

Southern CROSS

NOVEMBER
2016

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

2016
SYNOD
ISSUE



The learning curve

REAL LIFE FOR NEW MISSIONARIES

- + God our promise keeper
- & Marsden: the man through his sermons

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“

...our commission from the risen Jesus is still as pressing as it was when first delivered.

Glenn Davies
Archbishop Speaks

”



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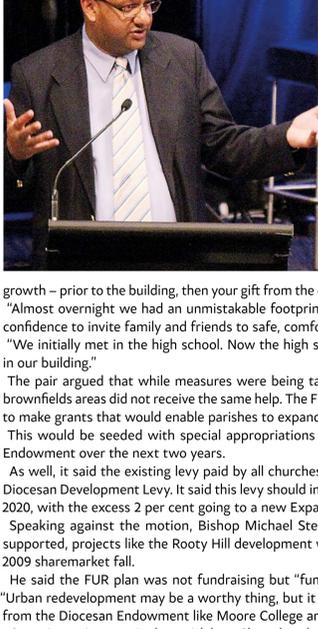
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Urgent urban renewal need



SYDNEY SYNOD HAS BEEN TOLD FUNDING for urban renewal is "too urgent to wait" and should be given as much prominence as expanding to "greenfields" areas of Sydney.

The second night of Synod saw a debate led by two western suburbs rectors, the Rev Raj Gupta of Toongabbie and the Rev Ray Galea of the Multicultural Bible Ministry at Rooty Hill.

Mr Gupta said the "funding for urban renewal" (FUR) committee found 70 per cent of the growth in new Sydney housing was anticipated for so-called "brownfields areas". He said research had shown churches in older areas that had undertaken building projects had experienced greater growth.

Mr Galea said his church began in 1991 with just over a dozen people, but growth later slowed, constrained by a lack of facilities. The church benefited from a Diocesan Endowment grant, which allowed construction of a new ministry centre. "For years we hit a brick wall in our growth – prior to the building, then your gift from the endowment came like manna from heaven," he said. "Almost overnight we had an unmistakable footprint in the community. Our people had a new-found confidence to invite family and friends to safe, comfortable facilities and we doubled in size. "We initially met in the high school. Now the high school and other community groups hold concerts in our building."

The pair argued that while measures were being taken to buy land and fund buildings in new areas, brownfields areas did not receive the same help. The FUR committee recommended a fund be established to make grants that would enable parishes to expand facilities.

This would be seeded with special appropriations of \$2.5 million and \$1 million from the Diocesan Endowment over the next two years.

As well, it said the existing levy paid by all churches to buy land in new areas should be renamed the Diocesan Development Levy. It said this levy should increase from the current 2 per cent to 4 per cent by 2020, with the excess 2 per cent going to a new Expanding Churches for Expanding Communities fund.

Speaking against the motion, Bishop Michael Stead said that while urban renewal was generally supported, projects like the Rooty Hill development were funded in better economic times, before the 2009 sharemarket fall.

He said the FUR plan was not fundraising but "fund-raiding", and it would cut into other ministries. "Urban redevelopment may be a worthy thing, but it is not more worthy than things we currently fund from the Diocesan Endowment like Moore College and Youthworks."

Opposing an increase in the parish levy, Cherrybrook rector the Rev Gavin Poole said, "While the proposal will fund between two and four parishes a year it will take from 270 others, some of which are struggling." A raft of amendments had the effect of stripping out immediate funding commitments and the issue was referred to Standing Committee for further consideration.

Marriage booklet approved



SYDNEY SYNOD HAS EXPRESSED DEEP concern about moves to remove gender from the Marriage Act and has authorised the distribution of a booklet in Anglican churches outlining the consequences of same-sex marriage for families and society.

Debate was led by Bishop Michael Stead (left) – who chairs the Archbishop's Plebiscite Task Force – and the Dean, Kanishka Raffel.

"The whole question of whether we are allowed to have a discussion in Australia on same-sex marriage is in a state of flux," Bishop Stead said. "Labor has committed to block the plebiscite machinery legislation in the Senate, so the plebiscite is off the table [for now]. "But this... does not change the essence of the motion; it just changes the timing. The motion is premised on the idea that we can have a civil, respectful public discussion on this issue – not just can, but must – and that it is essential we should have a debate before making such a fundamental change to the definition of marriage."

Bishop Stead cited a survey that said a large majority of Sydney Anglicans were opposed to same-sex marriage, with only about 8 per cent wanting it practised in churches. Yet many were reluctant to engage in debate because they didn't know what to say.

"The task force was convinced of the need to provide resources," he said, adding that the booklet sought to present "a positive argument that marriage as God designed it is a good thing. It gives, we think, a good way of communicating that message to people who don't necessarily share our belief in God".

Dean Raffel spoke of free speech restrictions that have followed the introduction of same-sex marriage in some countries, and local issues such as a push for anti-discrimination laws to apply to religious bodies. "We are respecters of all people, recognising that all are made in God's image and loved by the God who hates nothing that he has made," he said. "Love for our neighbours means we earnestly desire that people should know and live in accordance with the truth that sets us free.

"We zealously defend the right to worship God in Spirit and in truth and to teach what is in accordance with his word," he added. "We defend the rights of others to do the same in accordance with their conscience – whether they are Muslims, Jews, Sikhs or atheists. And we believe that it is not the role of government to regulate such beliefs or to mandate certain beliefs while outlawing others."

Bishop Stead said although a plebiscite was blocked for now there might be pressure for one next year, or at the next Federal election.

"Many Australians have not made up their minds yet," he said. "Many who are nominally in favour of same-sex marriage are so because they think it will make absolutely no difference to them or to other marriages. But as soon as people are made aware of the consequences of redefining marriage – for family and children, for gender, for freedom of speech – the support for same-sex marriage falls away."

Leave adopted for parents



There is no 'One size fits all': Archdeacon Hartley.

SYNOD HAS APPROVED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW PARENTAL LEAVE ORDINANCE, establishing and clarifying the entitlements of parish clergy who become new parents and providing guidelines for specific cases.

The ordinance, first discussed at last year's Synod, was devised largely because of the unique status of clergy under Commonwealth leave entitlements.

Under the Fair Work Act 2009 church ministers are, in most cases, not entitled to parental leave because they are not employees under the Act. The Parental Leave Ordinance 2016 is designed to guarantee certain leave entitlements and is, in many respects, modelled after the Act.

"We have been very mindful that when it comes to family and ministry life, there is no 'one size fits all'," said the mover of the motion, chairwoman of the Parental Leave Committee and Archdeacon for Women, the Ven Kara Hartley.

"Each parish and family is different, and therefore we wanted to give enough guidelines without simply imposing law," she said.

"There are things within the explanatory statement, and in the policy and ordinance, that will allow this to be worked out at the local level... What I trust this will do for both male and female clergy is to give guidance for what will be reasonable, mature discussions about what is best for all."

Some of the key entitlements include up to 52 weeks' continuous unpaid leave for women, eligibility for the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave Scheme for 19 weeks, and the right to remain in any parish-provided dwelling while on leave upon payment of a just and equitable occupation fee. Male ministers will be entitled to up to two weeks' paid paternity leave.

Both men and women will also be eligible for largely identical entitlements if adopting a child.

The amendments made to the bill at this session largely dealt with drafting issues, and most of the principal and specific implementation of the ordinance saw little discussion from the floor. After amendments were made the ordinance was passed without dissent on the final day of Synod.

Individual parish councils will have the power to decide whether to give effect to the provisions of the ordinance in their parish. The ordinance will come into effect from January next year.

Sydney mission expands

SHARING NEW MISSION INITIATIVES and strengthening partnerships with Egypt and Madagascar helped make the annual Mission Hour a cause for rejoicing at Synod.

Speaking of Moore College's decade-long link with the Alexandria School of Theology, college principal the Rev Dr Mark Thompson said, "There is... a massive opportunity for us here in Sydney to be involved in responding to the spiritual needs of the Middle East".

Dr Thompson spoke of Moore's assistance in training AST's Masters students. Students have had online access to the college library in Sydney, and a range of faculty members have also visited Alexandria in the past few years to teach intensive units of study.

"In March six students from the Alexandria School of Theology graduated with a Moore College MA in theology," he added.

Through conversations with local Bishop Mounser Anis, Moore has also been made aware of the need to have AST lecturers trained to PhD level. Aided by a financial donor, the college has welcomed one of the Masters graduates, George Bishai, to Sydney to undertake a PhD in New Testament.

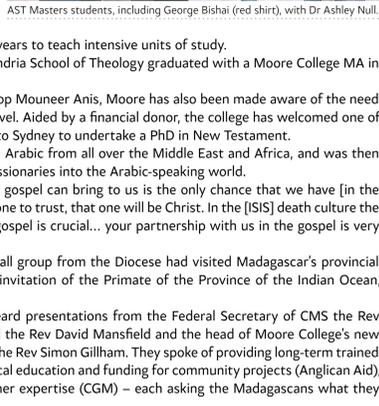
Mr Bishai said AST taught students in Arabic from all over the Middle East and Africa, and was then able to send these graduates out as missionaries into the Arabic-speaking world.

"I think life in Christ and the hope the gospel can bring to us is the only chance that we have [in the Arab world]," he said. "If we have someone to trust, that one will be Christ. In the [ISIS] death culture the life of the gospel and the hope of the gospel is crucial... your partnership with us in the gospel is very important for our future."

Synod members also heard how a small group from the Diocese had visited Madagascar's provincial standing committee in August at the invitation of the Primate of the Province of the Indian Ocean, Archbishop Ian Ernest.

The provincial standing committee heard presentations from the Federal Secretary of CMS the Rev Peter Rodgers, director of Anglican Aid the Rev David Mansfield and the head of Moore College's new Centre for Global Mission (see page 2), the Rev Simon Gillham. They spoke of providing long-term trained people (CMS), scholarships for theological education and funding for community projects (Anglican Aid), resources in the local language and other expertise (CGM) – each asking the Madagascans what they needed.

Regular PTC teacher in the region and rector of Croydon the Rev Alan Lukabyo said afterwards that, "This was a great vision to present to the church leaders. Most of the people of the standing committee are bishops and senior clergy who are trying to solve exactly these problems in their own dioceses. "Coming from Sydney we encountered much in Madagascar that was exotic, strange or unfamiliar. We expected to. Perhaps more surprising to us was how much was familiar: an Anglican church with leaders committed to the authority of God's word, seeking to grow through evangelistic church planting and convinced of the importance of good theological education. "There was a warm sense of fellowship and anticipation about our developing gospel partnership."



AST Masters students, including George Bishai (red shirt), with Dr Ashley Null.

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NCNC supports growth

SYNOD HEARD A PRESENTATION FROM THE ARCHBISHOP'S NEW CHURCHES FOR NEW COMMUNITIES and the Mission Property Committee about current greenfields developments, particularly the prospect of new facilities at Stanhope in Sydney's west and Leppington in the southwest.

In a video presentation the lead pastor at Life Anglican Church Stanhope, the Rev Steve Reimer, spoke about how the facilities available to be used by his church at the local leisure centre were being quickly outstripped by the church's needs.

"We've been feeling full for a number of years", he said. "We're outsourcing this place. There's a certain time we need to be out of the centre each week... This morning a fire alarm went off and not just us but the entire centre had to be evacuated. It looked like we wouldn't be able to have church at all today."

Many of the little things churches take for granted – such as having tea and coffee for guests, or even having services on Easter or Christmas Day – simply aren't possible when leasing a public community centre.

As NCNC's CEO the Rev Glenn Gardner noted, these were the kinds of needs that made church facilities so critical for the mission, particularly in new communities.

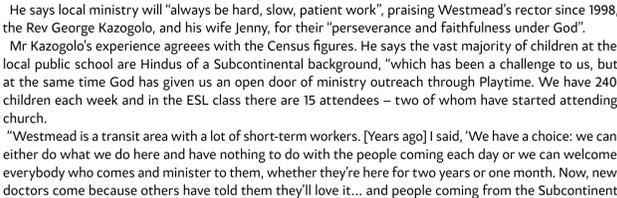
"I personally count it a great privilege to be involved in such a gospel course," Mr Gardner said. "That is, to provide emerging congregations of Christian men and women with a facility designed to help them connect with and serve the community around which – and with which – they are growing. A facility in which they can hear God's word taught and worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And all this in areas where, at the present time, there is no such facility."

Speaking to the Synod, Mr Gardner said \$2.5 million would need to be raised for the Stanhope project beginning next year, with \$960,000 of that already received in cash and another \$920,000 in firm pledges. A similar amount is to be raised for Leppington starting next year.

"We've had many generous donations from individuals and entities to this point but, in 2017, we're particularly looking to encourage parishes across the Diocese to embrace the change and to grab the opportunity," Mr Gardner said.

"I am still convinced we have a small window of opportunity to get ahead of the pack."

Blessed and blossoming



Hangout time: a group of teens at an Emmanuel Anglican Church barbecue.

GROWTH IN THE OUTREACH, MEMBERSHIP AND SERVICE OF TWO CHURCHES HAS BEEN celebrated, with Glenhaven and Westmead given full parish status by Synod last month.

There has been ministry at Glenhaven since the 1870s, with Emmanuel Church an independent mission before becoming a branch church of Castle Hill in the 1930s and a provisional parish in 2010.

Ministry in Westmead began in 1912 under the auspices of St John's Cathedral in Parramatta before a separate parish was created – although a range of issues meant that, from 1989 until recently, the parish was unable to support itself.

"Westmead is a small parish area geographically with some very great challenges," Bishop Ivan Lee says. "The last census in 2011 reported only 31 per cent of the population were born in Australia, while 28 per cent were born in India... there are 754 Anglicans but 3871 Hindus!"

He says local ministry will "always be hard, slow, patient work", praising Westmead's rector since 1998, the Rev George Kazogolo, and his wife Jenny, for their "perseverance and faithfulness under God".

Mr Kazogolo's expatriation agrees with the Census figures. He says the vast majority of children at the local public school are Hindus of a Subcontinent background, "which has been a challenge to us, but at the same time God has given us an open door of ministry outreach through Playtime. We have 240 children each week and in the ESL class there are 15 attendees – two of whom have started attending church.

"Westmead is a transit area with a lot of short-term workers. [Years ago] I said, 'We have a choice: we can either do what we do here and have nothing to do here for the people coming each day or we can welcome everybody who comes and minister to them, whether they're here for two years or one month. Now, new doctors come because they've already heard about us! We have a lot of people to be thankful to God for."

At Westmead the challenges aren't as multicultural but, like Westmead, a smaller, older congregation has looked outside itself in God's name to care for its community, which – over time – has borne fruit. Rector the Rev John Hooton, who has been in charge at Emmanuel Anglican Church since 2000, says in that time numbers have grown from 20 to 200.

"A joy for us has been the way more senior members of the church have been incredibly flexible and generous, cheering the leadership team and the new generation of families on," he says.

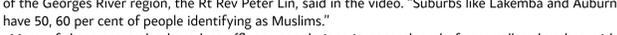
"Their service time changed three to four times in 10 years... and whenever there's been a significant decision to make such as building the first extension in 2007, or purchasing the land next door in 2012, they have been first on their feet to say, 'This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, we should go for it!'"

In 2000 they said, "We want our legacy to be a living church – we don't want to let the opportunities pass."

Bishop Lee praises Glenhaven for its commitment to mission, saying, "it has been a real joy for me to support and watch the growth of this small neighbourhood congregation – a growth that has been pastoral, spiritual and numerical."

Both parishes have developed welcoming ministries particular to their needs. A Synod representative from Westmead, Raymond Danam, says everyone is "introduced to the activities and events within the church [and] it's up to the individual as to how they want to fit themselves in. But nobody's left isolated... they go to other churches and it doesn't feel the same as coming to our church. People remember that."

Muslim connections



How to reach out? Eid prayer at Lakemba. PHOTO: Dnalynsidd

A WORKING GROUP FOCUSED ON CONNECTING WITH MUSLIM NEIGHBOURS HAS UPDATED SYNOD on its work.

The working group was set up after a motion passed at the 2015 Synod session asking for ways to connect with Muslims in culturally appropriate ways, as well as developing resources that could encourage others to do the same.

A video presentation featuring a number of Sydney Anglicans involved in Muslim ministry outlined where things now stand. "There are now hundreds of thousands of Muslims living here in Sydney," the Bishop of the Georges River region, the Rt Rev Peter Lin, said in the video. "Suburbs like Lakemba and Auburn have 50, 60 per cent of people identifying as Muslims."

Many of these areas also have less affluent populations in general, and often smaller churches with fewer resources for cross-cultural work.

The working group's convener and Moore College's Head of Mission, the Rev Simon Gillham, said, "If we're going to take seriously the call to reach out to our Muslim neighbours it needs a diocesan response. It is very hard for a church to start or sustain itself in a poorer area where there are fewer Christians... So an opportunity is for partnerships between parishes to emerge, where those with a heart for this ministry who might not live with Muslim neighbours can help those who do."

Key developments include plans for a visit by Dr John Zuma – a Ghanaian scholar focused on developing Muslim-Christian relations, in conjunction with a conference next June – as well as the creation of an online unit of Moore's new Diploma in Biblical Theology focusing on ministering to and engaging with Muslims.

The presentation to Synod also shared stories from a number of Muslim-background women who, after emigrating to Australia, began attending church as adults. They spoke of the unique cultural challenges in attending church as a Muslim, and also the difference learning about Christ has made to their lives.

Said Mr Gillham: "In ministry you can labour for years without seeing much fruit... but there are other times when exciting things happen right in front of you. I think we're in that kind of moment right now."

Shorter sermons go to vote

A MOTION CALLING ON SYNOD TO RECOMMEND THAT PREACHERS AIM TO LIMIT SERMONS TO 20 minutes has been defeated, but only narrowly.

The original motion, moved by Dr David Oakenfull, noted research on attention spans and information retention, and included a request that preachers be urged to restrict sermons to 20 minutes.

"Several times I've had the disheartening experience of inviting family or friends to church and having them refuse to come back," Dr Oakenfull said. "When I've asked why, the sermon has usually been the problem... Gentlemen of the class of wonderful preachers in this Diocese, please be mindful that evidence suggests you are more effective and powerful in preaching God's word when you are brief."

An amendment moved, and ultimately carried, by the Rev Craig Roberts, rector of Neutral Bay, sought to remove the length recommendation from the motion, instead urging Moore College and other institutions in the Diocese to ensure ministers taught according to best practice.

"Let's equip our people to preach better sermons, not shorter ones," Mr Roberts said.

"An ineffective sermon is ineffective whether it is 10 minutes or 30 minutes in length. We have all experienced the privilege, I'm sure, of sitting under preachers... who have so taken us deeper into God's word that if they'd stopped at 20 minutes we'd want to lock the door and throw away the key – not letting them out till they'd given us another 30. So my amendment is an encouragement to raise the bar."

A number of speakers spoke for and against the motion and the amendment, noting things such as the varying objectives of sermons, note taking and different cultural expectations around long-form speaking and storytelling.

In the end the vote went to a count, with the amended motion defeated by eight votes: 241 to 233.

Settle refugees with dignity



SYDNEY SYNOD HAS CALLED ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO EXPEDITE THE PROCESS OF settling the 12,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees Australia is taking and also to speed up the processing of others in our immigration detention centres.

The chairwoman of the Social Issues Committee, Dr Karin Sowada (above), led the debate.

"In the certain knowledge that all persons are created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), Synod acknowledges the efforts of the Federal Government in reducing the number of children who are asylum seekers in immigration detention facilities within Australia, and requests the Government to accept further changes in order that the human dignity of those seeking asylum in our nation is upheld," Dr Sowada's motion said.

The motion commended the continuing work of Anglicare, parishes and other agencies in assisting with resettlement efforts. It noted that of the 1580 people in detention as at July 31, 2016, 44 per cent had been in detention for one year or longer.

Synod also urged the Government to ensure processing of asylum seekers at Manus Island and the Republic of Nauru as "quickly and efficiently as possible".

Super man retires

TRIBUTES WERE PAID TO THE LONG-SERVING FUND secretary of Anglican National Super, Paul Willis (above), as the October Synod marked his retirement after 14 years in the position.

The fund moved from being administered by the Sydney Diocesan Secretariat to AMP in 2004.

"Our super fund is now called Anglican National Super," said the chairman of the board, James Flavin. "It would have been national in name only if not for the work of people like Paul. Our super fund has members in every state and territory, and practically every diocese, due to those efforts."

Mr Flavin said that for many clergy and church workers, Mr Willis was the face of the superannuation scheme.

"There are countless people who are enjoying a better retirement because of the efforts of Paul," he said. "There are also a hundred families upon whom Paul has been a particular blessing – families who have lost loved ones and whose insurance Paul has shepherded through the processes, being a bold and faithful advocate for the member."

Mr Willis, a member of Glenmore Park congregation, is considering several ministry options in his retirement.



Inner-west growth hub



Involved: one of the Hub's weekly lunches on the Petersham church grounds.

THE ALL SAINTS', PETERSHAM HUB OF HOPE CONTINUES TO GROW, PROVIDING A DIRECT CHRISTIAN link with disadvantaged locals.

The Hub has run for nine years, taking an increasingly important role in the church's life. "It just started with a BBQ and a community garden, but over the years it's grown and more people [have become] involved," says All Saints' rector, the Rev Ben Gray. "The real idea behind it now is that it connects people not only to our church, but to each other and to various services in the area."

These services include Anglicare, Centrelink, Baptist Care, Legal Aid and the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre. Many groups use the All Saints' property as a neutral setting while also partnering with the church in local initiatives.

The Hub hosts meals for about 100 locals twice a week, many of whom are without accommodation or live in nearby boarding houses.

"The intention behind the kind of culture we've created is not so much that Hub of Hope is a ministry we do, but is just part of what we are as a community," says Hub co-ordinator Matt Nutt. "We try to integrate everything as much as possible."

Future dreams include small-scale emergency accommodation, but a key desire is to link the Hub ever more closely with the parish.

"Often Sunday church is a huge leap for people," Mr Gray says. "We're trying to think about how we could do a chapel service with the Hub, something that might be a smaller step to them connecting up with all aspects of the church community. We have a Bible study that meets after lunch on a Thursday... but we're always looking at ways to further encourage [involvement]."

"There are many stories of people who've become Christians... and we want to share the gospel with people because that's one of our priorities as a community."

Church's 'tidal changes'

ANGLICANS ACROSS NORTH-WESTERN NSW HAVE been urged to speak up for Christ in the face of societal change.

Clergy and lay representatives met at Tamworth's Calrossy School in September for the Synod of the Diocese of Armidale. Bishop Rick Lewers, in his President's address, told the gathering that Christians everywhere have been confronted by tidal changes. "For a long time the Church has sat on the beach soaking up the sun, enjoying the material provisions of God, imbibing the age, unaware of the tidal movements around us," he said.

"We have lived as though tidal movements are imperceptible. In an era when Christianity was more acceptable this may have been convenient, but never right. In an age that has lived and spent its Christian capital to a point where it is now unappreciated, the tidal change is much more significant and an asleep, vacillating and disobedient Church will be washed away."

Bishop Lewers warned against "symptoms of cultural Christianity, not biblical Christianity... those vested in cultural Christianity drift with the tide of public opinion and dangerously encourage the Church to do the same. This is not limited to the man or woman in the pew. Cultural Christianity – or worse, the perversions of its truth – have found their way into pulpits across our nation where gospels of permission are offered in conflict with the gospel of repentance and faith."

The bishop spoke about a series of social issues including refugees and asylum seekers, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, debt and abortion. On abortion he said latest estimates showed that, nationwide, there were 80,000 abortions annually.

"More disturbing are the figures released by Queensland's Health Minister, Cameron Dick, revealing that 27 babies survived late-term abortions in Queensland hospitals last year but... were just allowed to die," he said.

"I am unable to support the abortion of children but dealing with live birth outcomes, where the living child is left to perish in the clinic, has little to do with what a woman does with her body and everything to do with the value we place on life.

"It is a sad truth that the majority of women and girls who have abortions do so because of a lack of support from partners, parents and friends. Seventy per cent of women say they felt they had no alternative to abortion. That response may well be to the Church's shame."

He called for prayer for the Hope for Life service, run by Anglicare in the Armidale Diocese. It was established in Moree by Mrs Claire Dunlop as an advocate for the welfare of unborn children and their teenage parents.

The Hope For Life initiative is the only one of its kind in Australia and is now running as a three-year pilot in Moree, Narrabri, Wee Waa, Inverell, Boggabilla and Mungindi. Its care program includes a high number of Aboriginal teen pregnancies for which it receives Government support.



Bishop Lewers gives a warning to the church.

PHOTO: James Levingston

Leaders “grieved” in Cairo



The Most Rev Mouneer Anis prays with Archbishop Davies. PHOTO: Michael Adel, Bridges Cultural Center

LEADERS OF THE ANGLICAN GLOBAL SOUTH GROUP HAVE DECIDED TO CONTINUE A DECADE OF evangelism, discipleship and networking at what they called a “critical time” for the Anglican Communion, marked by impaired and broken relations between provinces.

More than 100 delegates from 20 provinces met in Cairo in October. Archbishop Glenn Davies, the bishops of Winchester and Durham, Tim Dakin and Paul Butler, as well as Archbishop Foley Beach from the Anglican Church of North America, joined Asian, African and South American leaders.

Archbishop Mouneer Anis, the Primate of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East, was re-elected leader of the group, which represents the majority of the active membership of the Anglican Communion.

The conference statement said it upheld “the biblical, orthodox faith of the Anglican Communion; the faith we received from Jesus Christ through the apostles”. It said the unity of the church was “based on the truth revealed to us in the Scripture; it is a unity on the essentials of faith”.

The communiqué highlighted that one of the key reasons for impaired relations was “the unilateral decisions taken by the last general convention of the Episcopal Church (TEC) in the USA to redefine marriage and to accept same-sex marriages. We see these latest resolutions as a clear departure from not only the accepted traditional teaching of the Anglican Communion, but also from that of the one holy, universal and apostolic Church, which upholds the scriptural view of marriage between one man and one woman.” The statement said the group was “grieved” by the TEC’s actions.

The group is already providing primatial oversight for the Diocese of South Carolina, which withdrew from the Episcopal Church in 2012.

The conference, the sixth held by the Global South group, was planned for Tunis last year but cancelled because of security concerns.

Refugees, stories and tea



Willing to share: one of the refugee women who will feature in *Tea and Thread*.

CROSS-CULTURAL WORKERS ASSOCIATED WITH CMS ARE HELPING PREPARE A NEW BOOK documenting the lives of Arab women forced to flee their home countries.

Sally Bathgate, who – along with her husband Ben and their three children – works among urban refugees in the Middle East, decided to write a book to give women living under difficult circumstances a voice.

The book’s creative director and co-writer, fellow refugee worker Katrina Gulbrandsen, explains. “We want to introduce readers to the real, living, breathing faces of the current refugee crisis. By providing readers with personal and cultural insights into their lives we hope to trigger interest in Arabic culture and people, which will in turn challenge attitudes, hearts and minds, start conversations and kindle compassion and action.”

The book, titled *Tea and Thread: portraits of Arab women far from home*, is expected to be ready for publication early next year. The book will contain colour photos and first-hand stories from 20 Arab women detailing their experience as refugees, while also sharing crafts and recipes from their homelands with readers.

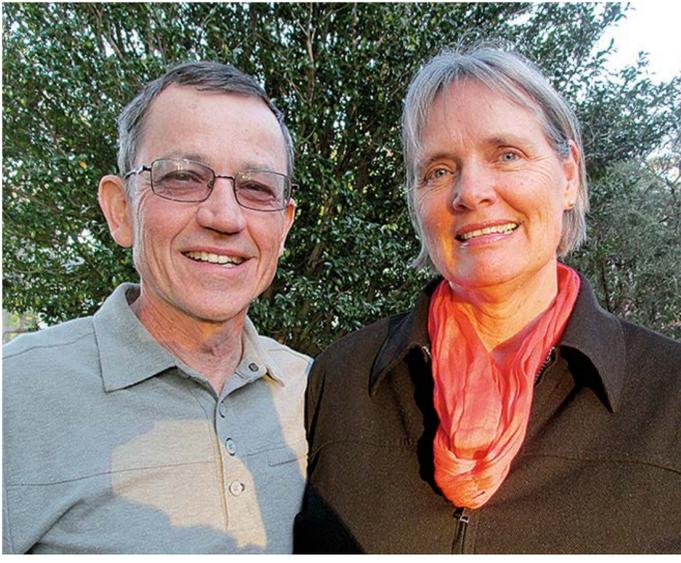
A crowd-funding campaign is now underway on chuffed.org – a website dedicated to social and non-profit causes – to help pay for the design, printing and distribution of *Tea and Thread*. At the time SC went to press \$7625 had been raised towards the \$25,000 goal with the assistance of Anglican Aid.

The Bathgates, who have spent three years working among locals and refugees and developing their Arab, plan to return to Sydney at the end of this year to minister in the south-western suburbs.

The fundraising campaign can be found at <https://chuffed.org/project/tea-and-thread>

MOVING

GEORGES RIVER SUPPORT



The Rev James Davidson became executive assistant to Bishop Peter Lin last month. He comes to the role after 13 years as senior assistant minister at the parish of Carlingford and North Rocks. For eight years of that time he led a congregation at Baulkham Hills North – an experience he expects will help inform his new work.

“It was a church plant – and that’s certainly something we want to keep doing in the Georges River region – but the main benefit was in leading a smallish church with all the struggles and joys that entails,” he says. “Many churches in the region are that size, so it’s given me an understanding of what it’s like for the rectors here.

“It’s going to be a very steep learning curve but I think that’s one of the things that attracted me to the role – it being slightly different to parish work and having new things to learn.”

After gradually touring the Georges River region with Bishop Lin, Mr Davidson says one of the main differences he has noticed is the area’s “many, many cultures”.

“It’s much more multiethnic and I think, generally, the churches are smaller in the Georges River region than the Carlingford area,” he says. “Smaller because there have been lots of other ethnicities moving in – and many of our congregations are largely Anglo, so they’re pretty small. There’s a great challenge there to cross cultures and it’s not easy. But that’s one of the challenges.”

Mr Davidson will be EA to Bishop Lin two days a week and on the other three days will undertake locums in the region – starting with Fairfield-Bossley Park.

NIXON TO HAMMONDCARE

After 20 months as director of mission at ARV – and a further four as manager for partnership development once the organisation merged with Anglicare – the Rev Andrew Nixon has this month become head of pastoral care at HammondCare.

He had intended to stay with Anglicare for a year to help with the transition but then he had a coffee with Dr Stephen Judd, the CEO of HammondCare. So, a little to his surprise, in very quick time he has begun a new role with a completely different organisation – and is pretty enthusiastic about the opportunities ahead of him.

“It’s really interesting that HammondCare is operating in a slightly different space to Anglicare or ARV and yet I think it’s complementary,” he says. “By being non-denominational, a bit like KCC [Katoomba Christian Convention], you can have a different kind of impact – you can reach different people. For some the traditional denominations are a real plus, for others the simple tag of ‘Christian’ appeals.”

Mr Nixon says he is looking forward to learning more about the organisation. He has already noted from the outside that HammondCare has “a pretty impressive reputation for being very good at what they do... I think that gives HammondCare a voice into the sector and into the wider community. And as an unashamedly Christian voice, that is a really significant.

“The bread and butter of my role at Hammond will be to help provide the best Christian pastoral care that we can,” he says. “There’s already a terrific team of pastoral carers. We just need to keep building and developing that team and the impact they can have for the gospel. And by that I don’t just mean telling people the good news about Jesus, but also being like Jesus in the way we treat people. Both of those things are equally valid and important.

“We often seem to struggle within our churches. We think there’s some kind of disconnect between evangelism and good works and it’s ridiculous – we just need to do both. There’s no contradiction between them.”

BEYOND THE BENDS

The Rev Sturt Young will finish up as interim rector of St James’, Turramurra on Christmas Day and move to the far northern beaches as rector of the parish of Barrenjoey.

“Over the past couple of years I’ve felt that God was calling me to take on the responsibility of leading a parish, so early last year I was priested in preparation for such a move,” he says. “My name was suggested to [the Barrenjoey nominators] and after five months of prayer and conversation we all decided it was the right move.”

After eight years at Turramurra Mr Young says he, his wife Emma and their three children are “all rightly excited and apprehensive” about the move.

“Leaving our church family in Turramurra has been a difficult decision for us to make,” he says. “Christian ministry is not a job – it’s entering into and sharing in the lives of people whom we love... so it’s gut-wrenching to leave people who really are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

“When God calls us elsewhere it comes at a cost and we should be ready for that. Of course, we’re not moving too far away but it will be very different not meeting with St James’ people every week.

“At the same time we’ve started to get to know people at Barrenjoey over the past few months, so there’s also the joy and excitement of growing new friendships and thinking through gospel ministry together in a new place. We’re excited about what God has planned!”

While Mr Young has heard that the area is hard ground for the gospel, this actually encouraged him to make the move.

“I like a challenge and I feel that Avalon and Palm Beach fits with the way I think about ministry – particularly the community aspect,” he says. “With Barrenjoey being the most northern parish in Sydney and past the Bilgola Bends it’s a very community-based area with a central hub at Avalon. People like to do things together... so keying into community is something I’m very keen to do as a church.”

VALE



He was ordained in 1956 and served as curate in Parramatta and then rector of Ermington with Rydalmere before lecturing at Moore College from 1963-66. Upon Dr Dumbrell’s return from Harvard he lectured at Moore in Old Testament until 1984 and was vice-principal from 1975-84. After four years at Regent College in Vancouver he taught at Moore until 1994. He and his wife Norma then left for missionary service in Singapore, where he worked at Trinity College until 1999.

Said Dr Thompson: “Alongside his highly respected contributions in the area of Old Testament studies, his theological acuity more generally, and his sense of humour and unique personality, his commitment above all else to the Lord Jesus and his gospel will leave an enduring mark on all of us. [He was] a dearly loved and respected member of the Moore College community for more than 60 years.”

The Ven Stan Skillicorn died on September 3, 2016.

Walter Stanley Skillicorn was born on January 1, 1932 in Sydney. He attended Homebush Boys High School and trained as a teacher – becoming very involved in the Christian group during his time at Sydney Teachers’ College. His future wife Joan also studied at the college, and they married in early 1955.

While working as a teacher Mr Skillicorn undertook studies at Moore College with a view to the mission field in Africa with CMS. However, India became the couple’s destination and for the first three years Mr Skillicorn taught at St George’s Grammar School in Hyderabad.

During their second term Mr Skillicorn was ordained in the Church of South India, and later became the minister of St George’s, Hyderabad. His involvement in youth ministry led to his appointment (during the family’s third term) as the southern India staff worker for the country’s Union of Evangelical Students.

Returning to Australia in 1968 Mr Skillicorn became rector at Yagoona with Condell Park, then rector of Yagoona, before spending 1972-1993 as rector of Eastwood. During his final two years there he was rector Archdeacon of the then Ryde area, and spent the four years before his retirement as registrar of the Sydney Diocese.

CMS NSW & ACT’s partnership support co-ordinator, the Rev Mark Fairhurst, gave the eulogy at Archdeacon Skillicorn’s funeral, and spoke of working with him in his later years at Eastwood.

“I had the privilege of working with him as his assistant but, perhaps even more importantly, [I saw] the effects of 21 years of faithful Bible and gospel teaching in the lives of our brothers and sister there,” Mr Fairhurst says.

“What I learned [at college] of the central importance of preaching the word of God I saw the reality of in Stan’s ministry, and for that I will always be immensely grateful.”



The gifts of God's people

The joys and challenges of our fellowship: highlights from the Archbishop's Presidential address.

Southern CROSS NOVEMBER 2016

8

THIS IS OUR LAST SESSION OF THE 50TH SYNOD AND FOR SOME THIS MIGHT BE YOUR last session of Synod – even if you don't know it – as fresh elections will take place at parish AGMs next year. Yet whether it be three years or 33 years, I want to thank you all for your service to the Diocese by your membership and participation.

Sometimes your vote may not be with the majority, yet our fellowship is not defined by our universal agreement on every matter. It is defined by our unity in Christ and our commitment to love and serve him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Of course, when we do agree it is a sweet expression of our being of one heart and mind. It was therefore with great pleasure that when we last met to approve the merger of Anglican Retirement Villages and Anglicare it resulted in a unanimous vote of approval.

This was the result of much hard work, which was clearly evident to the Synod, and has resulted in a stronger, more robust organisation better equipped to face the future with its combined resources undergirded by the power of the gospel to transform human lives.

Early signs of the amalgamation – under a new board and a new CEO in Mr Grant Millard – are very positive, though we should never underestimate the challenges they face as they seek to honour Jesus Christ, enrich lives and strengthen communities.

THE LAITY

I am constantly amazed and impressed by the commitment of time, energy and expertise that lay people give to the work of our Diocese. These labours are not in vain, and I thank God for the gifts he has given his people so the body of Christ might be strengthened and opportunities provided for his love to be displayed throughout our Diocese, so Jesus might be honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community.

Last year we passed an ordinance authorising lay ministry in our churches. Not all lay ministry needs to be authorised by the Archbishop as many ministries, like Sunday school teaching, may be exercised with the sole permission of the rector – though Working with Children Checks are mandatory for all those ministering among children and young people.

Yet where a person administers baptism, conducts funerals or regularly preaches they will need to be authorised. This honours both the person ministering as well as the congregation, as each person so authorised commits themselves to the teachings of the Anglican Church. I mention this because the ordinance allowed a period of grace that will expire at the end of this year, after which all rectors will need to comply with the provisions of the ordinance. This is not for bureaucratic efficiency or some misguided centralism – rather it is to highlight the importance and gravity of the public teaching of God's word.

THE CLERGY

Of course, all Anglican ministry within our parishes is overseen and regulated by the rector. A wise and godly rector will seek to promote the gifts of God's people so the whole congregation might be edified. The teaching and training of lay people ought to be high priorities for the clergy. Mission 2020 expresses this responsibility in our priorities to reach all the lost in our Diocese with the gospel of Christ, deepen spiritual maturity among our members and equip them to exercise their gifts.

Although Synod may set policy it is the local rector whose responsibility it is to appoint faithful people to exercise certain ministries – some of which require authorisation, though all who exercise their gifts will need training, encouragement and support. This is especially the case for those who regularly preach, where the Moore College PTC ought to be a minimum qualification.

Despite some heated debate in recent years, in 2015 the Synod reaffirmed the policy that it is appropriate for qualified women to preach in our churches. This is not new, since it dates back to the time of Archbishop John Charles Wright, when the first ordinance allowing women to preach was passed by the Synod. While rectors will have different views on the ministry of women, I trust we shall all express our views with charity, warmth and winsomeness towards those with whom we disagree.

Our greatest resources are our people – men and women who have been captivated by the love of God, have brought their lives into conformity with his word and seek opportunities to see Christ honoured as Lord and Saviour.

From our lay people come our clergy, those called to serve Christ as pastors and teachers of his word. This vocation is not for all. Yet I am heartened by the number of men and women who offer themselves as candidates for ordination. It is a serious business to be a pastor of God's people and the years of theological training at Moore College, with attention to the original languages of the Bible, provide an excellent foundation for a lifetime of ministry.

If you pass by King Street, Newtown you will see a new six-storey building on the corner of Carillon Avenue. It will provide the physical resources we need for the next 50 years, with ample space to house our world-class library, a larger gathering place for students, as well as purpose-built areas for staff and faculty.

Youthworks College relocates to the campus from January 2017. This, too, is an exciting development, as it will bring the training of youth and children's ministers in closer proximity to the resources of Moore College, while remaining a separate entity under the leadership of its principal, the Rev Dr Bill Salier. I should add that the need for youth and children's ministers is still great in our Diocese and I encourage all our parishes to identify those with gifts in this area to consider whether it is their vocation to bring the gospel to the young hearts and minds of the next generation.

Full-time paid ministry is a great privilege and honour. Sadly, there are pitfalls and dangers for clergy. In the past three years, for example, 10 clergy needed time out of parish to come to terms with episodes of depression, burnout, anxiety, personal conflict or other mental health issues, apart from those who have suffered medical setbacks. For these reasons we launched the Clergy Assistance Program last April. I have been delighted by this initiative, which has already produced results. Within its first three months 24 clergy accessed the program and received assistance, and its accessibility and confidentiality has been hailed by all concerned as a significant step forward in our care for clergy.

However, it is only part of the story, as both congregations and regional bishops have their part to play in caring for clergy so the body of Christ might be built up, strengthened and equipped to be disciples of Christ, demonstrating his love in word and deed.

ANGLICANS IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

In August we all participated in the Commonwealth Census. Of particular interest to us will be the percentage of those who identify as Christian, which in 2011 was 61 per cent. The push for Australians to mark "No religion" may have its effect on this statistic for 2016, especially as the "No religion" option was placed first in answer to "What is the person's religion?"

While it is true that 61 per cent does not translate into the percentage of Australians who attend a Christian church, the statistic is still a significant pointer as to where people see themselves, and how well we are penetrating the atheism, agnosticism and non-Christian religions of Australian culture.

Our own National Church Life Survey (NCLS) will be held later this year. While counting numbers can easily lead to pride, a humble account of the number of people attending our church, together with an analysis of their views concerning the vitality of church life, is an invaluable resource.

Recent revelations at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse are salutary reading for all Anglicans. Regrettably poor procedures, defective advice, inadequate record keeping and flawed leadership have contributed to the impression that Anglican churches are not safe places for children and young people.

While we may respond that Anglican cases of child sexual abuse are a small proportion of other cases of institutional abuse, and far fewer than those in the Roman Catholic Church, the reality remains that we have failed in this area. One case of sexual abuse against a child is one too many. While we have improved our procedures, increased awareness and training for all church workers, we have lost ground in the collective consciousness of Australian society.

I believe this reputational damage is a contributing factor to the rising opposition to the influence of Christianity in our country, most noticeably seen in the national debate about same-sex marriage. As I said last year, I believe a plebiscite is justified as a legitimate process for determining such a fundamental change to the definition of marriage that has served humanity well since the dawn of civilisation, that is, when God first designed marriage for the benefit of human society.

Our society presents challenges of unbelief and outright hostility to the word of God, of which our commission from the risen Jesus is still as pressing as it was when first delivered – to make disciples of all nations. The fourth priority of Mission 2020 is to "Respond to the changing face of our society". Our engagement in the public debate on same-sex unions is one such response. However, other questions such as gambling, domestic violence, asylum seekers and refugees are all issues in which we can bring the grace of God and the love of God into the marketplace of ideas. Of special mention here is our commitment towards the Syrian refugees, which we launched last year under the auspices of Anglicare.

Last year I launched New Churches for New Communities (NCNC), a project for raising money to build new facilities for the growing edges of greater Sydney in the northwest and southwest. To date NCNC has raised \$1.6 million and we are on target for our budget of \$2.5 million by the end of the year.

I am grateful for the skills and commitment of the Rev Glenn Gardner, and the generous gifts of so many Anglicans towards making this vision a reality. We have a strategy for the ongoing purchase of land and for the establishment of a building for a church community. We have a strategy for raising up church planters for new congregations. The only gaps in funding our growth strategies is church planting in urban areas and the redevelopment of existing buildings to accommodate the growing urban population in our Diocese.

May God so enrich our lives with love for the lost that many will see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. May God be pleased to raise up more labourers for the harvest, that the gospel may be so clearly preached that men, women and children will trust in Jesus and be saved forever. May all we do in this final session of Synod bring glory to God, with our eyes firmly set upon the vision of Christ enthroned, honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community.

©

ON behalf of Bishop Lee I want to express my thanks for all your prayers for him over the past year. Ivan was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last October and underwent extensive surgery. This was a complex but successful operation and one for which we thank God as we do the six months of chemotherapy that followed. Unfortunately, only 20 to 25 per cent of people with pancreatic cancer survive longer than 12 months. We thank God Ivan is within this narrow statistic.

Although Bishop Lee still has hurdles along the way, his most recent scan showed no presence of the cancer and, with renewed energy, he is back to full-time ministry. I am grateful for the prayers of so many across the Diocese for Ivan's recovery and we pray God will continue to bless him with vigour and good health for many years to come. Prayer is one of God's gifts of grace, which is essential for all ministry as it reminds us of our complete dependence upon God for how we live – or whether we live. Such miracles of healing are a fresh reminder of God's love for us and of his desire that we continue to live for him and through him for his glory alone.

Constant companions



When their family moved to Japan this year, **DAVID MCINTYRE** and his wife **BECK** knew nothing would be simple – even the “easy” things. They open a window for us into the early months of missionary life.

TIREDNESS...

When Beck and I look back on our first nine months in Japan as missionaries, one of the constant companions is the feeling of tiredness. The only thing that varies is the intensity of fatigue at the end of a day.

When we first arrived in Nishinomiya – halfway between Osaka and Kobe in western Japan – on a cold January evening, we were tired from the flights that had taken all day and the farewells that had taken months. The tiredness hasn't gone away; we just know a little more about where we are and what it's like to live in a different country with a different language.

Why so tired? For us, the major reason is the daily face-off with the new and unfamiliar.

Beck recalls that in the first month she didn't want to leave the house – in contrast to Sydney, where she loved going out. “Everything outside the house was new. Too much new,” she wrote in a diary. “Even the shower (my sanctuary) was new and different.”

There was one horrible morning when Beck wanted a warm shower but didn't know how to turn the hot water system on. I'd turned it off without thinking the night before, then had to go out that day. We didn't have mobile phones at that stage so Beck couldn't ring me. The on/off button was, of course, very clear – if you could read Japanese.

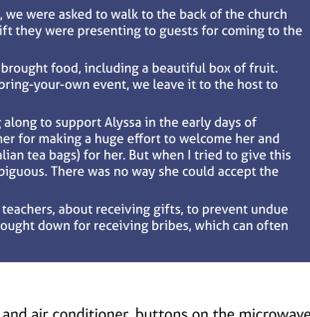
I, at least, have the language, having grown up in Japan with missionary parents. We have been very thankful that at least one family member had the language from the start, particularly because of all the paperwork that comes home. Most missionary families have no member who can understand the language.

As an aside, my upbringing in Japan has led to some misunderstanding about how Beck and I applied to be missionaries here; that I had wanted to come back to the country I loved while Beck tagged along.

In reality, Beck was the one more certain about wanting to be a missionary. I had wanted to come to Japan but not, for a long time, as a missionary. While I worked as a journalist, Beck started at Sydney Missionary and Bible College. It would be another three years before I quit work to study at Moore College.

Still, once here, at least I had more idea of what to expect. Beck and our three kids, Alyssa, Natasha and Mitchell, had no such luxury. Everything was foreign.

Most things they see, do, hear, taste and smell are for the first time, and they simply don't understand much of the communication that goes on. This newness is exhausting, as each day they try to make sense of something new and attempt to figure out how this new thing fits with their understanding of the world.



Japanese youth: David age 14 with his friend Shinya.

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ENDLESS GIFTS

We knew gift giving was an important part of Japanese culture before we came here. Even so, we have been taken aback by how much goes on.

At a recent wedding for friends we attended a very nice reception with good food and drink. We were given sweets to take home as a gift.

The following Monday a catalogue turned up so that we could choose a wedding gift from the bride and groom to say thank you for coming! We chose the mini soccer goal and ball set from the kids' section.

Similarly gift happened at a recent funeral. After the service, we were asked to walk to the back of the church to formally greet the family of the departed and receive the gift they were presenting to guests for coming to the funeral. It was some very nice coffee.

When we had Natasha's birthday party recently all our guests brought food, including a beautiful box of fruit. This might seem odd in Australia where, unless specified as a bring-your-own event, we leave it to the host to provide the food.

Yet there has also been a surprising reversal. I had been going along to support Alyssa in the early days of attending school and we had wanted to thank her Year 3 teacher for making a huge effort to welcome her and help her settle in. So we got a little gift (a small pack of Australian tea bags) for her. But when I tried to give this present to the teacher, her reaction was immediate and unambiguous. There was no way she could accept the gift. However, she was able to accept the card.

It turns out there are strict rules for public servants, including teachers, about receiving gifts, to prevent undue influence. Even so, many politicians and officials have been brought down for receiving bribes, which can often be in the form of “gifts”.

ENDLESS NEWNESS

Seemingly simple things like remote controls for the TV and air conditioner, buttons on the microwave and oven, all the mail and notes home from school, classroom instructions, street signs, most of the shows on TV and emergency messages, are all in Japanese and often different in layout.

Language never stops being a challenge for those who have to learn it as missionaries. Just recently, Beck was encouraged because she got a good result in a progress test in Japanese class. But the very next day she found she couldn't understand what the mums at kindergarten were trying to tell her about the upcoming sports carnival.

“I got a great score on paper but couldn't follow it up in real conversations,” she says.

“I was close to tears!”

The unfamiliar language, the world around us and the knowledge we are on “display” means that, even for me, our other almost constant companion has been hypersensitivity.

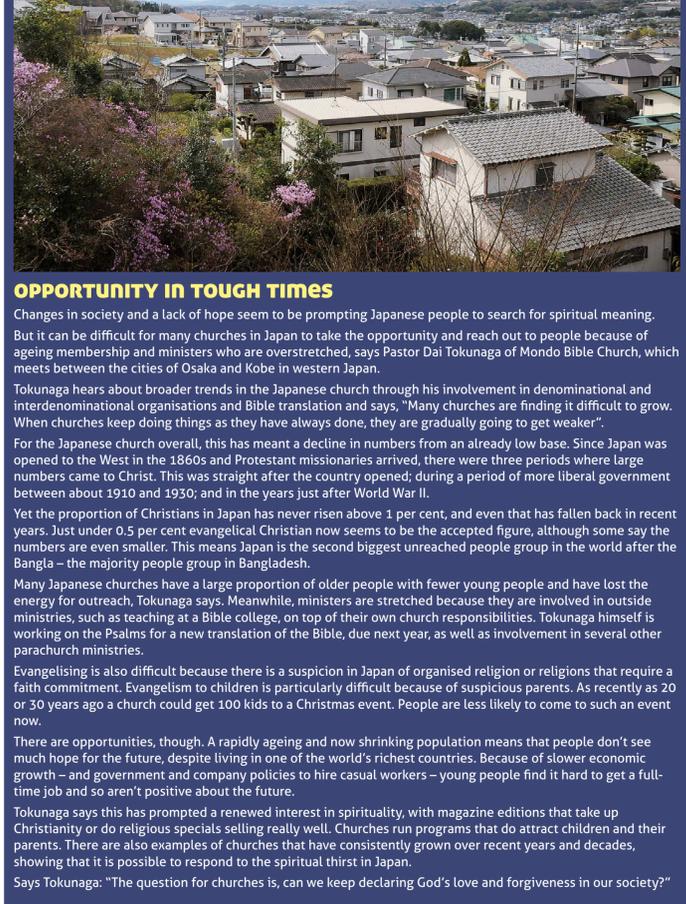
When Beck or I blow up at the kids for some minor thing, or when we find we just *have* to leave church to come home, or when a seemingly little thing really gets us worked up, we realise that our underlying stress levels are much higher than when we were in Australia.

A major stressor is this feeling of being on display, especially for the kids. It is particularly evident at church, where we are not just the different ones but the missionary family, the object of expectations that are totally unknown to us. The kids have reacted by hiding in books or throwing a tantrum, and we've had to respond to their needs at times by getting them home.

One stressful period for Beck occurred during the recent typhoon season. Japan has a good warning system to tell people days in advance to be ready for an approaching typhoon. The trouble was, Beck could not read or understand much of the warning system, so it became a source of stress rather than a means to be prepared.

It's not just the language that caused difficulties for Beck. There are so many differences in systems. One such is train ticketing. Beck found she had no idea how to buy a ticket when she forgot her Opal card equivalent. First, there was no English on the ticket machines. Second, there didn't seem to be any destinations at all on the machines, like the ones in Sydney. She had trouble getting through to me on the phone so finally asked some nearby students. They were able to help and Beck learnt that, in Japan, you don't buy a ticket to a destination but for a particular price. You work out the price for your destination by looking at the train line chart above the machines, then buy your ticket. An efficient system – if you know how it works.

Even buying milk is stressful due to the difference in language and product availability. Japan has a larger variety of milk than Australia based on fat content and how it is processed. There are also a large number of milk drinks, which aren't all milk but a combination of milk and other dairy products. Several times, Beck resorted to sending me a picture of the milk cabinet so I could help her choose. What is a seemingly quick task can take a full 10 minutes.



Supermarket crisis: how do you choose the right milk when you can't understand the language?



OPPORTUNITY IN TOUGH TIMES

Changes in society and a lack of hope seem to be prompting Japanese people to search for spiritual meaning.

But it can be difficult for many churches in Japan to take the opportunity and reach out to people because of ageing membership and ministers who are overstretched, says Pastor Dai Tokunaga of Mondo Bible Church, which meets between the cities of Osaka and Kobe in western Japan.

Tokunaga hears about broader trends in the Japanese church through his involvement in denominational and interdenominational organisations and Bible translation and says, “Many churches are finding it difficult to grow. When churches keep doing things as they have always done, they are gradually going to get weaker”.

For the Japanese church overall, this has meant a decline in numbers from an already low base. Since Japan was opened to the West in the 1860s and Protestant missionaries arrived, there were three periods where large numbers came to Christ. This was straight after the country opened; during a period of more liberal government between about 1910 and 1930; and in the years just after World War II.

Yet the proportion of Christians in Japan has never risen above 1 per cent, and even that has fallen back in recent years. Just under 0.5 per cent evangelical Christian now seems to be the accepted figure, although some say the numbers are even smaller. This means Japan is the second biggest unreached people group in the world after the Bangla – the majority people group in Bangladesh.

Many Japanese churches have a large proportion of older people with fewer young people and have lost the energy for outreach, Tokunaga says. Meanwhile, ministers are stretched because they are involved in outside ministries, such as teaching at a Bible college, on top of their own church responsibilities. Tokunaga himself is working on the Psalms for a new translation of the Bible, due next year, as well as involvement in several other parachurch ministries.

Evangelism is also difficult because there is a suspicion in Japan of organised religion or religions that require a faith commitment. Evangelism to children is particularly difficult because of suspicious parents. As recently as 20 or 30 years ago a church could get 100 kids to a Christmas event. People are less likely to come to such an event now.

There are opportunities, though. A rapidly ageing and now shrinking population means that people don't see much hope for the future, despite living in one of the world's richest countries. Because of slower economic growth – and government and company policies to hire casual workers – young people find it hard to get a full-time job and so aren't positive about the future.

Tokunaga says this has prompted a renewed interest in spirituality, with magazine editions that take up Christianity or do religious specials selling really well. Churches run programs that do attract children and their parents. There are also examples of churches that have consistently grown over recent years and decades, showing that it is possible to respond to the spiritual thirst in Japan.

Says Tokunaga: “The question for churches is, can we keep declaring God's love and forgiveness in our society?”

ODD ONE OUT

While I have the language, I'm acutely aware of my difference to those around me and the oddness of my situation as a stay-at-home dad while Beck goes to language school each day. Not only am I a white person among Japanese people, I'm often the only dad among the mums at kindergarten pick-up, or at a daytime school event.

I went along to a primary school parents' excursion to the Osaka Human Rights Museum. I was the only bloke and the only foreigner and at times it was *awkward*. It was hard to know whether it was mainly my gender or my race that caused the difficulty. Still, the other mums made an effort to include me in conversation and discussion, and the museum was definitely worth going to, so it wasn't a total disaster.

At such gatherings, I'm also usually the only Christian. This leads to another pressure: the feeling of needing to use my language from day one to all share the gospel.

This is good in one way and something that all Christians should feel, no matter what their situation. The problem for the new missionary is the sheer amount that is going on. There is the worry about how the kids are settling into school, kindergarten, day care and church. We're trying to support their language learning and acculturation while still trying to parent – loving them, having fun and disciplining, all of which we are doing amid our own tiredness and stress.

I'm also trying to support Beck as she goes to language school and facing the frustrations of learning Japanese – seeking to support her with my language skills without being condescending.

Meanwhile, there are groceries to buy, meals to cook, clothes to wash and floors to clean.

In fact, being new missionaries is like being first-time parents with a newborn.

And so, with language or no language, we are forced to realise that we are finite and weak and so we can despair... or we can fall back into the arms of our heavenly Father.



Welcome visit: Beck in Nishinomiya with some friends from the Sydney Japanese Evangelical Church.

IN HIS STRENGTH

That is our third and strongest presence of the past nine months. We have been reminded in so many ways that our heavenly Father is here with us and was, in fact, preparing things in advance for us.

Well before we came to Japan, God guided us and led us to get good preparation. Just as with a newborn baby, you can read parenting books and listen to advice before the birth and the reality can't be overwhelming. But those first few months of parenthood would be much harder if you hadn't done that preparation.

It's exactly the same with overseas mission. We are so grateful for the Church Missionary Society, which puts so much emphasis on training and support. It is not the only agency to properly train and support its missionaries but we can testify from experience that CMS prepared us well. Looking back, we can't think of something we have been through that we didn't discuss at St Andrew's Hall, CMS's training facility in Melbourne.

That's not to say every CMS missionary has been prepared 100 per cent, or that CMS has been perfect. But while it has been hard feeling tired and hypersensitive, neither of these things were surprising – especially when we stopped to think about them – because they had been discussed at St Andrew's Hall as normal parts of transition, especially to a new culture. It doesn't make it easier, but it helps us bear with it when we know such feelings are perfectly normal.

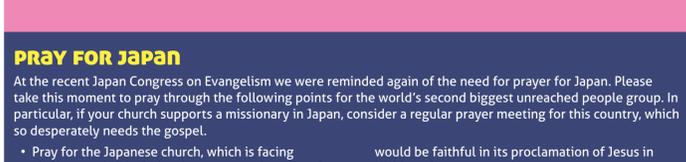
CMS's training emphasised being spiritually prepared for the time on location. We discussed the spiritual dryness that is often part of missionary life. One of the things discussed was that in periods of spiritual dryness listening to Christian music in English could be of help.

Some months into our time in Japan, Beck in particular found she was feeling distant from God and having doubts about her faith. Unlike me, able to understand the sermons at church and join with Japanese Christians in prayer and praise from our first week, Beck had no such input.

One of the things we realised when reflecting on Beck's spiritual life was that we weren't playing much music at home – and not much Christian music in particular. In Australia we regularly played music in the car, in which we spent a lot of time. We have no car in Japan and are still working out our sound system for home. It wasn't until we reflected on our change of lifestyle that we realised it was having an impact on Beck's spirituality.

Another area of preparation we have been particularly thankful for is the care of our marriage. CMS insisted we do several sessions of marriage counselling during our training in Melbourne, then another two-day workshop while raising our child in Sydney. Was this over the top? Absolutely not.

I had several men tell me to “look after your wife” when they heard we were heading overseas as missionaries. Since being in Japan we cling more firmly to our daily devotions together. It tends to be a chance to discuss the good and bad of the previous days, what the new day holds and bring it all before the Lord.



Starting out: David and Beck meet the congregation at Mondo Bible Church.

FAITHFUL CARE

God's care of us has also been evident in the way our Japanese church, together with fellow CMS missionaries, have cared for us – particularly in the first hectic weeks.

In fact, months before we even arrived here, members of Mondo Bible Church were praying for us. Yuko Kageyama, a long-term member of Mondo, tells me how they were praying for us well before we got to Japan, including that our preparation would go well and that God would provide a place to live here. As it turned out, God provided a house about 100 metres from the Kageyama! Mrs Kageyama was thrilled but I feel we are the ones who have been blessed.

Beck remembers evenings during our first couple of months in Japan when Mrs Kageyama would stop by, hand a bag or two of groceries or a meal to Beck, then jump back in her car to go home. Generous, practical help, and with no strings attached.

As we reflect on our first nine months in Japan it is amazing to think of God's response to prayer and work through his people. God took care of us through his people in Australia as we prepared to come, in response to the prayers of people like Mrs Kageyama in Japan. God continues to care for us here, in an unfamiliar place with none of our family networks, through his people in Japan in response to your prayers in Australia.

This was evident in the early weeks, which we now refer to as the “washing machine period”.

Although I could read the signs and tags as they went by, I was still in the washing machine with the rest of the family. But God provided a team of people to love us, taking us out to the places we needed to go, looking after the kids at home and even setting up many things before we got here.

One day very early on, Beck and I were taken to the shops by a member of our church while Kellie Nicholas, a fellow CMS missionary, babysat the kids. They made damper and did a pretend dog show while we parents did the boring shopping!

Our minister here, Dai Tokunaga, did a lot of work before and after we arrived so the transition would be as smooth as possible. Rental documents were ready, electricity and gas were hooked up, trips to the city office and schools were organised and he even had a *hanko* (a personal stamp Japanese use as a signature) made for us.

For us as missionaries, God's care through his people in response to prayer literally keeps us going each day. The more we reflect, the more we are thankful that God got us through a tough nine months; nine months that would have been impossible without his provision through his people in Australia and Japan.

We are still tired and hypersensitive. We miss people in Australia and are still getting used to many, many things in Japan. There are days of tears – from disappointments and conflicts, isolation, confusion and frustration.

But if it is a form of suffering we can remember that, “suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom 5:4-5).

So in the tiredness and difficulties we hope in the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and trust that he will not only be here with us and provide all we need, but use us to advance his mission to reach Japan. ☺

PRAY FOR JAPAN

At the recent Japan Congress on Evangelism we were reminded again of the need for prayer for Japan. Please take this moment to pray through the following points for the world's second biggest unreached people group. In particular, if your church supports a missionary in Japan, consider a regular prayer meeting for this country, which so desperately needs the gospel.

- Pray for the Japanese church, which is facing challenges that include a large proportion of ageing members, fewer young people and a shortage of pastors.

- Praise God that Japanese people seem to be spiritually thirsty. Pray they would seek and find the water that satisfies in Jesus Christ.

- Pray against the things that prevent Japanese people from coming to Christ: suspicion of unfamiliar religions, traditional beliefs, consumerism and the forces of darkness.

- Pray for more workers, both Japanese and missionaries, and pray for more Japanese lay Christians to see themselves as God's workers.

- Pray for our church, Mondo Bible Church, that it

- would be faithful in its proclamation of Jesus in Nishinomiya.

- Pray for more churches to be planted in a country where there are so few.

- Pray for co-operation between churches, parachurch organisations and mission agencies.

- Pray for us, that we would always be faithful to Christ crucified. May we proclaim his gospel and no other.

- Pray for Beck's language learning – probably the single most important thing for our long-term effectiveness in Japan.

- Pray for our children, that they would know the love of our Lord Jesus for themselves, and know it even more because of the difficulties they face.

Always at work

Amid the dangers of life in the early church, and the uncertainties now, God is still delivering on his promises, writes **PHILIP KERN**.

IN ACTS 12 LUKE PITS TWO KINGS AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. KING JESUS IS POWERFUL BUT since the dawn of time others claim his throne, sowing chaos, death and destruction.

In this chapter, opposition to Jesus appears in the form of Herod, whom Luke portrays as a king who is sovereign over life and death, killing whomever he wants. As the story begins this king kills James (the brother of John) and, recognising the political value of this act, moves to eliminate Peter.

Luke employs all the means at his disposal to convey the danger. Using King Agrippa's dynastic name, Herod, he reminds his readers of the king who killed babies upon hearing of the birth of Jesus, and the king who examined Jesus before his crucifixion. Mentioning the Passover further ties Peter's trial to Jesus' death. Luke is telling us that death is imminent and inescapable. Sometimes, servants of King Jesus will die for his name.

But is this all that Luke wants us to glean from the story? I want to suggest there is much more.

In verse 5 we learn that the church has gathered to pray for Peter. It takes little imagination to conclude that they prayed for his deliverance. No doubt some added that whatever happens, the Lord's will be done. The soul-crushing anxiety of this night would have been unbearable. Sometimes, servants of King Jesus will pray desperately.

But of course Peter doesn't die for preaching about Jesus (yet): he is released from the hands of Herod and the people who oppose the gospel. God acts dramatically and conclusively.

But there is more. The aftermath of the divine rescue shows Peter dazed and confused. He quickly recovers and makes his way through the streets of Jerusalem, presumably under cover of darkness, to the home where the church has gathered to pray for him.

To this point, the gates of the prison and the city open to Peter, but the door of the house remains closed. Rhoda, the servant girl who responds to the knocking, returns to the prayer meeting, leaving Peter outside, to report that he is at the door.

Sermons customarily mock Rhoda at this point. The silly girl fails to invite Peter in, leaving him standing (dangerously) in the street, and fails to convince the church that Peter has arrived. Her report meets with two objections: either Rhoda is a bit nutty or it must be Peter's angel rather than Peter himself. In this Luke provides a glimpse of how difficult faith can be. Sometimes the evidence of God's good work is knocking at our door and we provide psychological or even supernatural explanations, never quite grappling with the truth.

Rather than ridicule Rhoda, however, there are three reasons for reassessing her appearance in the story. First, it should be observed that we don't know anything about the etiquette of a servant girl's response to someone at the door. Is it something like in *Downton Abbey*, where a servant identifies the visitor and communicates the person's identity to the household? It may be that Rhoda did exactly as expected.

Second, Luke – as much as any NT writer – is committed to elevating the status of women. It would be out of character for him to introduce and (unnecessarily) name a woman for the purpose of shaming her. Third, in the aftermath of Jesus' resurrection, women were given the special privilege of being the first witnesses, and first bearing testimony, to the fact that Jesus had been released from the tyranny of death. Here again a woman, this time a servant girl named Rhoda, bears witness to God's work of deliverance.

Those who testify to God's work will regularly meet with ridicule. Sometimes it will take the form that Rhoda encountered and sometimes it will even come from within the church.

So what are we to make of the confusion and disorientation in the church? Why are believers so slow to recognise God's rescuing work? And what can this teach us about our own faith response to God's works? Perhaps we can find answers in revisiting Peter's reaction to his rescue. In verse 9 Luke tells us that Peter didn't know the rescue was real: the seer of visions (Acts 10:9-16) assumed he was seeing another one. Verse 11 tells us that Peter "came to himself". Verse 12, repeating the fact, says that when Peter "realised this" he at last goes to the house church.

Thus Luke tells us in triplicate that Peter himself, in the midst of divine rescue, failed to grasp what was happening. How often are we so close to events that we can't see the Lord's work?

In this we are reminded of some of Scripture's great promises. It won't do, of course, to find in Acts 12 the promise that God rescues his faithful servants from prison. If that is Luke's purpose, then he can only offer a 50-50 chance. James dies at Herod's hands. There is no hint that James had less faith, was less useful to God, or that the Lord loved him less than Peter. We simply encounter the emotionally barren report of his death.

So what promises can we find in chapter 12? The first is that God is able to rescue his servant. Sometimes such knowledge is all-important, a healing balm, no matter the outcome of a particular trial. The second is that God is always at work and may be performing one of his saving miracles even though we don't see anything. Sometimes servants of the king fail to understand what God is doing.

Is it a lack of faith or spiritual insight on our part when we don't grasp the sum of God's plan? This chapter would suggest otherwise: faith is not synonymous with insight, and understanding is often withheld, or at least deferred – sometimes until after God has finished his work.

A still greater promise may be at work in this chapter, one that courses through the argument of Acts as a whole. Many observe that this account of Peter's rescue echoes the Passover, including reference to sandals, haste and the particular way clothes are to be worn. Luke seeks to define the nature of God's rescued people and does so by drawing parallels with the OT story of God delivering Israel to form a nation. Now, again, God is rescuing his people to form a new "nation" based on one's confession of the Christ.

So this portrait indicates that the same God, the one who saved his people by the blood of the lamb in the Exodus, now saves his people by the death of his son and by the proclamation that ensues. And just as God then could not be overcome, so the word of Christ cannot be silenced.

Despite the best efforts of religious leaders in Jerusalem – Herod, Saul, and a host of others (even some insiders to the movement) – the preaching that Jesus is the saving Lord of all endures. James may die and, beyond the pages of Acts, Peter, John and Paul may give their lives for the gospel. But within God's sovereign plan, with all the messiness and joys of life, the church trumpets the fact that Jesus, the crucified and risen, is Lord of all. And the sound of this gospel echoes down the ages.

We live in turbulent times. In some places the church appears to be in retreat. This is nothing new: great Christian centres of the past such as Alexandria and Antioch have long since been eclipsed. Nevertheless, the faith that we confess bears its fruit in season.

The chapter goes on to demonstrate that Herod was, in fact, not sovereign over life and death – even if he held the sword. Peter lived to preach another day; Herod died. More to the point, the king who in Peter's first sermon (Acts 2:27,31) and Paul's first sermon (Acts 13:35-37) is said to never see decay is proven stronger than the king who decays even before he dies (Acts 12:23)

Jesus is Lord and King. Just as those who then opposed the gospel found themselves to be opposing God, so those who today oppose the gospel – whether by political, social, or personal forces – will one day bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Our task remains the same, whether seeing clearly or wandering in the dark, even to the edge of despair. In word and deed we join in this proclamation: the king who has conquered death gives life to those who trust in him. Ⓢ

Dr Philip Kern is head of Department of New Testament and Greek.

ST MATT'S JAZZES UP THE SOUL



NOVEMBER 2016

Manly Anglican Church hosted a number of jazz-themed church services in conjunction with October's annual Manly Jazz Festival.

The services took the opportunity to have a band play a number of soul standards along with classic hymns, inviting church members and festival-goers to celebrate music while also hearing a gospel message.

"We've been running this for several years now, and the aim is to always have the gospel there but present it in a way that flows out of the musical theme of that year," says the rector of St Matthew's, the Rev Bruce Clarke.

"This year we focused on soul music. That was an opportunity to also talk about Mark 8 and Jesus' words about what good is it for a man to gain the whole world but to lose his soul."

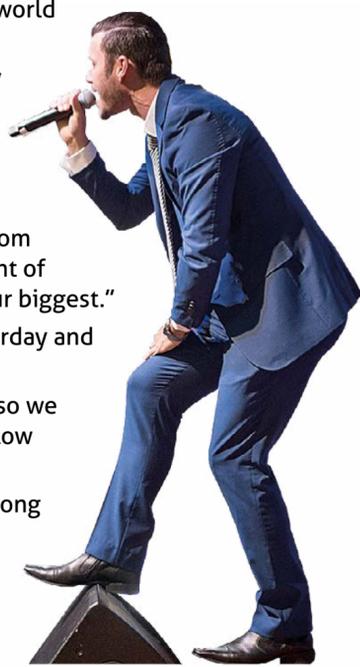
The two services on Sunday saw some 600 people attend, many of whom were invited by church members or were simply around for the festival.

"The band was made up both of members of the church and outside connections," Mr Clarke says. "Over the number of years this has been run here, the attendances and the investment into it from church members has meant that what was otherwise the lowest night of the year over the October long weekend has now become one of our biggest."

The church also made its facilities open to festival acts on the Saturday and Monday as a show of love for the community.

"My whole philosophy is that we're a part of the community here, so we want to reflect that in how we interact with people and how we allow people to use the space," Mr Clarke says.

"We had about 16 acts come in and use the church the rest of the long weekend, though obviously we were here doing our own things on the Sunday. But that makes it feel like a community thing and the fruit that has been borne from the whole weekend has been great, with people coming along to church or just staying connected as a result."



Southern CROSS

11

NO CLOWNING AROUND ON MISSION



Serious stuff: members of Heathcote-Engadine Anglican Churches all set for their clown-themed mission program.

A family connection has seen a team from Heathcote-Engadine Anglican Churches take a short-term mission trip to Ashford in the Armidale Diocese.

The mission, co-led by Matthew Richards from Engadine, came about because his father Warren was pastoral leader at Ashford (40 minutes' north of Inverell) until earlier this year. There was also an opportunity to seed a similar mission to Hay in NSW's southwest, with volunteers from Heathcote-Engadine augmenting local church members in both locations.

"What we've done well as a church is support our link missionaries, and it's particularly easy to do that when they live in Australia, in the country," Mr Richards says.

"There are still people that Mum and Dad know in Ashford, and there was one lady there who thought we could also do something in Hay. They floated the idea with us and we thought, 'Why not give it a go?'"

In the spirit of freewheeling mission, the event was only confirmed about six weeks before the start of the three-day trip. The program focused on primary-aged children in the mornings, with a two-day afternoon program for high school students.

Clothes, crafts, games, memory verses and campfires all played a part, with the circus theme focusing on what the Bible has to say about being "lost and found".

"It was a little seat-of-the-pants [in style], but in other ways it wasn't," Mr Richards says. "Mum is extremely organised, and a lot of the craft and stuff was very well planned even with that short planning time. My brother and I also both work as chaplains and are involved in kids' programs, so it wasn't completely alien. It actually ended up working really well."

Warren Richards, who worked for a number of years as Ashford's ministry leader, says such mission trips are valuable for regional churches – particularly those that don't have the personnel to maintain ministries throughout the year.

"A lot of the smaller regional churches just lack the resources to run this kind of thing themselves – even just from week to week it can be hard to do a Sunday school or regular children's program," he says. "So this is an opportunity where, apart from perhaps Scripture classes, the children can come together and have fun and learn about God's love for them."

"That's why it's so important for Sydney churches to look further afield than Sydney. People both inside and outside the church are often very grateful for the time people... are giving and the value they put on regional communities."

Accountancy action

RUSS MATTHEWS

The Accountant

Rated MA15+

CHRISTIAN WOLFF (BEN AFFLECK) HAS STRUGGLED ALL HIS LIFE TO FIT INTO society. Due to the awkward nature of his high-functioning autism and his father's military lifestyle, Wolff has had to learn to adapt to the world around him.

With the training from his father's unique teaching in self-defence and his acute abilities in mathematics, Wolff manages to become one of the world's most sought-after forensic accountants, helpfully assisting a range of influential criminal organisations. Using his rare gifts to find hidden discrepancies in the books of these groups, he unmasks their internal problems and often remedies justice in his own way through more physical means. Which makes him, possibly, the world's first vigilante accountant.

In the process of administering his gun-toting style of balancing the books, he crosses paths with Treasury agent Ray King (J.K. Simmons), whose curiosity – and suspicion – is piqued. Then Wolff is hired by a cutting-edge robotics company seeking a reason for the multimillion-dollar discrepancy in its books. As he digs deeper into the files, what he discovers bring him closer to his own past and to exposure, as well as placing innocent lives in jeopardy.

The premise of *The Accountant* has the potential to confuse and overwhelm movie-goers, never mind those who know little about accounting. Thankfully Gavin O'Connor has managed to direct this potential mess into an entertaining, thinking man's action film. He provides enough background about Christian Wolff to make sense of his disposition and decision-making skills, thus helping his cold demeanour to become winsome, even humorous at times. O'Connor delves far enough into the world of autism and the experiences of military children to provide us with context for the situational ethics Wolff confronts.

Coming off his performance as Batman, Affleck takes on the role of distant and focused accountant with convincing intensity, managing the slow-boil script superbly.

The surrounding cast adds to the quality of the action-mystery. J.K. Simmons provides the right amount of magnetism and measured control as the veteran Treasury agent, lifting the tension within the storyline, while Anna Kendrick puts forward her best role in ages as a young accountant assisting Wolff at the robotics firm. However, the casting of Jon Bernthal as a competing assassin was a work of genius. As a rival killer, his signature intensity and comedic timing add the perfect counterbalance to Affleck's deadpan delivery.

Amid any positive reflections on this film, audiences must be aware it is a violent affair. Christian Wolff's self-administered justice and the parental style of his father may convince some to give it a miss. On the other hand, the manner in which the production team handles the abilities, as opposed to the disabilities, of many of the lead characters is worth engaging with – recognising, as we do, that we all have different capacities and skills.

The Accountant may run up against some people's sensibilities but is a film worth considering. It will deliver on the entertainment front and will lead to a multitude of conversation points afterwards. **5**



Controversial character: Mr Pettett and Dr Jensen at the launch of the Marsden book.

NICK GILBERT

A NEW BOOK ON "FLOGGING PARSON" THE REV SAMUEL MARSDEN DRAWS FOR THE FIRST time on his sermons as an historical source, examining his role and attitude in public and church life.

The book *Samuel Marsden: Preacher, Pastor, Magistrate, Missionary*, written by the Rev David Pettett, is the result of a PhD thesis examining Marsden's life. Underlying the book's analysis are 98 sermon manuscripts currently held in the Moore College library, which were transcribed by Mr Pettett.

"What interested me initially was coming across some of this about 40 years ago when I was at Moore myself," he says. "The librarian at the time, Kim Robinson, showed me the collection of handwritten Marsden sermons in the archives... I didn't think much of it at the time, but about 10 years ago I decided it was a project I could undertake.

"There has been an awful lot written about Marsden. He is quite a controversial character in colonial history but nobody has ever seriously looked at his sermons before. Given his own stated desire leaving England was to 'preach the everlasting gospel', it's quite strange that hasn't happened to this point."

There are three main sources of controversy surrounding the man. The foremost is his relationship with the contemporary governor of NSW, Lachlan Macquarie. While this has been frequently labelled as antagonistic because of perceived veiled attacks on the governor by Marsden from the pulpit, Mr Pettett argues that the sermons themselves betray no hint of such an attack. Also covered is Marsden's second job in the colony as a magistrate, plus the strongly contrasted successes of his missions to New Zealand and Australia.

"Like most people, there were things that he did well and, of course, others that he simply didn't," Mr Pettett says. "He didn't always see the impact his actions would have or how people would perceive them. For instance, he had a reputation as a harsh magistrate – one rightly earned, I feel – and he didn't quite see the impact that would have on gospel work.

"He was also a wealthy man, involving himself in agricultural ownership, and that had an impact. He was inflexible in engaging with Aboriginal people here when they simply didn't show the same interest in Western things as the Maori.

"Those things are part of why he was blinkered, I think, but as a visionary he did have a view of of the gospel going out to New Zealand and Australia, in particular, and he was quite strategic in that respect. He had a true vision for evangelism."

The book was formally launched at St John's Cathedral in Parramatta – Marsden's first church in Australia, the town of his seat as a magistrate and also the site of his burial. Former archbishop the Rev Dr Peter Jensen spoke at the launch, commending the book as a new perspective on the life of one of Australia's first, but also most controversial, colonial clergymen. **5**

GROWTH WITH PAUL

The Life & Labours of Paul: Insights from Acts and the New Testament Letters
by Reg Piper
Anglican Press Aust., Anglican Youthworks

THIS latest in the series of "Studies for Lent and Other Times" is an outstanding addition to the genre. It is usually difficult to sustain the quality of brief meditations covering over 40 different Bible passages but Reg Piper achieves this as much by the selection and ordering of the material as his clear and straightforward comments.

The intent is to enable the reader to grow spiritually by reflecting on how God shaped Paul as an apostle and how Paul expounded God's love in his ministry and letters. Each day includes a suggested reading from the New Testament, a short prayer and a relevant prayer. There are also seven sermon outlines and questions appropriate for use at various stages in the series.

Bishop Piper lays out relevant readings from Paul's letters and Acts in a sequence that illustrates Paul's life from his early years to his final ministry and martyrdom. Piper is happy to admit this process must involve some conjecture and probable historical reconstruction as the available material can be quite patchy – especially around the early and later parts of Paul's life outside the period dealt with by Acts.

Even Acts is quite uneven in its coverage when it does deal with Paul. For example, the 14 years of Paul's ministry in Syria and Cilicia straight after his conversion (Galatians 1:12ff), is completely missing in Acts 9. Rather than argue his own case, Piper is content to be guided in these matters by two eminent Pauline scholars, F.F. Bruce and our own Bishop Paul Barnett.

The result of reading portions from Acts and Paul's letters in the order provided is quite illuminating. We learn more than we might have thought about Paul, his ministry and relationships. This would be very helpful to those who have never put the material together into a coherent whole. An attractive story of Paul the man emerges, which is, as Piper intends, an encouraging picture.

He presents a classic picture of Paul's thought and ministry and does not interact with any of the more recent scholarly discussions in the area. This may be applauded by some, although I wonder if more on how Paul saw himself completing Israel's story in his ministry through his frequent echoes of Scripture might have deepened the picture Piper presents.

As it stands, this accessible and encouraging short volume is an excellent basis for a personal/parish study program on Paul, and thus a significant part of the New Testament. Highly recommended.

Rob Forsyth

