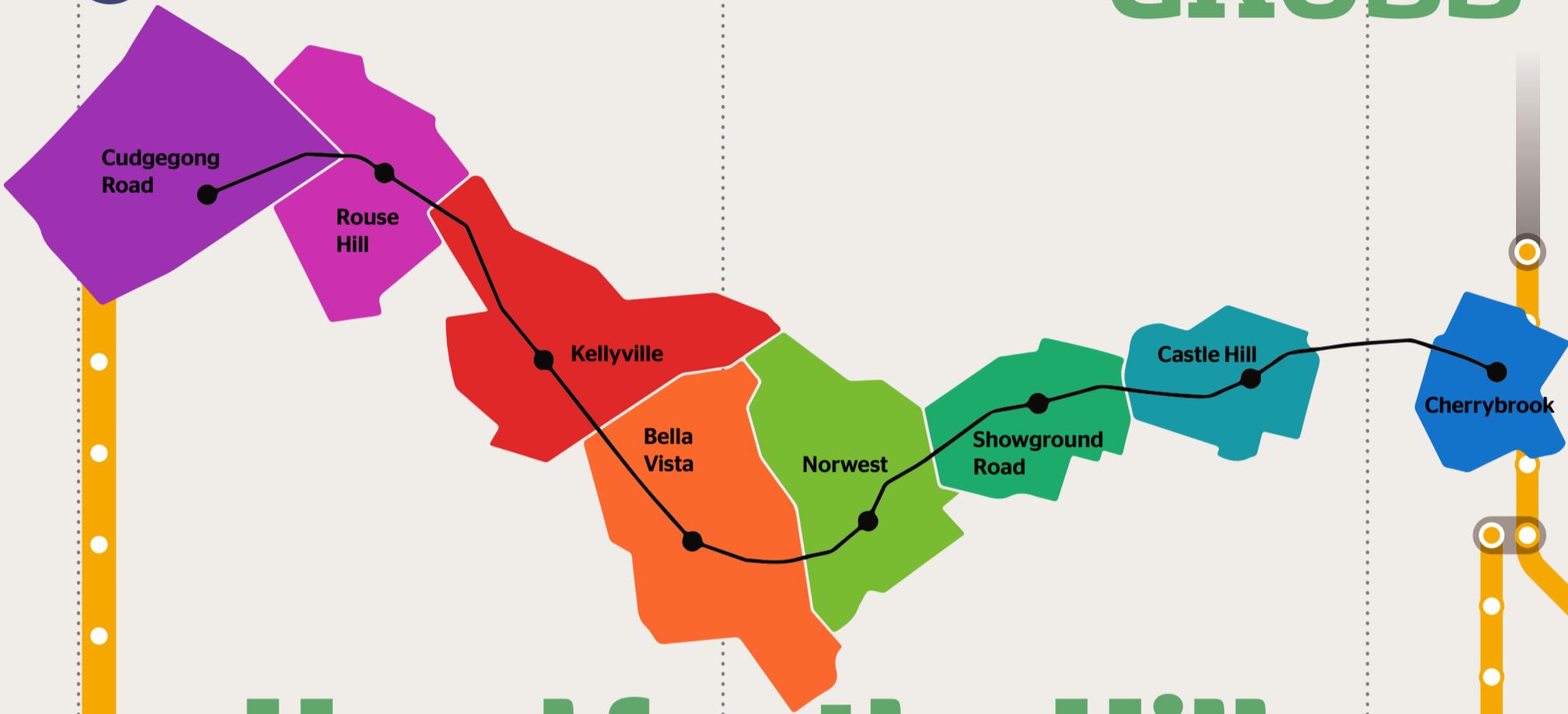


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2016

Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS



Head for the Hills

CHURCHES AND THE NEW RAIL LINE

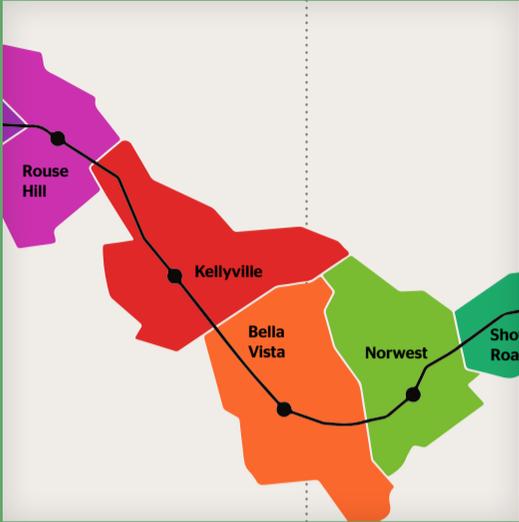
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- & Teenage apologetics

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We are really concerned that people are able to connect with refugees... in a way that is effective and also appropriate.

Cheryl Webster
Sydney News

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Southern CROSS
OCTOBER 2016
volume 22 number 9



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Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement. Inclusion of advertising material is at the discretion of the publisher.

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\$44.00 per annum (Australia)

Tanzania emergency

Surveying the wreckage: Bishop Lugumira visits Bukoba after the earthquake.

AN EARTHQUAKE THAT STRUCK NORTHWESTERN TANZANIA ON SEPTEMBER 10, MEASURING 5.9 on the Richter scale, has caused tremendous damage in the Kagera region.

Dozens of people have been killed, hundreds injured and 800 homes and other buildings have been destroyed – particularly in the regional capital, Bukoba, on the western shore of Lake Victoria. The quake was so strong that tremors were felt as far away as Rwanda and western Kenya.

The Bishop of the Diocese of Lweru, the Rt Rev Jackton Lugumira, has appealed for urgent funds to provide homeless locals with tents, blankets and other necessities for the imminent wet season.

Anglican Aid has already sent \$10,000 from its emergency fund and has launched an appeal to help raise the \$100,000 that the Diocese will need.

To donate to the appeal visit <https://anglicanaid.org.au/projects/tanzania-earthquake-emergency>

Bishop “outed” in C of E



A “SUFFRAGAN” OR ASSISTING BISHOP IN THE CHURCH of England has been forced to disclose that he is in a same-sex relationship, and the Archbishop of Canterbury has raised questions about the bishop’s appointment by saying he knew of the man’s sexuality.

The Bishop of Grantham, the Rt Rev Nicholas Chamberlain, (left) revealed to *The Guardian* newspaper that he is in a long-term, same-sex relationship, which he described as “celibate”. It is understood the newspaper was about to “out” the bishop in a Sunday story.

Bishop Chamberlain was consecrated last November and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said he knew of the relationship beforehand but the bishop “lives within the bishops’ guidelines and his sexuality is completely irrelevant to his office”.

There are concerns the news was leaked to pre-empt coming discussions in the Church of England on sexuality, known as “shared conversations”, and the revelation has drawn a sharp reaction across the world.

Canon Phil Ashey of the American Anglican Council said the standard for Christian leaders is to be “above reproach”.

“How can a bishop who struggles with same-sex attraction, claims to be celibate and yet has a male partner, effectively propagate, defend and safeguard the teaching of the church?” he asked. “Oh, but you’re not being fair to this man’, some might say. These requirements weren’t invented – they were given by God. Who are we to weaken the requirements?”

The Global Anglican Future Conference group (GAFCON) issued a statement calling the appointment “a major error”.

Canon Andy Lines (right), chairman of the GAFCON UK Task Force, said, “We remain opposed to the guidelines for clergy and bishops permitting them to be in same-sex relationships as long as they publicly declare that the relationship is not sexual.

“This creates confusion in terms of the church’s teaching on the nature of sex and marriage and it is not modelling a helpful way to live, given the reality of our humanity and temptation to sexual sin.

“In this case the element of secrecy in the appointment... gives the impression that it has been arranged with the aim of presenting the church with a ‘fait accompli’, rather than engaging with possible opposition in the spirit of the ‘shared conversations’.”



Terrorist massacre thwarted

THE MASSACRE OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY NEAR PESHAWAR IN NORTHERN PAKISTAN LAST month was averted after the intervention of security forces.

Four terrorists from a faction of the Taliban, armed with incendiary devices strapped to their waists and semi-automatic weapons, entered an empty church at about 6am intending to kill congregation members. But they came too early and were met only by a Christian security guard.



Sorrow: the funeral of security guard Samuel Sardar. PHOTO: BCPA

The guard, Samuel Sardar, called security forces and held off the terrorists until his ammunition ran out and he was killed by the attackers. The Taliban members then tried to go to the homes of Christians and detonate suicide vests but they were met by security forces, who killed two of the them. The others detonated their vests but caused no casualties.

One terrorist managed to enter the house of Farukh Masih and started to say prayers to Allah before exploding his suicide vest.

“By God’s grace when his suicide vest exploded only he was killed,” Mr Masih said. “I thank God for saving us. In the few moments we had to think we all just prayed to him for protection. By his power we have all survived and the evil man who tried to take our lives will now answer to him.”

The British Pakistani Christian Association (BCPA) has praised the intervention of local

forces and chairman Wilson Chowdhry said, “I hope that the sacrifice made by the Christian security officer will be praised by security forces in tandem with their own wonderful efforts. His sacrifice no doubt saved hundreds of civilians from death and injury and leaves people mourning his death.

“We will be praying for the family, we be counselling them and the community and hope to provide aid where possible.”

The guard’s eldest son, Waqar, spoke of the family’s heartache. “My innocent father has been killed simply for his faith,” he said. “Today he is a martyr and he is with God. Why do Muslims hate us Christians so much [when] we do nothing to hurt them?”

MIRACLE WORKING

It was great to read about St Thomas', North Sydney partnering with Reach Beyond (formerly HCJB radio) in its ministry of broadcasting the good news of the gospel to unreached groups across the world.

The story of Reach Beyond – which, as mentioned in the article, began in Ecuador in 1931 – is quite remarkable (the book *Come Up to this Mountain* by Lois Neely tells the story and it's a must read). We had the privilege of volunteering with HCJB in 2012 at its Australian broadcasting base in Kununurra. It was hard but a lot of fun to work alongside other short-term volunteers and the permanent volunteer staff helping erect new antennas to allow the broadcasts to be transmitted deeper into the Asia-Pacific.

In 2014 we were in Ecuador staying in a family hacienda hotel near the new airport (the original site for the first HCJB transmission station). The hotel's owner took us into Quito, the capital, to show us around. We came upon a large gathering of people in the main square holding what turned out to be a gospel service. They were singing, preaching and praying for the sick. The owner told us that a lot of people in Quito had become Christians as a result of the work of HCJB; he was clearly touched by the scene in the square.

We mentioned that we were Christian volunteers with HCJB in Australia; he said that he and his son were seeking to know more about Christianity. The impact of HCJB on Ecuador had certainly made an impression on him.

At the transmission station in Kununurra there is a plaque that reads, "We don't believe in miracles; we rely on them". It was great to hear that members of St Thomas' have visited Kununurra and are considering sending a short-term mission team to support the volunteer staff in the ongoing work of Reach Beyond.

Reach Beyond not only relies on miracles, it needs and relies on volunteers. Perhaps other churches would join in supporting this incredibly effective ministry of gospel outreach?

Daniel and Jeanie Ough
Jannali

CARE AUDIT

Before churches across the Diocese install "gender neutral bathroom options" ("Transgender – truths and trials", SC, September) could someone do a full audit of compliance with disability access standards?

Then, perhaps, there could also be an assessment of how good congregations are at accepting prostitutes, tax collectors, refugees, widows etc.

David Mitchell
Lane Cove

POWER CULTURE

There was much to stimulate our thoughts in September SC. As David Mansfield wrote in "Church in the freezer" God's love and mercy are seen in our church despite "the decadence, deceit and denial" which we experience in the culture as a whole.

In the church as well as the education system and health system there are individuals who have a different set of values and are prepared to "drop their guard and be... authentic with each other about... their failures, wounds and worries".

In the church these different attitudes will be seen to be increasingly powerful.

Rosemary Thomas
Wildes Meadow

HEAVENLY REALITY

In reading the article "Meaning in the mundane" in September's SC I was reminded that, many years ago, John Chapman said to his dentist, "There will be no need for dentists in heaven". The dentist replied, "There will not be any need for evangelists, either".

Michael Payne
West Pymble

READING HELP

Simon Gillham raised an important issue in his article arguing for more understanding by Christians of the many people in Sydney who struggle to read (SC, August).

While living in the Irish Republic a few years ago, I undertook a Masters degree in special education majoring in the teaching of reading. One of my tasks was to teach a 59-year-old man named Patrick who had been illiterate all his life, hiding it from all except his family and suffering much hardship in the process.

Teaching an adult to read requires patience, the use of research-proven methodology, individual lesson planning and plenty of practice. I chose Patrick because others had tried to teach him without success, even though he seemed to have no obvious mental disability.

Patrick was so keen to learn that he was prepared to do anything I suggested. Starting with the basic English sounds and linking them with their alphabet symbols, we began practising simple words by blending the sounds. This intelligent man made rapid progress and was soon able to read street signs and find addresses. "No one told me that the alphabet was a code," he said to me one day. Success brought great satisfaction to student and teacher.

I would suggest that we in the church can offer these people more than just understanding and better planning of our services, though these are important. I would be happy to help anyone who is interested in this area.

Jan Bellenger
Clovellly





Left to right: Tony Willis, chairman of the Anglican Schools Corporation; Dr Laurie Scandrett; and Kerrie Newmarch, a board member of the Anglican Schools Corporation.

SCANDRETT STEPS DOWN

Dr Laurie Scandrett has retired as CEO of the Anglican Schools Corporation after 17 years .

At his farewell Dr Scandrett noted that when he began in the role in 1999 the then Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation was responsible for 4191 students in nine schools. The student number has since grown by 10,000 while the number of schools has more than doubled – and now includes a trade college and two schools outside the Diocese (in Dubbo and Orange).

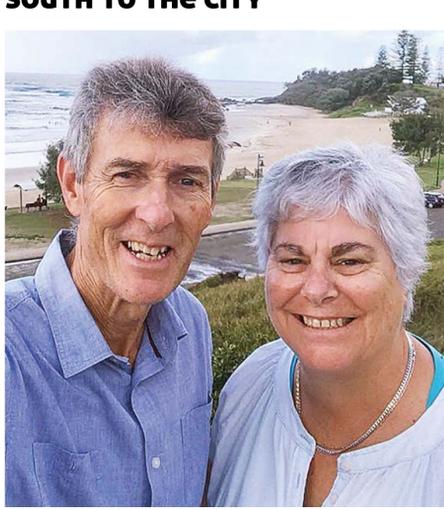
“We have only achieved under God such extraordinary growth by having a vision of seeing more children come under the ministry of the gospel,” he said. “God has truly blessed us and it has been a privilege to serve him and the corporation in this role.”

The chairman of the corporation, Tony Willis, noted how often Dr Scandrett would say the corporation was blessed, adding, “It is clear that Laurie understands the generosity of God and seeks to reflect this in his own life. He has proven over the past 17 years his generosity with his time, his generosity toward those who have struggled, his generosity with the resources that God has provided us – which have been to step out and make affordable quality Christian education available to many who have not had access to it.”

Dr Scandrett will continue to serve on a range of diocesan boards and committees, but stepping back from the ASC will allow him to spend more time with his wife and wider family.

In his final summary to the board he said, “The corporation, like other church organisations, is a ministry operating under business principles... it is about bringing more students, and others, under the sound of the gospel. It is not about making every school a roaring financial success.”

SOUTH TO THE CITY



After decades of ministry in the Armidale and Grafton dioceses, the **Rev Ken Fenton** is returning to Sydney to become rector of the parish of Concord and Burwood on October 27.

“[My wife] Gail and I both grew up in Sydney... and went to Moore College for our training,” he says. “I’d had a couple of years in Walgett as a civil engineer – that was my initial training – so I came to college as an Armidale candidate. We felt it was good to spread the love around and not keep it all in the big smoke.”

Much of Mr Fenton’s ordained ministry has been at St Peter’s, South Tamworth, where he spent 20 years in various roles – including as senior minister. But for the past nine years he and Gail have lived in the Grafton Diocese, building a new congregation from scratch.

“The Port Macquarie parish knew it was getting older and a new Anglican school had been started that was going gangbusters, so they said, ‘How about we get someone under God to come and start a service there?’” he says, joking that he and Gail were “probably the oldest church planters in history”.

While most church planters create a plan and vision for their new congregation and form a good-sized launch group, the Fentons began the vibrant Trinity Anglican Church from nothing. “I’m sure we could’ve kept going, but really it’s time to hand over to someone a generation younger... maybe someone from Sydney might want to come up here?” he says.

Mr Fenton began talking to Archbishop Davies in January, which resulted in his move to Concord and Burwood. “With a regional centre like Port Macquarie it’s like coming from a big village to the suburban spread of the big city,” he says. “It’s going to be big change in strategic approach, which is keeping us prayerful.”

SAILING AWAY

After 24 years of chaplaincy work – and another 14 as an ordained minister – the **Rev David Pettett** retired last month after five years as Assistant Director – Chaplaincy for Anglicare.

Following a range of curacies around the Diocese, five years in Japan with OMF and another five years as rector of South Coogee, in 1992 Mr Pettett took up a chaplaincy position with the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, adding Anglicare chaplaincy at the Prince of Wales Hospital six years later. In 2004 he moved to prison chaplaincy at Silverwater, then the Lithgow Correctional Centre, before taking overall charge of Anglicare’s chaplains in 2011.

Of his time as the chaplains’ manager he says, “I saw the need for well-trained chaplains so I was very keen to develop their training, and under the initiative of one of our own we set up the Anglicare Centre for Pastoral Development. We’ve developed that training in conjunction with Moore College.

“Also, when I first came into the role only about half of the chaplains were receiving pastoral supervision. I see it as an incredibly important thing that all people on the front line of chaplaincy receive pastoral supervision, and that’s now the case.”

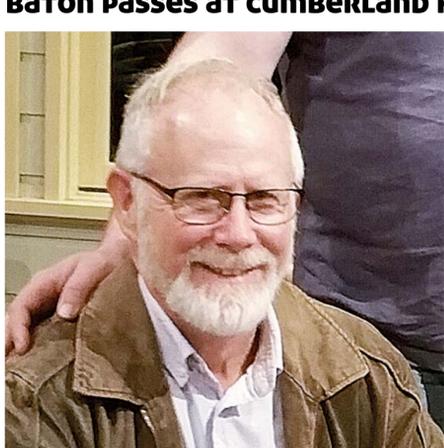
Mr Pettett regards his time as a prison chaplain as the “best ministry” of his working life, saying the men he spent time with each day “were incredibly spiritually hungry. I had free rein to just wander around, talk to them and answer every question they had. I found that every single day of the week I was involved in at least one in-depth gospel conversation.”

Retirement will mean a significant amount of sailing, but Mr Pettett is also teaching pastoral care and working as a moderator – helping ensure the standard of examinations and marking is consistent across all colleges linked to the Australian College of Theology.

“I’m looking forward to continuing to teach pastoral care and see people developing in their own ministry,” he says.



BATON PASSES AT CUMBERLAND HOSPITAL



The **Rev Rick Sewell** has retired from his role as Anglican chaplain to Cumberland Hospital after 12 years – and almost 40 years of ordained ministry.

Mr Sewell has served all over the Diocese, undertaking curacies at Darling Point and Nowra with Bomaderry, spending 12 years as curate-in-charge of Kenthurst, and another five as rector of Lalor Park with Kings Langley.

He began chaplaincy in 2002 with three years at Royal North Shore Hospital, followed by his most recent position in the psychiatric hospital at Cumberland.

“It’s a great privilege to be able to minister in a really quite unique situation dealing with those who have acute mental illness,” he says. “There are challenges but many great joys – like a young couple who came into the hospital almost 10 years ago, became Christians and they’re going to be married later this month... they’re quite active in ministry to patients now – they run a Bible study, take part in chapel services and are involved in pastorally caring for the patients. It’s a real joy.”

Mr Sewell is passionate about the needs of those with mental health problems, and is concerned about Cumberland’s long-term patients if policy changes see them placed back into the community.

“Chapel is not an occasional visit for them – many come every week, and they continue to come even after they’ve left the hospital because they feel safe there,” he says. “They don’t feel welcomed by other churches, even if the church does it unconsciously by not including them because their behaviour is strange or idiosyncratic.”

He is delighted by his replacement at Cumberland, **Col Ward**, who has been a volunteer for longer than Mr Sewell was hospital chaplain. A church youth worker for many years, Mr Ward began visiting when one of the parish youth was a patient, and just kept coming.

“Col is a very dedicated, faithful, humble man who was there for virtually every chapel service and every Wednesday night Bible study,” Mr Sewell says. “He got to know other patients and has such a desire to see them get to know the Lord, or get to know the Lord.”

Mr Sewell remains in the casual chaplaincy role and is confident other opportunities to serve will arise because “ministry is a lifelong thing”.

“I have this escarpment view of life,” he says. “The nature of it is that you take up new challenges – you don’t bump along the bottom thinking that you’re on the way out. Whether it’s ministry in a parish context or anywhere else, it’s serving the Lord.”

FAMILY FIRST

The **Rev Robert Denham** has resigned from St Peter’s, Hornsby after 12 years as rector in order to free up more time for his two foster children.

Mr Denham and his wife Dot have been carers of their great-niece and great-nephew for almost five years – since the younger of the two was just six months old and the elder was two. In addition, the seven-year-old is deaf and needs to attend the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children school at North Rocks.

For six months last year the Denhams spent hours driving to and from Hornsby and North Rocks each weekday. The Diocese then approved a move for the family offsite from the church so they could live closer to the school.

That has been the arrangement for the past year, but Mr Denham says it recently “became obvious that I needed to spend more time with them – to support Dot and help more with school, homework and so forth”.

With grown children and eight grandchildren, the couple has plenty of experience with young ones. Mr Denham also ran the playgroup at St Peter’s for 12 years, “so I’m used to kids – I love kids!”

After resigning from Hornsby in mid-August, the couple bought a house at North Rocks and now attend church locally.

Mr Denham is working part-time as a locum, but says the option of returning to full-time work is available to him at any time – as long as the position is close to North Rocks. And he is confident that God will continue to be in charge of whatever happens next.



In Brief

The **Ven Stan Skillicorn** died on September 3, 2016. More details in the next edition.

The new chairman of St Andrew’s Cathedral School is the Dean of Sydney, the **Very Rev Kanishka Raffel**.

The Rev Dr Colin Bale has retired from the role after nine years of service.

Apologetics and paper planes

SCOTT MONK

MORE THAN ONCE DURING A PARTICULARLY LONG SERMON, I'VE DREAMED OF THROWING A paper plane past the preacher's ear.

So imagine my delight during the July holidays when I finally got my dream, turning the normally sedate upper Chapter House of St Andrew's Cathedral – with its portraits of mostly frowning old archbishops – into a loud, joyful and mischievous version of the airport.

The wettest behind the ears of the Cathedral's four student ministers, I was teaching the 30 Cathedral Kids about persistent prayer by inviting them to pen requests to God and fold them into paper planes. One wrote "forgiveness" while another scrawled "\$90,000,000,000,000" and was still adding zeroes when I asked everyone to line up without – oi! – throwing their planes.

First, the kids had to turn their backs on me and toss the planes over their shoulders. This represented how most people treat God's call to prayer. Second, they grabbed hold of their throwing wrist with the other hand and tried to launch their planes, which predictably all fell short. This represented prayers handicapped by doubts or disillusionments.

Third, I stood above the kids on the mezzanine level and asked them to throw the prayers for me to catch. All but one missed. This showed our wrong belief that only a few prayers reach God. Finally, I had the children line up one last time and I collected each of their prayers face to face, illustrating how God not only receives all our prayers but does so personally.

As the planes were put away with none found lodged up the late Archbishop Mowl's nose, two brothers aged 13 and 11 approached me to lead a Bible study as they were too old for the main group.

Keen to support their eagerness, I sat them down and posed an off-the-cuff question that has since forced me to rethink Bible studies for young adults: "Rather than me picking a passage, is there anything you've ever wanted to know about God but you've been afraid to ask?"

The brothers leapt at the chance. "How can I keep believing in God when all my friends say I'm stupid?" the elder asked. His brother was just as blunt. "If a baby dies and never knows Jesus, does it go to hell?"

These weren't your standard questions from a teen study booklet. This was real frustration yearning for real answers.

And they're not alone. In 2011, a five-year project by research firm Barna Group found six main reasons why US teenagers disconnect from the church after the age of 15 – and one of those was the church being a safe place to ask questions.

"Young adults with Christian experience say the church is not a place that allows them to express doubts," Barna reported. "They do not feel safe admitting that sometimes Christianity does not make sense. In addition, many feel that the church's response to doubt is trivial."

One in three said they felt unable to "ask my most pressing life questions in church". Almost a quarter had "significant intellectual doubts" about their faith.

As a journalist and a Christian, the older I've grown in my faith the more confident I've become about the reality of God because of what I call the Alice principle: when faced with an unanswered question, go down the rabbit hole. Stop sitting fearfully on the riverbank. Chase after the truth, even if you have to tumble down a very deep well to find it. And the remarkable thing is, for every bottle labelled "Drink me" or cake marked "Eat me" fawned over by secularists, atheists or the media, none has ever disproved the existence of our Almighty God. There is no Queen of Hearts ready with an axe to chop our faith in half – and there never will be.

For the two brothers, when we were faced with no black-and-white answer in the Bible as to what happens when children die, we followed the breadcrumbs through the character of God, the Jewish concept of the age of accountability and David's lament for his dead child in 2 Samuel 12:21-23.

With the older brother we pulled about his friends' claims by explaining God's general revelation in nature (Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 1:20), the accurate witness of the Gospel writers, the words of Josephus and Tacitus, and we explored the motivations of Christ's disciples to continue to proclaim him Lord despite torture or death.

At the end of the 20-minute study, both brothers were clearly reassured. I thought that was the end of my little experiment but the Lord had other plans. With youth leaders away for the next two weeks, I volunteered to run a proper apologetic teenage Bible study again, with no preparation, that this time lasted a full hour and attracted six sharp-minded teenagers.

The rules were simple: ask whatever you want and we'll try to find the answer in the Bible. If we can't, we'll go away and research it.

Again, the teenagers didn't hold back. "Why does a loving God allow suffering?" "How can God send people to hell even if they've never heard of him?" "If God created Satan, doesn't that mean God created evil?"

There was also an old atheist logic trap, albeit with different sheep's clothing: "If God is all powerful, then can he make a chilli that's so hot even he can't eat it?"

There were a few light-hearted ones: "If you fell off a building when Jesus returns at the Second Coming, will you keep falling?" and "Did Adam and Eve go through puberty?" (to which I suggested that God left a copy of *Where Do I Come From?* somewhere behind a tree in Eden).

For a bit of fun, I threw in my own question: "Did Adam and Eve have bellybuttons?" This lit up the group because they'd never thought about it before but, using logic, humour and Genesis, they came to the consensus: no, because neither Adam nor Eve were formed in utero.

For each session the group was fully engaged and answering each other's questions with Bible passages. Teenagers I'd witnessed say virtually nothing in normal studies were suddenly animated and vocal about their faith.

There were no chips, no chocolates nor any other bribe. They had a different kind of hunger: a safe place to have their greatest questions answered without condemnation or fear their entire faith would collapse. Alice had gone down the rabbit hole and found the ageless and simple truth: God still is God.

Teenage apologetics can never replace weekly Bible studies, or – just as importantly – relationships with other Christians, but modern churches need to cater for inquiring minds and the combative culture young adults live in.

Atheists, whether in the media, at a whiteboard or in the playground, never play fair. Their goal is to ridicule, not engage. We must build up our young Christians in the open safety of our churches and family homes first to help them respond with fair, intelligent and proper replies. Only then will the smug, purring Cheshire cats of secularism fade into insignificance.

Scott Monk is a journalist, children's author and Moore College student.



Plebiscite problems

DR GLENN DAVIES

THE OPENING WORDS OF CHARLES DICKENS' *A TALE OF TWO CITIES* SEEM REMARKABLY apt as a description of the times in which we live.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had

everything...

Twelve months ago our newly installed Prime Minister was telling us, "There has never been a more exciting time to be alive than today and there has never been a more exciting time to be an Australian".

How things have changed! Within less than a year the Federal Coalition he leads has been transformed from a Government with a healthy majority in the House of Representatives to a humbling majority of just one seat.

Moreover, part of the platform of the Prime Minister's electoral victory was to promise the Australian people a plebiscite on same-sex marriage, yet his political opponents appear only to pour disdain upon the Government's slender mandate as they jockey for position in the Senate. They seek to scuttle the PM's plans and prevent Australian citizens from having their say on what is arguably one of the most significant social changes to the fabric of our society ever contemplated in this country.

As I write it is unsure how this will play out in the Senate, though there is much speculation in the press. One of the most touted reasons for not having a plebiscite is the fear that an avalanche of "hate speech" will be unleashed by those who do not want the legal definition of marriage to change.

Of course, such a proposition is somewhat counter-intuitive; normally it is those who are advocating social change, rather than those seeking to maintain the status quo, that become more virulent in promulgating their views. After all, experience teaches us that there is a greater need for convincing arguments for change than arguments for no change – as the 1999 referendum on the republic demonstrated.

In recent weeks we have discovered who the perpetrators of "hate speech" really are. When it became known that the Australian Christian Lobby, Marriage Alliance, Sydney Anglicans and Sydney Catholics were holding a meeting to discuss the "No" case for the proposed plebiscite, a torrent of abuse and vitriol poured forth from proponents of the "Yes" case (www.samesame.com.au).

Abusive phone calls to the hotel in which the planned meeting was to take place, together with threats of violence to the staff and guests, caused the meeting to be transferred to another venue.

In the land of free speech Christians are not allowed (so a segment of our society dictates) to defend the definition of marriage that has been fundamental to Australia's civilisation – not merely since white immigrants of the 18th century, but also to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, the first inhabitants of the land.

Yet those who are committed to changing the culture of Australia by removing gender from the definition of marriage feel free to excoriate their opponents. We are regularly and intemperately described as "homophobic" and, in the words of one journalist, defenders of historic marriage are "weirdos" and "a sweating pig circus of morons and bigots, [wishing to] mangle their hate boners in the marriage equality plebiscite".

It is indeed the worst of times when such derogatory language is uttered by journalists and politicians alike. One can only suspect that the proponents of the "Yes" case are fearful of the response of the Australian public with regard to a plebiscite. If they are so confident of winning, why are they so fearful of a citizen-wide vote on the question?

While I recognise the cost of holding a plebiscite is high, democracy always comes at a financial cost, if you believe the will of the people is worthy of being heard. Every federal election comes at a high cost. The most recent estimates for the 2016 election are in excess of \$200 million – apart from the money that is paid to politicians who run for office, which this year is estimated to be at least \$60 million. I wish someone would start to complain about this extra cost to taxpayers!

Yet it is the best of times when we still have freedom to speak without fear or favour. We currently enjoy that freedom, notwithstanding the attempted censorship from certain sections of society. As Christians we must always speak graciously; there is no excuse for hateful speech or derogatory remarks about those with whom we disagree. We still have the freedom to assemble, to proclaim Christ and to teach his word to our fellow Australians.

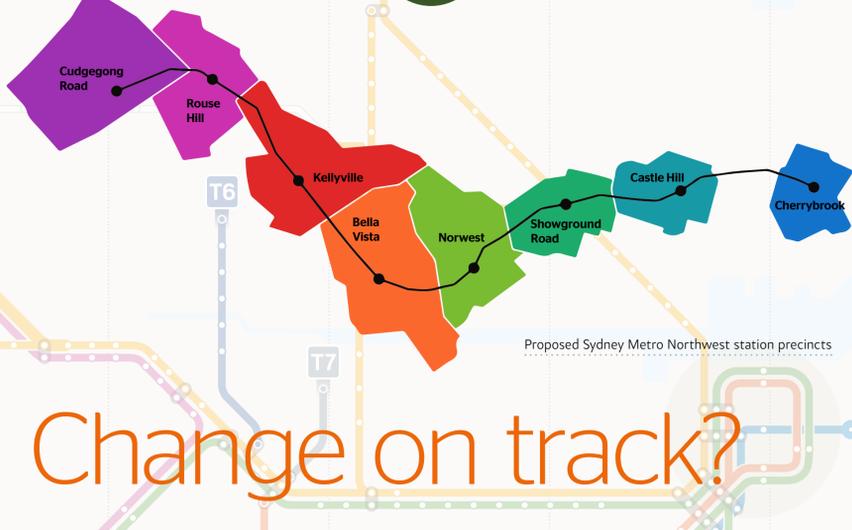
May we all continue to show Christ's love as we fulfil our calling to be phosphorescent Christians, "shining like stars in the universe holding forth the word of life" (Phil 2:15).

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.



Proposed Sydney Metro Northwest station precincts

Change on track?

In only a few years a new rail line will change the look and population of northwestern Sydney forever.

TARA SING asks local churches how they are preparing.

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, THE SENIOR MINISTER OF ST PAUL'S, CASTLE HILL STOOD IN a horse paddock and filmed a plea to his church. In this video he estimated that more than 6000 people would move into those Castle Hill paddocks and urged the church to get ready to share the gospel.

Now history is repeating itself. St Paul's is one of many churches in Sydney's northwest gearing up for an onslaught of changes. Castle Hill's current senior minister, the Rev John Gray, is no longer telling his congregation to prepare for 6000 new residents – he's telling them to expect up to 200,000.

So why are people heading for the Hills?

One of the major drawcards for suburbs like Castle Hill will be the Sydney Metro Northwest, an \$8.3 billion railway project of the NSW Government that will run from Epping to Rouse Hill. It is due to open in 2019 and promises a train every four minutes at peak times. Accompanying the new rail line will be major housing developments, with medium- to high-rise apartment buildings of up to 20 storeys to be constructed in close proximity to Metro stations.

"Sydney's northwest is a great place to live and raise a family," NSW Premier Mike Baird, who is also the Minister for Western Sydney, told *Southern Cross*. "For the first time, there will be a reliable public transport system in Sydney's northwest – a region which will be twice the size of Canberra in the coming decades. Sydney Metro will forever change the way of life for people in Sydney's Hills region."

Are churches ready for this? Already some parishes feel at capacity in terms of resources and are aware they are struggling to reach all of their existing neighbours. What will happen as their suburbs shift dramatically? How will they take the gospel to the thousands of people who will come once the rail line is finished?

"This has been the largest cultural shift in our generation in housing and high-density living," says the Rev Geoff Bates, Mission Area leader for the Hills and senior minister of Life Anglican Church, Quakers Hill. "When we talk about the northwest growth corridor, the State and local governments have very clearly planned around these train lines. There are enormous numbers of people going into these transport nodes."

The end of the Sydney Metro Northwest (formerly known as the North West Rail Link) will be Cudgegong Road Station at Rouse Hill, which – according to the plans – will be ringed by buildings three to six storeys high. The Rouse Hill and Kellyville precincts will have apartments up to 12 storeys high. Plans like these indicate just how many new people churches in the Hills could have – more than Bates and others previously thought.

"We're concerned because we don't know who is going to occupy these buildings," he says. "Will it be professionals, families, the elderly? We don't know yet, so we've got a bit of homework to do. It will be people living on a growth link, so we assume that most are commuting to another area to work. A number of prayer and think tanks need to be put in place. We need research done so we can know the best model of mission."



Full house: Easter Day at St Paul's, Castle Hill.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

On a warning note Bates adds, "I am positive [churches] are not prepared, and have not done enough thinking about this. We're not doing ministry properly now to areas that are our bread and butter. How do we expect to go with these new challenges? This will be a tsunami and we can't be prepared enough. We need to think now and get ready."

At St Paul's, Castle Hill, at least, there has been thorough research, thinking and educating of its congregations for the past three years. "Our area is on the cusp of a very dynamic and irreversible change," Gray says. "We're aware of that now with the evidence of the train line coming in and skyscraper apartment towers being built in Castle Hill. Estimates vary between 160,000 and 200,000 people moving into the Baulkham Hills Shire alone. Everything will change and it will be a challenge to all churches here."

Even knowing these figures, Gray doesn't believe people will fully comprehend how big the changes will be and what it will mean for their parish. "We've read everything we can get our hands on and are listening to everything that real estate agents, town planners, school principals and local and state councils can tell us," he says. "We are trying to figure out how we can best prepare for what will be a major immigration in 2019. We figure people will look for St Paul's, so we want to make sure there is car parking and seats available."

St Paul's is not the only church thinking logistically about how it can practically cater to the needs of a larger neighbourhood. Norwest Anglican Church has been contemplating the best way to use its facilities to promote gospel growth alongside the growth of its area. Senior minister the Rev Peter Stedman says that despite the challenges it will bring, he is excited about the upcoming changes. "The big challenge for us is to afford the resources," he says. "It's a challenge to ensure everyone is cared for in appropriate ministry spaces, and providing resources is expensive."

"We need to actually plant new services to accommodate people," he adds. "We're not sure what new services will look like, but a big challenge [now] is that our 9am service keeps filling up. I hope that [as these changes come] our church will never be a church about itself but always about the Lord Jesus Christ."

"We pray that in every street there will be a home where people love Jesus and are ministering to their neighbours. We share our lives and our doctrine with people and, even at our size now, we try to visit every new family that comes along. When we grow, will we be able to do that? We don't know, but we will try. We don't care about size, we're happy to be a small church that loves Jesus, but if God chooses to grow this church, that's up to him. We just want Christ at the centre of everything."

In contemplating how to reach out to so many new people arriving at once, Bates believes the key is to not only to create community, but also find ways into the new communities that will form. "The church needs to go to them," he says. "Over the next 25 years, ministry has to bring in other paradigms. That's what this is causing us to do. We need to experiment and invest in new paradigms to see if they work or not. Parishes need to draw up area plans and consult with leaders. This is all new for us. What does effective mission look like in these communities? We need to work out the research and then the training to get people in there."

Along with the increase in population and suburbs, there also needs to be an increase in the number of church buildings for people to gather in. New Churches for New Communities (NCNC) has been working hard to ensure there are church buildings in these expanding areas.

"Wherever possible, we want to raise funds up to \$2.5 million for each new church project, to give a new congregation that's been planted a facility," says Glenn Gardener, the executive director of NCNC. "The facility needs to be designed in such a way that the building will be used by members of the congregation connecting with the community. So, as much as possible, it will be used for youth activities, English classes, *Christianity Explained* classes, parenting courses, mothers' groups and a whole range of other things that can help a church connect with the community as the community grows. Connection is what it's all about."

How are churches preparing for change?

- Listen to God's word and hear the urgency for mission. All nations need to hear the gospel, including your suburb. This is the most important task.
- Research what the plans are for your suburb. Head to local and State government websites to see what changes are in store for your area.
- Examine what the needs will be in the future. Who will be in your area in the next 10 years and how will you serve them?
- Evaluate what you are doing now. Will these ministries continue to serve people and what can you do better?
- Communicate with your congregations. Discuss the upcoming changes and help them to see your area as a mission field.
- Pray with your parish for the area, for these changes, for the people who are coming and for those who are already your neighbours. Pray for God's glory, for people to know Jesus and to put their trust in him for salvation.

CRUNCH THE NUMBERS

- The Sydney Metro Northwest will be 23 kilometres long and is due for completion in 2019.
- Branching off at Epping the planned new stations are Cherrybrook, Castle Hill, Showground, Norwest, Bella Vista, Kellyville, Rouse Hill and Cudgegong Road.
- There were 10,850 dwellings along the corridor of the new rail line in 2012.
- A total of 27,000 new dwellings are planned for construction by 2036 to accommodate an expected population increase of 200,000 people.
- In 2012 there were 100 apartment blocks of seven storeys or above around the planned stations. By 2036 there will be 6750 – and in Castle Hill some of these will rise to 20 storeys.
- Bella Vista, Kellyville and Cherrybrook had no apartment buildings along the rail corridor in 2012. By 2036 Bella Vista will have 3200 (1400 from 7-12 storeys), Kellyville will have 4200 (1100 at 7-12 storeys) and Cherrybrook 3150.

Information taken from the North West Rail Link Corridor Strategy (September 2013).

One of the five NCNC projects is the church at Stanhope Gardens, which currently owns a vacant block of land. Connected to Life Anglican Church at Quakers Hill, the congregation now meets at the Blacktown Leisure Centre and is led by the Rev Steve Reimer. Reimer is already considering what kind of impact the Metro Northwest will have on his congregation and how his members can make contact with the thousands of people who will move in.

"No doubt it will mean doing things quite differently to how we've done them in years gone by," he says. "It presents a great opportunity to be working with local churches in praying and planning, as well as learning from those in city areas."

Stanhope Gardens may not have its own building yet, but it keeps alive the vision and mission of reaching out to the area by holding a church service on its block of land a few times a year. "It helps people to see what could be one day, and helps the community to see there is an active church with many families, even if it's only a tent we're meeting in," Reimer says. "We would love to be a light on the hill and we would love to see a people who love God, love their church and love their community."

What can we learn from other areas?

Green Square is another suburb where there is major development and culture change. Grace City Church, which was planted early last year, is already facing what is coming to the Hills: high-density housing and a commuting neighbourhood.

The church's mission pastor Matt Varcoe started with research. "We spent time thinking about what people in this area [mostly young professionals] expect," he says. "You want to remove obstacles so the gospel is clear." Gospel urgency also shaped the church culture. "We put on a service where people know if they invite their friends they will hear the gospel."

One challenge they face is connecting with closed-off people. "You can't get people to come to you as much – you have to go to them. Figure out where people are going, make personal connections and from there you can invite and welcome them in." This has inspired church stalls at the local markets and also carols in the park, where more than 200 apartments overlooked the church's event last year.

Another obstacle when ministering to commuters who work long hours is busyness.

"The longer things are the less people are willing to come," Varcoe says. "So we ask people to be present for three weeks and then see if they want to recommit. Weeknight [events] start later and finish on time, because people are concerned about work in the morning."

He adds that churches in areas like this need to be flexible. "Your family service may not work for the new majority of people, so you need to figure out what works."

Grace City has been surprised at one thing that has worked for them – leaflet drops. "We can leaflet 15,000 homes pretty quickly because they're all apartments," Varcoe says. "After we leaflet, our website traffic increases significantly. When we ask visitors, most say they heard about us from a leaflet or our website."

"We need to remember the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. There is an amazing opportunity if you can figure out ways to do church to bring people in. It is an amazing privilege to go down the road and find a building with people from all over the world in it."

Changes in the south

To get an inkling of what may happen in northwestern Sydney just look at the southwest, where major developments have begun along the rail line and where two new stations have opened: Edmonson Park and Leppington.

This is the first stage of the South West Rail Link, designed to service the new suburbs and airport planned for the area.

The week these stations opened, Hoxton Park Anglican Church took its Moore College mission team to hand out leaflets and talk with commuters.

"The station attracts people from all directions as there hasn't been any train in this area before," says the Rev David Clarke, senior minister of Hoxton Park. "Being a new station with new staff, there was a sense of celebration. People were friendly and open to talk to us. It was a positive experience – maybe more positive than if we had gone to an established station."

Aware of the developments, next year the Rev Luther Symons will be heading up a new church in Leppington: Hope Anglican Church. "Leppington is [one of the] fastest-growing suburbs in Australia, with 20-30 blocks of land selling every week," he says.

"Leppington alone will have 60,000 people in 20,000 new homes move in, in the next 15 years. It will also have 10 schools, a TAFE, a business park, shopping centre – and the train station will link to the new airport."

In the wider southwest 300,000 people are predicted to move into 110,000 new homes over the next 15 years, which is almost equal to the population of the Central Coast.

Symons is working out how the church can best reach these developing suburbs. "Our first plan is to gather a team who are mission minded to move into the area so that we might share our lives and the gospel with this new, rapidly growing and diverse community," he says.

"Some of our launch team families are moving from the eastern suburbs, inner west and St George areas. They are selling their homes and moving for the sake of the gospel. It's extremely encouraging. Many are catching the vision and making big changes to reach the lost in the new southwest."



Welcome: Hoxton Park's leaflet day at Edmonson Park station.



Busy building: Sunday at Norwest Anglican.

The Funding for Urban Renewal committee was established in response to a request from Synod in 2015, and the committee is presenting a proposal to Synod this year to creatively enable funding for the expansion of existing churches.

The Rev Raj Gupta, who heads the committee, says, "Other than parishes in the top 20 per cent of wealthiest suburbs in Sydney, not one parish has been able to develop and expand its facilities without assistance in some form, and very few will ever be able to."

Gupta believes Sydney Anglicans aren't keeping up with the urban renewal across the city because we can't overcome the barrier of helping parishes to develop adequate facilities.

"I think churches can do effective ministry without these upgrades [and] churches are doing brilliant ministry and seeing significant growth, but a point in time comes where you are limited," he says. "If the auditorium you have seats a certain number of people, then at some stage you will be limited."

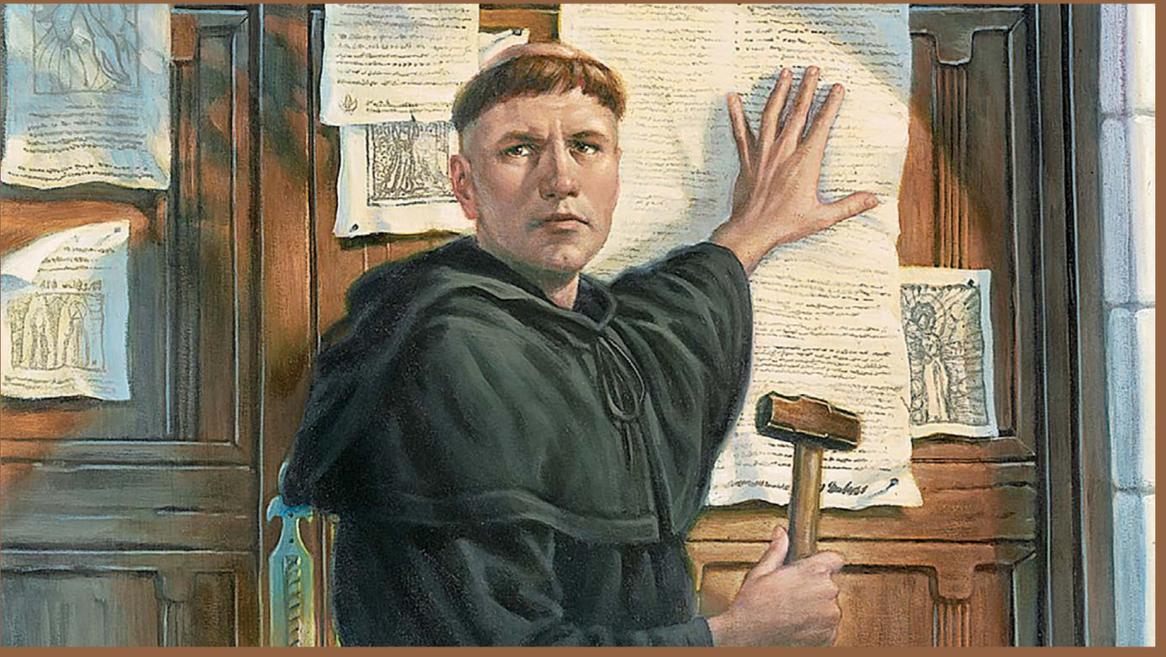
In an attempt to remove these constraints, the Funding for Urban Renewal committee is proposing a way to think holistically about development as a Diocese.

"What it entails is taking the current 2 per cent land levy, rebadging it as a Diocesan and Development Levy, and slowly increasing it over a few years to 4 per cent in total, so that parishes don't feel the impact," Gupta says. "That means there is an additional \$2 million a year to give grants to existing churches so they can expand."

"Churches still have to raise their own money. The problem we discovered was the average cost of a development was \$3 million, and that's just out of reach for churches. If churches have a grant, that changes their situation." The proposal will be presented to Synod for debate later this month.

Gray says ultimately, as the area shifts, churches will need to keep asking one key question: "How can we interact with people coming in and how can we reach and welcome them and go about our mission? Just in Castle Hill alone there will be thousands of extra people within metres of us."

"It is always about people. Every human being has an eternal destiny and we want to get them to the right place rather than the wrong place. We want to help people engage with Jesus so they know their eternity is secure and they know the love of God now. There's a huge mission field. We've got to help them connect with Jesus."



Is the Reformation still necessary?

We've come a long way in 500 years, but that doesn't mean the Reforming is over, writes **MARK THOMPSON**.

ALL OVER THE WORLD PEOPLE ARE GEARING UP FOR A YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS commemorating 500 years since Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg.

There is still an academic debate about whether the theses were actually ever nailed to the door, though the tide has certainly turned back in favour of saying that he did. Not that it matters much. No one doubts that the theses, which ignited the Protestant Reformation, were sent to Luther's local bishop on October 31, 1517. That Reformation transformed the religious landscape in ways that continue to resonate in 2017.

Yet is it still a cause of celebration? Is it still necessary? Today some voices – including apparently Pope Francis himself – consider it is all over. The Reformation has ended. But has it, and should it?

Luther's response was provoked by a church that was demonstrably corrupt but, then again, it had troubled others before him. His was not the first voice raised in protest. Yet what Luther did – which very few others had done – was to draw the link between abusive practices and false doctrine. It was not only what was done in the church's name that needed to be changed but what was taught in the church's name as well.

False doctrine inevitably leads to false practice. False practice is a very reliable indicator of false doctrine. The list of false doctrines Luther would uncover included an emphasis on tradition that obscured the supreme authority of Scripture, an emphasis on priesthood and sacraments that distracted from hearing, believing and obeying the word that God has given us, an emphasis on institutional unity and uniformity that was often treated as more important than Christian discipleship, and an emphasis on works which transformed grace into a supplement to our own religious effort.

There are undoubted heroic dimensions to the narrative of the Reformation. Luther's great stand at the Imperial Diet of Worms in 1521 is clearly among them. With all the power of the Western world arrayed against him – the new emperor in his splendour, the princes of Germany and the representatives of the Pope – he refused to recant and declared that his conscience was captive to the word of God. The words his friends heard, but which never made it into the official record, are well known: "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me".

Everything – including traditions, papal pronouncements and the law of the Church – must be tested by the final authority: the written word of God.

The stories of Bilney, Tyndale, Ridley, Latimer and Cranmer, immortalised in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (published as *Actes and Monuments*), continue to inspire Christian men and women today (a quick Google will give you the gist but there have been magnificent biographies written in the past couple of years, too!). They were mistreated, hunted down and murdered because the truths that Luther had helped them see afresh were too precious to ignore.

We are justified by faith apart from works. What matters most is not what we do but what has been done for us by Jesus. Our life of obedience and good works flows out of being right with God; it does not make us right with God. Our access to God is direct in the gospel of his Son. It is not dependent upon the ministrations of the priest. The true church is the congregation of faithful people around the word of God, those who hear God's word and take hold of God's visible words of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

What believers need more than anything is to hear what God has to say to them, and so having the Bible in your own language is not a luxury but a necessity.

In the 16th century ordinary life was dramatically different, depending upon whether you were Catholic or Protestant. You could tell what people believed by looking inside their church buildings. In Protestant churches there were no images or statues, the lectern or the pulpit was moved to the place of prominence and the table and font, while they were retained, were moved to the side.

You could tell what people believed by looking inside their homes. In Protestant homes, images and icons were nowhere to be seen and the Bible was given pride of place. You could tell what people believed by looking at their daily routine, the new dignity given to "secular" work (it was not only the monks and priests who were honouring God in their work) and the respect given to women.

Of course mistakes were made. Luther was tired, sick and sore and never really understood or listened to Zwingli and the Swiss, so a divide was created between the German Reformed and the Swiss Reformed – the Lutherans and the Calvinists. Luther's harsh tongue was not just reserved for the Pope and his court but for Turks (Muslims) and Jews as well. Some of the language he used, especially against the Jews, is deeply offensive to those on the other side of the Holocaust.

Calvin and Farel made a real hash of their first stint in Geneva and were actually ordered to leave the city. They were ideologues who tried to impose their will on the people rather than persuade them from the Scriptures. Archbishop Cranmer capitulated under tremendous pressure and signed a recantation of all he had taught and written. Only at his trial in the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford – they never were going to set him free – did he reaffirm his commitment to the doctrines of the Reformation, whatever the consequences. John Knox was a hothead who made Luther look calm and irenic (and that's quite a feat!). Eccentric extremists broke off from the Reformers in Germany and those in Switzerland causing riots, disorder and public distress.

We shouldn't look back at the Reformation with rose-coloured glasses. The heroes of that era were ordinary, fractured, weak and anxious people, just like us. We don't have to turn them into something they were not. The Reformation dramatically changed millions of lives over the centuries to come. Yet at the time no one was certain it would survive. In fact, the Catholic emperor's armies marched into Wittenberg while Luther's body was still warm in the grave.

So was it worth it? Most definitely. To the Reformers we owe the recovery of the gospel of grace and unconditional pardon, the Bible in our own language and the transformation of home, work and church. These men and women did not intend to separate from Rome. They stayed within that institution until they were thrown out. Yet they judged that access to the word of God, the freedom of the grace of God and the reform of the church of God were all worth it. Freedom from fear, ignorance and superstition were all worth it, too.

Is it still relevant? Does the protest of Protestantism still need to be made? In the centuries that have followed the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church has changed a lot. The liturgy is no longer primarily in Latin. There have been concerted attempts to tackle corruption. Conciliatory advances have been made towards the other denominations. However, there has been no movement on the doctrine that divided us in the 16th century. The Pope is still presented as the authoritative interpreter of Scripture – the only one who has the right to determine what it means. Church tradition is still accorded such a high place that it is not easily disentangled from Scripture. Justification is by faith but not by faith alone. Our access to God is not direct but mediated through the saints and even the virgin Mary. The sacraments are necessary for salvation. Only Roman Catholic ordination is valid. The Pope is infallible.

A close examination of every joint statement made by Roman Catholics with Lutherans or Anglicans or the Orthodox reveals that in every case it is the Lutherans, Anglicans or the Orthodox that have moved. The Roman Catholic teaching of the 16th century remains intact. The teaching behind the abuses that fired the Reformation flame continues as the official teaching of the Roman Church.

Since the Pope didn't start the Reformation, he has no authority to declare it over. What is more, the protest is needed just as much today as it was then. For all our friendship with Catholics and co-belligerence on certain moral and political issues, we must remain conscientious Protestants.

So next year, when the celebrations begin, we can join in with the knowledge that the freedom we now enjoy in the gospel was recovered for us by the Reformers. Luther with his courage and directness in expounding Scripture, Calvin with his commentaries and even more his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Cranmer with his magnificent liturgy in the *Book of Common Prayer* and its program to expose God's people as much as possible to the life-transforming power of God's word – they are all God's gift to us and their legacy is something we cannot afford to ignore, belittle or surrender.

Throughout 2017, Moore College is planning a series of events to celebrate the Reformation and its recovery of the biblical gospel. Will you come and celebrate with us? ☪

The Rev Dr Mark D. Thompson is the principal of Moore College and head of the department of theology, philosophy and ethics.

For details of the college's planned celebrations, see www.moore.edu.au.



BELLS TOLL FOR 9/11

Contemplation: Former Prime Minister John Howard and his wife Janette remember September 11, 2001 at St Andrew's Cathedral. Below left: The US Ambassador to Australia, John Berry. Below right: Archbishop Davies speaks to the congregation.

PHOTOS: Russell Powell

Former Prime Minister John Howard sat in the front row of St Andrew's Cathedral as the bells tolled 15 times in remembrance of September 11, 2001, when terrorists attacked the twin World Trade towers in New York as well as flights over Pennsylvania and Washington. The attacks killed 2996 people, including 343 firefighters and 72 law enforcement officers, and injured more than 6000 others.

Mr Howard, who was Prime Minister at the time and in the US when the attacks occurred, watched from his hotel room window as the attack on Washington unfolded. At the Cathedral he read Matthew 5:43-48 before a church packed with diplomatic representatives from the more than 60 countries who lost citizens in the attack, including the US Ambassador to Australia, John Berry.

Mr Berry brought greetings on behalf of the American President and people.

The Governor of NSW, the Honourable David Hurley, sat in the same row as Mr Howard, and representatives of Fire and Rescue NSW were also in attendance to show solidarity with their colleagues in New York.

"The Bible readings chosen for today's service are apt for our occasion," Archbishop Glenn Davies told the congregation. The Bible is no stranger to calamity or trouble. It is not naive about the terrors of destruction unleashed by humans upon one another for whatever cause seems right in their own eyes. It is not unaware that disasters strike for no apparent reason, whether it be natural disaster such as earthquakes in central Italy, or deadly diseases such as cancer, or even accidental death where there is no apparent cause. The Bible deals with real life and is neither simplistic nor idealistic.

"We cannot fathom the depth of human depravity which unleashes the horrors of terrorism across the world. That this past week we should hear the news of the Taliban mercilessly capturing more territory in Afghanistan is a chilling reminder of the crisis of our world. Yet there is hope. 'God is our hope and refuge'."

Dr Davies spoke of a visit earlier this year to the site of the attacks in New York.

"In the lowest level of the 9/11 Museum is an unbroken pane of glass," he said. "Of 40,000 windows in the Twin Towers, which shattered on September 11, only one windowpane – from the 82nd floor of the South Tower – is known to have survived intact. As it fell to the earth it was still set within a fragment of the facade that penetrated the street below. Out of rubble and ruin was a remnant of survival.

"Let us not forget that Jesus will return to wrap up this old world and bring in everlasting righteousness," he added. "If we fail to heed Jesus' own warning to turn back to God and put our trust in him, then the horrors of 9/11, the pain of a world bent on destruction, the insecurity of not knowing where terrorism will strike next, will haunt us relentlessly.

"If we look to Jesus, conqueror of death and destruction, then there we shall find hope – true hope that will not disappoint but will bring us safely home to an eternal rest."



menai GETS FESTIVE



The inaugural Springbound festival took over Menai Anglican last month with live bands, night markets and even live art in an effort to engage people in the area with the church.

The parish's assistant minister, the Rev Andrew Hartman, says the event grew from trying to reinvent ideas used on beach assistance into something that could work in the local context.

"A number of ideas got thrown around but the initial idea that evolved into Springbound was a band night," he says. "We had a lot of stuff happening for kids and youth, and also for adults, but there wasn't a whole lot of avenues for [our young adults] to invite people to come and join in.

"Then it kind of evolved. Festivals and markets are popular – not just for young adults but can also extend further – and we also had contacts who we thought would like to get involved with the markets side of thing."



The earlier hours saw a greater proportion of families with young children and twenties, while later in the evening the balance turned towards those in their late teens and twenties. The combination of church members, people coming to see the bands and punters taking a peek at the art and markets saw about 1000 people make their way through Springbound over the course of the night.

"We had things we were praying for and hoping for, particularly in terms of people coming, but it was a bit of a try and see kind of thing," Mr Hartman says. "We were also wrestling with how 'churchy' to make it.

"Initially we were going to make it a kind of church modelled after our Saturday night service, including some preaching, but we eventually decided we weren't going to be able to do an event that was both aimed at our current church people and at visitors. We decided this event was primarily for us to connect with our community as a kind of pre-evangelistic event, and guided our decisions that way.

"We did have the bands talk about the Christian themes of their songs as a more natural kind of way of introducing the gospel, but the intent was for the night to be a first step towards potential future connections."



While there are no definite plans in place, the success of the night means that continuing Springbound as a large annual event is definitely on the cards.

"It was a learning experience – including things that we could change and work on for next time," Mr Hartman says. "One of the goals we had was that every visitor would meet someone from church and make that connection. I think there were some great examples of that, there were also some where we probably missed the mark.

"The hope is that we can take this exciting new thing, grow it and also get better at utilising the opportunity to connect with people and invite them into the life of our church through that."

RICHMOND TURNS 175

St Peter's, Richmond recently celebrated its 175th anniversary, boasting a church that's one of the oldest in Sydney.

The parish's youth minister Josh Wilson, who co-ordinated most of the proceedings, says the occasion was an opportune time to remember the church's legacy and invite the local community to celebrate this with them.

"We thought we'd try to do something that was more aimed at engaging the community for our 175th," he says. "We had some family stuff in the morning – jumping castles, a bunch of community bands and our own youth bands playing music.

"We also had something for the history buffs: we pulled out things from our safe that we have at the church – including some 200-year-old Bibles – and exhibited those, as well as running some tours through the cemetery. We just had a whole series of things that highlighted the legacy of the church but also what it's doing today."

St Peter's was consecrated on July 15, 1841 by Bishop William Broughton. The graveyard predates the church itself, coming into use in 1810 – before the township of Richmond had been formally named by then Governor Lachlan Macquarie.

The celebrations of the modern-day Richmond church included a 2pm combined service with members, visitors, local councillors and Archbishop Davies (who also preached) in attendance.

"It was a pretty busy day, with a lot of people who knew the church from years back, or from today, all together in one place," Mr Wilson says. He is thankful for the legacy of St Peter's and hopes that by the church's 350th anniversary it will be even greater.

"There are a lot of people who would talk about this church being 'their' church but they haven't attended for many years – or only for Christmas and things like that – and it's more about the connection than the faith," he says. "I think it would be nice for someone to maybe look back another 175 years from now and perhaps see a legacy from this time of people still having that goodwill, but also because that goodwill comes from remembering this as a place that led them to faith in Christ. That would be a good legacy to leave."

Still magnificent?

DAVID HÖHNE

The Magnificent Seven

Rated M

AKIRA KUROSAWA'S EPIC STORY OF HONOURABLE SACRIFICE HAS BEEN REMADE, providing us with a 21st century version of *The Magnificent Seven*. Director Antoine Fuqua (*Training Day*) is reunited with his Oscar-winning star Denzel Washington to retell the story of seven mercenaries who answer the call to redeem honest "Great Expansion" farmers from the oppressive weight of a greedy mining baron – at least that's their mission in this incarnation.

The 1960 version directed by John Sturges and starring Yul Brynner rides a little closer to the plot of Kurosawa's original tale *The Seven Samurai* but, with Trump-style Republican politics being what it is these days, repeating a story about evil Mexican brigands invading from across the border could end up being popular for all the wrong reasons. So, instead, a cast of heroes that better reflects current US demographics (mostly) is assembled to answer the cry for justice – but are these seven still magnificent?

All the tropes are present and accounted for with an efficiency that better suits the attention span of a 2016 audience (Kurosawa's tale lasted more than 200 minutes). An impressive sweep of the Rocky Mountains comes to rest on the little town of Rose Creek, where beleaguered citizens are gathered in the church lamenting their current state.

Enter big bad Bartholomew Bogue (Peter Sarsgaard), surrounded by gun-toting henchmen, to intimidate the locals into accepting his terms of humiliation. The settlers acquiesce but not without the loss of a few good men, most notably the husband of Emma Cullen (Haley Bennett) – but she rises from her ashes to enlist the kind of help that comes in the form of bounty hunter Sam Chisholm (Washington).

Their contract is sealed with his words, "So you seek revenge?" and her poignant reply: "I seek righteousness, as everyone should, but I'll settle for revenge".

So the gang is assembled with all the colours of Benetton: Anglo, African American, Asian, Hispanic and indigenous. We don't have time for lengthy "try-outs" of the seven – instead we have to settle for an ongoing commentary to pick up sufficient backstory. Travel banter gives way to grave assessment as our heroes start "empowering the locals" to take up their fight against tyranny. A cunning plan is set, the (lesser) women and children are hidden and the "big bad" and his army arrive sooner than expected.

The battle for Rose Creek is skilfully edited into a tribute to the right to freehold title and the arms necessary to defend it. Acts of valour are mixed with tragedy, as lawless men become heroes "defending those who could not defend themselves and fighting for something they couldn't keep".

The sight of so many Americans shooting other Americans is sobering amid the current media attention to gun deaths. Nevertheless, a story of redemption through self-sacrifice – justice established by grace – is a trope that Christians should welcome.

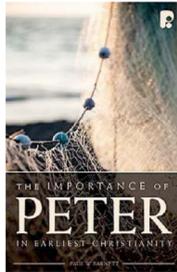
The M7 2016 cast had big shoes to fill and all the wonders of contemporary film technology can't suspend our belief that a great story rests on the "talk and walk" of great performances. Washington and Christ Pratt rise manfully to the challenge laid down by Brynner and Steve McQueen, helping to make this telling of the tale equally magnificent. SC

The Peter paradox

GLENN DAVIES

The Importance of Peter in Early Christianity

by Paul Barnett
Paternoster



THIS YEAR HAS SEEN TWO BOOKS PUBLISHED FROM THE HAND OF BISHOP PAUL BARNETT, my predecessor as Bishop of North Sydney and a distinguished lecturer, author and scholar (whose number of publications clearly surpass that of his successor!).

The first book was his contribution to the Reading the Bible Today Series with the release of a commentary on Philippians and Philemon. The second is his appreciation of the contribution of the Simon Peter to early Christianity.

Bishop Barnett's mastery of the historical situation of the first century provides an excellent background and interpretive grid for his exploration of the complexity of the apostle Peter, with all his ups and downs: from his coming to full realisation of the identity of Jesus to his rebuking Jesus for contemplating suffering and death; from his betrayal of Jesus during his trial to his leadership of the church on the day of Pentecost.

However, the paradox of Peter as Barnett describes it is that, after such a triumphant contribution to the opening pages of Luke's second account to Theophilus, Peter seems to disappear after the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) – which raises the question as to what Luke meant when he enigmatically declared that Peter "left for another place" (Acts 12:7).

Paul Barnett explores this paradox in great detail and provides a helpful guide to the travels of Peter from Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee and then to Antioch and Corinth, his memoirs as recorded by Mark in the compilation of the second Gospel, his conflict with Paul as recorded in Galatians, his two canonical letters and, finally, his martyrdom in Rome. Helpful dating of each of these events enhances the telling of Peter's story. Where the evidence is scanty to fill in the gaps Bishop Barnett is a reliable guide, even when speculation is called for in order to make sense of the chronology.

I found the book easy to read, engaging and insightful. Bishop Barnett rightly highlights the way in which Jesus was prepared to trust Peter to be leader of the Twelve, despite his obvious weaknesses.

He challenges the reader to reflect upon the change of leadership from Peter to James in Jerusalem and the way this apostle to the Jews complements Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles, providing us with a rich tapestry of the New Testament documents that enables those who read them to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever more. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18). SC