line style that really pops on the page and conveys action scenes (see the example above) really well. So far, I've only got my hands on the first part of this book but am

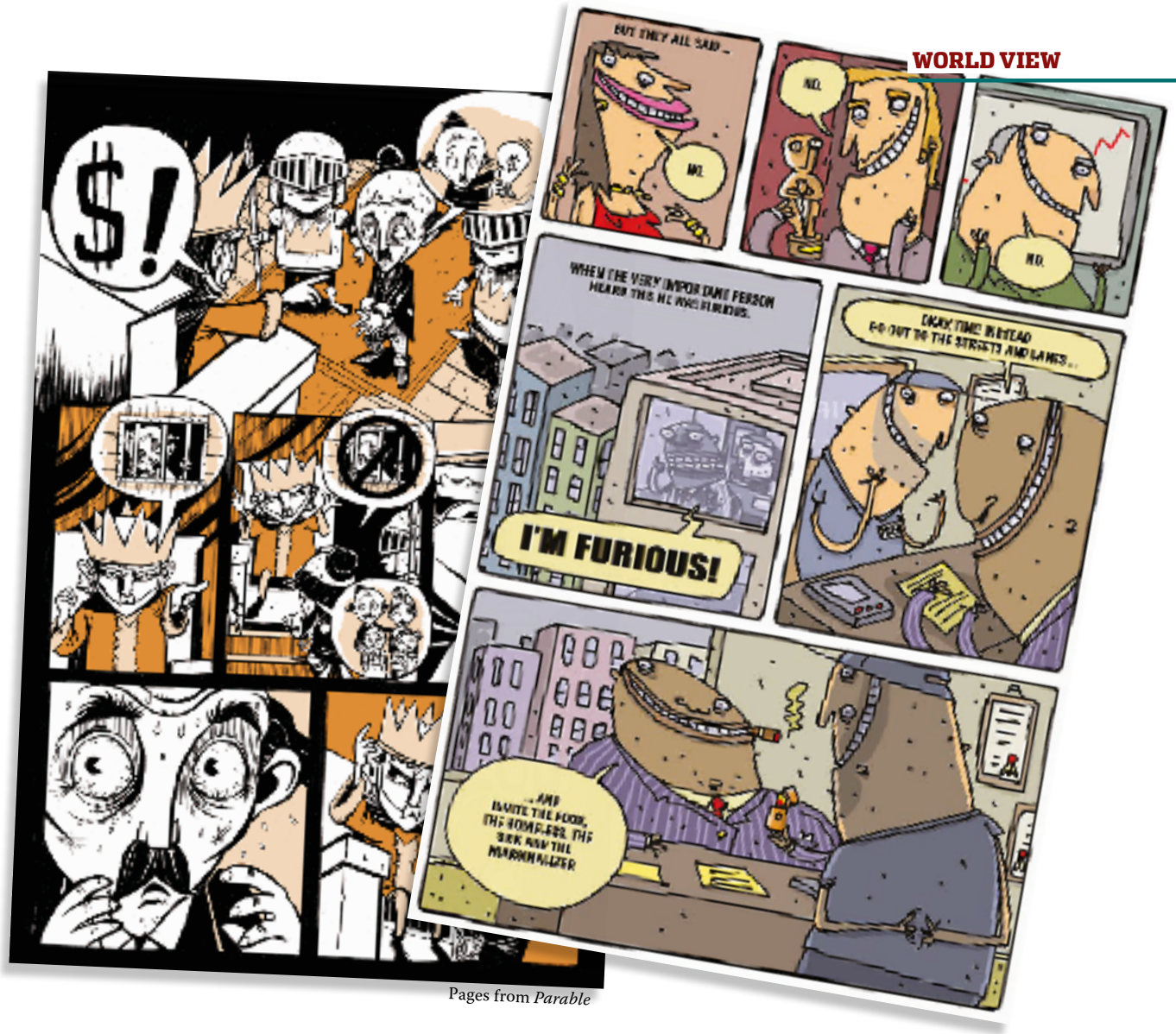
looking forward to reading the rest. What will make or break this book for me is how the author will deal with 2 Samuel 7 (David's desire to build a temple for God and God's promise to establish David's line forever). Too often these comics isolate the stories of Old Testament figures from the big story of the Bible. They turn these men into action figures that have no relation to God's plan of salvation. I have high hopes for the rest of the *David: The Shepherd's Song* series.

On the other hand, you have books like *Son of Samson*. This series stars a young man called Branan, who is allegedly the son of Samson. Branan travels across Israel and learns all about his father's exploits. The artwork in this book is engaging and grabs your attention but something doesn't sit right, probably because Branan (the good guy) is depicted as being, for all intents and purposes, Anglo-Saxon. And the bad guys? Middle-Eastern caricatures. I find this kind of subtle racism in a comic disturbing — but not as disturbing as the telling of Samson's life. We have are all the highlights — destroying the Philistine temple, killing the thousand with the jawbone of a donkey — but none of the lowlights. All context has been stripped out of these accounts. Samson becomes a mythological Superman who never did anything wrong and never acted in a way that was selfish and ungodly. And there's no suggestion that he was an imperfect saviour who achieved more in death than he did in life. Instead we have a Saturday morning cartoon that I would struggle to call Christian.

Son of Samson

When it comes to comics about Jesus, *Manga Messiah* has been a popular choice in recent years. This Japanese style of storytelling has spawned several 'sequels', covering books such as Genesis and Acts. *Manga Messiah* takes a harmony approach to telling the story of Jesus, drawing on all four gospels, beginning with the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary and finishing with Jesus' ascension. The art style is expressive and makes great use of colour. The text sticks pretty close to the biblical account and also includes footnotes on every page to point to the Bible passages used, which is really helpful. One area of caution with this book is the art. Because of the Japanese influence of the art, some of the visuals take on a certain look. An example of this is in *Manga Mutiny* where the serpent in the Garden of Eden is portrayed as a scaly humanoid with a snake's tail, wings and feminine features. Sometimes making a visual representation of something from the Bible can give it meaning and substance that perhaps weren't there in the first place. This is something to be cautious about with all visual retellings of the Bible.

Manga Messiah



Pages from *Parable*

The Christian comic that I have been most impressed with is called *Parable*. Harnessing the talents of a number of creators, this anthology is based around the idea of parables. Some of these stories are retellings of specific biblical parables. Others take Christian ideas and concepts and use them to create compelling stories. There's a variety of art styles featured here, providing something for everyone. Most importantly, by trying to be Christian rather than sticking to a particular biblical text, the creators do a much better job of presenting a work that is both entertaining and consistent with God's word. I can't recommend this title highly enough.

These books are not even the tip of the iceberg of Christian comics. As I write this, there is a large pile of comics by my desk. Some I have read and I love. Some I have read and am embarrassed by. There are some made by Christians for Christians. There are others that are made for the secular world that explore Christian themes. There are even more in my pile that I am yet to read.

Here are some questions to help you evaluate if a Christian comic is worth promoting:

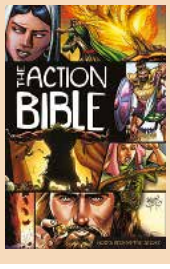
1. Is the comic consistent with the Bible?
2. Does the comic communicate how the story fits into God's big picture of salvation?
3. Does the comic engage the reader with interesting visuals and clear storytelling?

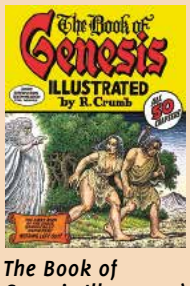
If the answer is yes to these three questions, then chances are you have a good Christian comic in your hands. **SC**

Joel A. Moroney is the associate minister at St Luke's, Liverpool and a dedicated comic fan.

Some recommended titles:

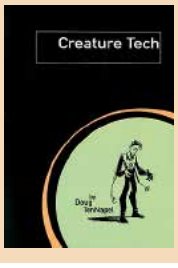
The Action Bible
Sergio Cariello





The Book of Genesis Illustrated
Robert Crumb

Creature Tech
Doug TenNapel



Hammer time

Thor (3D)
Rated M

Judy Adamson

FILM financiers are a brave species. There is so much scope for disaster when a new superhero makes it to the screen that it's a wonder anyone is willing to take it on.

Sure, the films are regularly successful — and even some of those panned by critics go on to excrete a lesser, even more derivative sequel. But the audience doesn't like to leave the cinema feeling short-changed.

Which is why this Marvel adaption of its *Thor* comic for the cinema is such a breath of fresh air. Yes, he's mighty strong; yes, he wears a cool superhero costume (and, most girls would agree, looks pretty fine in it); and yes, there are plenty of action sequences, fights and things blowing up amid spankingly good special effects.

But this is where a number of comic book adaptations stop, as if this is all that's needed. Here, you discover what a difference it makes when a superhero movie is tightly scripted, well cast and directed with a sure hand (by Kenneth Branagh). *Thor* expertly balances drama with sharply timed wit, reality with fantasy and makes the struggle between good and evil a complex one in which both extremes can easily be fighting for supremacy within the one person.

Don't get me wrong: I don't think *Thor* is attempting to be 'great art'. It's just seeking to give watchers a rollicking good time with some moments to ponder along the way, and it succeeds excellently well.

At the outset of the film Thor (Aussie Chris Hemsworth) is, to put it mildly, an arrogant prat. He's heir to the kingdom/planet of Asgard but is completely unready to rule. He is prideful, hot-tempered and doesn't have a compassionate bone in his well-muscled body.

When a small band of frost giants, vanquished long years earlier by Thor's father Odin (Antony Hopkins), breach an Asgard weapons vault to try to reclaim the core of their chilly power, Thor is incensed and vows to teach them a lesson.

[Thor] is prideful, hot-tempered and doesn't have a compassionate bone in his well-muscled body.

Odin has ruled wisely and with honour (a bit of a departure from the cunning, war-like Odin of mythology but never mind) and has only resorted to violence to protect Asgard or other, weaker peoples among the 'nine realms' (planets) — one of which is Earth, whose Norse inhabitants he saved from the frost giants more than a millennium earlier.

Thor on the other hand, god-like in strength but not in wisdom, finds his quick-fire "lesson" to the frost giants almost proves fatal. He, along with his friends and younger brother Loki, are lucky to escape with their lives and, with sorrow and anger, Odin takes away Thor's power — and the greatest symbol of his strength, his hammer — and banishes Thor to Earth until he proves himself worthy.

Which could take a while. For Thor has an ego as big as his biceps, along with a king-size sense of entitlement. He's still strong by Earth standards, walking away with just a few scratches when he's run over by scientist Jane Fraser (Natalie Portman) and her colleagues as they rush to see the strange atmospheric event that has planted him in the middle of the New Mexico desert.

Jane is fascinated by Thor, while her Scandianvian colleague Professor Selvig (Stellan Skarsgård) thinks he's a nutter. After all, Thor is spouting all the myths Selvig learned as a child as though they're facts. Meanwhile, Federal agents are busily trying to to extract Thor's hammer from a nearby desert crater.

To give much more away would spoil the fun but at the heart of the story is the journey Thor must take: learning humility in the face of his failures as well as true care and concern for others.

You could attempt to draw Christian parallels given that he is the son of a god (as well as a god himself) who becomes willing to think and act sacrificially. You could talk about redemption and suggest a prodigal son theme — or even hint at a touch of Cain and Abel with Thor's brother Loki.

But, to me, that misses the point. Recognise those themes by all means, rejoice that there's a film your teens can see that isn't packed with sex and swearing and that underscores the importance of gaining wisdom and understanding before you can serve and live well.

Really though, this is a simply a film to go and see because it's a visual feast that will keep you hooked, make you laugh (and think occasionally) and provide a jolly good two hours of entertainment. SC

Go soul surfing

Soul Surfer is the inspiring true story of teen surfer Bethany Hamilton. Bethany lost her left arm in a shark attack and courageously overcame all odds to become a champion again, through sheer determination and unwavering faith.

Bethany (AnnaSophia Robb) was born to surf, took to the waves at a young age and participated in national surf competitions with her best friend Alana (Lorraine Nicholson). One morning a four-metre tiger shark came out of nowhere and seemed to shatter all her dreams.

Soul Surfer reveals Bethany's fight to recover from her ordeal and how she grappled with the question of her future. Strengthened by the love of her parents, Tom (Dennis Quaid) and Cheri (Helen Hunt), and supported by her youth group leader Sara (Carrie Underwood), Bethany refuses to give in or give up and begins a bold return to the water.

Courtesy of Heritage HM, *Southern Cross* has 10 double passes to give away to see the film on May 26. Email ads@anglicanmedia.com.au with 'Soul Surfer competition' as the subject heading and we will let you know if you are a winner.

More info: www.soulsurferthemovie.com and www.soulsurferwave.com