

FEBRUARY  
2018

# Southern CROSS

THE NEWS

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## Baby boom

HOW TO CARE FOR NEW PARENTS

PLUS

**The habit of evangelism**

**Faith amid the refugee crisis**

## CONTENTS



### COVER

Preschool fun:  
Junior Jivers at  
Glenmore Park. 10

Sydney News 3

Australian News 4

World News 5

Changes 6

Letters 7

Essay 8

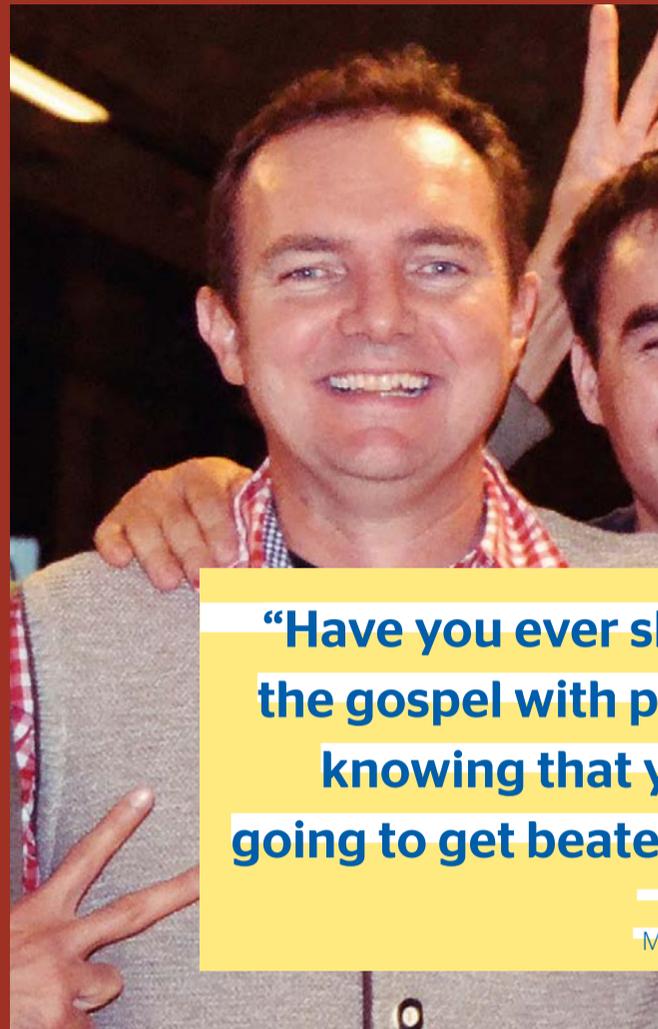
Archbishop Writes 9

Cover Feature 10

Moore is More 11

Events 12

Culture 13



**“Have you ever shared  
the gospel with people  
knowing that you’re  
going to get beaten up?”**

Mike Clark  
Mission News

## Southern CROSS FEBRUARY 2018

volume 24 number 1



**PUBLISHER:** Anglican Media Sydney

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

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\$44.00 per annum (Australia)

**PRINTED BY:** Southern Colour



## Bumper harvest at MBM

Joy in faith: Dave Jensen (left) baptises Warren Kuschert.

**MBM ROOTY HILL HAS CONTINUED TO GROW THE NUMBER OF NEW CHRISTIANS, WITH 2017 seeing more than 90 new conversions in the church.**

The leader of mission at MBM, Dave Jensen, says one of the most heartening things about that number is the mix of ages in the group. "As a rough number, half of those people are adults, about 30 per cent are teens or youth, and the other 20 per cent are children," he says.

"I think two of the reasons for the number of adults is, firstly, because of the kind of church we are. We do have a fringe of people who attend, maybe even attend regularly, but may not be converted. So we don't assume that everyone in our pews is a Christian.

"Secondly, Sydney in general – but western Sydney in particular – has seen such a huge influx of refugees and immigrants in the past few years, and there are second- and even third-generation kids from other countries who have simply never heard the gospel. So there is a huge number of people out there waiting to hear the gospel from Christians."

One of the new converts is Warren Kuschert. He says that while he'd long had some understanding of God and the gospel, he spent much of his time running away from God, and only recently came to understand what has been done for him in Christ at MBM.

"I've been in churches before – I was actually at St John's, Minchinbury before coming to Rooty Hill – and only ended up here because I knew people," Mr Kuschert says.

"It took me a long time, but some experiences I had earlier [last] year convinced me I was tired of running and of sinning, and that came with a real understanding for the first time about what has been done for me by Christ's sacrifice.

"It's been a transformation for me to not run my own life any more, but to follow Jesus." Mr Kuschert is currently involved in growth groups, and it also helps mow the church lawns.

According to Mr Jensen, MBM has what it calls an "evangelism pathway" that aims to guide people all the way from seekers to disciples – disciples who themselves invest into others on the pathway.

"We try to be really intentional about that, and we do also want to be a church that is somewhere both non-Christians and Christians want to be and want to invest their time in," he says.

"We don't think those two things are mutually exclusive, and we work really hard to ensure not only that we offer solid Bible teaching and spiritual encouragement to Christians with us, but that we also pursue evangelism as much as possible, in as many ways as possible."



## New year, new combination

Parish merger: David Ould and Joe Wiltshire outside Glenquarie Anglican Church.

**THE TWO PARISHES OF GLENQUARIE AND INGLEBURN HAVE AMALGAMATED, WITH THE FORMER rector of Glenquarie, the Rev David Ould, moving into a new role at Parramatta.**

The move came about because of financial issues at Glenquarie, which is unable to afford a full-time rector's stipend. Mr Ould, at Glenquarie since 2013, is now the senior assistant minister at St John's Cathedral.

"We've made it work [at Glenquarie] but it's never been financially viable," Mr Ould says. "Now we're in a position to make a change in a supportive and constructive way, and we saw that a merger with Ingleburn was the way to go."

The rector of the newly combined parish, the Rev Joe Wiltshire at Ingleburn, says, "Glenquarie actually used to be a branch church of Ingleburn many years ago, so in a way this partnership was really a natural fit.

"We looked at a number of options, but an amalgamation seemed the best choice long-term. I think that while people at Glenquarie are a bit sad about it, and [will not be] meeting in the church building as regularly as they have been, there's also an opportunity here for us to grow and to move forward in the area together."

Services will now be conducted at Ingleburn's church, but the Glenquarie building will continue to be used for regular programs such as the Break the Cycle.

Mr Wiltshire says the amalgamation will also provide opportunities to explore new ministries, including a burgeoning Spanish-speaking outreach that he hopes will grow into a full service at Glenquarie in the future.

"This gives us concrete avenues to explore new ministries and to put new energy into ministries started at Glenquarie," he says.

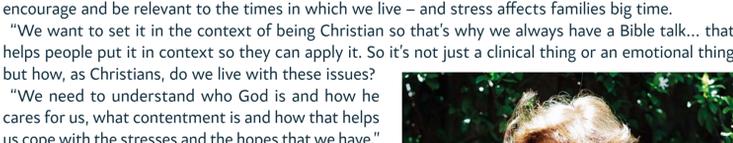
"We have people that we can involve in that – we have another venue that we can use. Glenquarie also runs a once-a-month service for clients of Break the Cycle and their friends, so we're looking to continue with that.

"Ingleburn is a fairly typical middle-class church right now, so I think it's good for us as much as for the people attending that service that we continue with Glenquarie's work there."

The new parish has been meeting as a single church since late last year, although the change wasn't formalised until New Year's Day. The plan is to explore replanting a congregation at Glenquarie in the next three to five years.

Says Mr Ould: "We're in a position now where there's 100 per cent engagement with it. Everyone's saying, 'Yes, this is what we need to do'.

"We're handing over a very united, loving church family who love Jesus, love his word and are excited about the opportunities that a larger church family represents. For me the great encouragement is that we're in that place."



## Stress and faith

**IN A PERFECTLY TIMED CHOICE, MOTHERS' UNION SYDNEY IS PREPARING TO HOST ITS 2018 CONFERENCE on the theme "I fear, I feel, I hope: living for God in a stress-filled world".**

"Our ultimate goal is supporting marriage and Christian family life," says MU Sydney's members' co-ordinator, Christine Jensen. "We always try to think of a theme that will fit into our aims and goals but also encourage and be relevant to the times in which we live – and stress affects families big time.

"We want to set it in the context of being Christian so that's why we always have a Bible talk... that helps people put it in context so they can apply it. So it's not just a clinical thing or an emotional thing but how, as Christians, do we live with these issues?"

"We need to understand who God is and how he cares for us, what contentment is and how that helps us cope with the stresses and the hopes that we have."

The Dean of Sydney, Kanishka Raffel, will give the Bible talk at the conference, to be held on February 23 in the Chapter House of St Andrew's Cathedral, while the keynote speaker will be Dr Jenny Brown (right) – the founder and director of the Family Systems Institute Australia.

"Jenny Brown is a very good communicator and a great resource person on this topic," Mrs Jensen says, adding that there has already been a lot of interest in this year's event – hardly surprising when society works so hard to deal with stress, but doesn't look at it from a Christian perspective.

"I was looking at various conferences on anxiety and stress and I didn't see one that was Christian or that came up with our particular topic, so I feel perhaps this is touching where people are at," Mrs Jensen says. "Someone said to me that they like coming to our conferences and seminars because they're at a different level... we have something extra to offer."

As with past years, the conference is free and all women are invited to attend, although registration is necessary so morning tea and lunch can be catered for.

And numbers are growing. For the first MU conference in 2011 about 100 women attended. Last year there were 300, "so it does push the limits of the Chapter House!" Mrs Jensen says cheerfully.

Those interested in the event need to register at [www.musydneym.org.au](http://www.musydneym.org.au) by February 16.



## Daniel steps up

**DANIEL GLYNN HAS BEGUN WORK AS DIOCESAN Secretary and Secretary of Synod following his appointment by Standing Committee late last year.**

Mr Glynn (right) is replacing Robert Wicks, who served as Diocesan Secretary for 13 years and has now been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Sydney Diocesan Secretariat (SDS).

The post of Sydney's Diocesan Secretary involves overseeing the administration of Synod, Standing Committee and various diocesan boards and committees. Mr Glynn joined SDS four years ago as Manager of Diocesan Services and has a background in corporate operations and IT.

In the past 12 months in particular he has shouldered more responsibilities as Mr Wicks took over interim leadership of the SDS while a decision was made about a new CEO.

Mr Wicks said he had "thoroughly enjoyed" his time as Diocesan Secretary, adding, "It has been a privilege to serve in this way. However, it was time to hand the reins over to someone else.

"I'm delighted Daniel has been appointed as my successor. His skills, experience and fresh set of eyes are just what the Synod needs to move forward at this time."

Mr Glynn has been responsible for administering elections to Standing Committee boards, councils and committees; co-ordinating the staff at Synod, and serving as secretary to various diocesan committees and the board of Freedom For Faith.

He said that "when I reflect on the role of the Diocesan Secretary and the breadth of opportunities that it provides to serve Jesus, I am honoured and amazed that God would use the likes of me in such a position... and then I am reminded that our God has long used the weak and foolish to achieve his purposes!

"Having seen the high standard which Rob set, I am grateful for his confidence in me; and am particularly thankful for my wife Sarah and my family, as well as the many others within the Diocese who continue to support me through personal encouragement and prayer."

Mr Glynn has attended Sylvania Anglican Church since childhood and serves as treasurer, Bible study leader and in the music ministry.



## Time to dine

**BELMORE ANGLICAN CHURCH HAS BEEN CONNECTING WITH ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH regular community dinners.**

The idea for the dinners came from a similar concept used in Jindabyne. A familial connection between parishioners in the two churches led to the idea making its way to the rector of Belmore, the Rev David Wallace. It was pursued as a way to particularly welcome young families with no previous church backgrounds into the life of their churching.

"We provide the food, encouraging members of the church to come along with salads and drinks while we fund the purchase of kebabs, sausages, bread rolls and things like that," Mr Wallace says. "We cook them up on a Sunday afternoon and people just come along to have a bit of a meal together and a casual chat with their neighbours.

"It's been running for around two years now and we average about 30 to 40 people each month – with the usual drop-off during winter and a pick-up in summer."

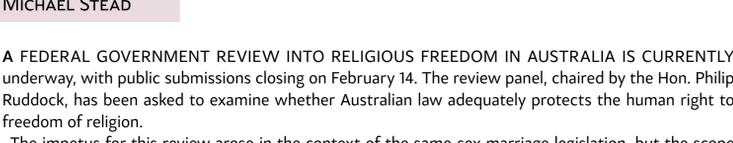
Mr Wallace says the focus has been very much on people who would otherwise have no connection with the parish or its members, although a dozen or so people who are existing friends of church members also attend. The dinners are advertised through letterbox drops and word of mouth, and some have become regular church attenders as a result of the event.

"We had young one mum who connected with us through one of the dinner letterbox drops, and then she started to come along to church," Mr Wallace says. "While I think she was a God-fearer already, the clincher was just being able to have a meaningful neighbourly connection with a local church, and the possibility of getting involved in what we're doing."

The dinners have also resulted in inter-church collaboration, with Belmore teaming up with Bankstown for one particularly well-attended dinner last year.

"We invited Grant de Villiers [the assistant minister at Bankstown] to one of the dinners," Mr Wallace says. "He said he had contacts with a couple of refugee families in the Belmore-Lakemba area, so we said, 'Sure, bring them along as well.'" He put the news out to these contacts, and I think that dinner we had nearly double the number of regulars. We needed to grab some extra food at the last minute, but it was a great night!"

The plan for the 2018 dinners is to continue to expand on some brief interviews with church members that were introduced last year, and also seek to cater to the wide range of ethnic backgrounds represented.



## Be heard on religious freedom

MICHAEL STEAD

**A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW INTO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AUSTRALIA IS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY, with public submissions closing on February 14. The review panel, chaired by the Hon. Philip Ruddock, has been asked to examine whether Australian law adequately protects the human right to freedom of religion.**

The impetus for this review arose in the context of the same-sex marriage legislation, but the scope of the review is much wider than marriage-related issues. It goes to the fundamental role of religious freedom in Australia's liberal democracy.

A recent report from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's human rights subcommittee concluded that the protections for freedom of religion in Australian law are very limited.

In its interim report on the Legal Foundations of Religious Freedom in Australia, released in November 2017, the subcommittee examined Australia's compliance with Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and concluded that:

- "Commonwealth protection for freedom of religion or belief is limited... Constitutional protections are not absolute in their effect, nor do they prohibit such restrictions at state or territory level. There is no positive protection of religious freedom" (para 4.76).
- "The Commonwealth has failed to implement the range of ICCPR rights despite committing to do so" (para 2.33).

Article 18(4) protects the rights of parents and guardians to "ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions". This right is not currently protected (paras 3.33-3.36).

To this point in our nation's history, formal legal protections for religious freedom have not been necessary, because our "live and let live" social compact has made space for people of all faiths and none to express their beliefs without fear of discrimination or persecution. But this has begun to change, as irreligious (and anti-religious) voices are increasingly setting the public agenda.

The freedoms of conscience and speech we have previously assumed can no longer be taken for granted. The Ruddock Review is a key opportunity for Christians to contribute to a national conversation about religious freedom. On the basis of submissions to prior inquiries, it is likely that there will be many submissions arguing that Australia needs to wind back existing protections of religious freedom, especially in relation to anti-discrimination law. It is vital that Christians (and those of other faiths) make well-argued submissions to the review panel.

The Sydney Diocese is supporting the initiative of Freedom for Faith (FFF) to produce a very substantial submission to the Ruddock Review. The submission was prepared by Professor Patrick Parkinson AM with advice and comment from a range of religious freedom experts and church leaders across the country. The FFF submission demonstrates that it is possible to enact the protection of religious freedom Australia has committed to as a signatory of the ICCPR without seeking special privileges for people of faith, and without winding back non-discrimination rights of others.

The key recommendations of the FFF submission are:

- Reframing anti-discrimination law to move away from treating religious freedom as a grudging exception to discrimination laws and instead recognising a positive right to religious freedom.
- Extending the coverage of Federal anti-discrimination law so that religious belief is a protected attribute.
- Expansion of the Fair Work Act so that employers are under a duty to offer reasonable accommodation of religious belief in the workplace.
- Enacting a national Freedom of Religion Act, which would provide statutory recognition of the rights and freedoms recognised in ICCPR Article 18, and the associated rights of freedom of speech and of association. This would include explicit recognition of parents' right to educate their children in accordance with their beliefs, and the associated right of religious groups to run faith-based schools and receive Government funding on an equal basis with non-religious schools. It would also provide anti-detriment provisions to protect faith-based organisations from, for example, discriminatory Government funding on religious grounds.
- Creating a National Religious Freedom Commissioner
- Acting on other legislation to address anomalies not covered by recent changes to the Marriage Act (such as religious marriage celebrants, same-sex marriage exemptions for Anglican school chapels, and protection for charities).

The Sydney Diocese's submission to the Ruddock Review fully endorses the recommendations of the FFF submission, and provides further comments in relation to Anglican schools and Anglicare Sydney. Many other churches and faith-based groups will also be endorsing the recommendations of the FFF submission.

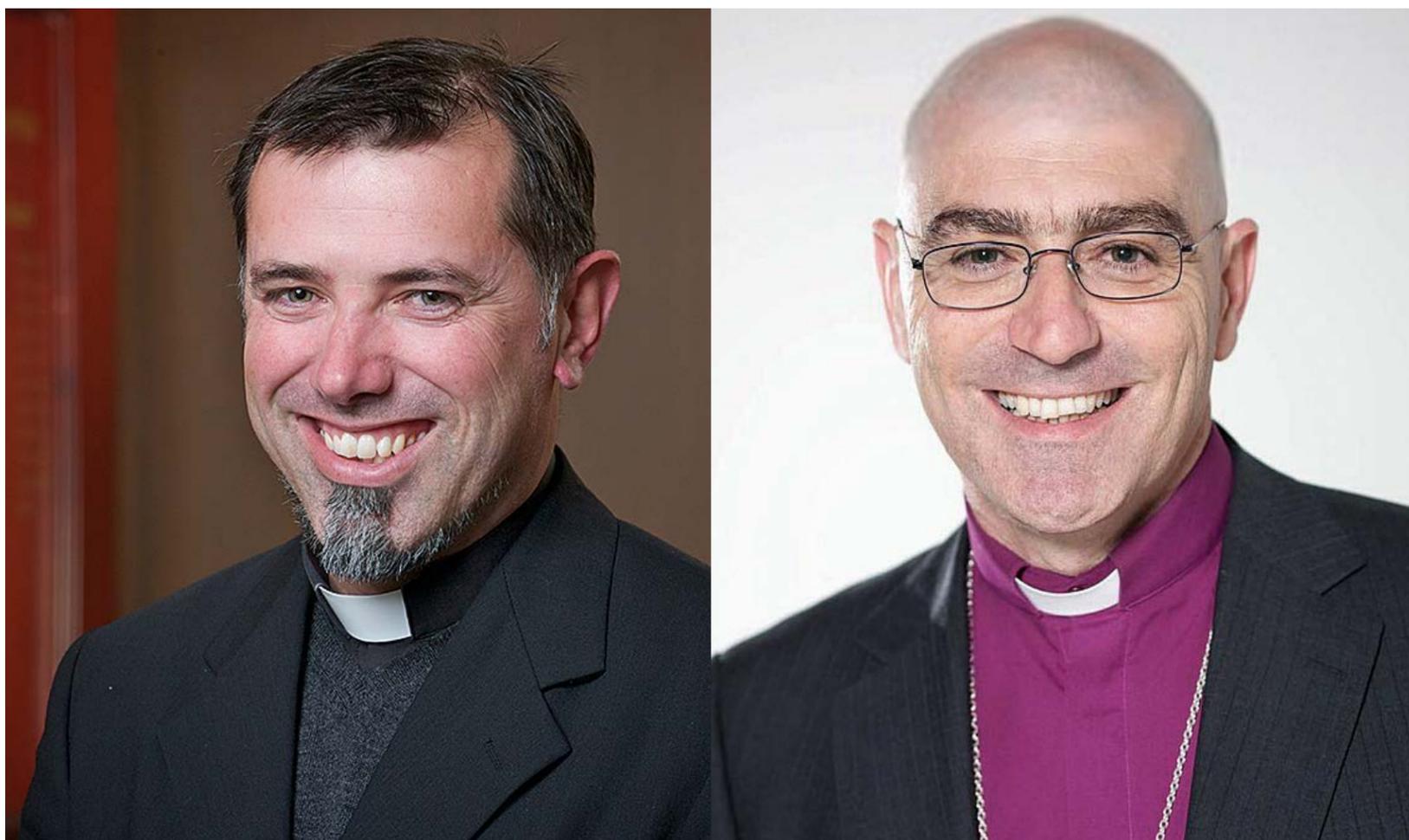
Bishop Michael Stead is chairman of the Religious Freedom Reference Group.

It is vital that all those concerned about the protection of religious freedom in Australia make their voices heard. To find out how to receive your copy of the FFF submission, see the Sydney Anglicans website ([sydneyanglicans.net/ruddockreview](http://sydneyanglicans.net/ruddockreview)). Please make a submission to the Ruddock Review in support of its recommendations. These can be submitted online (<https://pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/religious-freedom-review/submission>) or in letter form, but submissions must be received by February 14.

Hard copy written submissions should be mailed to:

The Expert Panel on Religious Freedom  
c/o Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
PO Box 6500  
Canberra ACT 2600

# Canberra changes



Bishop Matt Brain (left), the Bishop-elect for Bendigo, and Bishop Stuart Robinson, who is returning to minister in Sydney.

**THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF CANBERRA-GOULBURN LOST TWO SENIOR LEADERS IN DECEMBER,** with the resignation of Bishop Stuart Robinson and the appointment of Bishop Matt Brain as Bishop of Bendigo.

Bishop Robinson, 58, has led Canberra-Goulburn for nine years, after 20 years serving in Sydney and a three-year secondment in Belgium, which is part of the Anglican Diocese in Europe. He concludes his role on March 31, and the diocese subsequently announced that on May 5 he will be inducted as rector of Vaucluse and Rose Bay in Sydney's east.

Bishop Robinson said he and his wife Jane had been blessed to work in Canberra-Goulburn, and the service had been "a privilege".

"We do sense our work is complete (as much as that can ever be discerned) and with extended and immediate family responsibilities, we have determined the time is right to conclude this ministry," he added.

Of his move to Vaucluse, he described it as "refiring back into parish ministry", adding that he and Jane were looking forward "to engaging with people in the eastern suburbs with the transforming gospel of our Lord Jesus".

Until a new bishop is elected by the Canberra-Goulburn synod in mid-2018 the diocese will be led by its long-serving vicar-general, Assistant Bishop Trevor Edwards.

Meantime, the Bishopric Electoral Board in the Diocese of Bendigo, after deliberations lasting a number of months, has chosen Dr Matt Brain as the tenth Bishop of Bendigo.

Bishop Brain oversees Ministry Training and Development in Canberra-Goulburn, as well as parish support chaplaincy and mission. He has worked in lay and ordained capacities in five dioceses including North-West Australia, where he was ordained and gained experience in rural and remote ministry.

He has published numerous books, articles and conference papers and lectures at St Mark's Theological College in ministry and outreach.

"Being able to serve God and his people is a great privilege and I rejoice in this new opportunity to serve," he said. "The Diocese of Bendigo shares many values and characteristics with Canberra-Goulburn. Indeed its vision is to 'transform society through the gospel of Jesus Christ by building healthy mission-shaped faith communities'. What a great call."

The date for his installation in Bendigo is Saturday, February 17.

In a pastoral letter to the diocese, Bishop Robinson wrote: "no doubt there will be mixed emotions as you process the prospect of both our departures in the New Year.

"I want to assure you that God sovereignly works all things for the ultimate good of his people, and I am therefore convinced he will attend to all the future needs of this great diocese."



## Opportune Sanctuary

Helping the helpers: (from left) the Anglican Bishop of Milne Bay Tennyson Bogar, United Church Bishop Leidimo Edoni, The Sanctuary Project senior researcher Angus Skeoch and Catholic Bishop Rolando Santos.

A SYDNEY-BORN PROJECT IS LOOKING TO BRING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS, OR "SERVICE MISSIONARIES", from overseas to Papua New Guinea to work in church-run schools and hospitals, with the aim of combining practical assistance and partnership with a mutually humanitarian bent.

Known as The Sanctuary Project, it seeks to provide migration pathways for Christians in countries with persecuted Christian populations, while also being able to make use of their skills and expertise to benefit the host country. It has strong support from PNG's Anglican, Catholic and United churches, is directed by Anglicans from Sydney, and will be conducted in partnership with the PNG government.

"It's essentially a sponsored migration program," says the director of The Sanctuary Project and former director of Evangelism and New Churches (ENC), the Rev Bruce Hall.

"The government gives the churches visas and work permits for people outside the country to come in and work in hospitals and schools that the churches run in rural areas. So we're trying to find people in the persecuted church and bring them across, particularly to within the Milne Bay Province."

Mr Hall says the project is completely independent of the Australian Government, and people brought to PNG would not be refugees and asylum seekers under the UNHCR. They would instead be entering the country under working visas, taking up teaching and nursing positions in rural communities that are deemed locally as difficult to fill.

The first of the migrants are yet to arrive in PNG, although there are teachers who have been approved by the government as skilled migrants. The idea is to trial the pathway with 15-16 families.

"The plan is to benefit all the parties involved," Mr Hall says. "Christians persecuted overseas have safe sanctuary among Christian communities, [and] the churches and the government benefit from skilled migration by having people enter the country who are willing and able to make use of their talents for the benefit of everyone."

He adds that the project has the support of Papua New Guinea's Deputy Prime Minister Charles Abel and is expected to be endorsed by the PNG cabinet around the time *Southern Cross* goes to press.

In the first group of migrants there will be about 70 people to settle into new positions in the Milne Bay area. To do this The Sanctuary Project needs to raise \$2500 for each person, which will cover the passport required, immunisation and flights to Papua New Guinea.

For information or to donate, contact ENC on 02 9577 9875 or visit the Anglican Relief and Development Fund Australia website ([ardfa.org.au](http://ardfa.org.au)) and click on "Sanctuary Project PNG".



## AMiE ordains nine

The Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) ordinands with AMiE director the Rev Lee McMunn (second from left), the senior minister of Christ Church Central in Sheffield the Rev Tim Davies (third from left), and Bishop Andy Lines (fourth from right).

THE ANGLICAN MISSION IN ENGLAND (AMiE) IS ON ITS WAY TO PLANTING 25 CHURCHES BY 2025 after conducting its first ordination. Nine men were ordained by the Missionary Bishop to Europe, Andy Lines, in December in London.

AMiE is a network of English churches which are Anglican by conviction. They are not part of the central structures of the Church of England but are connected to global Anglicanism through the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON).

"Up until now, AMiE's clergy have either come from the Church of England, or have been ordained by overseas bishops," the mission said in a news release.

"Now, for the first time, nine men have been ordained by an English bishop who can give them regular oversight as they begin their ministries.

"A new generation of ordained leaders will be essential if AMiE is to achieve its gospel desire of planting 25 churches by 2025 and 250 by 2050."

One of the men was ordained as a presbyter, the other eight as deacons. The service in took place in the Baptist East London Tabernacle Church.

The Rev Rico Tice, associate minister at All Souls', Langham Place, preached from Matthew 28 on Jesus' command to "go and make disciples of all nations". Archbishops and bishops from Australia, Africa and Latin America sent video messages of support.

The Church of England, through a spokesman, stressed that the AMiE "is not part of, nor affiliated with, the Church of England, nor is Bishop Lines' parent denomination part of the Anglican Communion". The latter statement refers to the Anglican Church of North America, which took the lead in consecrating Bishop Lines in June.

"Under our Canon law, Church of England clergy are unable to participate actively in the group's services," the spokesman said. "Our prayers are, of course, with all those seeking to proclaim Christ."

At the moment AMiE has 10 parishes in England but its mission director, the Rev Lee McMunn, said, "We are convinced that England needs many new Anglican churches that are sharing the great news about Jesus our Saviour and Lord – and forming communities of his loving disciples, who base their lives and worldview on Scripture and are empowered by his Spirit.

"We want to play our part in the spreading of the gospel in England."



## COAST FOR CHRIST

The **Rev Nathan Sandon** became rector of the parish of Austinmer – or “Austi-Thirroul”, as the locals call it – on January 24 after three years at EV Church on the Central Coast.

“After being ordained within the Anglican diocese of Sydney, my long-term plan had been to lead a church in a Sydney Anglican parish, then three years ago EV Church invited myself and my wife Mel to be part of that ministry there,” he says. “We were really impressed and encouraged by what EV Church has been doing up on the coast in terms of reaching the community and being driven missionally, so we said, ‘Yes.’”

There was an opportunity to stay long term, but after three years the Sandons were contacted by Austinmer.

“We’re going from our coastal town north of Sydney to a coastal town south of Sydney, so there’s a similarity there in terms of the culture,” he says. “EV is doing a great job of reaching those people [and] Austi-Thirroul is also keen to reach their surrounding community with the gospel. When they go to know Melinda and myself they saw a good fit in that.

“Austi-Thirroul is part of that relaxed, coastal, non-Sydney thing. They abbreviate everything! I go from Nathan to ‘Nate’ and everything becomes de-formalised in a way. I’m more than happy working with that. When we started to get to know the church, part of that keenness to reach their community is the ability to meet them where they’re at, and the informality is part of that.”

Mr Sandon says the family is thrilled to be going to a place where there are great opportunities and they have a strong connection to the area – including links with the Gospel in the Gong network.

“We’re looking forward to lots of things in stepping out and sharing the gospel with the people of Austi-Thirroul and the northern Illawarra,” he says.

“The driving force for us is that heart for mission. Going up to EV was part of that... to experience and grow and be challenged. We’re very thankful for EV... we’re really glad for the way it’s strengthened and equipped us, and we’re keen to bring some of those things with us – that sharp edge of mission to see people saved.”

## CHANGING CHAIRS AT HORNSBY HEIGHTS

The **Rev Christopher Pears** (pictured right with his wife, Karen) has returned to the Armidale Diocese as its Registrar after spending eight years as rector of St Luke’s, Hornsby Heights.

Mr Pears was originally ordained in New England and says, “We never entirely cut our ties with Armidale when we moved to Sydney.

“We’ve been going for the past eight years to Summer School at Mt Tambourine in southern Queensland, which is the one the Armidale people go to. So we catch up with a number of our clergy colleagues and key lay people from across the region each year.”

That being the case, it didn’t come as a complete surprise that he was encouraged to apply for the Registrar’s position. He is looking forward to working with the local bishop, Rick Lewers, and the team in the diocesan office in Armidale.

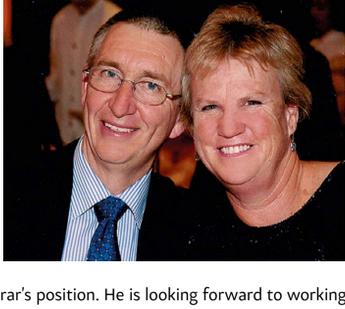
“Many of my colleagues have asked me what I’ll be doing as the Registrar,” he says. “The bishop has described the position to me as ‘looking after the interests of the diocese’, and specifically this will mean looking after key aspects of the administration of the diocese to enable the work of the gospel to go forward.”

This time Mr Pears and his wife Karen will return to Armidale without their children – two of whom are at university, while the youngest prepares for the HSC this year and will board with another clergy family in Sydney.

“I think that’s what we’ll find hardest about the move,” he says.

“We’ll also be missing the people [at Hornsby Heights] but I’m confident that we’re leaving the parish in good hands, and I look forward to hearing how things are going forward under the new guy.”

That “new guy” is the **Rev Mike Begbie** (below), who takes up the role of rector this month – only a couple of weeks after Mr Pears officially relinquishes it.



Mr Begbie, who moves from Miranda after four years as an assistant minister there, says the link with the new parish began when nominators from Hornsby Heights came to hear him preach one Sunday.

“I wasn’t preaching at that service – I was leading and hearing music,” he says. “I was preaching at the next service though, so they got some dinner and came back!”

As the nominators and the Begbies got to know each other, each began to see the possibilities if the family came to the parish.

“They were after a young guy with a young family, with ideas and drive and energy to bring to the next stage of the church’s life,” Mr Begbie says.

“We came to firmly believe that God’s hand was behind this... in the type of church it is, what they were looking for and what it would look like for us as a family.

“We’re looking forward to going and seeking opportunities to help grow the church. There are lots of young families in the area and two good-sized public schools in the parish – 1400 kids in two schools, which is great.

“Christophers has left a church that is keen to grown spiritually and numerically, and is open to ideas about what we might do together in the future, so I’m excited about those things.”

## SADLEIR SERVANTS



After almost four years working in Western Australia with Bush Church Aid in the parish of Paraburdoo and Tom Price, the **Rev Dave Morgan** became the rector of Sadleir in southwestern Sydney on February 4.

“We’ve really loved working with BCA and we’ll miss BCA,” he says. “They’ve been a great society to be supported by and to support, and we’re very thankful for our time in the Pilbara, what we’ve learned and the wonderful group of friends in ministry.

“It’s hard to find people to go to the north west, and we feel that, but we also feel it’s the right thing to go to Sadleir. As we’ve got to know them – albeit from a distance – we’ve been really encouraged by the evangelistic heart they have for people becoming Christian and their concern for the poor. Those things have really warmed our hearts.”

Mr Morgan grew up in the Sutherland Shire but always felt the need to do ministry in areas where there was greater need.

The first place that took him for any length of time was the Anglican church in Merrylands, where he served for seven years as a youth minister then assistant minister, revelling in the down-to-earth nature of the people and the cross-cultural opportunities in the area.

“Being in Merrylands gave me an interest in other cultures,” he says, adding that his wife Priya also “has a heart for western Sydney and feels at home among the culture of that area” while they were in Western Australia the couple knew that, were they to return to Sydney, “that’s the kind of place where we’d want to go”.

When Mr Morgan first began talking to people at Sadleir, he was amazed to discover the parish had been vacant for more than two years – especially once he found out more about the parishioners and their heart for the gospel.

“They certainly seem like a group of godly people and we’re really looking forward to getting to know them better,” he says.

## NORTH TO SOUTH

There is no doubt in the **Rev Gavin Perkins** mind that God directed his family’s path to his new role at St Jude’s, Bowral, where he became rector late last month after six years as an assistant minister at St Thomas’, North Sydney.

“It felt like a really strong sense of God’s leading that almost immediately after considering we might move somewhere else, Bowral approached us. [My wife] Amy and I were the sort of people they were looking at bringing in, and there are elements of the life and church in Bowral and what the church is doing where I can hopefully be useful. It’s all happened wonderfully well!”

“We’ve loved being at St Thomas’ – I feel like I’ve learned a huge amount from Simon [Manchester]. I particularly loved the training side of the work, all the MTS apprentices, and there are huge number of lay leaders I’ve been involved with helping to train. It’s a great challenge to work out how you direct a usually young, keen but not yet fully thought-through leader and steer them in the right direction. That’s been a great joy.

“There are also many young people in the church at St Jude’s and more young families moving into the area all the time, so that’s only going to increase over the next 10 years. I do imagine a good and growing work among young adults, training and equipping them for a life of ministry.”

Mr Perkins regards Bowral as a “similar type of church in its organisation to North Sydney”, with elements of the congregational diversity he experienced at St Ives, where he has also served.

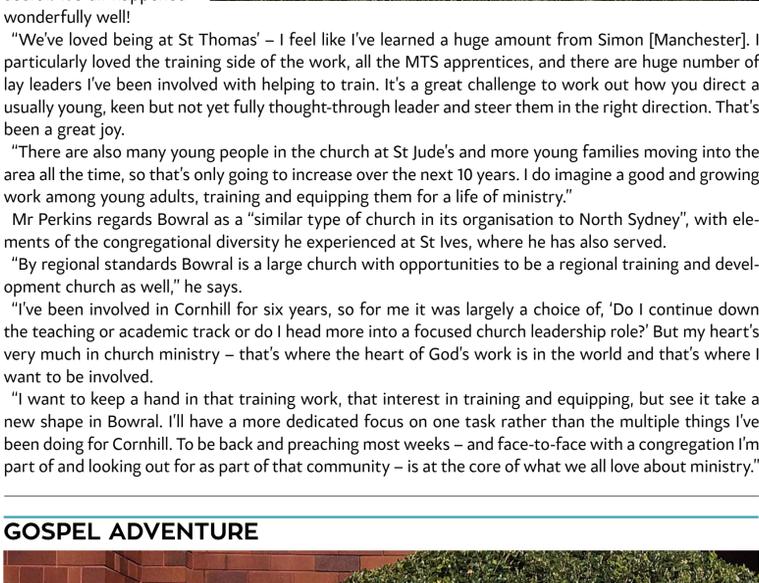
“By regional standards Bowral is a large church with opportunities to be a regional training and development church as well,” he says.

“I’ve been involved in Cornhill for six years, so for me it was largely a choice of, ‘Do I continue down the teaching or academic track or do I head more into a focused church leadership role?’ But my heart’s very much in church ministry – that’s where the heart of God’s work is in the world and that’s where I want to be involved.”

“I’ll have a more dedicated focus on one task rather than the multiple things I’ve been doing for Cornhill. To be back and preaching most weeks – and face-to-face with a congregation I’m part of and looking out for as part of that community – is at the core of what we all love about ministry.”



## GOSPEL ADVENTURE



An Aussie adventure turned into a faith and life change for the **Rev James Smith**, who began attending church at Roseville when he arrived in Sydney nine years ago to work as an accountant. This gradually morphed into a student minister and assistant’s role, but on January 15 he left Roseville to become the rector of St John’s, Beecroft.

Mr Smith says that, after a year in Sydney “the faith of my wife and myself had been reignited” and, rather than move to Melbourne for most of the following year, “I decided to take stock and spend some time with my daughter. During that year off I did the one-year diploma at Moore College and then decided, ‘This is what I want to do’.

“That one-year diploma became the first year of a three-year degree course and, less than five years after arriving in Sydney, I was kneeling before the Archbishop being ordained a deacon in the Sydney Anglican church – which wasn’t exactly the plan when I arrived!”

It only took one year as an assistant for Mr Smith to realise he wanted to work towards becoming a presbyter and, that done, Beecroft came knocking at the perfect time.

“The fit seemed to work very well with us, right from the start,” he says.

“I’ve been very fortunate in the training I had at Roseville from all the staff there... everybody’s really got exceptional skills in discrete areas that together have created for me a comprehensive education in how to be a pastor and a teacher, and that’s been fabulous.

“They’ve been very loving. It’s been a very fast learning curve in ministry, I’ve made lots of mistakes and they’ve been very gracious in pointing them out to me and helping me to develop... hopefully I will take that experience with me.”

Mr Smith says Beecroft was looking for someone who could understand them and their culture, relate to people from different backgrounds and also work cross-culturally, “because just as Roseville is changing, Beecroft is changing in its make-up. I’m very much hoping for St John’s to more reflect the cultural, educational and socioeconomic diversity of the community it’s in, and obviously grow in numbers and maturity of faith.

“What I particularly enjoy is seeing people step up into ministry themselves, so I’m very much hoping to equip people for service. There’s a strong foundation at St John’s in faith, history and tradition, and that is a great thing to build on.”

## MINISTRY AS A COUPLE

In the Changes pages of December *Southern Cross* – in particular “Parson’s pleasure in parish” – perhaps you could add “plural people in parsonage”. We here in Beecroft have enjoyed the ministry of the Collisons but Geoff would be the first to say that his wife Margaret was at least half of this wonderful team.

It seems a shame that her amazing contribution to our parish life in every aspect, as well as letting their home be always open to all and sundry, is not acknowledged. We certainly got two for the price of one.

When Geoff and Margaret arrived in our parish 17 years ago we had the locum Presbyterian minister staying with us. He came with us to our “Carols on the Lawn” and commented, “You look after that young minister – he will run himself ragged”. Well, they both did and we here know how blessed we have been.

The invisible half has often turned her back on a (in this case) brilliant career to support her family and parish. Many thanks, Margaret.

Catherine Bartho  
Beecroft

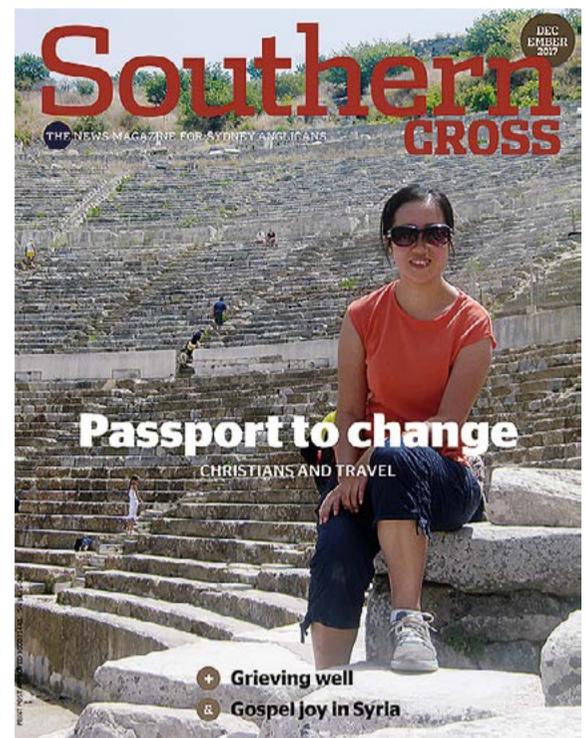
## THE ABC OF THE AGM

This publication's first 2018 copy will be delivered to parishes as they prepare for the year's vestry meetings, now commonly called annual general meetings (AGMs).

To qualify as an accountant some decades ago I was required to study and pass exams on a text “The Law and Procedures at Meetings”, especially annual general meetings.

If we are having AGMs in our churches then the laws of meetings must apply – including parishioners' rights to ask general questions, receive answers and discuss issues raised.

Reg Lobb  
Stanwell Park



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# Matthew, Christ and the children

MARTIN KEMP

RECENTLY OUR CHURCH HAS RENEWED ITS CONCERN FOR MINISTRY AMONG CHILDREN. THE burgeoning enrolment figures at our local public school made it an obvious area of focus; we're trying hard to know our own context and respond accordingly!

Of course, we knew that Jesus allowed suffering children to come to him; he did say something *like that*, didn't he?

It so happens that in recent weeks I've been reading Matthew's Gospel, and in my reading I've been struck by Christ's repeated references to children. Not just once, but a few times they enter into the narrative, sometimes at the bidding of Jesus himself, other times because of their parents, sometimes on account of their own behaviour.

The impact of these references was to underscore in my mind just how important a focus on children is for the local church – regardless of full or empty public schools. Let me show you what I found.

First of all, Jesus sees children as a means of teaching us about humble discipleship. Inviting a child to stand with them, Jesus warns his proud disciples: "unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt 18:3).

As we reminded ourselves while celebrating the Reformation anniversary last year, entry into the kingdom is something we cannot engineer ourselves. We remain helpless before God and can only receive his benefits as beneficiaries of his grace and mercy – just like a child receives life and sustenance from those charged with their guardianship. Children have a role in reminding us of such humility each and every week as we gather with them.

Children also remind us of how ministry is practiced in weakness. Matthew tells us that part of the cacophony that was aroused when Jesus cleared the temple was the children shouting out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Matt 21:15). The Jewish officials were indignant, yet Jesus answers their objections with words from Psalm 8: "From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise".

How extraordinary that it's the words of children and not those of the teachers of the law that are correctly interpreting the situation. When the Holy Spirit speaks he uses some unexpected mouthpieces – ones we might be tempted to overlook as we seek to conduct our ministries (cf. 1 Cor 1-2). Whenever a child raises a hand to answer a question in a family service, be ready to be reminded of this fact!

But aside from their ministry among us, children are valued by Jesus because they themselves are capable of saving faith: "If anyone causes one of these little ones – those believing in me – to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt 18:6).

Interestingly, the fact of juvenile belief is presented by Jesus in negative terms. That is, he mentions the possibility of children "stumbling" (Matt 18:6) and "perishing" (Matt 18:14). Putting aside the thorny question of when precisely a young person becomes responsible for their own belief (of lack thereof), the idea of a young person "perishing" – an image which Jesus himself saw fit to communicate – ought to instill a sense of urgency within us for this avenue of ministry.

Finally, Matthew simply teaches that children ought to matter to us because they matter to Christ. Among the miracles recorded in the first gospel are two healings of children on account of the faith of their parents (Matt 9:18-26, 17:14-20). Children were among the 4000-strong crowd that Jesus had compassion on and fed with the loaves and fishes (Matt 15:29-38). During his ministry, Jesus exhibited great concern for the younger members of his community, extending grace and mercy towards them as well as those who were older.

So as we gear up for another year of gospel work I'm encouraged that our church has a renewed commitment to children's ministry, and I've been glad to discover that if our local context gives us some impetus for this, then Jesus himself gives a whole lot more.

*The Rev Martin Kemp is the rector at Waitara Anglican Church.*

# Delight in the law



DR GLENN DAVIES

**A**T THE BEGINNING OF EACH YEAR ST JAMES', KING STREET HOSTS THE ANNUAL Law Service. It is a longstanding custom for the Archbishop of Sydney to preach at this occasion and it is a privilege to do so. The Chief Justice of NSW, the President of the Court of Appeal and other members of the Supreme Court, District Court judges, Local Court magistrates, barristers, solicitors and paralegals are in attendance.

While St Mary's Cathedral also hosts a similar service (called the "Red Mass") on the same morning, many judges and lawyers attend both services as they mark the beginning of the Law Term with prayers to God that they might act wisely and compassionately, with integrity and grace.

It is a long time since lawyers practised both canon law as well as statute law – which is the reason why their university degree is a Bachelor of Laws (LLB), not a Bachelor of Law (LB) – however, the connection with the church is still recognised as an important part of the justice system.

As Christians, we should pray for those who administer the law of the land, as we do for those who govern us (1 Timothy 2:2). While it is the government who makes laws for the good of society, it is the judiciary that applies those laws in the particular circumstances of everyday life. In our context, Paul's admonition to the Romans, therefore, has particular application to the judiciary, as they are charged with the duty of sentencing lawbreakers. Paul describes such public servants as "servants of God".

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is *God's servant for your good*. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience (Romans 13:1-5).

The apostle has two reasons for submitting to human authorities: possible punishment and for the sake of conscience. This latter reason is at the heart of the Christian's motivation – to seek the honour of God in all circumstances.

Keeping the civil law is necessary because in so doing we are honouring God, who placed the human law-giver and law-dispenser over us. In other words, it is part of God's law to obey human authorities.

It is a curious development in some areas of Christian theology that sees law as antithetical to the gospel. This I believe to be a misunderstanding both of God's law and of God's grace.

King David has no problem in extolling God's law as "perfect, reviving the soul... trustworthy... giving joy to the heart... radiant, giving light to the eyes... more precious than gold... sweeter than honey" (Psalm 19:7-10). Paul likewise exclaims that "in my inner being I delight in God's law" because he knows the law is "spiritual" – that is, of the Holy Spirit (Romans 7:14, 22).

No doubt it was for this reason that Cranmer composed the response of the people of God to the recitation of each of the Ten Commandments in the introduction to the Lord's Supper: "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law".

The Ten Commandments are read less regularly in our congregations than they once were, which is regrettable. The commandments are often omitted with the excuse that Jesus' summary of the Law will save time in the service.

However, keeping God's law is integral to our Christian discipleship, as our Saviour has taught us: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). SC

## A PRAYER FOR MISSION 2020

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

Amen



# Baby driver

When a new arrival turns parents' lives upside down, the changes come thick and fast. **KALEY PAYNE** explores how churches can help.

IT WAS A SOCIAL WORKER AT A BABY SLEEP SCHOOL WHO TOLD LEISA BONAVENTURA she had postnatal depression and sent her to hospital.

"I was really angry with her," she says. "But I was a mess. I felt like it was a big slap in the face. I kept thinking, 'I'm fine, I'm fine. I'm just having a bad day. I'm just tired.'"

But Bonaventura (below) wasn't just tired. She cried a lot. She felt like she was losing patience with her son, Sebastian, who was eight months old. "I would go from zero to 10 in a split second and get really angry. I scared myself a little bit.

"I was pretty much at the point where I did not enjoy being a mum. I thought that if I could go back and not have a kid, I probably would have. And that made me feel terrible. I thought I was supposed to like it, and that it was going to be the best thing that had ever happened to me.

"It was so much harder than I expected."

In the lead-up to being admitted to hospital, Bonaventura had withdrawn from most of her important relationships.

"I had started having panic attacks, particularly about leaving the house," she says. "I feared being late to things."

She says the panic attacks often happened before Bible study at her church, which is Church by The Bridge in Kirribilli.

"Sometimes I would be running late for Bible study and think, 'I'm never going to get there on time. I'm going to have to walk in late, and everyone's going to know I'm disorganised... and then I'd freak out and just not go. [It was] too hard."

Up to one in seven women will experience postnatal depression after giving birth, according to statistics from Beyond Blue. Eighty per cent of new mums do get post-baby blues in the early days – feeling tearful or overwhelmed – which usually passes before long without specific care, but with lots of support from family and friends. Postnatal depression, though, requires professional help.

Bonaventura and her son spent six weeks in the mother and baby unit at St John of God Hospital in Burwood. The staff helped her develop a better attachment with Sebastian and assisted with sleep training. By the time she left, she felt like a new person.

"I was fixed completely, but I was well on my way," she says.

Sarah Condie, the women's minister at Church by the Bridge, visited Bonaventura every week while she was in hospital. She was one of the few people Bonaventura would allow to visit. When Condie first arrived at Church by the Bridge as their women's minister, there were 30 babies who had been born in the previous two years. The baby boom meant new mums were a top priority in her new role.

## BUILDING RESILIENCE

Condie believes churches have a huge role to play in preventative measures that can help communities deal with mental health issues – including postnatal depression.

With her husband Keith, Condie co-directs the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute, a project of Anglican Deaconess Ministries. The institute aims to provide biblically informed pastoral care that "alleviates distress and promotes wellbeing, especially to those suffering from mental illness."

Through a grant from Fuller Seminary in the US, she is developing a series of three short courses for first-time parents, particularly mothers, on building resilience. She is working with Lyn Worsley, a clinical psychologist and director of The Resilience Centre, who is also a member of Church by the Bridge. The course was trialled at Kirribilli late in 2017 with a view to making it available to other parishes this year.

"It's the time we put more attention and energy into new mums," Condie says. "We just don't support them enough."

Worsley says resilience is a threefold process, not an entity in itself: "It's the development of personal competence, the ability to navigate available resources and doing both of those things in the face of adversity."

In her research, Worsley has identified seven external factors that help build a resilient person: partner, family, skill, education, friends, community and money. She says a person needs at least three of these factors to be more likely to recover and grow from adversity.

Identity, she adds, is probably the biggest issue new parents face, stemming from a loss of or significant change to many, if not all, of those seven factors. For example, if a parent has left work to look after a new baby, they'll lose three factors all at once: skill, community and money. But actually, staying home with a new baby will most likely affect all seven of those external factors.

"People having babies are having to renegotiate who they are," she says.

"[They] are in a major transition in their lives, where many – if not all – of their strengths have been removed or changed. They have to find new ones."

"The resilience course helps them to look at the strengths they're shifting away from and towards, how they can orchestrate it so they don't spend as much time in transition and are able to move quite quickly into the next stage, without any mental health crises."

Worsley stresses that the course isn't going to "give" new parents resilience. Rather, it puts them in an environment where they have the opportunity to navigate and associate with people as they go through big life challenges.

She says resilience is based primarily on the quality of relationships. This is why research suggests that people who are part of faith-based communities have higher levels of resilience, "because they have good connections with people".

## SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

"I thought I would be a really relaxed mum," says Amy Jamieson (right), who attends St John's, Maroubra. "I was a list maker. I felt productivity was important. I thought I'd be in control and organised. From day one, I realised that wasn't what was going to happen."

Jamieson says that while the first couple of months were overwhelming, mainly because of the lack of sleep, it was after about a year with her first son, Jem, that she really struggled.

"A lot of the mundane lifestyle starts to get you down," she says. "And things get harder when babies get more mobile. The novelty of a new baby has well and truly worn off a year in and you're definitely on your own by then. The help you got in the early months goes away."

Jem is six now, and Amy has since had twin boys – Bert and Harry – and new baby Sidney.

The community at St John's helped a lot after each birth. Three times a week for the first two months, someone from church would bring them a meal. When Amy had her twin boys, the meals ministry provided three meals a week for a full year.

"It's not just getting the meals, it was feeling loved by a whole community – that people are thinking of you," she says. "We had people coming to give us meals who we'd barely ever spoken to at church."

The church also had, for a time, a babysitting club, where parents would add themselves to a roster and once every month or two would look after a group of kids in the church hall while the other parents got a few hours to themselves.

"It helped a lot, especially for parents who didn't have family living locally, so finding babysitting was really difficult," Jamieson says. "They never got to go out!"

But she adds that the most beneficial thing for her spiritual life as a new mum was the daytime women's Bible study.

"Sundays are like a whirlwind. One of you is rostered on to do something, you're breastfeeding during the sermon, or trying to get the baby to sleep. So having an hour during the week where I got to focus on the Bible in some sort of depth, and pray with people without the distractions, was wonderful."

She stresses that the Bible study only worked for her because the group organised childminding for the babies. "It wouldn't work without that. You couldn't concentrate without it."

Sometimes the babysitters are volunteers from church. At other times, St John's has approached students attending Unichurch at the nearby University of NSW to find appropriate people who are willing to look after the children and earn a bit of extra cash.

"It can be tricky to organise, but it's one thing I would say that was a great way for our church to care for their mums," Jamieson says.

"If there's no child care, the kid mucks up every time a mum gets to the study, she'll just stop coming. And I think if you disconnect from something like a Bible study at this point in time, things go downhill pretty rapidly. [Amy] loses relationships, she loses that time to get deeper into God's word, she loses prayer with other people; encouragement from other people."

"For me, it really helped having that connection with other women, all at different life stages. It helped me overcome some of those big changes I was feeling."

## NORMALISING DAD LIFE



Joel Harrison (left) knows what he's doing is unusual. He takes six months off work to care for his 10-month-old son. His wife, Kate Harrison Brennan, is the CEO of Anglican Deaconess Ministries, and went back to work when their son was six months old.

"Kate and I have an understanding that marriage and our parenting is a partnership," he says. "It's not differentiated in the sense that one is a breadwinner, one is doing the parenting. We both have vocations that we're pursuing, as well as parenting. They're not mutually exclusive and we want to support each other to continue to do those as much as we can."

Kate and Joel consider themselves fortunate that both their workplaces offer six months paid parental leave. He has talked to a lot of parents and found many would love to be able to do this. "But there are barriers. You first of all need the capacity in your work to take this sort of approach. Six months non-paid for most families would be disastrous. For many people, that's just not possible."

Harrison didn't go looking for a dad's group to join when he started his parental leave, because he didn't expect that any existed. He wasn't too concerned about an organised group to be part of, but says, "You do need people – I do have to plan things out to see people, because I go stir crazy."

When Harrison took his son to Gymparoo for the first time, he had a brief moment of feeling as if he wasn't welcome from the mothers in the group. He was the only dad. Several months in, he takes his son to a playgroup where he is known by the other mothers and it's much more comfortable.

The family goes to Paddington Anglican Church, where he says their parenting arrangement has been completely supported – and something he feels the church would have expected of them anyway.

But outside their own church, Harrison has been prepared to confront the stereotypes and the surprise about what he's doing. He says it amuses him when people suggest he is babysitting his own child.

"They'll say something like, 'Oh, you're giving Mum a break, are you?'"

"The other most common thing people will do is treat me like a hero. Because I'm a dad looking after my son. That is hilarious. This is just a normal thing to do."

## KEEP AN EYE ON MARRIAGES

"Entrances and exits are key stress points for families," says Dr Jenny Brown, a social worker and family therapist. "The entrance of a little one is a significant disruption to a marriage. Each spouse is feeling more tired, more stretched. There is not any couple that can go through that transition without having to rethink how they're going to sustain their marriage in this new, demanding phase of life."

Brown says the doubts and insecurities about being a new parent bleed into a marriage and can create unrealistic expectations on one's partner. A member of a new Presbyterian church plant at Sydney's Scots College, after having spent 10 years at St Augustine's, Neutral Bay, she cautions churches not to neglect the importance of supporting marriages when couples have their first baby.

"I think support for new mums in churches can be wonderful, but often it's a lot about sending them to daytime groups with other mums, other women," she says. "What we don't want is for there to be too much emphasis on female friends that can easily become a replacement for communicating what life is like to one's husband. Churches need to be actively looking at ways to support the marriage relationship in this time, not just the new mum."

A practical example of this, Brown says, could be keeping couples in a Bible study together, rather than separating out the mum who goes to a daytime study, and the dad who continues in a night-time study, by offering babysitting support. "It prevents a couple's lives becoming spiritually compartmentalised."

## BEYOND PLAYGROUP

On one crazy day Glenmore Park Anglican Church had 95 children (and their parents) turn up to Junior Jivers. That's only ever happened once, but the church has three sessions of the music-based playgroup every week as a response to local demand.

"It's enormous," says Sharon Chamberlin, who co-ordinates the program. "As a church, we keep asking the question: are we just providing a playgroup, or is this a real outreach? The team is quite small, so connecting with all these parents can be difficult."

Junior Jivers at Glenmore Park has been running for more than 10 years, and Chamberlin has been around for most of that time. She says it started out as a group of about 20 parents and ballooned from there. Other churches in Sydney have visited to see how the program runs and use its model in their own context.

The church has put a lot of thought into using Junior Jivers – and a new Joey Jivers program offered for young babies and new parents – as a launching point for other ways they can support parents they come into contact with.

"It's the easiest thing to invite someone to come along to," Chamberlin says.

The church offers meals to parents coming along to Junior Jivers who have had new babies. They also give a pack with a few resources such as books and information about what's available for new mums and dads.

"There's a Bible study group that we encourage new parents who are at home during the day to come along to," she says. "We've seen many new mums in particular join that group. And we've seen several families come along to church, and come to Christ, through the Junior Jivers ministry."

Ann Cunningham, the social issues and actions co-ordinator at Mothers' Union Sydney, says that while playgroups are an excellent starting point for churches, she'd like to see churches go beyond playgroup and really support parents as they learn the parenting ropes.

"Churches need someone in them to say, 'We're going to look after families. So, not just playgroup for the babies, or youth groups, or Sunday schools, but we're going to look at how parents can be supporting one another.'"

Cunningham runs Mothers' Union parenting courses in churches, and sees a lot of what parishes are doing in a more formal context to help new parents. She encourages the churches she visits to set up a regular group after the course is finished to provide parents with an opportunity to continue talking about the daily struggles of raising children.

Holy Trinity, Kingsford has recently run the five-week Mothers' Union parenting course with Cunningham as the facilitator. Senior minister the Rev Dave Doran says he has been trying to build a place that emphasises healthy relationships ever since the church was "repotted" in 2016. The parish has since applied for a Mothers' Union grant to employ a part-time "female playgroup evangelist" to help them set up a playgroup in 2018.

"I don't think we're doing anything particularly original or innovative," Doran says. "There are a lot of new mothers in our community who would never think of coming to church on Sunday but they're looking for genuine connections and more meaningful relationships in this season. We're hoping this role will be dedicated to building some of those relationships."

The church is also establishing a group of parents who completed the Mothers' Union course to meet into the future and support each other as they continue the parenting journey, just as Cunningham suggested.

## ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET

Here are a few tips to lay out the red carpet for new parents in your parish:

- Offer to take the baby when a new parent gets to church. Multiple offers for hugs can be overwhelming but sometimes just the offer can make a new parent breathe a sigh of relief. Maybe they can park the pram and prepare a bottle with both hands. "We shouldn't underestimate what new parents have done just to get to church on Sunday," Amy Jamieson says.

- Not every new parent automatically has a burning desire to be on kids' ministry. "It's not helpful to think that in this stage of having infants, all you do at church also involves infants and crèche," Jenny Brown says. "Parents should still be encouraged to contribute according to their gifts, so it's not just about playgroup – as useful as that may be."

- Provide comfortable seats for breastfeeding mums. "Somebody brought out a comfy armchair and put it right by the door, so I got a breeze. It was the most lovely thing," Jamieson says.

- Consider encouraging new parents to stay with the rest of the congregation. "Crying rooms can make me feel isolated; it's nice to be with people."

- Leave the back row for parents who may need to make quick exits... and have prams the size of Kombis. "People seem to gravitate to the back of churches," Joel Harrison says. "But with the pram, it would be nice to be able to sit there!"

- Is there a baby crying? Don't look back. Jamieson says she had to get over the anxiety of her baby making noise during church. "As a new mum, I was so paranoid about Jem's affect on other people. I didn't want to distract people. And people would turn around if they heard him. So, I'm very conscious now of not turning around if I hear someone else's baby. Because I'm just a new mum that's like, the anxiety it creates."

- Create a new parent aside and ask them how they're going. Like, *really* how they're going. Many new parents find it difficult to talk about the hard things – either they don't want to bore people, or don't want to sound like they're complaining about their baby.



Fun with the kids: singing, teaching, craft and more – a snapshot of some of the busy Junior Jivers' groups at Glenmore Park Anglican Church.

## ASK FOR HELP

"It's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life," is how Leisa Bonaventura now describes her experience of early motherhood.

"I trained as a pharmacist. I know the rules, I know when I'm doing a good job.

"Having a baby, there's no right answer. You can read and read, and everything will tell you something slightly different about what you should be doing. It's overwhelming. I felt completely out of my depth.

"I didn't realise there was so much that I didn't know."

No two experiences of becoming a new parent are the same. Every child is different and every parent reacts differently. But one thing is for sure: that adorable "little blessing" that has been prayed for and cooed over has, in fact, turned their parents' lives upside down.

Many parents find it hard to recognise themselves and, as Lyn Worsley points out, it can take them a while to make the transition from who they were before kids to who they are now, as parents.

Providing a space for parents to admit that, and walk with them on that journey, is one step in the right direction.

# The evangelistic habit

Looking for the right person to talk to a friend about Jesus? It's not rocket science, writes **SIMON GILLHAM**.

**HELMUTH'S DYING.** WHEN HE WAS A YOUNG BLOKE HE JUMPED THE WALL and escaped from East Berlin. He tells me he was taught at school that religion was stupid and weak and, for the rest of his life, he saw no reason to question that judgement.

That's been a bit awkward for me from time to time, as I first took up following Jesus and then, a few years later, left a government job to be a pastor. Despite (or maybe because of) that awkwardness, he and I have never talked that much about the Christian faith. I've prayed for opportunities, I've been trained in evangelism, but it has never quite seemed like the right moment.

Have you got friends like that? People you know and love who don't know Jesus, and you just struggle to find the right time and space to have that conversation? Maybe like me, you've agonised over finding the right moment. You've gone over and over the script in your head – how the conversation should go – but the moment never comes.

Well, that's all changed for Helmuth and me now, and I want to show you how combining some 3000-year-old wisdom and great contemporary research made all the difference. In fact, I think this may be the beginning of a new cutting-edge evangelistic strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia.

First, let's understand what's happening in our country at the moment. Bob Dylan got it right in 1963 when he sang that, "the times, they are a-changin'". The times have been changing dramatically ever since, and last year's same-sex marriage debate seems like a real watershed moment. We can expect that life will be different, and more difficult, for Christians in the coming years. Despite what the noisy voices of the media may keep telling us, though, there continues to be a real openness to the gospel in Australia.

The McCrindle group published some great research on Australian attitudes to religion in May last year (see <https://faithandbelief.org.au>). Fifty-nine per cent of Australians still identify with Christianity and 22 per cent go to church at least monthly. The number of people in Australia identifying with "no religion" is growing, and now this group is almost the same size as the group going to church at least once a month.

As I try to understand the decline in church attendance in Australia, and think about my 30-year relationship with Helmuth, there are a couple of other stats in the McCrindle research that are very telling. Jesus is viewed positively by the great majority of Australians and 23 per cent of those who identify as not being Christian are open to considering Christianity further.

But we are simply *not* talking about Jesus. Eighty-two per cent of Australians have a conversation about Jesus less than once a month. That means that not even everyone going to church (22 per cent) is having a *single* conversation about Jesus each month. Even more tellingly, those that do speak about Jesus are only talking to one another.

To drill down even further, 68 per cent of Australians are not having a conversation about Jesus more than once in a year. We're talking about all kinds of "religious" and ethical topics, but not about Jesus.

Given that Australians are generally so positive about Jesus, given that 59 per cent of people identify with Christianity (and of the rest, one in four are open to hearing more), given that evangelism doesn't happen until the "evangel" (the gospel) is proclaimed – and it is the gospel of the Lord Jesus – we simply must start speaking about Jesus with people who do not yet know or follow him!

I've waited 30 years for God to raise up someone else to talk to my friend Helmuth, and you might be thinking to yourself, "Yes, that's all well and good, someone should do that". Someone else. Again, the McCrindle research tells us that seeing a life of integrity, and hearing stories or testimonies of how faith has changed people, are the most attractive things about religion – and hearing from celebrities or hearing philosophical debates about religion are among the biggest turn-offs.

I am the right person to talk to my friends about Jesus, and you are the right person to talk to those you know, too.

So much for the contemporary research. What about the 3000-year-old wisdom?

<sup>1</sup> *Ship your grain across the sea;  
after many days you may receive a return.*

<sup>2</sup> *Invest in seven ventures, yes, in eight;  
you do not know what disaster may come upon the land.*

<sup>3</sup> *If clouds are full of water,  
they pour rain on the earth.  
Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,  
in the place where it falls, there it will lie.*

<sup>4</sup> *Whoever watches the wind will not plant;  
whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.*

<sup>5</sup> *As you do not know the path of the wind,  
or how the body is formed in a mother's womb,  
so you cannot understand the work of God,  
the Maker of all things.*

<sup>6</sup> *Sow your seed in the morning,  
and at evening let your hands not be idle,  
for you do not know which will succeed,  
whether this or that,  
or whether both will do equally well. (Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 NIV)*

This is not a passage originally written about evangelism, but the wisdom is directly applicable.

"Shipping your grain across the sea", or "casting your bread upon the waters", might be loosely translated for us as "have a go".

Faced with all the things we don't know, we can so easily fall into "analysis paralysis". We're so worried about what other people might think or say, or the questions they might ask us, that we end up saying nothing. We're like the person so busy watching the wind that they never plant the seed, or so busy watching the clouds that they miss the harvest.

Evangelism is scary. It is risky. If we try talking about Jesus, maybe our friends won't want to hang around with us as much. Maybe our workmates will ridicule us. Maybe our family could even disown us. It might happen. The thing is, that we just don't know and not knowing is scary.

I want to know, because knowledge is power, and I want to be in control and to weigh the risk and make my own choices. That's okay, but me not knowing is not the disaster I might imagine – not if I trust that the God who knows all things is in control and is working for my good. So, my fear should not lead me to analysis paralysis, it should lead me to have a go.

In fact, not just to have one go, but to have many goes. If you don't know "which will succeed, whether this or that", the wise thing is to do is to have a go at both. To "invest in seven ventures, even eight".

What does this mean for evangelism? Stop waiting until you think you can answer every question or weigh every risk. Don't agonise and procrastinate over that one massive conversation that everything will hang off. Just pray, and do it.

Make and take lots of opportunities to talk about Jesus consistently, because you don't know who God may be calling to himself through your sharing of the good news.

Can you guess what I did with Helmuth this week? It's not rocket science, is it? The strange thing is, I was a lot more worried about the conversation than Helmuth was. It's always the way. He is facing eternity without hope, and I have good news. I reckon I've got another half a dozen friends like him.

Not sure how to start a conversation about Jesus? Did you hear the one about the two blokes who turn up at the Temple to pray? Jesus was out in the midday sun one day and bumped into this woman at a well... Have you heard about the wedding where they ran out of wine? I'm such a sook, but do you know when they whipped and flogged and spat on Jesus, and hung him up to die, he said, "Forgive them, Father..."

Looking for a new, cutting-edge evangelistic strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia? Why would you look for a more complicated plan than this: talk about Jesus. Talk about him so often that it becomes a habit to keep and not a hurdle to leap.

*The Rev Simon Gillham is head of the Department of Mission and director of the Centre for Global Mission at Moore College.*



## A moving event

Youthworks staff broke into applause as Archbishop Glenn Davies cut the red ribbon to officially open their new offices. Although less than 500 metres from their previous centre at St Andrew's House, the purchase of a floor in a Clarence Street building means savings in rent that can be freed up for ministry purposes. The office space was purchased during the term of interim CEO Dr Laurie Scandrett and opened just in time to welcome the new head of Youthworks, the Rev Craig Roberts (right).

## Eastern youth assembly

A COMBINED EVENT THAT STARTED AS A WAY TO ENCOURAGE SMALLER YOUTH GROUPS HAS grown so much it's had to move to a bigger venue.

"Assemble" was the brainchild of a youth leader at St John's, Maroubra eight years ago, and initially drew in teens from the groups run at Maroubra, Malabar and Wild Street – in addition to a local Baptist church.

In 2013, as clergy in the Eastern Suburbs Mission Area discussed ways their parishes could work together, Assemble – with its once-a-term gathering – was raised as one simple but effective way to do this. Now it includes groups from the Anglican churches at South Coogee, Clovelly, Coogee, Kensington and Moore Park, with the addition of teens from a couple of local Presbyterian and Brethren churches.

"It started very slowly and tentatively," says the rector of Wild Street, Rod Cocking. "We wanted to

encourage teens and show them they have peers who are loving and serving the Lord Jesus in their community, but we did not know how many people would come. Right at the beginning there wasn't a great many people who *did* come, and it took them a while to get used to each other!"

Assemble has always included food, hangout time, music and teaching. In the past four years, however, events have been planned with more of an evangelistic focus in addition to better music, speakers and leaders, so the kids could have confidence that "they weren't going to show up next time and find it's wildly different".

Halfway through last year the organisers decided that the event had grown beyond its initial home at Maroubra and would have to move to Wild Street.

"They had too many people and they needed a bigger space, which is great!" Mr Cocking says. "At the first Assemble we hosted there was about 180 people – I went into the church and thought, 'This is massive!'"

Each Assemble now starts with dinner and hangout time, followed by singing and teaching hosted by one the youth, a game to help people from different groups get to know each other better, and supper.

"It has a twofold aim – one, to come together as youth groups, but it's always been designed evangelistically as well: how can we together get our youth to reach their friends in the local community?" Mr Cocking

says.

"[The organisers] have always been clear about the format and that's why it works. They've made sure it has the kind of atmosphere where your friends don't feel uncomfortable, everything that's been done has been fun and light-hearted but it's always had a gospel focus.

"The young people have gained confidence in the event every time it's gone on... Our guys have often just brought friends from school."



# All you need is... ratings

JUDY ADAMSON

SO, ANOTHER YEAR OF TELEVISION GETS UNDER WAY WITH A DEPRESSINGLY SIMILAR theme: sign up here for a potential relationship with a complete stranger in the name of ratings, or 15 minutes of fame, or – heaven help you – true love.

The worst of the new shows will undoubtedly be *Love Island Australia* (9Go!), hosted by former Bachelorette Sophie Monk (below), in which “sexy young Australian singles” will head off to a beach somewhere to endure the usual challenges, eliminations and “a revolving door of hot new islanders”.

The title intimates that love is the goal, but the truth is much more mercenary. The show, which originated in the UK, seems to combine elements of *Big Brother*, *The Bachelor* and *Survivor*. You outlast and outsmart others on the island by winning challenges, but to put it as crudely as the publicity information, you have to “hook up” with someone, and do it strategically, or you won’t last.

The public votes on who they like and who they want to get rid of, and – somewhat like electing a Prom King and Queen – they also choose which couple they want to win this “love” competition. It’s a masterstroke by the makers and all but ensures the show’s popularity, given that social media is always crammed with viewer opinions on the best catch for the annual Bachelor or Bachelorette.

But despite saying that applicants for *Love Island Australia* have to be “genuinely looking for love” (I mean, seriously, in what universe can they be certain of that?), the makers’ eyes, as ever, are focused on ratings rather than relationships.

Perhaps the winners will be good at faking it for the cameras in order to fool the public and split the cash. And even if they have developed a relationship, they don’t simply get to live happily ever after, or even live in peace and quiet. As the last couple standing, chosen by the public, they will be handed a wad of cash (it’s £50,000 in the UK) – and then one of the pair will be offered the option of taking all the money for him or herself. Charming.

How much money does it take to turn someone’s head? Or, how much money does it take for someone to pretend to love someone else, with their eyes solely on financial gain? If money is chosen over the relationship, no doubt we will hear some self-justifying claptrap that it’s better for the abandoned party to know now the real heart of their former boyfriend or girlfriend.

So, while “love” is held out with one hand as the answer to happiness, money is held out with the other. Kids watching will learn, yet again, that you only deserve a place in the sun if you’re “hot”; that deception is good, that money might be worth leaving someone for... and that other people’s opinions about whether a couple should be together potentially matter more than the couple themselves.

We can only pray – and certainly should for children we know – that they have strong examples around them of self-sacrificial love and commitment. If they don’t, it’s a ripe breeding ground for cynics.

In other “love” television, Network Ten’s new show *Blind Date* (to be hosted by Julia Morris, (right) looks relatively tame. In the manner of 1980s show *Perfect Match*, but presumably without Dexter the robot, it offers a range of volunteers the short-term opportunity to embarrass themselves on national television in the interests of scoring a date.

There will also be three (count them!) different *Bachelor* series on Ten, including the new *Bachelor in Paradise* – in which contestants who the public loved or loathed from previous *Bachelor/Bachelorette* series have incomprehensibly allowed themselves to be put through the TV mill again, this time on a Fijian island.

Finally, advertising for the fifth series of *Married at First Sight* (Nine) clearly glories in what will likely doom its hapless couples: unhelpful expectations, vast personality differences, difficult in-laws, physical imperfections – you name it.

The men and women involved who are genuinely seeking a lifetime spouse are, as the song says, “looking in all the wrong places”, while others are focused on themselves, their work, their past... or even just the desire to be married. Not the best of starts to a life together. Or even a month together.

The public’s enthusiasm for this painful style of television shows no sign of waning but that doesn’t mean we have to agree with it.

Sure, let’s take part in the water cooler conversations. Listen to what others are saying. But as people who know what real love is, show that and live it. It’s better than a visit to Love Island any day. ✉



# Christ in his church

CHRIS MULHERIN

**People of the Risen King**

by Elizabeth Willis

ST JUDE’S, CARLTON, SOME TWO KILOMETRES NORTH OF MELBOURNE’S CBD in the heart of “little Italy”, has a long history of being a staunchly evangelical parish in a diocese of little persuasion, in a way that the church’s Anglican flavour is more Sydney than Melbourne, and its first and current vicars were/are Moore College-trained men.

Written for the occasion of St Jude’s sesquicentenary (150<sup>th</sup>) celebrations, *People of the Risen King* is the story of what is now a dynamic multisite church, meeting in six congregations over five locations. The book is the more significant for being both a theological history and a social commentary.

As a long-time St Jude’s member, Elizabeth Willis has witnessed first hand many of the changes she recounts. So, in a sense, this is an insider’s account, offering both the benefits and the pitfalls of being written by someone close to the subject matter. That said, Willis is also a professional historian and museum curator, aware of the dangers; this is not a hagiography, uncritical of vicars or players in the parish’s long history.

We hear of the changing life and times of Carlton – its unsewered streets, the bulldozing of crowded “slums”, waves of immigration, public housing estates and the Lygon Street traders; of depressions and times of plenty, including the effect on the city of the world’s richest gold rush. We read of a changing Australia over the generations: of the place of religion in its life, of world wars and of denominational wars over conscription.

We also, of course, read of Australian Anglicanism, of missions and evangelism, of different preaching styles and ministry philosophies, of a church struggling to survive followed by a time of growth on the back of university student ministry, and of clerical attitudes and their theological dispositions.

Readers are also shown the complex workings of an inner-city church, named after the patron saint of lost causes and desperate cases: a Sunday School of 600 children; regular evangelistic rallies for international students, which led to the formation of the Overseas Christian Fellowship; fluctuating congregational numbers and near closure (on one new vicar’s first Sunday, there were eight people at the 8am service and 12 at 11am!).

The parish has done open-air services with Greek, French and Italian translations; run soup kitchens and opened its crypt to house up to 16 homeless people a night (now, almost a century later, the church runs a thriving debt centre). It typified a “gathered” church long before the days of the megachurch. By 1956, half of the people on the parish roll lived outside the parish; now St Jude’s gathers people from more than 100 postcodes.

There are more stories – but in addition to providing an engaging account of human comings and goings, the book is also laced with clear theological convictions. For Willis, the history of the church is the history of God working with Christians through every generation to build his Church – the body of Christ. And so the story is one that reveals Christ at work in his people: the people of the risen king.

I recommend this book as an encouragement to all the people of the risen king. In a time when we are prone to see our confidence rise and fall with Facebook likes or the latest skirmishes between Christians and others in the media marketplace, this reminds us of the work of God through his people in the parish church over the decades and centuries. ✉

*The Rev Dr Chris Mulherin was interim vicar of St Jude’s during 2017 and is now executive director of ISCAST (Christians in Science and Technology). People of the Risen King is available at: <https://stjudes.org.au/people-of-the-risen-king/>*

