

Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

JUNE
2014

Knee workout

LEARNING THE ART OF PRAYER

- + Faith, war and the Sydney Diocese
- & *Star Wars* for a new generation

COVER

The Christian life should be one of prayer, but often isn't. How do we increase and maintain our knee fitness? P10

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Pride is something that impeded my prayer because I was very self-reliant.



Jo Charles
Feature

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Sudanese Australians a voice for salvation



Sudanese Australian youth at a recent Voices of Salvation charity event in Canberra.

NICK GILBERT

A YOUNG SUDANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENT HAS HELPED START A NATIONWIDE CHARITY, RUNNING events and raising money in tandem with Anglican Aid to support people suffering the effects of civil conflict in South Sudan.

Apajok Biar, who was herself born in a Kenyan refugee camp before arriving in Australia with her parents at the age of two, says she came up with the idea after speaking to other Sudanese friends about what was happening in their home country.

"One of my friends, a Sudanese youth who has also grown up in Australia, saw what was going on back home on TV, and she called me and asked what I thought we could do," Ms Biar says.

"We came up with the idea of doing a fundraiser and sending money to give aid to those who need it... It took about a month to be registered as a non-profit organisation in NSW, get fundraising certificates and so forth, but we did all that and started running events, which we organised through contacting friends in other states over social media."

The charity, called South Sudan Voices of Salvation, ran its first event at St Philip's, Caringbah, Ms Biar's home church, in March.

"It was great," Ms Biar says. "All the support and help I got from my St Philip's family was really great, as well as having people from other churches I've been at being involved... All sorts of people came, I think around 250, which was really surprising to me. Being able to raise awareness, pray for people back home and raise money was really important, I think."

"The civil war back in 1991, which affected me and my family personally, is a lot like what's happening now, so my aunty and some others got up at the event and told their stories from back then."

The charity has, through Ms Biar's contacts around the country, spread to other Australian capitals, with more events planned in the near future. The first set of events raised more than \$7000, which will be invested in development works and emergency relief to those displaced in South Sudan.

"Since March we've been getting a lot of donations through our online website, as well as the Canberra team running a barbecue down there, which raised over \$800," Ms Biar says. "They're looking to use some of that money to run a bigger event there, a concert and awareness evening. In early July the Queensland team and Western Australian team are looking to run an event as well, and in late June something similar will be running in Melbourne and Adelaide."

The immediate objective for the fledgling charity will be to support, with Anglican Aid and its link organisations in South Sudan, around 60,000 people displaced within the Lakes state, with many locals stranded on the other side of the Nile without food and shelter after fleeing their homes around the town of Bor late last year in fear of armed anti-government militias.

Church dismay at "normalised" gambling

RUSSELL POWELL

A SUBMISSION FROM THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY TO A STATE INQUIRY ON GAMBLING HAS EXPRESSED dismay at "the ongoing proliferation and access to gambling" in NSW, and especially the effects on children. Archbishop Glenn Davies, in a letter to the Select Committee on the Impact of Gambling, said that in particular, the impact of the internet and televised sports wagering means children have "unprecedented exposure to gambling, as it becomes a 'normalised' form of entertainment".

The committee, established last November, is looking at the impact of new electronic forms of gaming on the public and the effectiveness of strategies, including education and pre-commitment, in curbing problem gambling. The panel is chaired by Christian Democratic Party leader the Rev Fred Nile and includes Liberal, Labor, National and Greens members of the Legislative Council.

The Anglican submission congratulates the Government on work already done to treat problem gambling but argues that, given the dominance of electronic gaming machines (EGMs) in the market, "reducing the number and location of EGMs and limiting new licences issued for their operation is the first step in tackling the impacts of gambling".

It also comments on the system of pre-commitment, where gamblers voluntarily give themselves a limit on the amount they can wager. The Archbishop's letter notes that "a voluntary pre-commitment scheme is unlikely to produce meaningful results" and urges mandatory pre-commitment technology be implemented for EGMs.

"Mandatory, self-chosen pre-commitment will strike a balance between preserving personal autonomy, providing safeguards for members of society who are particularly vulnerable and allowing casual gamblers to have certainty about their gaming limits," the Archbishop wrote.

The submission backs moves to restrict advertising, particularly to limit the impact on children. "The unwelcome intrusion of online gambling advertising during sporting events, televised at times when children will be watching – for example, all-day cricket matches and afternoon football matches, requires special attention," it says.

In his letter Archbishop Davies also called on the inquiry committee to consider how the State Government could partner with community organisations to prevent and treat problem gambling.

Papers were also submitted to the inquiry from the Australian Christian Lobby, other churches, medical groups and clubs and hotel lobby groups. A submission from Clubs NSW claimed that "the overall social impact of gambling is overwhelmingly positive even after accounting for the harm experienced [by] problem gamblers and their families". The inquiry is expected to report later this year.

Poorest "locked out" of affordable housing

NICK GILBERT

A NEW REPORT INTO SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE HAS found that conditions for low income families, children, and indigenous people continue to worsen, with some identified factors becoming even more of a concern in light of the Federal budget.

Sue King, Anglicare Sydney's Director of Advocacy and Research and co-author of the *Locked Out* report, says the most critical factor in much of the entrenched disadvantage is the low level of housing affordability in Sydney, with the average at-risk person or family spending roughly half of their income on rent alone.

"It's become really apparent to me as I've been doing this work for the last five or six years that the most critical factor is affordable housing," Ms King says.

"If families are in sustainable and affordable housing, their outcomes are so much better. We look at families coming to us who are in crisis, but they're usually in crisis because they can't afford to put a roof over their heads. For me, it's just a really key issue."

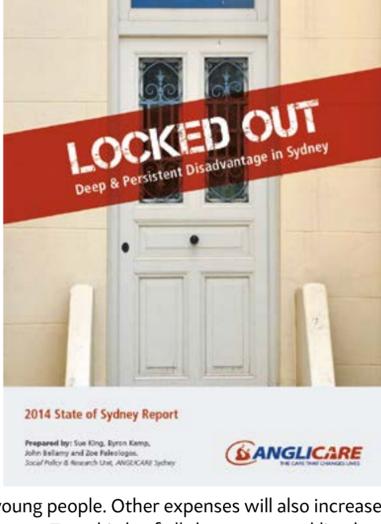
Ms King also says problems over the high proportion of income needed to rent has been further compounded by the recent budget, which will see welfare payments reduced – particularly for families, the unemployed and young people. Other expenses will also increase, especially through the proposed \$7 Medicare GP co-payment. Two thirds of all those surveyed lived on \$500 a week or less, with many of those at the bottom end of the scale being indigenous people.

"These are people who are very close to the margins, and for whom the experience is often intergenerational," Ms King says. "Complications are typically about private rental and rental affordability. We think there will be fallout for these sorts of people from the budget, and we're also concerned about changes to the aged pension, particularly if people don't own their own home."

The report surveyed about 40,000 people who had visited an Anglicare Emergency Relief centre over the 6½ years to the start of 2014. Less than 5 per cent of reporting households had a household member who was employed, with most dependent on some sort of welfare income.

Ms King says one of the most serious concerns is the impact on children, with an estimated 1 in 10 children of reporting families expected to go to at least one whole day without food once every fortnight, a cycle of poverty that can have a lifetime impact.

"One of the things that we proposed in the report was to have a Child Poverty Strategy, a national strategy, and to work to get these children out of these impoverished households by elevating the families," she says. "It's so important that we focus on the children in these households, and to promote better outcomes not only for them but into the future for the children and their families."



Winter appeal has kids focus



Helping out: local young people gather in the Dapto Street Crew van.

IT WAS 1934 AND THE NEW ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY, HOWARD MOWLL, SAW THE GREAT Depression plunging families across the Diocese into poverty and homelessness.

"Already the winter is upon us and before many more of its days have passed, we who are able should, in the name of Christ, do all that we can to bring comfort into the lives and homes of those where ordinary comfort is wanting," the Archbishop said. "I therefore appeal to all church people to make a special effort to this end."

In creating the first Archbishop of Sydney's Winter Appeal, Mowll could not have imagined the changes the Diocese would undergo in the following 80 years. In 1934, money was to be directly addressed to the Archbishop and he personally dispensed it to the parishes. Now, Anglican Aid distributes Winter Appeal funds to programs as diverse as those feeding the homeless in Surry Hills, ministry to kids on the streets in Dapto, child literacy at Port Kembla and South Community and community chaplaincy working to "break the cycle" of poverty at Glenquarie in south-western Sydney.

In launching this year's appeal, Archbishop Glenn Davies unveiled the 2014 theme, *The Winter of Our Kids' Content*. "We long to see children living in loving and safe homes – that life for some of the most vulnerable children in our society will be transformed from a gnawing discontentment to growing contentment," the Archbishop said.

One of the direct beneficiaries of the appeal is the Dapto Street Crew, which is working with young people aged from 12 to 25. The crew, all volunteers, use an outreach caravan – equipped with video games, a barbecue and physical activities such as a basketball hoop – and move around to where young people congregate on weekends. The team uses the van to meet young people, form relationships and provide counsel and advice to steer them away from antisocial activities.

The Winter Appeal is open now, taking tax deductible donations online at www.anglicanaid.org.au or by phone on 1800 653 903.

For the voiceless

CHURCHES IN THE MANLY-WARRINGAH AREA ARE banding together this month to support what Christians can and should do about the fraught issue of asylum seekers and refugees.

St Matthew's, Manly is hosting "Boundless Plains to Share? Australia, Jesus and the Refugee" at 6.30pm on June 14, at which a panel with expertise in areas from advocacy to immigration will make presentations and answer questions. A documentary (right) will also be shown with interviews from detainees in Indonesia.

"We're inviting people to think about what is a Christian response to the refugee crisis," says the Rev Bruce Clarke, rector of St Matt's. "I'm certainly glad our Father in heaven didn't say, 'Sorry, heaven's full. You can't come in!'"

Mr Clarke says the church has been seeking to help refugees from Burundi, who fled their country either because of ongoing violence among Hutus and Tutsis, or because of whistleblowing on corruption.

When dealing with such matters St Matt's is fortunate to have the expertise and advice of former State and Federal MP Bruce Baird, who is a member of the congregation and also chairman of the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council. However, Mr Clarke says this month's event can provide greater information and understanding for other congregation and community members who also have "concern and a desire to be helping at a practical level".

The event has been put together by Seaforth Baptist Church, which contacted local churches to support it and asked St Matt's to be the host.

Event organiser Vikki Howarth says the focus is "to give the facts out, because I think there are a lot of myths out there and not a lot of transparency.... If you just look at the reality of the situation it's difficult information to hear. But it's something we need to talk about because it's happening right on our doorstep."

The event is free but seating is limited, so you must register to get a ticket at <http://refugeejesus.eventbrite.com.au>



Parish consultations hit target



Neil Atwood (far left) and Bishop Lee (second from right) explain the recommendations to Emu Plains rector Roger Cunningham and church members Anna and Oriel.

LAST YEAR AN "EXPERIMENT" OF SPECIAL PARISH CONSULTATIONS BEGAN IN THE DIOCESE, AIMED at helping churches enter new cycles of growth through reigniting spiritual passion for the lost and developing more effective strategies.

Bishop Ivan Lee invited an experienced consultant, practitioner and seminary lecturer Dr Paul Borden from Growing Healthy Churches (a US Baptist organisation) to provide guidance and training in the initial stages. Together they have conducted seven consultations – the latest during March at Emu Plains, Asquith and Oatley. Regional staff such as Terry Dein and Neil Atwood, as well as Mission Area leaders and nearby rectors, helped form the consultation teams and will provide ongoing support for the parishes for 12 months.

Bishop Lee is very positive about the outcomes so far, but is cautious that no-one regard this as a silver bullet or easy fix: "It is quite a challenge for a minister and congregation to open themselves up to a fairly extensive review," he says. "However, the aim is greater spiritual health and mission effectiveness – they go together."

"It is early days with much work ahead of us, but the results in virtually every consultation so far have been quite moving and exciting, even remarkable in some cases. Pastors can and should attend conferences and courses to develop as leaders, but this process challenges and changes the congregation itself. There is no coercion. In fact, the congregation votes to implement the consultation team's recommendations or not. But therein lies actual buy-in, not simply compliance."

The Rev Roger Cunningham, rector of Emu Plains in the Penrith Mission Area, says of their consultation that it "may well turn out to be a 'once in a generation' shaping event" for the church.

"The [consultation] team heard what we were trying to do and their recommendations showed us what we should do next to get there," he says. "They also put their finger on things that needed to be addressed immediately. Some of our groups were so keen to proceed they started on new activities to serve 'those who are not in church yet'. One group provided morning tea for an exercise class that meets on the property, and talked with the participants."

"The team challenged us to review the logistics of our Sunday children's ministry to make more space for new families. We're now working through the resources needed to duplicate our Sunday morning family congregation within the next year. The team has given us strategies to increase our presence in the community and to refocus our prayers on the lost."

The Rev Craig Olliffe, the rector of Oatley in the St George Mission Area, describes the Saturday lay training as "eye-opening as to the plight of churches that are inward-focused."

"People were invigorated and keen to think harder about why we do what we do," he adds. "Everyone got something out of it, and it felt like people were ready to vote on the spot to go ahead – before even hearing what the recommendations were! The training day helped us to think beyond our own preferences to the eternal needs of our community... the voting day couldn't come soon enough for many, and it turns out that we had a unanimous result. Every single vote was a 'yes'!"

"We know that we serve a very big God, who has very big plans for our world – the consultation helped the entire church get excited to think about how we can play our part in God's plans right here in our area."

The Rev Brian Get, rector of Asquith in the Upper North Shore Mission Area, says there was "a mixture of apprehension but also excitement as to the possibilities that the consultation might bring. The day of lay training was great. There were lots of helpful insights and people are excited at moving forward in the great mission of reaching the lost."

"The consultation has helped refocus us to be crystal clear in our vision and mission, to have a strong system of welcoming and incorporating, and to do bridging events in such a way that outsiders always know what we are offering them next," he says. "We know that it won't all be plain sailing because the evil one will try and distract us from the task, but we know the effort will be worth it because the word of God is powerful to change lives. We look forward to what God has in store."

Never too old for God

IT WAS A SLIGHTLY UNUSUAL PHONE CALL for Stephen Miller, the rector of Chester Hill with Sefton: a lady named Sue Black rang, asking if he would be willing to baptise her Aunt Ivy.

Why was Sue ringing him rather than her aunt? Because Ivy Vince (or Ella, as she prefers to be called) is 100 years old and living in a retirement village.

"Sue was Ella's carer for about 20 years, but last year Ella had a fall and has now gone into the village," Stephen says. "She's still very alert but as a result of the fall is not as mobile as she used to be."

Stephen Miller assured Sue he would visit her aunt, so he went to her home, at the Gillawarna Village in Bass Hill, and had a chat to Ella about her life and why she had never been baptised. "She said that she had 'missed out' the first time around," he recalls. "She had elder brothers and a sister, but just after she was born her family moved to South Hurstville and I guess in the move they didn't get to church or something and then it was forgotten."

Ella told him she had wanted to be baptised for years, then added, "When I turned 100 I thought, 'I should be baptised the second time around!'"

Stephen Miller set a date for a baptism, which was done in Ella's room with her niece present.

"Ella was very excited about it, very happy," he says. "It meant a lot to her. Sue gave her a white presentation Bible and a necklace with silver cross, which Ella said she would wear always."

"I talked about Jesus and heaven, and I spoke from Psalm 23 – which is one of Ella's favourite passages – about living with God forever and being his friend. I'm so glad to have had the chance to say those things to someone who is looking in that direction."

Which just proves that you're never too old. Adds Stephen: "At 100 years, Ella now says she feels complete. [The baptism] was a very moving occasion."



Ready the second time around: Ella Vince on her baptism day.

LOCKED OUT

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"

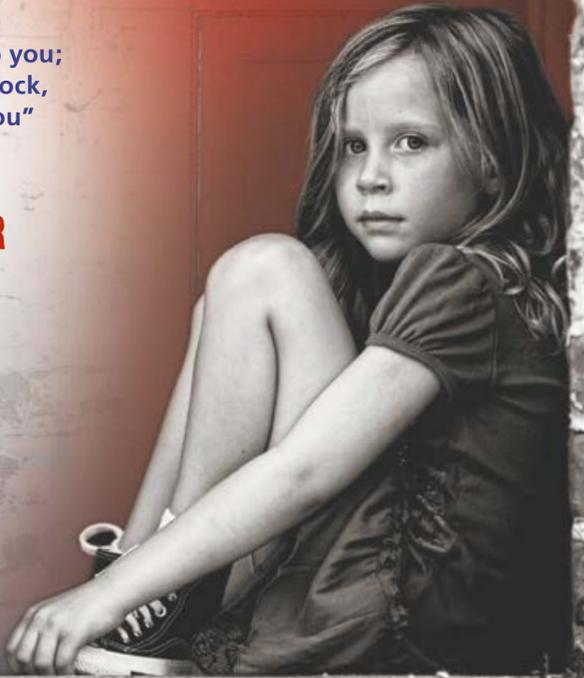
Matthew 7:7

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GAFCON primates urge clear leadership



From left: The Rev Paul Perkin (chairman FCA UK), GAFCON chairman Archbishop Eliud Wabukala and Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali (UK) at the GAFCON primates meeting in London, April. PHOTO: American Anglican Council

RUSSELL POWELL

THE GAFCON PRIMATES, MEETING IN LONDON AFTER EASTER, URGED BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH of England to provide clear leadership and biblical teaching in the face of new same-sex laws.

The primates, including leaders of some of the world's largest Anglican churches, released a seven-point statement covering areas such as the future of the movement, the same-sex laws in the UK, and recent attacks on Christians in various parts of the world. The statement spoke about the momentum from last year's Nairobi conference and said GAFCON was emerging as an "instrument of unity capable of gathering the majority of faithful Anglicans in communion globally".

"We are now taking practical steps to heal, renew and revitalise the Communion for future mission by growing our membership, improving the frequency and range of our communication and setting up networks, which will equip us to fulfil the Great Commission," the statement said.

It also referred to peace efforts in South Sudan and Nigeria and other incidents, including the recent earthquake in Chile and terrorist attacks in Kenya, expressing solidarity with Christians affected plus prayer and material support for peace efforts.

The statement also touched on the Church of England and a reported breach of church discipline in which it is claimed a hospital chaplain has been married in a same-sex "wedding".

"Meeting shortly after the recognition in English law of same-sex marriage, which we cannot recognise as compatible with the law of God, we look to the Church of England to give clear leadership as moral confusion about the status of marriage in this country deepens," the primates said. "The Archbishop of Canterbury has rightly noted that the decisions of the Church of England have a global impact and we urge that as a matter of simple integrity, its historic and biblical teaching should be articulated clearly.

"We are particularly concerned about the state of lay and clerical discipline. The House of Bishops' guidance that those in same-sex marriages should be admitted to the full sacramental life of the church is an abandonment of pastoral discipline. While we welcome their clear statement that clergy must not enter same-sex marriage, it is very concerning that this discipline is, apparently, being openly disregarded. We pray for the recovery of a sense of confidence in the whole of the truth Anglicans are called to proclaim, including that compassionate call for repentance to which we all need to respond in our different ways."

The statement also paid tribute to Archbishop Robert Duncan, who is shortly to retire as the Primate of the Anglican Church in North America, and looked forward to the next Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) planned for 2018.

The West wakes up to Nigerian persecution

IN SCENES REMINISCENT OF THE KONY CAMPAIGN OF 2012, WESTERN COUNTRIES SWUNG BEHIND efforts to rescue 200 girls kidnapped from Chibok in Nigeria by the Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram.

The group's attacks on Christian churches, government offices and other targets have plagued Nigeria since 2009 but have attracted little attention in mainstream Western media. The Chibok raid occurred on April 15, as hundreds of students at a government girls' secondary school studied for senior exams. One hundred terrorists with automatic weapons and vehicles stormed the school and carried off 200 female students – 150 more managed to escape into the bush.

Although slow to react, major Western countries eventually expressed outrage at the kidnappings and the reports that the gunmen had taken them to neighbouring countries such as Niger, Cameroon and Chad to be sold as Muslim child brides. Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, claimed credit in a video circulated to news agencies, taunting "I abducted your girls... there is a market for selling humans. Allah says I should sell. He commands me to sell." He offered to release some of the girls if the Nigerian government released some Boko Haram terrorists who were in prison.

Photos of women were shown with Shekau claiming the captives had converted to Islam. But press reports from parents said some could not identify any of their daughters in the video. One parent said some of the faces in the video were not students – they were between 20 and 30 years old. Another father told the *Daily Telegraph* in London, "My daughter is a Christian; she will never change. I would rather she died as a princess than convert to Islam".

Church leaders in Nigeria have urged the government not to negotiate with the terrorists. Anglican Primate Archbishop Nicholas Okoh declared weeks of prayers and fasting, urging Christians to pray against insurgency and kidnapping of innocent citizens.



A campaign on Twitter with the hashtag #bringbackourgirls was endorsed by the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, in a Mothers' Day video (left).

Since the Western media picked up the story, other victims of persecution have been speaking out. One survivor, 15-year-old Deborah Peters, is from the same town as the abducted girls. She told a news conference in the US how her father,

a pastor, was shot dead in 2011 when he refused to renounce Christianity. She watched as the three terrorists shot her father and then turned their guns on her young brother.

"One said they should not kill him because he is too young... but the leader told them if my brother stays he will grow up to be a pastor like my dad, so the leader said to kill him too," she said. Her brother was shot at point blank range.

Boko Haram, which translates as "Western education is sin", has been responsible for more than 1500 killings in Nigeria this year.

"One of my ministries at the moment is to run a group for mainland Chinese students. Even though I am ethnically Chinese, I quickly realized that these students are very different to me. What I have learned at College has really helped me in this ministry."
KahLin Wormell, St Barnabas

"The wonderful thing about Mary Andrews College is that it trains women for ministry in all walks of life and in all age groups. So all women can have the opportunity for marvellous study of the Bible. They can then use that knowledge in their ministry to others."
Archbishop Glenn Davies

"I started with the Pastoral Care Course, and kept going with a Certificate. I've been leading a bible study group for years, but I never realized how much I didn't know!"
Jean Whitfield, West Wollongong

"I just graduated from university, and I think that the Pastoral Care Course which I have just completed will be good for all of my life... whether it is the student ministry I am currently involved in, or for the rest of my life."
Erica Lee, Wollongong University



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What is a Christian school?



ROBERT GRANT

IN HIS THOUGHTFUL REVIEW OF *TEACHING WELL: INSIGHTS FOR EDUCATORS IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS* in February's *Southern Cross*, Bryan Cowling raises the question as to what constitutes a Christian school. Some people may think such nomenclature might relate to the number of Christian staff or students. Such a measure is too simplistic.

A Christian school might be described as being a function of two factors: a) its purpose, and b) implementation.

In respect of purpose, it is surely essential that such a school have as a central aim the promulgation of the Christian gospel. This quality rides in tandem with its educational purpose. Regarding implementation one enters a more contentious area. From this writer's perspective there are three constituent elements.

1 For the Christian purpose to be fulfilled, it seems essential to have a principal whose commitment derives from personal faith and practice. It is difficult to see how the Christian purpose can be implemented without such a core ingredient.

2 At the same time, the head needs the support of a council or board whose task is to set policy, and therefore uphold the same goal by encouraging, supporting and holding the head accountable in the task. This implies that a significant proportion of council members themselves practise a Christian faith.

3 Supporting the principal in implementing appropriate strategies and practices it will also be important to have Christian staff. While it is desirable to ensure a high proportion of staff hold such values, the key is having sufficient to actively support the policies; to administer the Christian teaching; and to provide Christian leadership. It follows that staff of Christian conviction will be strongly represented in positions of leadership. Many Christian schools that admirably serve their communities do not necessarily have a full complement of Christians on their staff. Where this is so, it is nevertheless imperative that such staff are supportive of the Christian mission and certainly are not antipathetic to it.

When a school follows practices as outlined, it is clear that there will be parents and children who, because they themselves value such goals, are attracted to the school, actively supporting this central purpose. In this writer's experience such a clientele assists in furthering the Christian program in a variety of ways, such as attending services of Christian worship, supporting prayer groups, and positively influencing the Christian activities and policies of the school.

Independent Christian schools are, of course, not alone in having Christian men and women on their staff who assist children in their Christian understanding. However, unlike secular enterprises, independent schools are advantaged in being unashamedly able to declare and uphold a Christian purpose.

Well over a century ago when the State education acts ("free, compulsory, and secular") were implemented, there was a clear concern that if the church surrendered its dominance in education, Christian education itself would suffer. Such concerns led during the latter part of the 19th century to the establishment of many new independent schools, created on a distinctly Christian foundation, by different religious denominations.

As a dispensation to the church it was agreed that regular Scripture teaching would form part of a new, expanded secular education. This provision has been eroded over time, leading to a compensatory response. Accordingly, recent decades have seen a proliferation of schools of Christian foundation, some arising from church congregations as avowedly Christian schools, and others derived from established religious denominations. Regardless of origin, the growth of such schools has been the outcome of a demand for such education, together with a determination to provide it. This has been a powerful feature of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The Sydney Anglican Church itself has made a significant commitment to the formation of numerous new schools while actively supporting its older, more traditional schools – each for the purpose of ensuring that education is provided with a declared Christian base. As far as education goes, we live in exciting times.

Robert A. I. Grant AM, was headmaster of Shore School in North Sydney from 1984-2002.

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

End of Financial Year Appeal

FALSE TEACHING HAS ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES

The Tanzanian Church is facing an enormous challenge. False teaching – especially the prosperity gospel – is undermining the faith of many Christians.

As the Church grows rapidly, so does the need for pastors and ministers. However many are becoming church leaders with little or no training in the Bible.

Through Bible Colleges like Munguishi, **CMS is addressing this serious issue by offering training and mentoring to pastors and future church leaders.**

Nicholaus Mlengeta is a pastor in the Tarime Diocese in Tanzania. Before he came to Munguishi Bible College (MBC), he believed that salvation was achieved through being holy and doing good.

Nicholaus says, "Before I came to MBC, I taught other Christians to do good works so that they could have a relationship with Jesus and not be judged. Now I know that we are saved by God's grace alone."

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

Archbishop Glenn Davies

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- Donna Meehan, author, speaker, advocate for reconciliation

For 25 years MU Sydney has provided local funding for Parish Workers to connect with their local communities through family ministry.

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GO THE BLUES

The Rev Jonathan Guyer will become rector at Wentworth Falls in August.

An assistant minister at Croydon since 2007, Mr Guyer says he and his wife Julie were "open to wherever God took us". They had discussed serving beyond Sydney but also had their eyes open for opportunities "somewhere in the west or south-west where they need a minister – we were keen not to keep camping out in the inner west".

When approached by nominators from Wentworth Falls, the Guyers were struck by the number of connection points. "It felt like it was an opportunity to serve as a first-time rector in a church that was looking to grow, in an area that was growing in young families – and we have a young family," he says.

"Wentworth Falls is also connected with a ministry in Port Elizabeth in South Africa, and I also happen to be a trustee of a university ministry in Port Elizabeth – so that was a nice connection that suggested future possibilities."

In addition, Mr Guyer was impressed by the parish's faithful, well-trained lay people. "There was already a strong workforce that wasn't looking for someone to come in and do everything," he says. "They're already doing good things, so we can partner with them in that."

MINISTRY CONTINUES

After 38 years in ordained ministry, the Rev Chris Burgess retires on June 20.

"It's hard for me to think in terms of being old enough to retire," he says. "Neither my wife Cathy or I feel that way... and I can't see the world 'retirement' in the Scripture anywhere! But for us it's time to do ministry in a different way."



Mr Burgess says he and Cathy have "really enjoyed" ministering at St Philip's, Eastwood over the past seven years and were sad to go, but at the same time were "excited about what God has in store".

"There are so many opportunities for people at this stage to involve themselves in ministry," he says. "You no longer have the ultimate charge of a parish but you can still do the ministry you love and have been trained to do."

After visiting family overseas, the couple plans to settle in the Blue Mountains.

VALE

Ailsa Knox, the widow of a long-serving principal of Moore College, Dr Broughton Knox, has died in Sydney. Mrs Knox, who was 90 this year, passed away last month just days after suffering a stroke.



Ailsa Knox served with her husband in ministry for more than 45 years, including the 26 years Dr Knox spent as principal of Moore College and later as founding principal of George Whitefield College in South Africa. Born Ailsa Lane in Sydney in 1924, she met her husband at an Inter Varsity Fellowship meeting at Sydney University in 1947. They married in 1950 and had six children. Dr Knox died in 1994.

The current Moore College principal, Dr Mark Thompson, said his first memories of Mrs Knox were of her "warm hospitality and generosity, experienced near the end of her time at Moore College. In every contact with her since, I have been encouraged by her transparent trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and her unfailing concern for the spread of his gospel in Sydney and around the world".

Archbishop Glenn Davies first met Mrs Knox 30 years ago, when invited by her husband to join the Moore College faculty. He described her as "a gracious, hospitable and entirely servant-minded woman of God".

"Ailsa modelled Christian virtues at so many levels," he said. "Her ministry, especially among faculty wives and students, was a great encouragement and a godly example. I have no doubt that the impact of Broughton Knox upon our Diocese would not have been as profound or as significant had he not had the life companion of Ailsa by his side. Precious indeed, in God's sight, is the death of his saints."



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This is what the **Being Moore** campaign is really all about. The building of the Main Campus Complex, with a world class contemporary library at its heart, but with study space, teaching rooms, a large auditorium and much more as well, is designed to provide the College with the space it needs to shape the next generation of gospel-hearted servants who will take the love of Christ to the world.

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MUSICAL WRANGLES

While the article on church music (SC, May) was interesting and I agreed with much of it, it failed to address one issue with music being performed at anything Christian: it's WAY TOO LOUD.

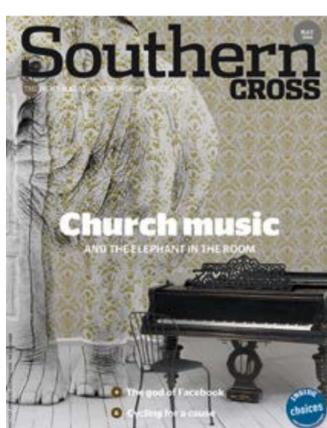
I have attended both the Katoomba Men's Convention and the recent Easter Convention, and I have been disappointed to find that the music there has also become so loud one cannot hear oneself, let alone anybody else. Any time I have attempted to convey this to those responsible I get looked at as if I were mad.

Music that is so loud it drowns out your own voice is killing off congregational singing. For years I have gone to conferences at Katoomba and have been moved and encouraged hearing hundreds or thousands of my fellow Christians singing words of truth. Now that is all dead.

In addition, the music has also become performance rather than accompaniment. The focus is on those on the stage, rather than the words we are trying to sing. To my eyes and ears, it seems that the world has crept in and changed something essential in our church culture.

If another person tells me that this is how young people like it, I think I'll go mad.

David Ashton
Katoomba



Why shouldn't music in our services be absolutely wonderful? I think many of us Anglicans are still wary of excellence in music lest we "worship the worship", hence we all settle for mediocrity. We also seem to be fixated on our own musical preferences, which sadly indicates that we are simply church consumers in the end.

A good music director requires personal musical skills, band-leading ability, songwriting skills, pastoral care, sensitivity and love for a congregation, sound theology and administrative skills. Do we still expect someone to take up this kind of role in their spare time? There are plenty of mature Christian musicians out there who would not touch church music with a 10-foot pole due to the time demands and cultural complexities involved.

A good start would be for churches to get music ministry into the budget and musicians onto the staff. Another way forward would be for our theological colleges to offer a music stream. That way we are demonstrating that music is an essential gift for the life of the church and one that we want to excel in for God's glory.

Ali Maegraith
Marrickville

I found the article on church music interesting and thought-provoking. However, Anglican church music is more comprehensive than modern "songs". The many Anglican anthems that we sang in the church choirs usually contained the exact words of Scripture, e.g. "If you love me, keep my commandments".

Also, we have so many wonderful hymns that are useful for teaching and evangelism. To me, the text is the source of inspiration (using a singable and appropriate tune) such as "O Jesus I have promised to serve you to the end". Very challenging for confirmees and others.

I have been a church organist for 72 years, and playing the traditional hymns gives me a great deal of real joy. I well remember attending the Home Mission Society (now Anglicare) annual celebration in the Sydney Town Hall. To hear the hundreds of people singing with great enthusiasm – traditional hymns, to the excellent accompaniment of the grand organ, and also the boys' choir, with an anthem – to me, this is the best of church music.

Arthur Gee
Mittagong

I recently started working as a chaplain in an independent living retirement village. Even though the people I talk with have a variety of church backgrounds and service attendance patterns I have found the topic of church music soon comes up. It seems that what many of this "twilight generation" want is the comfort of familiarity. They like the old hymns sung to the old tunes with unrevised lyrics.

I had expected that the article "Elephant in the music room" in the May issue was going to expose this generation as the elephant within the current practice of a new song a month and a changing song list. I was surprised to see that of the 13 "helpful" songs only three of them were written before 1999. Haven't they sung "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"?

Since the "Twilighters" didn't seem to get a mention I guess they remain the elephant in the room.

Denise Lake
Silverwater

PRAYER TROUBLE NOT NEW

The problem of Christians not praying didn't start with Facebook ("The god of Facebook", SC, May). And it's a shame that often Christians can't see Mark Zuckerberg's invention for what it is: simply a different way to communicate with people.

In fact, I'd argue that Facebook can promote prayer. In the past couple of months I've been involved in a prayer team that has spanned continents, countries and generations. People all over the globe have prayed specifically for a particular family with missionary and Christian connections who were in a tragic car accident in Asia. The fervency and number of prayers would not have been possible without Facebook, which kept (and still keeps) us all in touch with what was going on from day to critical day.

It's easy to demonise the internet and social media in particular. Of course, it's true you can use it badly and for suspect motives. But that's not its fault – it's the fault of the human heart. We're all quite capable of treating our "in person" friends badly as well. Used well, Facebook and all social media can enhance and build relationships and encourage others in godliness and love.

Cecily Paterson
Kangaroo Valley

GRACE IN PRINT

I want to commend two articles in the May edition of *Southern Cross*. Both celebrate different gifts that our God bestows upon his people.

The first is "Hold lightly to this world" by Jane Tooher on the life and poetry of the Puritan poet, Anne Bradstreet. In an increasingly prosaic world, this article reminds us of the great gift of poetic expression that God has given us.

On a similar theme, the cover story by Huw Jones, "Elephant in the music room", is a very helpful and substantial discussion on the importance of the gift of music in our churches. Unfortunately, for a complexity of reasons, this gift often causes disunity and discord. It should not be so, for music's unique combination of words plus melody is a great and powerful gift from God, for his glory and our edification, for which we ought to be thankful. And of which we need to be careful stewards. Because of the issues he raises a reading of, and reflection upon, Huw's article is to be encouraged.

Thank you for these reminders of "the triumphs of His grace".

Ian Keast
Riverstone

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Prayer power

DR GLENN DAVIES

THE BOOK OF REVELATION DESCRIBES THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS (NAMELY, THE people of God) as incense laid upon the golden altar before God's throne (5:8; 8:3-4). It is an arresting image of the significance and sacred nature of our prayers. That the sovereign Lord should bid his people to pray is not only a great wonder but also an enormous privilege. Yet in his divine providence he delights in our prayers and yearns for us to pray. For through our prayers God brings about his purposes.

It was not surprising then that Thomas Cranmer entitled his first English liturgy as a book of "Common Prayer". It was not only "common" in that the words were in the common tongue of the English, but it was also "common" in that the people themselves joined in with the minister in saying their prayers. One of the virtues of Anglican liturgy is the opportunity that the people have in joining in prayer *together*, rather than merely being an audience for the minister's prayers alone. Cranmer's saturation of the text of his liturgy with the teaching of the Bible also contained the response of our prayers to God's revelatory word. His collects "collected" the themes of the Bible passages for a given Sunday or feast day and expressed them in prayer to God.

The heart of prayer is petition, which together with thanksgiving expresses our heart's desire before the throne of grace. It is an essential part of the Christian life and ought to be part of our daily routine, and not just when we gather for "common prayer". The traditional concept of a quiet time has proved to be an effective discipline for Christians as they either start or finish the day in Bible reading and prayer. In the Bible, God speaks to us; in our prayers, we speak to God.

Yet in my experience, prayer can be a difficult discipline for Christians, even for ministers. There are, of course, a myriad of resources in Christian bookshops for practising prayer, but what we need most of all is a theological understanding of prayer. Why do we pray? Does prayer change God's mind? Do our prayers have any real effect on a God who orders all things according to the counsel of his own will? These are important questions to understand, which will both enlighten and enrich our prayer life. John Calvin's superb exposition of prayer (*Institutes* III.20) describes prayer as the chief exercise of faith and answers many of these questions. A more contemporary and equally excellent resource for a biblical theological understanding of prayer is Graeme Goldsworthy's *Prayer and the Knowledge of God* (IVP, 2003).

Prayer is an expression of our dependence upon God, and an opportunity to express our needs and desires in accordance with his revealed will. As an exercise of faith, it seeks first and foremost to glorify God, hence the opening petitions of the Lord's Prayer are: "Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done". Our concern is to glorify God and pray that he might use us, and our prayers, to further his kingdom.

Ungodly lives can hinder our prayers (1 Peter 3:7), but the prayer of faith, the prayer of a righteous man or woman, has great power in its effects (James 5:16). 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.

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We need to do it, and we should do it – so why is prayer so hard?

DAVID MCINTYRE investigates.

WHEN PRAYER IS MENTIONED, IT PROVOKES A VAST RANGE OF RESPONSES in Christians. It might be something we enjoy, or find difficult. We may even find it hard to see the point – after all, God knows everything and is in total control, so why pray?

Perhaps talk of prayer creates a sense of guilt. It's something we feel we should be doing more, but we never seem to pray as much as we'd hoped.

The question is, what is the place of prayer in the Christian life, and how do we make that a reality?

The Rev Dr David Höhne, who lectures in theology and philosophy at Moore College, suggests that we underestimate the place of prayer.

"Prayer is doing what we were made for," he says. That is, joining in the conversation between God and his children, led by the chief prayer, the Lord Jesus. It was he who made prayer possible by praying in the garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will but yours".

"Then it's a straight line to the cross," Höhne says. He adds that in Matthew's Gospel, that prayer in the garden is the goal of the whole Bible story, because previously a man in a garden had said, "Not your will but mine".

Our goal as Christians is to join in the gospel prayer that puts God's will first.

This makes prayer much more than a list of things we ask from God, or even regular "reporting in" to our King. Jesus has reconnected us to our heavenly Father so that we have fellowship with him.

If God's goal of saving us through the Lord Jesus was in one sense so we could fellowship with him through prayer, then, Höhne says, it is a complete negation of who we are not to talk to God. "Our sinfulness makes us work against God," he says – and not praying is part of this.

The Rev Archie Poulos, who lectures in ministry and mission at Moore College, says simply that the things that stop us praying are the world, the flesh and the devil.

He says the world teaches us that our actions bring results – when the reality is that God does things – while our hearts prefer not to pray if it means repenting.

"Standing behind both is the devil, who will do anything to prevent us from enjoying the privilege that God holds out," he says.

This privilege is that we can be intimate with our heavenly Father, rather than stand at a distance, as the Israelites had to do at Sinai because God's holiness could not allow them to come near.

Tim Baker, a young ESL teacher who is seeking to serve as an overseas missionary, realised how close we can be to God because of who he is – the gracious, compassionate God who is slow to anger and abounding in love – and what he did on the cross. "He sees you at your worst and His Spirit is inside of you and you're not consumed!" he says.

Baker, who attends Austimner Anglican, was changed by this realisation. He no longer approaches God as a slave to his master, but as a friend or father who already knows the worst of us and is more willing to listen than we are to pray.

Yet our true nature and even our desires not withstanding, many of us find prayer difficult.

IN LOVE WITH THE LORD

For Frances Bradford (right) prayer is her whole life as she seeks to spend it with her Lord Jesus.

"When you're in love, you want to be with your partner, and I'm in love with my Lord Jesus Christ," says Frances, who is 93 and has been praying since she was very young.

Yet Frances didn't just one day wake up to find herself a faithful pray-er. Her current prayer life is built on many years of practice, modelling from others and teaching from the Bible.

In her case, her grandmother had already been praying for Frances and other family members, even before she was born. Frances' father led the family in prayer and both her parents taught her to praise God in all circumstances.

"I come from a Christian family where prayer and the reading of the Scriptures were dominant," she says.

Frances and her sisters carried that on by ringing each other to pray regularly, a practice they continued until her sisters passed away, one of them recently.

But she credits none of this to herself.

"God's been very kind to me," she says. "Before I was born I was covered by prayer... and he kept the spark alive through his Holy Spirit."

This has carried her through life's ups and downs and in different circumstances.

As Frances' husband was incapacitated and wasn't able to earn enough for the family she also worked, and would pray for the person next to her on her commute. She would duck outside in the evenings when she still had little children to look up at the night sky and pray. Prayer carried her through when her husband died suddenly, several decades ago.

Frances' prayers are also firmly centred on the Bible, which provides both the model, the content and inspiration for her prayers.

She points to Nehemiah as someone who sent a quick prayer up when the king of Persia asked him what was wrong, and describes how she now quickly prays for the person who is being carried by an ambulance passing by. She also points to how Jesus taught his disciples to pray, and says it's the model that all who pray should follow.

Putting God's priorities first also shapes what she prays for. That means praying for those who need to hear the gospel and for opportunities to tell them.

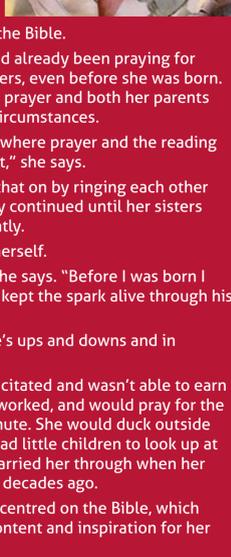
"I just had the carpets shampooed and God sent me a lovely young Muslim man and I was able to show him parts of the Bible," she says.

Frances says the Bible, and particularly Psalms, provide words for prayer that allow us to praise God when we are down. "I had a tiny son die and when I was down in the dumps [my parents] would put their arms around me and we read through the last few Psalms," she says.

As well as her family, Frances credits the good teaching she has received at St Matthias', Centennial Park and from teachers like John Chapman when she was still working in the city.

Now, Frances says she has a lot of time to pray because she "can't race around any more". But she also sees that as an opportunity given by God.

"That's the job that you're given [when you're older] – to be people of prayer."



PRAYER TOGETHER

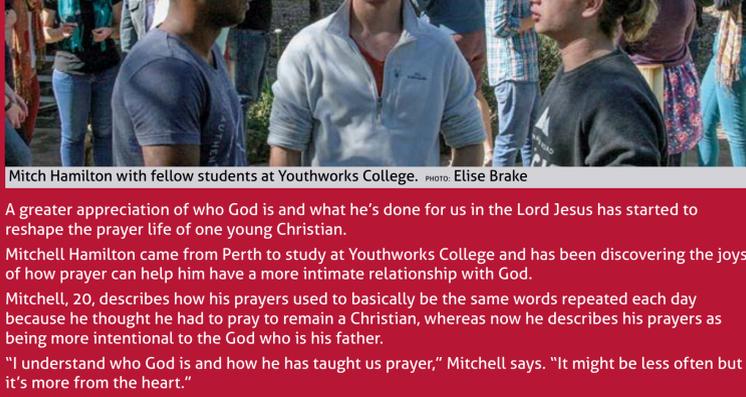
Höhne suggests the issue is one of practice and modelling, rather than teaching. We are strong on the facts and the truths of Christianity and assume that will lead to good habits, when that does not necessarily follow.

Thus, the first thing he suggests is that we need to make better use of the opportunities for corporate prayer, whether in the Sunday service, at Bible study, or when we meet with other Christians.

Höhne says most of the teaching in the New Testament is to groups of Christians. "As 21st-century individualists, we need to relearn the corporate nature of prayer."

Höhne adds that corporate prayer, and the individual prayer that will flow out of it, needs to be guided by the Bible, because we as sinful people don't know what to pray for and we need to train people to pray if they are doing it publicly.

HONEST PRAYERS



Mitch Hamilton with fellow students at Youthworks College. PHOTO: Elise Brake

A greater appreciation of who God is and what he's done for us in the Lord Jesus has started to reshape the prayer life of one young Christian.

Mitchell Hamilton came from Perth to study at Youthworks College and has been discovering the joys of how prayer can help him have a more intimate relationship with God.

Mitchell, 20, describes how his prayers used to basically be the same words repeated each day because he thought he had to pray to remain a Christian, whereas now he describes his prayers as being more intentional to the God who is his father.

"I understand who God is and how he has taught us prayer," Mitchell says. "It might be less often but it's more from the heart."

From the heart for Mitchell means humbling himself before God by acknowledging his weaknesses, anger and grief.

"God wants us to be down-to-the-bone honest," he says.

For him, the key to regular prayer has not so much been about routine as thinking deliberately about praying – when he rides his bicycle, when he goes on the train, or wherever. He will deliberately leave a book at home so he can pray on the train.

At the same time, Mitchell knows it is a constant struggle to keep praying. "So many worldly things like Facebook and the iPad get in the way," he says. "My heart is in it, but I find it really easy to get distracted."

As with others before him, the model of prayer provided by older Christians – his parents and older men at church, his lecturers at Youthworks College – has been of great benefit.

There is also his greater understanding of Scripture, which is helping him better comprehend prayer and some of the problems people have when praying. For instance, he has come to understand that God may say "No" or "Not yet" to our prayers, and this can be much better than the "Yes" we hoped for.

Mitchell points out Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 12 where the apostle had pleaded for the removal of a thorn in the flesh three times, but the Lord allowed it to stay to show Paul that Christ's power would be seen through his weakness.

Mitchell has also found it helpful to focus on the end – the time when Christ will take us to the coming kingdom – and he has found that it helps others as well.

"I pray for his kingdom to come," he says. "I don't think we pray for that enough. It gives us an eternal perspective."

That is what Mitchell is seeking to model and teach the youth he is leading. And he prays for them, "that their eyes would be opened and that they would grow in Scripture".

A good example of faithful corporate prayer is the Healing Service at St Andrew's Cathedral, which is held each Wednesday evening.

The Rev Canon Chris Allan, who leads the healing ministry at the Cathedral, says the service is a place where people can come and pray with Christians. "The Healing Service defines what we are," he says. "It's our relationship with God and who he is that gives us our confidence."

At the Healing Service, people are invited to put up their hands and Christian members of the congregation come at the end to pray with them where they are sitting. Both Christians from other churches and many non-Christians come to be prayed for.

And many hear and see the work of the gospel, with Allan estimating that up to 30 per cent of people each week are non-Christian visitors.

Of course, the Cathedral does have certain geographic and architectural advantages over most local churches. The healing service has also been going for 50 years. However, Allan says that other churches are investigating whether they can emulate, if not the Healing Service, then having people who pray for others at the end of the service.

Matt Stedman, the senior associate minister at St Andrew's, Roseville, is part of a ministry team that wrestles with how to keep praying as a church. He says the great temptation for both the leadership, and the congregation, is to do things rather than pray.

For that reason they have structured prayer in place, such as the quarterly church prayer meeting, prayers scattered through Sunday services, prayer points sent to Bible studies and a weekly staff prayer meeting to remind all congregation members that God, and not people, are in control.

"Our motto to pray is, 'We're going to pray until we like it!'" says Stedman, who adds that he doesn't think St Andrew's is unusual among Sydney Anglican churches in terms of prayer.

Stedman and the other staff members also seek to model by praying with people every time they meet up and at formal meetings.

NOT US, BUT GOD

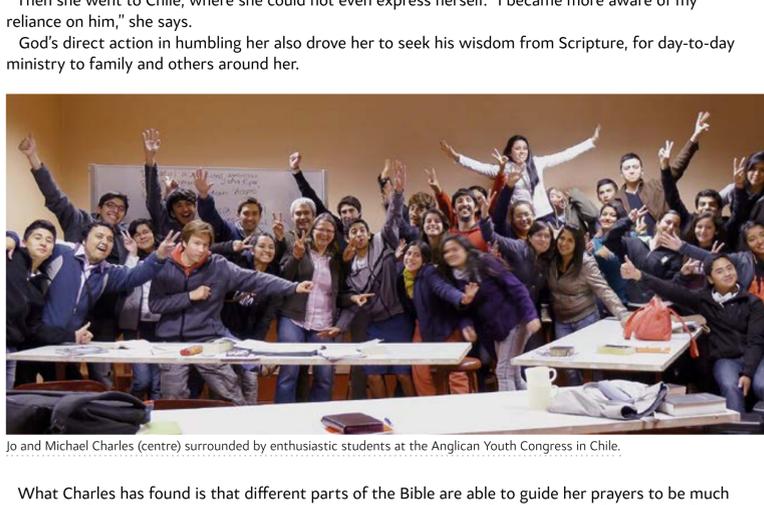
The self-reliance that stops people from praying is something that God stripped away from Jo Charles when she went to Chile as a missionary 10 years ago with her husband Michael and their kids.

Charles says the early years of missionary service were a constant reminder of her total dependence on her heavenly Father.

She looks back and speaks of herself before mission as a self-reliant and competent person. "I would ask for God here and there," she says. "Pride is something that impeded my prayer because I was very self-reliant."

Then she went to Chile, where she could not even express herself. "I became more aware of my reliance on him," she says.

God's direct action in humbling her also drove her to seek his wisdom from Scripture, for day-to-day ministry to family and others around her.



Jo and Michael Charles (centre) surrounded by enthusiastic students at the Anglican Youth Congress in Chile.

What Charles has found is that different parts of the Bible are able to guide her prayers to be much more specific than the general prayers for God's work, confession of sin, or for her family. Specific prayer, in turn, guides her to parts of the Bible that speak into that circumstance.

Charles gives the example of having children. Rather than just praying for wisdom in raising kids, she speaks of praying that one of them felt ripped off by God – and God reminded her of Jonah, which in turn led to a conversation she was able to have with her child about being angry with God.

Charles also speaks of the Bible college where her husband teaches, and how they introduced morning and evening prayer times to bookend the academic day with reliance on God. They encouraged the students to pray from Psalms and, at first, they would read the psalm then go back to general prayers. Then, after a while, they learnt to pray more specifically, guided by the psalm they were reading.

More specific prayers and the application of Scripture more specifically and creatively in our life lead to one of the great ends of prayer, which is to become more intimate with our heavenly Father, Charles says.

Perhaps it will also help us at times we have felt that prayer is boring by showing us the way to a variety of prayer – in both content and expression.

The Bible also provides other model prayers and great pray-ers, the greatest of course being the Lord Jesus.

Frances Bradford, who has been praying for most of her 93 years (see page 17), says the Lord's Prayer is an excellent model because it was Jesus' response when his disciples wanted to know how to pray.

"He did give us that prayer and I've tried to follow his words in the prayer," she says. "The first is for his name to be hallowed and his work to be done... that stops the shopping list."

That takes us back to Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane and what we have been saved to be... people who can say to God, "not my will but yours".

Yet this too has to be taught. We all need to be reminded to set our hearts on things above and not on earthly things.

That's not to say our daily needs are unimportant, and God has said he wants to hear us ask him for what we need. But if we are seeking to put God first in our lives, then that would include reordering our priorities to be more like his.

UNANSWERED PRAYER?

And yet, there are times when we feel that we are praying according to his priorities and our prayers don't seem to be answered. This can be a tremendous challenge for Christians, but the first thing is to trust that God can say "No" or "Not yet" to a prayer and still love us.

David Höhne points out that the cross and resurrection are the things we need to cling to because they remind us that God loves us to the extent that he was willing to die for us.

"The cross is our guarantee that God is for us," Höhne says.

Jo Charles says there have been lots of times that prayers didn't make a difference to circumstances – "but it does change my intimacy with God in the midst of that".

She adds that there have been long-term health issues in her family which haven't been resolved, and that prayer for healing may never be answered in the way she thinks it should.

In the midst of this, the unanswered prayer gives her an opportunity to cling to God more.

"Perhaps all you're [God] doing is making me long for heaven in a way I would never have done if I was healthy," she says.

Chris Allan also says that while he has seen some amazing things at the healing service, there have been other times that have broken his heart – for instance, where a person's cancer that had gone came back.

In the midst of that, he says, "we need to trust in God's sovereignty", remembering that "our presenting problem is not always our greatest need".

However, there may be circumstances where things are so painful, physically or emotionally, and we feel so distant from God, that we feel it is impossible to pray.

Höhne finds again to the corporate nature of prayer, and to the amazing indwelling of God's Spirit. "When we point ourselves in a place of misery, then give yourself up to the Lord who prays for you, and his people who can pray for you," he says.

God has remade us into people who can pray to him through the Lord Jesus. God's Spirit within us is always praying for us, as is Jesus in heaven. Christians are now, by nature, people of prayer.

The question is, will we take up the invitation on our side, as congregations then as individuals, to deepen our intimacy with our heavenly Father? What is stopping us from praying, and how can we remove those obstacles so that we can deepen our intimacy with him?

WHERE TO START?

Content and structure

- Pray from the Bible, whether it's from the Psalms or the many other recorded prayers.
- Write a verse to keep in your pocket to pull out during the day.
- Use the Lord's Prayer as a template.
- ACTS (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication) or TSP (thanks, sorry, please) can be a helpful routine.
- Pray through the church contact list, mission diaries and other prayer letters.

Attitude

- Read the Bible.
- Remember that God is in control.
- Pray to become a better pray-er.
- We don't need to win God over! He is on our side.
- Short prayers are okay. Three minutes of actual prayer is better than an hour of intended prayer.
- You may need routine, or you may not be a routine person. Try different things.
- Come with your own words.

Practice

- Start short. A short prayer each day as you get up is an excellent habit.
- Pray with those around you regularly – spouse, children, Christian colleagues, Bible study members.
- Take advantage of the church service and mentally join in, or get on the church prayer roster.
- Pray at transition times in the day: at meals, when you get in the car, dropping a child at school, commuting to work, getting up or going to bed, when you're in a queue.
- Encourage more prayer at church.
- Put up laminated prayer points or Bible verses in the shower.
- Make sure prayer is part of Bible study. If sharing takes too long, maybe get everyone to write down their prayer points then pass them to the next person to pray.
- Cards for set areas of prayer (i.e. spouse, children, work, church etc).
- When talking to a friend in need, offer to pray straight away with them.
- Reminders connected to specific people (i.e. associate a landmark with a friend).
- Get alongside someone who is more mature at prayer. They can model prayer to you.
- Use a prayer app.

When prayers don't seem to be answered

- Be persistent. God does care about what you're praying for.
- Ask others to pray for you, especially if you are having trouble praying.
- Be willing to examine your own motives and change before God.
- Be patient. God may be saying wait.

Sydney and the Great War



Nursing the wounded from Gallipoli in a Cairo hospital, 1915.

As the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I approaches,

COLIN BALE considers the impact of the war on the ministry and people of the Sydney Diocese.

JUNE 2014

Southern CROSS

1

HIS YEAR MARKS THE CENTENARY OF THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR I IN 1914. THE conflict often described as the "Great War" or "the war to end all wars" had a profound impact on Australian society and culture. More than 60,000 service personnel had died by the declared end of the war. As well, a further 160,000 suffered some sort of physical wound – not to mention those who bore ongoing emotional and psychological scars because of their war service.

In a small nation, with a population of just under five million in 1914, a primary experience of the war for Australian families and communities was that of loss and grief. The historian Jay Winter writes, "it is not an exaggeration to suggest that every family was in mourning: most for a relative – a father, a son, a brother, a husband – others for a friend, a colleague, a lover, a companion". Ken Inglis, an Australian historian, estimates at least one in two families were directly affected, many others indirectly. Given the scale and impact of the conflict, how did the Anglican Diocese of Sydney respond to it, and what was the nature of its ministry during the war years?

In Sydney, Archbishop Wright was a very strong supporter of the war effort and urged clergy in a 1915 issue of the *Australian Church Record* to be active in encouraging men to enlist: "We teach the solemn call of duty as the Voice of God". Sydney Anglican clergy were no different to most other Protestant ministers in promoting the call of national duty for eligible young men. However, in his book *The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War, 1914-1918*, Professor Robert Linder writes of his belief that the mainline Protestant churches erred in promoting the war effort so vigorously because, when disillusionment with the hope of the conflict being a war to end all wars began to grow in the 1920s and 1930s, this impacted negatively on the churches.



A church service in the Domain, conducted by Archbishop Wright, on the first anniversary of Anzac Day.

Many Anglican laymen joined the Australian Imperial Force or Australian Navy as is evidenced by the large number of names on Roll of Honour boards in parish churches around the Diocese (more than 2000 women served with the Australian Army Nursing Service and many more with other nursing organisations or as volunteers with the Red Cross). Numbers of clergy volunteered to be military chaplains but with the number of applicants being far greater than the positions available many clergy were unable to serve in this way. For some of them their keen desire to serve for the sake of the cause meant they relinquished clerical positions and enlisted as servicemen.

During the war the ministry of the Diocese was focused on both the home front and military operations overseas. As well as providing physical comforts such as coffee canteens and entertainment venues to troops stationed in the growing military camps, the Sydney Diocese worked hard to get bibles, testaments and prayer books into the hands of all soldiers, believing this would aid their spiritual wellbeing. During the war Archbishop Wright sought to ensure that all soldiers leaving Australia from Sydney received a New Testament and/or a Prayer Book. By doing this the Archbishop claimed the "Church is showing to the men that their Church does care for them, and is prepared to do all in her power for their spiritual and social welfare".

The diocesan magazine discloses the effort that went into this venture. The March 1916 edition of the *Sydney Diocesan Magazine* related how "5000 testaments have been given the men [at Liverpool Camp in Sydney] and a large number of prayer books". The October issue of the magazine reproduced a letter from the Rev A. Stoddard who said "on board ship to Egypt he gave out 500 testaments containing a promise in duplicate to play the part of a Christian, the duplicates being forwarded to Sydney to be forwarded to the various addresses given". The January 1917 issue informed readers that "the Home Mission Society has just cabled an order to England for four thousand prayer books for the soldiers".

Robert Linder believes the emphasis secular historians have placed upon the "larrikin" attitude of Australian servicemen has overlooked another dimension – "a spiritual hunger among troops". In 1916, the Anglican Home Mission Society in Sydney had sent the Rev A. Stoddard to England to work with the wounded in the hospitals. In a 1917 report to the diocesan magazine a correspondent wrote that,

One practical thing he [Stoddard] does is he gets soldiers to fill out a card with name, address, state of health, and the person in Australia for who the card is intended... thousands of these cards forwarded to Australia where they are sent on to the various addresses. Many are the letters... received from mothers, wives and friends expressing heartfelt thanks for the cards. In some instances they were the only news received had received from some of their boys.

The October 1917 issue of the diocesan magazine printed excerpts from the letters of two chaplains at the front:

Said one: "All the church parades are voluntary, and the men attend in very large numbers. My trouble is that I have not nearly enough service books for them all... the fact that the men have often been out half the night, and you will see that it requires no small effort to make a Church Parade a success... We had a grand Communion service on Easter Sunday. It was held in an old tumbledown place, ankle deep in mud; that did duty as a sergeants' mess. It was just simply packed with men, many could not get in."

Chaplain Richmond wrote that "Somehow here where men are living on the brink of eternity, men are ready to turn to higher things... beginning to prepare another body of men for confirmation. They are coming forward very readily."

The Diocese was also active at home to succour soldiers and their families. Here again, the *Sydney Diocesan Magazine* provides insights into the activity of the Church of England, which was mirrored



AIF servicemen with an ambulance presented by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1916.



Ladies of the Red Cross Society distributing comforts to wounded men at Randwick Military Hospital (now Prince of Wales Hospital).

by the other denominations. At the Army camps in Sydney the Home Mission Society established soldiers' clubs, which were halls used for services, entertainment and as meeting places for the troops where they could write letters and socialise. Entertainment was also organised for the soldiers' wives and children.

The January 1917 edition described how toys were distributed to 4000 children, of whom "about one thousand were children of our soldiers, who with their mothers were regaled at special gatherings arranged for them". In the report of another event in the same month attention was drawn to one young, unnamed woman with "a babe in arms, and by her side a little girl of five, and a little chap of the function. Readers were reminded of the tragic circumstances of some attendees when they were informed that the young woman's husband had been "killed in action just a month before". The report concluded that the mission zone workers "were privileged to do some little thing for the wives and children of our heroes".

In dealing with those bereaved because of the war, Sydney

Anglican clergy had an important,

but often difficult, part to play. Early in the war denominational leaders had agreed to have clergy deliver telegrams informing next-of-kin of the death of a soldier. This was a well-intentioned policy designed to enable clergy to comfort relatives when the sad news arrived. Archbishop Wright explained that while it was a "heavy duty" for clergy, "they know they can help to soften the blow by the administration of God's word".

However, it often had the result of turning clergy into virtual social pariahs, as the Archbishop acknowledged: "the pity is that anxious friends are dreading the sight of a clergyman at their door lest he be the messenger of bad tidings". Given the level of casualties the Australians suffered in the war, clergy found this duty occurred all too frequently, and made any ministry of consolation very difficult. Nevertheless, in spite of this obvious problem regarding the delivery of telegrams, it meant clergy were not only aware of grieving families but were given the opportunity to minister to next-of-kin as they received the tragic news.

In the absence of bodies for funerals, churches often conducted memorial services that allowed a family to share its loss with community and friends in a service of thanksgiving and remembrance for the deceased. For example, a memorial service for Corporal Attended Dawes of the 45th Battalion was held at Dapto in August 1917. Such a large number of people attended the memorial service that the venue was changed to the larger Agricultural Hall. Dawes had been killed at Bullecourt on April 11, 1917. After the war his parents chose a hopeful epitaph for his headstone: *TILL WE MEET AGAIN*. It looks forward to a heavenly reunion of the family with their soldier, an indication that their Christian belief about eternal life consoled them in their grief.

Churches also organised other kinds of memorial services. The anniversary of the Anzac landing at Gallipoli witnessed commemorative services in numbers of churches. The *Sydney Diocesan Magazine* reported that two services were held on April 25, 1917: "the fallen were commemorated at Holy Communion celebrated at 10am", followed by the official service held at noon with a "vast congregation, packed tight into every square foot of available space, overflowing outside every door... displayed its realisation of the protecting hand of almighty God, the transitoriness of human existence, and the unchanging eternity of God's existence". The service was unmistakably Christian and was attended by government and community leaders. The issues of the diocesan magazine during the war list a number of memorial services held on the anniversaries of key battles. One such service was held on August 6, 1916 when the anniversary of Lone Pine and Suva Bay operations were commemorated by special services at the Cathedral, with members of the newly formed Returned Servicemen's Association parading. The magazine reported that "many hundreds were unable to gain admission to the Cathedral".

Thus the involvement of the Diocese of Sydney at the community and family/individual level during World War I was significant. Numerous accounts in the diocesan magazine readily demonstrate both the desire to share the great news of the gospel with soldiers at home and abroad, and to care for the spiritual, emotional and physical needs not only of those on active service but of their loved ones waiting back in Australia.

Commemoration of World War I gives us the opportunity, along with the rest of the community, to remember and honour the sacrifice of that generation whose hope was that the awfulness of the war would act as a deterrent for future wars. Sadly their hope was not realised, for the only hope of lasting peace – as the gospel makes abundantly clear – can be found through the saving sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus. Let us prayerfully commit ourselves, as Sydney Anglicans did during World War I, to minister that message of hope to our generation.

The Rev Dr Colin Bale is Moore College's academic dean as well as head of its Church History department. He lectures in Church History and Ministry.

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SYDNEY MEETS CANTERBURY



Archbishop Davies and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.

Archbishop Glenn Davies travelled to Europe in May for the Lausanne International Leadership Meeting in Switzerland, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the first Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation and the writing of the Lausanne Covenant (more on the meeting in *Southern Cross* next month). On his way back to Sydney, Dr Davies stopped in London for a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury at his London home, Lambeth Palace. After discussions over lunch, the archbishops read the Bible and prayed together in the historic study once used by Thomas Cranmer to write *The Book of Common Prayer*.

ON A MISSION TO MARA AND MUKONO



Opening the Boys Brigade Mara Training Centre



Brett Hall visits the Olwas

A recent missions trip to Africa saw the growth of gospel work in Tanzania and Uganda, some of which is assisted directly by Anglican Aid projects.

The Rev Brett Hall, assistant minister at Rosemeadow and Appin Anglican Churches, took the trip, visiting locations such as Mara in Tanzania and Mukono District in Uganda. He says it was a great opportunity to see how churches in Sydney are partnering with churches in central and eastern Africa.

"It was incredible being able to just see everything in context over there," he says. "I got to see the teachers at the theological college and see how they do teaching over there, and I got to actually see the difference the projects that we support make for real people. I think before I went, my own personal support of Anglican Aid was driven by a desire to be generous, but when you see the project on the ground, you meet the people who are helped by it and partner with it, it adds a real personal dimension to it all."

He says the purpose of the trip was threefold – to see the progress of five Anglican Aid projects in the region, to meet with the Rev Canon Dr Alfred Olwa, a friend of Mr Hall's with whom he studied at Sydney's Moore College, and also to visit Rosemeadow and Appin Anglican Churches' link missionaries in Tanzania, Matthew and Samantha Archer.

Some of the Anglican Aid projects in the region include a sustainable farming development, a secondary school for girls, a young men's vocational training centre, and the provision of scholarships at the Uganda Christian University. Mr Hall says the spread of these projects shows the highly integrated nature of ministry in Tanzania and Uganda; that for them there is no real difference in the end between proclaiming the gospel and assisting in social development.

"For instance, the project on sustainable farming, one of the benefits of that is that they are able to move out of poverty, and they've actually invested the money that they now have in a local church building," he says. "A visible local gospel ministry is now starting to flourish, where previously it was under-resourced. The dichotomy between development and gospel proclamation simply breaks down – they actually go hand in hand."



A church vs village soccer game



The Archer family, missionaries in Tanzania

MOTHERS' DAY AT APPIN



Pancakes for breakfast at Appin Public School.
PHOTO: Scott Webster

Rosemeadow and Appin Anglican Churches recently held a Mothers' Day breakfast at the local school, which was attended by some 150 mums, grandmothers and kids.

The Rev Brett Hall, who headed up the event, says it was a great day, and was intended to build upon the success of the Fathers' Day event held at the school last year.

"We've been involved in the school, running Scripture classes and the like," he says. "It's a small community at Appin, so all of those things came together. There were a stack of mothers there, with kids floating around. A bunch of the kids that were there are in my SRE class and were talking to me about it the next time I had the class. I think we made about 60 or so cups of coffee."

The principal of the school, Ms Vicki Walsh, graciously thanked the church for the event, which was set up and staffed by the church, which also donated the food and drink.

Says Mr Hall: "It's absolutely essential for us to be connected with the school. This is where we have and will have our primary contacts. It also gets us out of the church building and allows people to see that there is an active church in Appin."

PARTY ON FOR EASTER

St John's, Darlinghurst changed its approach to Easter Sunday this year, putting on a party for the local community, complete with food, lights and an in-house DJ.

The Rev Ed Vaughan, St John's senior minister, says the idea came from the observation that the local community's way of relating to celebrations was different to the way his church traditionally celebrated Easter.

"The reason why it came up was because a woman at church, straight after Mardi Gras, noted that lot of the people who lived in her block of units were gay males," Mr Vaughan says. "Particularly around Mardi Gras, she noted that there was a party atmosphere where she lived and she said, 'It's funny, Christians never really seem to celebrate in that way'. That got us thinking about how we can connect with the party atmosphere, but instead connect it to celebrating what is good about Easter, and that moved us towards doing what we did."

The party included spit roast lamb, plenty of decorations around the church site on Darlinghurst Road, and also involved one of the parishioners, who is a DJ, putting on a dance mix for church members and other Darlinghurst residents alike.

"It was a very public location and people wandered in and out," Mr Vaughn says. "People from our Rough Edges street ministry came as well. I gave a toasts, which was basically a talk. We also had a special Easter dance, which in the end turned out to be 'Zorba the Greek'. We wanted a bit of line dancing, so that's what we did."

Mr Vaughan estimates there were between 80 and 90 people at the event, and the plan is to continue in the same vein for Easter next year.

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FULL FORCE

On the back of last month's international celebration of Star Wars Day ("May the 4th be with you"), **PETER COLLIER** discusses why he was happy to revisit the series with his young son.

Southern CROSS JUNE 2014

13

I'M SURE IT FEELS LIKE A LONG TIME AGO IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY, BUT I'M OLD enough to remember when the original *Star Wars* movie came out. Like so many of my generation, I couldn't tell you where I was when Kennedy was shot or man landed on the moon as I wasn't alive then, but I could tell you when I first watched *Star Wars*.

The series has had such a global impact since it first appeared on cinema screens in 1977 that not only is there now a gazetted "Star Wars Day" on May 4 each year, but a new *Star Wars* film – set 30 years after *Return of the Jedi* – is now in the works, to be released next year.

It might be difficult to imagine (or perhaps not), but I remember *Star Wars* creating a bit of a dilemma for Christian parents in my day; various friends of mine from Christian families who "weren't allowed to see *Star Wars*" confirm this was indeed the case.

So what was the big deal?

Well, the Force, of course. *Star Wars* has a quasi-religious element to it in all the talk about "the Force", which has various New Age overtones, as well as a few other religions mixed in. All very California-in-the-'70s – not surprisingly, given its development by George Lucas. So my mum faced a dilemma many Christian parents did back then: should I let my kids see *Star Wars*?

I'm so glad she allowed it. Not so much because *Star Wars* has provided so much fun for me, although it certainly has, but more because it was a display that my mum's very practical Christianity was evangelical and not fundamentalist. It might sound like splitting hairs, but in fact it is a significant difference. It can be the difference, for example, between a kid knowing exactly what their friends are talking about at school (and therefore not being unnecessarily weird), or not having a clue.

But as every parent knows, *your* parents may have made one decision, but there are often times when you have to ask the question: do I want to do for my child as was done to me? While I'd loved *Star Wars* all my life, I revisited all the thinking about it again when my son James was little.



Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and other actors from the first *Star Wars* films (episodes IV-VI) join new cast members for a *Star Wars: Episode VII* read-through with writers, producers and director J.J. Abrams. PHOTO: AP/Lucasfilm, David James

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be radical. Acutely aware of all the New Age overtones in *Star Wars*, I had to think again: do I want my son to watch this? After careful consideration, I firmly decided, "Yes". Here are five reasons why:

1 IT IS FICTION

While *Star Wars* professes to be a tale told about "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away", in fact it is, of course, fiction. Some might argue that children don't understand this; however, I would respond that people underrate children's abilities on this front. The fact that I don't carry a light sabre in my day-to-day life – nor do any other adults our children interact with – is a bit of a giveaway. *Star Wars* may contain elements that overlap with New Age religions; it also contains elements that overlap with Christianity. Good fiction often does. *The Lord of the Rings* is a case in point.

2 JUSTICE IS A KEY THEME

This is perhaps another way of saying that *Star Wars* has a strong theme of good versus evil. However, very importantly, it is actually more than that. It is not simply that there is good and evil: the entire narrative of *Star Wars* is written in such a way that you rejoice in good and want to see evil defeated.

Significantly, George Lucas himself grew up watching movies based on World War II. There are many parallels between the bad guys in *Star Wars* and the Nazis (e.g. dictatorship and domination, soldiers called storm troopers etc).

3 IT PROVIDES GOOD ROLE MODELS FOR BOYS

While there are many negative features of the different male characters in *Star Wars*, a common positive feature of the good guys, which is the dominant characteristic that unites them, is that they are prepared to take risks themselves in order to help, serve and bring about justice for others.

For many a parent of young boys, a great dilemma is whether or not boys should be able to watch or use toy guns (or blasters, for that matter). What I noticed with my son James is that his interest in guns came at the same time as his interest in justice: "That's not fair!" I wasn't troubled by his pretending to use guns – I was passionate that he was eager to fight for good, not evil.

4 IT IS PART OF OUR CULTURE

Once my concerns were allayed as a Christian about whether or not James could watch *Star Wars*, my next question was, "Is this a good use of his time?" In the end, this is an arbitrary decision and I wouldn't want to suggest that every boy must watch *Star Wars*! But it means that he could have something in common with many other boys his age, and men (in particular) of different generations. He bonded with an uncle over a *Star Wars* exhibition, for example.

5 IT IS A RIPPING GOOD YARN

Lastly, the thing that convinced me about *Star Wars* was a traffic jam. When James was aged about four I was stuck with him in a massive traffic jam with nothing to do. So I decided to tell him the story of the original *Star Wars*. We were stuck for about an hour and James listened to every word.

It was then I realised that quite apart from all the special effects and costumes, the original *Star Wars* is just a ripping good yarn. This may seem obvious, yet many elites like to look down on things that have become part of popular culture. I think I had underrated how clever the original *Star Wars* was as a story until I was caught in a traffic jam with a four-year-old boy!

I am eager that James understands about narrative for a whole host of reasons, but the main one is that about half of the Bible is written as a narrative. The way to learn about narratives is to be exposed to them, and *Star Wars* provides a very easy way to expose a boy to a great narrative.

And so James watched *Star Wars* with me, and has seen all but Episode 3 – *Revenge of the Sith* (unlike the other movies it is rated M, appropriately in my mind). For a few seasons, James was a *Star Wars* nut. He's not that into it any more, to the point where he hasn't seen Episode 3 and doesn't really care. But he does have a keen sense of justice, and reads the narratives in the Bible with great insight for his age. And he knows that they are not fiction.

THE HIGHEST FORM OF FLATTERY

And just for the fans, here are three places where the original *Star Wars* narrative has directly imitated the narrative of 1 Samuel in the Bible:

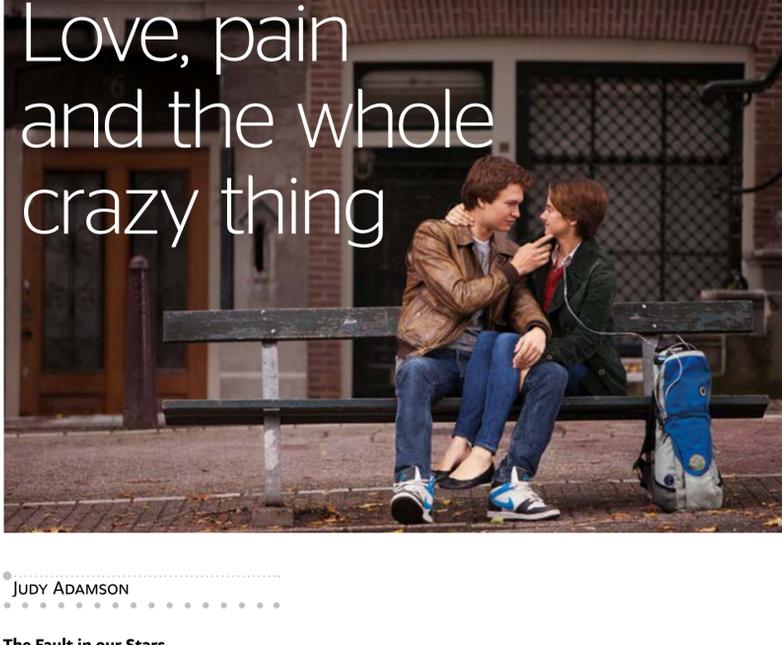
• Luke Skywalker is introduced in the same way as King Saul in 1 Samuel 9 – just change "lost donkeys" and "old prophets" for "lost droids" and "old Jedi" and it's the same narrative.

• When Luke says he can destroy the Death Star because he used to shoot things back on the farm it is the same line David uses to explain why he isn't troubled about facing Goliath in 1 Samuel 17.

• *Return of the Jedi* ends with a banquet on Endor, with ghostly Jedi watching; King Saul's final banquet is at Endor watched by a ghostly prophet in 1 Samuel 28.

Like *Star Wars*, but even more so, the Old Testament is often dismissed as being written by people to whom we are so superior. However, the fact that one of the grand narratives of our age directly imitates an Old Testament narrative ought to give us reason to pause at dismissing the Old Testament so easily. It may be that the God-inspired writers had more of an idea than we have given them credit for and, like the original *Star Wars*, their words are worth looking at again more closely as an adult. ☺

The Rev Peter Collier trained in Sydney and lives and works in Christchurch, New Zealand.



JUDY ADAMSON

The Fault in our Stars

Rated M

HAZEL GRACE LANCASTER (SHAILENE WOODLEY) IS 17 AND HAS CANCER. SHE'D love her life to be like the cute books and films where nothing is too hard and everything ends happily, but drily adds that "it's just not the truth". Her reality is one of doctor's visits, medications and walking around in an oxygen tank because her Stage 4 cancer – while shrinking, thanks to meds – is in her lungs.

A quick look at the world through Hazel's eyes shows the sense of distance she feels from almost everyone. There's a wistfulness as she watches healthy teens shopping, chatting and cuddling; a layer of guilt and frustration in her relationship with her parents, particularly with her edgily cheerful mother (Laura Dern); and patient resignation – even jokes – at the doctor's.

Matters aren't helped by Hazel's cancer support group, which she attends for her mother's sake. It's held in an Episcopalian church and the cheery cancer-surviving leader, Patrick, sings embarrassingly upbeat songs and tells the teens they are all sitting together "in the heart of Jesus". Nothing like a good dig at glib Christians!

John Green, the author of the original book (also called *The Fault In Our Stars*) was actually on a path to be an Episcopalian minister until he worked as a student chaplain with cancer, and found it impossible to reconcile the big "S" of suffering with the truths about God. Writing *The Fault In Our Stars* was a cathartic experience, as he sought not only to deal with his own responses to the sickness and sorrow he saw during that time but bring this to life in a way that could be engaging as well as truthful. That yes, some kids have to grapple with cancer and yes, this involves a balancing act: see-sawing between childhood thoughts and concerns, and maturity beyond their years.

Readers around the world have responded overwhelmingly to Green's story, and are likely to greet the film with equal enthusiasm because it is an unflinchingly honest. These teenagers are living death and loss in the face every day, so shallowness and pretence just doesn't cut it. They want to be real, and they demand the same of those around them because there isn't time for anything else.

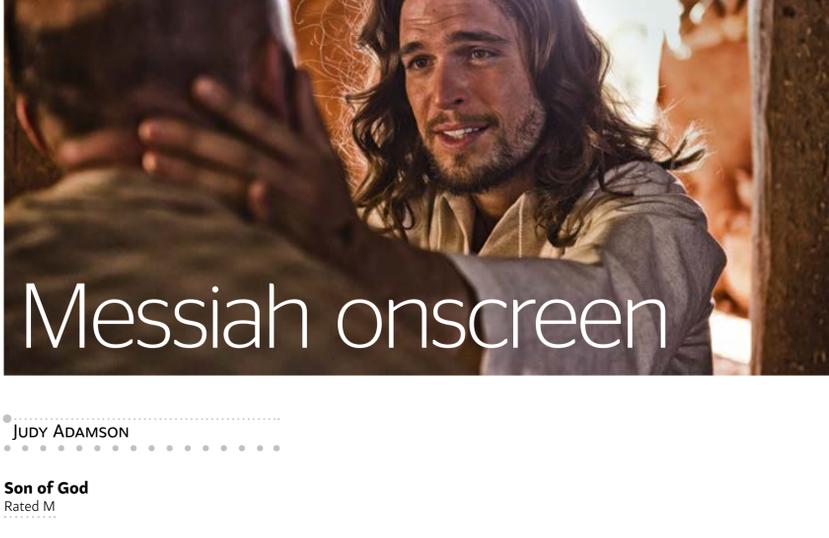
When Hazel meets the charming cancer survivor Augustus Waters (Ansel Elgort) at the support group, she isn't impressed when he clamps a cigarette in his mouth and immediately tells him so. Then he explains that he never lights it: it's about having control over the "killing thing". Augustus then floors Hazel by telling her she is beautiful.

The intense friendship that follows from this unlikely first meeting is the heart of the story – not just because of the love that grows from it, as that would play into the clichés Hazel speaks of at the beginning of the film. There is love and it is deep, strong and held with precious care. There is also, however, the growth in Hazel and Gus and in those around them: emotional resilience, selflessness and valuing what can last when life itself is so clearly fleeting.

Thankfully the adults in the film (apart from Patrick) aren't presented as cardboard cut-outs. We see the hurt and pain underneath the positive smiles they paste on for their children's sake, just as we see Hazel's desperate desire to know from her favourite author – a crusty cameo from Willem Dafoe – what happens to the characters in his book after the heroine dies of cancer. Will they go on living? Will they manage okay? It's her greatest worry.

The film is very faithful to the book, with dialogue regularly moved lock and stock into the characters' mouths onscreen. Which in one sense is fine, but Augustus is so articulate and fulsome that sometimes this really doesn't work, and it looks as though Ansel Elgort knows this. His character is much truer once Gus's confidence is shaken and it's less about impressive lines and more fully a performance from his heart. Woodley, however, is brilliant as Hazel – balancing strength with vulnerability, and youthfulness with maturity, in a very poised performance. You believe every word.

The Fault In Our Stars is about love, but it's not sentimental. It's about death, but it's not maudlin. It's funny, sad, joyous and sorrowful, sometimes all at once. Because it's about life, and life contains all these things. As Augustus says, "It's a good life, Hazel Grace". ☺



Messiah onscreen

JUDY ADAMSON

Son of God

Rated M

ANYONE WHO WATCHES *THE BIBLE* SERIES ON OUR TVS LAST YEAR WILL HAVE A FAIRLY GOOD idea of what they will get in the reworked theatrical release *Son of God*, but given that it has been edited to focus specifically on Jesus it's a lot tighter and I think that works very well.

What bothered me about earlier episodes of *The Bible* series was some really ham-fisted acting and clunky dialogue, both of which are mercifully absent here – along with the ponderous voiceover. Instead, with sensible editing and a bit of thought, our narrator becomes the disciple John. We start on Patmos and are then given a brief précis of a few Old Testament moments, Jesus' birth and the worship of those at the stable, before Jesus calls his first disciples.

The producers and scriptwriters have chosen to change the timing of some events in Jesus' life, or – to a certain extent – what he does, such as his entry into the tomb of Lazarus instead of remaining outside, but the core of the message and its purpose remain solidly the same.

I like the idea of putting the temple prayer of the tax collector "Have mercy on me, a sinner" into the mouth of Matthew as Jesus calls him, and it's also very affecting that Jesus sees his upcoming betrayal and death in his mind's eye as he shares the last supper with his disciples. Characters such as Caiaphas are a bit one-dimensional and Jesus is almost too gentle and doe-eyed, but Diego Morgado does a laudable job in a difficult role and the crucifixion scenes are confronting and done extremely well.

This presents the best of the series, and it will be something well worth seeing on the big screen – or taking friends to. ☺



ABBOTSLEIGH

An Anglican Pre K-12 School for Girls

Abbotsleigh staff possess the highest professional skills and actively support our Christian ethos.

SCHOOL CHAPLAIN

With deep gratitude to our formerly retired Deputy Headmistress Mrs Robyn Claydon for acting as Chaplain at Abbotsleigh in 2014, Abbotsleigh now seeks to appoint a School Chaplain to commence in January 2015.

The Chaplain will be a member of the Anglican Church and will hold a university degree as well as theological qualifications. The Chaplain will have demonstrated spiritual depth and commitment in previous work and community activities, will ideally have teaching qualifications and experience, and will be committed to the empowerment of young women through education. The Chaplain will have a special calling for ministering to children and teenagers, and have an innate ability to lead, encourage and inspire their spiritual education and wellbeing.

This is an executive role reporting to the Headmistress, leading staff in delivering the Christian message of the School and is a vital member of the School's pastoral care team. Responsibilities include leading School Chapel, delivering special community services, supporting our Christian service work and teaching in our Christian Studies program.

Applications close Friday 18 July 2014

For more details please visit
www.abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au/employment



SAFE MINISTRY AND SRE COORDINATOR

The Diocese of Armidale is strongly committed to all facets of safe ministry and the effective delivery of SRE across the Diocese. To this end, it is looking to appoint a Safe Ministry and SRE Coordinator.

The Coordinator will be responsible for:

- providing policy advice to Diocesan bodies;
- policy implementation, including distribution of information and materials, team building and co-ordination;
- conducting Safe Ministry training throughout the Diocese;
- ensuring training materials are kept up-to-date;
- monitoring compliance among parishes with respect to the Diocese's policy requirements and legal obligations; and
- reporting periodically to Diocesan bodies.

The successful applicant will be required to work the equivalent of one day a week in the position.

Applications will close on 20 June 2014.

Applications, and any enquiries, should be directed towards Mr Alan Hardy, Bishop's Assistant, on 02 6772 4491 or 0447 751 855 or at alan@armidaleanglicandiocese.com.

The Diocese's postal address is
Diocese of Armidale,
PO Box 198, Armidale,
New South Wales 2350.

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Contact: 8860 8850 or
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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.



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The desired candidate must have strong spiritual maturity and leadership skills, relevant experience and gifts in forming, directing and nurturing teams within the areas of music, performing arts and multi-media.

For criteria to apply for the position,
www.figtreeanglican.org.au

Applications close 17 June 2014

Position available from July 2014



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