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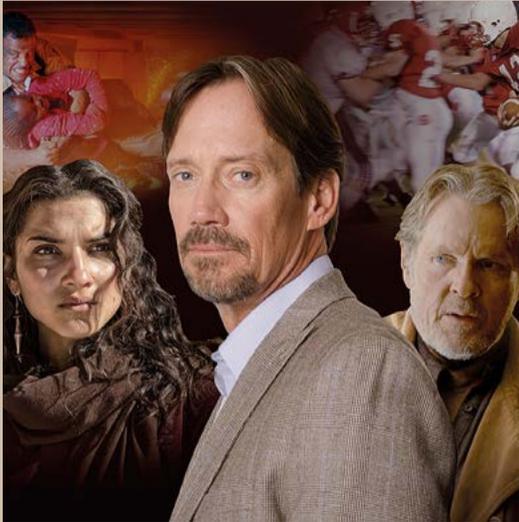
He thought they were cheesy.  
Then he read this.

CHRISTIAN MOVIES  
IN

# SOUTHERN CROSS

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF SYDNEY PRESENTS AN ANGLICAN MEDIA SYDNEY PRODUCTION SOUTHERN CROSS STARRING CHRISTIAN MOVIES - BE THOU MY BLOCKBUSTER  
CO-STARRING CREATION AND THE CHRISTIAN AND THE AFTERMATH OF AFRICAN ATTACKS WITH CHOICES SCHOOLS AND STUDY SUPPLEMENT  
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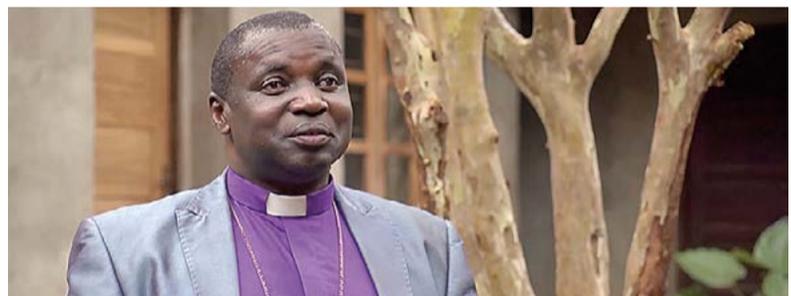
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**PUBLISHER:** Anglican Media Sydney  
PO Box W185  
Parramatta Westfield 2150

**PHONE:** 02 8860 8860

**FAX:** 02 8860 8899

**EMAIL:** [info@anglicanmedia.com.au](mailto:info@anglicanmedia.com.au)

**MANAGING EDITOR:** Russell Powell

**EDITOR:** Judy Adamson

**ART DIRECTOR:** Stephen Mason

**ADVERTISING MANAGER:** Kylie Zahra

**PHONE:** 02 8860 8850

**EMAIL:** [ads@anglicanmedia.com.au](mailto:ads@anglicanmedia.com.au)

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**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Garry Joy

**PHONE:** 02 8860 8861

**EMAIL:** [subs@anglicanmedia.com.au](mailto:subs@anglicanmedia.com.au)

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# Growth drive reaches out



Archbishop Davies and Glenn Gardner, executive director of NCNC, look at plans for new communities.

THE ARCHBISHOP HAS CREATED A HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE TO HELP ESTABLISH MINISTRY CENTRES for church communities in new growth areas of Sydney.

New Churches for New Communities (NCNC) will spearhead fundraising for ministry facilities and co-ordinating diocesan resources into some of the fastest growing areas in Australia.

Working with the existing Mission Property Committee (MPC), which is buying land in growth corridors, the new committee will assist the Archbishop in active fundraising activities for the building of facilities and ensure a holistic approach in identifying the needs of new communities.

"This is a great opportunity for parishes and our diocesan organisations to work together for the expansion of God's kingdom," Archbishop Davies said. "This is not just parish-based, but will have the active co-operation of agencies such as Anglicare, ARV and the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation. We are seeking to honour Christ as Lord and Saviour in every community."

According to the NCNC's executive director, Glenn Gardner AM, "The MPC's role is to get the land and ours is to get the funds to build, as well as playing a co-ordinating role in terms of community needs and diocesan resources.

"Some needs will always be ministry-orientated, for example proclaiming the gospel. But other needs may be service-orientated, such as education, health and other service ministries often provided by our Anglican agencies. In consultation with the local church and the community, we want to find ways to meet those needs."

Chaired by business and education consultant Philip Bell OAM, the committee also includes businessman Roger Corbett AO, solicitor Greg Hammond and Angela Livingston, who heads a recruiting firm.

"We are not looking to build neo-Gothic church buildings," Mr Gardner says. "Rather, we want multi-purpose buildings which can be used as churches on Sundays – or single-use facilities. For example, if there's a great need for a preschool in a particular area, we will look seriously at trying to get funding to build one.

"We are establishing a Public Ancillary Fund (PuAF) to secure tax deductibility. So if we build something which serves the community and qualifies for deductibility, we can offer that."

Archbishop Davies says there will be regular reports on this initiative.

"I hope everyone in the Diocese will be excited by what is happening in growth corridors and new areas of Sydney and surrounds," he says.

"Of course, we know that the new churches are the worshipping congregations connected with new communities, not the buildings themselves. However, buildings are a useful resource for forming Christian congregations. We live on the legacy of generations which had trust in God's goodness and the foresight to build for the present and the future. Like them, we need to be bold."

The first project for the new committee is Stanhope Gardens in Western Sydney. There will be more on this in future editions of *Southern Cross*.

Southern Cross MAY 2015

# Chinese school opens



Big day out: students from the International Chinese School at the opening with local Federal MP Paul Fletcher and State MP Gladys Berejiklian. PHOTO: Chris Jones

JUDY ADAMSON

AN AVOWEDLY CHRISTIAN BILINGUAL SCHOOL HAS OPENED IN THE GROUNDS OF ST PAUL'S, Chatswood.

The International Chinese School has been constructed next to the church, remodelling the old hall and surrounds to accommodate students as well as church events.

Classes began with 10 kindergarten students in January but the school – which has "Christ is my Light" as its motto – was officially opened late in the term by Bishop Chris Edwards as part of a service that included songs from the children and a lot of celebration that long-held plans had finally come to fruition.

"The church already has a Cantonese, a Mandarin and an English-speaking congregation, so how do you keep reaching out to these new families – one way is through a school," Bishop Edwards says. "You establish a community, that community builds links with the church and I think you can do great things evangelistically, really helping people who are in your country and loving your neighbour as yourself."

The primary co-ordinator for the school, Mrs Wendy Yu, says at this stage the school has a specialist Mandarin teacher and a class teacher, with specialist teachers also brought in for music, PE, chapel and Scripture classes.

"Parents think the idea of a bilingual school is really new, but language is just an extra component to a normal school," she says. "As much as possible we try to integrate the two because we're very aware of not wanting to have language as just a stand-alone topic. So at school assemblies the children sing songs in Mandarin as well as English, and when they do 'Show and Tell' or news, they can perform their news in both Mandarin and English.

"It's all about developing the whole child and being able to give them a really global education that's rooted in Christian faith."

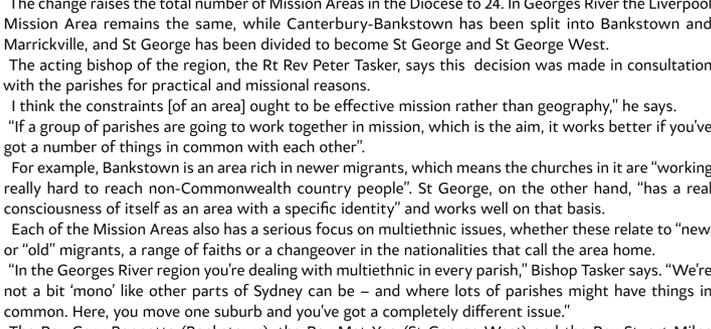
Bishop Edwards is enthusiastic about the Anglican Church providing clear opportunities for people from a range of backgrounds.

"We're the 'Anglican' Church and that's not necessarily a welcoming title for people who are not Anglo," he says. "In Australia now you don't call people 'white', you call them 'Anglo'. So then we're the white church, but at the same time we've got a message for everyone. It's international. We want to tell them about Jesus.

"We can't expect everybody to turn up to our place and fit in. We need to be the ones to make the change. There's a pretty good model for that – that's what Jesus did. He became one of us... so we could understand. To step into other people's language, world and community is an exciting adventure for us as a church."

Mrs Yu agrees. "It really is very exciting. And the kids, their minds are like sponges. Research tells us that the best time to start learning a language is before children are nine years old. Here, we see our students moving from one language to another without any problems at all, and how much they've been able to absorb even in the first term has been incredible!"

# Mission Areas expand



Newer migrant area: Bankstown. PHOTO: Peter Hindmarsh

THE GEORGES RIVER REGION HAS CREATED TWO NEW MISSION AREAS TO HELP PARISHES MINISTER and plan with other churches experiencing similar mission issues.

The change raises the total number of Mission Areas in the Diocese to 24. In Georges River the Liverpool Mission Area remains the same, while Canterbury-Bankstown has been split into Bankstown and Marrickville, and St George has been divided to become St George and St George West.

The acting bishop of the region, the Rt Rev Peter Tasker, says this decision was made in consultation with the parishes for practical and missional reasons.

"I think the constraints [of an area] ought to be effective mission rather than geography," he says. "If a group of parishes are going to work together in mission, which is the aim, it works better if you've got a number of things in common with each other."

For example, Bankstown is an area rich in newer migrants, which means the churches in it are "working really hard to reach non-Commonwealth country people". St George, on the other hand, "has a real consciousness of itself as an area with a specific identity" and works well on that basis.

Each of the Mission Areas also has a serious focus on multiethnic issues, whether these relate to "new" or "old" migrants, a range of faiths or a changeover in the nationalities that call the area home.

"In the Georges River region you're dealing with multiethnic in every parish," Bishop Tasker says. "We're not a bit 'mono' like other parts of Sydney can be – and where lots of parishes might have things in common. Here, you move one suburb and you've got a completely different issue."

The Rev Gary Bennetts (Bankstown), the Rev Mat Yeo (St George West) and the Rev Stuart Milne (Liverpool) remain leaders of their Mission Areas, and are joined by Blakehurst rector the Rev Paul Lucas (St George).

Bishop Tasker will be, for the moment, the acting Mission Area leader in Marrickville, and says that amid these changes the prayer of those in the region "is that we remain true to 'the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints' and that the Lord of the harvest will continue to raise up the needed labourers for the work here".

# Draft TV code criticised

RUSSELL POWELL

A DIOCESAN SUBMISSION TO A GOVERNMENT BODY IS CRITICAL OF A NEW DRAFT CODE OF practice for commercial TV stations, which would bring M-rated programs into family viewing time and relax regulations on gambling and alcohol advertising.

The commercial telecasters group, Free TV Australia, said, "This is a code to catch up with the times. Many of the provisions in the old code have been dated for 20 years or more. There are now a range of other options for managing viewing including dedicated children's channels, ubiquitous availability of parental locks and information contained in electronic program guides."

The Social Issues Executive (SIE) of the Diocese made a submission last month, during a six-week consultation period on the code. The Australian Communications and Media Authority must now consider the code and either accept or reject its new provisions.

Most contentious is the plan to bring forward the time from which M-rated material (not including films) can be shown from 8.30pm to 7.30pm. The code also proposes to change the timeslot for MA15+ material from 9pm to 8.30pm.

"It is unclear what changes to community expectations have occurred to warrant such a change, especially in relation to children," the submission said. "We reiterate that, for most families, 7.30pm is still prime family and children's viewing time and thus there is no justification for changing the current regulations."

It also points out another effect of the code would be to introduce alcohol advertising into that timeslot for the first time.

The SIE also strongly argues against changes to the MA15+ timeslot and subsuming the category of "adult violence" into that classification. MA15+ material is described as having "strong" impact nudity and sex scenes, and permits the "treatment of strong [adult] themes" in context. Said the executive: "We submit that there is no justification and little good purpose served to bring forward the broadcast of strong impact material to the very edge of family viewing times".

The extension of alcohol and gambling advertising is also questioned.

Using Free TV's own submission that its programs are "valuable to our national identity", the SIE said: "it is of concern that the draft code does not seek to better protect children and younger audiences from a normalising of behaviour in relation to gambling and alcohol". They added this was of particular concern during live sport broadcasts.

The submission suggested digital platforms, rather than the broadcast itself, be used for the promotion of gambling, providing more protection for younger viewers. "It is hard to see any community benefit arising from the advent of gambling on field sporting codes. It has resulted in a degree of corrupt behaviour within the codes themselves. The promotion of gambling on TV fuels this dark underbelly of sport and is not in the community interest."

Archbishop Davies endorsed the submission, highlighting the committee view that "Children and young people are the most vulnerable of viewers, least able to protect themselves from confronting or harmful material. All changes should be considered through this lens of protecting those most vulnerable."

# Selling up for ministry

NICK GILBERT

IN ORDER TO KEEP PACE WITH MINISTRY IN THE AREA, DUNDAS-TELOPEA ANGLICAN CHURCH IS planning to sell up its current property and buildings and relocate to a new site in the parish over the next few years.

The move has come about largely because of increased development in the area immediately around the church, and a limited number of potential development options for the church itself. Issues like improving the accessibility and location of the site, plus parking and future capacity, have all played into the decision-making process.

"Basically, the Dundas site has been surrounded by developers, and there's not capacity to redevelop the site in a way that's feasible," says the senior minister at Dundas-Telopea, the Rev Alistair Seabrook. "The only way for us to deal with the parking issue, for instance, according to council development codes, would be for us to excavate an underground car park, which is simply not possible."

The Dundas area has changed significantly from when the first local Anglican church was planted 90 years ago. Farmland and gardens have gradually been replaced by development blocks and high-density housing, with the change likely to accelerate over the coming years.

The move is in the early stages, with a consultant currently engaged to inspect potential sites. A location has not yet been decided upon.

"The plan at the end of this phase of the project is to consolidate both of our current properties into one property that we can sell, and purchase a new site and ministry centre," Mr Seabrook says. "It's likely that will be in a commercial or industrial zone rather than a residential area, so it will mean a change of environment and a change about how we engage with the people around us."

A proposed sales ordinance was presented to Standing Committee on behalf of the church by the Bishop of Western Sydney, the Rt Rev Ivan Lee, in late 2014, which was approved unanimously. Bishop Lee says the decision was a "courageous and well-considered move" on the part of the church.

"It's a bold move but, as I saw it, the choice was between continuing good ministry severely limited by the site and taking a risk to find a new site more effective for mission for the next 50 years," Bishop Lee says.

Mr Seabrook adds that, while the potential move has been difficult for the church's congregations, relocation is already in the church's history. The Dundas church moved to its current site down the street from its original location within living memory of some of the older members, while the Telopea site was constructed in the 1960s. He says this has made the future move easier, as well as the fact that it will allow the church a chance to refocus on its mission to the area.

"I don't think we've ever approached the development around us as a negative," he says. "We see the opportunity of reaching out to neighbours moving in, but our responsibility is not just to our immediate neighbours, but the 15,000-20,000 people in our parish. We need to think about them long term [as well as] the place and location where we can gather people to hear the gospel and use as a base to go out from."

# Archbishop appoints commissary in the US

FORMER SYDNEY RECTOR, THE REV JOHN MASON, has been appointed an honorary canon of St Andrew's Cathedral and the Archbishop's Commissary in the United States.

Canon Mason (right) was rector of St Clement's, Mosman for 16 years and in 2001 was invited by Redeemer Church, New York, to establish a new church in Manhattan as part of a strategic church-planting movement in New York City.

He and his wife, Judy, were living three blocks from the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001.

Christ Church New York City was planted under his leadership in 2004 and he has engaged in speaking and teaching in the US, England and Asia.

Since 2013, Canon Mason has ministered part-time at Neutral Bay Anglican Church and, with frequent trips to the US, has been directing the work of Anglican Connection, North America. He is also involved in "More to Life", a ministry on Wall Street which he founded in 2001.

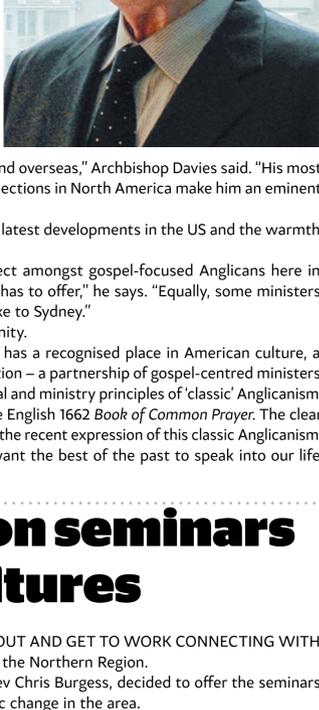
"John is an experienced and well-respected son of the Diocese who has exercised fruitful ministry both here and overseas," Archbishop Davies said. "His most recent ministry in New York City and his network of connections in North America make him an eminent candidate to act as my commissary in that continent."

Canon Mason told *Southern Cross* he was excited by the latest developments in the US and the warmth towards the Sydney Diocese.

"Over the last year there has been an increasing respect amongst gospel-focused Anglicans here in North America for what Sydney Diocese stands for and has to offer," he says. "Equally, some ministers have also remarked that they have a contribution to make to Sydney."

Canon Mason says his work provides a unique opportunity.

"Because Anglicanism [or Episcopalianism in the USA] has a recognised place in American culture, a number of us have been developing the Anglican Connection – a partnership of gospel-centred ministers and churches whose ministry is founded on the theological and ministry principles of 'classic' Anglicanism. This finds expression in The Thirty-Nine Articles and the English 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. The clear statements of the Jerusalem Declaration [2008] have been the recent expression of this classic Anglicanism. He added that "rather than returning to the past we want the best of the past to speak into our life and gospel ministry today".



# Northern Region seminars aim to cross cultures

SEMINARS DESIGNED TO HELP CHURCHES THINK ABOUT AND GET TO WORK CONNECTING WITH multicultural communities in their area are rolling out in the Northern Region.

The region's Multicultural Committee, chaired by the Rev Chris Burgess, decided to offer the seminars as a way to try to get ahead of the curve of demographic change in the area.

"Those that we previously would have had to go overseas to share the gospel with are now coming here," Mr Burgess says. "Many are coming with a real spiritual hunger because there's nothing really for them in their home countries. Sydney is only going to become more multicultural and if we don't start thinking about these issues now, we'll only be playing catch-up – but being further behind – going into the future."

The latest seminars, which were first run in the Ryde Mission Area, make use of statistics provided by Anglicare. These allow churches to see how their parish reflects trends in the local area, and differences and similarities demographically with other nearby churches, potentially allowing opportunities for parishes to partner in particular areas.

"I've just retired from Eastwood, for example, and about half the population there right now are from an Asian background," Mr Burgess says.

"As time goes on I think this changing demographic will be an increasing factor in many other parishes... which will have to be taken into account when people look at how they are going to connect with their local communities."

The aim of the seminars is to use demographic data, along with the specific resources of a given church, to produce tailored methods which congregations can use to reach other ethnic groups. Mr Burgess says ESL ministries, in particular, have expanded as a result of the seminars.

"Through ESL it's possible to more easily engage members of congregations initially in reaching out to specific people from other cultures," he says.

"Out of that it's often possible to evolve Bible studies and things as well, but building those friendships can be an avenue for students to go to a church service, or otherwise to stay connected beyond the classes themselves. And often people from those classes will want to come to an English church service because they want to work on their English."

Mr Burgess says even churches that might struggle to get something significant off the ground quickly in terms of ministry can take small steps to work towards a particular goal.

"It's always possible to pray," he says. "You can get the whole congregation to get behind [it] in prayer and that should be the first step. In terms of ESL, there are enough church and non-church classes around that it's possible to go, sit in on a class and see how it's run, and use that as a ready-made template, or even partner in that in some way.... There's information and methods out there already so you don't need to start from nothing."

## Ready for more growth at Neutral Bay



ST AUGUSTINE'S, NEUTRAL BAY IS PREPARING TO COMPLETE THE LARGE-SCALE REDEVELOPMENT of its church site, twinning the old with the new in order to facilitate further growth.

The \$2.4 million project, which began last year, has seen the current site, originally established in 1887 but redeveloped in 1923, changed to accommodate the growing ministries at Neutral Bay.

"[Numbers] had been growing steadily for a decade and then plateaued, and it coincided with hitting space capacity," says the senior minister at St Augustine's, the Rev Craig Roberts.

"We had no office space for a growing staff, we were at capacity for services, there wasn't space for children to play together and it wasn't possible for home groups to use the church as a meeting area.

"Entry was a problem, as we have about nine different entry points into church. We also had a sizeable projected repair cost into the future for the current building that we were able to swallow up in this work."

The new development not only accommodates more people, but also makes movement easier, as well as allowing for multiple different activities on site at once.

"The brief we gave to the architects was to produce a design that promoted relationships with each other and with our Saviour," Mr Roberts says. "It's now very easy to move from one space to another, able-bodied or not. There are additional and safer play areas for the kids, and breakout spaces for various ministries and community groups that want to make use of the space."

Mr Roberts says he has been appreciative of the way the church congregation has engaged with the building project, which has been funded primarily through investments, as well as special donations and by borrowing.

"We had an Extraordinary General Meeting where we had a final cost in the budget and a debate on whether to proceed," he says. "A number of people spoke eloquently and in a godly manner against it, and a number of people similarly spoke in favour of proceeding. At the end, we took a vote and it was 88 per cent in favour of proceeding.

"I spoke to each of the people who spoke against proceeding, and they all said, 'That was a great meeting, the Holy Spirit was clearly present as we had prayed he would be, Jesus was honoured and I'm so glad this is my church'. That's the kind of spirit we've proceeded in and I'm very thankful for that."

The church building will open to the public on May 31 to give Neutral Bay locals a chance to check out the changes as well.

"We're hoping our neighbours are like most Sydneysiders, who love talking about property and love having a stickybeak," Mr Roberts says.

"We'll have a kind of open house with a regular church service, followed by ribbon cutting, cake and free lunch on site, so people can see our new facilities and maybe have a look at what being at church is like."

## MTS and Mission Minded merger

TWO MAJOR MINISTRY RECRUITING MOVEMENTS, THE MISSION MINDED CONFERENCE AND THE MTS Spur event, have announced they will join forces.

The networks have run separately in recent years, with the Ministry Training Strategy (MTS) running Spur and Mission Minded being chaired by the rector of Carlingford, the Rev Gary Koo.

A new joint committee has been formed that includes the senior assistant minister from St Ives, the Rev Nathan Walter; an assistant minister at Jannali, the Rev Andrew Barry; MTS director Ben Pfahlert; the ministry pastor from Hunter Bible Church in Newcastle, Dave Moore; and Kitty Chan, an AFES staff worker on the University of Sydney's Cumberland campus.

"Our desire for the new conference is to show the pre-eminence of Jesus, facilitate the networking of recruiters and recruits and call on people to live their whole lives in service of Christ," Mr Koo says.

"We want to help those who want to pursue ministry understand the process and, in particular, encourage them to consider a ministry apprenticeship before seeking further training."

Although this year the first joint conference will be held over the second weekend in September, from 2016 the conference will run on the October long weekend.

Ben Pfahlert is enthusiastic about the changes and what he hopes it will mean for the gospel.

"I am excited by the new conference because it will aid in solving a big problem – the problem being that there is one outreach-focused Christian in Australia for every 125 Aussies," he says. "We pray that we will raise up thousands more proclaimers of Christ."

# Newcastle Bishopscourt sale



Beautiful, but expensive to maintain: Bishopscourt in Newcastle.

## ANOTHER OFFICIAL BISHOP'S RESIDENCE IS FOR SALE IN AUSTRALIA.

Earlier this year, the Diocese of Newcastle ended 20 years of debate by deciding to sell the Bishopscourt estate by tender.

The seven-bedroom, four-bathroom house, dating from the 1920s, is not heritage-listed, but parts of the grounds and garden are on the National Register.

The current bishop, the Rt Rev Greg Thompson, did not move into the house when he was appointed in 2014 and is supportive of the sale. Among other reasons, Bishop Thompson said the estate had cost \$500,000 over seven years to maintain.

The house was bequeathed to the diocese in 1929 by the widow of the Archdeacon of Newcastle, so there had been some opposition to the sale on the basis that the original gift to the diocese was to house the bishop in perpetuity.

Newcastle assistant Bishop Peter Stuart told the *Newcastle Herald* newspaper that he strongly believed the original donor, if she were alive, would be "very pleased" that proceeds from the sale of that gift were still being used to house the bishop and meet the modern challenges faced by the church.

The property, which also has water views, covers more than 4100 square metres in Brown Street in the centre of Newcastle. It is estimated the sale of the estate could fetch close to \$5 million.

The bishop's house in Rockhampton in Central Queensland is also in the midst of a sale process, while historic bishops' residences have been sold in Bathurst and the Riverina in NSW, and Bishopscourt in Sydney also has recently been up for sale.

# Brain becomes assistant bishop

THE VEN DR MATT BRAIN HAS BEEN APPOINTED as a new assistant bishop in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

Dr Brain (right) trained for ministry in Perth and was ordained in 2003. He served in the Diocese of North West Australia as the diocesan youth minister and in the parish of Kalbarri. In 2010, he moved to Canberra to become director of Synergy Youth and Children. He is also a lecturer at St Mark's National Theological College.

Since 2013, Dr Brain has been director of parish support, chaplaincy and mission in the Canberra-Goulburn Diocese.

Diocesan Bishop Stuart Robinson described the appointment as "significant" because it brought "generational change and renewal" to the senior leadership team.

"Dr Brain will play a key role in helping our diocese continue to identify new missional leaders and support those already in ministry to engage with a changing culture," Bishop Robinson said.

He will be consecrated by Archbishop Glenn Davies (in his capacity as Metropolitan of NSW) at St Saviour's Cathedral, Goulburn on Saturday, June 13 at 11am.



# African attacks prompt further security fears



In danger: Christian women and children are scanned and searched to prevent possible attacks as they enter church grounds on Easter Day. PHOTO:AP/Ben Curtis

**KENYAN CHURCHES ARE LEARNING TO LIVE WITH INCREASED SECURITY IN THE WAKE OF THE Easter college attacks in Garissa, in the north of the country, in which 147 students died.**

Gunmen from the militant Al-Shabaab Muslim group burst into Garissa University, separating the Christians and shooting them dead.

"These young people died because they were Kenyans and they were Christians," Kenya's Anglican Primate Archbishop Eliud Wabukala told Easter services at All Saints' Cathedral, Nairobi.

"This attack was a calculated manifestation of evil designed to destroy our nation and our faith, but on this Good Friday we are reminded that the very worst evil can do is not the last word.

"We call on the government to do all in its power to protect the lives of its citizens and we call on the world community to recognise that this latest outrage is not just an attack on Kenya, but part of an assault on world peace. The time has come for the world to unite as never before in defeating this growing menace."

Archbishop Glenn Davies was among the Anglican leaders who sent condolences to his Kenyan counterpart, saying, "We grieve with the families of students who have lost loved ones, some of whom were deliberately targeted because they own the name of Jesus. May God enable you and the church to stand firm in this time of testing."

Security has been stepped up at schools, malls and churches. In Garissa itself, the 36 churches are normally guarded by three armed police officers but that has now been doubled to six guards at each church.

In West Africa, Nigeria has marked 12 months since the kidnapping of 219 by Boko Haram militants in the north-eastern village of Chibok. The country's new Muslim President-elect, Muhammadu Buhari, said he couldn't promise that authorities would ever find the girls.

"We do not know if the Chibok girls can be rescued," Buhari said in a statement. "Their whereabouts remain unknown. As much as I wish to, I cannot promise that we can find them. But I say to every parent, family member and friend of the children that my government will do everything in its power to bring them home."

But as activists wearing red T-shirts and members of the public massed in the Nigerian capital Abuja, holding banners with the names of the kidnapped girls, it was revealed militants have abducted 2000 women in Nigeria since the start of 2014 and forced many of them into sexual slavery or combat.

As hopes fade, activists have marked the anniversary with a change in their slogan from "Bring Back Our Girls – Now and Alive" to "Never to be Forgotten".

## 2018 for next GAFCON



A global meeting of minds (from left): Archbishops Beach, Rwaje, Wabukala, Ntagali, Okoh, Zavala and Isingoma.

**MEMBERS OF THE GLOBAL ANGLICAN FUTURE CONFERENCE (GAFCON) PRIMATES COUNCIL SAY** they are encouraged by reports from the newest GAFCON provinces and fellowships in the US and Australia.

A communique issued after their meeting in London in April said the group met "for prayer and fellowship in order to help chart the future of global Anglicanism... We are uniting faithful Anglicans, growing in momentum, structured for the future and committed to the Anglican Communion".

At the start of the meeting, Archbishop Foley Beach, installed last year as Primate of the Province of the Anglican Church in North America, (ACNA) was unanimously elected to the Council.

"Archbishop Beach shared about the remarkable growth being experienced in North America, evidenced by the planting of 483 new congregations since 2009." The primates celebrated the recent launch of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans Australia (FCA AU), the newest GAFCON fellowship, led by the Ven Richard Condie, Archdeacon of Melbourne.

The statement also mentioned FCA UK & Ireland: "We are particularly concerned about the Church of England and the drift of many from the biblical faith," it said. "We do not regard the recent use of a Church of England building for a Muslim service as a minor aberration. These actions betray the gospel and discourage Christians who live among Muslims, especially those experiencing persecution."

Under the chairmanship of Kenya's Primate, Archbishop Eliud Wabukala, the meeting was attended by seven primates and seven official advisors, including the Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Glenn Davies and retired English bishop Michael Nazir-Ali.

The communique stressed the primates were not leaving the Anglican Communion. "The members of our churches stand at the heart of the Communion, which is why we are committed to its renewal. We belong to the mainstream, and we are moving forward."

As part of the role of "uniting faithful Anglicans", the Primates called the third Global Anglican Future Conference for 2018. No dates or venue was announced, but like previous conferences it will include delegations from around the world and all orders of the church (lay and ordained).

## LIFELONG SERVICE

Well done to *Southern Cross* for its comprehensive coverage of "boomers and seniors ministry" ("Boomers Unleashed", SC, April). It is a clarion call to our parishes to pray about, think through and plan ministries to these increasingly significant groups in our society. The different approaches outlined that are being undertaken in parishes are a fertile bank of ideas to draw upon for those of us engaged in this area.

We were also pleased to note references to a most valuable ministry which boomers and seniors can undertake, given they have more time, and (often) less agility and mobility: prayer. J.I. Packer in his book *A Passion for Faithfulness* offers this wisdom: "There is always more to be done, and the doing is not meant to stop until this life is over. Even when the state of our health limits our doing to praying, as in old age it commonly does, that remains true".

Herein is a challenge to prayer co-ordinators in our parishes. Marshal and encourage the resources of these prayer warriors so that the concerns of the kingdom can be brought to the throne of grace. Significant ministry, indeed.

Ann and Ian Keast  
Riverstone

## Review reviewed

I read with interest the review of the movie *x+y* by Judy Adamson (SC, April).

I really wonder if this is suitable for *Southern Cross* for two reasons:

1) I was drawn to the photograph on the last page, which shows a man lying on the ground with what appears to be a cigarette in his hand. I was surprised and a little disappointed as we have two of our family members struggling with addiction to cigarettes. It is hard enough to try to persuade them of the problems associated with cigarettes without their being promoted in *Southern Cross*.

2) The review speaks of a character who is "an emotional shambles and swears too much. But he is exactly what Nathan needs because his bluntness and his maths ability won't allow Nathan to stay in his shell".

Sadly I understand most movies will have some swearing in them but does *Southern Cross* have to endorse this in its review? Furthermore, the article states that this is what Nathan needs. Are we to use this as a guide as to how to choose role models (mentors) for our children?

I am sure with the great number of movies around a better example could be found for your review to encourage us as Christians.

Russell Ashley

## Sydney at War

In response to Colin Bale's work on the Anglican (formerly Church of England) Church and World War I (SC, April), I am writing the history of St Barnabas', Broadway and offer these thoughts about that time.

In 1914 Andrew Fisher, the Australian Primer Minister at the time, announced that Australia would serve the mother country Great Britain down to the "last man and shilling". Young Australian men rushed off to enlist.

The Rev William Charlton – rector of St Barnabas' during the war – used the parish newsletter to encourage young men in the church to serve their country. He also asked his congregation to pray for the men who were fighting in Europe and the Middle East and saw it as his pastoral duty to visit the families of those who were wounded or killed. The annual church picnic was suspended "in view of the terrible European war", however the Dorcas Society knitted clothes for the men at the front.

In 1916 Mr Charlton even had a notice in the Parish News saying, "Victory is surest way of winning the war and God must be first and who shall stay his hand?" The Government's attempt to introduce conscription by way of a plebiscite divided Australian society – yet Mr Charlton's support for it was common among Church of England ministers, who sought to tell their congregations it was their patriotic duty to supply servicemen to fight for the Empire.

In both plebiscites the area around Glebe and Chippendale voted "No" by more than 60 per cent, so the St Barnabas' congregations who were drawn from these two suburbs did not heed their rector's dire warning that voting yes would see the world being overrun by Germans! But by 1917 most people in the congregation had known someone killed or wounded and were heartily sick of a conflict that showed no sign of ending.

Nevertheless members were able to meet the changes brought upon them by the war by remaining true to the faith that they learned at church – putting it into practice by reaching out to the community during the war and providing ongoing spiritual and physical support in the decades to come.

Stuart Lawrence

Dr Bale is to be thanked for his article about Sydney Anglicans who fought at Gallipoli. The account of Chaplain Talbot's communion service is a wonderful insight and deserves to be far better known. So does the work of the Sydney organists who assisted the chaplains on such occasions.

Twenty-nine Sydney organists fought in World War I, 16 of whom were killed in action or died of wounds. The most prominent was Major General Sir Charles Rosenthal, who commanded the Australian artillery at Gallipoli and the Second Division in France. In civilian life he had been an architect and organist and choirmaster at Holy Trinity, Dulwich Hill.

Rosenthal survived but Private Christodos Frederick Hart perished at Gallipoli in the charge on Lone Pine. Hart was organist at St Martin's, Kensington and an apprentice to the organ-building firm of Griffin & Leggo. His father, the Rev Frederick Hart, was curate at Surry Hills and Erskineville.

Four of the eight sons of Joseph Massey, the organist at St Andrew's Cathedral, served, including sub-organist Victor Massey. Other organists were from the parishes of Church Hill, Wentworth Falls, Coogee, Botany, Petersham, Manly, Glebe and Croydon.

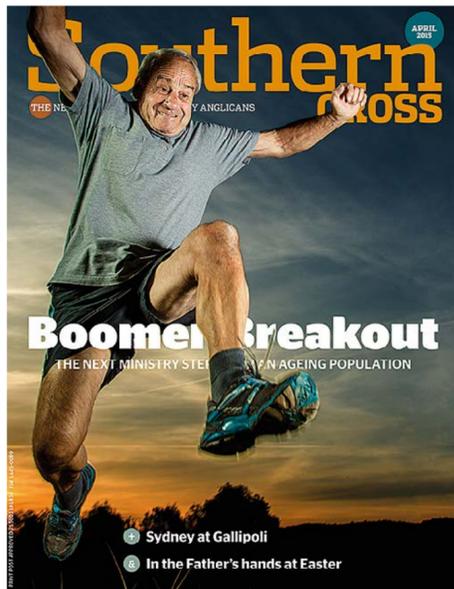
Peter Meyer  
BCA and Norfolk

It was great to learn of the return of a full-time chaplain to Norfolk Island, David Fell's appointment to the position and South Sydney Regional Council's program of significant support to this ministry.

I first read of his appointment in BCA's March/Autumn publications *The Real Australian* and *Prayer Notes*.

So I was disappointed when I read the *Southern Cross* article that there was no mention of BCA's support of the Fell family. After some investigation I find that BCA will be providing pastoral and prayer support to David and Crystal and their children during their tenure on Norfolk Island.

Joan Lester  
Blaxland



# A familiar Easter



DAVID PETTETT

IN THE WEEK RUNNING UP TO EASTER I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF LEADING A CHURCH SERVICE FOR a large group of elderly people.

They wandered into the building aided by walking frames and nursing staff. The look on most of their faces was one of confusion. This was an experience outside their normal routine.

Anglicare staff normally bring these elderly people to a day centre once a week for activities. Most of them have some form of dementia. They are all frail and find most of life's routine tasks difficult to accomplish.

They come to be cared for by Christian people. They're used to prayers and activities led by a chaplain. They know this is a Christian day centre. But to be brought into the church building was a new experience.

A few had a vague idea of what was going on. Some even expressed excitement as they came in, telling me they were Christians but didn't get much opportunity to go to church any more. But because this was out of routine all of them seemed to be lost at some level as they walked in. They were putting a lot of trust in the staff, trusting that they were being taken to somewhere safe.

We sang hymns and said prayers that brightened some faces with a glimmer of remembering something from a long time ago. I spoke on Jesus' words, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except by me".

There was confusion because they were out of routine. But even in the twilight of their lives, they could still hear some familiar words. Jesus is the way.

To the casual observer they may have looked lost. But the eye of faith could entrust them in their frailty to Jesus. Just as they trusted their carers, they could trust Jesus to show them the way to the Father.

What a privilege to be able to tell 50 or so souls, some lost souls, that Jesus is the way. How much they understood, I don't know. But compassion has taught me that Jesus cares for the frail, the elderly, the lost. As a minister of the gospel I have the joy to speak about Jesus to a lost world every day.

You won't build a congregation on these folk. You won't raise a large sum of money for gospel work. But you do see lost souls coming within the sound of the gospel. And you pray that the Lord's word will do its work in the lives of people that Jesus cares for.

The Rev David Pettett has worked as a parish rector, a chaplain, missionary and church planter. David now manages the chaplains in prisons, hospitals and Chesalon in the Sydney Diocese.

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



### KEMP FOR WAITARA

After four years as assistant minister at Darling Street Anglican Church in Balmain – including six months as acting rector – the Rev Martin Kemp becomes rector of All Saints’, Waitara on May 20.

“The [upper north shore] area is going through a lot of change with older houses being bulldozed and high-rise apartments taking their place,” he says, “[so] the challenge for Waitara is the same as that faced by every church: to shape a ministry that creates the best opportunities for engaging locals with Jesus.”

He adds that he chose to go to the parish because it “seems to be a place where both my experiences as an assistant minister, at Castle Hill and Darling Street, might prove extremely relevant. Also [previous rector] Bruce Stanley has done an excellent job. I like the idea of building on the great work of my predecessor.”

Mr Kemp is doing this in more ways than one, given that Bruce and Heather Stanley were his youth group leaders while he was growing up at St John’s, Parramatta. In an extra connection, his brother-in-law is Bruce Stanley’s brother Rob – also a rector, in Tasmania.

“So there’s an historic and familial link between past and future Waitara staff and St John’s, Parramatta, which we all attended back in the ‘90s,” he says.

When asked what he was looking forward to as he takes up his first parish, Mr Kemp says he is “simply looking forward to the new challenge of being a rector. I have lots to learn but am looking forward to growing in these skills. We’re also excited about meeting new friends!”

### IN BRIEF

The rector of Epping, the Rev John Cornish, will retire on July 7. More in a future edition.



The Rev Canon Tony Lamb died on April 9, aged 90.

Born Richard Eglinton Lamb in 1925 in the Southern Highlands, he grew up on a farm outside Moss Vale. Excelling in maths and sciences at school, he trained as an industrial chemist in the Illawarra and then as a metallurgist.

He had given his life to Christ in his teens – and had been marked as a future minister by his church rector at 16 – but it wasn’t until he was 32 and his employer offered him a promotion “with the proviso I would marry the job” that he had to make a choice, and chose ministry.

Mr Lamb studied at Moore College in the 1950s and was ordained in 1960. He was curate at Eastwood, Thornleigh and Parramatta before becoming curate-in-charge at Westmead in 1962.

In 1966 he began his ministry at St Philip’s, Caringbah, which was to last for nearly 20 years – during which time the congregation grew enormously, missionary interest and support were strong, and many people trained for ministry.

*Christianity Explained*, written by Michael Bennett (who was a Caringbah staff member at the time), was launched at the church in 1980, and in 1981 Mr Lamb was made a Canon of St Michael’s Cathedral in Wollongong.

In 1985 the Lambs moved to Christ Church, St Ives, where they spent six fruitful years before Canon Lamb’s official retirement. After leaving St Ives he undertook a lengthy list of locums, including Ryde (twice), South Carlton, Cooks River, Walgett, Neutral Bay, Kingsgrove, Fairfield, Moree, Lord Howe Island and Armidale Cathedral. He was also honorary assistant minister at Castle Hill from 1998-2001.

Canon Lamb’s former catechist and long-time friend, the Rev Canon Bruce Ballantine-Jones, called him “an outstanding servant of the gospel” – someone he admired for “his integrity, fierce loyalty to the Scriptures and the evangelical cause”.

“As a member of St Philip’s, Caringbah since my retirement, I know how long-lasting was his influence and how much he was loved by the folks there,” Canon Bruce Ballantine-Jones said. “I know also that many others of our diocesan family have appreciated his ministry and witness. For myself, it was a pleasure and a privilege to have worked with him and to have been his friend.”

# True allegiance



DR GLENN DAVIES

**T**HE WORLD WAS OUTRAGED BY THE NEWS OF THE INVASION AND SUBSEQUENT slaughter at the Garissa University College last month in the early hours of Maundy Thursday. The gunmen responsible for the atrocity were from the militant group Al-Shabaab, based in Somalia, taking some 700 students hostage. Though the siege ended the same day when all four attackers were killed, by then 148 were dead including 142 students, three policemen and three soldiers. It is understood that the gunmen asked the students if they were Christian or Muslim. If they answered "Muslim" they were freed; if they answered "Christian", they were executed.

One wonders what it would have been like to be faced with such a challenging question. One also wonders how the average Australian Christian, let alone Sydney Anglican, would have responded if faced with the same question. Would the immediate prospect of certain death sway you from your allegiance to Jesus? Or would the prospect of freedom and the comfort of life, however transitory, be such a compelling attraction that denouncing the name of Jesus would be an easy price to pay for liberty and life? Not so for 142 Christian students in Kenya.

The unfolding evidence around the world of the rise of militant Islam against Christianity gives us cause for reflection. They are clearly zealous, driven by a mission to bring the rule of Allah to the lands under their control, as well as lands which they desire to control, and consequentially the elimination of all that stands in their way. While the word Islam is derived from the Arabic root *salema*, meaning peace, in a religious sense this means submission to the will of God and obedience to his law. However, the pursuit of this ideal embraces violence and force in order to achieve such submission.

By contrast, the Bible reveals that God's way of peace is through the gospel – not by force but by persuasion; not by coercion of human will but by the grace of God's will, as by his Spirit he changes the hearts and minds of people to enable them to put their faith in his Son, the Lord Jesus, who alone brings peace through his life, death and resurrection.

Like militant Muslims we have a mission, but our mission is in the way of peace. As the prophet Isaiah (52:7) declares: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion: 'Your God reigns!'" Similarly the apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians (6:15), reminding them that they are to have their "feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace".

Our mission, adopted by our Synod in 2014, is to commit ourselves afresh, in prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, to glorify God and love our neighbour by proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ, calling people to repent and living lives worthy of him.

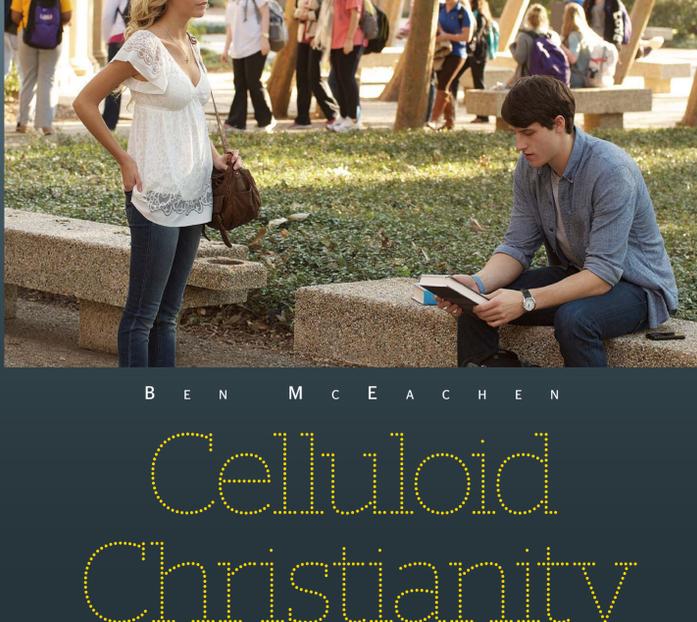
Since we have the good news, the news of true peace, our allegiance to Christ should be nothing less than the commitment of those students in Garissa – who, when challenged, did not hesitate to honour Jesus as their Lord even though it cost them their lives. May God give us the grace and courage "to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that is within you, yet with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

## 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.

Love them or hate them, they're making a noise.  
So where are Christian filmmakers getting it right and wrong?



B E N E M C E A C H E N

# Celluloid Christianity

## INTENT AND CONTENT

Those are the common questions asked of Christian movies and TV. They boil down to two crucial components: intent and content. Like any other Christian professional, screen practitioners exist in a simple yet complex consideration of whom they serve and how (Colossians 3:12-25). Despite significant changes ushered in by the phenomenal success of *The Passion of the Christ*, intent and content remain the defining markers of Christian screen productions.

To determine where things are at, then, demands clarification of exactly what industry operatives and commentators believe the intent and content should be. However, seeking such answers reveals contrasting perspectives and approaches, rather than uniformity.

Hollywood's desire to milk *The Passion* (right) was instantaneous but has taken time to emerge due to the slow-turning wheels of commercial art. Since 2004, the Christian subject matter broached by many American productions on the big and small screen has increased. The USA remains the world's only true market for creation and consumption of Christian productions, which saw a prominent spike during the past few years. From Russell Crowe in *Noah* to *The Bible* mini-series, epic *Exodus: Gods and Kings* to biopic *Selma* and the small-scale drama *God's Not Dead* (above), Christian-related content became something like a trend. Not since the heady days of biblical epics in the 1950s and 1960s – *The Robe* (below), *The Ten Commandments*, *The Greatest Story Ever Told* – have such major money and high-calibre talent been invested into screen stuff that Christians value.

David Nixon was at the birth of this post-*Passion* movement. The son of Australian missionaries, Nixon produced *Facing the Giants* (2006) and *Fireproof* (2008), one of the best-known and successful Christian movies ever. As he describes it, "*The Passion* turned the tide" in the Hollywood studio system "not because of the content, but it made a bunch of money." This awakened studios to the truth that Christians actually watch movies. Their newfound quest to deliver "God films" to an "under-served audience" helped Nixon's low-budget Christian movies get major distribution and notice.

"Hollywood now wanted these kinds of films – but they couldn't call them Christian films, because they were afraid that would turn off some of the market," Nixon says. "So they turned it into 'faith-based' film. Now that's a very broad word that could mean anything, and not necessarily a Christian film. It could be a spiritual film. Could be a feel-good film. Like the movie *The Blind Side*. That's not really a Christian film. It's about a Christian family and there is one scene where the family sits down to pray at the Thanksgiving table. And that's it."

From a Christian standpoint, the most notable win from the faith-based surge was *The Chronicles of Narnia* trilogy. Without reaching the same heights as the *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings* franchises that it competed with, C.S. Lewis' fantasy allegories still scored more than \$1.5 billion at the world's box offices. "I don't mind if Hollywood wants to call films 'faith-based' because, 10 years ago, you couldn't get films like that into theatres," Nixon says. "So now we're able to do that. Whatever you want to call it is fine with me."

## TWISTED TALE

But it's not fine with everybody, especially when the line between "faith-based" and "Christian" blurs so much it results in serious misrepresentation or misinformation. Biopics such as 2006's *Amazing Grace* (about William Wilberforce) and last year's *Unbroken* (about Louis Zamperini) dialled back the Christian convictions of their protagonists. So much so that these real disciples of Christ were presented as more faith-based than based upon Christian faith.

You may be less offended by this than the way *Noah* and *Exodus* deliberately warped Judeo-Christian Scripture. Both films are fantastic examples of content being Christian-related with intent being far from any Christian purpose. These Hollywood epics chose to treat historical accounts from God's word as launch pads for big-budget bluster. Each movie distanced itself from any possible "Christian movie" label to appeal to as broad a global audience as possible. Yet this didn't appease those outraged by biblical distortion onscreen.

"*Noah* was an embarrassment," says Ray Comfort, who released a short documentary last year to counter *Noah* with the biblical data about the Flood. "*Noah* was a childish fantasy produced by an atheist with an overripe imagination."

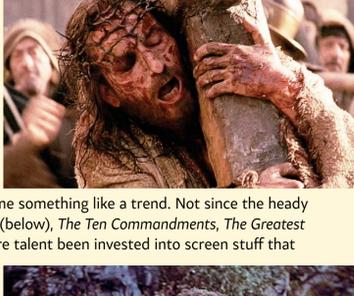
Author of *What Hollywood Believes* and co-leader of evangelism movement *The Way of the Master* with *Fireproof* star Kirk Cameron, Comfort typifies the "outraged" response. His disdain extends to Christians supporting productions such as *Noah*, even if they only watched it to witness "how bad it is" first-hand.

"We line the pockets of Hollywood producers who hate God, hate the Bible, and now have more financial ability to make more movies to promote their anti-Christian worldview," he says bluntly.

Still, such "faith-based" blockbusters created an undeniable opportunity for real-world biblical discussion, akin to what *The Passion* provoked. Comfort acknowledges they did offer "a springboard for Christians to share the gospel. So there is one redeeming feature".

In agreement with that point is Rod Hopping, CEO of Heritage Films. Based in Queensland, Heritage is Australia's leading distributor of Christian and faith-based movies.

"Just imagine someone sees *Noah* or *Exodus* and they are so intrigued by what they see that they go to the source to find out more," Hopping says. "I can see the other side of this argument... and my response is I don't feel called to be the movie policeman who points out theological mistakes Hollywood is making. There are too many positive things to focus on than spend our time having this sort of conversation each time Hollywood 'gets it wrong'."



## FILM DOWN UNDER

Outside the USA Christian filmmakers are virtually unheard of. It's not that they don't exist or aren't involved in productions, it's simply that American practitioners and product are so dominant they appear to be the only players.

In a noteworthy move, Queensland's Heritage Films is looking to compete in the international "faith-based" space. Heritage recently announced its first film production – a dramatic thriller about one of Australia's most high-profile crimes. Set to be released in 2016, *Where is Daniel?* will focus upon the abduction of Sunshine Coast schoolboy Daniel Morcombe (right), and the colossal impact upon his family.

Heritage is a distribution company dedicated to releasing movies with the "overriding factor" of hope. Its CEO, Rod Hopping, read the book written by Daniel's parents Bruce and Denise Morcombe (also called *Where is Daniel?*) and was "absolutely enthralled" by their telling of what daily life was like after Daniel disappearing from a bus stop in 2003.

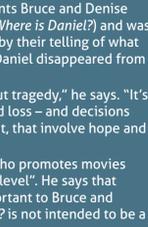
"*Where is Daniel?* is about tragedy," he says. "It's about pain, suffering and loss – and decisions made in the midst of that, that involve hope and purpose."

Hopping is a Christian who promotes movies that "connect at a heart level". He says that while "faith is very important to Bruce and Denise", *Where is Daniel?* is not intended to be a Christian movie.

How the Morcombes experienced pastoral support and care from Catholic priests during their ordeal will be represented onscreen. But Hopping says Heritage's first production doesn't want to be "limited" by any mainstream scepticism directed at Christian movies, as it will strive to connect with families everywhere.

"I want to be in that [faith-based] space," he says. "One of the gaps in some [Christian movies], and why I'm drawn to telling the *Where is Daniel?* story, is that it isn't really 'Come to Jesus and everything's cool'. Your problems can sometimes start when you begin a life of faith."

"I'm a big believer in telling true stories of pain and suffering, but finding hope in the midst of it, because none of us are exempt from pain and suffering. That's one of the great opportunities we have here with telling the Bruce, Denise and Daniel story."



Faith dialled back: Ioan Gruffudd as William Wilberforce in *Amazing Grace*.

## GROWTH INDUSTRY

Whatever else *Noah* and *Exodus* generated, they revealed the upswing in Christian-related content on mainstream movies or TV was no Billy Graham crusade.

Yet this upswing has been the USA's Christian movie and TV industry develop, in terms of quality and prominence. Bigger names have become associated with Christian-related productions, such as Oscar winners Angelina Jolie (*Unbroken*), Nicholas Cage (*Left Behind*), Cuba Gooding, Jr (*Freedom*) and Tilda Swinton (*The Chronicles of Narnia*).

While the gospel intent about some of those movies can be questioned, professing Christians such as Cameron, *The Lord of the Rings*' Sean Astin and *Everybody Loves Raymond*'s Patricia Heaton have been making more overt Christian movies. Following years of involvement with *Survivor*, *The Apprentice* and *The Voice*, prominent TV producer Mark Burnett used his clout to get *The Bible* mini-series to air.

"Grateful to be able to spread the word," Burnett and wife Roma Downey have funnelled *The Bible*'s international success into follow-up series A.D. (above) about the book of Acts.

Last year, the number of self-proclaimed Christian movies released at American cinemas was unusually high. These movies aimed to promote Christian messages or teachings within the world's largest and most influential entertainment marketplace.

In contrast to the disappointing revenue of *Noah* and *Exodus*, *God's Not Dead*, *Heaven Is For Real* (right) and *Son of God* sold far more tickets than expected. Does this mean explicitly identifying as a Christian film is more appealing to US audiences than a movie trying to distance itself from any Christian material within it? Is there also a widespread yearning for the good news Christian movies claim to spruik?

Not necessarily, according to *Christianity Today*'s chief film critic Alissa Wilkinson. "The market seems pretty large, and I've seen statistics that suggest a sizable percentage of Americans are watching [Christian movies]," she says. "But because a major strategy for the films has been to have churches buy out blocks of tickets in theatres, it's still fair to say that most watchers are people who already agree."



Successful, but filled with "decidedly" Christian language and culture: *Fireproof*.

## PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED

Grassroots campaigning within American churches and their membership is the favoured method for publicising Christian movies. Nixon's latest production, *To Live Love On Her Arms*, was recently released in the US and had spent one year promoting itself to local congregations. This indication of a targeted audience brings the issues of content and intent to a head. Who are Christian movies and TV series actually made for? Are they made for believers, or everyone else?

Australian reviewers Russell Matthews and Mark Hadley agree with Wilkinson. They feel that, despite the technical quality having improved and higher-profile names being attached, the majority of Christian movies continue to only preach to the converted (see left), despite the fact that they seem to be trying to live out Jesus' missional commands in Matthew 28 or Acts 1.

"They're trying to be evangelistic in their mindset," says Matthews, who blogs about film at *Russelling Reviews*. "[Christians] try to do everything in one film to try to get a person to the point of believing in Jesus and accepting him as your saviour – that they're going to come to the altar of the big screen at the end."

"Christian filmmakers want to reach out and have a good gospel message to present to the non-Christian population but, unfortunately, it's only the Christians going to see these films."

Hadley doesn't believe film is the "best way to present the gospel directly. What a film audience is doing is coming in to relax their guard intentionally, to enjoy something and maybe be challenged. They're not coming in to have their worldview changed and to make some kind of life-changing decision in that cinema."

These issues have plagued Christian movies and TV shows. Confusion about who these productions are meant for, and how viewers should respond, flows from the difficulties of Christian communication. Professing the good news to those who haven't yet responded to it has tended to be done in terms only Christians subscribe or relate to. Additionally, damage has been done by the compounding factor of screen "sermons" delivered by those without the requisite abilities or credibility to pull it off.

"The challenge at the moment is not to get people to listen to the gospel," Hadley says. "The challenge at the moment is to get people to listen to Christians who are telling people the gospel."

Nixon and Wilkinson also note that too many Christian screen practitioners haven't been up to snuff. "I think the problem has been that Christians have been too quick to praise a Christian movie, even when it's not that good," Nixon says. "There is a lot of enthusiasm out there, but not a lot of talent. Well, they need to get talent. They've got to see that they've got to get better and better."

Adds Wilkinson: "Christian filmmakers often need to learn how to use critical feedback as a means of improving their craft. I find that Christian filmmakers sometimes skip the years of hard work that come [before] becoming a good artist. There's no fast track or short cut to artistic excellence: just a lot of hard, careful work and prayer."

There's also no clear direction among industry operatives and commentators about how to proceed with Christian movies, or Christians involved with faith-based screen productions. However, the repeated call for content and intent to align provides guidance. If the good news is to be broadcast at all through the big and small screen, excellence in artistry should be matched with Christian purpose, in whatever way this is best expressed to the audience being targeted.

Although the past decade has seen many gains, the immediate future isn't as jaw-dropping. Since *Noah* and *Exodus* failed to become enormous hits, Hollywood has gone quiet on what biblical epics it will be releasing next. Recently announced was Hugh Jackman being cast as the Apostle Paul in a Warner Bros film produced by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck. But don't hold your breath for it to be made. What's more certain is that explicitly Christian or faith-based productions will continue to pour forth from the American heartland.

While that's an unsurprising announcement, more notable are two upcoming projects linked with Australia – a documentary about Hillsong United (*Let Hope Rise*, released this year) and Heritage Films' *Where Is Daniel?* for 2016.

Whatever the future for Christian screen productions, Nixon sounds a rallying cry about post-*Passion* opportunities: "God opened that door so that we would be able to do this".

## TAKING DIRECTION

Out or in? That's the dividing line that scriptwriter, producer and cultural commentator Mark Hadley uses to define a Christian movie. Is it looking to reach those who are on the outside or inside of Christian faith? From his experience, the "vast majority" are made for those already aligned with the Christian messages being projected.

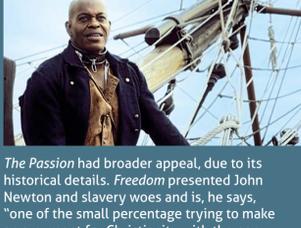
"They might think they are facing out," Hadley says. "*Fireproof* might think it is facing out; that [it is asking viewers to] consider the claims of Christianity upon their life. But the truth is that the language and culture that are being presented are decidedly Christian. Christian filmmakers are largely talking to Christians."

Like any subculture trying to reach the masses, Christians will struggle to communicate effectively when it's entirely on their own terms. In other words, when they seek to speak at audience members, rather than speaking to them where they are.

Hadley believes the biggest issue with Christian movies is that, as those making them attempt to "face outward", they can often fail to see beyond their own agenda.

"The problem with most films in the Christian market that seem to face outward – or the producers would even say they are facing outward – is they haven't got outside their own culture," he says. "They are not addressing the concerns of the non-Christian world."

Hadley cites *The Passion of the Christ* and recent release *Freedom* (below) as examples of outward-facing Christian movies.



*The Passion* had broader appeal. Due to its historical details, *Freedom* presented John Newton and slavery woes and is, he says, "one of the small percentage trying to make an argument for Christianity with the non-believer in mind. But, again, it is shackled by a lot of 'Christianese' and the decision to place Christian songs in it, as if Christian songs meant something to the non-Christian market."

## TOP FIVE CHRISTIAN FILMS

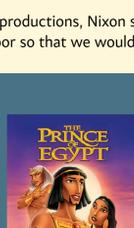
**Elmer Gantry (1960)**  
Burt Lancaster plays a salesman who fakes conviction as a revival tent preacher. Many movies feature doggy ministers but this classic drama vividly illustrates the conundrum of 1 Phillipians 1:18.

**Chariots of Fire (1981)**  
Best picture Oscar-winner, based on the true story of a Christian athlete motivated by God's glory, not Olympic gold. Inspiring without making you gag.

**The Prince of Egypt (1998)**  
Forget *Exodus: Gods and Kings*. This animated musical is a vastly superior treatment of the Exodus events. While a secular production, God's sovereignty and humanity's status are well presented.

**The Passion of the Christ (2004)**  
Brutal, resonating depiction of what Jesus suffered before his sacrificial death. Mel Gibson diminishes the realism but his unflinching gaze upon Christ's gracious endurance is laudable.

**Fireproof (2008)**  
Virtually synonymous with the "Christian movie" genre, Kirk Cameron's marriage drama raised the bar for onscreen witnessing, and affected real-world relationships to change.



# Creation and the Christian

In the first of a two-part series

**DAN WU** savours our Creator's

joy in what he has made, and

our place in his delight.

“THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND EVERYTHING IN IT, THE WORLD, AND ALL WHO live in it” (Ps 24:1).

One of the absolute highlights of the past few years for me was the time when I opened the back door, walked outside and leaned on the back fence... watching the blazing sun go down below the headland while looking over my panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean.

Needless to say, this is not the usual evening view in Newtown where I live; there the night-times are most often punctuated by the thud of doof-doof music from college parties, and the only thing you can watch go down at night might get you killed if the dealers spot you.

But that evening we were on holidays down the coast and the scenery was spectacular. The house we were staying in was on the headland, with a 270-degree water view overlooking a beautiful beach, carved deep into the rocky coastline. On a calm and sunny day, the ocean is this brilliant deep, deep blue, the air is warm and clear and you can't do anything but feel totally relaxed. Even when the weather turns, it is no less spectacular. To see the clouds roll in and watch the weather change from sunny to storming in a matter of seconds, to see the swell suddenly pick up and feel the intimidating power of the waves crashing up against the rocks, sending spray up high into the air with so much power you felt the echo of the impact go through you from hundreds of metres away, was simply awesome.

Yet the absolute highlight moment came early the next morning. I was determined to go fishing while we were down there. I thought, "With this much water around, I'm going to catch a fish if it kills me". So I braved the weather, put on about four layers of clothes and took my gear down to the headland. The air was so cold that it felt like a knife through my chest with every breath, and my faithful running shoes were saturated in the wet grass before I had gone 10 metres.

As I got near to the honey hole spot down there that I knew of, there was the deafening thud of a wave and I saw a solid wall of water rise up and smash down on the little rock seat where I was going to sit. So I thought, "Okay, that *would* kill me and I'm not really that determined to catch a fish".

I thought I'd try somewhere else. So I picked my way along the rocks until I found a spot that was high enough and set back far enough that I thought I would be safe. But, you guessed it, about five minutes into it I watched a wave come towards me in slow motion, hit the rocks below, jackknife up about five metres above me, come down and drench me to the core. That was my cue to pack up and head back to the house for a shower, some clean, dry clothes, and bacon and eggs for breakfast. But even as I trudged back up the hill, through more wet grass, soaked through and freezing cold, I felt alive and great at having been out there to experience all that.

The point of all this is to say that real life is physical. It has to do with touch and smell and sight and sound and taste. It has to do with rocks and waves and fish and bacon and eggs. It has to do with stuff, sensations, adrenaline, experiences. That's what life is. And that is because – and I find this pretty amazing – God, who is not physical, who can't be seen or touched, has made a physical universe of creatures and sensations, and made us to take part in, experience and, what's more, to enjoy and delight in that physical creation.

The doctrine of creation has very important things to say to Christians about the nature of created life, how God wants us to live in his world and how we are to understand our salvation in Jesus Christ. In fact, the two doctrines – creation and salvation – are two sides of the same coin. As Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck wrote of the doctrine of creation presented in the pages of the Bible: "Creation is the initial act and foundation of all divine revelation [...] No right relation to God is conceivable apart from this basis".

One of the most sustained reflections on the nature of created life is Psalm 104. In this article I'd like to offer some thoughts drawn from this psalm on what it means for us to be made by God. These are not the only things that can be said about our created nature but they are very helpful in our approach to life in this world.

## GOD DELIGHTS IN RULING HIS CREATION (V1-9)

The first thing to note from this psalm is that to be made *by* God is to be made *for* God. The psalm is an extended exposition on God's providence: his rule and care over all aspects of creation – time and space, light and dark, the weather, provision of food, drink and shelter for all animals. But the psalm is far more than a dry list of what God does. It is a beautiful celebration of the wonders and pleasures God has stitched into the fabric of his world. But the main message and theme of the psalm are expressed in v31: "May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works". It is a psalm about God's delight: it is about *his* joy in filling his creation with joy.

The psalm opens with a focus on God's rule over the creation and sustenance of the world. The secular biblical scholar Robert Alter comments that it is a "poetic free improvisation on the creation story". But where Genesis 1 emphasises God's transcendent authority (speaking his word from on high with creation leaping to respond in obedience), Psalm 104 complements that image by presenting God this time as a labourer, doing that hard, satisfying work of fashioning a home with his own hands. Perhaps here in Psalm 104 we may liken God to the ultimate contestant on *The Block* – fashioning decor (v2, 6), laying beams (v3a), creating "water features" (v3b), pouring foundations (v5), designing floor plans (v8-9), even doing his own plumbing (v6-9)! Bringing the two passages together also helps us to better feel the sense of satisfaction and joy in the repeated refrain after each stage of the Genesis creation narrative, "And God saw that it was good".

It's also worth noting that this view of creation stands in stark contrast to just about every other ancient view of both the world and God. In Mesopotamian religion, the world wasn't good but rather full of chaos and disorder, dark forces and bad luck, created as a side product of the warring of the gods. Gnosticism, which arose in the second century AD, taught that physical creation was evil or illusory, to be escaped from in order to join the realm of the purely spiritual. Likewise God (or the gods) in ancient religions were mostly fickle, capricious and self-serving, creating humanity primarily to be their slaves and bring them food.

But the God of the Bible is the God who is faithful, generous and self-giving – the God who works and whose work reflects his character of goodness. Who creates for his own glory and pleasure, but whose glory and pleasure is not narcissistic self-aggrandisement at the expense of others; instead, it shows his faithful, serving love for what he has made. It is rather fitting, then, that when God became flesh in the Lord Jesus Christ, he did so as a carpenter's son – a humble worker. Creation, in Psalm 104, is envisioned as the magnificent, strong, secure house, solidly and beautifully built by God himself, to become his home, filled with his glorious love and faithfulness, for all his family to experience and revel in – for God to delight in, in bringing delight to others. And this is what we see in the central section of the psalm.

## GOD DELIGHTS IN CARING FOR HIS CREATION (V10-32)

The main section of the psalm moves through different aspects of creation, exploring the length, width, height and depth of God's faithful, loving provision for each part. No animal is despised or neglected – even wild donkeys and rock badgers receive focused attention. Resources are deployed with careful planning. Ecological systems are woven together in profound interdependence (v10-23), even to the extent of apportioning time-sharing of common resources (v20-23)! One cannot read this psalm and help but think that the nature documentaries on our TV screens confirm the truth of God's world, as we are presented with amazing discoveries and insights that boggle the mind in how varied, intricate and delicately balanced the system of our world is.

As I have mentioned already, however, the psalm moves us beyond a call simply to observe, or even conserve, the creation. It calls us to *revel* in it and take joy in it. The wild donkeys in v11, for example, quench their thirst. A more literal translation would be: "they break their thirst in pieces". More than simply not needing to drink any more, the cold mountain air and riverbeds through which water flows into the springs provides wild donkeys the equivalent of a "thirst crusher": like the pleasure an ice cold can from the fridge provides after a long, hot day working in the sun.

The birds (v12) are given the branches of the trees to shelter in, so that they can spend their time filling the air with song – the noise of beauty and celebration. Or, perhaps most strikingly, in v26 leviathan is mentioned: "which you formed to frolic [or 'play'] there". Leviathan was the "Jaws" of the ancient world; the semi-mythical, terrifying sea monster whose main occupation was killing. Here it is pictured like a bath toy for God. He made the leviathan to play like a rubber ducky, splashing in the waters. Enjoyment, fun, play, are all celebrated as an integral part of God's purposes for all his creation.

When it comes to human life, it is no different. We are also made to delight and revel in the physical, mental and emotional experience of being God's creation. The food that God provides is more than just what it takes to survive: "wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, bread that sustains [lit. 'strengthens'] his heart". A glad, strong heart and a shining face. Food, drink and more than that not only keep us alive but allow us to thrive, enjoy and express the physicality of our bodies in all their God-given glory.

Again, this is a perspective on life and bodies that may be familiar to us but it needs reinforcing for two key, related reasons. First, Christians are so often portrayed and caricatured as those who miss out on the pleasures of life, because God doesn't want us to enjoy ourselves too much. It *can* often seem like those who reject God have the most pleasurable, fulfilling existence. And Christians fall into the trap of thinking that if we enjoy ourselves too much this must somehow be sinful. But this is a total lie. The God of the Bible is not mean-handed or stingy in his blessings and following him does not automatically reduce our freedom to enjoy the pleasures of creation. In fact, just the opposite – it's only those who follow God who can properly enjoy creation.

Second, moreover, this enjoyment of creation is not an optional extra in the Christian life. It is something that we *need*. In God's goodness, we have been made as finite beings. We have bodies and minds that grow tired. We need food and rest, to relax and be refreshed, to stop thinking "produce", "achieve" and "do", and simply receive, be content in and enjoy God's goodness to us.

That is how we have been made, and when these are lost from our lives the effect over time can be very marked and sadly observable. The impatience and irritability of the overworked, overtired parent, whose main engagement with their children is to bark them into line between replying to emails or posting on Facebook on their handheld device. The insatiable need to climb the corporate or social ladder, which turns colleagues and friends into rivals to be stepped on. The draining away of excitement and joy in a congregation because they have forgotten whose work it is to save, and have started to think they are an indispensable asset to God's kingdom and he cannot do his work without their initiatives.

The rest and enjoyment Psalm 104 expresses as part of created life remind us there is only one Sovereign Lord of the universe, only one being in whose power it is to create, sustain and change the world and it isn't me. But this, also brings us back to the ultimate goal of the psalm. It is not simply a celebration of creation, and a call to enjoy ourselves. Rather, it is a call to celebrate and enjoy creation *in a way that points to the joy of the Creator himself*.

The psalm gives us three "tracks" or parameters to understand what creation is all about and how it testifies to the God who made it. First, it testifies to his sovereign power: "All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time" (v27). At every moment that fills day, we are entirely dependent on our creator for each beat of our heart and each breath that every our lungs. He made us, he sustains us and he provides for us. It is a notion that should fill us with both fear (knowing our lives hang utterly on nothing but his word) and thankfulness (knowing the God on whose word our lives hang is good, faithful and generous beyond our understanding).

Second, it testifies to his wisdom: "How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all!" (v24). God, not us, is the one who knows everything and whose wisdom is the power that moves around. Thus, if we are to understand the world – and our place in it – properly, we do so only by listening to his word and bringing our created lives and use of creation into alignment with his ways.

Third and ultimately, it testifies to the fact that the joy at the centre of the universe – by which all other joys are relativised and find their right place – is God's joy, and not primarily ours. Or, to put it another way, our human delight can only be properly fulfilled when God's delight is realised. As the theme verse of the psalm puts it: "May the Lord rejoice in his works" (v31). It is only when God's own purposes for his creation are brought to pass – when he is able to delight at his goodness flowing through to his creation *without interruption* – that creation's own joy can be complete.

## OBSTACLES TO DELIGHT WILL BE REMOVED (V33-35)

This leads us to the conclusion of the psalm. One of the somewhat puzzling things about many of the psalms meditating on creation

(e.g. Ps 8 & 139) is that they all have what is known as an "imprecatory" section in them – a section that refers to the judgement and destruction of the wicked. In Psalm 104 it comes right at the end: "May sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more" (v35).

While this may seem a somewhat rude and out of place insertion in a psalm meditating on the beauty and delight of creation – as if some dour editor has decided to put a wet towel on the whole thing at the end – in fact, this is the very point of its being there. There is a rude interruption to the flow of joy between God and his creation, a direct opposition to the delightful plans and purposes of God for his world, a rejection of the creator and his sovereignty and wisdom: sin.

Because we are so used to living in a world full of sin, this has trivialised the word into meaning something like "fun but a bit naughty". We can forget "the exceeding sinfulness of sin". But *sin*, as the Bible defines it – rejecting the Creator and attempting to rule our lives in his place – is *the* problem in the world. Psalm 104 makes this stand out even more starkly in relief – each part of the world lies in an interconnected web of total dependence on the wisdom of its Creator. When the world turns away from God, then, the result cannot be anything but darkness, death and decay, an inability to fulfil the glorious purposes for which it was made.

We will look further next month at the difference between the world's sin and the joys of Psalm 104, and its implication for our lives.

## CHURCHES DO OUTREACH FOR EASTER



Kids at Asquith's program get into the groove.

Churches around Sydney have made the most of the Easter school holidays, running programs for young and old and connecting with non-church community members.

St John's, Asquith, on Sydney's north shore, is one such church, that began running its current holiday program two years ago.

"We started it because we just wanted to do outreach a bit better," says the Rev Scott Maxwell, assistant minister at St John's. "We hadn't previously run a lot for kids that age that was deliberately outward-focused, and so it's been good doing this. Team member-wise it's picked up momentum as well, I think because people have seen it, heard stories, and [become] excited. It's become a whole-church thing."

St John's program is run similarly to a beach mission, with a kids, adults and "behind the scenes" team, with kids' activities run to the theme of "Epic Explorers". Mr Maxwell says the church has been keen to make sure adults know the program is for them as well, and follow-up has been something St John's has tried to capitalise on.

"This year, we've had heaps of people [who came to the program] express interest in other ministries," he says. "We had one lady who wants to come along to church and wants to join a Bible study group. We planned for that kind of thing more this year. We have a BBQ in a few weeks that we invited people to and we plan to run Christianity Explored as well."

In Sydney's inner west, the Village Church in Annandale ran a program with a slightly different bent, hosting a School of Rock complete with guitars and rocking outfits.

"We had School of Rock because we have a couple of talented musician members, Cameron and Chanelle Henderson, who have the relevant skills and are already involved in ministries here," says Annandale's children's minister, Kristy Griggs. "They offered to contribute in that kind of way and the theme came out of that."

"We didn't take the approach that 'Jesus is the ultimate rock star', partially because out of the 32 kids, only three of them are churched. The rest are community contacts who either only do Scripture, or do nothing. So, we had two lessons that were really simple gospel presentations, one being 'God saves', and the second being 'Who does God save?', the answer being 'sinners'. We tried to keep it simple and to the point."

Annandale has been running similar programs for the past 18 months, but Ms Griggs says the children seemed particularly engaged this time, and also seemed to retain more from the lessons and the memory verses. Songs from Colin Buchanan, Pharrell Williams' "Happy" and "Octopus's Garden" by The Beatles all made appearances during the week.

"We had trombones, we had violins, we had a boy on the bongos, we had recorders, it was all there," Ms Griggs says. "It all ended up sounding good as well."



Annandale's School of Rock students perform.

In Sydney's Blue Mountains, Springwood themed its program after ancient Egypt in order to teach the story of Joseph from Genesis. "We had the auditorium set up like it was something out of the Temple of Doom," says Springwood's outreach and women's minister, Vicki Brasington. "We turned it into an archaeological dig site where kids unearthed the story of Joseph and learnt about the problem of sin, and also about forgiveness."

Ms Brasington says that close to 100 children attended each day, with drama being at the heart of the program. So much so that the leaders acting in the drama stayed in character all day, allowing children to interact with them and the story over morning tea or during breaks.

"The kids were also involved in one of three electives: science, craft or dance," Ms Brasington says. "We found that helped keep kids switched on, and they had something to show at the end of it. The dancers performed, so parents came back to watch, but we also had a parents' cafe so parents could stick around for coffee and morning tea."

Mr Maxwell says he has enjoyed seeing his church's holiday program progress and encourages other Christians to be involved in church outreach over the Easter holidays in particular.

"Easter is a time when churches often get loads of visitors, non-church people are on holidays and have time to spend," he says. "It's a great time for people to back their church's ministries at that time, and maybe try and plan family holidays around ministries like this if possible. That can be really good for the whole church to get behind outreach."



# Adventure time

JUDY ADAMSON

**A Royal Night Out**  
Rated M

IT'S JUNE 8, 1945 AND COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF BRITISH REVELLERS ARE AT THE GATES of Buckingham Palace, ready to celebrate VE Day as the end of World War II in Europe becomes official at the stroke of midnight.

Inside the palace, teenage princesses Elizabeth and Margaret are longing to go outside and experience this national party, but "Mummy" (Emily Watson) has put her foot down. Both are keenly disappointed and Margaret (Bel Powley) loudly expresses her frustration, hilariously adding that she is "completely cheesed" about the Queen's decision. Teens will be teens.

Elizabeth (Sarah Gadon), with steel in upper lip, tackles her parents again and convinces the King (Rupert Everett) to let them go. The Queen is naturally concerned about protection for – and appropriate actions by – the young heir to the throne yet the King, while agreeing, is more sympathetic, remarking that for Elizabeth this night out "may be the only chance she gets".

The girls are dizzy with excitement about an evening incognito as "Lizzy" and "Megs", Margaret busily planning where they'll go and getting the scoop on secret party passwords from the footmen. Then they discover the Queen has arranged a couple of officers as escorts and planned a very "safe" evening for the two of them.

Needless to say, safety isn't what happens. London is full of joyous revellers and Margaret soon slips out to experience it all. Before long the older, more responsible Elizabeth has to rush off to find her. So, they're separated from each other and their (easily distracted) escorts, out among thousands at a time when just about anything is possible – and they aren't the least bit prepared for any of it.

We know from the now-Queen Elizabeth's diary that she and Princess Margaret did indeed go out to celebrate the end of the European war, cheering their parents up on the balcony of Buckingham Palace and partying the night away.

Her diary doesn't offer much in the way of detail, so *A Royal Night Out* enthusiastically fills in the blanks, creating adventures for both girls that take them from high-end hotels to local pubs, and Trafalgar Square to seamy Soho.

The city is brimful of people bursting to cast their cares aside for one day, whether that means drinking and dancing until the sun rises, raising a glass with family at home or carting complete strangers off to bed (be aware there are a couple of scenes that include semi-naked girls and half-dressed sex romps).

It was, on the whole, one big party and, watching the crush of crowds from her window, it's no wonder the Queen was nervous about letting her protected princesses out into this whirlwind of colour and high spirits.

Margaret, as one might expect, is soon downing champagne with relish, taking up with a party-hearty officer and having a whale of a time. Elizabeth's adventures happen more or less by accident through her search for Margaret, grudgingly aided by Jack (Jack Reynor) – a working-class airman whose experience of war has left him with a lot of emotional baggage.

The filmmakers have worked hard to recreate an authentic mid-1940s look and feel. There is literally a cast of thousands and plenty of hairstyles, end-of-war clothing and set decoration to admire, which is bound to trigger a few memories for the grandparents among us.

As the King and Queen, Rupert Everett and Emily Watson inhabit their roles with ease. However, they do spend a relatively small amount of time onscreen and the bulk of the dramatic burden falls to their "daughters".

Powley provides much of the comedy as Margaret and is very naïve and knowing, jolly and wide-eyed all at once (although the character teeters when she plays her too much for laughs). Sarah Gadon has a good deal of poise and presence as Elizabeth, and looks enough like her to carry that off as well, although the scriptwriters do her character a disservice by overplaying the ignorance card.

The exceedingly plummy tones of the young princesses do seem a bit forced to modern ears. On the other hand, all we need to do is watch old newsreels and we will hear, more or less, the same sounds. Not to mention that in the story the girls spend most of their time – almost literally – as fish out of water, so perhaps part of what we see is an intentional gap between them and everyone else.

The story of *A Royal Night Out* plays almost like a reverse fairy tale and has, like a fairy tale, a reasonable amount of predictability to it. It's lightweight but sweet and while it doesn't always strike the right note, the feeling you are left with is one of gentle, uncomplicated charm. Those were the days, right?

## Jesus in the Congo



Film producer, writer and narrator Joshua Maule (left) with Congolese men and women from the documentary.

NICK GILBERT

AS MUCH AS WE HEAR ABOUT OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN AFRICA, IT IS always striking how different and unfamiliar the situation for many African Christians is to our own. One where suffering and persecution, at the hands of your neighbour, even from fellow Christians, can be the order of the day, but where God's work still abounds.

This is the story of *Jesus in Congo*, a half-hour documentary made by Sydney Anglicans Joshua Maule and Bryce McLellan. It's a story told from the perspective of the viewers as outsiders looking in, but those involved are mostly Congolese Christians from a variety of backgrounds and vantage points.

The film, mostly a combination of archival footage and on-location interviews with individuals, begins with an overview of the historical and political situation of the country: colonial era slavery; more than 5.4 million dead since the beginning of civil war in 1998; some 40 per cent of all women in the country believed to have been victims of rape. It is a harrowing assortment of statistics that barely scratches the surface.

Particularly through the Congolese Christians who speak on camera, *Jesus in Congo* also makes the point that the church itself has often been complicit in the suffering. The mission of the church as established by colonial powers, says Bishop Dr Titre Ande, was not to spread the gospel but was often a tool of "civilisation" to "submit local people to politicians. That was the aim".

In speaking of mass graves in the country in the late 1990s, former health administrator Oscar says, "What led me to be very sad was because most of the people who had been involved in those things, massacres, were Christian, and they were killing their neighbour. The people who together were going into church and singing together."

Narrator Joshua Maule ponders: "I wonder how Christianity can be a force for good when it has such a bad history in Congo?"

Thankfully, this is a question asked with an answer in mind. *Jesus in Congo* provides refreshing glimpses into the work that God is doing through the faithful church in Congo, and through individual Christians as well. Bishops like Dr Ande and Bishop Muhindo Isesomo – both with links to the Diocese of Sydney – are working for the betterment of their regions and for the church of which they are bishops.

In the end, though, the people in the documentary, working in official positions or among their local neighbours, place their final hope in God, not in people. Even, or especially, in the face of great suffering.

"I have hope that, even though we don't know how, one day [widespread change in the church] will happen," says Timon, who works as a dentist in Congo. "God is not a human being, he is not limited. We will still trust him to change things. If not today, one day."

The stories are well worth hearing.

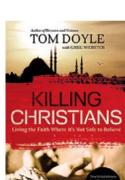
*Jesus in Congo* launched on May 2. [www.jesusincongo.com](http://www.jesusincongo.com)

## For the faint-hearted

DAVID MANSFIELD

**Killing Christians: Living the Faith Where It's not Safe to Believe**

By Tom Doyle  
Harper Collins Christian Publishing



THIS HAS BEEN A HARD BOOK TO READ.

Not because the writing is unreadable but because the contents are unbearable. It has been hard to pick up.

*Killing Christians* is a book of stories, snapshots of life for our brothers and sisters in Christ in countries and regions where the hatred for Christians, and the love of Christians, lead to horrific suffering and heroic sacrifices in and for the name and glory of Jesus.

We are taken to Somalia where a believer smuggles bibles into the country by hiding under corpses inside coffins, safe in the knowledge that the enemies won't touch, let alone look inside, something that carries death. In this way he survives undetected at various checkpoints along the way.

In Syria a Muslim refugee is fleeing to Jordan to provide some safety and future for her children. She travels by night, her black hijab providing the perfect camouflage. Several truck drivers offer her travel for sex. She meets one offering her extraordinary kindness and blesses her in the name of Jesus. Then, in Jordan, she meets more "people of the Bible" and life is changed.

We move to Gaza City where an infidel's apartment is ripped apart by Hamas strong men (some very young) because he is known to be praying with his Christian brothers. He knows he is on a hit list but his heart burns within him to share the gospel, even with his enemies.

I have writhed in my own shame and shallowness, pettiness and prayer-less life, cowardice and lack of courage.

But *Killing Christians* has also been hard to put down because the stories testify to the sovereign grace and purposes of God and the power of the gospel to rescue and gather his people to himself in dangerous places, in extraordinary ways, using unlikely people.

As I read this the world was confronted with the latest massacre by Al-Shabaab terrorists, killing 148 people in Garissa in Kenya – their target being Christians or anyone who couldn't recite the Koran.

In addition, while I read *Killing Christians* I have been making my way through the whole Bible, in every Anglican parish across the Sydney Diocese, for Anglican Aid. I have read afresh of the unfulfilled promises of God, ultimately fulfilled in His Son; the faith of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel and David; the righteous judgement of God on the idolatry and sin of the faithless nation of Israel and the nations around them; and the golden (crimson) thread of grace that God weaves through the generations and centuries of hideous human sin and evil.

The book will make you uncomfortable. I have been confronted with the searching question of Job 1:9: "Does Job fear God for nothing?" If there is no fruit on the vine, will I continue to rejoice in the Lord or have I simply embraced a subtle and pathetic mutation of the "prosperity gospel" I so often rail against?

I have also thought of that first-century extremist who smiled with smug satisfaction at the brutal stoning of Stephen, was hell-bent on destroying the church, went about from house to house dragging men and women off to prison and breathing murderous threats against the Lord's disciples (Acts 8:1,3 and 9:1). And we know what happened to him!

*Killing Christians* is for the faint-hearted. Read it and weep. Read it and repent. Read it and pray.