

Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

AUG
UST
2015

A world of pain

DOMESTIC ABUSE IN ANGLICAN CIRCLES

+ SSM: Hand back marriage licences?

& Praise from God, not men



COVER

In our church communities there are women and men being physically, emotionally and spiritually abused by their spouses right now. Think it doesn't happen? P10

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“We just love doing this
and making the most
of our gifts.”

Daniel Ough
Mission News



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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

MANAGING EDITOR: Russell Powell
EDITOR: Judy Adamson

ART DIRECTOR: Stephen Mason

ADVERTISING MANAGER: Kylie Zahra
PHONE: 02 8860 8850
EMAIL: ads@anglicanmedia.com.au

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Garry Joy
PHONE: 02 8860 8861
EMAIL: subs@anglicanmedia.com.au
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North Ryde youth focus on Diocesan Mission



Ready to go: the young leadership team of the North Ryde Games (NRG) program.

ST JOHN'S, NORTH RYDE IS TRYING TO FIND NEW WAYS TO FULFILL THE DIOCESAN MISSION, encouraging young people to stick around in our churches by getting more hands-on with ministry.

For the past nine years, St John's has operated a kids' program with a twist – high schoolers participate as leaders and as "campers" in two different components of the same program.

"I've been involved with beach missions and things in the past," says the rector of St John's, the Rev John Chappell, "and you reflect on the fact that they're great opportunities to do evangelism, kids' ministry and things like that, but often the long-term payoff is teens and young people having an extended opportunity to switch on to ministry.

"There are a lot of things we saw in that model that we thought would translate and serve well in our local context."

The five-day program sees 170 kids come along, assisted by a large group of 90 leaders, including many high schoolers. Mr Chappell says the program began with much smaller numbers nine years ago, but has slowly grown as it has gained traction in the local area and former attendees have transitioned to become leaders themselves.

"Parts of the program grew out of another program called Kids' Games, which we ran at my previous church," Mr Chappell says. "When we started here it was very much a provisional parish, there were only a few families, and we had maybe 15 leaders and 25 kids turn up to the first program. Since then it has grown each year to its current size.

"It is possible to take this idea and scale it down, then just add elements as the program grows."

While high schoolers help lead the primary school-aged children during the morning, they are treated to teaching and activities later in the afternoon that are especially for them. Mr Chappell says many of the mentoring and training elements have grown out of work done by Peter Mayrick at Moore College's Centre for Ministry Development.

"The leaders have a longer Bible talk together, they have discussion around that talk, some feedback or mentoring, some free time as well, and then head home at 4pm," Mr Chappell says. "The beauty of it is that we can get the good stuff out of beach missions but without it being in a residential mode. Plus parents love it because their teenage kids get home in the afternoon and zonk out, and then get up early the next day raring to go."

While the logistics of running a two-tiered program might seem intimidating, Mr Chappell says the church has worked around the burden particularly through the use of money raised from children enrolling in the program, which is then used to pay for afternoon soccer clinics and other professionally operated activities.

"A lot of churches attach a negligible cost to their programs on the assumption that will attract more people," Mr Chappell says. "We charge the first child \$120 for the week. Part of that is they get a cap and T-shirt, but that money also helps us pay for professional external coaches. That not only adds value to the program but logistically it frees us up to run the other program for the teen leaders."

The program has Mission 2020 firmly in its sights. Currently only 65 per cent of young people remain in the church when they reach adulthood, but Mr Chappell wants Sydney churches to far surpass the Mission target of 70 per cent.

"The retention stat in our churches, I think, is a real problem," he says. "We, as churches, really need to stop and have a hard look at why that is. What I think we need to be doing is recognise that teens are not a waste of space. They have enormous potential to offer things, but we have to actually make space and give them something to own and step up to the plate on. And they are capable of doing that, if we're prepared to think out a structure that works."

New urgency on marriage licence move

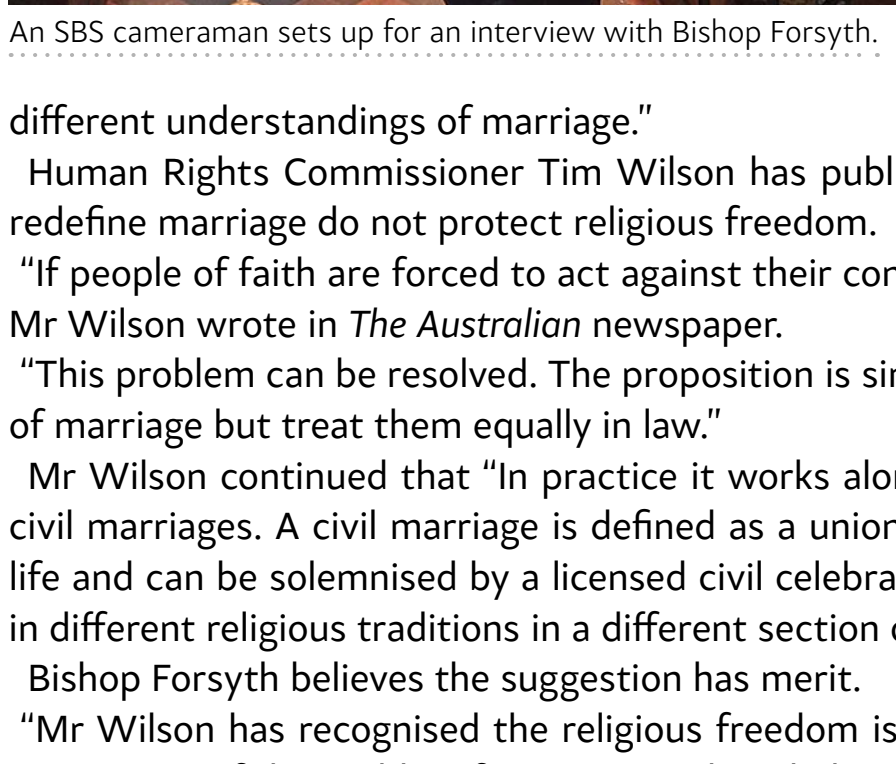
A REPORT BEING PREPARED FOR SYDNEY SYNOD IN OCTOBER ABOUT THE CHURCH'S FUTURE involvement as marriage celebrants for the state has been given renewed impetus by a decision of the Presbyterian Church in NSW.

The Presbyterian State Assembly has voted to ask its General Assembly of Australia to withdraw the whole Church from the Marriage Act if marriage is redefined to include same-sex couples, meaning its ministers could no longer solemnise marriages under the Act.

"The report which recommended this decision argued that if the Federal Government were to redefine marriage to include same-sex marriage then it would corrupt a good gift of God into a wrong," said the Rev Kevin Murray, the NSW Presbyterian Moderator. "That would mean that ministers would then be acting for the government in a system which did not reflect the biblical view of marriage. In this case the positive reason for our co-operation with the Marriage Act would have been removed, and we would be better to avoid association with evil by no longer acting as celebrants."

The Moderator said there had been a great deal of debate but "with no rancour or ill-feeling" and the State Assembly approved the proposal by a vote of 140 to 62. Mr Murray stressed this was not a final decision and the General Assembly would be asked to consider the issue, either at the next regular meeting or at an emergency meeting.

"It is possible that we may introduce a form of 'church marriage' which is not recognised by the Marriage Act so Presbyterian churches would still be able to be involved in celebrating marriages but these would be 'religious marriages' recognised by God but not by the Government," Mr Murray said. "It is envisaged that couples could participate in that religious service and that they may also choose to have a civil marriage."



An SBS cameraman sets up for an interview with Bishop Forsyth.

The Anglican bishop of South Sydney, Robert Forsyth, who is chairman of a diocesan religious freedom reference group which is considering the issue, said, "At present we have no such plans".

"We are preparing a report in answer to a question Synod asked last year, as to whether clergy should or should not continue as authorised celebrants," the bishop said.

"My own personal judgement is, although I can understand where the Presbyterians are coming from and I respect their point of view, I think it's better to stay as engaged as we possibly can rather than too quickly find ourselves breaking that long and historic relationship between Christian marriage and the state.

"I think there are ways of being still involved, particularly if the law is changed in a way that gives much more explicit freedom for religious people – not just Christians but there are Muslims and Jews who would have issues of conscience if marriage were to be redefined. I think we can survive in that situation but I would like to see, if the law is to be changed, that it be done in a way that makes it easier to maintain conscience on what would be two

different understandings of marriage."

Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson has publicly declared that current legislative proposals to redefine marriage do not protect religious freedom.

"If people of faith are forced to act against their conscience, their human rights will also be breached," Mr Wilson wrote in *The Australian* newspaper.

"This problem can be resolved. The proposition is simple: we separate the civil and religious traditions of marriage but treat them equally in law."

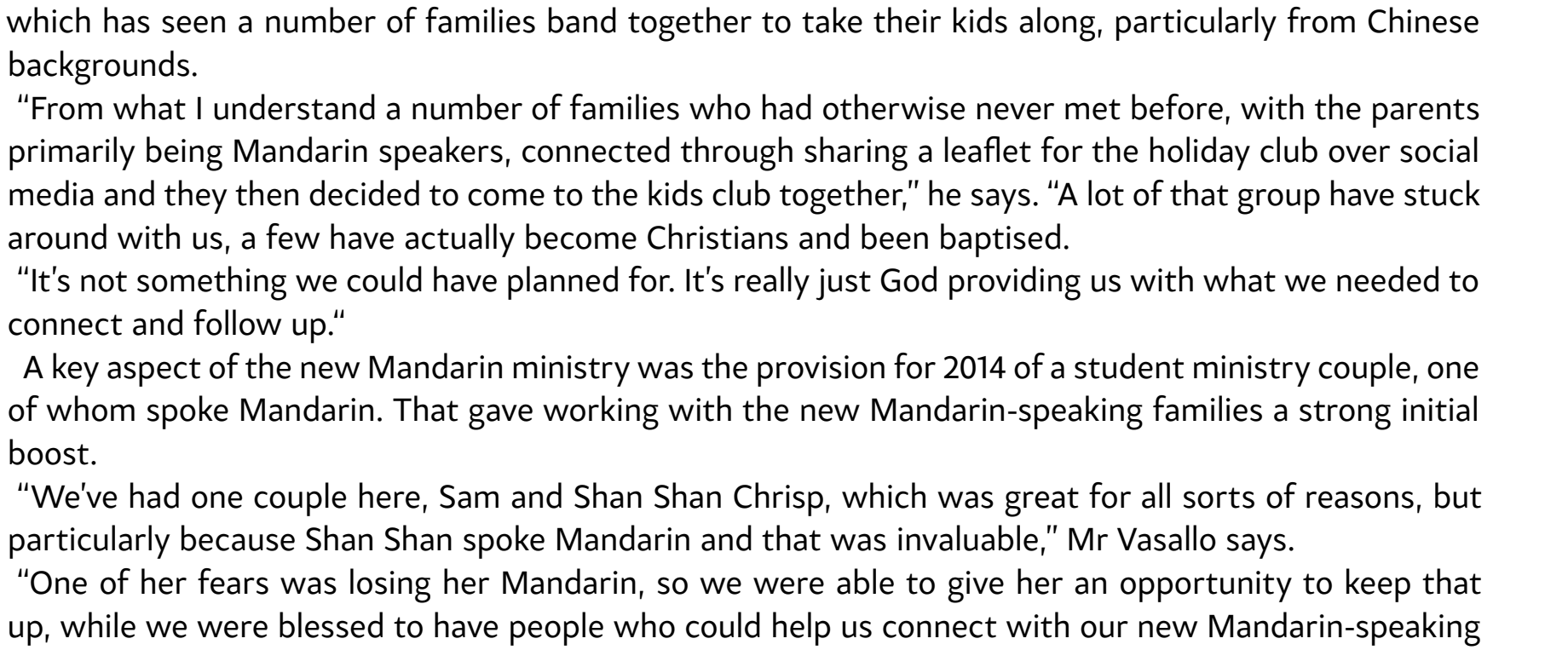
Mr Wilson continued that "In practice it works along these lines. The Marriage Act would recognise civil marriages. A civil marriage is defined as a union between two people voluntarily entered into for life and can be solemnised by a licensed civil celebrant. The Act will also recognise religious marriages in different religious traditions in a different section of the text."

Bishop Forsyth believes the suggestion has merit.

Mr Wilson has recognised the religious freedom issue in a way no one else has, and I welcome this recognition of the problem from a man who, I believe, is in favour of gay marriage," he said.

"I hope his proposal gets considerable thought if – and I don't want this to happen – there is to be a change in the law."

Connecting with migrants



Student minister Shan Shan Chrisp (centre) with Zacheaus and Peninah Mutai from Kenya. PHOTO: Robert Worthington

A NEW WAVE OF MIGRATION INTO THE YAGOONA AREA HAS SEEN THE LOCAL ANGLICAN CHURCH welcoming large numbers of first-generation people from other cultures into their ministries.

In the past 12 months, a large number of people from Kenyan and Mandarin-speaking Chinese backgrounds have become involved at Yagoona, according to senior minister the Rev Ray Vassallo.

"This area has been multicultural for a long time but the main groups have usually been Lebanese and Vietnamese," Mr Vassallo says. "But in 2013, there were a few Kenyans who came to check us out.

"I went on long service leave in 2014 and when I came back there was this large number of Kenyan people who were regularly here at the church, who'd steadily been inviting people they knew from all over Sydney. If you added up all those who come at various times, it would be around 50. I haven't seen something like this on this scale before in ministry, in basically just 12 months."

According to Mr Vassallo, one of the key connections has been through the church's holiday kids club, which has seen a number of families band together to take their kids along, particularly from Chinese backgrounds.

"From what I understand a number of families who had otherwise never met before, with the parents primarily being Mandarin speakers, connected through sharing a leaflet for the holiday club over social media and they then decided to come to the kids club together," he says. "A lot of that group have stuck around with us, a few have actually become Christians and been baptised.

"It's not something we could have planned for. It's really just God providing us with what we needed to connect and follow up."

A key aspect of the new Mandarin ministry was the provision for 2014 of a student ministry couple, one of whom spoke Mandarin. That gave working with the new Mandarin-speaking families a strong initial boost.

"We've had one couple here, Sam and Shan Shan Chrisp, which was great for all sorts of reasons, but particularly because Shan Shan spoke Mandarin and that was invaluable," Mr Vassallo says. "One of her fears was losing her Mandarin, so we were able to give her an opportunity to keep that up, while we were blessed to have people who could help us connect with our new Mandarin-speaking membership."

Mr Vassallo says that while trying to work with a variety of cultures has stretched his parish, Yagoona is working towards a genuinely cross-cultural church life.

"We don't just want to be multicultural in the sense of having the Kenyans over here, and the Mandarin speakers over there, but a single church of all nations," he says.

"Having said that, I also think for the purposes of evangelising the first generation it is important to create stepping stones for people through their heart language and culture. That takes resources and skills we don't necessarily have right now, but we're praying for them and willing to work with others as well."

With fruit already being seen from both new major ethnic groups within the church, it's a vision that also seems to have caught on throughout the congregation.

"We're only at the very beginning of cracking it, but there's something that God is doing here," Mr Vassallo says.

The congregation now has caught the idea, despite language or cultural barriers, of communicating love and a welcoming feeling across cultures. That has created an environment for the gospel to somehow get through anyway."

Vanhoozer's "sola" power

AMERICAN BIBLE SCHOLAR PROFESSOR KEVIN Vanhoozer will be in Sydney this month to deliver Moore College's annual lectures.

Dr Vanhoozer (right), who teaches at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, will be speaking on the five "Solos" of the Reformation, examining how they renewed, and continue to renew, biblical interpretation.

"I got the idea for these lectures when I began to notice that several people, including some evangelicals, were saying that they were planning to lament rather than celebrate the Reformation's 500th anniversary [in 2017]," Dr Vanhoozer says.

"The biggest reason to regret the Reformation, according to its critics, is its proven divisiveness. The culprit? 'Sola scriptura' [Scripture alone], which its critics say loosed interpretive anarchy upon the world. I want to examine this claim and to suggest that the solas may be our best hope of discovering what unites Protestant evangelicals."

The lectures this year will consist of an open evening lecture, as well as a set of morning lectures on each of the solas during the week. Biblical exegesis is not going to be the direct focus of Dr Vanhoozer's examination of the Reformation, but understanding it and applying it correctly will play a big part.

"Ultimately, biblical authority only has teeth if we know what the Bible is saying, and when people disagree about what the Bible means I want to know why," he says.

"I am therefore bringing a long-standing interest in biblical interpretation and hermeneutics to this topic."

Dr Vanhoozer hopes that by unpacking the unity that lies at the heart of the theology of the Reformation, he can also encourage Christians to find unity across traditions as they sit under the authority of Scripture.

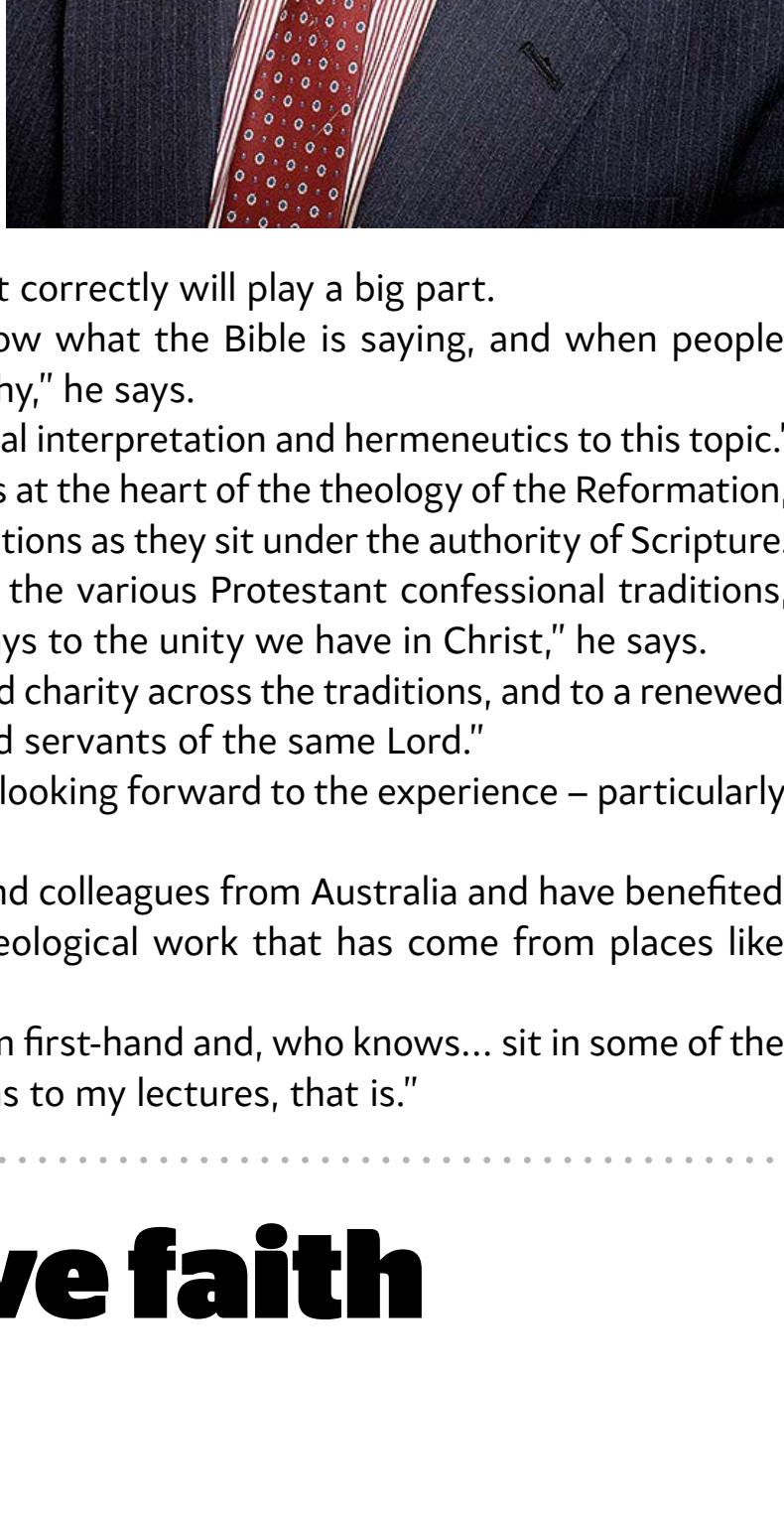
"While I appreciate the specificity and particularity of the various Protestant confessional traditions, I'm also concerned that churches witness in tangible ways to the unity we have in Christ," he says.

"I would be glad if my lectures led to more hospitality and charity across the traditions, and to a renewed sense that we are all students of the same Scripture and servants of the same Lord."

As this will be his first trip to Australia, Dr Vanhoozer is looking forward to the experience – particularly the opportunity to plug into Anglican circles in Sydney.

"I have not visited Australia before, but I have friends and colleagues from Australia and have benefited for years from the excellent exegetical and biblical-theological work that has come from places like Moore College," he says.

"I'm looking forward to experiencing Sydney Anglicanism first-hand and, who knows... sit in some of the classes at Moore. When I'm not fiddling making revisions to my lectures, that is."



Freedom to have faith on the agenda

THE RECTOR OF EAST ROSEVILLE, THE REV MICHAEL Kellahan, has been appointed the executive director of Freedom for Faith – a legal think-tank that promotes and protects religious freedom in Australia.

Mr Kellahan (right) will continue his work in the parish, combined with a part-time role at Freedom for Faith.

"These are critical times for the future of religious freedom in Australia," Mr Kellahan told *Southern Cross*.

"Debates are happening and decisions are being taken now which could influence the cultural landscape for decades to come."

Bishop Robert Forsyth and Professor Patrick Parkinson are among the leaders of the organisation, which also has advisers from Baptist, Presbyterian, Seventh-day Adventist and Pentecostal traditions, and from the legal profession. An office in North Sydney has been established as a base but the organisation will operate nationally as well as running a website, freedomforfaith.org.au.

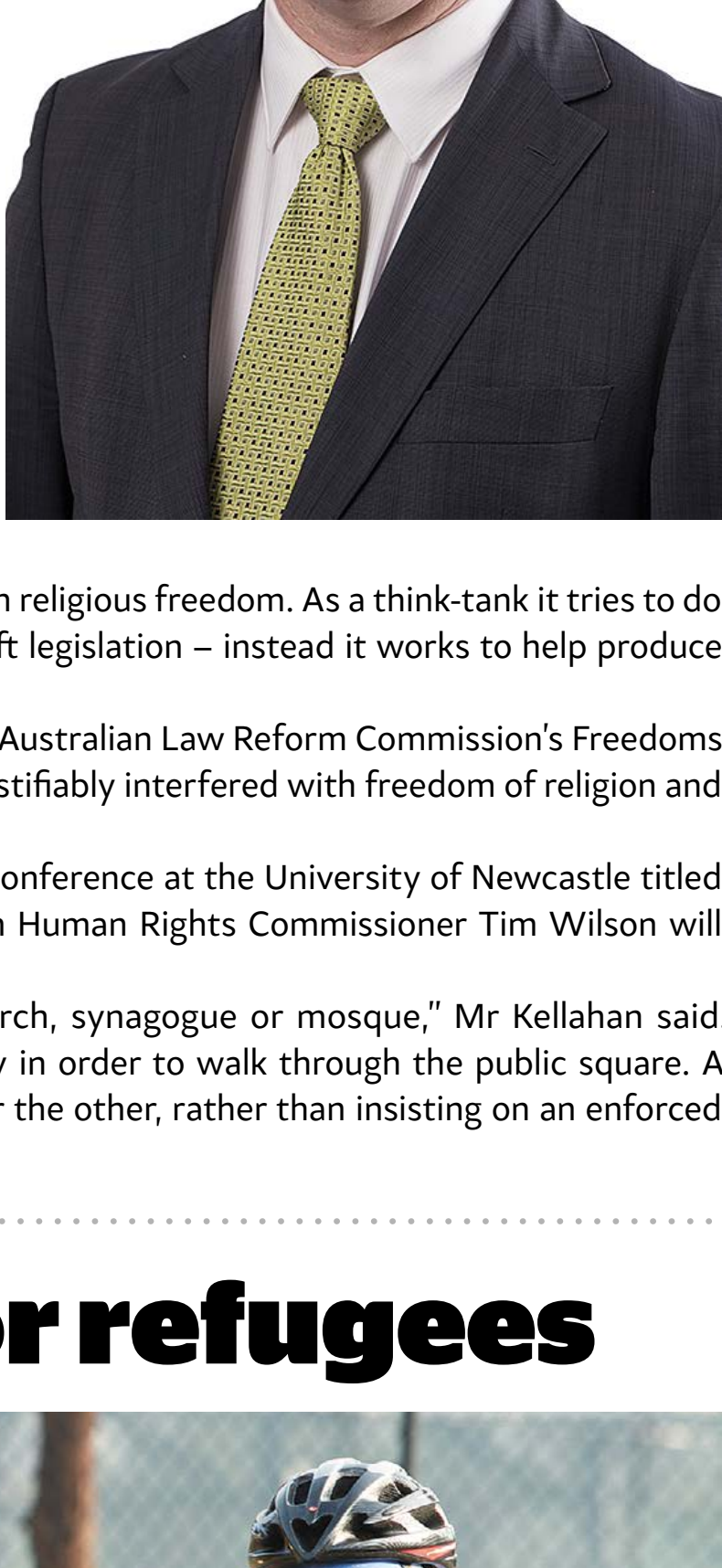
"Freedom for Faith has only been around for a couple of years but in that time has very quietly achieved much in making representations to governments at a Federal and State level," Mr Kellahan says.

"It has been very productive to have a specialised pool of legal expertise that can speak to matters that touch on religious freedom. As a think-tank it tries to do more than just be a voice of critique of policies and draft legislation – instead it works to help produce better laws."

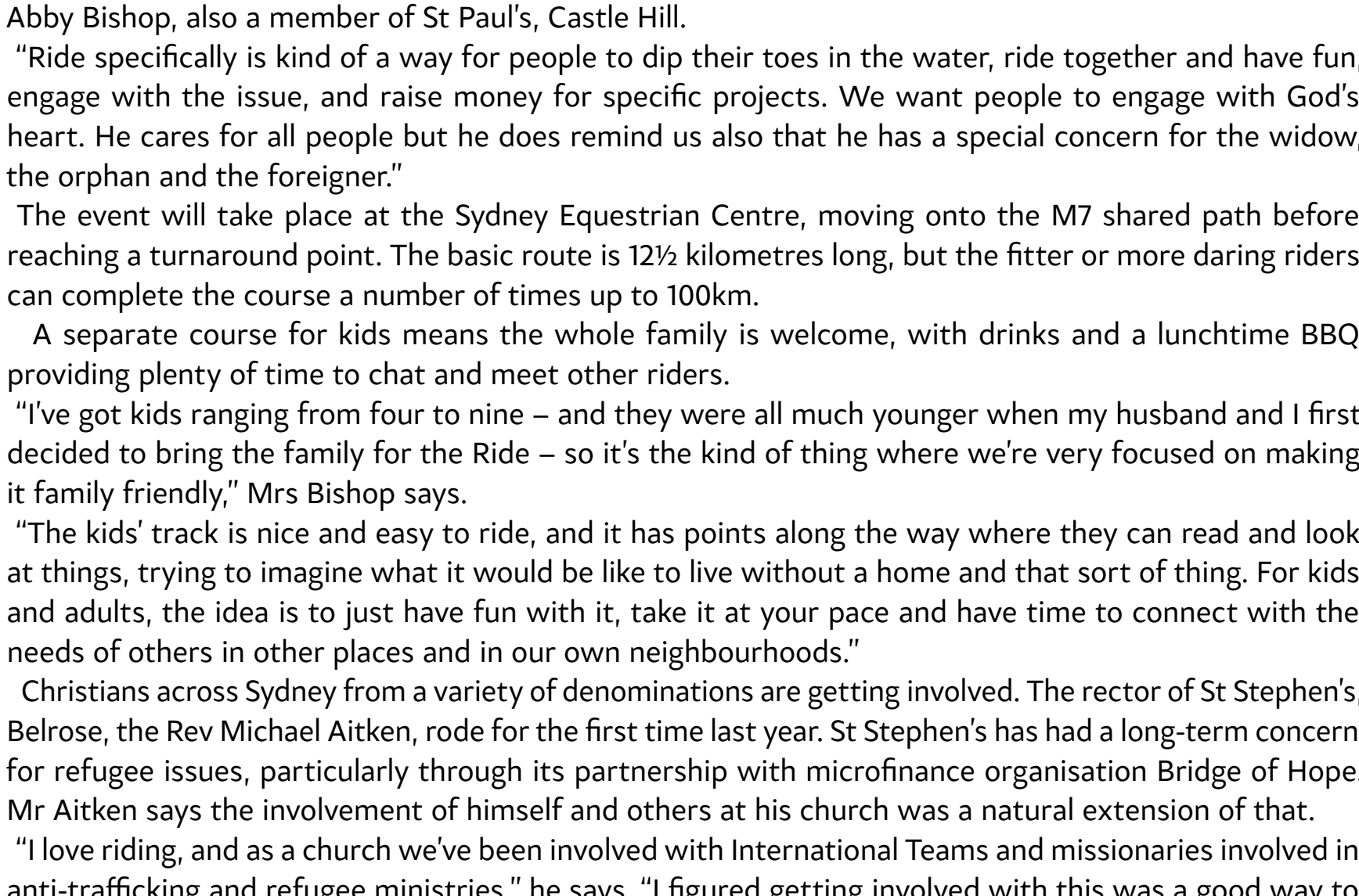
In March this year the group made a submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission's Freedoms Inquiry, which asked whether Commonwealth laws unjustifiably interfered with freedom of religion and what general principles should apply in the area.

In September, Freedom for Faith is holding a one-day conference at the University of Newcastle titled "Religious Freedom in a Multicultural World". Australian Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson will be among the speakers.

"Religious freedom can't stop at the door of the church, synagogue or mosque," Mr Kellahan said. "Religious people shouldn't have to cast off this identity in order to walk through the public square. A truly multicultural liberal democracy will make space for the other, rather than insisting on an enforced secularism."



On your bike for refugees



Fun and fitness with a purpose: a couple of riders at the 2014 Ride for Refugees.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES TO REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE ABOUT TO RECEIVE THEIR annual boost from this month's Ride for Refugees.

The ride, run by International Teams Australia, is a family-oriented event where people of all levels of skill and fitness can take part, with sponsorship money they raise going to a variety of ministries around the world that support asylum seekers and refugees in direct ways.

"Our focus as an organisation is to help churches help the poor and oppressed," says Ride 2015 director Abby Bishop, also a member of St Paul's, Castle Hill.

"Ride specifically is kind of a way for people to dip their toes in the water, ride together and have fun, engage with the issue, and raise money for specific projects. We want people to engage with God's heart. He cares for all people but he does remind us also that he has a special concern for the widow, the orphan and the foreigner."

The event will take place at the Sydney Equestrian Centre, moving onto the M7 shared path before reaching a turnaround point. The basic route is 12½ kilometres long, but the fitter or more daring riders can complete the course a number of times up to 100km.

A separate course for kids means the whole family is welcome, with drinks and a lunchtime BBQ providing plenty of time to chat and meet other riders.

"I've got kids ranging from four to nine – and they were all much younger when my husband and I first decided to bring the family for the Ride – so it's the kind of thing where we're very focused on making it family friendly," Mrs Bishop says.

"The kids' track is nice and easy to ride, and it has points along the way where they can read and look at things, trying to imagine what it would be like to live without a home and that sort of thing. For kids and adults, the idea is to just have fun with it, take it at your pace and have time to connect with the needs of others in other places and in our own neighbourhoods."

Christians across Sydney from a variety of denominations are getting involved. The rector of St Stephen's, Belrose, the Rev Michael Aitken, rode for the first time last year. St Stephen's has had a long-term concern for refugee issues, particularly through its partnership with microfinance organisation Bridge of Hope. Mr Aitken says the involvement of himself and others at his church was a natural extension of that.

"I love riding, and as a church we've been involved with International Teams and missionaries involved in anti-trafficking and refugee ministries," he says. "I figured getting involved with this was a good way to do both. Another guy here at church and I have been riding to build up kilometres, I reckon I'll probably be good enough to do a 50km ride this year."

He believes the Ride can be a particularly valuable experience for families.

"I want to have one of the International Teams folk and her kids come and speak at our church about the event," Mr Aitken says.

"I think one of the big things about it is it's a family event. I have young adult children now, but a few years ago we went to Uganda together, and they saw the effects of war and the lives of refugees there. I think being aware of those things lays a foundation for later in life, and events like the Ride help to do that."

There will be a second Australian ride next month in Brisbane. Last year the two events attracted about 400 riders.

Youthworks goes west

Relationship building: Youthworks College students enjoy their time with local children in the Pilbara region.

A NEW YOUTHWORKS MISSION TEAM HAS GONE BEYOND SYDNEY TO SERVE A REGIONAL community in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

The team, consisting of current Youthworks College students, travelled to Wickham, about two hours west of Port Hedland, accompanied by a support team from Norwest Anglican Church. A significant proportion of the mission team's time was spent in the Wakathuni Aboriginal community, several hours south of Wickham near the mining town of Tom Price.

The mission was designed to work with and assist the community in partnership with the BCA-supported community chaplains, the Rev Richard and Mrs Tracy Goscombe, who seek to engage the wide spectrum of people in the area – from high-income miners to public housing residents, Anglo people and Aboriginal people – with the gospel.

"The issue of relationship, trust and credibility is the absolute key across the community, and particularly among Indigenous people," Mr Goscombe says. "What I've found is the open doors that come through ministry here flow from time spent serving and caring, and building that trust, particularly through attitude. While missions like this one are concentrated periods over a week, when they're repeated consistently with real warmth, it creates space for more people to participate and share together, and for those bonds to be formed."

Youthworks ministry advisor and mission team leader Tim Beilharz says there were connections with the Goscombes through the college, creating a natural partnership.

"Richard has had teams before, but [gave] our students a chance to not just do mission in Sydney, which we've done before, but to do cross-cultural mission on the other side of our country, to walk alongside Indigenous communities, learn how we can be loving and caring without presuming, and share Jesus in that context," he says.

While the team from Norwest went as support for the mission team, they ended up getting hands-on themselves at Wakathuni, serving the local community with their own skills.

"We fed the team, drove them into the community and into Tom Price as they needed," says Norwest team leader Wayne Smith. "We also did other things like take some of the Aboriginal kids to school on the buses, and we did some maintenance work on the building we'd been given to stay in by the community... It just meant that we could use some of our surplus time and skills to serve in a direct way, and it was important to us that we did that, to bless them, because they'd blessed us by allowing us to stay in that building."

The hope is that the mission will become an annual event. Mr Goscombe, the Wickham community and team members are all keen to connect again.

"We loved spending time at Wakathuni," Mr Beilharz says. "We also talked to some schools that we didn't get to spend time with this year who are interested in us visiting next time... there are so many things for us to partner into the future."

"It's so important that Christians be involved in industry ministry, and that we learn how to do better at working alongside Aboriginal people and sharing the gospel as well... We've been blessed to be out here, and we hope we've been a blessing."

Mr Goscombe says his hope is that local young people, particularly Indigenous youth, will eventually desire to partner with the mission themselves and help it become a locally driven initiative.

"My dream is that one day this is something that can be owned more fully by the people here," he says.

"Maybe one of the Aboriginal kids will spend time with the mission team here, and when they're older decide they want to spend time somewhere like Youthworks doing Year 13... then come back to their community here to do their own ministry in their own place. That's what I really want to happen in the longer term."

Job skills for the kingdom



Skill-sharing: Jeanie and Daniel Ough take questions at one of their seminars.

A RETIRED COUPLE WHO ARE MEMBERS OF SYLVANIA ANGLICAN CHURCH HAVE BUILT A GLOBE-trotting ministry as job coaches and team skills advisors to support missionary organisations and other Christian groups.

Daniel and Jeanie Ough, who worked for most of their lives as an engineer and lawyer respectively, began the ministry after trying to find a way to serve their church when they were living in Dubai.

"The ruling sheikh had given the church land to build a church on – they just had to raise money for the building," Mr Ough says. "I said to the leader that I couldn't bake cakes but I could teach people how to get a job... the seminars were a runaway success, hundreds of people came along and we were able to serve the church financially that way, while also helping Christians and others with job skills."

Despite working in a Muslim country where direct proselytising of Muslims is illegal and they couldn't often speak directly about their faith, they soon found their skills in demand by several organisations, including local media.

"A local magazine got interested in this story about an engineer raising money for charity and for a church," Mr Ough says. The reporter wasn't a Christian but asked me about my beliefs and why I did what I did and essentially reprinted my entire story. All of a sudden I was giving my testimony in a widely read publication. Apart from that God-given opportunity in a Muslim country, it also opened other doors for us going forward."

Jeanie Ough, who worked as a lawyer for various non-profit agencies, resigned from her job to co-run the company with her husband. They moved to Australia hoping to continue the work more directly in support of Christian causes, and the ministry blossomed.

"It's taken us delightfully by surprise," Mr Ough says. "In Australia we've been going to missionary organisations, offering to provide free job coaching for missionaries who have come home and are looking for new work in the secular sector. Many children of missionaries find it difficult as well, especially if they've spent much of their life in another culture and are not familiar with job culture in Australia. We just love doing this and making the most of our gifts."

While they spend a large part of the year outside Sydney, they are thankful to their church in Sylvania for providing support and accountability. "Mark and Ben, our ministers [at Sylvania Anglican], are two of the most encouraging people in our lives," Mr Ough says.

"They recognise our lifestyle is a bit unusual – we spend a good portion of our time not at home. One of the vulnerable parts of our ministry, and that of anyone itinerant, is that you lose accountability; no one can know and care about what you do. So that's something we're grateful for among our Sylvania church family. There are people... who contact us, who check on what we're doing and who pray for us."

They are also thankful for the opportunity retirement has given them, allowing them to provide services without having to earn an income from them. "We've just moved from an income based on services rendered to an income from the pension the Lord has given to us," Mr Ough says. "Retirees like ourselves are people who have experience [and] a lifetime of skills developed in secular work in all sorts of areas, and they are exactly the things that churches and missionary organisations would love to have."

Marriage “mistake” by Episcopalians

GLOBAL SOUTH PRIMATES, GAFCON, THE ANGLICAN Church in North America and the Archbishop of Canterbury have all expressed deep concern at a move by The Episcopal Church (TEC) in the US to remove reference to gender in the marriage canon and introduce rites for conducting “same-sex marriage”.

TEC had already moved out of fellowship with significant parts of the Communion through its liberal theology and the consecration as bishop of Gene Robinson in 2003.

After ending his marriage to his wife, Robinson lived in a homosexual relationship with a man whom he has since “divorced”.

Leaders of the largest churches in the Anglican Communion made their positions clear in statements from the Global South grouping and the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON).

Both statements pointed out the decision was in clear contradiction of Scripture.

“We are deeply grieved again by The Episcopal Church USA (TEC) Resolution to change the definition of marriage in their church canons,” said the Global South statement.

“By this action, TEC has chosen by its own will and actions in clear knowledge to depart from the Anglican Communion’s standard teaching on human sexuality... This TEC Resolution is another example of such unilateral decisions that are taken without giving the least consideration to the possible consequences on other provinces and the Anglican Communion as a whole, the ecumenical partnerships, the mission of the church worldwide, and the interfaith relations.”

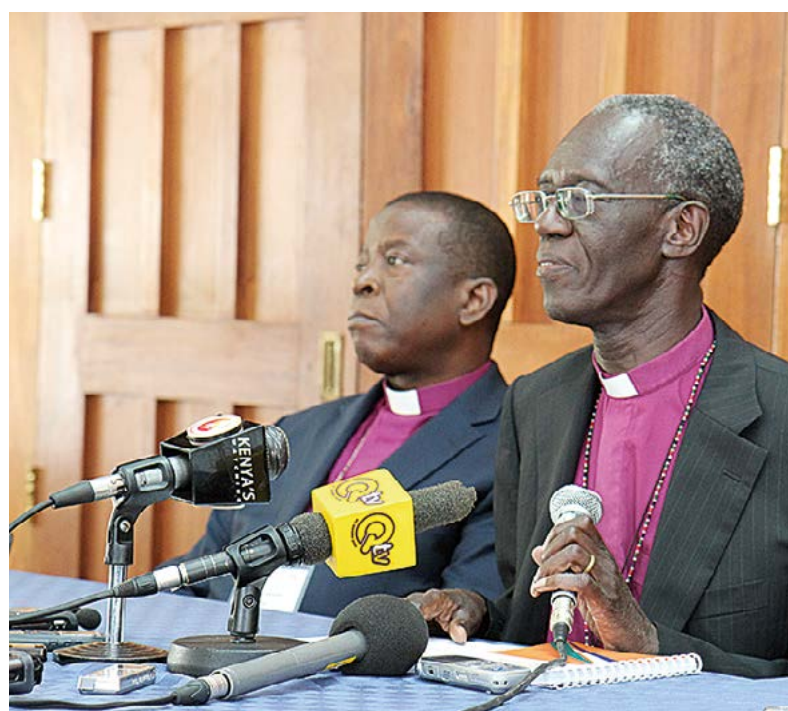
The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, also expressed deep concern about the stress for the Anglican Communion.

Archbishops Eliud Wabukala and Nicholas Okoh of GAFCON described it as “a mistake with serious consequences”.

“The problems for the rest of the Anglican Communion have already been noted by the Archbishop of Canterbury,” the Primates of Kenya and Nigeria said. “But the fundamental reason that it is a mistake – and the reason why it is so destabilising – is that it is a significant departure from Holy Scripture. This is a departure which Christians are not at liberty to make.”

One of the smallest of the American churches, TEC has lost even more members since Gene Robinson’s election 12 years ago.

A significant number of provinces have now affiliated with the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) under the leadership of Archbishop Foley Beach.



GAFCON Archbishops Wabukala (R) and Okoh (L) speaking at a news conference in Nairobi in 2013.

Bibi faces triple death threat

A CHRISTIAN PAKISTANI MOTHER, JAILED IN 2009 ACCUSED OF BLASPHEMING ISLAM, IS STILL IN danger of her life from illness and death threats.

Aasiya Noreen, or Asia Bibi as she is better known, is a 44-year-old mother of five who was arrested after a group of Muslim women complained that she should not be sharing the same drinking water as them.

Mrs Bibi denied their accusation that she had insulted the prophet Muhammad, but in 2010 a judge sentenced her to death for blasphemy and she has been on death row since then.

Last month, a court ordered a stay of execution pending an appeal, but it has now emerged her health has deteriorated.

A source close to the family said that Mrs Bibi was “vomiting blood, having difficulty eating and had a constant pain in her chest”.

Her family is also in hiding after receiving death threats and it now appears that even if the appeal is successful and she is freed, militant Islamists have vowed to kill her.

Her husband Ashiq Masih has told Britain’s *Daily Mail* that “My children cry for their mother, they are broken. But I try to give them hope where I can.

“The Maulvis [clerics] want her dead,” Mr Masih told the newspaper. He said they had offered the equivalent of \$100 to \$6000 for anyone who kills her.

“They have even declared that if the court acquits her they will ensure the death sentence stands.”

If the Pakistani authorities carry out the sentence, it would be the first time a woman has been executed under the country’s blasphemy laws.

A better Facebook?

A GROUP OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS IN BRAZIL HAS LAUNCHED A SOCIAL NETWORK, FREE OF swearing and pornography, designed to be an alternative to Facebook.

“Faceglória” has reportedly attracted 100,000 members in the first month and its founders want all Brazilian evangelicals to shift to the new network, predicting a user base of 10 million within two years.

Around 20 per cent of the more than 200 million people in Brazil identify as evangelical, so Faceglória has a huge market.

The creators are all Christians who got the idea while working at the mayor’s office in the city of Ferraz de Vasconcelos, near Sao Paulo. The mayor himself helped provide start-up capital.

One of the founders, Atilla Barros, told Agence France Presse he wants Faceglória to be “morally and technically better than Facebook”.

“On Facebook you see a lot of violence and pornography,” the web designer told AFP. “That’s why we thought of creating a network where we could talk about God, love and to spread his word.”

Depictions of sexual activity and bad language are monitored and removed while, instead of pressing “like” on posts, users can press “Amen” on entries they agree with.

Faceglória’s logo is white lettering on blue surrounded by a cloud, but the rest of the site is reminiscent of Facebook. So much so that Facebook has issued a cease and desist letter, saying Faceglória is infringing on its trademark and could create confusion for web users.

The site is only in Portuguese, but the founders have bought the domain name faceglory.com and there are plans for an English site.



WALKING THE WALK

I'm not surprised to read Dave Vincent's letter ("Love at work", SC, July). I live in Wollongong and always receive a *big beam* when I greet hijab-wearing women in Arabic (just a "Salam") or make a comment about Ramadan or Lebanon (depending on the situation).

A number of shopkeepers in Shellharbour are Muslim. I find them unfailingly polite. I'm also aware of the cultural aspect of hospitality ingrained in their culture, so sharing food is paramount. We have much to learn from them.

I have also been developing a friendship with an Afghan woman who was a refugee in Iran and a journalist. I've quietly suggested she write her story. She knows I'm a Christian. I recently gave her the book *In the Land of Blue Burqas*, which documents the five-year work of a US Christian among Afghan women.

Also in today's local paper there's a story of the local Muslim ladies who, as part of their after-dark meal during Ramadan, provided a meal to 30 homeless people. I've had similar experiences with my Muslim Indonesian friends.

Meeting people on common ground helps overcome barriers and, in my opinion, it's "walking the walk" as God's people.

Alison Watts
Haywards Bay

CHECK YOUR WELCOME MAT

Much is made in SC about our churches being welcoming. My husband and I regularly travel to different places around the country, and we find one of the most frustrating things is trying to contact churches to visit.

He frequently emails but gets no response, or rings and no one answers. Church websites he looks up rarely provide details such as service times.

Are we serious about wanting newcomers in our churches? Why, then, are basic details about times and locations so hard to access? I challenge all your readers to look up the website for their own church – would an inquirer have all the information they would need to attend a service?

Bev Wilkinson
Nowra



Letters should be less than 200 words.
newspaper@anglicanmedia.com.au
PO Box W185, Parramatta Westfield 2150



FELLOWSHIP WARMTH

At the end of this month the **Rev Barry Lee** retires from the parish of Robertson after more than 40 years of ordained ministry.

He says he arrived in Robertson in 1999 with two main tasks from the local bishop: “to get the new building built, which we completed in 2007 – that’s what gave us the capacity to grow – and the second thing was to get us back to full parish status, which we finally achieved in 2012”.

Robertson is a rural village in the Southern Highlands that only has a population of about 3000, but the pretty old sandstone church had become impractical for the existing congregation as well as for any potential outreach.

“It’s very cold – particularly at this time of year – so people wouldn’t bring their families during the winter because it was so cold in the church!” Mr Lee says.

“Also, the original church was only built to seat about 60 people, so when you had 40-50 people in it, it looked full.

“The new building has given us the capacity to grow – and it’s a nice warm building that people are happy to come to, so that makes a big difference.”

Mr Lee say the congregation is now growing gradually, with 60-70 people of all ages each Sunday, combining “the experience of the older people and the enthusiasm of the younger ones”.

He and his wife Anette will be moving to the south coast, where there will be time for not only long-neglected hobbies such as woodturning but ongoing opportunities to serve in the church at Callala Bay.



NARELLAN MATCH

The senior assistant minister at St Michael’s Cathedral in Wollongong, the **Rev Jim Douglass**, will become rector at Narellan Anglican Church in October.

“I had been approached by a couple of people late last year and I wasn’t looking to move,” he says. “But then I was presbyterized in November last year and had a chat to [Bishop] Peter Hayward, who asked me questions about what sort of church I’d be interested in working at.

“He told me about two parishes... then said, ‘I’m going to send some nominators from Narellan to you and I think you should talk to them’. We hadn’t progressed any further with anyone else but I saw, from what Peter had said and from talking to them, why we might be a good match. But they were talking to five people so I wasn’t getting carried away! Then they came back and said they were offering us the position.”

Mr Douglass has worked at Wollongong since 2009 and, 2½ years ago, he and his wife Vanessa began a school church plant in nearby Coniston. He admits it will be a wrench to leave the people there, and describes the family feeling “a mixture of sadness and excitement” at the change.

“It is quite sad, but we can also see the opportunities at Narellan,” he says. “The reason we started Coniston [church] is that we thought, ‘There aren’t enough people following Jesus here’ so we wanted to reach them. Narellan has lots and lots of houses going in, which means lots of people who need to hear about Jesus!

“I love that it’s an area that’s growing and needs to be reached.”

GOD’S NEXT TASK

The **Rev Campbell King** is officially retiring from the parish of Canterbury with Hurlstone Park on September 30, but that doesn’t mean he’s retiring from ministry.

“I’m nearly 69, so I’m finishing up as a rector,” he says. “The time has come for another phase of ministry after this one.”

Mr King trained as a high school English and history teacher but, after five years, decided his passion for communicating the gospel was greater and went to Moore College.

Only a few years before the usual retirement age of 65 he chose to leave a 23-year ministry at Manly Vale with Allambie Heights to get involved in church planting in Sydney’s inner west.

“When I first came over here seven years ago I was looking after Marrickville and Canterbury and the idea was to get involved in planting new congregations alongside the existing congregations,” he says. “And then when Marrickville was getting on its feet... the guy who was doing the church plant there took over the whole parish and then I concentrated my ministry at Canterbury.

“It’s the idea of [Bishop] Peter Tasker – to penetrate the inner west by ministering to existing congregations but also experiment and look to the Lord to raise up new congregations that reflect the demographic of the area. And, I guess, to mentor church planters and encourage that work as well.”

Mr King describes the inner west as “a very exciting area to work in” because it is possible to make contact with from all cultures and religions.

“It’s been a good time – a very substantial and rewarding time,” he says. “It’s a sheer privilege to get to know people from all nationalities and, as you see some of them converted, a door opens up into their culture and their place of birth and they become ready-made missionaries.”

Once he leaves Canterbury with Hurlstone Park he hopes to keep up some of the overseas ministry links made – either in person or on Facebook – as well as having more time for children, grandchildren and beach fishing with non-Christian friends. But he’ll also be “waiting to see what God might open up for me to do in other areas”.

IN BRIEF

After four years as rector of the parish of Menangle, the **Rev Steve Davis** has resigned for health reasons.

Who is the real God?

MARYAM DARVISHI

AS AN IRANIAN NATIONAL I GREW an Islamic framework. This God found him irrelevant to my life. This in Iran and many Iranians are only

Since arriving in Australia in 2013, Bible and the divinity of Jesus. appealing and I was so interested. Christ and as a convert from Islam think are worth sharing. I use the

Islam teaches that we are judged good deeds outweigh the bad. that nobody is able to do enough cover their evil ones and still find

Even if somebody could outweigh good deeds (a practical impossibility)

and devoid of sin that he will not tolerate even the smallest sin. Therefore, even with one tiny sin, a human cannot be admitted to God's presence. Only one sin is enough for our holy God to prevent us from entering heaven.

While Islam focuses on the balance of good and bad deeds, Christianity focuses on the fact that these sinful deeds arise from a sinful and broken heart.

It could appear that this truth in fact destroys any hope of salvation and that we are doomed to hell for all eternity. God's sacredness necessitates that all the sin be judged and condemned forever. As a result, it was necessary for Jesus to be sacrificed for our sins.

According to the Koran, Jesus was devoid of any sin but the question is how can a human possibly not commit any sin in his entire life? This is impossible. Therefore how can it be that Jesus was innocent?

Jesus Christ was beyond being simply a human. It is not Christians who call Jesus God, but it is his Holy Book that provides evidence as to Jesus being God's son. The Bible repeatedly shows us his divinity.

The Koran states that the Bible is the book of Jesus Christ and is divine scripture. This means that according to Muslims the Bible, like the Koran, is God's word and if Muslims deny it then they are rejecting the teaching of the Koran. They also believe that since the Koran is God's words, no one can alter it. If this is the case, how can one tamper with the divine Bible?

The claim that the Bible has been tampered with is a challenge to God's limitless power and wisdom. How can it be that God, the omniscient and omnipotent one, whose presence dominates all beings, has in some way not been able to protect the Bible – his own word – from tampering? There is no doubt that the Lord has preserved his own book and will continue to do so in his power. Therefore, God's words will never see any substantive changes or alterations until the end of time.

Additionally, while God loves us and wants all of us to enter his everlasting heaven, he knows that we all have committed sins and thus cannot end up in heaven. God knew well that the only way to save us was for us to be redeemed from sin.

Human beings did not cease to commit wrongdoings even with Moses' law or other prophets' messages, nor by God's wrath or love. Humanity's sin has grown tremendously but God still wants a relationship with us. Hence, he became an innocent man, lived on earth, preached an infallible message and was crucified for our sake so that he paid the punishment for our sins. In doing so he showed us how much he loves us. God, the compassionate, wants eternal heaven for us.

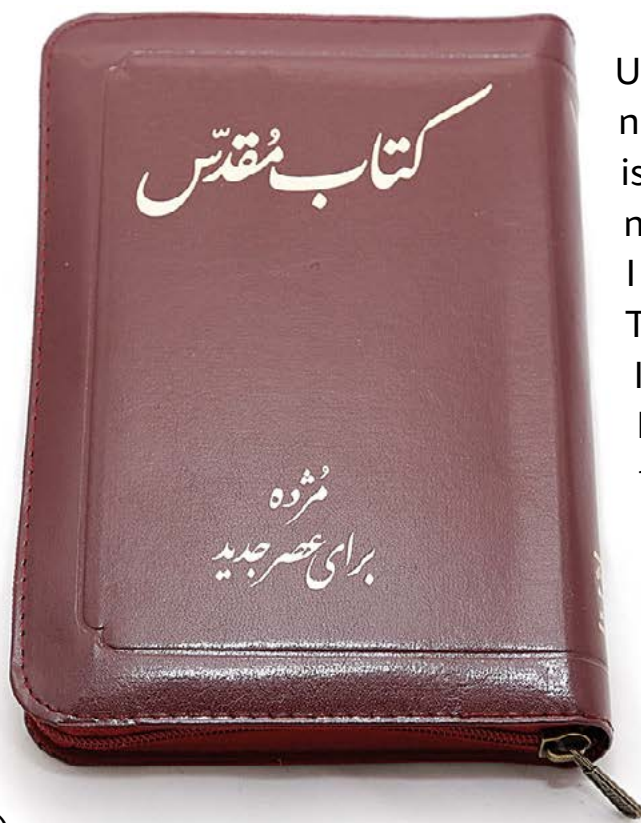
Jesus is a complete sacrifice for our sins and God will gift us forgiveness and salvation, simply if we are willing to embrace it. Our God is not a god only of anger to his children – rather, he is the Lord of care and forgiveness, which is proven by Jesus' sacrifice.

He did this so that there is no way to object to his mercy and justness on the Day of Judgment. He wanted to show his endless love for us so he called us his children, providing simply that we believe in him.

How can one imagine then that he wants his own children to have their hands red with each other's blood? Jesus Christ gave his own life away for everybody, showing the greatest possible love even to those who killed him. With his being the redeemer, God will forgive our sins and cleanse the filth off our souls. He will refresh our souls and will grant us a fruitful life in this world and an everlasting life in the other.

How can one refuse such a precious gift? How can anyone turn their back on the God who loved us and devoted his life for our wellbeing?

Maryam Darvishi is a journalist from Iran who was outspoken on social issues and policy in her home country. Maryam wanted to share some of her thoughts on faith from an Iranian perspective with SC readers.



UP LEARNING ABOUT GOD IN never appealed to me and I is a very common experience nominally Muslim.

I heard about the God of the The God of the Bible was so In 2014 I committed my life to I have a few reflections that I thoughts in this article when friends.

by our deeds. You hope the However, Christianity teaches good deeds to successfully their way to heaven.

his evil doings with lots of God is so holy, immaculate

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

Leading in truth



●
DR GLENN DAVIES
● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

AM REGULARLY HUMBLLED BY THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO SAY THEY ARE PRAYING FOR me as Archbishop. I am also often asked what an Archbishop's job entails. An intriguing question, whether out of genuine interest or the general scepticism that sometimes accompanies questions about the work of parish clergy beyond Sunday services.

Like any clergyman, one is tempted to justify the work spent in one's study in prayer and the preparation of sermons. Yet no minister of the word of God should be defensive about the time spent in praying or studying the Bible so the saints can be well taught in the things of God. This is true for bishops as well as parish clergy, for we are called to be both teachers of God's word and pastors of God's people. This dual function requires time and diligence. In fact the challenge for rectors, in particular, is managing the twin temptations of overwork or underwork. The dangers of workaholism or laziness are constant as rectors, not being employees, have no immediate supervisor.

Managing the weekly delivery of sermons and Bible studies can be relentless amid the ever-present pastoral situations that arise requiring not only wisdom, but courage and grace for the faithful discharge of the God-given responsibilities to be a shepherd of God's people. Moreover, the minister with wife and children who neglects his own family neglects these other God-given responsibilities and denies the very faith that he seeks to proclaim (1 Timothy 3:4; 5:8). That is one good reason for us all to pray for those who minister God's word to us.

A bishop is first and foremost a teacher of God's word – this is as true of the Archbishop as it is of any parish minister. True leadership is exercised by persuading, encouraging and exhorting people to bring their lives under the lordship of Christ Jesus. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God changes lives, and it is a great honour for leaders to be messengers of God's grace as we proclaim the word of God.

As our Mission 2020 vision expresses it: to see Christ honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community. As Archbishop my chief role, therefore, is to lead the Diocese by word and example in making Christ known through the proclamation of the word of God.

Thus much of my time is spent in preaching sermons and leading Bible studies as I move around the Diocese and visit parishes most Sundays. A highlight of my week is to meet with the regional bishops for Bible study and prayer, followed by discussion and decision-making about mission and ministry. Although I do not pastor a particular congregation, certain pastoral difficulties have a way of working themselves up to the Archbishop. My predecessor, Peter Jensen, used to say that by the time such problems had arrived at his office they were well-nigh insoluble! I have found his observation to be true, even though such problems still have a tendency to consume significant amounts of time.

The other important and unique role of the Archbishop is in ordaining and licensing men and women for ministry. I share this task with the regional bishops. With more than 30 ordinands each year, the number of deacons continues to grow and I seek to meet with each of them during the process of their candidature and progress through Moore College, so that I can get to know them as they embark on ordained ministry. Although I am blessed to share the task of pastoral care of clergy with the regional bishops and the Archdeacon for Women's Ministry the limitations of time and opportunity are very real. Yet I do believe every member of the clergy should be able to have access to the Archbishop as part of their diocesan oversight, even though the first port of call is the regional bishop.

However, some pastoral issues uniquely require the presence of the Archbishop. I am thinking in particular of the role I play in meeting with victims of abuse by church workers and offering them an apology on behalf of the Church. I have seen the therapeutic value of this ministry, which can be quite arduous for these survivors as they relate their stories, and yet a receptive ear and an apology from the chief representative of the Anglican Church in Sydney is often received with a sense of relief and closure, notwithstanding the horrors that they have experienced at the hands of unscrupulous church workers.

The Archbishop is also president of a number of Anglican schools and diocesan organisations and here opens up another vista of my role in the great mission of the Diocese – although I am still only halfway through my quick tour of an Archbishop's life! I will continue this theme next month, hoping that in the meantime I have outlined enough for those who pray for me regularly to do so with more insight as we work together for the honour of Christ's name.

SC

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.

Victim to their charms

It's a painful truth but we've got to face it: domestic abuse happens in every corner of society, including ours, writes ANNE LIM.

THE UNTHINKABLE HAPPENED THIS YEAR IN THE NATIONAL DEBATE ON DOMESTIC violence. Amid the eloquent advocacy of Rosie Batty, whose son was killed by his father, a light was shone on the confronting reality that domestic violence reaches into all levels of society, even into the homes of Sydney Anglican families.

Moreover, disturbing suggestions were made that biblical ideas on male headship and female submission in marriage could be serving as an enabling mechanism for domestic violence and that abused women were being counselled by clergy to stay in unsafe situations.

Writing in *The Sydney Morning Herald* under a pen name, Isabella Young¹ castigated Christian leaders for disbelieving that domestic violence was a problem in the Anglican Church.

She was upset by the reactions of a theologian and a minister, who had publicly questioned the suggestion in a column by journalist Julia Baird that teaching on the doctrine of male headship and female submission could be creating an environment in which domestic violence could flourish.

Isabella's article detailing the psychological torture she had endured from her ex-husband, and a seemingly godly Christian and Bible study leader, blew apart the assumption that church marriages were somehow immune to so-called intimate partner abuse.

"I wrote that article because I was angry with the two responses that I read in relation to Julia's article, which were 'How dare someone accuse us as Christians of behaving like this and accuse ministers of allowing things like this to go on?'" she recalls.

"I didn't think anyone else would have the insight, especially into the abuse of Scripture aspects of the Church. I don't think many of the ministers in Sydney were realising the extent to which it was happening. [They didn't understand how] if they weren't saying anything well nuanced about submission and divorce, that could be used for evil."

Twisted principles

Amy Cheng² was just 21 when she married a seemingly gentle and kind man she had met at a church in Sydney. They moved cities and for the next two years Amy experienced slowly escalating violence of a subtle but undermining nature which left her questioning reality.

About three weeks after they got back from their honeymoon, her new husband announced he didn't want to be married to her any more. About six months in, he was diagnosed with depression and began to use that as an excuse for his lack of caring and understanding.

"I knew something was wrong but I thought 'I'll stick it out, it'll get better,'" she says. "And it slowly got worse. It was quite insidious. Then by about one year he started to get out of control in his rage and he was smashing wedding photos and throwing keys at windows and throwing chairs through walls and breaking things."

"There was quite a lot of jealousy and quite a lot of 'I want to control you'. I'm quite a hard person to control and so a failure to be able to control me would spark rage."

"A recurring thing for him was, 'I need to make you submit. It's my job to clip your wings'. My theology was not like that and I went, 'It's not your job to make me submit – it's my job to choose to submit. It's your job to love me.'"

Amy had medical issues that made sex painful and had surgery to try and fix the problem, which was unsuccessful. "About 18 months in, he got very demanding around that area and I started to check out during anything physical because I felt like I was being raped in some circumstances. It was consenting but in that way of, 'I know I should do this' as opposed to 'I actively want this.'"

The violence escalated. One day when they were out in the car, "he pulled up, opened my door, took off my seatbelt and pushed me out and drove away – just left me on the side of the road."

After a few more such episodes, Amy met up with an Anglican minister and his wife to discuss her situation.

"They were sweet and kind and well meaning but not equipped to deal with what was going on," she says.

"I didn't tell them exactly what was going on. Part of the problem of my experience with the church was I didn't reach out as fully as they would have needed me to, to realise exactly what was going on. And often from the outside the person who's doing the abusing looks charming and the person who's not looking demanding; it looked like I was being the bossy wife, putting a lot of pressure on him. From the outside it didn't look like what it looked like on the inside."

She then called the Domestic Violence Hotline to find out if what she was experiencing was domestic violence, even though she didn't have a black eye or a broken nose.

"I thought, 'Is this really happening? I'm educated and I come from a church family and he comes from a church family and I'm not who I think this happens to.' And the woman on the other end of the line said, 'If you're feeling unsafe and these things are happening then, yes, you are

experiencing it'. In some ways it was a relief, in some ways it was terrifying."

"But I just needed somebody to say, 'Yes, you're right, your suspicions are correct'... nobody in the church had been able to say that for me."

The marriage finally broke down during an overseas holiday. Amy received a message from a friend who had been diagnosed with cancer and had been given four to eight months to live. "I was very upset and burst into tears. My ex said, 'What's wrong?' I showed him the message and he just threw the phone at me and said, 'If you love him so much we should get a divorce and you should marry him.'"

As soon as they got home, her husband left her, "but not before he told my dad I'd been having an affair. The whole thing was ludicrous."

Three years on and now a student in Sydney, Amy believes the things that attracted her to her ex were not real. "He paid me a lot of attention and told me I was lovely and he really wanted to be with me. He wanted to be serious. I just thought marriage is what you do."

She recalls that at the church where she met her ex-husband there was a culture of believing that if you were still unmarried at 22 you were on the shelf. "We got engaged within eight months of dating but because we were in this circle of people who were doing that nobody blinked an eye," she says.

"I don't know if it would have happened to me if I'd been inside the Christian circles because you don't date, you're intentionally court, so from the word go you're talking about getting married."

Amy says she is telling her story because "there is a fundamental lack of understanding about domestic violence and I'm really hoping that the church will step up and educate itself a bit more."

She says ministers need to be able to recognise the signs of domestic abuse when a woman comes to them. "I went to ministers and said, 'I'm scared to go home' or 'He can't control his anger'. There are phrases that people use that aren't flat-out 'I am being abused.'"

Amy says people also need to know the things not to say, such as 'Are you sure?' – "If they are coming to you, they are sure."

She believes teaching on submission needs to include a caveat that wives do not need to submit if their husbands are behaving in a way that is not based on love, and they can reach out for help.

"One of the things I learnt is there are principles in the Bible that are beautiful in a marriage that has two people who are not perfect and are working at it, but they are principles that get really badly distorted in an abusive relationship where one of you is just twisting it," she says. "Then it becomes very dangerous."

With the issue suddenly brought to national prominence, Christian leaders took their stands. The Rev Dr John Dickson and Dr Natasha Moore of the Centre for Public Christianity called for an independent survey to gauge the prevalence of domestic violence in our churches and clergy responses to it.

The Rev Nigel Fortescue, senior minister at Campbelltown Anglican Church, went further, calling for urgent action at the grassroots to address "the erroneous teaching of some pastors".

"Having acknowledged that some pastors have taught and encouraged people to stay in abusive relationships, we pastors must get talking among ourselves," he wrote in a blog post. "Ask each other what we think. Share ideas for how to teach, rebuke, correct and train our people in righteousness when it comes to their marriages. Challenge each other if you hear that someone has their teaching on marriage warped. Rebuke each other and prepare to be rebuked if you have in any way encouraged a married person to stay in a violent relationship."

He also urged pastors to ask more pointed and penetrating questions of people about their marriages, including sex, violence and finances.

Then in June the Standing Committee of the Sydney Anglican Diocese voted to set up a taskforce to interview victims and develop a policy statement along with advice for good pastoral practice.

Importantly, the taskforce is not just in-house. It includes a professional counsellor; the Rev Canon Sandy Grant, the senior minister at St Michael's Cathedral, Wollongong; a chaplain; and the Archdeacon for Women, Kara Hartley. It has been given a modest amount of funding from contingencies to fly in victims from interstate.

The training institutions are to report to Synod in October on the steps they have taken in policy areas related to domestic violence such as including educational material in their curriculums.

Moore College already runs a module on domestic violence for first- and third-year students. The college has recently put a domestic violence policy on its website.

"The goal is to have this policy known among the student body and spouses of students," says Dr Keith Condie, the dean of students. "We are also planning training for faculty and chaplains working at the college."

For Sandy Grant, it is the culmination of two years of energetic advocacy. In 2013 he proposed a resolution in Synod calling for greater education of clergy in dealing with domestic violence, which was passed unanimously. It also asked Moore College and the in-service training group, Ministry for Training and Development, to beef up their training in this area.

Abuse from a clergy husband

The story of Karen Patterson³ demonstrates how the victim of domestic abuse can be victimised by her own church. Her lengthy abusive marriage to an Anglican minister also serves to show the lasting damage that verbal, emotional, financial and sexual abuse can inflict.

Karen was driven to contemplating suicide while under the thumb of her husband and still has regular counselling for a major depressive disorder.

While Karen's husband never physically abused her, but he demanded that she obey him in everything, especially in the bedroom. She was told she was a bad wife because she wouldn't submit to his sexual fantasies.

"He would constantly remind me that the word 'obey' was in our marriage service and it was my duty to obey him in all things," she says.

"He would constantly accuse me of being 'unfaithful' whereas it was him who was – there are many women who have fallen victim to his charms."

He kept tabs on her movements and there was an endless catalogue of petty rules. "If we had bottles of lemonade or soft drink in the fridge I had to ask his permission to drink it," she says.

"Chocolate and other confectionery were given out bit by bit according to his wishes. I was never allowed to pick vegetables out of the garden as I was 'doing it wrong'."

"Weekly housekeeping money was given to me a note at a time, counted out onto the dining room table – if I needed more I was asked to [nominate] a specific amount; any excess not used was to be returned to him."

"Whatever went wrong or was not to his liking was perceived as my fault. I didn't do it or say the right things. My opinions or views were not important, let alone valued, to the point where I would just agree to everything to keep the peace to make life easier for me and the children."

When the family moved interstate Karen went back to work, but the money went to their joint account and she wasn't allowed to touch it.

"After I had been in the job for about six months, it was his birthday and I spent the previous night cooking what he wanted for his birthday dinner," she recalls. "I went to work the next day, came home, prepared dinner for us all and then he said, 'Let's go for a walk.' On this walk he said that unless I was prepared to give in to his sexual demands in all their forms, the marriage was over."

"Apart from the fact that I was furious that I had gone to all this trouble for his birthday while working full-time, he was giving me an ultimatum."

"For a brief few seconds I had a moment of clarity and said, 'Well, the marriage is over then as I am not prepared to give you what you want.' I think it shocked him as previously I had done what I was told – I hadn't stood up to him since before we were married."

The next Sunday her husband announced their separation from the pulpit. "As we lived in a church house, I had to be the one who left – which was interpreted by many in our church as 'heaving' so therefore the break-up was my fault," she says.

"During this time the best support I got was from non-Christians and people outside the church."

After the split, the financial abuse continued as Karen got none of the money from their joint savings and was unable to obtain regular child support for their children.

"In the end, even after divorce, I was getting about \$30 a month for our son, when he paid it," she says. "All the while he was off on overseas holidays about twice a year, and a new car every two years."

When the marriage broke up, the bishop of the diocese sent Karen to a psychologist for counselling. But he did not arrange for her husband to see a psychologist.

When her husband's harassing behaviour continued after the break-up, she appealed to the bishop, whose response was to send him to a parish a long distance away.

"The attitude of the hierarchy was it was my fault. It was insinuated I was being vengeful, vindictive and difficult," she says.

"I didn't go to church for a long time – I was disillusioned and hurting and only getting accusations from many within the Church."

"Even in the darkest days, I never felt that God had deserted me, only the Church."

"I also attend a great Pentecostal church now – far removed from the rituals of the Anglican Church and the patriarchal system it encompasses."

Isabella was overwhelmed by a flood of emails from domestic abuse victims in response to her article. She stopped counting when her southern Cross and agreed to tell some of their names, including two wives of clergymen, contacted Southern Cross and agreed to tell their stories under pen names. However, the shame of being a domestic abuse victim, which is even greater for a man, may have been what kept any Anglican men from contacting Southern Cross.

While physical violence was present in two cases, the predominant abuse reported by the six female and two male victims was threats, verbal abuse, financial abuse, isolation and other emotional or psychological manipulation.

In a pattern of behaviour well known by psychologists, the men would woo their wives with charm, chivalry, flattering attention and a winning need to commit, then after marriage would drop the mask and make it their job to control and undermine their wives. In most cases, wives were told it was their duty to submit and were subjected to unpredictable rages when they stepped out of line, leaving them walking on eggshells and afraid to go home.

To add to the problem, the humiliation of naming their spouse's behaviour as domestic violence kept many from seeking help.

"Admitting that to yourself is really shameful because then you become like someone from an episode of *The Bill* who has a druggie boyfriend who's bashing you up," Isabella says. "There are a whole heap of pride emotions, particularly if you've been to university, you have a decent job and you think you should be able not to get sucked in by people like that."

Isabella's husband bombarded her with quotations from the Bible about nagging wives and her duty to submit, while isolating her from her parents and friends and controlling her every move. Once he even dragged her by the hair upstairs after she spent longer than she was supposed to on the phone to her mother.

"There's no way I would have dared nag him," she says. "Any signs of normal frustration are interpreted as insurrection and insubordination and have to be dealt with... It's like the girl scout; you always have to be ready for the next attack."

With her love and fear intertwined, Isabella describes her marriage as like a two-person cult, with a leader exposing a follower to warped Christian-type teaching. "There is a great deal of captive-bonding Stockholm Syndrome going on," she says. "It's not an adult-adult relationship; it's a master-servant, parent-child relationship."

After feeling like a hamster on a wheel, Isabella finally found the courage to escape when she confided in someone she met at a church dinner.

"In the car on the way home, I told someone and she said, 'You cannot go back there'. Next day I packed and got out of there. She went and told the minister, who was very supportive. Then after a few weeks when my husband realised I had told a few people apart from the minister, he scareder."

The fact that Isabella's husband fled the congregation made it safe for her to continue attending the same church, where "pretty much everyone who knew what had happened was incredibly supportive".

However, not every abused spouse receives appropriate protection or support.

"A woman is told, with bad theology, that if she submits and tries harder then it will stop happening – whereas if you're a bloke, if you could control the little wifey then this wouldn't happen," Isabella says. "Of course, both those things are wrong."

A man's perspective

For Chris Fitzgerald⁴, one of the hardest things he faced as a victim of domestic abuse was not being heard or believed. Chris's story shows that being a male victim of female spousal abuse is not acceptable in our society.

When he rang the Domestic Violence Hotline he was told, "Chris, I don't believe you were abused because only men abuse women".

While he was telling a marriage counsellor what was going on, his wife would "just cry and say, 'He's making it all up, it's all lies'. On the way home she'd say, 'No one's going to believe you. They believe me.'"

When he sought individual counselling, the caseworker told him the only option was an anger management course. "I said, 'Hang on, I was spat on, I was punched in the head, I was bitten, I was verbally abused, emotionally abused, spiritually abused, and I have to do an anger management course?' She said, 'Yes, that's the only program we have for men to do.'"

Chris's marriage went off the rails almost a decade ago when he collapsed with a life-threatening illness and was hospitalised for weeks. Until then he had his own business, and had been busy and fit. But during rehab he had to learn to walk and talk again and he very little energy.

"I was supposed to get a shower chair and on the way home from hospital my wife said, 'A real man doesn't sit down in the shower, he stands up – we're not getting you a shower chair'. So began the onslaught of getting told all the time that 'I wasn't a real man,'" Chris recalls.

"I'd only been home for three or four days and I said, 'Can I have some money to get the boys some Christmas presents?' She said, 'No, a real man would be out earning his own money instead of begging his wife for some and lying flat on his back and being a lazy x-y-z doing nothing for two months.'"

"Where do you go to when you get a comment like that? I just said to God, 'What do I do with this?' When we were out shopping I was in a wheelchair and a fellow from church came up and gave me \$100 and that was a beautiful thing, just knowing God was there. When I told my wife she said, 'You've got to give me that, you don't deserve money.'"

His wife would come into the bedroom while he was having a shower and mock him as he hoisted himself up from the shower floor by hanging onto the toilet seat. "She would laugh and say, 'Look at you, you something have the doctors convinced that you're mighty wrong with you, but I know better, I'm going to get you out working whether you want to or not, you lazy so-and-so.'"

After refusing Chris money to finish building

a flat for a friend, she spat on him and said: "I'm disgusted with you, you promise someone that you would build them a shelf and you're not a man of your word." I said, "I only need about \$40 of materials and it's done." She said, "No, you go and be a man and earn your own money." In all our years of marriage my wife hadn't worked until I got sick and collapsed."

As his wife's violence escalated to punching him in the head, she sought to get him banned from church. One day she stood up in church and told everyone her husband was a backslider, that he was possessed by the devil and didn't want anything to do with anyone at church.

"Slowly I was being ostracised from friends," he says. "I was constantly told that I was mentally ill, that there was nothing wrong with me, it's all a mental thing. You get isolated from your family and friends and you start taking a lot of that stuff on board and you get depressed."

"One day she was in the kitchen cooking and she was sharpening kitchen knives and she said, 'One of these days I'm going to stab you.'"

On one occasion Chris's wife bit him on the wrist to the bone. "I pushed her away and she hit her head on the couch. That's the first time I had touched her in any way to defend myself."

She called the police, who wanted to arrest her rather than Chris. "I made a really stupid decision, I said, 'I don't really want her arrested.'"

Coming to realise that he had to separate from his wife was one of the hardest things Chris ever did. "I just said to God, 'I can't do this any more.' You're told God hates divorce but I got to a point where I said, 'I don't believe God wants me to go back to an unrepentant person who is so evil.'"

After the bitter incident, Chris left the house and lived in the back of his place for three months. When he did get a plan of his own, his two children would visit every second weekend.

"Father's Day wasn't on my second weekend and she told me I couldn't have the kids that weekend. But on the day she got them ready and said 'Dad's going to pick you up at 10.30'. And the following weekend they said, 'Dad, how come you didn't pick us up last week?' I had no knowledge she had got them ready."

Chris is convinced his wife was trying to push him to commit suicide and she almost succeeded. "One weekend, one of the kids had made a mess in their undies and I didn't return the undies because I had washed them. And she rang me up and abused me for being

Sandy Grant still feels sad he was unable to help a woman in a former parish who stayed in an unsafe place for much longer than was wise. She believed her wedding vows before God meant she could not leave her husband and move herself and her children to safety. He candidly says this was his sense of failure in his pastoral role that drove him to spearhead calls for a diocesan domestic abuse policy.

He believes clergy need to be trained "in how to be alert to the issue and then how to respond well to those who are caught up as victims of abuse, and from the point of the clergy person to recognise the complexity of their role."

"One, you're a pastoral carer but you may also be called on to be, in some sense, an investigator or an adjudicator. It's not always easy or even advisable for one person to be all things to [another] person at that point. So what's good practice in those circumstances?"

Isabella believes the Diocese should set up a set of protocols and resources to educate and support clergy. "We need a couple of people in the Professional Standards Unit who can help the poor rectory when he has someone come to him and he doesn't know what to do," she says. "I'm pretty sure you would have a whole heap of rectors keeping them fully employed, either doing seminars or answering phone calls."

Grant believes clergy must not underestimate the problem of domestic violence or excuse it on the basis of biblical teaching on the sanctity of marriage.

"It's possible to use biblical teaching in a platitudinous way, as mere nostrums that excuse unacceptable behaviour and, in light of the sort of things that are being normalised in our society [such as *Fifty Shades of Grey*], I think we need to be teaching our youth as well."

Grant is a complementarian, which means he defends the theology of male headship and female submission in marriage, which has become counter-cultural in our society. "But it was pointed out to me by a Christian who took a different view that we haven't defended against the abuse of that teaching and I was convicted by that," he says. "I think we need to guard against the chauvinistic abuse of that teaching... and do more in preaching to guard against misunderstandings."

While Grant cannot recall hearing a single sermon in Anglican circles that told women they just had to submit in a situation of aggression and violence, he recognises that's not everyone's experience.

Isabella believes ministers should preach on domestic abuse both as a topical sermon and woven into other sermons. She is gratified to see that ministers preaching on submission or forgiveness have started including a caveat on domestic violence, stressing the need for genuine repentance by perpetrators.

She has observed that many women feel trapped and even pushed to the verge of suicide by 1 Corinthians 7:11, which says if a wife separates from her husband she must remain unmarried. "I don't think you can be a safe parish if the ministers in the parish don't believe in divorce for domestic violence because the reason people kill themselves rather than stay in the situation is that they don't see any hope," she says. "It's all very well to say, 'Pray to God and he'll look after you'. But if your choice is between having money and four children and staying in an abusive situation and bringing up four children on your own with no money for the rest of your life, what do you think they're going to do? It's preferable to stay and be bashed up and turn your children into the next generation of abusers than it is to leave with the hope that at some point it won't be this hard."

It's a point vigorously taken up by several Sydney clergy, who believe a man has broken his marriage covenant by treating his wife abysmally.

"We have this idea that Jesus said only if you commit adultery can you get a divorce," says the Rev Steve Wakeford, rector of South Carlton. "But I don't reckon that's true at all. I reckon marital unfaithfulness is being unfaithful to the vows that you made at your wedding and that would include physical violence, emotional violence, spiritual abuse."

"If you've got a girl in that situation getting terribly abused and mistreated and she comes to me and says she's being psychologically terrorised and says, 'I can't cope with it any more, it is OK to leave?' the answer is 'Yes'."

Wakeford says a lot of Christian men wrongly interpret submission as meaning their wife must do as they tell them.

"It doesn't mean that at all, so I wonder if we just haven't done a very good job of teaching that for probably a few generations," he says. "Or some blokes did a very good job of teaching it and unintentionally taught the wrong thing and then allowed other blokes to get away with all sorts of crazy stuff."

As a police officer for five years before he became a minister, Wakeford is alert to the signs of domestic abuse that others may miss.

"If I notice a woman come to church and she's wearing a bit more make-up than normal I will look pretty closely at the make-up, and if she's got a couple of defensive wounds, if she's got scratches on her hands or her knuckles or the palm of her hand – the sort of stuff when someone puts their hands up to stop someone," he says.

"Also the kind of language [an abused] woman uses is very different to the language a woman who's safe at home uses. A lot of people wouldn't realise but if you could train people to look out for it, it would probably change the way things go on."

He suggests clergy would benefit from lectures by a domestic violence liaison officer or Christian counsellor on how to recognise the signs of abuse.

"We need to do more from a church perspective to raise awareness of it and teach blokes to ask the right questions and look for the signs," he says.

"I also think we shouldn't be afraid to take this sort of stuff on. A pastor is like a shepherd. It's the hired hand who runs away from the wolf, the shepherd will stand and fight... But a lot of blokes are not like that, they don't know what to do and they put it in the too-hard basket. They don't want to cause a fuss."

Waking nightmare

For Jane Ellis⁵, the nightmare began in her mid-20s when she was assaulted regularly by Aaron, an outwardly godly but disconcerting member of her church who had aspirations to go into ministry.

"He would hit me, or kick me, or put my head in water so I couldn't breathe," she recalls. "He ended up breaking me in the end."

"He used the Bible – in Timothy it says 'I do not give women authority to teach or have authority over men', so every time I tried to say something to him he would say, 'Don't teach me.' His belief was that all women had to submit to men."

Jane distanced herself from Aaron but because he was trying to get a leadership role in the church she went to see him and told him what had happened. But after speaking with Aaron, the minister said he didn't believe her. Aaron also spread lies about Jane in the church and many in the congregation rejected her.

"I stopped talking to God, my relationship with God broke down and I became really angry with God, saying, 'How could this happen?' I'd been in the church for years and all of a sudden the minister has turned around and said, 'I don't believe you'. He trusted me with the kids in Sunday school. But he believed Aaron, who was really good at playing the innocent baby, but he wasn't."

Aaron also lied to a Christian lawyer and a social worker who undertook an investigation. Even so, enough doubts had been raised that Aaron's ministry ambitions were thwarted.

At a different church Jane began a relationship with another controlling man, who introduced her to alcohol, which became a problem for her. "He was abusive as well but in a different way, – emotionally," she says. "He gave me a drink and it was like 'OK, this is what I've been looking for.'"

"I felt so bad because I was not talking to God and I had started drinking, and now I was sleeping with someone out of marriage, so I was gutted. I knew better and I felt God was not going to forgive me."

Jane fled to another state, where she stayed for some years. She eventually returned to Sydney and to a local church but, two years later, she bumped into Aaron and he physically assaulted her.

"He had followed me home and assaulted me and put my head through the mirror of my wardrobe. He was angry with me. He had stopped going to church and I had ruined things for him. I had wrecked his life."

"My face was smashed up, so I stayed away from church. I wish I had gone so people could have seen the damage but I didn't. I was involved with a group for preschool kids and I didn't want them to see."

After that incident, during one of her nightmares Jane screamed out, prompting a neighbour to

call the police. When the police arrived, they saw her black eyes and took her to the police station and issued an intervention order on Aaron.

However, he came up with alibis and the police believed him.

"He started to come around regularly and assault me," she says. "I would have a freeze response; I didn't know what to do."

Unfortunately, every time Aaron assaulted her, Jane would go on an alcohol binge. And when Jane told her ministers and their wives what was happening, they focused on the alcohol problem and raised doubts about the violence issue.

"I needed to get safe but it was always, 'You need to get the alcohol fixed first' – they just couldn't see it was a symptom," she says.

"It was almost like I wasn't being heard ... You already feel shame and guilt so to not be believed is like being victimised again."

Early last year she had been sober for quite a while when Aaron found her again. All she can remember is being thrown up against her dining table. Three days later she was found unconscious and taken to ICU with a stab wound and a pressure wound from lying on the floor for too long. She was also covered in bruises.

"I was really

Praise from people or praise from God?



It's easy to seek security and importance in this life through the praise of others but it's a recipe for trouble, writes LIONEL WINDSOR.

HOW SECURE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW? IT'S NOT AN EASY QUESTION TO ANSWER. No matter how confident we might look on the outside, we all have big or little insecurities niggling away on the inside. We might be concerned by issues of national security: whether we can be safe from terrorists in Syria and madmen in Sydney cafés. We might be concerned about questions of individual security: whether we can be safe from unemployment, anxiety, sickness, or the ups and downs of property prices and pensions.

Often our deepest security issues concern our very identity. Who am I? Where do I fit in? Am I secure in my relationships? Am I secure in my place in the world, now and in the future? Naturally enough, then, we often look for acceptance and approval from other people. However, our quest to find security through the approval of others can lead us into big trouble. Let me explain what I mean.

In the Bible, in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans at the end of chapter 2, he touches on this question of security and approval. Paul describes the true Jewish person "whose praise is not from people, but from God" (Romans 2:29). This little saying presents a choice about where to find security – who to look towards to find approval. Is true security found in the approval (the "praise") of people, or in the approval (the "praise") of God?

The issue of security comes up in various places in Romans chapters 1-3. These chapters are about two great truths: judgement and salvation. The first truth – God's judgement against our sin – threatens our security at the deepest level. But the second truth – salvation – is a source of astounding security and comfort. Jesus Christ has died as a sacrifice for our sin, so that everyone who trusts in that sacrifice is completely forgiven, justified, right with God, now and forever.

In Romans 2, Paul describes various people who look for security in places other than in Jesus' death for them. Some people feel secure because they think they are morally superior (Romans 2:1-11). Others feel secure because they have God's law (Romans 2:12-16). Still others feel secure because they *teach* God's law to other people (Romans 2:17-29). These law teachers "boast" in the law (2:23). The word "boast" doesn't just mean bragging or posing; it's about having confidence and feeling secure. The people Paul is talking about here know God's law and even teach God's law. This is where their confidence and security lies.

At the time Paul was writing it was the Jewish people, more than anyone, who had God's law and knew God's law (i.e. the first five books of the Bible). And because they had God's law, many were motivated to teach and promote God's law to others. They wanted to show that God's law gave the world the best blueprint for all human wisdom and flourishing. We can see this in a number of Jewish documents from around that time, for example *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, especially chapter 24, and Philo of Alexandria's *On the Life of Moses* 2.

In fact, many Jewish people in Paul's day believed that Israel and her teachers deserved special recognition for their possession of the law. The idea of law teachers being praised by people was a "meme", or repeated idea, that had been going around for a century or so when Paul wrote Romans. The meme appears, for example, in a writing called the *Letter of Aristaeas*. It tells the story (probably legendary) of 70 Jewish law teachers asked to translate the Jewish law for the Greek king Ptolemy II. The king invites the law teachers to a huge dinner party, and then asks them all for advice about how to run his kingdom. They repeatedly amaze the king and his guests with their superior eloquence and wisdom, which comes from God's law. Again and again the law teachers are praised by the king and the dinner party ends with "loud applause" for them. The king raises a toast in their honour and tells them how much he has gained from their superior wisdom.

This is a powerful vision for many Jewish people in Paul's time – a vision for how they thought the law was supposed to work. Teach God's law, the world will flourish and you'll be praised. This is where true security lies.

In effect, then, when Paul describes the true Jewish person as someone "whose praise is not from people" (Romans 2:29), he's trashing this meme. He's saying that, actually, there's no ultimate security to be found just in knowing the law, teaching the law and being praised by people. The problem is not that God's law is bad or wrong. In fact, as Paul says later, the law is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12). The law truly reveals God and his will. However, the law *by itself* is powerless. That's because everyone – Jew and Gentile – is under the power of sin. The law by itself just makes this problem worse; it shows up our sin and holds us accountable (Romans 3:9-20). Our ultimate confidence, our security, our "boast" can only be in Jesus' death for our sins. It can't be found in our Bible knowledge or our Bible teaching, and it certainly can't be found in the approval of others.

Our security is, instead, in the person and work of Jesus. We're freely forgiven, we have peace with God, and we have that sure hope of being saved (Romans 5:1-11). We're safe. Our security can never be taken away by terrorists or madmen, by poverty or sickness, or by the disapproval of others. It's safe in Jesus. That security makes us free to love, free to do what is right in God's eyes, free to speak the truth in love even when the truth (and the love) is rejected. It also makes us free to suffer for Jesus' sake – even if that suffering involves being disapproved of or slandered by others. We live for God's praise, not for the praise of people.

So this little saying, "whose praise is not from people, but from God", raises a big question for all of us. Where do we look for our security, first and foremost? Do we look for security in the praise and approval that come from people, or do we look for security in the praise and approval that come from God?

This is really about our motivations. It won't always be obvious from our actions. That's because praise from people is not always in conflict with praise from God. God wants us to speak graciously, to love our neighbours, to help those in need. When we do these things, it's likely we will also be praised by people.

However, this isn't always true. No matter how gracious or loving we might try to be, we can't please everyone all the time. Family members or fellow Christians might be upset at us for not meeting their expectations; friends or colleagues might disapprove of us just for being Christian. As many are experiencing now, friends or colleagues might cut us off or slander us for holding unpopular, yet biblical, views on sexuality.

When things like this happen, how should we respond? It's right for us to ask whether we have been truly loving, truly done what is right, and repent if need be. But there's another, even deeper, question we need to ask: Where is our security? What is our core, driving motivation in responding to people? Is our driving motivation to do what looks good in the eyes of others; to protect ourselves, our reputation and our good name? Or is our core driving motivation to please God – even if that means giving up praise from others?

These questions are particularly relevant for those who regularly preach, teach and lead God's people. Those who are engaged in gospel ministry constantly face the temptation to be driven by the approval of others over and above the approval of God. They can too easily crave praise from outsiders, praise from congregation members, praise from colleagues. So please pray for your leaders. Pray that they will keep seeking their security in the praise that comes from God. Pray that they will be willing to endure suffering, loss of reputation or even more for the sake of lovingly speaking the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, pray that all of us will be given the strength in Jesus to be able to say, along with the apostle Paul:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. There is reserved for me in the future the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Real estate of mind

JUDY ADAMSON

5 Flights Up

Rated M

THE PROSPECT OF A MOVIE STARRING MORGAN FREEMAN AND DIANE KEATON AS AN older New York couple is automatically appealing. They're not a pair you'd instinctively put together, but oh, the possibilities once you do!

Freeman and Keaton play Alex and Ruth Carver, who married at a time when interracial unions were still illegal in 30 US states. He's an artist, she a schoolteacher, and they've lived in their Brooklyn apartment – up five flights of stairs from the street – for 40 years. But as their hair gets greyer and their joints begin to creak, they reluctantly make preparations to sell so they can purchase for their old age in a building with a lift.

Throw into the mix a mouthy niece as their real estate agent (Cynthia Nixon), the strangest collection of potential buyers imaginable and Dorothy the ageing pooch and all sorts of delicious opportunities present themselves. Added to that is a drama with a missing Muslim tanker driver that has all the locals glued to their TVs, wondering if they're about to be plunged into another terrorism crisis.

All the elements are there for a well-rounded tale about love and ageing, reminiscences and real estate but, disappointingly, *5 Flights Up* doesn't make the most of them.

It's not as though Freeman and Keaton aren't comfortable together, and Nixon is an absolute scream as the irritating, high-octane agent with odd monikers for everyone who walks through their door. Yet the way it plays out onscreen left me a bit flat. One minute we're watching a quirky New York comedy, the next we're trying to squeeze some drama out of the bids people make on the apartment while the Muslim media beat-up continues.

Including the earlier years of Alex and Ruth's relationship in flashback doesn't help matters, because these scenes are the most enjoyable part of the film. He's a vibrant young artist while she's making a few extra bucks as a life model, and the chemistry between the younger couple is palpable.

I found these snippets far more engaging than the present-day part of the story: there are some meaty issues to explore, a real depth of emotion, and it's not all linked to buying and selling property.

It doesn't help that there's a lack of any real spark between Keaton and Freeman. They perform together like the friends they may well be, but the deep love and closeness built over decades of marriage and accentuated by Ruth's inability to bear children is sadly absent. I actually found the illness of Dorothy the dog more affecting.

The story for the film is taken from a 2009 novel called *Heroic Measures* – so titled, I assume, because of the tremendous effort and inconvenience of putting a home on the market.

Certainly that's something many people in Sydney can identify with. No one can deny that having strangers tramp through your house and make judgments about your décor and taste has to be experienced to be understood, but not every interested buyer in the film has to be quite so odd and/or unpleasant. And it's a pretty thin premise to build a script upon.

I imagine the original story had much more depth because of the opportunity for detailed description of time, place and thought. Here, almost all characters are painted in the broadest of brush strokes, so despite good performances you can't help but feel as though you're skating on the surface.

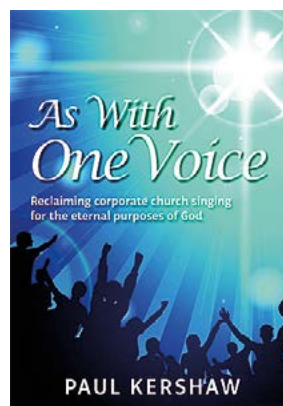
It's not as though *5 Flights Up* is a bad film. It's not. There's certainly the capacity to pass 90 minutes pleasantly enough (unless you loathe real estate), but it's a pale imitation of what it could have been. **SC**

Unity in spirit, unity in song

NICK GILBERT

As With One Voice

By Paul Kershaw



MUSIC IS AN ONGOING DISCUSSION IN CHURCH CIRCLES, AND SYDNEY IS NO DIFFERENT. Walk into any church in this city, even if you limit yourself to simply Anglican circles, and you will find a variety of musical styles to get to grips with. So whenever a book comes along that tries to examine church music as a matter of theology as well as pragmatics, it's worth having a think about why and how we do what we do.

As the title suggests, *As with One Voice* looks at church music and corporate musical worship through the prism of unity. Author Paul Kershaw, from Wild Street Anglican in Maroubra, uses the first chapter to establish this proposition from both testaments: why do we want unity, and how do we actually achieve it in order to properly glorify God (Romans 15)? The first half of the book largely deals with theoretical aspects of music in general, and song selection in church in particular. The second half is more practical, providing advice for musos, ministers, the people in the pews – even those who don't fancy themselves singers at all – about how to engage as the body of Christ in this corporate verbal glorification of God.

The book has much to commend it. While many similar titles ignore a biblical theology of music altogether, or focus so much on it that it becomes difficult to grab a practical application for the local church, it is clear the author has both aspects in mind and seeks to integrate them throughout the book, while avoiding being too technical or "wordy".

For example, *As with One Voice* provides advice on specific musical approaches to arrangements depending on what instruments you have available, but does so from the clear principle that the band should be united and "playing off" each other as a group for the benefit of corporate participation, instead of operating in their own little private worlds. This kind of line runs right through the book, adding a cohesion to a two-part structure that could otherwise feel a little partitioned.

There are, however, a couple of niggling problems. The book relies very much on some foundational premises and while these are generally fine, there is also perhaps room for nuance that would materially impact approaches to music ministry, song selection and what we are trying to achieve in our congregations.

For instance, *As with One Voice* deals quite a lot with individualistic tendencies within musical worship, often as a symptom of sinful human culture outside the church. That is to say, some church music emphasises our own emotional needs, or own exclusive introspective bubble, at the cost of corporate unity and engagement.

"Individualism can lead our singing away from the purposes of God, whereas the Bible will lead our singing to conform to the purposes of God," Kershaw writes. This individual thinking is also connected to things like why we pick certain songs, musical style and the opposed extremes of "popular music concerts and soporific rituals" (p.32). This is certainly true, and just about anyone, regardless of age or taste, can think of music that fits this bill and almost glorifies mankind at the expense of God. This corrective is helpful and certainly useful to a certain point.

However, while this is a critical point that underpins much of the rest of the book, it isn't explored in much depth, in a way that leaves questions of individual responses in the context of the body of Christ largely unexplored.

For instance, while singing and worship as an expression of unity is certainly the prime objective (one, as Kershaw correctly points out, that is essentially commanded in Scripture), do we think that within that unity there is space for music to be used as a tool to impact individuals?

Is the sin of the Fall simply a sin of individualism, or is it also in some way a refusal to correctly assert our God-given individual agency to his glory, in the face of temptation and an "I'll-have-what-she's-having" mentality?

In a related sense, how do we maintain corporate accessibility and engagement in music without allowing the individual simply to fade into the crowd and avoid being genuinely exhorted or corrected in their own life and circumstances?

Does unity when singing consist of everyone being equally engaged by the lyrics, the music and turning that out vocally themselves for any given song, or does unity exist in that setting in other ways as well?

Reading the book, I was waiting for an examination of these elements, and how they might in turn mould our approach to church music, but I never quite found it. This is perhaps not a fault of the book given its intended scope, although the prominence of unity as a theme would perhaps have made the topic a worthwhile study, as it may have real ramifications for how we think of church music.

In all, though, *As with One Voice* is a worthwhile book from within our own Diocese that helpfully approaches the topic emphasising unity in the church, with genuinely thoughtful ideas on how to approach that.

Not everyone will necessarily agree with every premise that underpins the book, but it will hopefully serve to encourage thoughtful reading and – in the end – clearer and more extensive discussion across our churches.

The practical tips from someone clearly well versed in music ministry will be encouraging and thought provoking for both less-established and "old hand" music ministry teams alike. **SC**