

Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

SEPT
EMBER
2017

Word inspired

THE PLACE OF LYRICS IN CHRISTIAN MUSIC

- + Losing our religion
- & The plebiscite - what's next?

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St Cecilia, patroness of musicians, in stained glass. 10
PHOTO: Zvonimir Athletic

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“

...we try our best to gear these [theology] courses towards helping and engaging Muslim society.

”

Shady Anis
World News



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Gladesville greets refugees

Welcome: Rami and Waed arrive in Sydney.

THE FIRST SYRIAN REFUGEES SPONSORED WITH THE HELP OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY'S Anglican Aid are settling in after touching down in Sydney. On a chilly August morning Rami, Waed and their four-year-old son Stephanos were greeted at the airport by members of Christ Church, Gladesville after their journey from Jordan.

"Anglican Aid has been working with a group in Jordan that has been trying to place people and our community care team had agreed last October that we could sponsor a family," Gladesville's rector the Rev David Mears says. "We only got notice a couple of weeks back that a family had been picked and were coming out. So we have been madly trying to get everything ready."

The Rev David Mansfield, CEO of Anglican Aid says, "Having an organisational sponsor allowed refugees without direct family connections in Australia to be assessed by a Christian organisation in Jordan." This helps refugees complete the application process and be referred to the Australian Embassy for consideration.

A number of churches have responded to Anglican Aid's request: five families have been proposed to have applications submitted to the embassy in Amman, with the churches supporting them on arrival. Mr Mears says once Gladesville got the word, "We produced a card with their pictures on it so the whole church could be praying for them and we had an interview with them that was played in front of church. "One of our families moved out of their own unit to stay with a friend so Rami, Waed and Stephanos could stay in the unit while they worked... to locate a place for them to live."

The church's main role, Mr Mears says, is social connection and support. "We also provide whatever the Government doesn't - whatever we think helps them to live comfortably." Already, Stephanos has a place in the parish preschool next term, the family has been shown around the city and, on their first Sunday at church, they were invited into Bible study groups.

He believes the family's outlook is realistic and they are adjusting well. "I think they are quite loving it, actually," he says. "Their English is better than we thought it was going to be so they were able to understand a lot of what of what happened on Sunday. I think they have been very encouraged by the support they have received. Rami did say something about expecting it to be a little harder as time passes... but they seemed great - their little boy was playing with other kids so it was really wonderful."

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Pay it forward



Studying to serve: scholarship recipients Motheba Shakhane and Lucinda Spence.

IT'S NOT OFTEN A PARISH GETS TO SUPPORT THE STUDIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE BEYOND ITS borders but St Mark's, Darling Point is rejoicing that, through the grief of losing loved members, they can provide for the needs of Christian university students.

The Rebecca Brandon Scholarship was created in honour of a member of Darling Point's evening service, who died of pancreatic cancer early last year but was so touched by the nursing care she received at St Vincent's Hospital during her illness that she wanted to benefit a young Christian entering that profession. The death of Michael Robinson and Angela Livingstone, two morning service members who also wanted to leave money for St Mark's to help others, became the genesis of what the church hopes will be an ongoing organ scholarship.

"It was a very difficult beginning to last year - we lost three parishioners in two months," says the rector of Darling Point, the Rev Dr Michael Jensen. "But it's wonderful that something like this can come out of such sadness and loss."

He and the parish council worked with Miss Brandon's estate to prepare a one-off scholarship worth \$26,000 for someone who was "active in their church and vibrant in their faith and who, out of their Christian conviction, had chosen to pursue a career in nursing".

After advertising for applicants and interviewing five, the group decided to give two-thirds of the scholarship to Motheba Shakhane - a member of St Luke's, Liverpool - and one-third to Lucinda Spence, who attends St Barnabas', Broadway.

Both women are studying for a Masters of Nursing as well as another undergraduate degree: Science for Shakhane and Arts for Spence, and they received the scholarships during a service at St Mark's last month.

Says Shakhane: "Being a full-time student, I do work one or two days a week at a café, which gets pretty intense during exam time. I also need to do work placements during holidays and [the scholarship] helps alleviate any stresses or worries I have that relate to financial concerns. I'm so grateful to have it... an opportunity like this doesn't come often and I hope to utilise it effectively to help me become a good nurse."

Like Brandon, Spence's mother died of cancer in St Vincent's Hospital - in December 2012 - and she says the grounded support and care of the nurses really "struck a chord" and inspired her to choose nursing as a career.

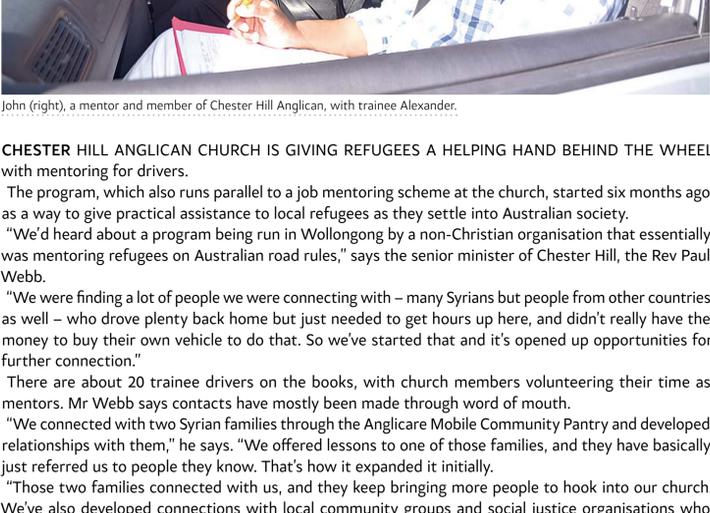
"[The scholarship] definitely takes the pressure off things," she adds, "but to have the support from the St Mark's community as well is quite amazing. They made it clear they wanted to support us through prayer and ongoing contact, which is really something you weren't going to get from any other scholarship! It's quite special."

An organ scholarship was awarded about a year ago to Sam Giddy, also a member of Barneys, who is in his second year at the Sydney Conservatorium. He is provided with \$5000 a year for three years, but also has the opportunity to work with Darling Point's music director Bill Clark and the parish choir, and plays the organ each week for the 8am service in term time.



"All of this is excellent exposure to the practical side of being an organist, while the pressure of having to practice different music every week is effective preparation for working as a musician," he says. "And, while it may seem trivial, the discipline of getting up every Sunday to make the trip from Sydney's inner west to the eastern suburbs for a 7.25am choir practice is one which I hope will stand me in good stead! "As a student I enjoy looking for new ways and places to learn. But when these arise in a context like St Mark's, amid sound teaching and the worship of God, I consider it a rare opportunity."

Drive for mission



John (right), a mentor and member of Chester Hill Anglican, with trainee Alexander.

CHESTER HILL ANGLICAN CHURCH IS GIVING REFUGEES A HELPING HAND BEHIND THE WHEEL with mentoring for drivers.

The program, which also runs parallel to a job mentoring scheme at the church, started six months ago as a way to give practical assistance to local refugees as they settle into Australian society. "We'd heard about a program being run in Wollongong by a non-Christian organisation that essentially was mentoring refugees on Australian road rules," says the senior minister of Chester Hill, the Rev Paul Webb.

"We were finding a lot of people we were connecting with - many Syrians but people from other countries as well - who drove plenty back home but just needed to get hours up here, and didn't really have the money to buy their own vehicle to do that. So we've started that and it's opened up opportunities for further connection."

There are about 20 trainee drivers on the books, with church members volunteering their time as mentors. Mr Webb says contacts have mostly been made through word of mouth.

"We connected with two Syrian families through the Anglicare Mobile Community Pantry and developed relationships with them," he says. "We offered lessons to one of those families, and they have basically just referred us to people they know. That's how it expanded it initially.

"Those two families connected with us, and they keep bringing more people to hook into our church. We've also developed connections with local community groups and social justice organisations who have also referred some people to us."

The parish has put measures in place to ensure the ministry is sustainable long term. Trainees are asked to pay \$15 for their lessons to cover petrol and other maintenance costs, and are expected to take on some professional lessons before coming to Chester Hill to ensure a baseline level of understanding.

The church is also exploring ways to financially support the co-ordinator of the ministry, Caroline Seaton, so she can devote more hours to it and ensure its sustainable growth.

"We're putting a lot of effort into this, but we have a big emphasis on just doing driver coaching, but also talking about Jesus with people we meet," Mr Webb says. "That's led us to start up a Syrian Arabic and Easy English discipleship group out of people in our mentoring programs, which is going well. We've also been able to connect people to our community events and to church services."

"It's all grown quite rapidly, and there's been great gospel fruit already."

New head for EdComm

ANGLICAN EDCOMM, THE EDUCATION COMMISSION of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, has announced the appointment of Stephen Kinsella as its next executive director. Mr Kinsella, (right) who is currently headmaster of The Illawarra Grammar School in Wollongong, will take up the appointment in early 2018.

"The commission warmly welcomes Stephen Kinsella to this vital leadership role," said the chairman of EdComm, Professor Chris Bellenger. "Stephen has the professional background and reputation, and the Christian character and personal attributes, needed in this role of assisting Anglican schools in the Diocese and their teaching staff to be leaders in biblically shaped student learning, character and faith formation based around their Christian ethos and foundations."

"Stephen is well connected within the professional world of educationists and will bring wise counsel on a broad range of educational matters, in all school types and beyond, to assist the leadership of the Diocese in a complex Australian society."

Stephen Kinsella has been headmaster of The Illawarra Grammar School (TIGS) since 2006 and before that was principal of Kormilda College in Darwin. He has served as a teacher in both government and independent schools over four decades.

He introduced the International Baccalaureate to TIGS and chaired the Association of Australasian International Baccalaureate Schools from 2000-2002.

He is well connected within several independent schools associations including the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, Heads of Independent Co-educational Schools and the Association of Independent Schools. Mr Kinsella and his wife Gay have two adult children and he is a parishioner of St Mark's, West Wollongong.

In response to his appointment Mr Kinsella said: "The Anglican Diocese of Sydney has a long and proud history of involvement in school education. It is exciting to have the opportunity to support our many Anglican schools in delivering a quality education within the framework of a biblical worldview for our students."

Archbishop Glenn Davies said he was "delighted with the appointment of Mr Stephen Kinsella to become the second executive director of EdComm. Mr Kinsella has made an outstanding educational contribution to the Illawarra Grammar School and I look forward to working with him in his new position, which is vital in both facilitating the direction of Christian education in our Diocese and in providing advocacy with state and federal governments."

Professor Bellenger noted with thanks that Dr Julie Mathews, a member of the commission who stepped in to temporarily lead EdComm following the illness and retirement of its previous executive director, Dr Bryan Cowling, will continue as executive director of EdComm until the end of 2017.



Plebiscite campaign gets underway

ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES HAS URGED A "NO" VOTE IN THE UPCOMING PLEBISCITE ON WHETHER gender should be removed from the Commonwealth Marriage Act.

The message came as the Diocese helped establish a coalition of 80 groups from across Australia, representing more than 3 million people, to campaign against any change in the Marriage Act.

The Coalition for Marriage (C4M), is the leading voice for the plebiscite "No" to Australia unveiled its website, coalitionformarriage.com.au, last month. The coalition is led by four groups: the Australian Christian Lobby, Marriage Alliance, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney and the Anglican Diocese of Sydney.

In a letter to clergy, Dr Davies called the issue "a monumental decision for the Australian public". "Since the beginning of creation marriage been defined as the exclusive and lifelong union of a man and a woman," he wrote. "As Christians we know it is God's plan; but it is God's plan for humanity, not just the people of God. It is the best structure for society and for the procreation of children in the secure nurture of a family with a mother and a father."

"Furthermore, this understanding of marriage is reinforced by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 19, where he tells his disciples that marriage is God's idea, and is uniquely expressed in the union of a man and a woman." The Bishop of South Sydney, Michael Stead, who represents the Archbishop in the coalition, warned of the implications for religious freedom if the law was changed.

"The attempts we have seen to legislate in this area so far are manifestly deficient in the protection of civil and religious freedoms for all Australians," he said.

"International conventions recognise both the right to non-discrimination for all people as well as the right of freedom of conscience and religion. However, the experience in countries where marriage has been redefined has been a quick and steady erosion of freedom of speech, conscience and belief. The fact that promised safeguards for freedom of religion have quickly unravelled overseas should serve as a warning to us."

The Archbishop said Christians should consider the issues carefully, and urged prayerful consideration of how to support the "No" campaign. He said opposition to the change was not a "homophobic reaction" but an expression of "our contention that retaining the definition of marriage is best for our society, and especially for the socialisation of children".

"The very important vote we have called a referendum on religious freedom and freedom of speech, and it's voluntary because we all make our voices heard," he said.

Sunday, September 17 has been designated a day of "Praying together for marriage". Churches are being asked to set aside time to pray for all aspects of marriage, including the current debate.

Sydney's refugee Response turns two



Cooked with love: plates are filled at the Syrian Refugee Response Picnic, held in July at the PCYC in Cabramatta. PHOTO: Sarah Milne

NEW MINISTRY INITIATIVES AND SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES HAVE FORMED THE BASIS OF assistance to new refugees under the Sydney Anglican Diocese Syrian and Iraqi Refugee Response, which celebrates its second anniversary this month.

In that time 8000 refugees have been resettled in Australia under the Commonwealth's additional intake - 90 per cent of them within the Fairfield and Liverpool local government areas.

Anglicare, which has co-ordinated the Response, reports that since 2015 more than 440 people from Anglican churches in the Diocese have been trained and equipped in how to connect with and support refugees who have fled from conflict - particularly in Syria and Iraq.

"Our three Arabic-speaking staff have been key to engaging with newly arrived refugees, and the churches running mobile community pantries provide opportunities to connect and provide further care to refugees," says the CEO of Anglicare, Grant Millard.

"Seeing the willingness of people in our churches to care for the outsider amongst us has been extraordinarily encouraging. However, the success of the Response will ultimately show in the safe and well-adjusted settlement of those who have fled conflict and persecution."

Initiatives of the Refugee Response have included the Mobile Community Pantry, which provides essential goods to disadvantaged community members, particularly refugees, as well as a context in which clients are able to connect with local churches and settle into the area where they live.

ESL classes and Early Learning Through Play initiatives have also begun in many parishes. There are four churches and two schools running ELTP programs, and more than 90 parishes have ESL classes - which are of particular benefit to those who have left their countries suddenly and have no English proficiency.

However, there is still work to do. A Commonwealth Government delay in processing refugee claims has held up the resettlements, so the Response has been extended by six months to June 2018. Another 3500 refugees are expected to arrive during that time.

"Settlement is not an easy or quick process and these people are going to need long-term care, friendship and support," Mr Millard says.

"We are encouraged by the response from our parishes and volunteers, but these resource-poor parishes, in particular areas such as Fairfield and Liverpool, need more support to effectively care for those who are coming through their doors.

"We can and must do more to address the need and grow our cross-cultural ministry."

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Global mission from the grassroots

Seeing God at work: Jill Wallis and Pastor Kalyan speak to a groups of Hindu villagers in Bangladesh.

A CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION SUPPORTING CHURCH PLANTING IN BANGLADESH GREW OUT OF A grassroots effort in a Sydney church, and continues to be supported by local congregations.

The Caleb Foundation began in 2004 after a former member of St Philip's, South Turramurra, Jill Wallis, met Bangladeshi pastor Kalyan Biswan as part of her work with the Lausanne Movement.

"The thing that confronted me the most when I met Pastor Kalyan was when he told us about a Christian village that was being prevented by Muslim neighbours from getting water from the local well... they had to travel a kilometre and a half daily for supplies," says Mrs Wallis, who now attends St Jude's, Bowral.

"I asked St Philip's whether we could support them by raising some money to build their own well. We raised more than enough for that, so we explored other ways we could help Christian ministry in Bangladesh. Things really just proceeded from there."

The fundraising gradually moved from providing wells to supporting orphans and schools, and then to providing for the training of pastors doing "cold-call" evangelism in areas with no existing Christian presence. Since that first fundraising effort 13 years ago, the Caleb Foundation now supports 24 pastors across Bangladesh, along with an orphanage and nine schools. About 900 people have become Christians and are part of churches planted by Pastor Kalyan and his team, supported by the foundation.

"It's been very much supported by local churches here in Sydney, which is great," says the current chairman of the Caleb Foundation and member of St Philip's, South Turramurra, Warwick Lloyd.

"The rectors at the churches we're directly involved with, St Philip's and St Jude's, have been uniformly supportive, and the churches as a whole have gotten behind sponsoring people and organisations in Bangladesh directly. They've also supported Jill personally... she visits Bangladesh regularly as the direct link between the foundation and the work it supports."

The establishment of the foundation's work actually grew out of a partnership formed with three members of St Matthew's, West Pennant Hills who, on approaching retirement, explored establishing a foundation to support global Christian mission. The work of Pastor Kalyan provided the focus and the work of Mrs Wallis merged with that foundation, named after Caleb from the book of Numbers.

"Each year when I've gone to Bangladesh we travel around to all the churches, I give talks and run women's conferences, and it's exciting to see the growth," Mrs Wallis says. "The thing that was most striking, though, was the poverty. I've seen lots of places as part of my work with Lausanne and also with an organisation called Global Action, but never seen the need of Bangladesh. It's been a privilege to see God at work, filling both material needs and also the huge need for the gospel in that country."

The rector of St Philip's, the Rev Shane Dirks, will travel to Bangladesh this year, the first rector of a Caleb Foundation support church to do so. The foundation is also looking to raise further support through wider church links in order to increase the number of pastors it can train to 50.

Mega-ministry in Darwin



Leaders and youth slice a watermelon with rubber bands at Mega Surge.

A SYDNEY CHURCH IS GEARING UP TO EMBARK ON ITS EIGHTH YOUTH MISSION UP TO THE Northern Territory, in partnership with local churches.

Church By The Bridge in Kirribilli has been running Mega Surge in Darwin since 2009. The first three years were run in partnership with the organisation Youthsurge, but since then CBTB has taken on the entire initiative, which aims to bring together youth from churches and denominations territory-wide for a weekend of fellowship and Bible teaching.

Mega Surge began at the suggestion of the Rev Bruce Chapman, a Bush Church Aid worker who serves part-time with St Peter's in Nightcliff, and part-time as the diocesan youth minister for the Northern Territory.

"Our church took on Bruce and Jodi as mission partners several years ago, and beyond financial support and through prayer we wanted to explore helping out in other ways as well," says CBTB's children's pastor Naomi de Vries.

"Bruce suggested he'd like to see an inter-church mini conference – a way to bring youth together. Really it's been about supporting the work that Bruce is doing and helping support youth in churches up there, where it's often hard to get an event like this together."

Mrs de Vries says a key part of the mission is creating continuity of ministry, as well as relationships with churches and individuals for the long term.

"We and another couple have stayed with the same church families every year. They've basically adopted us. They really show us a lot of love and it's a real privilege. It's become a real two-way relationship."

The event averages about 80 youth for the Friday night, with 40 staying for the whole weekend. The rector of CBTB, the Rev Paul Dale, will be this year's key speaker, and the CBTB team is also planning for the first time this year to visit as many of the youth's local churches on the Sunday as they can, in order to continue to grow the partnership.

Says Mrs de Vries: "A big focus of ours is also to encourage kids to be in their local churches and to be cross-denominational, so we encourage church leaders to come with their kids and to actually be a resource for their kids when they come to Mega Surge. We really see ourselves as just being a support for existing ministries."

Bernard's "Big Plod"

Running the race –or plodding the plod: Bernard Gabbott on day two of his fundraising effort, on the road into Burren Junction.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF WEE WAA NEED A YOUTH WORKER. THE VICAR OF WEE WAA IS AN ultramarathon runner. Put the two together and you have a novel fundraising idea called The Big Plod – the "plodder" being the Rev Dr Bernard Gabbott.

"The idea came from the diocesan funding running out for our youth worker," Dr Gabbott says. "The [Armidale] diocese had supported us for three years at \$15,000 a year. This provided a youth worker for two days a week but this runs out at the end of 2017."

The youth worker, Chris "Chippy" Petersen, runs youth Bible studies plus two youth groups each Friday night that cater for students in years 3-12. The ministry involves about 40 kids.

"As a parish, we needed to meet the cost ourselves but struggle a little financially," Dr Gabbott says. "I decided to run around our parish centres – Wee Waa to Pilliga (60km), Pilliga to Burren Junction (38km) and Burren Junction to Wee Waa (51km) and get sponsorship."

Dr Gabbott canvassed local Anglican and Presbyterian Church members, businesses and his own contacts through family and friends. The three-day run last month was 150km – more than double his previous best performance of 70km a week. With sponsorship from more than 100 people, \$16,000 was raised.

"The Big Plod has been plodded, the support has been wonderful, the money raised has been unexpected and the legs are shattered," Dr Gabbott said afterwards. "Chippy can continue his work of supporting Wee Waa youth by introducing them to Jesus, and all because of the generous support of people from Ulladulla to Picton, Dapto to Cronulla, England to Tanzania."

He is already looking further ahead. "One thing this has reminded me of is the benefit of staying in ministry long term in a small town," he says. "We have been here nearly eight years and the response from the town has been warm, generous and supportive. I think that this is testament to God using his mob in Wee Waa widely to show his grace and mercy."

Donations are still being accepted. You can contact Wee Waa Anglican Church on Facebook.

Sydney's sister support

Among friends: Alexandria School of Theology's academic co-ordinator Shady Anis (second from left), speaks at Moore College with the director of the Centre for Christian Living the Rev Tony Payne, visiting lecturer Ben Cooper, the head of the Department of Missions the Rev Simon Gillham, and college lecturer the Rev Dr Lionel Windsor.

RUNNING A THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE IS A HUGE UNDERTAKING – FINDING STUDENTS, BALANCING budgets and co-ordinating classes and exams. Imagine doing that in a country where Christians are small in number, you can't advertise publicly and churches are regularly burned to the ground.

Such is the context of the Alexandria School of Theology (AST) in Egypt. The college's academic co-ordinator, Shady Anis, has been visiting his sister college – Moore Theological College – and spoke to *Southern Cross* about the challenges of ministry at AST.

"In our part of the world, of course, Christians are a minority and Anglicans within the Christian population are a minority as well, so we are a minority within a minority," he says.

"But by the grace of God, he has blessed us by allowing AST to play a huge role in the education of Christians in Egypt. Education in general in Egypt is crucial but specifically Christian education is very, very helpful for the church, not just in our own country but in the Middle East and the wider Arab region."

The Alexandria School of Theology is just over a decade old, with about 130 students at three campuses - in Cairo, Alexandria and a newly established centre in El Minya in upper Egypt. Only 20 per cent of students are Anglicans; the majority are training for other Protestant denominations or the Coptic Orthodox Church.

"We try to learn from different Anglican seminaries, especially Moore Theological College, and we provide two-, three- or four-year courses." Mr Anis says. "We stress biblical theology, systematic theology but in the context of Islam, and we try our best to gear these courses towards helping and engaging Muslim society."

The challenges for the small Christian population are significant. "It is not easy to be a Christian in the Middle East," he says. "Sometimes students can not afford to become full-time ministers. The church in the Middle East needs a lot of attention. We have a lack of leadership so we would love to see more students come and learn at AST but sometimes it is hard for them to do this while having their own jobs and families and careers."

The Rev Simon Gillham, head of the Department of Missions at Moore College who has been hosting Mr Anis, says the college has been in partnership with the AST since its inception.

"Moore has offered support in many different ways, including by sending lecturers to Egypt to offer a Masters degree program for the key lecturing staff of the school. We are now hosting George Bishai and his family for three years as he completes a doctorate in New Testament, in order to return to AST as a senior faculty member."

Spending time with Mr Anis reveals the strains of conflict in Egypt since the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood president in 2013.

"This was a very violent time," he says. "Hundreds of churches were burned down and there were many Christians killed because of this... I think that Christians are now seen as a major player or a role player in the ousting of radical Islam in Egypt. So, we continue to get death threats and a lot of Christian young women are kidnapped, especially in upper Egypt. Radical Islam is still a threat to the church in Egypt."

However, Mr Anis takes comfort from the support of Sydney, a sister diocese to the Diocese of Egypt. "We receive strong support – standing together for the gospel against the threat not just from other religions but from the liberal strand within the Anglican communion. So, yes, the support, the theological support through Moore, the prayers and just standing together shoulder to shoulder – this is really crucial in these difficult times."

While Mr Anis returns to Egypt bolstered by Sydney's support, for Simon Gillham it works both ways: "The courage our brothers and sisters in Egypt are showing, holding firmly to the Lord Jesus in the face of significant threats, is inspiring."

Thousands support Olwa



"Bishop of Scripture": Dr Alfred Olwa (centre) at his consecration in Boroboro.

IT IS NOT OFTEN THE START OF A CHURCH LEADER'S MINISTRY BECOMES AN EVANGELISTIC EVENT, but hundreds of people responded to an altar call at the consecration of Dr Alfred Olwa as the third bishop of Lango Diocese in Uganda last month.

Bishop Olwa is well known in the Sydney Diocese, having completed his PhD studies at Moore College and the University of Western Sydney. He has also spoken in many Sydney churches and was the graduation speaker for Moore College in 2013.

The Archbishop of Sydney's Bishop for International Relations, Peter Tasker, and Graham and Wendy Toulmin – CMS dental development workers in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo – travelled to Boroboro for the service, which was also attended by visitors from Nigeria, Zambia, the UK and the US, neighbouring churches in Kenya, South Sudan and Tanzania, and thousands of Christians from throughout the Lango Diocese.

The colourful event was presided over by the Primate of the Church of Uganda, Archbishop Stanley Ntagali. "The call to be a bishop in the church of God is a call for you to be a shepherd, a preacher, a teacher and leader of God's people," the archbishop told the newly installed bishop. "Please keep yourself humble and desire to hear God daily."

A stirring sermon from Nigerian guest speaker, the Archbishop of Jos, Benjamin Kwashi, saw hundreds come forward to accept Jesus as their Saviour.

Bishop Olwa responded, saying, "The mission we are involved in is the mission of God, and I have come to build on the foundation that was already laid by our Lord Jesus Christ." Dr Olwa pledged to be a "bishop of Scripture" and called for a "movement of expository preaching".

He had earlier told Ugandan reporters that he had never expected to be in such a leadership position. "It never crossed my mind at any point in my life that one day I will become a bishop," he said. "But once I gave my life to Jesus Christ in 1982, one thing that I was passionate about was to preach the good news that Jesus is Lord. I was inspired by the apostle Paul's words: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel'. I still preach the good news. I will continue to do so."

In a country with 11 million Anglicans, or one in three of the population, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni was to have been guest of honour but had to withdraw. The government was represented by the Prime Minister, Dr Ruhakana Rugunda, who congratulated Dr Olwa and presented him with a new car for travel throughout his diocese.

STRENGTH IN THE STRUGGLE

From my heart I want to thank Emily, Hamish and Lily for your courage in sharing your struggles with mental illness ("Struggling Saints", SC, August). I cried for you. Your stories are mine. I suffer from depression and panic attacks and I, like you beautiful people, wanted God to take me home. I actually asked God for his permission to take me home.

But I praise God that he is always with me, uplifting me, comforting me. I do Scripture in three schools and just seeing my beautiful children at Scripture lifts me so high. There is so much blessing in giving.

My wife suffers as she sees me suffering. The depression, panic attacks etc can be crippling but with the support of a few understanding people and the wonderful love of a faithful, understanding God, I march forward – with Deuteronomy 31:8 as my verse of tremendous strength and encouragement: "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged".

Dave Vincent
Bidwill

OUR HISTORY EXPLAINED

I was very glad to see that Rob Forsyth reviewed the book on *The Ecclesiology of Donald Robinson and D. Broughton Knox* by Chase Kuhn (SC, August). As someone who has grown up thankful for our Diocese it was a treat to read the book and have so much of our early history explained (so freshly) in the early chapters. How great to have a young American come and do that for us so well.

Then the doctrine of church that permeates our Diocese is explained in all its richness – the gathering church and scattering people of God; the heavenly reality and the earthly expressions; what to expect and what not to expect.

The Knox-Robinson view is tested and challenged well in the book and I would urge those who like a mental workout to chase it down – "significant and timely", as Rob says it is.

Simon Manchester

North Sydney

King and refugee

The article "The king and the refugee" (SC, July) by Andrew Shead grabbed my attention.

The fact that at the end of the article I find Mr Shead is actually the Rev Dr Andrew Shead makes me ask what his goal is in referring to people displaced by war and wealthy countries in the opening lines, other than to politicise emotions?

Perhaps part 2 will address our relationship with other refugees? I do hope, however, there is no author's translation of "The alien who lives among you will rise above you higher and higher, but you will sink lower and lower. He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him. He will be the head, but you will be the tail" (Deuteronomy 28:43-44).

Jo Arthur
Hornsby





Family... Children's pr... the
Family se... children's...
Night chu... outh, ad...

Nairobi to North Epping

The Sampson family has returned to Australia after 6½ years in Kenya with the Church Missionary Society, and the Rev Paul Sampson has now become rector of All Saints', North Epping.

"We first went overseas in early 2010," he says. "CMS says we were one of the fastest families to get on the field from when we first knocked on the door and that was because, in part, that our kids were of an age where if we'd left it for another year or two it would've become increasingly difficult to take them."

Family considerations – not to mention God's timing – were eventually what brought them back home. Their eldest had already spent six months solo here at university ("We quickly worked out we didn't enjoy having our family split over two continents!"), and another of their children would have finished school a year into any further stint overseas.

In addition, Mr Sampson had been the vice principal of Carlile College in Nairobi, which was seeking to move towards indigenous leadership across the board. "So the Lord was making clear on the family side that we needed to think about returning, then on the work side those doors were closing, so it seemed like the right time to come back," he says.

After returning to Australia for their final home assignment, the Sampsons made visits to their link churches – and he was particularly struck by a weekend away with the parish of Caringbah.

"I did a couple of talks on that weekend and preached on the Sunday... I had the opportunity to be there with people the whole weekend, and it was brilliant," he says. "I said to Cath afterwards that that's what I wanted. I love to be engaged in people's lives, to teach, to preach, have meals together, and walk and talk together."

When he preached a few Sundays later at another link church, St Luke's, Liverpool, nominators from three other parishes happened to be there – and one group was from North Epping.

"It's clear that North Epping is the place where the Lord wanted me to be," Mr Sampson says. "It's a really good fit in terms of the style and shape of the congregational ministry priorities, their desire to continue to see people reached for the gospel and to be involved in ministries in the local school and the community. There's a high level of participation of parish people in various ministries.

"One of the other things I like about the church is that while focusing on ministry here they're also concerned about the bigger world, so in a month's time there's a group of about a dozen going to Tanzania to be involved in supporting ministry in Iringa.

"People from this church support more than 100 Compassion kids from that neck of the woods. As a former missionary that appeals to me very much – having a kingdom focus that goes beyond 2121 [the local postcode]!"



Gone south

After 12 years with Youthworks as the organisation's director of ministry support, the Rev Jon Thorpe became rector of Shellharbour City Centre Anglican Church in early July.

"I came from parish into Youthworks and I'm thoroughly committed to the local church being the primary means of ministry in our local area, so really this is just a return to my roots," he says.

"I'm a big believer in the core role of parish ministry. At Youthworks we oversaw support for ministry to children in the parishes: children's ministry and youth ministry training, SRE and – until recently – safe ministry training, and it was a constant thing in our team to say to churches that we're here to work with you and help you. That's so important."

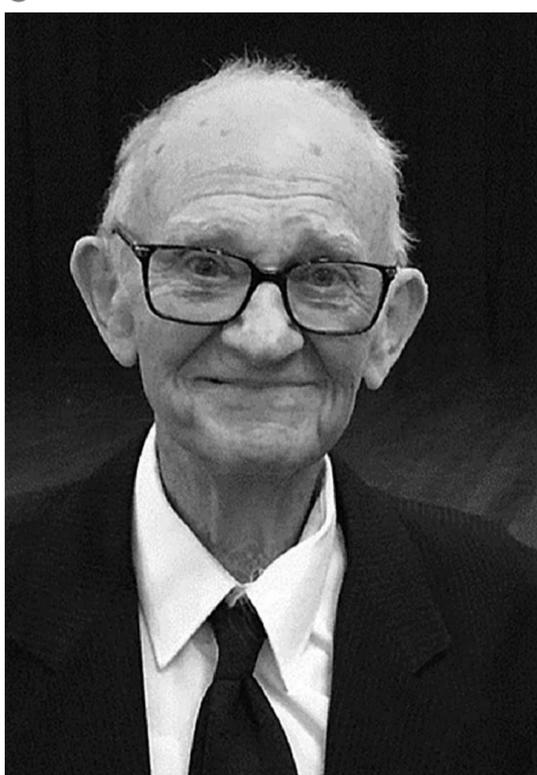
Mr Thorpe says he loved working with his Youthworks team but he and his wife Sarah had become convinced it was time for him to move on, so he already had his eyes open for a rector's position when the nominators from Shellharbour City Centre made contact.

"After our initial meeting my wife and I came way thoroughly convinced that this was a place where we could serve God faithfully for the next season," he says.

"It's got this great gospel heritage. My predecessors have been thoroughly committed to proclaiming God's word faithfully to the saints, encouraging people to grow in their love for Jesus, and they reached out with love into the community. I'm really thankful to them and their commitment to solid gospel ministry, and straight away I could see how I could contribute to that heritage and move forward with those key principles.

"There's a lot to do here. It's a growing area. There are plenty of gospel opportunities and there are some real social challenges as well that, as a church, we can engage in as we seek to support our local community."

VALE



The Rev Canon Max Corbett died on July 4.

Born Maxwell Thomas Corbett on April 7, 1928, the young Max grew up in Punchbowl and then Dulwich Hill – which became the family church, where he also met a girl called Valda Carter in Sunday school.

He attended Canterbury Boys' High School where his good marks were more than matched by a love of sport, then he began an arts degree at the University of Sydney, marking time until he met the age requirement for Moore College. He didn't finish his BA in literature until 1974, but completed college in 1951. He and Valda were married at the end of that year and began work early in 1952 in the new parish of Punchbowl.

The family moved to Brisbane in 1954. Mr Corbett held the role of acting secretary of CMS for that year – and the following year he and Valda answered the strong call they felt to mission overseas, working in a range of positions across Tanzania for the next 15 years. He was made a Canon of Holy Spirit Cathedral in Dodoma in 1966.

Returning to Sydney in 1970, Canon Corbett became rector of Summer Hill and worked hard to establish and grow ministries there – including broadening access to worship for

people of other cultural groups. In 1974 he moved to Wollongong to work with the Home Mission Society (Anglicare), preaching at various local parishes when needed. He then spent a year as one of the Masters at Barker College, before taking up the rectorship of St Andrew's, Wahroonga in 1977.

In her eulogy at Canon Corbett's funeral, his daughter Sue Wright called this "a rich time of pastoral work, in which Dad's distinctive style of preaching included wisdom from Africa years, dedicated Bible scholarship and understanding from literature".

"Throughout his ministry in and out of parishes, I am proud to note that, to Dad, people mattered more than organisations or systems," she said. "He invited and accommodated alterations to what was deemed conventional if it meant that a person or group would gain an insight and experience of God's saving grace".

From 1986-1990 Canon Corbett worked as chaplain to the then ARV retirement villages at Castle Hill and beyond – including an exchange to the parishes of St Michael and All Angels at Blackheath in London, and a stint as Provost of Nairobi Cathedral in Kenya.

Mrs Wright finished her eulogy by quoting the Tennyson poem "Crossing the Bar" – a favourite of her father's, which she said summed up his "lack of focus on the finite and enduring confidence in a heavenly home".

The final two stanzas read:
Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

Fear and our response

LES MILLER

HAVE I EVER BEEN AFRAID? OF COURSE. HAVE I MET PEOPLE WITH GOOD REASONS FOR FEAR – in this life, at least? Absolutely.

In this world, with all its sinfulness, there are many things that can cause us to fear. We can be overwhelmed by these fears, and they can crush our joy and weaken our faith if we don't rest in God's strength.

Since 2004 I have been visiting Kenya and working with Bishop Alfred Witendi, who heads up Tumaini Ministries (*tumaini* means "hope" in Swahili). This ministry began in 1992, with Alfred evangelising young men in the slums of Nairobi.

A residential discipleship and life skills program, plus church planting, soon followed. Initially this was in Korogocho and then Kibera, the two largest Nairobi slums. Later, churches were planted in other Nairobi slums and on the coast, after one of the trained young men moved there.

We visited the village of Hindi on the Kenyan coast late last year. A terrorist attack there in 2014 affected us more than the larger al-Shebaab attacks that killed 60 people in the Nairobi shopping mall in 2013 and 147 Christian students at Garissa University in 2015, because we knew these people from visits in 2010 and 2012.

In 2014, 12 heavily armed men crossed the Somalian border to attack the village of Hindi, burning a church and killing a number of Christian men. Pastor Morise (of the Hindi Tumaini church) and other men slept in the forest while their families initially sheltered in the jail – the most secure local building. Many Christians fled, and church services were held outside. Disruptions settled after about a year but things were not the same.

This was the context in which I spoke at Hindi on fear. A sermon followed at our home church (St George's, Gerringong), with the following thoughts about what we grapple with on this earth, and how God's word teaches us to respond.

Fear may be irrational (of small heights), part of an illness (a soldier's PTSD), realistic (a bushfire), or a problem for our walk with God. Fears can affect every part of the way we live.

Let us consider some things the Bible has to say.

Fear of death and the devil: Jesus not only dealt with our sin on the cross, but he also triumphed over spiritual forces (Col. 2:15), freeing his children from the slavery of the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15). While we are to be alert and resist the devil, he will flee from us (Jam. 4:7) because the victory is ours through Christ. Death is no disadvantage for the Christian. Our destination beyond death is assured (1 Pet. 1:3-5) and Paul writes that "to live is Christ, but to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Fear of temptation, suffering and strife: People have rebelled against God from the beginning, with challenging consequences but God's word is helpful and comforting. We are encouraged to pray about temptation (Matt. 6:13) and draw strength from the fact that in dependence on God he will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can endure (1 Cor. 10:13). He will also use the "wrinkles" in our life for our benefit, to mould and utilise us (Jam. 1:2-4; Rom. 8:28).

Consider Joseph's transition from a challenging youth to a wise prime minister, serving Potiphar and those in jail along the way. We can also be confident of receiving grace and mercy in our time of need when we approach Jesus, for he is a high priest who understands and can sympathise with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15-16).

Fear of yesterday's problems and tomorrow's uncertainties: We cannot change our past, and it can have ongoing consequences, but we do not need to fear our past for God has dealt with it. If we are in Christ we are a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17). He has also taken care of our tomorrows (Matt. 6:28-34).

Fear of failure, not being good enough and persistent anxious thoughts: To become a child of God we need to recognise our need and our inability to earn our way to heaven. We were chosen by God before creation, and even the capacity to believe and accept his offer is a gift (Eph. 1:4-5; 2:8-9). This helps us to cast our anxieties before him (1 Pet. 5:7; Phil. 4:4-7). In fact, our weaknesses and challenges can make us more dependent on God.

Note Paul's insight in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10: "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Fear of other people: Fearing what other people may think or do is common, for we dislike rejection and Christians are persecuted for their faith in 139 countries. Jesus, however, says we should not fear those who oppose us, for they are no match for God's power and love (Phil. 1:27-28; Heb. 13:6; Luke 12:4-7).

Fear of God: The opposite of fear is faith – faith in God, his character and his love. John tells us that God is love, and that there is no fear in love because perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:14, 16).

To fear God, that reverential awe that is his due, is so important that it is noted as the beginning of knowledge, wisdom and the whole duty of man (Prov. 1:7, Ps. 111:10, Eccl. 12:13). When we fear God, we do not have to fear anything else (Is. 43:1-3a, Ps. 34:4-7). Loss of the fear of God can lead us into strife. Two notable examples are Solomon, who worshipped Molech, and Aaron making the golden calf that "brought the Israelites out of Egypt" (1 Kings 11:1-6; Exod. 32:4).

Time may help some of us better manage our actions and even our words but our thought life can be a challenge. Jesus made it clear that our thoughts do matter.

Consciously seeking to cultivate the fear of God, and humility, can help here. We are encouraged to be humble and servant hearted (Luke 18:9-14; Matt. 23:11-12), emulating Christ's attitude displayed in his supreme example of service and suffering (Phil. 2:1-11).

I pray these references may be a useful resource to better equip us to handle our fears, to draw strength and help from God as we more clearly understand and continually focus on his awesomeness, his character, his example and his love.



For the benefit of all

DR GLENN DAVIES

LAST MONTH I TOOK THE UNUSUAL STEP OF WRITING TO ALL ANGLICANS IN THE Diocese of Sydney. The letter was sent to your rector so I trust that you received a copy and, if not, you should feel free to ask him for a copy.

My reason for writing to all Sydney Anglicans was the decision of the Federal Government to hold a postal vote on the issue of same-sex marriage. Since the Government had been frustrated by the Senate to fulfil its electoral promise to hold a compulsory plebiscite, the only avenue open to the Government was to use the Australian Bureau of Statistics to conduct a survey of the voting public. At the time of writing, this procedure has been challenged in the High Court and it is hoped that the validity of this measure will be decided before the survey is due to commence in early September, with November 7 set as the final date for returning one's vote.

I have been a strong advocate of the view that the people of Australia should have their say on such a fundamental change to the fabric of our society. I have spoken on a number of occasions with the Prime Minister about this issue and have been impressed by his commitment to let the people's voice be heard before the parliament makes any decision. That the Labor Party and some minority parties in the Senate have blocked the Government's mandate for this democratic process is highly regrettable.

One can only wonder why they are afraid of hearing the voice of the electorate, unless they fear that the opinion polls have got it wrong, since no opinion poll has asked the Australian public if they would support same-sex marriage knowing the adverse consequences of such a change. It is as if they have been blind to the evidence from overseas where, for example, schools in the UK, US and Canada have been forced to teach same-sex marriage as part of the new normality. Such draconian compulsion even applies to faith-based schools, which are unable to teach what marriage truly is, as defined by God, and which has been the universally accepted understanding of the foundation of the family as the core construct of society across all cultures.

Recent history in Australia has shown the same cynical intolerance to those who hold to the current law of the land, such as the challenge to Archbishop Porteous in Tasmania, and the threat of violence against a hotel hosting a meeting of church leaders gathering to discuss the issue. If this is the response of some Australians to those who uphold the legal definition of marriage, what opposition and persecution might we expect when we promote our views on marriage should the legal definition be changed?

The arguments against same-sex marriage have been thoughtfully and respectfully addressed in the diocesan booklet, *What has God joined together?* Copies were distributed to all parishes in February this year. Your rector may still have some copies, but you can also access it at www.sydneyan Anglicans.net/marriage. Further resources are available from the Coalition for Marriage: www.coalitionformarriage.com.au/anglican.

I make no apology in asking all Anglicans to vote "No" in this postal vote. Indeed, all Christians should vote "No" if they wish to uphold marriage as God has intended and to express that view with courage and commitment, if we are to be both salt and light, as Jesus requires:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savour, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by others. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a lampstand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before all, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

SC

A PRAYER FOR THE MONTHS OF SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

Father God, we praise you that we are fearfully and wonderfully made in your image, male and female, to live for your glory and the honour of your name. We thank you for the gift of marriage, your plan for the nurture of children and the health of our society. We pray for our nation, as it contemplates overturning your good design for men and women. Give us courage to serve you without fear as we declare your truth for the good of all Australians. Give us wisdom and grace as we seek to persuade our friends and family that God's way is best. Grant us humility, compassion and steadfastness when we encounter views to the contrary.

May you be pleased to bless our nation so that marriage remains as the union of a husband and wife, in accordance with your purposes and the benefit of all. We ask this in the name of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

Music and lyrics

We all know when a Christian song is good – we love it, can't stop singing it, and it raises our hearts to God. But what happens at the start of its life, back at the drawing board with the songwriter? **Tess Holgate** investigates.

SEPTEMBER 2017

SOUTHERN CROSS

11



WHILE YOUR toes are tapping along to your favourite song at church, Christian songwriters are working hard to make sure you aren't just enjoying the latest Christian

musical fad (remember those key changes of the early '90s?). Their goal is for your heart and spirit to be moved ever closer to God.

If this doesn't sound easy, that's because it's not. Writing one congregational song can take weeks or months of disciplined work to ensure the lyrics not only reflect the truths of the gospel and the news of Jesus, but have music that supports the movement and purpose of the song, with a final product that drives you to worship.

To write a good song, suitable for singing in church, songwriter Rob Smith – who also lectures at Sydney Missionary and Bible College and is assistant director of Ministry Training & Development – believes it is necessary for the writer to have a solid theological foundation, although not necessarily formal theological training. But this is not enough: good songwriters are also able to phrase deep biblical truths poetically and memorably. In rare circumstances, he says, "sometimes they're good musos, too – sometimes you get the three to line up.

"For example, Stuart Townend is a poet-theologian-musician. And Keith Getty originally got together with Stuart Townend because he wasn't strong on the lyrics. He was a brilliant musician, a great tune writer, but he needed a good poet-theologian."

Luke Woodhouse, Greg Cooper and Gav Perkins has written songs together for more than seven years, ever since they worked together on the ministry team at Christ Church, St Ives. Their partnership was born when they realised they each brought unique yet important skills to the songwriting table.

"Originally, Gav Perkins had the responsibility for putting together preaching series... we'd see that we were going to be preaching on Romans, so we'd bounce around some ideas of the big themes in Romans and try to write a song for the series," says Woodhouse, who is now an assistant minister at Turramurra in charge of the Bobbin Head Anglican Church.

Perkins would provide the team with some of the big themes and a bunch of verses for them to mull over. And then Cooper, a former Garage Hymnal guitarist, and Woodhouse would get together, scribble out some different lyrics around those themes and work up a few melodies to complement them.

"The three of us would be in an office space together and play through some ideas, fixing lyrics – tweaking them and trying to sharpen the theological angle," Woodhouse says.

"We complemented each other in different ways. We all had different strengths that we brought to the table. One of us might know what's singable in the congregation, one of us might know what is theologically sharp, and one of us might know how to arrange the song a bit better. God was bringing all our different gifts to help make songs that are edifying for the church to sing."

When they moved on to other positions they began Voyage – a songwriting partnership that aims to pair preachers of the Bible with songwriters and musicians – and they are in the midst of recording their very first album to come out of this partnership.

Says Woodhouse: "[There] is an intentionality about bringing [more than] just traditional people into the songwriting process. Often you might have a music team and you might collaborate with a few other musicians, maybe run it past your senior minister and then it is sung in church.

"We think that with the gifts God has given his church we can go a bit broader than that, and encourage collaboration with people who might not traditionally think of themselves as musicians."

Andrew Judd



"Usually for me [an idea] comes out of my preaching – some big idea of a passage stays with me and seems to cry out for expression in a creative way.

"But sometimes it's more random. I was in a fire escape talking to one of my co-writers and just as he asked if I had any ideas I found myself standing in front of a massive old church services sign which said 'Sunday gatherings, 10am, 6.30pm'. That's become a song Scott Groom and Greg Cooper have been working on about the beauty and significance of the church.

"For me writing is all about setting aside half a day for a co-writing session. In the days leading up to it we might talk about an idea for a song: something that we want to say, which no other song says in quite the same way.

"But usually at that point we are lucky to have rough sketches. The process of shaping that draft into a finished song takes months. One of my friends jokes that on a good day he might add in a comma, then the next day take it away. Congregational music is particularly heavy going at this stage because there is no room for ambiguity or a melody that isn't bulletproof singable. You have to think about so many factors that often by fixing one problem you create three more."

When writing a song Judd will usually start with the lyrics but says it is possible to start with the melody because "melodies are already meaningful phrases and speech is already rhythmic sound, so it can go both ways".

WRITING THE SONG

The ideas for a song come from everywhere. For Mike Begbie, an assistant minister at St Luke's, Miranda, it usually starts with a "big picture of where I want the song to go". Andrew Judd, another Garage Hymnal alumnus who is now community pastor at City on a Hill in Melbourne, regularly gets ideas from his preaching.

Rob Smith relishes the chance to write to task, for a specific event. Singer-songwriter Nathan Tasker says, "Some of my favourite lyrics have come from a throwaway line in a sermon." And Woodhouse's songs often start with an idea or biblical theme.

All agree, however, that there is no one way to write a song. Sometimes the lyrics come first, and sometimes the melody.

Says Smith: "The lyrics are the heart of a song. Music serves the lyrics, just as the sung word serves the spoken word in church." Judd, who also tends to write his lyrics first, says, "I try to hear the rhythm in the syllables and the tones that the vowels suggest. That makes the most natural phrases... the best song lyrics have alignment between the natural speech rhythm and the music."

Begbie finds the process more "organic" than lyrics or music first. Once he has his big picture idea, "after that it's almost like a vibe – either musical or lyrical – [that has to] grow together and be moulded together.

"There are obviously some building blocks which you need to get right: interesting yet accessible music; a melody that is singable and intuitive, yet surprising; lyrics which are true and yet have been digested through the seasons of life; a theme which allows people to dwell on it. And then there's just an X factor some songs have and you often can't tell what it is. In just grabs you.

"A song could tick all these and that would make it successful, in a sense, but we have to have a far bigger picture than that. In the end a song is successful if it brings glory to the God who created the songwriter. Firstly in the songwriter's own enjoyment of him, and beyond that in the delight it brings to the church as they sing it to the Lord."

For Woodhouse, the role of music in a church song is key – but not in the way most people might expect. "A good song is one that serves God's people by allowing God's word to dwell richly in their hearts," he says. "Richly" is the key. Music is a gift to allow [God's word to dwell] in a way that is rich and deep. You want music to move people; that's why it's there. You can't get around it. It does move you."

He seeks to line up where the music moves its hearers with the lyrics and the Scriptures behind them.

"There is nothing to be ashamed of in using the gift of music God has given us to move people emotionally to where the Scriptures are moving us," he says. "That's just using the beautiful, wonderful gift of music for a purpose.

"Sometimes you can repeat a lyric a hundred times for emotional effect, so it becomes a bit of a mantra. There are much worse things than singing the name of Jesus 10 times!"

Yet if a certain song repeats a chorus 12 times, or has 17 verses, Smith encourages singers to ask what the purpose of that particular feature might be.

"Different songs do different jobs, like different parts of the Bible do different jobs, and they all have their place," he says. "Every song ought to be driven by and oriented to the gospel; how explicit that is in any given song is probably going to vary.

"We need to be clear about the purpose of the song. Songs are like little sermons – you need to work out the purpose.

"Songs are like the tip of an iceberg. They remind us of the deeper truths that we've learned in sermons. For example, when I sing 'How Deep the Father's Love' I am remembering so much more than that line. There's a whole lot of theology under the tip of the iceberg, so while the song sticks in my brain, the theology is digging deeper."

Alanna Glover

"There's no one-way to write a song; sometimes the music comes first, either with a chord pattern or a melody. Other times I start with a Bible passage, or thematic idea, often inspired by a sermon or book.

I think I'm a better melody writer than lyricist, so I love reworking old hymns or working straight from a psalm.

"Often people imagine songwriting as this emotional, ethereal, creative process, in which inspiration strikes and a fully formed song just spills out – this almost never happens! Generally good songs take days, weeks or months of disciplined work to get right."

Glover says she isn't very good at writing songs without a specific purpose.

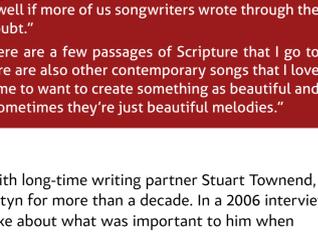
"I really need to be working toward an album project or writing for a sermon series or a conference theme. Because of this, I tend to work to those timelines and agendas rather than just writing about what I'm going through or thinking about in my own life.

"Sometimes I write on my own, other times in larger groups. It can be hard to start the songwriting process with a lot of people, because the first step of coming up with an initial idea can feel pretty vulnerable. I most often write with just one or two other people that I know and trust to hear me out in that process."

She knows she is less likely to write songs when she's feeling spiritually dry, and has two go-to strategies to help refresh her during these moments. First, she suggests our Christian lives and church gatherings would be stronger if songwriters wrote through the drought and spiritual dryness.

"So many of the 'lament' psalms talk about the feeling of God seeming far away or the world seeming too hard," she says. "We tend to shy away from writing songs about these feelings, and it's left a bit of a hole in our church song repertoires. I think we'd do well if more of us songwriters wrote through the droughts and gave voice to our struggles, pain and doubt."

Second, she turns to the things that inspire her. "There are a few passages of Scripture that I go to when I need refreshment [Psalm 73, Psalm 1] but there are also other contemporary songs that I love to listen to, that particularly speak to me and inspire me to want to create something as beautiful and moving. These aren't always Christian songs either. Sometimes they're just beautiful melodies."



FAITHFUL LYRICS

Keith Getty, who created the song "In Christ Alone" with long-time writing partner Stuart Townend, has also written modern-day hymns with his wife Kristyn for more than a decade. In a 2006 interview with the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship he spoke about what was important to him when writing a song.

"It's been several hundred years since Christian worship was as shallow as it is today," he said.

"Christianity is more universal than it's ever been, but people's understanding of their faith and the Bible is disappointing.

"We try to write theological and Bible truth that speaks in everyday life, as Charles Wesley did. And I try to write melodies that large groups of people can sing. That is my filter: Can all ages sing this melody?"

"From a lyrical point of view, we use Bible terms in a poetic way to give the lyrics class and artistic credibility. But we write in language we would speak, that you can imagine saying."

Begbie agrees there is a "broad shallowness" to a lot of music in society, and says this has found its way into the church's singing. But he cautions people against throwing away things that might, on the surface at least, appear "simple".

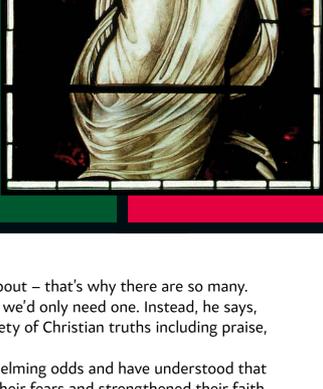
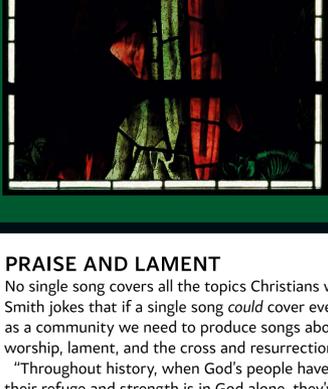
"Simple songs can and should have a place and have profound impact for good in people's lives," he says. "This is one of the lessons the book of Psalms teaches us. For every Psalm 139 there is a Psalm 136 or 117 or 150. We need to have a balance of songs in our churches."

Songs are also the part of the service many congregants go away remembering – a fact that neither surprises nor alarms Smith. He freely acknowledges that a tune can stick in your brain much more easily than the spoken word. But he is quick to point out that this means we need to work hard on having faithful biblical lyrics, so that while we hum a tune, we also remember good theology.

He underscores this in his recently published book *Songs of the Saints*, written with Mike Raiter: "The lyrical substance of our congregational songs is of the utmost importance. No matter how good a tune might be it can never substitute for a lack of biblical content or gospel clarity.

"However, it is also true that putting an inappropriate or ill-fitting tune to solid biblical words is bound to severely limit their usefulness, if not render them ineffectual. So, if our aim is to sing the word of Christ faithfully and with the greatest edification effect, then we will be concerned not only for faithful lyrical substance but also effective musical form."

This is one reason many songwriters elect to write new tunes for old hymns, or simply write music and use the words of a Psalm or an epistle as inspiration for the lyrics.



PRaise AND LAMENT

No single song covers all the topics Christians want to sing about – that's why there are so many. Smith jokes that if a single song *could* cover every topic, then we'd only need one. Instead, he says, as a community we need to produce songs about a wide variety of Christian truths including praise, worship, lament, and the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

"Throughout history, when God's people have faced overwhelming odds and have understood that their refuge and strength is in God alone, they've expressed their fears and strengthened their faith not only in words of prose but in songs of worship," *Songs of the Saints* notes. "Such is the power of song."

Yet any survey of the songs we sing reveals an inordinate number to help us praise God compared to those that help us lament.

Most Christian songs focus on praise, Smith says, because "singing is a natural way of praising... however, we can also sing when we're sad. And, of course, the Psalms are full of lament. We are lacking in laments but that seems to be an accident of our history. A lot of work has been done on the Psalter in recent years and I think that's opening our eyes again to the importance of singing lament as an appropriate way of praying in times of distress."

Alanna Glover, creative director of Emu Music and a pivotal member of Garage Hymnal, says, "We've definitely lost the art of corporate lament. We feel uncomfortable about expressing doubt and pain and mourning when we're gathered together. We need more songs that help our congregations to articulate these kinds of human emotions – but they probably need to be paired with teaching on the topic for our congregations to feel confident in singing them."

Her model of congregational singing comes from Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God".

Nathan Tasker

"I tend to have 'seasons' – seasons of feeling very inspired and creative and almost as though I can't help myself but sit down and write," he says. "But I also have seasons where I don't want to write, or can't (2016 was a year with no songs for me)."

Tasker has learned to be prepared for a season of creativity by reading, listening to sermons and talking to others about their Christian walk. "The goal is that when the inspiration strikes, I am drawing from a full and deep well," he says. "I have also learned not to freak out when I have a dry season and instead trust that God is the ultimate creator... he delights to see his children pursue him and the kingdom with their gifts and abilities, in his time."

In the past Tasker knew a song was finished "five minutes after I had three verses, a chorus, and a bridge". Now he has come to love the process of playing the songs over and over to tweak them, sharing them with a few trusted friends and then reworking them further.

"I just recorded a song that I started writing six years ago," he says. "I finally found a chorus that I liked two weeks ago!"



CHRIST IN US, THROUGH SONG

"When we sing, Jesus dwells in us through his word," Glover says. "We then share in Jesus' ministry by teaching the word to one another, fuelled by the spirit as we respond to God with hearts of gratitude.

"Singing helps us to know Jesus better, to encourage and serve one another and to praise God with great thankfulness for all he's done for us."

Nathan Tasker adds that the joy for Christian songwriters is to "create art that engages the heart, mind and imagination, awakening us to the breadth, width, depth and height of the love of God in Jesus.

"When someone comes to me after an event and shares how one of my songs has encouraged or strengthened them, or caused them to look again at a familiar part of the Bible, that feels like the closest thing to success," he says. "Of course, the wonderful paradox is that it is God graciously working through an earthen vessel, so it's not really success in the way our world would view it... [and] as Michael Card puts it, 'great art washes feet'. It's more about service."

Woodhouse is excited by the possibilities of a "very intentional ministry of the word, and not just in the way we package our services but right at the very beginning in the way the songs are written".

The team of Woodhouse, Perkins and Cooper is trying to encourage greater alignment with the ministries of the word and the songwriting process. The songs produced by the Voyage partnership, Woodhouse says, are "not just written by musicians, but by musicians in collaboration with the church and the gifts that God has given".

He says collaboration in songwriting is massively underrated.

If we are writing songs for God's people to sing, it's effectively like constructing the Prayer Book. One guy just doesn't sit down and write the Prayer Book by himself, unless you're Thomas Cranmer! We want to think carefully about what our people are singing and we are not solo artists in that sense.

"In terms of writing songs for God's people to sing, I encourage as much collaboration as practically possible with like-minded Christian brothers and sisters using the gifts that God has given them." ☺

Images of stained glass windows from works by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, ca 1900. St Cecilia, King David and Miriam.

Losing our religion?

No, it's not a pop song – it's a serious question we need to ask ourselves as society's attitudes and practices move further away from the Bible, writes **PAUL WILLIAMSON**.



RECENTLY ONE OF MY BASKETBALL FRIENDS AND I WERE HAVING A conversation prior to the game. He asked me what I'd been doing that day. When I told him that I'd been marking essays, the next bit of our conversation went something like this:

"Are you a teacher, then?"

"Yes, I'm a lecturer at Moore Theological College."

"What's sort of place is that?"

"It's like a university for people training to be Christian ministers or missionaries."

"Oh, so you're religious, then?"

"Well, I'm a Christian, yes."

"So you must take it very seriously."

"Yes, I do indeed..."

As you can see from that snippet, like most evangelicals I am somewhat guarded about using the label "religious". It's something we often associate in our minds with mechanical ritual, nominalism, idolatrous practices, or any belief system that espouses salvation by works. Hence we are rightly reluctant to apply such language to our personal faith in Jesus and our devotion to the triune God revealed in Scripture.

However, in doing so, could we be throwing out the baby with the bathwater? After all, while admittedly uncommon, the New Testament occasionally uses such terminology in relation to Christian practice. Most famously, James ends his first chapter with a contrast between worthless and acceptable religion: "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:26-27 NIV).

In a similar vein, Paul speaks of Christians "putting their religion into practice" (i.e. demonstrating their piety; cf. Acts 17:22) by caring for older family members (1 Tim. 5:4 NIV). Significantly, in both these cases where religion is clearly being commended, what is in view is Christian behaviour or practice. Moreover, both texts have a shared focus on our Christian responsibility for others – in particular, the more vulnerable members of our society.

So, with apologies to R.E.M. (whose song "Losing my religion", about frustration and the loss of civility stemming from unrequited love, was a huge hit) I want us to consider the question: are we in danger, today, of losing our religion?

While it's clear from James that there's much more to "acceptable religion" than just caring for vulnerable members of our society, it's on this that I want us to focus especially. Today we are rightly concerned about child abuse, domestic violence and those who mistreat or take advantage of the elderly. However, there are aspects of such abuse and maltreatment to which our society is unfortunately much more tolerant, and even the Christian voice often seems rather muted.

Just recently, I came across the picture of an unborn child in the womb, which was being used to highlight the fact that the safest place for children should be their home. The irony of this is somehow lost for many in modern Australia. In a similar vein, our contemporary society rightly vilifies those who exploit or harm the elderly, yet at the same time many are pushing for a change in legislation that could end up taking away the right of the elderly to live – or at least jeopardising their say in such matters.

As Christians, it is important that we stand against the tide of 21st-century utilitarianism, and do all in our power to protect and care for the vulnerable and defenceless, however inconvenient this (or they) might be.

First and foremost, we should do so because it is clearly a matter of great interest to God himself. In the Old Testament, we are repeatedly reminded of God's special concern for the weak and the helpless. Widows and orphans (vulnerable children) are mentioned frequently as the objects of God's care (Deut. 10:18; 27:19; Ps. 68:5; 146:9), and thus feature prominently in Old Testament laws designed to ensure the protection of the weak from exploitation or abuse (Exod. 22:22-24; Deut. 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17-21; 26:12-13).

Due care for such vulnerable people is recognised as a mark of true piety or godliness (Job 31:18), whereas its absence or neglect is a characteristic of the ungodly (Ps. 94:6). The prophets thus encourage such care (Jer. 7:6; 22:3; Zech. 7:10), and strongly rebuke those who fail in this regard (Isa. 1:23; 10:2; Ezek. 22:7; Mal. 3:5).

As these passages underline, caring for the vulnerable is something God is deeply concerned about. As such, it is something that should obviously concern his people. But it's also an ethical obligation. Looking out for the vulnerable was clearly a responsibility for God's people in the Old Testament. But as James has already reminded us, it's also a New Testament responsibility for the people of God. Insofar as James is concerned, this is one of the hallmarks of the "religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless".

Genuine Christian piety should thus express itself in caring for weak and vulnerable members of our society. And while, as Paul reminds us, such care will begin with the members of our immediate family (1 Tim. 5:3:8), it will not end there (1 Tim. 5:9-16). Moreover, as he reminds us elsewhere (Gal. 6:10), our Christian duty of care also extends beyond our church family.

So, I suppose the question is simply this: How are we going with our Christian duty of care for those in our biological family, our church family and our wider society? Have we relinquished all our family responsibilities to the state, or are we genuinely caring for the vulnerable members in our families insofar as this is possible?

What about those in our churches? In some cases it may be more a matter of time than money but what, if anything, are we doing to assist them in whatever way we can? And perhaps most importantly today, what practical steps are we taking to care for the weak and vulnerable in our society?

On issues such as abortion and euthanasia, it is clearly important for us to speak out and make our objections heard. In a society that is so strongly pro-choice, unfortunately the womb is far from the safest place to be. Indeed, in some parts of Australia there are already moves to extend abortion legislation still further and mute the voice of all those who would dare to speak against it. Unfortunately, the Christian voice has seemed largely silent on this issue in recent times – possibly due to a perception that this battle has already been fought and lost.

Interestingly, however, many former advocates and even some of the doctors who performed such procedures are now firmly pro-life. This is hardly surprising given the techniques involved and the post-abortion trauma so often suffered. Surely the ongoing massacre of unborn children in the womb is something that God's people should be deeply concerned about?

Of course, as well as praying and protesting about such matters, we must do whatever we can to support and show love to those with unwanted pregnancies. But saying or doing nothing is surely not an acceptable option for the people of God.

The same applies in the case of euthanasia, arguably the next great ethical debate voters will face in a world where the legalisation of this practice is increasingly advocated. Under the guise of "dying with dignity", assisted suicide or voluntary termination of life is promoted as a positive alternative to a much less desirable life or a death involving prolonged suffering or anguish.

Aside from the fact that suicide or murder is a sinful act, and that death may usher people into a much worse experience, the practice is open to significant abuse. Where currently legal, the decision to terminate can be taken out of the hands of the patient altogether and sometimes even carried out against their expressed will. It is thus incumbent on Christians to speak out against and resist the moves to legalise such immoral practices.

But, as in the case of abortion, we must also take whatever practical steps we can to help those who are terminally ill or are facing prolonged mental or physical suffering. Simply handing over our responsibilities to the state, or just opposing unethical legislation, or selfishly ignoring such people in a hospice or nursing home, is arguably an indicator of unacceptable religion.

As acknowledged above, the religion that God accepts as pure and blameless involves much more than carrying out our responsibility for the vulnerable members of society. But it clearly does not involve any less than that. And so, I think there is every reason for us to reflect carefully on the question: As Christians living in the 21st century, are you and I in danger of losing our religion?

Dr Paul Williamson lectures in Old Testament, Hebrew and Aramaic.



Luther at the Diet of Worms by Émile Delperée, 1878

MARK THOMPSON

IN OCTOBER 31, 1517, IN A SMALL PROVINCIAL TOWN, AN AUGUSTINIAN MONK who served as a professor in the university nailed a document to a church door. It started a revolution. Today, 500 years later and on the other side of the world, that unexceptional act – there would have been lots of notices on that door, since it was the unofficial noticeboard for the university – still captures the imagination.

More books are written about Martin Luther every year than about any other figure in history save one – the master he served, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was born the son of a copper miner in 1483 and grew up in an ordinary German family, but he was serious and studious and soon preparing for a career in the law.

Luther's father Hans had great plans for his son. Martin would not struggle the way he had struggled. He would make his mark in the world. But Hans Luther had no idea of the mark his son would make as Martin entered the University of Erfurt in April 1501!

The younger Luther's life took a dramatic turn in 1505 after he finished the first stage of his studies. Caught in a violent thunderstorm and afraid for his life, he cried out for a saviour, promising to become a monk if St Anne rescued him. Hans was furious – he kept muttering things about the fifth commandment. But Martin was determined. He had made a vow and he was duty bound to honour it. So, on July 17, 1505, he entered the monastery at Erfurt, expecting to be a monk for the rest of his life.

"I was a pious monk," Luther wrote, "and so strictly did I observe the rules of my order that I may say: If ever a monk got to heaven through monkery, I too would have got there." He conscientiously confessed his sins over and over again. He prayed. He attended mass. He did all the menial tasks – cleaning latrines, scrubbing the floors – all of it. Later he would say, "This is the chief abomination: we had to deny the grace of God and put our trust and hope on our holy monkery and not on the pure mercy and grace of Christ".

However, only five years later, Luther's father confessor announced that Luther was to do more study in order to lecture at the new university in Wittenberg. Luther would spend the rest of his life in that town, radically transforming the university curriculum, then the church, and eventually Europe.

He began at Wittenberg as a Professor of Bible in 1512 and only left that post when he died in 1546. And rather early on was 1517 – the year that sparked the revolution.

THE CATALYST

One of the things Luther did as a university professor was write, and publishers could not get enough of it. He wrote with passion and an unshakable conviction in the urgency and truth of what he had to say. And in 1517, two pieces he wrote signalled a dramatic change.

The first, in September, was the *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*. This was his great break with the dominant way of writing and teaching theology in the medieval church. Luther systematically dismantled the foundations of what had been taught in the universities and schools for centuries. "Hope does not grow out of merits," he insisted, "but out of suffering which destroys merits." In other words, you cannot secure your own future. You cannot earn your way into God's favour, or even contribute to it. God must save us, from beginning to end. The publication caused a stir immediately. Theologians all over Europe were furious.

Then Luther published his *Disputation against the Power of Indulgences*, better known as the *95 Theses*, on October 31 – the date celebrated as Reformation Day ever since. The very first of the theses set the tone: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent', he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance".

"It is vain to trust in salvation by indulgence letters," Luther wrote, "even though the indulgence commissary, or even the Pope, were to offer his soul as security." The piece of paper promising your release from purgatory in return for payment, or the release of someone you loved from purgatory, again in return for payment, was worthless. And, perhaps most famous of the 95, thesis 27: "There is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flees out of purgatory the moment money clinks in the bottom of the chest".

Those in Rome immediately saw Luther's theses as disputing the power of the Pope and they went on the attack at once. He had to be silenced or his writings would unravel the cords by which ordinary people were bound to the ministry of the priest and the Pope's authority. Luther was not just criticising abuses – this had been done before. He was challenging the theology that undergirded the abuses, which was dynamite and they knew it.

LUTHER'S IMPACT

The *95 Theses* were read all over Europe. Lives were changed. Patterns of thinking, patterns of church life, patterns of community and family life, even patterns of government – all changed. Luther put the Bible at the centre of church life in the place of tradition; the family at the centre of a Christian community's life in the place of the monastery; Christ the Saviour at the centre of Christian devotion in the place of Mary, the saints and Christ the Judge.

He translated the Bible into vernacular German in 11 weeks and transformed the German language in the process. He created the model pastor's home when he married Katherina von Bora in 1525.

Yet Luther was certainly no saint. Fiercely intelligent without a doubt, but generous with those who opposed him? Not at all. His language could be extreme, as in his writing against the peasants in 1525 or his later writing against the Jews in 1543. It is hard not to be offended as you read those tracts today. I wish he had never written them. But his greatest venom was always reserved for the Pope and the Roman church.

Peasants may have courted anarchy, that terrible work of the devil. The Jews had not converted *en masse* as Luther thought they would when the gospel was recovered. But the Pope had robbed God's people of their greatest treasure, profited from misery and taught false doctrine that enslaved those for whom Christ died. "The Pope is the antichrist," Luther concluded – the instrument the devil uses to pollute the world and oppose God's work in the gospel. He didn't mince words when he was angry. And sometimes the language was foul.

LUTHER'S COURAGE

Yet there were wonderful moments of extraordinary courage, when all the odds were stacked against him. Of these, his stand before the Emperor, the princes of Germany and the officials of the Roman church at the Diet of Worms in 1521 was most remarkable.

The appearance at Worms had been anticipated for months. The Pope had given strict instructions that Luther was not, under any circumstances, to be allowed to give a speech. The Emperor was determined this upstart monk would be silenced.

All the way to Worms Luther was shaking. He did not fear death, but feared most of all that when it came to the test he would buckle. He feared the devil would win. On the appointed day he entered the room and there was a table laden with his books and tracts. He was taken to examine them and led to his place. Two questions and only two questions were to be put to him and he was instructed to answer simply "Yes" or "No".

"Are these your books?" Of course they were. They had his name on them, after all. "Will you recant?" This was the question everyone had been anticipating. The princes leaned forward in their seats. And then Luther, who knew very well how to milk a moment for all it was worth, asked for 24 hours to consider the question.

You can imagine the sense of anticlimax. You might imagine the frustration and the anger at this manoeuvre. After all, hadn't he expected precisely this question? Shouldn't he have been prepared?

But the extension of time was granted, though not without a few barbed comments from the Emperor.

The next day Luther was again led into the room. The table was still there, and the books. "Are these your books?" "Yes." "Will you recant?" At this point Luther astonished everyone by questioning the questioners. "But you do not want me to recant them all, do you? They are not all the same. There are three kinds of books here. Some of them are devotional works on the creeds and the Lord's Prayer. No one says anything against those books. You don't want me to recant them, do you?"

There were those written in the heat of debate, he continued, and perhaps he had spoken too harshly in those. But the others were simply explanations of the teaching of the Bible, on grace and Christ and the gospel, and no one had yet shown him that they were wrong. "If I am shown they are wrong from Scripture, then I'll gladly recant. But no one has done that yet."

It was a masterpiece. He had found a way to give a speech and to make his case. His enemies were furious. "Yes or no," they screamed. "Yes or no!"

And that's when Luther did it. That's when he said, "Since then your serene majesty and your lordships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner... Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the Pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. May God help me. Amen."

The official stenographers didn't get the last few lines. Pandemonium had broken out in the hall. Luther was taken out by friends, drained but rejoicing that he had come through the test. On the way home he would be kidnapped by his own prince in order to keep him in safe custody in the Wartburg, the castle just outside Eisenach. By then he was both excommunicate and an outlaw.

LUTHER THE THEOLOGIAN

The Luther story is full of high drama. A German theological professor in a small, new and little-known university, trembling and fearful, had upset the entire world. The consequences are still felt today. And it began in 1517 when he called teaching and students back to the Bible, away from sterile philosophy and scholastic folly, and when he called men and women back to a life of repentance and faith in response to God's extraordinary mercy.

Luther has been co-opted for all kinds of projects since his own time. He has been the proto-German nationalist, the forerunner of Marxism and communism; the first historical critic of the Bible, the man who would challenge that criticism on the basis of the Bible's own message; one of the great exponents of introspection and despair, the man who pointed us beyond ourselves to a work done for us first and only then *in us*.

He was a statesman, counsellor, educator, guide and musician. But he was always, first and foremost, a theologian who taught about Jesus from the Bible. He changed language, politics and society but that is not what he set out to do. He wanted to talk about God and the great thing he has done by giving his Son so that the guilt we like to pretend does not attach to us, our estrangement from the God who made us, our corruption and pollution, and our enslavement to desire and to the devil and his schemes, might be dealt with completely and forever.

I recently heard the suggestion that the Reformation should be summed up simply in the words "freedom" and "responsibility". Luther himself would have used a single, very different word, for he was all about Christ. His preaching was about Christ. His lecturing was about Christ. His writing was about Christ. His counselling and everything else was about Christ.

Luther didn't just insipidly endorse the values of our culture or his own. He challenged us all with Christ. What have you done with Christ? Have you laid aside your self-importance and self-preoccupation and taken hold of Christ?

That is what Luther's reformation was about from beginning to end. Everything else was, and is, *die Mache* – window dressing.

This is an expanded version of the address given by the Rev Dr Mark Thompson at last month's opening of the Luther exhibition at St Andrew's Cathedral.

ST FAITH'S AT HOME FOR 100 YEARS



Happy anniversary: Alan and Helen Shannon cut the St Faith's cake. Helen has played organ for the church choir since 1952; Alan has been involved since 1942, most of that time leading the choir. PHOTO: Kelly Jury

A century by the sea on the northern beaches has been celebrated by St Faith's, Narrabeen with a packed-out service and community lunch.

While St Faith's has existed as a parish since 1897, it moved to its current site in 1917. Over those hundred years much has changed in Narrabeen, paralleling transformations that have occurred across Sydney.

"Narrabeen was a little rural community people came to for holidays not that long ago," says parish rector the Rev Kerry Nagel. "Now, instead of being a ways away from Sydney, it's basically part of Sydney. There's been a lot of change around us, with more home units in our immediate area and changes in lifestyle."

In an anniversary service attended by 500 people, the congregation heard stories from members old and new about how God has worked through the church. The choir, active in the church for many decades, sang on the day, and two of the parish's longest servants, Alan and Helen Channon, cut the official anniversary cake at the service.

While many of the good things that began 100 years ago remain, the church's site has undergone many changes as the parish grew beyond its original vision for the area.

"The brick building that opened in the 1940s – that is now a chapel and church hall, and the newer church building we use now was built after that," Mr Nagel says. "There's also a Sunday school hall and youth hall now to go with that."

"The people who originally built on this site, they didn't know how many people would be coming to this church. The original building was for 70 or 80 people but they outgrew that, which I think is lovely."

ART... FOR GOD'S SAKE



GyMEA gets arty (clockwise from main photo): long-time parish member Mrs Joan Thompson beside her painting of Kata Tjuta; young artist Jemima Archer sold all three of her pretty bird artworks; four-year-old Joseph Hunkin, beside his Lego creation, is very happy about winning the under-8 Lego competition; church members Ibolya, Sandra and Rochelle in front of the parish's "history corner" at the show.

GyMEA has been busy celebrating its 90th anniversary by reflecting on the parish's history and looking to the future with a weekend away, recognising the ministry of past members, preparing to support a Syrian refugee family and encouraging each other to "finish strong" in the faith.

The most recent event was an art show, opened on August 4, with exhibitors and entrants aged from four upwards. Guest artist for the exhibition, Roslyn Elms, spoke at the opening about the importance of creativity, reminding those present that they were all created in God's image.

GyMEA's rector, the Rev Graham Crew, observed that "often the art crowd and the church don't connect, so doing this kind of thing is all just part of keeping up the connection with the community".

"At the show a local commented to one of his churchwardens that "'people here are so friendly, I'd like to be part of a community like this'. We were delighted that they were so touched by it... it's great people are seeing the church offers such real connections."

"Our theme for the year is 'firm foundations, finishing strong', and we thank God for good beginnings here and our pioneering story... it's a good heritage to draw on for the future."



Perfect provider

JUDY ADAMSON

All Saints

Rated PG

WHAT POTENTIAL MINISTRIES COULD WE BE PART OF IF WE LOOKED further than our front doors? How does God show us his plans for us? And what happens when we trust completely in him, even when all seems hopeless?

These are some of the issues considered in *All Saints*, which manages to tell its true story of faith, care and God's provision without sugar coating any of the people in it.

Michael Spurlock (John Corbett) a newly ordained Episcopal minister, is placed into a dying Tennessee parish for the express purpose of taking an inventory of the church and its assets to clear the way for a quick sale. The bishop is bluntly clear about what he wants, and how soon he expects Michael to do the "godly work" of helping the locals face the loss of their church. Ouch.

The handful of parishioners left at All Saints' know exactly why Michael is there. Some are resigned – others resentful, particularly the curmudgeonly Forrest (Barry Corbin), who rebuffs Michael's friendly overtures, angry that the diocese seems to want nothing more than the money to be made from the 30 acres the church building stands on.

"Church is more than a couple of billfolds, or didn't your preacher school teach you that?" he asks angrily.

Michael is torn – wanting to help, but not seeing any option beyond the task he's been given. However, to make the keener parishioners happy while he can, he agrees to put church flyers up around the local area. And this brings a handful of Karen refugees to their door the following Sunday.

(The Karen people, for those who don't know, are an ethnic group hailing from the border region of Myanmar and Thailand. As a result of mission work from the 18th century onwards about 15 per cent of the Karen are Christian. They're persecuted in Myanmar because they are an ethnic minority, and are often persecuted or ignored in Thailand also.)

The leader and carer of the refugee group, Ye Win (Nelson Lee), explains to Michael that they're Anglicans: their forebears "learned about Jesus Christ from the British". They are also destitute – they're sleeping on floors and need food, jobs and a sense of safety and community in the new place they're calling home.

Michael is sympathetic but at a loss. How can a parish that's \$850,000 in debt, with only a few members, meet such needs? And how can he stop the diocese from selling the church out from under him?

A pivotal moment is when he says to his son that they should ask God to help the Karen. His son pointedly responds, "Aren't you God's help?" It's an excellent observation – and quite a challenge for a new, green pastor who grapples with a constant tendency to go his own way.

This is one of the best things about *All Saints*. It shows us a warts-and-all Christianity, where pastors aren't clichéd cardigan wearers or ranting nutters, but people who love God, struggle to understand his will and have personal shortcomings – just like everyone else. The onscreen Spurlock is lovable, but often the last person in the room to understand and trust in God's grace and provision!

So often we don't know why events in our lives happen the way they do. We can desire to serve God but we don't understand how he will bring about his plans for us and those around us. And second guessing him is never good. It's not for nothing that Isaiah 55:8 says, "'my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord".

It is this truth, plus our entire dependence on the goodness of God, that Michael Spurlock and his family, the Karen, the church and the wider community have to learn – along with the transformative power of love, faithfulness and friendship.

It's worth noting that there really aren't any "bad guys" in the film, and that's a welcome change. There are bad choices, sure, but often it's simply through misunderstanding, ignorance, or a lack of trust in God. The remarkable journey of All Saints' church and its people, and the blessings God gives them, shows how extraordinary his answers to our prayers can be. ©

Back to the Bible on bodies

TAMARA ROBSON

Birds and Bees by the Book

by Patricia Weerakoon,
illustrated by Lisa Flanagan
(CEP)



WHEN I SAW PATRICIA WEERAKOON HAD WRITTEN BOOKS FOR PARENTS TO READ WITH children, I couldn't help but be curious about what they would be like. They delighted me in some ways and made me squirm in others, but the squirming is possibly my own discomfort with the discussions they are meant to prompt.

Conversations around who we are and how we work are becoming increasingly complicated. Having spent a lot of last year reading books about gender, I've dipped my toe into the rabbit hole that is gender conversations. It matters how we have them but we cannot make the mistake of only having them in academic terms – there are real people involved. When we speak about sexuality, gender, and porn especially, we need to have some sort of grounding.

I'm not a parent. I'm a children's minister. It is not my task to open these books with children, especially considering the sensitive nature of some of the content. But for parents, educating yourself and your children matters. These are written for ages 7-10 but obviously it's up to your own wisdom about when you would open them up. Let's not hide our heads in the sand and pretend children aren't thinking about or experiencing these issues.

It shocks me constantly that these conversations have already begun among children. The average age a child looks at porn is getting younger and younger, and when an Infants' student can articulate a knowledge of, and hurtful disdain for, a transgender student (as happened in my SRE class), it feels like we're a little behind. Children are already wading into this water and we've got to wade in with them, even if it's a little cold for our taste.

Weerakoon has done a brilliant job of grounding the books in clear, simple language without dumbing anything down and she constantly brings us back to the Bible. We're reminded again and again of the gospel, who God is, how he feels about us and how Jesus died to save us from our sins.

There is a page in *Thinking about Gender* in which she encourages readers to love others even when they're different to us – to love them like Jesus loves them – and in a climate where truth can bring too very exclusion and cruelty, like message matters. It matters that children learn their bodies – even the private parts – are good because God made them, but he wants us to use them appropriately.

My one caution is that if your children, or you, are not comfortable with frank language and detail about body parts, sex etc, you'll find this awkward going. Read the books alone first and make sure the conversations you're about to have are ones you're both ready for. Perhaps begin with *Me and My Brain* and move on to other books later. It doesn't change my recommendation but please, be wise and do your best to have this moment be prayerful and considered.

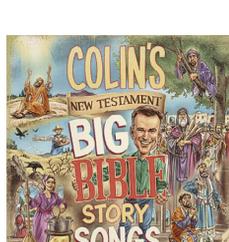
If you want to begin to engage – as a parent or as a Christian – but the whole idea seems too hard, these books offer a good foundation for beginning to think and speak about "the birds and the bees" in this complex world. ©

Big CD, big Bible, big stories

NICK GILBERT

Colin's New Testament Big Bible Story Songs

by Colin Buchanan



AS USEFUL AS KIDS' MUSIC ALBUMS HAVE BEEN FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES THE WORLD over, they must also be a rollicking good time for the songwriters and musicians to put together, and nowhere is this more evident than on a Colin Buchanan album.

His latest offering, *Colin's New Testament Big Bible Story Songs* (say that 10 times fast), is a stroll through the New Testament across 13 tracks, taking in sights as diverse as Zacchaeus up the tree, the Garden of Gethsemane and the Damascus Road. There's a similarly eclectic mix of styles, all linked together by Colin's usual energetic delivery and a raucous crowd of kids joining in the singalong.

One song, "The Ballad of Farmer Phil", will be a familiar to Colin fans as a re-recorded track from an earlier album with extra backing vocals from some junior singers, but every other track on the CD is new.

Each song comes with some fun hooks, typical of any Colin kids' album you care to name, across a number of genres. You have your country blues, you have AC/DC-lite, a bit of pop reggae and '80s soul funk, and a couple of softer ballads.

If you've ever struggled to find a song to go along with a lesson on the Mountain of Transfiguration, for instance (it certainly doesn't lend itself to song as easily as other stories!), Colin has a nice swaggering piece of 12-bar blues ready to come to your aid. The variety offers something for everyone, and a mix for different uses in kids' ministries and church services.

Of course, the big focus here is linking each of the stories to Jesus, with the big idea being to show how the New Testament is teaching us and pointing towards Jesus as Saviour and King. The CD does that ably, making *Colin's New Testament Big Bible Story Songs* a great selection of new material for children's ministers to dip into, and for family car singers to enjoy.

Colin Buchanan is doing a national kids' tour on the back of the new CD, in addition to some adult shows linked to his earlier 2017 release, Calvary Road. For more details go to colinbuchanan.com.au.