

Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

JUNE
2017

Intimacy and the older Christian

BREAKING THE SEX TABOO

- + Boasting in our justification
- & *13 Reasons Why...* and plenty why not

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“

I want to go back and share... to sow the word of God in the hearts of people that I will come across.

”

Albert Lamoureux
Mission News



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There's no ministry like snow ministry



Visitors to Perisher Valley enjoy a BBQ before one of the weekly Alpine Church services. Photo: www.taylorbrantphoto.com

MINISTRY IS STILL GOING STRONG ON THE NSW SNOWFIELDS WITH A RESIDENTIAL HOLIDAY lodge and a church and chaplaincy program serving the needs of, and reaching out to, holidayers hitting the slopes.

Southern Cross Alpine Lodge, a ministry first begun by the Anglican Youth Department (now Youthworks) in 1963 as the Southern Cross Ski Chalet, has seen thousands of visitors over its time – providing accommodation for mostly Christian families and groups, but also guests and visitors joining friends for a snowy retreat in Kosciuszko National Park.

"Most of the people who pass through here come again, I feel," says Southern Cross Alpine Lodge host the Rev Graham Morrison. "There are a lot of people who make this an annual or near-annual event.

"We are generally pretty full through the year but we always welcome people. We particularly enjoy when they bring guests, because frequently non-members and guests who visit are non-Christians, so there is a real ministry to those people as well."

Mr Morrison's time is divided between his role with the Alpine Lodge, his job as one of Perisher Ski Resort's honorary chaplains alongside the Rev Lloyd Bennett, and his leadership role with his wife Margie in the Anglican parish of the Snowy Mountains.

"Chaplains are different to being at the Lodge or out the front at church," he says. "The company [Perisher Ski Resort] wants you to be skating around and meeting people, helping when necessary. Sometimes we provide a listening ear after disasters, and sometimes we just end up having conversations with people that come out of nowhere – little opportunities to pray or to chat with people.

"Some conversations have even begun with people saying, 'A chaplain? I didn't think people like you still existed'. There's still plenty for us to do."

One of the things Mr Morrison has noticed is that visitors to services at Perisher's Alpine Church are often people who have not attended church in years. He believes three such visitors became Christians after attending this year's Easter service.

"In some respects it's like a beach mission with snow," he says. "What we saw at Easter was obviously God's work, but I think it also illustrates that people will do things they wouldn't normally do when they're on holiday.

"We get congregations at the Alpine Church full of people who have long since dropped away from Christianity. But they'll see the chapel – which is right in the middle of a snowfield and often with a barbecue running before services – and be happy to re-link to Christianity with us in a way they might never choose to do back home, because they're too busy or too worried about what people might think. It's refreshing to see people actually give church a go again."

Freedom laws needed

THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY, ALONG WITH A NUMBER of other Christian groups, has called for specific legislation to enshrine freedom of belief as a "positive right" in Australia, rather than as a negative "exemption" to other legislation.

The call came in a submission to the Federal Government inquiry into the "protection and promotion of the human right to freedom of religion or belief worldwide, including in Australia".

"Within the boundaries prescribed by law, we should be seeking to promote the greatest (not the least) possible freedoms of religion or belief", said the submission, signed by Bishop Michael Stead – on behalf of the Religious Freedom Reference Group – and Dr Karin Sowada (right), who chairs the Social Issues Committee.

"It is not prudent for legislation to call on secular courts or tribunals to arbitrate on what is or is not a church doctrine, tenet, belief or teaching," the submission said. "The law should provide for broad – not narrow – conceptions of 'religion' and 'religious organisation'."

The Ambrose Centre for Religious Liberty likewise submitted that, "the various discrimination and equal opportunity laws do not recognise the right to manifest religious belief. Rather, exemptions are granted but, if challenged, are subject to the determination of tribunals and courts. Rarely do the religious rights of individuals succeed before tribunals and courts."

Christian lawyer and expert on religious freedom, Associate Professor Neil Foster from the University of Newcastle, referred in his submission to a "patchwork" protection for freedom of religion.

"It is past time for consideration to be given at the Commonwealth level for protection of religious freedom to be the subject of specific legislation," he wrote. "The Commonwealth has undertaken to provide serious religious freedom protection by acceding to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights... it would be appropriate that this commitment be translated into law."

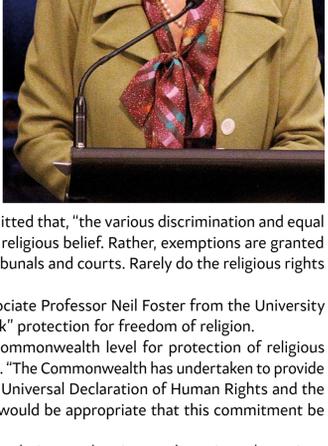
The diocesan submission said possible changes in law relating to abortion, euthanasia and marriage could "create potential conflicts for many people of faith... We submit that there should be a general protection in Federal law that protects the individual's freedom of thought, conscience and belief, which will prevent a person being compelled in the course of their employment to perform an action contrary to conscience or religious belief."

More than 175 submissions have been received and posted on the website of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, which is conducting the inquiry.

The sub-committee's chairman, Kevin Andrews MP, said, "Australians can also be justly proud that our country has not experienced the atrocious violations of this human right that have occurred elsewhere.

"Nevertheless, important questions touching on the right to freedom of religion or belief, and its relationship with other rights, have arisen in our own country in recent times. How we protect the freedom of religion or belief, promote religious tolerance and prevent violations or abuses of this right, may prove to be of significance to the wider, religiously diverse world."

The diocesan submission agreed, saying our country could lead the way. "Australia has an impressive track record to date in supporting freedom of religion, and by continuing to foster and support the right to freedom of religion and belief we provide leadership and encouragement to other nations to do likewise."



Plant for Bondi rescue

A NEW CONGREGATION PLANT AT BONDI BEACH IS IN THE PREPARATION STAGE, LOOKING TO start a local ministry in one of Sydney's most irreligious suburbs.

The congregation will be planted by Bondi Anglican under its associate minister the Rev Blake Hatton, but will not start with a core team from existing Bondi members. Instead, the plan is to build from Christians who live in the beach area but aren't already a part of the church.

"Bondi's not unique – there are lots of areas in Sydney that are also trying to be more missional and trying to reach unreached people, but it's very difficult to do," says Bondi rector the Rev Martin Morgan.

"What we've tried to do here is create a near-independent church planter situation for Blake, a blank canvas, to give the best chance of a new, missional plant springing up. There's a real need to put evangelism and actual missionary activity right at the forefront of our work."

Bondi Beach has been the focus of new ministries in the past, but this time Mr Hatton says the idea is to make use of connections already made by the parish, while creating fresh expressions of "church" that connect with the new kinds of people making Bondi Beach their home.

"Our church already has a name in the suburb through things like Scripture, kids' clubs and mother's groups," he says.

"So while what we are doing is a fresh expression, we actually get to build on the faithful love already shown by this church. Bondi Beach has changed – there are different people here now – and we're looking forward to opening up our new church community in the next few months."

Mr Hatton (right), in addition to his work with the church, also serves as a volunteer lifesaver at the beach and leader with the local scout group. He is encouraging other members of the team to be involved in the wider community, saying, "We're on about gathering to be built up with the good news, so we can go into all the places God has placed us in the week full of peace, purpose and hope.

"Often, a church might send a group of 30 Christians as a core team and then that group will begin to make connections in a new area. We're essentially doing the opposite – we've got the connections but we haven't got the Christians.

"In a way, I'd like to throw open the doors this Sunday, but we haven't yet got a large enough team of mature Christians to keep things going sustainably. So that's what we're focusing on right now: building a community of Christians who can together welcome their neighbours."

A prospectus with information for locals who might like to help is available at www.bondichurch.org.



"Extreme" abortion bill fails



Signatures against the bill: Rebecca Anderson, campaign liaison officer for Abortion Rethink, and Rebecca Gosper from Youth For Life. PHOTO: ACL

A BILL DECRIMINALISING ABORTION HAS been voted down 25-14 in the NSW Upper House. Put forward by a Greens MP, it prompted a huge petition – the Australian Christian Lobby calling it "the worst abortion laws ever".

Abortion remains in the Crimes Act in NSW but women can have the procedure because of a 1971 court ruling that abortion is not unlawful if a doctor honestly believes a pregnancy will endanger a woman's physical or mental health.

There are an estimated 27,000 abortions in NSW annually. If the bill had passed, doctors who objected to abortion would have been required to refer patients to doctors who supported it and 150-metre exclusion zones would have been set up around abortion clinics to prevent protests.

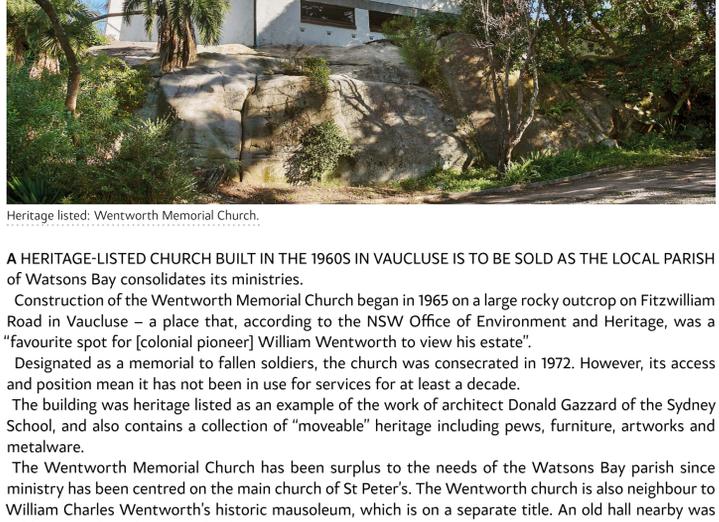
ACL, the Christian Democratic Party, Right to Life and Abortion Rethink gathered more than 50,000 signatures against the bill and Premier Gladys Berejiklian gave Liberal Party MPs a conscience vote.

Speaking in favour of the bill, Labor MP Penny Sharpe called existing abortion laws "archaic". Christian Democratic MLC Paul Green opposed it, saying, "Rather than decriminalising abortion, we need to review our attitudes and practices

to ensure there are appropriate safeguards for the wellbeing of the unborn child, the woman and others impacted by the decision."

In a letter to State MPs, Archbishop Glenn Davies and Catholic Archbishop Anthony Fisher said, "Currently any child born after 20 weeks gestation in NSW must legally have a birth certificate and death certificate issued, even when stillborn. The bill [would] sanction the killing of those who would otherwise be citizens of Australia, merely because they are living in their mother's womb."

Wentworth church for sale



Heritage listed: Wentworth Memorial Church.

A HERITAGE-LISTED CHURCH BUILT IN THE 1960S IN VAUCLUSE IS TO BE SOLD AS THE LOCAL PARISH of Watsons Bay consolidates its ministries.

Construction of the Wentworth Memorial Church began in 1965 on a large rocky outcrop on Fitzwilliam Road in Vaucluse – a place that, according to the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, was a "favourite spot for [colonial pioneer] William Wentworth to view his estate".

Designated as a memorial to fallen soldiers, the church was consecrated in 1972. However, its access and position mean it has not been in use for services for at least a decade.

The building was heritage listed as an example of the work of architect Donald Gazzard of the Sydney School, and also contains a collection of "moveable" heritage including pews, furniture, artworks and metalware.

The Wentworth Memorial Church has been surplus to the needs of the Watsons Bay parish since ministry has been centred on the main church of St Peter's. The Wentworth church is also neighbour to William Charles Wentworth's historic mausoleum, which is on a separate title. An old hall nearby was sold previously and is now a kindergarten.

A statement about the listing said, "Proceeds from the sale will provide funding for expanding local ministry and enable the parish to ensure that the main St Peter's church, a heritage item on Woollahra Council's LEP, is able to be cared for and maintained appropriately.

"After a rigorous tender process of several reputable eastern suburbs agents, McGrath has been selected to market the property for sale. The building itself was listed on the State Heritage Register in 2012, so buyers will be subject to the terms of its listing."

Soldier support network

A CHURCH MINISTRY TO RETURNED SERVICEMEN and women is seeking to expand and equip local churches to create safe and caring environments for soldiers to reconnect with their Christian faith.

Warrior Welcome Home, a ministry of St John's, Gordon, has been running since 2012 and recently set about supporting parishes in Darwin – a centre for Australia's armed forces – to run similar ministries in their local context. The plan is to operate Warrior Welcome Home in Darwin on two consecutive weekends before handing the long-term ministry over to the churches.

"It'll be our first out-of-Sydney program," says senior associate minister at St John's, and leader of the Warrior Welcome Home ministry, the Rev Rob Sutherland. "We're also trying to do it in such a way that we help run the first one so local churches feel ready to run the second one.

"There's nothing particularly complicated in what we do – it's very focused on being simple and about relationships. If you can run an Alpha course or Christianity Explained, you can run Warrior Welcome Home."

Mr Sutherland was himself a member of Australian Defence Force, serving as an infantry officer in the Army before later becoming a chaplain to the Army and Army Reserve. After completing two tours as a chaplain in Afghanistan, he says many men and women struggled to reconcile their experiences of war with their faith, even more so when trying to return to civilian life in Australia among communities that struggle to understand.

"What's becoming understood now is that, as a country, we're very good at training people and sending them off to war, but we're not good at bringing them home," Mr Sutherland says. "For many, coming home is the hardest thing.

"In recent times, the concept of moral injury has become understood... we've also added to that the idea that people can be spiritually wounded as well. So Warrior Welcome Home looks to heal the dents in the soul and we've found that love, principally the love of God, works at healing those spiritual wounds."

Despite the existence of ministries like Warrior Welcome Home, Mr Sutherland says in general the church can struggle to know how to love and care for returned servicepeople – whether they are veterans of conflicts like the Vietnam War, or more recent and continuing conflicts such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

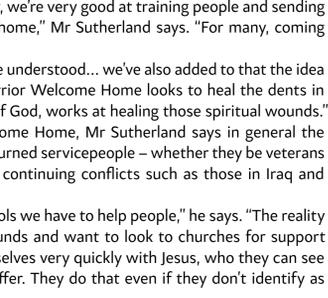
"I think we've lost confidence in our message and the tools we have to help people," he says. "The reality is that many returned soldiers have these spiritual wounds and want to look to churches for support and for hope. Many of the people we see identify themselves very quickly with Jesus, who they can see was abandoned, cast off and knows what it's like to suffer. They do that even if they don't identify as readily with the church itself.

"Churches don't need to be afraid of what to say or what to do, and they don't need try and help with every single problem.

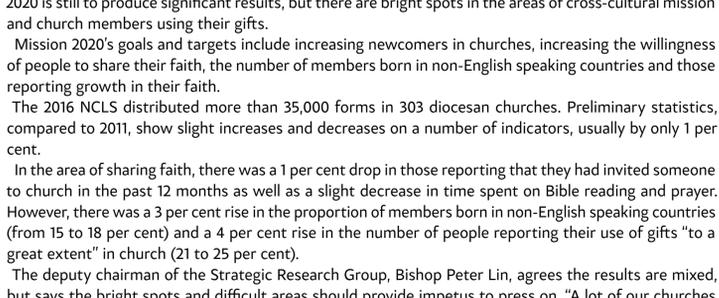
"If you're looking for help in your churches, and they trust you enough to talk about their experiences at all, then that's a good thing."

Warrior Welcome Home at St John's operates as a four-day residential program for about eight people at a time, aimed at Christians and those with a Christian background. Spouses of service personnel are also often invited to take part in the program.

See stjohnsgordon.org.au/warrior-welcome-home for more information.



Mission progress mixed



Bonds created: "building belonging" is a key priority for many Sydney Anglicans.

EARLY INDICATIONS FROM THE NATIONAL CHURCH LIFE SURVEY (NCLS) INDICATE THAT MISSION 2020 is still to produce significant results, but there are bright spots in the areas of cross-cultural mission and church members using their gifts.

Mission 2020's goals and targets include increasing newcomers in churches, increasing the willingness of people to share their faith, the number of members born in non-English speaking countries and those reporting growth in their faith.

The 2016 NCLS distributed more than 35,000 forms in 303 diocesan churches. Preliminary statistics, compared to 2011, show slight increases and decreases on a number of indicators, usually by only 1 per cent.

In the area of sharing faith, there was a 1 per cent drop in those reporting that they had invited someone to church in the past 12 months as well as a slight decrease in time spent on Bible reading and prayer. However, there was a 3 per cent rise in the proportion of members born in non-English speaking countries (from 15 to 18 per cent) and a 4 per cent rise in the number of people reporting their use of gifts "to a great extent" in church (21 to 25 per cent).

The deputy chairman of the Strategic Research Group, Bishop Peter Lin, agrees the results are mixed, but says the bright spots and difficult areas should provide impetus to press on. "A lot of our churches have been working very hard on the key areas [but] ministry doesn't necessarily bear fruit on a steady curve. In God's timing, there are often peaks and troughs."

The survey shows adult Sydney Anglicans are more likely to be female (54 per cent), average 50 years old (49 per cent are over 50, 51 per cent under) and close to 40 per cent have joined their current church in the past five years.

Almost 60 per cent value the preaching and teaching of their church and about 40 per cent value small group ministry. Over half believe their gifts are being valued and used well at church, but 25 per cent want to become more involved.

The most common priorities for the next 12 months are spiritual growth and "building belonging" to a congregation. "There's a desire to become more involved and the figures also showed 86 per cent of people would support new initiatives for ministry and mission," Bishop Lin says. "That is a great platform to build on for the future."

For God and country



Just over here: Albert Lamoureux points to Mauritius on a map.

ALBERT LAMOUREUX LIVES IN THE SUTHERLAND SHIRE, STUDIES AT YOUTHWORKS COLLEGE AND ministers to youth at Jannali. He could be your typical youth worker except that, in six months' time, he will be working at St Paul's, Plaine Verte in his home country of Mauritius.

So what brought Mr Lamoureux all the way to Sydney? He'd already been a youth worker for 10 years, and over time worked his way through the Moore College PTC. But this helped him see he needed an even deeper understanding of the Bible. "I gained a passion for digging into the word of God and wanted to know more," he says. "I felt I really needed to be more equipped if I wanted to lead the youth group efficiently."

Born into a nominal Catholic family, Mr Lamoureux came to know Jesus in Year 10 when a Christian friend invited him to church. There he felt the love of God in the fellowship of God's people and, through the preaching of the Bible over time, he gave his life to Jesus.

This was a joy but a costly decision. His family fiercely opposed his new faith and, on his 18th birthday, he had to move out of home.

He began to serve at his local church – first in music ministry, then as a youth leader. His minister the Rev Eric Ma Fat, who had undertaken post-graduate study at Moore College, could see Mr Lamoureux would also benefit from further study. He made contact with the rector of Croydon, the Rev Alan Lukabyo – a fellow French speaker and regular teacher in Mauritius – who spoke to Anglican Aid about raising funds for a scholarship.

The director of Anglican Aid, the Rev David Mansfield, says "Albert was a star student, and Al [Lukabyo] saw his potential and the value of investing in him in the extra training at Youthworks College. I'm very confident that on his return he will make a significant contribution to [his parish] in a number of areas."

Despite Mr Lamoureux's years of experience as a youth worker, his college studies presented him with ongoing challenges about how to do youth ministry.

"I had to question myself to see whether I really wanted to work as a youth minister or not," he says. "But after more than a year of study I can say this is what I really want to do. My knowledge of the Bible has expanded a lot and I know can tackle some tough questions about faith using my Bible as the supreme authority. When you read the Bible having in mind God's big picture, things that you've read before suddenly make sense."

Mr Lamoureux hopes what he's learned in Sydney will help him serve and strengthen the Mauritian church when he returns in December. The country's evangelical church makes up only 7.78 per cent of the population of 1.2 million people. Close to half of the country is Hindu, and Islam is on the increase.

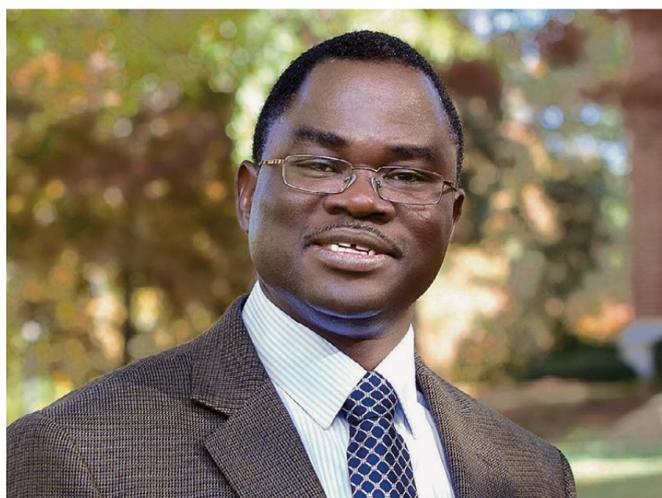
"I want to go back and share, equip and empower my youth leaders for ministry... not only helping my local church but helping other churches without a youth ministry to start one," he says.

"I want to sow the word of God in the hearts of people that I will come across. I know it will be a challenge to change certain things but it's not my work... Christ will work in the hearts of those around me and transform them through his word."

NB. Mr Lamoureux's family has since reconciled with him. He is deeply appreciative of God's grace and their love.

For information about Anglican Aid's Overseas Ministry Fund see www.anglicanaid.org.au.

Mission to Muslims



Christian-Muslim engagement: Dr John Azumah.

AN INTERNATIONAL EXPERT ON GLOBAL Islam is visiting Australia to speak to churches and colleges about mission to Muslims.

Dr John Azumah, Professor of World Christianity and Islam at Columbia Theological Seminary in the US, is one of the world's foremost Christian experts on Islam. A convert from Islam himself, he says Christians should be bold in love when engaging with Muslims globally and in their local context.

"Evangelicals have contributed to the invisibility of Christian presence and witness in Muslim lands," he writes religious journal *First Things*. "Instead of openly challenging the criminalisation of Christian missions and evangelism in Muslim contexts, we have engaged in undercover and

underhand missions... we must remain watchful and prayerful, lest radical Islam radicalise us into redefining our witness and values out of fear and hatred."

Dr Azumah will give public lectures at Moore College on June 17 (see page 28) and work with college students, ministers and others across the Diocese to help formulate a more complete mission to Muslims and Muslim-background people. He will also engage in similar work at the Brisbane School of Theology.

"What we're doing with John is a part of a bigger program we're looking to run throughout the Diocese," says the head of Moore College's Centre for Global Mission, the Rev Simon Gillham. "There are various ministries and independent workers across the Diocese already working hard in this area. So this conference really plugs in to existing training and ministry initiatives."

In addition to the conference Dr Azumah will also give something of a primer on global Islam, the different ideas and "faces" that fall under its umbrella and the state of gospel work among Muslims around the world. This is particularly aimed at people who might have no background in ministry to Muslims but want to learn more about what they believe and how to connect.

"One of the reasons for having John come out is his global perspective," Mr Gillham says. "It's no longer the case that Christians in Sydney are going overseas to meet Muslims. Instead, we're meeting them here. I also think a lot of people are fearful... we want to encourage Christians to love Muslims, to not be hostile but to be aware and mindful. John's articulation of Islam can help us have a realistic and clear perspective as we love and share the gospel."

Fun not funerals

Colly carnival: kids get ready for another team activity.

IT'S A SAD FACT OF LIFE IN COLLARENEBRI THAT MANY CHILDREN HAVE MORE EXPERIENCE OF church at funerals than anything else. But a mission partnership between the Anglican churches of Walgett-Collarenebri in the Armidale Diocese and the Sydney parish of North Epping is changing that.

Collarenebri is a small town on the Barwon River 90 minutes south of the Queensland border. The district's population is about 530, half of whom are Indigenous. Previously a prosperous cotton growing centre, it has been in decline and, because of drought, has just had its first wheat harvest in four years.

The church in Collarenebri has declined with the town: less than 20 years ago it was a healthy church with many families but now has just six elderly people.

"I do Special Religious Education in Collarenebri Central School every Tuesday," says Walgett Anglican's vicar, the Rev Tory Cayzer, "but our resources mean we are not able to do more outside of school for the kids. We hope to reach the younger generation but can only do it with outside help."

Enter North Epping, which sent a team in 2016 – and again this year – to help out. "Roger Green [the former senior minister] wanted to take a mission team somewhere within a day's drive of Sydney," Mr Cayzer says. "We were only too happy to have them come to Colly! We aren't able to billet a team for the week, but the team generously pay for their own accommodation and meals in the local pub."

There were 28 members on the 2017 team, some of whom were making their second visit. "Continuity from last year meant the kids were more comfortable... we had good engagement with older local boys – something we find difficult as a small church of elderly people!"

The event, known as Carnival Collarenebri, included a mock magic show with tricks that always failed. "Each day Trixie [Chelsea Sillar] would unsuccessfully try a new magic trick [and] Tim Sillar would show from the Bible how Jesus did real miracles because he is God," Mr Cayzer says. "We had 40 kids each day. It was aimed at primary school ages but we let high schoolers come too as we have no other Christian ministry for them in Colly."

One of the highlights was an Easter Sunday church service.

"Most came and it was great to have them there for a positive experience – with a low life expectancy in Colly I am always doing funerals. These kids are very used to going to our church for funerals of their siblings and parents, and so it was terrific for them to have a fun, positive connection with the church."

As well as the mission, four men from North Epping did maintenance at St John's, Collarenebri, including replacing broken windows, installing a projector screen and garden work. They also fixed a leaking roof and broken gutter at St Peter's, Walgett.

There was also a "first" – a church service at Walli, the local Aboriginal reserve, known as The Camp. "We invited the locals along for a sausage, to sing some of the good old gospel songs and celebrate the good news of our Saviour," Mr Cayzer says. "As one team member said, 'It's great to see church can be done in such a simple way with a few chairs in the dark under the stars'."

"Again, it was terrific to have a team of all ages so we could reach the Walli people from young to old. Two Walli couples stayed on to talk for some time after the service. It was well received by the locals, and something we hope to build on in future years."

The mission partnership has been made possible by an Indigenous Ministry grant from the Diocese of Armidale.

Medical ethics

Barry Wilkins' article on euthanasia ("Medically Assisted Dying", SC, April) was helpful in pointing out the many complex issues on this subject.

He is right when he says this issue will soon return to the NSW parliament. He suggests "we work extremely hard to discuss" these matters. Most of us have experienced two types of answer in our conversations about this issue. The first is, "But I read in the newspaper..." and the second is an example of a friend, relative or neighbour who suffered terribly and so on. And so the door is closed.

I have found a very helpful booklet entitled *Talking about Ethics* by Justin Denholm (published by Acorn Press) where he encourages us to move beyond broad theoretical concerns and biblical quotes and instead use practical questions which are less comfortable than theoretical ones but start us all thinking.

He first asks us to think more ethically and then actively seek ways to stimulate ethical thought and discussion among our friends and communities. He challenges us to be informed about our own world view and the world views of others. He provides useful questions to promote conversations.

For example: "What would I do if I were in that situation?"; "Is there an alternative course of action?"; "If you wanted to discuss this with your children how would you start the conversation?"; "How did you come to this position?"; "Have you always believed this?"

If we are talking with Christians he suggests asking, "How do you think being a Christian makes a difference to your thoughts about this?"

The book is subtitled "Negotiating the Maze" and our experiences tell us that this is indeed a maze. It is an excellent starter for all of us to learn to engage in our society on a topic that will become more personal and more critical sooner rather than later. We dare not leave this to be decided by terrible stories.

Jan Adeney
Kincumber

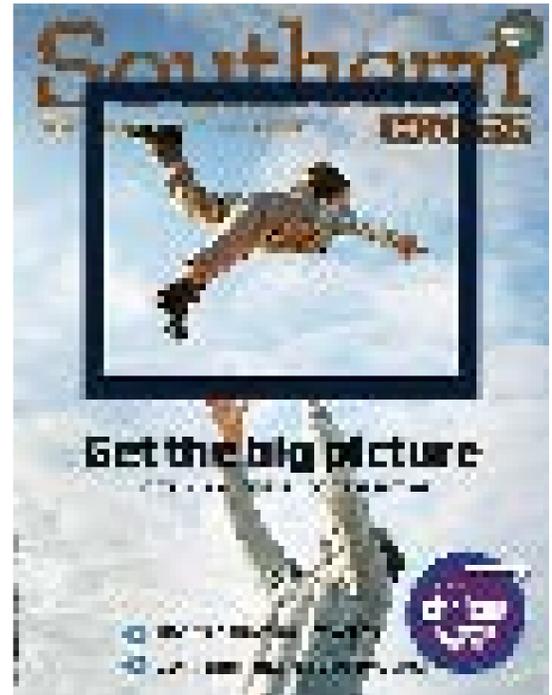
Religious freedom

Any suggestion that the arrest and fining of the Bristol street preachers is a blow to religious freedom in England is way off the mark (SC, April).

Online reports disclosed that the men were arrested in a public street outside a shopping centre, after preaching for an hour with a microphone. They denigrated Mohammed, Buddha and homosexuals and referred to the crowd as "animals". The court determined that the men had crossed the line on freedom of speech and had commented on other religions using disparaging and offensive language.

As Christians we should consider how we would react if preachers from another religion opened up with loudspeakers at the local supermarket and denigrated Christianity for an hour. There needs to be a balance between individual freedoms and the conditions necessary for living together peacefully in society. The street preachers overstepped the mark in an ill-directed attempt to hector people into heaven.

James Moore
Kingsgrove





PARTNERSHIPS AND PRISONS

After close to 14 years as rector of All Saints', North Epping, in early April the **Rev Roger Green** began working for Anglicare as its justice chaplaincy and partnership manager.

"Leaving North Epping was really hard," he says. "We loved the church family there, and there was a great team with great ministries, so there's a real sense of loss. We have seen a few people since then but when you leave you feel you really do need to *leave* and pastorally allow space for the church and whoever else is coming in."

Mr Green says that over recent years he had felt a growing conviction under God of the need to reach out to those who were marginalised or in difficulty, and this has resulted in All Saints' developing a partnership with Compassion, and with regional NSW churches in Walgett and Collarenebri (see story, page 12).

"This gave me a greater sense that God might one day move me in a different direction without really knowing what that might be," he says. "We'd also been in the parish for 13 years and it was time for us to rethink."

He and his wife Lisa felt that whatever God had in store for them next, "it would be something quite different – so, not to another parish". Enter Anglicare.

"My role with the prison, juvenile justice and police chaplains is as overseer and encourager," Mr Green says. "They work in isolated, often difficult circumstances and quite often what they're doing can go under the radar. No one really goes to Bible college thinking 'I'm going to be a prison chaplain', so it's also important to raise the profile and get people thinking about it."

"The other side of the role is to lead the partnership development team. The aim of this team is to build and foster partnerships between Anglicare and the local church. There is a vast array of Anglicare services and resources that can assist and enhance the mission of local churches as they seek to engage with their community. The partnership development officers also play a key role in bringing ideas and information back from the local churches to Anglicare, and this helps inform decisions we make."

"There are some great ministry initiatives making a real difference to the lives of individuals and communities and with the merger of Anglicare and ARV there is scope to do so much more."

While Mr Green says he and Lisa are still grieving at some of the changes from parish life, they're also looking forward to becoming an active part of whichever church they settle in.

He also has "a sense that God's placed me here [with Anglicare] for a purpose and I'm excited about that. Already I have met many people within the organisation who are passionate about serving people in need and sharing the love of Jesus, and they are doing this in all sorts of ways and in all kinds of places. I think there are some real challenges ahead, but there are also some great opportunities."

Southern CROSS JUN 17 2017

FULL TIME FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The **Rev Michael Kellahan** has stepped down as rector of Roseville East after 10 years to focus fully on his role as executive director of Freedom For Faith. Linked to this is an appointment as a Moore College Reader on religious freedom and as the Archbishop's advisor on religious freedom.

"We've kind of jumped [from the parish] without a parachute," he says, "because we need to raise funds in order for there to be a position to go to. But this is the time to do it. Five years ago if anyone had wanted to raise the need for a religious freedom think tank people would have scratched heads and asked why. 'I think at the moment everyone gets it and says, 'We need something like this in play', because they see the challenges to religious freedom on a whole stack of fronts."

"If we waited another five years people would have wondered why we didn't do something sooner. Now is really the moment to act."

The links with the college and the Archbishop are honorary, but Mr Kellahan says having the capacity to undertake research as well as tap into what's happening at Moore College is very important.

"I'd hate to think that religious freedom was such a strange, specialist area that it didn't connect with broader thinking about gospel life and culture in 21st century Australia," he says.

"In having this connection with Moore College we're part of the conversation with that broader theological leadership... and we can add the experiences we're having in religious freedom into their preparation of the next generation of leaders."

College principal the Rev Dr Mark Thompson says he is delighted that Moore can partner with Mr Kellahan and Freedom For Faith.

"The issues which [Freedom For Faith is] tackling impact each of us, Christian and non-Christian alike, and need to be addressed with a clear and deep grasp of the Scriptures – and especially the gospel of Christ crucified and risen," Dr Thompson says.

"Michael has shown he is able to do just that. We trust our fellowship with Michael will encourage him in that work and I look forward to what the Lord will do through him."

As Mr Kellahan and his wife Deborah are "absolutely committed to the need for this role", and know it is needed now, they have made the move without the \$120,000 funding needed by June 30 to fully support it, trusting in God's sovereignty.

"Religious freedom is a matter of critical importance in a number of contemporary public policy debates," he says. "Freedom For Faith is there to help churches and Christian ministries consider how to be faithful in light of these new challenges."

"We're very encouraged by the level of support we're getting from organisations and individuals wondering how they can get on board. People want to know what can actually be done to change the outcomes of some of these debates."

"Operating in a political environment where there are constant pressures for pragmatism and compromise, it is vital that we act in principled ways driven by the gospel. We are therefore keen to see the development of a more robust Australian political theology around religious freedom."

For more information on the work Mr Kellahan and Freedom For Faith are doing, or to help support the ongoing ministry of the organisation, go to www.freedomforfaith.org.au



COMMUNITY CHURCHMAN

On April 4 the **Rev Paul Perini** retired after 7½ years in the parish of Glebe.

He and his wife Michelle had chosen to come to Glebe after 10 years in Melbourne at St Hilary's, Kew, seeking a parish that would be "very hands on and had similar theology and church values as St Hil's. And Glebe had those – although it's very different to what we'd experienced at St Hil's, from leafy suburb to inner Sydney!"

And Mr Perini really did want "hands on" when he came back to Sydney.

"St Hil's was a large, multi-staffed, multi-congregation church – St John's, Glebe is a small, single congregation church with a lot of community work," he explains. "I was the only ordained member of staff, so I was doing the weddings and funerals and baptisms and regular of regular... and you're also the one who has to make sure the bins are out! It's just the regular stuff of a small parish ministry, which we wanted to do again."

He describes St John's as "really present in the suburb of Glebe", with the congregation "fully supportive and engaged" in a community that is very diverse in terms of people's origins as well as their income, social status and mental health.

"St John's as a church makes a big difference to Glebe – it has great partnerships with other services in the suburb," Mr Perini says. "The purpose is growing a community of disciples of Jesus, extending his hope to Glebe and beyond... having a bigger concern for the wider community and the wider world."

During their time in the parish Michelle Perini established two mid-week playgroups to minister to local mums and children. The church also holds a monthly meal, with prayer and preaching, on a Sunday night, which "really draws people from the local community". But on other weeks there is only one Sunday service – and that, Mr Perini says, will be one of the big issues a new rector will face.

"The great challenge is how do you maintain the great strength of that congregational worship and at the same time grow your congregation? We could say we'll start a 5 o'clock afternoon service but that will take a real core group of adults out of the 9.30am community, and they enjoy being part of a congregation that's all ages and all economic dispositions. It's a balance... how do you preserve what is your great strength and at the same time plant more congregations?"

His prayer is that the new rector will be "someone who owns the DNA of the parish... who will love Glebe and be able to build on those community relationships to lead people to Christ."

"It's not so much getting people outside Glebe to come in but presenting it to Glebe, because it's a local church. It's not a regional church."

VILLAGE VICAR



After three years as senior assistant minister in Gladesville – the final six months as acting rector – the **Rev Scott Newling** became rector of St Peter's, Watsons Bay in January.

"People here are keen to connect with the community, see the church move forward and grow," he says.

"The Watsons Bay area definitely has a village feel. I don't think there are *any* traffic lights in the parish [which takes in part of Vaucluse] and for all its young families there is still a lot of 'old family' vibe to it – which goes with the village feel. Back in the '60s this was very much a fishing village in its demographic: working class, with tugboats on the demour. It's worth in the past 20 years or so it's reflected the affluence of Vaucluse."

Mr Newling says when he was approached to gauge his interest in coming to the parish the key things the nominators were interested in was "someone who could provide pastoral and teaching stability for the congregation – just a solid foundation from which to build – and then work on new connections with the community, particularly with schools and young families, and grow ministry to those groups."

In summarising the wider community he observes that while it is physically very beautiful, with its harbour setting and air of affluence, there is a thread of despair never far from the surface – particularly notable with The Gap as close by.

"In the midst of the beauty and success, there's this stark contrast showing up the emptiness of that – people need the gospel," he says. "The other thing would be the area is 25 per cent Jewish. So there's obvious outreach potential there in a very distinct way."

In the short time he has worked in the parish Mr Newling has been thrilled to find that St Peter's is a "praying church".

"They devote themselves to prayer in a way that we've not seen before in churches that we've been in," he says. "They're hungry to learn; they're eager to connect with the community. And that's why we're here."

IN BRIEF

Adam Arnold Bennett Lamb has voluntarily relinquished his holy orders.

Good preaching - a response

JOHN SCOTT

ALTHOUGH HE MAY NOT HAVE RECOGNISED IT AS SUCH, PETER JENSEN'S REPORT ON LISTENING to 40 sermons from Sydney senior ministers (SC, February) was extremely interesting as he was reporting informally on a case study.

Case study is a well-known methodology in educational research. Cases under investigation need to be clearly defined. I'm examining the article through the lens of educational research, making some further response.

THE CASE STUDY

The Archbishop argues cogently for the significance of preaching: "the reading and exposition of the word of God in the midst of the people of God is indispensable to true worship".

His interest in examining preaching is situated in the broad theoretical framework of his biblical understanding – "the Lord rules his church by his word", for example.

I did not find it easy to see precisely what question he was examining. Perhaps "What are the characteristics of a Sunday sermon in the Sydney Diocese?"

However, the "case" in this study was well defined: 40 publicly available Sunday sermons by senior ministers in Sydney, chosen from across the Diocese.

The sampling has limitations, as Dr Jensen recognises: only the Sydney Diocese; and only senior ministers, for example. Nevertheless, the sampling might be understood to be a purposeful, criterion-based, multiple-case sampling. Studying publicly available sermons also avoids the ethical issue of needing informed consent.

Dr Jensen also points out that there are inherent limitations in judging a sermon purely by listening to a recording, without attention to the context of its delivery and, in particular, the context of the hearers.

I found the article to be less clear in its data analysis. For example, although he explained that he "also checked things such as Bible passages used, length, fairness to the text and exhortation", there was no indication whether this list was complete.

The main conclusion of this informal case study was that sermons were generally expository, underpinned by a deliberate desire to teach the Bible, by senior ministers passionate in their belief.

ANALYSING THE CASE STUDY FINDINGS: THE "SO WHAT" QUESTION

Researchers are sensitive to what some term the "so what" question: is there a rationale which establishes the research's worth, and the time and expense involved?

I argue that the "so what" question has been clearly addressed in the Archbishop's opening paragraphs. As Dr Jensen explains, a concern that preaching should meet high standards (however they might be defined) is consistent with the fundamental importance of reading the Bible and hearing the Bible expounded.

Dr Jensen did not seem to explicitly address his criteria for a "successful" sermon. However, I found some implicit criteria:

- focused on biblical exposition;
- a "spiritual and pastoral" opportunity;
- responsive to the maturity of the particular congregation;
- balanced over time between biblical exposition, doctrine and ethics.

THE NEXT STEP

The Archbishop commends the sermons he examined, urging clergy to "Press on! Do better!", and commends Moore College.

I argue that we might move the discussion forward by asking, "What are the avenues for constructive engagement of the laity regarding Sunday sermons in the Diocese"?

This is consistent with the Archbishop's view that preaching does not take place for the benefit of the preacher, but the congregation. However, I cannot remember any occasion on which there has been any attempt to assess a sermon's effectiveness by asking the views and experience of the laity that are its focus.

My argument is that consciously involving the laity in assessing the Sunday sermon is one strategy that may help to meet Peter Jensen's call to "Press on! Do better!"

The views and experience of the congregation might be sought, e.g., through personal interviews with congregational members, focus groups of congregational members, or surveys. Any of these suggested strategies may be seen to recognise and value the insights of those involved.

CONCLUSION

Dr Jensen's case study has raised a number of interesting questions and issues. I have chosen one such question, viz., "What do congregational members think about the quality of the preaching?"

There are other issues that might be usefully examined, such as: "How do ministers decide whether their preaching is resulting in a growing maturity in their congregations?"

That is to say, Dr Jensen's case study, though informal, has resulted in some interesting analysis and has raised further questions that might be pursued – consistent with the nature of any educational research.

Dr John Scott is an Honorary Associate in the University of Sydney, Sydney School of Education and Social Work, having been principal of two Anglican schools in the Diocese of Sydney. He is also a Lay Canon of St Andrew's Cathedral.



God's image bearers

DR GLENN DAVIES

THE BIBLE'S DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S CREATION AND KNOWLEDGE OF US IS STRIKING. "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb," declares King David in Psalm 139:13. Each of us bears the image of God from conception, the moment life begins in the womb.

Our society has long held this view and valued human life throughout the period of gestation. It is only since the 1960s that it has been under serious challenge. What Christians have known to be self-evidently true is now a battleground of "rights".

Even before the Roe v Wade decision on abortion by the United States Supreme Court in 1973, there was agitation here in Australia. Two years earlier in NSW, Justice Aaron Levine of the District Court, taking his cue from a Victorian ruling, opened a legal avenue to abortion (R v Wald). The judge found an abortion was not unlawful if a doctor honestly believed on reasonable grounds that "the operation was necessary to preserve the woman involved from serious danger to her life or physical or mental health which the continuance of pregnancy would entail".

These provisions have allowed hundreds of thousands of abortions in NSW. But abortion remains in the Criminal Code here, as it does in Queensland. Although there are occasions where abortion is necessary to save a woman's life, they are rare. These include ectopic pregnancy and early eclampsia (high blood pressure) when the child is not able to live outside the womb and the mother's life is in danger. Anglicans support legal abortion in such cases, where it is not possible to save the life of the mother and the child.

So, when there was a move in the Legislative Council of State Parliament last month to decriminalise abortion, I felt it necessary to write to all members of the Upper House to speak up for those who have no voice. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Anthony Fisher, joined me in protest against a bill promoted by Dr Mehreen Faruqi, a member of the Greens Party. We both felt the bill contained many disturbing provisions with significant implications for women, children and medical practitioners.

Our letter informed Upper House MPs that the passing of this bill would result in the loss of all current (albeit slender) protections for the unborn, with a concomitant devaluing of human life, not to mention a fundamental breach of the rights of the unborn child.

But this was not all. The requirement that doctors with a conscientious objection be involved with abortion, whether directly or complicitly by arranging a referral, was a direct attack on the rights of conscience for doctors. Furthermore, it would be a violation of the privacy of other doctors who would need to advertise their willingness to be involved with abortions for an effective referral to take place.

Moreover, the bill recommended 150-metre "safe access zones" around health services that provide family planning, reproductive health or abortion services. Even silent prayer in those zones would have been outlawed.

While Archbishop Fisher and I made it clear we are opposed to harassment and violence, this section of the bill ignored the association between coerced abortion and domestic violence, especially in light of recent allegations in the news media of such coercion by a prominent rugby league player.

A major demonstration of public opposition, in the form of a petition of more than 50,000 signatures and the joint submission on behalf of our churches, was clear evidence of community concern which helped the Legislative Council to reject the bill. We must be thankful to God for this outcome and for those MPs who voted against the draft legislation, especially when both major parties allowed a conscience vote on it.

Do pray for our politicians. Pray for the doctors and nurses at risk of violating their conscience in a system that already allows much latitude in determining what constitutes "serious danger to the life or physical or mental health" of a mother.

Pray also for the women who are in such desperate circumstances in their lives that they feel compelled to consider the termination of lives yet unborn.

Many women regret their decision years after the event. We should neither judge them nor ostracise them. On the contrary, we should show them the love of Christ, in whom there is forgiveness and hope. Yet at the same time we should value all human life, from the womb to the grave, and seek to protect the principles that our politicians have wisely provided for the good of our society and for the honour of God's image bearers.

a PRAYER FOR MISSION 2020

Our heavenly Father, fill our lives with the fruit of your Spirit, so that we may walk in joyful obedience, share your love by word and deed, and see Christ honoured in every community as Lord and Saviour.

Amen

Sex, intimacy and ageing

We might not like talking about it, but intimacy – sexual and non-sexual – is a real issue for many of the older people in our churches and families. Let's not put it in the too-hard basket, writes **PATRICIA WEERAKOON**, with **BEN BOLAND**.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

The Bible teaches that sexuality is neither only about procreation (Song of Songs makes no mention of fertility), nor just for the young. The patriarchs of the Old Testament were sexual through to mature age. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90 when she gave birth to Isaac (Genesis 17:17). Jacob, we read, loved Joseph because he was born to him in his old age (Genesis 37:3). In the New Testament, John the Baptist was born to Zechariah and Elizabeth when they were old (Luke 1:7).

In none of these accounts is there any suggestion of a change in their sexual patterns. This is balanced by Ecclesiastes 12's description of the challenges of old age and its reference to decreased sexual desire.

But what does this mean for today? Genesis records that humanity is created in the image of God, as male and female, for deep relationship one with the other. The pinnacle of male-female relationship is marriage. For some marriages, intercourse is a major component of this connection until death. However, even when intercourse is no longer possible (or sometimes desirable), intimacy remains important. The biblical command of 1 Corinthians 7:5 – "Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time" – is not age limited!

Seniors rejoicing and glorifying God as they celebrate intimacy is clearly God's plan. Why God-glorifying intimacy rather than God-glorifying sexual intercourse? Because intercourse as a physical activity is only a part of the love, companionship, affection and enduring tenderness that form the glue of the one-flesh relationship of a Christian marriage at any age.

And what of older singles? Non-sexual friendship intimacy is important at all ages. The apostle Paul ends his epistles with greetings to his friends, and instructs his readers to "greet one another with a holy kiss" (Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, 1 Peter 5:14).

How can the church support octogenarians to enjoy God-glorifying intimacy?
In a culture where all touch seems sexualised and older adults, especially the frail aged, are institutionalised and lonely, never has there been a more urgent need to encourage loving companionship, both between older adults and in an intergenerational context – a closeness and real intimacy in friendship that has nothing at all to do with sex.

Younger members of the church are called to serve by caring and loving the old and marginalised as humbly as Christ loved us (John 13:34-35, 1 Peter 3:8, Galatians 5:13-14, 1 John 4:7-8).

Sexual activity in ageing
Women and men remain sexually active in their 70s and 80s. A British study found that 60 per cent of men and 37 per cent of women over 65 were sexually active, as were at least 25 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women aged 85+. The most common reason for not having sex was not low desire but lack of a partner.

Interestingly, another study shows that for many couples over 75, activities such as touching, hand holding, embracing, hugging and kissing take precedence over intercourse as satisfying acts of sexual intimacy. In addition, sexual activity contributes to physical and psychological wellbeing in ageing.

However, high divorce rates and partner changes at older ages in Australia – together with the take-up of online dating – have resulted in an increase of sexually transmitted infections and contributed to an increase in porn use in residential care. This generation equated safe sex with avoiding pregnancy and condom use with prostitution, so its members see no need for protection when having postmenopausal "fun" in a perceived safe environment. This, too, is something the church needs to be aware of and speak about.

COMMON MYTHS

Older people are asexual

If you are 60+, you know this is not true. Sexual satisfaction for older couples depends on the overall quality of the relationship rather than the quality of the intercourse. Biblical sexuality, like the rest of marriage, should be based on sacrificial love. Ask your spouse what they like, then share your thoughts. Your libido may have decreased, but it's still there. Fan the embers.

Older men take longer to feel turned on. Don't let this stop you. You have the time to enjoy the journey without focusing on the end point of intercourse. Use your senses. Enjoy it.

If you want penetrative sex, you will have to adapt. Use a lubricant. Experiment with different positions. Or else, just forget intercourse and enjoy the sensuality of full body sexual intimacy.

Sexual intercourse is the end point of all sexual intimacy

Any act of couple sensuality could be a legitimate end point for sexual intimacy. Many older couples have a great sex life without having sexual intercourse. Discuss your preferences. Explore touch, smell, taste – use your senses to enjoy each other.

Sex has to be spontaneous

Television shows portray sex as a sort of mutual, instant, spontaneous combustion of sexual energy. This is unrealistic. If perfect and spontaneous sexual performance is expected by older couples they will be disappointed and performance anxiety will decrease the pleasure they get from sex.

Older couples need to plan sex most times. Sometimes a disability (such as arthritis) or illness needs painkillers, or even some appliance like a stoma bag needs to be cleaned. Other times it is just finding a time when you are both relaxed and not tired.

I am too ill or disabled

There is no illness or disability that makes a person totally asexual. Intimacy needs very little "ability".

Arthritis: Joint pain due to arthritis can make movement uncomfortable. Joint replacement surgery and drugs may relieve this pain. Exercise, rest, warm baths and changing the position or even the timing of sexual activity can be helpful. To add to this, lovemaking is a great exercise to mobilise stiff joints.

Chronic pain: A constant pain can interfere with intimacy. Chronic pain does not have to be part of growing older and can be treated. But be aware some pain medicines can interfere with sexual function.

Chronic illness: Diabetes, heart disease, urinary problems and other issues may cause sexual dysfunctions but they do not mean an end to sexual intimacy.

Incontinence: Loss of bladder control or leaking of urine may occur with ageing. Passing urine before and immediately after sexual activity will help. Also, changing the position so as not to put pressure on the bladder is helpful.

Stroke and other forms of paralysis: A change in positions or the use of medical devices may help people with ongoing weakness or paralysis to have sexual intimacy. Some people with paralysis from the waist down are still able to experience orgasm and pleasure.

People with dementia or Alzheimer's struggle with sexual urges

Dementia and Alzheimer's cause cognitive decline with loss of memory, a lack of spatial awareness and disinhibition. In these people what is perceived as inappropriate behaviour is not a sign of hypersexualised behaviour.

For example, it is not uncommon for a person to be accused of masturbation, disrobing or urinating in public when they simply can't locate the toilet. A person with memory loss may confuse someone else for their partner or develop a new romantic attachment. Disinhibition – common among people living with frontal lobe or Lewy body dementia – may result in a person exposing themselves or touching a care worker.

These behaviours are distressing for spouses and family as well as care workers. Education and pastoral care is needed to clarify the behaviour as related to the pathology and not deliberately sinful.



A WORD TO MARRIED SAINTS

As both Scripture and science teach us, sex and intimacy do not stop with increasing age and frailty but they do become more challenging.

Relatively fit and healthy older people in their 60s and 70s face the challenges of biological decline: wrinkles, grey hair, arthritis pains, menopause and decreased libido, plus possibly medication for conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol and hypertension.

As time and frailty increase, additional challenges of decreased mobility, canes, hernia surgery and cataracts are added. Assisted care becomes a reality and a move to a nursing home comes with a potentially sterile, impersonal environment and, perhaps, incontinence and pads. Sometimes, if an older person is separated from their spouse due to different care needs, opportunities for intimacy are denied, ignored or stigmatised. Those with dementia face the double jeopardy of being frail and cognitively impaired.

These are not modern issues. Scripture records impotence (1 Kings 1-2, Ecclesiastes 12:5); vision impairment (1 Samuel 4, 1 Kings 14:4); digestive issues (2 Chronicles 21:15); grey hair (Proverbs 16:31, 20:29); weakness (Isaiah 46:4) and "old age ain't no Zechariah 8:4).

As Bette Davis so succinctly put it, "Old age ain't no place for sissies".

AGEING AND THE SEXUAL BODY

A Christian marriage glorifies God and exemplifies the bond between Christ and his church. Husband and wife enjoy each other, sacrificially serving each other in all things.

As couples age, enjoyment of one another and mutual service take place on a continuum of physical and emotional intimacy. Towards one end is companionship and fellowship and, at the other, playful intimacy and sexual activity. Relationships in older couples move across this continuum like a concert pianist playing a keyboard. The result can be a wonderful symphony. The bonds that are built will be joyful to them and an awesome example to young people in the church.

But as they age, sexual function changes. In men, erections take longer and are smaller and softer. Ejaculations take longer and are less forceful. The frequency of erectile dysfunction (ED, or impotence) increases.

In a large cross-national study about 30 per cent of men over 40 reported erectile dysfunction and 6 per cent orgasmic impairment, both of which were associated with increasing age and conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity and heart disease. Interestingly, only 38 per cent of men with ED were concerned about it.

About 50 per cent of men over the age of 70 reported some degree of ED and, of these, 60 per cent said they had enjoyed sexual activity other than intercourse.

It's also common for disease and medication use to increase with age. Drugs for anxiety, depression and other antipsychotics can affect sexual desire and arousal in men and in women. Some drugs used in heart disease and hypertension also have effects on sexual function. Surgical procedures such as radical prostatectomy affect sexual function. A decrease or loss of erection at any age can also be a barometer for the onset of illness. Any change in sexual function should be discussed with a doctor. It could be lifesaving. It will definitely improve sex life.

For many men the loss of erectile function at a time when they may lose other traditional marks of masculinity – such as physical strength, paid employment and perhaps their driver's licence – can be psychologically devastating. Some turn to pornography to increase stimulation for erection and as a boost to masculinity. The church needs to recognise and support men at this stage of their lives.

Older women face two major sexual issues: menopause and stigma. Menopause is associated with hormonal, physical, psychological and social adjustments. A decrease of oestrogen causes vaginal dryness and atrophy leading to discomfort during intercourse, low desire and impaired arousal.

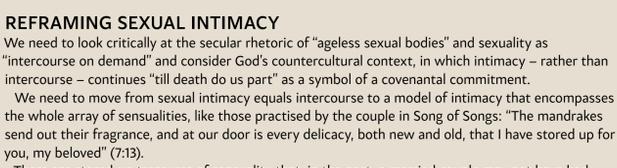
Interestingly, some postmenopausal women, released from the pressure of pregnancy, feel more sexual desire. Others maintain a high desire through life. Yet, sadly, in our culture the sexuality of older women is often stigmatised. Pastorally, it is critical that the church does not perpetuate this.

When preaching and teaching about sexual temptation we need to ensure that we are not flippant about sexual desire in women, and do not promote the myth that all men are more sexually tempted than all women.

The longing for sexual intimacy is normal right through to the end of life. For some it may be a haunting thought of "Wouldn't it be nice if", while for others it may be an emptiness that haunts every waking moment.

The aged must never feel guilty or ashamed when they desire intimacy and sex. It is healthy and normal for children and grandchildren to see grandparents holding hands and kissing – whatever age they are.

What does all this mean for our married seniors? They can respond to the slowing down in one of two ways: spend time and money on medication and surgery to maintain penetrative sex, or reframe thinking to accept a new norm of sexuality.



STORIES FROM THE TRENCHES

These are stories from Patricia Weerakoon's 37 years as a sexologist in three countries.

A woman whose husband has dementia

When she cared for him at home the only intimacy they had was at night when they both slept in the nude. Once he was in the nursing home, she and workers occasionally allowed her to climb into bed with him. They would draw the curtains around them to give them privacy. This was fully clothed. She missed the intimacy of their skins touching.

A widow

What she missed most was what she hadn't even noticed when he was alive. Being together. The sharing of a look across a room, where they both knew what the other was thinking. The good and not-so-good times they had gone through together. That occasional pat on the head, or a peck on the cheek in the morning.

A frail older man

He missed what he called "caring touch" – for someone to touch him because they loved him. He tells how the only time "people touched" him was to bathe him, clean him or change his clothes. Sometimes they would talk to him while they did it. Often they did their job in silence. He felt like a thing. In his words, "a piece of flesh".

Spouse of an older man

They had an active sex life until he had major surgery. After that, he was impotent. She didn't mind. She hadn't done much of the closeness, cuddling and kissing – non-intercourse activities that they hadn't done much of before he lost his ability to have an erection. He wanted to have surgery to get his erections back. She couldn't understand why it bothered him so much. She would have rather gone on as they were. But he said he needed to do it to feel like a man again.

An older man whose wife had a debilitating stroke

After the stroke, she could hardly move. She was in a wheelchair and he was her carer. However, when in bed, she enjoyed being stroked and held. In a wheel chair and he was her carer. He loved to touch her as she was able. They also enjoyed bath time together, when they would both be undressed and in the shower.

MAINTAINING SEX – OR NOT

There is a range of medical and surgical modalities available for male sexual dysfunctions. They range from drugs for ED through to vacuum pumps, injections into the penis and prostheses. There is much less for women, although there is a "desire pill" now available.

There is nothing inherently sinful in turning to medication to improve sex life that has been lost through ageing, illness or surgery. However, couples should consider two principles, perhaps with the help of a minister.

First, whose decision is it? In a marriage relationship your body is not your own. In 1 Corinthians 7:4 Paul says, "The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife." This verse is preceded by the point that husbands and wives should each fulfil their "marital duty" to the other (7:3).

Does this fulfilment of marital duties and the sexual satisfaction that follows suggest a need for penetrative sexual intercourse? The research indicates not. Older couples report sexual pleasure from other activities. Touching, cuddling and being intimate and close without having intercourse take on a deeper significance. Activities such as gardening and "playing footsy under the table" take on an aura of sensuality.

Second, why are you doing it? What is your motivation? In 1 Corinthians 6:12 Paul says, "I have the right to do anything", you say – but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything – but I will not be mastered by anything."

The question, then, should not be, "Am I permitted to do this as a Christian?" but rather, "Am I (or we as a couple) a slave to this act? Is our sexual activity becoming our master instead of a blessing? Is this activity building us up as a couple to serve God better?"

Another thought might be, "What example does this use of money set for our children and grandchildren?" Maybe even, "Could the money we are using for this procedure/medication be used instead for building up God's kingdom?" Whatever path is taken, it is important that any decision is a joint decision.

REFRAMING SEXUAL INTIMACY

We need to look critically at the secular rhetoric of "ageless sexual bodies" and sexuality as "intercourse on demand" and consider God's countercultural context, in which intimacy – rather than intercourse – continues "till death do us part" as a symbol of a covenantal commitment.

We need to move from sexual intimacy equals intercourse to a model of intimacy that encompasses the whole array of sensualities, like those practised by the couple in Song of Songs: "The mandrakes send out their fragrance, and at our door is every delicacy, both new and old, that I have stored up for you, my beloved" (7:13).

There are stored-up treasures of sensuality that, in the past, a married couple may not have had time to savour. Now is the time to explore every delicacy. To relive loving things the couple did early in their life together. To be adventurous, toss out the myths on sex and ageing and bring back the loving feeling.

All change requires acceptance and adaptation. Sexual practices change as a couple progresses through marriage. Couples need to explore and accept a new norm of sexual intimacy.

A WORD TO SINGLES

It's very important to include single men and women in such a discussion. Singleness is very difficult in a society that treats sexual expression as a need and celibacy as unhealthy. Many older Christians are single – having never married or having lost their spouse to death or divorce. Others are celibate due to having a frail or disabled spouse.

Christian singles can feel excluded by the church. This is particularly true of the old and frail. It is critical to encourage people of all ages that Scripture shows marriage and celibacy are both good.

There is also the possibility of establishing a new relationship in older years. If a Christian single is attracted to a person in their church, retirement village or nursing home, there are questions they should ask. Are they searching for friendship or sexual intimacy? Do they like spending time with the person, or are they aroused sexually by the relationship?

Importantly, is the person they are attracted to as cognitively aware of what is happening as they are? In other words, are they certain the other person does not have dementia? And where do they want the relationship to lead? If it is companionship they are looking for, they should keep the intimacy light and avoid pursuing sexual intimacy.

This might sound like the advice given to a teenager when dating but the same principles hold whatever age a couple may be.

Of course, if their spouse is alive any sexually intimate relationship with another person is infidelity. If the person is single and would like to continue the relationship to marriage, they should discuss it with another wise friend or their minister. Then go for it.

SENIORS, INTIMACY AND THE CHURCH

We have seen that the need for relationship and intimacy does not disappear and that many marriages enjoy sexuality until the couple is parted by death.

Older people, especially the frail aged, are often lonely. Never has there been a more urgent need to encourage loving relationships in married partners and within the church family.

So here is a question: in the context of church family, what does honouring your parents mean in terms of supporting older people's needs for intimacy and sexuality?

There are four ways the church can facilitate this. Recognising that older people are sexual is a critical first step. Second, there is a need for research on the theology of sexuality and intimacy for frail older people.

Third, family members have a responsibility to be understanding and compassionate if a person they care for seeks sexual intimacy. Christians facing this challenge need to ask: Is my loved one cognitively able to make the decision? Are they in any way abusive? Would this be an act of infidelity? Should we advise marriage? Is the person expressing sexual desire or a desire for relationship? Is it the expression of the physical skin hunger every human feels for a caring touch rather than the clinical touch?

We may be uncomfortable grappling with these questions, and that raises a couple more. Is our discomfort the result of personal biases and misconceptions of sexual intimacy and the elderly? Or is it maybe a more selfish motive, such as the fear of losing an inheritance? You may choose to discuss these questions with your minister.

Finally, in a church community, we need to care for the need for intimacy and companionship of the aged in our church family. Younger members of the church are called to serve by caring and loving the old and marginalised as humbly as Christ loved us. As we learn from Paul (1 Timothy 5:1-2), "Don't rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat... older women as you would your mothers".

Practically this could mean visiting with older people. Hold their hand, sing some of their favourite songs, and yours, with them. Never assume older adults are disinterested in the activities of young people. Tell them about your life and ask for their prayers for you. Go a step further if you can and arrange for a massage, manicure or pedicure for your elderly relative.

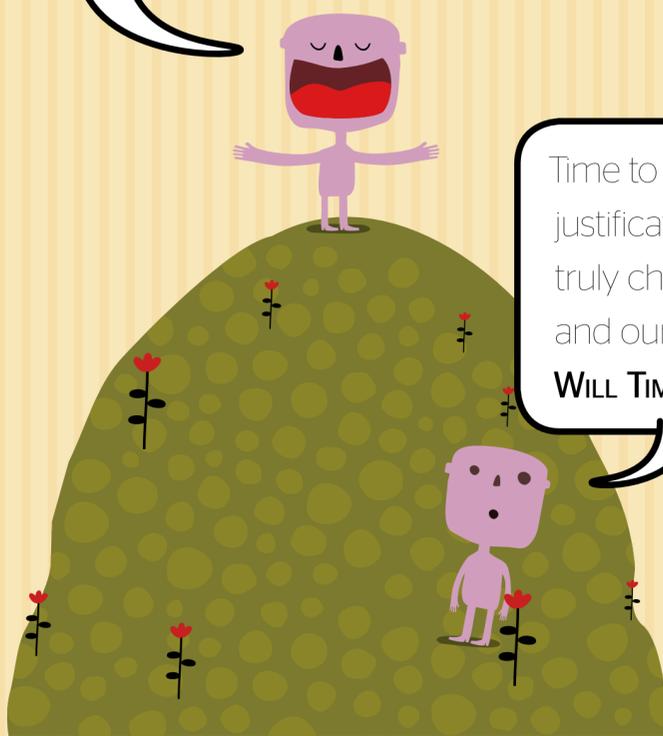
So, exhort if needed, but love with compassion always. Walk in the shoes of your elderly relative or friend. Let me end on a personal note. How does your church support the aged members of the church family in terms of their sexuality and intimacy? Do you encourage married couples to continue in the older-focused loving so their lives and decades of covenant commitment portray God's faithfulness to younger generations? Do you support your ageing singles with the love and intimate companionship of a family? Are you there to offer friendship and touch to our frail and lonely?

If we are not doing this, we fall short of Jesus' instructions to honour our parents, love God and our neighbour (Matthew 19:18-19).

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Where then is boasting?



Time to check whether justification by faith has truly changed our lives and our churches, writes **WILL TIMMINS**.

JUNW 2017

Southern CROSS

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AS MOST READERS WILL NO DOUBT BE AWARE, THIS YEAR HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY marked as the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. The significance of 1517 is that it was during that year, on October 31, that Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

Luther was protesting against what he perceived, in the light of Scripture, to be flagrant abuses practised by the church of his day. And it was also by the light of Scripture that Luther was led over the coming years to grasp, in quite a revolutionary way, that the righteousness of God of which Paul speaks in Romans 1:17 is, in his own words, "that through which the righteous live by a gift of God, namely by faith".

This realisation, that the righteousness that God required of sinful people was a righteousness that God himself provided as a free gift, set Luther free: "I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through gates that had been flung open".

As Luther realised, and as Lionel Windsor reminded us in the March issue of *Southern Cross*, justification stands at the very heart of how we relate to God and is, therefore, a doctrine of the utmost importance for the health and wellbeing of the church. If the knowledge of justification by faith is taken away, then – to quote another great figure of the European Reformation, John Calvin, "the glory of Christ is extinguished, religion abolished, the church destroyed and the hope of salvation utterly overthrown".

I want to reflect on just one way in which "the glory of Christ is extinguished" when the knowledge of justification is taken away from God's people. It's the issue of boasting. I focus on it because the apostle Paul chooses to focus on it. The key verse is Romans 3:27, where Paul rhetorically asks, "Where then is boasting?"

The immediate context of this statement, Romans 3:21-26, is probably the most important teaching in the Bible on justification. There we are told God has now manifested his righteousness apart from the law (v. 21). Paul has been arguing that the world of both Jew and Gentile, of everyone without distinction and without exception, is helplessly "under sin" (3:20). That is the conclusion he has reached.

So we would expect, would we not, that when God chose to reveal his righteousness in the world he would reveal it in terms of his "righteous judgment" (Romans 2:5), since that is what we deserve. Indeed, when God's righteousness is revealed it *does* come as a righteous judgment. It has to. How could God's righteousness come to a sinful world like ours and not come in terrifying judgment?

But when God's righteousness is revealed – and this is the miracle of it – it is revealed "apart from the law". In other words, it is not a righteousness that is tied to our law keeping, or wretched lack of it. It is "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ" (v. 22), the righteousness displayed at the cross of Christ (vv. 24-25). In the death of Jesus Christ, God was demonstrating his righteousness in a new way, in a way he had never done previously, when in his forbearance he had continually passed over former sins (v. 25-26).

The implication, of course, is that now, in the death of Jesus, God is showing forbearance no longer. Now sin is receiving its just judgment; now the full weight of God's righteous anger against sin is being poured out. But – amazing grace! – it is not poured out on the sinful men and women like you and me who deserve this condemnation. No, God takes it upon himself in the person of his crucified Son, the innocent one who, as Paul strikingly says elsewhere, "was made sin" for us (2 Cor 5:21).

By revealing his righteousness in this new way, at one and the same time God demonstrates that he is righteous (in his judgment of sin), and declares that we are righteous through our faith in Jesus (who was made sin for us). This is what Paul underlines in the very condensed language of Romans 3:26. The same act of righteous judgment that vindicates God also acquits us of every liability to the judgment we deserve. And so this righteousness, this justification, comes to us through faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 22, 25, 26), since only in Christ, and not through our pitiful (lack of) obedience to the law, has righteousness been achieved for us.

The Apostle Paul grasped this. Luther grasped this. Calvin grasped it. What are the implications if we grasp it?

Well, the very first thing Paul mentions, which we so often overlook, is that our boasting goes the way of the cross. "Where then is boasting? It is excluded" (Rom 3:27). Crucifixion was the worst form of exclusion possible; it was a way of casting someone onto the rubbish dump, treating them as refuse not fit to belong to the human race. That, Paul says, is what has now happened to our boasting. It has been cast out; excluded.

Why? It is quite simple. We simply have nothing to boast about any more. Of course, if our righteousness comes through our own obedience then we would have something to boast about (Rom 4:2). We only ever boast when we think we have something worth boasting about, something that sets us apart from others, and enables us to stand tall in the presence of God. In Paul's day, within his own religious context, the source of such a proud boast came from a misuse of the Jewish law (2:17, 20, 23). Given by God to hold up a mirror to the people to show them their need of God's righteousness in Christ (3:20), they too easily used the law to their own advantage as a way of asserting the credentials of their own pedigree and performance.

But in one fell swoop the cross exposes both the deadly depths of our unrighteousness and the free grace, the giftedness if you like, of God's righteousness. Where is our boasting now? It is excluded. Why? Because "we consider a person to be justified by faith apart from works of the law" (3:27).

Where then is boasting? If only we could say, as we look around us, that it is crucified with Christ! What so deeply concerned Paul as he wrote to the church in Rome was that among God's people boasting was still very much a part of how they related to each other. Christians displayed a proud judgmentalism in looking down on their fellow believers, actually believing they were superior to one another (Rom 14:1-13); they thought, in effect, that they had something to boast about.

Where might such boasting be found in our own lives and churches? We tend to think of boasting in terms of the bragging and bravado that parades its brilliance in full view. But the boasting of which the Roman believers were guilty was not as blatant as this. The key evidence that their boasting had not yet gone the way of the cross was that their view of themselves was measured against their view of others, and vice-versa. It was not measured against Christ. They were still operating in their relationships as if there was some standard of measurement other than Christ crucified.

We live in a culture that is basically pretty intolerant of excessive bragging and bravado. But we are clever enough to know that there are other ways to boast of ourselves – or perhaps we should say to boost ourselves – before others, and other ways to assert ourselves at the expense of others.

The boastful heart hates nothing more than to leave a conversation and have others think less of it than they did at the start. Indeed, it often matters less to us that we are in the right, and more that we are seen to be in the right. And what is boasting if it is not making sure that others see and hear that we are as good as we think we are? And when they realise that we are not we find ourselves crestfallen. Boasting is the way in which the proud human heart parades itself. It is desperately difficult to cure. In fact, only the miracle of justification can cure it.

The boasting that dies with Christ is also raised with Christ. In a lovely gospel reversal, just as justification by faith excludes boasting, so it also invites boasting (Rom 5:1-11). But this new boasting – this boasting on the other side of Christ's resurrection – is a boasting in the hope of God's glory (5:2). It is a boasting in suffering (5:3). It is a boasting in God himself (5:11).

And here is the real test of whether justification by faith has taken hold of our lives and churches. It is whether we have died to the world's values and what it holds so dear. In the world of Paul's day, the idea of boasting in suffering was absurd. So, of course, was boasting in an unseen hope. What, after all, do you have to show for yourself if your life is marked by weakness, not power, and if the only inheritance that awaits you is in the world to come?

The boasting that rises with Christ, as Paul says in Galatians 6:14, is a boasting in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, "by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world".

During this Reformation celebration year, then, here is a question to ask ourselves and our churches: where then is boasting?

Dr Will Timmins lectures in New Testament.

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BUILD AND GROW



Archbishop Davies with members of Hope Anglican Church, Leppington, including (from left) Damian and Eva Dropmann, Chanelle Lim, Lenore Symons, lead pastor Luther Symons and Richie Lim.

The Archbishop's New Churches for New Communities (NCNC) has held a series of regional dinners, unveiling a three-year fundraising plan for the construction of ministry facilities in growing areas.

In partnership with the Mission Property Committee, which buys land, NCNC's role is to raise funds to provide emerging congregations across the Diocese with dual-purpose facilities for community and church use.

"We are on a mission to preserve the future of Christianity in these growth areas and these facilities will enable emerging congregations to connect with the communities around them and grow together," said the executive director of NCNC, the Rev Glenn Gardner.

There was an appeal at the dinners for parish councils to consider including NCNC in their mission allocations budget, and an appeal for ambassadors for this task.

"Ours is the only Protestant denomination addressing this vital challenge," Mr Gardner said.

The series of dinners in March and April kicked off with a function at the newly built Oran Park Church. Each dinner was hosted by a regional bishop, with the Archbishop sharing his vision for NCNC, reports from church planters and members of congregations in the southwest and northwest growth corridors.

Three big reasons why not



RUSSELL POWELL

13 Reasons Why
Netflix

W

HAT QUALIFIES ME TO REVIEW *13 REASONS WHY* – A NETFLIX SERIES aimed at teenagers? My four kids were teenagers when the social media age began, so my first-hand knowledge might be outdated. But teenagers are just props here. The central character is suicide, and that I know a lot about.

The hand grenade that is suicide was tossed into my family twice, first by the suicide of a close friend, then by that of a family member. So yes, I can speak with some experience.

13 Reasons Why tells the story of Hannah Baker, who has killed herself but left behind 13 tapes blaming 13 people for her decision (actually 12, excluding her would-be boyfriend Clay Jensen). The 13 episodes are pretty much the TV version of click bait: "You'll never guess what happens next – who is on the next tape?"

In the self-justifying documentary/promo that comes after the series, all sorts of reasons are given for making it: it is a difficult subject, adults don't understand what teenagers are going through, etc. But as one of the directors, Tom McCarthy, says, "At the end of the day we are storytellers and our job, probably more than anything, is to entertain." Nailed it.

It's not that *13 Reasons* is badly made. Australian actress Katherine Langford (above), who plays Hannah, and Dylan Minnette as the bumbling, lovelorn Clay, are good. Really good. Every cast member puts in a strong performance. It is yet another production that proves well-made television is no longer the preserve of big networks but is coming from online providers such as Netflix and Amazon.

The script is good, but aspects of the storyline seem implausible. Yes, I know this is fiction, based on a book published in 2011, but the calm voice of Hannah narrating her story has about as much grittiness as the voice of Kevin Arnold in *The Wonder Years*.

As the story unfolds, what happens to Hannah ranges from teen angst and bashful attempts at romance to sexting, drink driving, cyber-bullying and rape. As Clay listens to the tapes and we hear events from Hannah's viewpoint, her parents are preparing a lawsuit against Liberty High for failing to protect their daughter from bullying and Clay's mother just happens to be the lawyer defending the school.

Only a select group of students know about the tapes. The adults try to piece together events, wondering why she didn't leave a note. The final episode ties the story together with the teens realising they were mean to her and didn't give her any support. "We all killed Hannah" is the conclusion. It also features a very graphic scene of the suicide itself, which I readily admit I couldn't watch. This scene is not in the book but producers said they wanted it to be painful to watch to make "very clear that there is nothing... worthwhile about suicide". Ironic, after they've made a 13-part suicide note with a full colour manual at the end.

Reaction has been mixed. One critic described the series as "unsettling visual genius" but I found a greater number of writers made comments along the lines of "unspeakably dangerous". Some schools have gone so far as to send letters to parents warning them of the content. In a brilliant twist, one US school played 13 tapes over its PA system of students being saved from self-harm by the support of their classmates: "13 Reasons Why Not".

I have only three reasons why not – why you or your loved ones should not watch this. But they are big ones. First, we need to warn teens of the dangers of sexting, cyber-bullying, sexual consent and rape, binge drinking and all the things the program raises. But under no circumstances can we ever entrust Hollywood with sounding those warnings or attempting to provide any kind of hopeful answer to teenagers struggling with these issues.

Second, Hannah's mental illness is never mentioned and the adults in the show may as well not be there. No one is ever seen going to parents for help. It is not even canvassed as an option. The school counsellor's office is a place to speak in riddles and never say what is wrong. If they did, the click bait of the series wouldn't work and, let's face it, those producing "entertainment" don't want to provide role models – they just want to keep 'em watching.

Third, if the stated aim of this program is to not romanticise suicide, it fails. When I was a young journalist we were forbidden from even reporting on suicides for fear it may glorify, even encourage, the act. That's why papers print a disclaimer whenever it's discussed.

Producers: if you are serious about suicide prevention don't glorify Hannah's revenge. Give some perspective beyond high school and some reasons for hope. Most of all, continue the story in the lives of Hannah's parents and friends. Those of us who, in real life, have dealt with the shrapnel left behind from suicide know that resolution isn't neatly encapsulated in 13 episodes but is an ongoing, lifelong misery.

I am realistic enough to know many teens will see this show whether we like it or not. That's where prayerful conversation begins. Parents need to take on the responsibility that Hollywood never can. ☹

For crisis or suicide prevention, or if you or someone you know needs help, contact Lifeline on 13 1114.

The music of time

MARK WORMELL

Music Remembers Me: Connection and Wellbeing in Dementia

by Kirsty Beilharz
HammondCare Media



CARERS OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA HAVE KNOWN FOR SOME TIME THAT MUSIC can be an extremely effective way of helping the people in their care. Kirsty Beilharz draws on her technical training and practical experience to not only provide an explanation of why music can be so effective, but also to show the remarkably broad range of benefits that can flow from its intelligent use.

Her main point is that tailoring music to the needs and choices of each person is a relational way of engaging with that person. The wide range of benefits include affirming meaning, worth and love, helping the person connect with their memories, reducing anxiety, improving mobility and balance, stimulating appetite, assisting with stressful routines, reducing reliance on drugs, enhancing a sense of belonging and bringing happiness. Beilharz is rightly enthusiastic about the transformation well-chosen music can play in enhancing the quality of life of people with dementia.

Music is a love language, and is often far more effective than spoken words. As many carers know, a person who can no longer speak can still sing and derive great joy from doing so. Music helps at all stages of dementia because it is not reliant on memory or speech and offers a broad engagement with the whole person.

The book is wonderfully practical. It provides a wide range of detailed advice on when and where music can be used, how to choose the right music for each person and how to deliver it. Devices such as iPods with earphones are far more effective for many people than we might think. The book is enhanced throughout with short personal stories of those who have clearly benefited from carers reintroducing music into their lives.

Beilharz also recognises the major contribution music can make in connecting people with the spiritual dimension of life.

The book is not written from a Christian perspective and this is understandable. It will reach many more hands if it is not overtly theological and, in those hands, benefit many more people. However, a Christian would benefit from thinking theologically about the use of music in helping people with dementia. We know music is a gift from God. As God is the source of all good, he is the agent in the many good ways music can help people with dementia. Viewed this way, music is a way to bring God's love into the life of people in care.

The table of contents is enhanced by summaries at the end of each chapter and the book has an excellent bibliography.

On the downside, much of *Music Remembers Me* reads like a manual, and many readers will find it easier to dip in and out of the sections that relate to their specific circumstances. And while the content of the book is excellent, it does need a more thorough edit.

If you have a person with dementia within your care, then both you and they will benefit greatly from the application of the suggestions made in this valuable book. ☹