

MAY
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Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

God's love at school

CHOICES SCHOOLS AND STUDY SUPPLEMENT

PLUS

Women in the early church

CPX's For The Love Of God

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“We want to develop a meaningful response to socioeconomic disadvantage”

Grant Millard
Australian News

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Village keen on its Green

Welcome mat ready: locals and church members hang out after the opening of the new public space at Village Church. PHOTO: Glenn Wilmington

VILLAGE CHURCH ANNANDALE HAS OPENED UP ITS LAND TO THE COMMUNITY IN A MOVE THAT'S been welcomed by members of the parish, government and locals alike.

Called the "Village Green", the new area was created by knocking down the entire wall separating the church property from the footpath – adding timber seating that wraps around existing trees, plus new grass and plants. This connects naturally to public seating that was already in place, protected from the busy road by a low hedge.

"I think the walls we had there before created a bit of a barrier between our church property and the community space, but now there's just a natural flow from the street onto the church premises," says Village Church's mission pastor, Jessica Brouwer.

"The changes were simple, but the brick walls created a physical and visual barrier... Now it doesn't feel like people are crossing a boundary. It just makes the step into church easier."

Miss Brouwer is Village's staff member responsible for the Green and its use, and is enthusiastic about the opportunities it presents for enhanced relationships.

"You know how there are people in your community that you walk past all the time?" she asks. "When you walk past someone they're on their way somewhere else, so to try and get them to stop and talk can be kind of scary. But if they're sitting there on your grass you have more of a liberty to walk up and say, 'Hi, I go to church here, what are you up to today?' in a way that you can't when you're just walking past them on the street."

"Now when I see them in the street they know my name and I can say hello!"

Miss Brouwer also praises the support the parish has received from local and state branches of government – both of which supported the changes financially and in other ways.

At the official opening of the Village Green last month, local mayor Darcy Byrne and State MP for Balmain Jamie Parker were both in attendance and spoke enthusiastically about the project and the church.

Said Mr Parker: "When this project first came before me... one of the things that I loved about it was the generosity of it. It's such a generous proposal to say, 'We want to open up our space to the public. We want to make sure that we connect not only with people in here with our message of faith, but also connect with people in the location around our church'."

Mr Byrne agreed, noting how focused Village Church was on the community around it and saying he "wasn't surprised at all" that the parish would come up with such an inclusive project when it already had outreach through the arts, children's services and helping local disadvantaged people.

"I want to thank you, the church community, for thinking not just of yourselves but of how we can make Annandale and the whole of the inner west a better place," he said.

Miss Brouwer says that, in simple terms, the creation of the Village Green has "made us more visible and transparent, so now our church members come out the front where the community can see us."



Eagle Vale gets a kick out of Jesus!

IT'S A THURSDAY NIGHT, AND ASSISTANT MINISTER THE REV STEVEN THURGAR KNOTS UP HIS black belt and heads to church.

While this might not be your usual church attire, it's the perfect outfit for the community self-defence class Mr Thurgar runs. A black belt in karate and a qualified exercise physiologist, he saw an opportunity to use his skills and share the gospel with the residents of Eagle Vale in a unique way.

This is not the only creative way Eagle Vale Anglican is reaching its community. Over the past few years the saints have ramped up their evangelism game, with multiple initiatives for their neighbourhood run throughout the week. A weekly Bible study meets in Raby Tavern, plus there's also a playgroup, community pantry and knitting group. Future ESL and life skills classes are on the cards, too.

"These activities were chosen because, especially in the southwest of Sydney, sadly the days are gone when people walk into the church off the street," Mr Thurgar says. "We wanted to meet people where they were at and have regular contact... so there is time to develop trust and friendship, which is a good platform to share the gospel with people."

With the high price of kids' sport, the church-run self-defence group offers families the chance to affordably get fit together. "We wanted to start a class that was free – we only ask for a voluntary gold coin donation," Mr Thurgar says. "There was a need... for something that families can do together."

After class, he runs a 10-minute, kid-friendly Bible time. "We've gone through Mark's gospel, and at the moment we are picking up Old Testament events and looking at how they relate to Jesus' ministry. Last week we had 30 people come to karate class, and two-thirds stayed back for Bible time."

With a class made up of many faith backgrounds and non-church people, Mr Thurgar finds this a huge encouragement. The classes have also provided opportunities for him to read the Bible with several men, and have even resulted in some families coming to church.

"It's been a good ministry to just meet people and share our faith with them, what Jesus means to us and what the Bible says about Jesus," he says.

Also seeking to make the church more visible to the community, the weekly Bible studies at Raby Tavern started in 2017. Among the beer and bar regulars, church members have open bibles and would one day love to see others join the discussions.

"The hope is that they would meet people who go there regularly, and that we can start a conversation with them and tell them a bit about Jesus," Mr Thurgar says.

The end goal for the church is simple. "What we're trying to do is see that Jesus' name is glorified in our area, and we're trying to do that by caring for people's social, physical and spiritual needs in a Christian way. That's the overarching principle of what we're doing."



Mission blessing in Wollongong

God's word in worship: youth from across the region come together at Free To Be. PHOTO: Mark Whitelock

A MISSION THROUGHOUT THE WOLLONGONG REGION THAT RAN FOR MOST OF MARCH, CULMINATING at Easter, has "exceeded all expectations" according to the local bishop, Peter Hayward. "Not everything worked as perfectly as we'd hoped, but the feedback from rectors and lay people has been extraordinarily positive," he says.

"The idea of parishes collaborating together was very powerful for people, and very effective. From smaller to medium to large parishes, all seemed to benefit from what was undertaken and have good work to follow up on. Everything came together in a way that people were very thankful for."

Bishop Hayward says 450 people made a commitment or recommitment to Jesus during the mission, and nearly 2500 new contacts were made through Jesus is ___ events and church activities. More than 6000 Jesus is ___ conversations were clocked throughout the region, with the mission's school ministry reaching 5000 public school students and another 4500 in Anglican schools. Not to mention record numbers in most parishes at Easter.

The biggest single event of the mission was Free To Be at the WIN Entertainment Centre in Wollongong, where 2200 youth and leaders turned up for a night of music, singing and talks – and even some breakdancing.

The chairman of the Christ For All organising committee, the Rev Paul Gaetjens from Austinmer-Thirroul parish, says churches and youth groups from the Shoalhaven to the Southern Highlands came to the interdenominational event in "a great show of community and unity".

"There's been a combined youth group event running for the past few years at Figtree Anglican, which was the biggest place we could find," he says. "At Figtree last year we had 600 people, so we went from 640 at Figtree last year to 2200!"

"Lots of people came on the night who would have been introduced to a large Christian community and the word of God in a big way. For things that we might normally get 10-20 youth group kids to come to we were getting 30-40 instead. It was an overwhelmingly positive response."

Mr Gaetjens says the main talk was done by the senior assistant minister at Miranda, the Rev Brett Middleton, who spoke on the theme of Free To Be, "contrasting the world's idea of freedom – which is actually enslaving, trying to prove yourself – and finding freedom in Jesus, who loves you as you are".

Says Bishop Hayward: "We wanted everyone in our parishes to take one step further on whatever evangelistic work they'd ever done before. If they'd never identified as Christian, then identify as Christian. If they hadn't prayed before, pray; if they'd never spoken before, speak; if they'd never invited someone before, invite. And if we collectively did this, we prayed under God's gracious hand that he might bless our endeavours."

Changes leave limited support for up to 7000 people seeking asylum

NEW CHANGES BEING ROLLED OUT BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO ITS STATUS RESOLUTION Support Services may leave up to 7,000 people seeking asylum nationwide without financial or other essential supports. A new model will require strict assessment of 12,000 asylum seekers, and those deemed work ready will have the basic safety net of support removed.

People seeking asylum on bridging visas cannot access mainstream supports including Centrelink. SRSS provides people seeking asylum with a small fortnightly payment, access to a caseworker, and other small supports.

These people were also denied the right to work for their first few years in Australia, and some have since encountered added barriers in finding employment.

The Government has already withdrawn support from those who have sent money overseas to family, as well as those enrolled in full-time study, and wants to reassess every person seeking asylum who are on a bridging visa by the end of the year. Many people deemed work ready may have been looking for work for a long time. This assessment is occurring while people wait for their claims for protection to be assessed.

"This is a huge amount of stress for people in a vulnerable situation who won't have access to anything," says Ms Amelia Savage, asylum seeker outreach worker for Anglicare.

Without government assistance for people seeking asylum, those waiting for claims to be assessed will be reliant on the generosity of charities, community services and churches,

"Our biggest concern is that people won't be able to support themselves in basic ways," Ms Savage says. "This is a very dire situation and because this group is so vulnerable and has endured a lot already, there are also mental health risks. What's happening is that the cost of looking after these people for the Government doesn't disappear—it is shifting to the community and churches and charities."

Mrs Jo-Ann Elvery, who works with St James', Berala in cross-cultural ministry, believes these changes could leave a lot of people already struggling to find work in a worse position.

"Most asylum seekers I know want to be working," she says. "Studying English or short term TAFE courses gives them a better prospect of employment, and is better for their long-term settlement in Australia. We would be doing the right thing if we gave them the best start in their new life."

"This is hard for us [to watch] because we know and love these people," Mrs Elvery adds. "This hurts the whole body of Christ. We're concerned for their whole wellbeing, mentally, spiritually, emotionally and financially."

There are several things Christians can do to make a difference right now, including praying, getting involved with community initiatives, and speaking to their local member of parliament.

"We do need to encourage Christians in churches everywhere, even if they're not in direct contact with asylum seekers, to offer help in practical ways and be willing to get alongside them," Mrs Elvery says.

"We are very encouraged by people who pray. The asylum seekers are overwhelmed to know that people are praying for them and they are very grateful."



Church in a tent: Stanhope church invites locals onto its land at Easter.

TO SAY STEVE REIMER IS EXCITED ABOUT THE future of his parish would be an understatement.

And it's not surprising. Stanhope Anglican Church began just over a decade ago through Rouse Hill, moving under the banner of Life Anglican at Quakers Hill two years later – and this year the church plant has become a parish in its own right.

Not only that, but funds from the Diocese ensured land for a church was bought in a prime position in Stanhope Gardens. The recent approval of the parish's development application means building will start in just a few months' time. So, given that for its entire short life the church has met in the Blacktown Leisure Centre, excitement about a home of their own is pretty high.

"The anticipation for building on the land has been there for quite some time!" Mr Reimer says.

"We're hoping that by Christmas next year we can celebrate in the building. It will really help to give us a presence in the community, and it's a great location on the main road across from the shops... We want to be a light to Stanhope Gardens and the surrounding suburbs, and we believe the building will help us to reach out and hopefully be a blessing to the community."

He says the suburb has changed tremendously in the past five years, with paddocks grazed by cows and horses converted into "thousands and thousands of homes... Whether people have moved from another part of Sydney or from overseas it's really a mission field, and one of the things we're trying to work on is how we can make the most of that."

"[The work] is hard. It's slow. It's on people's hearts and we want to do it more but it's not easy. There's a real increase in the number of people moving here from all numbers of nations, so we're working hard on how we can reach out to them... and larger numbers have come now from Asia and the Subcontinent."

"In some ways they're open to talking about faith 'cause they're used to that, but [for some of them] who Jesus is, it's still quite foreign. We're trying to encourage people in their everyday contact with others to be sharing their life and the gospel."

To that end, Stanhope has hired the Rev Edwin Thambyayah part-time to take on its cross-cultural ministry – helping members reach out individually and collectively to their changing suburb.

However, the parish needs to raise support to keep Mr Thambyayah on long term, and Mr Reimer says Stanhope wants to make connections with other parishes that would value "partnering with us as part of a mission in Sydney".

"We're thankful for the partnership over the years with Quakers Hill, and for one-off partnerships like St Paul's, Castle Hill, [which helped] at Easter. Sydney Anglican churches working together – that's something we want to keep looking at."

Church time it is a'changing

THE TIME FOR SUNDAY CHURCH CAN VARY A LOT: 8AM, 10.30AM, 6PM AND NOW EVEN 4PM – but 1.30pm? That's the time Park Rail Anglican Church meets, and it works.

"Actually we start at 12.30 or so and have lunch first, then church is at 1.30," says the Rev Neil Scott, leader of the Park Rail church plant, which started six years ago as an outreach from the parish of Albion Park Rail, south of Wollongong.

"Park Rail is a low socioeconomic area and characteristically Anglican churches have not thrived in these conditions, but we've been very encouraged by the growth both numerically and spiritually," Mr Scott says.

The church is growing by about eight people each year and most of these have been converted from the community or surrounds. It also operates slightly differently from your standard, middle-class Anglican church.

"In a low socioeconomic area, the currency of the community is relationships," Mr Scott explains. "In general, families are fractured and blended and we see more dysfunction in people's lives than in middle-class areas. Due to the currency of relationships and damage in people's lives, we do not run group Bible studies but rather one-to-one discipling that increases honesty and accountability."

If this all sounds like an innovative strategy, Mr Scott is quick to put it down to accidental discoveries and God's wisdom.

"Most of the things we've discovered have been by accident," he says. "Because we couldn't have a church building, instead of inviting people to a program that we run – other than the church service in the community centre – it made everyone go out into the community and be in people's houses. So we weren't a programs church, but rather a really highly directed, relational, one-to-one discipling church. That has been purely by God's grace and once again, accident."

He adds that, with the service time, "I'd love to say we were really clever and strategically thought things out, but what actually happened is that I was already leading and sometimes preaching at three services as an assistant minister at Albion Park. So [1.30pm] was the only time slot that was available for the church plant."

"What we soon recognised is that a lunchtime start gives people a really slow, relaxed day. Our church is not a short, sharp hour and then gone. Church is the main event for people's day. They come in, they eat and spend time together. They stay for three hours sometimes... even after the service is finished they are out in the car park talking."

Mr Scott spends his half his time in the community, as a chaplain to a local school and teaching SRE, and the other half equipping and training up the congregation. And Park Rail, with oversight from Evangelism and New Churches, is already looking to the future.

"More than half our congregation is kids or teenagers and therefore we are constantly training up high school students to be involved in the life of the church, as Jesus was involved in the religious life of his community after the age of 12," he says.

"The young leadership base is strong and we are looking forward to seeing God's faithfulness to the next generation."

"We would love people to partner with us both prayerfully and financially because we've seen a model of church flourish in a low socioeconomic area and we're thinking that in the next three years we'd like to plant another church in the Illawarra. We would employ a tentmaker to come in and join the church for two years to see how it runs and then go and plant another church in a neighbouring suburb."



Anglicare Sydney goes north

ANGLICARE SYDNEY WILL AMALGAMATE WITH ANGLICARE NORTHERN INLAND (ANI) FROM JULY, extending its services to the Diocese of Armidale.

ANI operates from Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell and Moree and provides outreach services to other centres such as Glen Innes, Narrabri, Boggabilla, Mungindi and Wee Waa.

"ANI's current size and level of resources is constraining our capacity to meet the extensive need in our region," says ANI's interim CEO, Larry Apthorpe. "There is a strong historical bond between the Sydney and Armidale dioceses. When we considered Anglicare's large-scale, wide range of services, and our shared mission, it just made good business sense to amalgamate with them."

Anglicare Northern Inland provides a range of services to communities surviving on low incomes and facing high levels of unemployment, relationship stress, addiction, depression and mental health issues. It also runs the Hope for Life program, which assists young Aboriginal mothers with educational support and life skills.

"ANI and Anglicare are closely aligned in their vision, mission and values," says Anglicare Sydney's CEO, Grant Millard.

"We aim to serve the community in Jesus' name and make a positive difference in the lives of others. We're both committed to providing counselling, family skills, financial counselling, services for people living with mental illness and programs working with Aboriginal families."

The amalgamation takes effect on July 1, and a local advisory committee will be established to ensure a regional voice in the future direction of service delivery in the northern inland.

Says Mr Millard: "Anglicare will continue to build on existing relationships, working collaboratively with local parishes and with others in the community. We want to develop a meaningful response to socio-economic disadvantage, retain and grow existing services and generate new ways to meet the needs of those we serve."

NEXT STEP FOR ELLIS

After 22 years of ordained ministry the **Rev Neil Ellis** will retire from the western Sydney parish of Oakhurst on July 28.

He and his wife Carmen have been farewelled and are on long service leave, contemplating what future ministry and life will look like.

"We don't really have a set plan, but I've already talked to BCA [Bush Church Aid] and the Bishop of North-West Australia about doing a locum," Mr Ellis says.

Northwestern Australia is where the couple first served after he finished Moore College, spending five years in the parishes of Bluff Point and Northampton before coming back to Sydney.

"We were the first in a training scheme [BCA] started trying to get people to go to the bush," he says. "I went to college with the intention of not working in Sydney and it's just by God's good humour that we ended up back here."

Mr Ellis spent more than two decades working as an industrial chemist before leadership training and PTC study helped convince him he should go to college.

He has rejoiced in the ministry at Oakhurst – which, over the past 13 years, has included helping establish ongoing paid high school Scripture ministry, encouraging and supporting youth members of the church through the Year 13 program, starting ESL classes, and links with Richard Johnson Anglican School.

A South Sudanese church also became part of the parish about seven years ago, and has blossomed: "Sometimes there's 110 kids at their service!"

Mr Ellis was grateful to hear congregation members talk of spiritual growth through his Bible teaching at their farewell, but says he and Carmen "have always had a team ministry. She has been part of music, headed up the women's ministry, worked in our playgroup, taught ESL and SRE and taken countless women through *Christianity Explained* over the years."

He says they could have stayed longer in the parish, but knew it was time to go. "The parish needs a younger person running it... they need more energy and we need something that takes less. But our retirement will not be to watch the grass grow. We'll get involved in something!"



VALE

The **Rev Craig McAlpin** died on February 18.

Born Craig Neal McAlpin on July 14, 1927, Mr McAlpin accepted Christ at a St Paul's, Chatswood church houseparty in 1944. While undertaking night study to become a metallurgist, he felt a call to full-time ministry and entered Moore College in 1949 – and he and his wife Elizabeth were married two years later while Mr McAlpin was a catechist at St Andrew's, Lane Cove.

After finishing college, the Bishop of Nelson in New Zealand invited Mr McAlpin to work in his diocese in 1952 and, in Elizabeth McAlpin's words, "he found himself, at 25, in charge of the parish of Suburban North with only a bicycle for transport".

The McAlpin family remained in the Nelson area, serving in three parishes in all, until 1960 when they returned to the Sydney parish of Mulgoa, moving to Holy Trinity, Panania in 1962.

Says Mrs McAlpin: "Large numbers of children [at Panania] progressed from baptism to Sunday school, then youth fellowship and confirmation. There were many opportunities to challenge them about their faith on this journey.

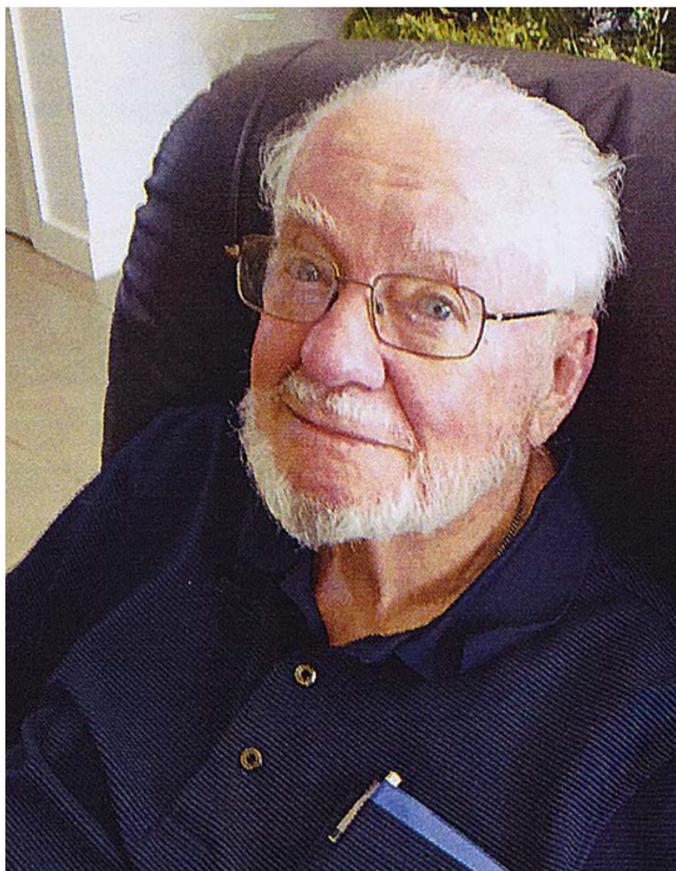
"Then they began to marry, with two or three weddings most Saturdays. When the young marrieds returned and began asking for help, Craig began marriage counselling training."

This training took Mr McAlpin in a direction he would follow for many years, working first with the Church of England Marriage Guidance Centre from 1970-75 (with added Sunday locums for parish clergy), then for the Family Life Movement for the following decade.

Shortly after joining Family Life, where he worked at night, Mr McAlpin also began work as a probation and parole officer – a job he continued until his retirement in 1986.

"In 1991, Craig returned briefly to parish ministry as a locum at Paraburdoo-Tom Price in the Diocese of North-West Australia," Mrs McAlpin says. "On the way home across the Top End, an association began with St Peter's, West End in Townsville, which was to continue for the rest of his life. Most winters until 2015 were spent in Townsville."

Mr McAlpin's son Ian recalls his father as "perceptive, peaceful, caring, a listener, a friend... could always make you laugh and was a very humble man. [Dad] chose to have no eulogy at his funeral as he wanted it to be about heaven, but that didn't stop many people expressing to family members their appreciation of his ministry."



TOUGH LOVE

I was pleased to see *Southern Cross* recently engage with some of the very real dangers and potential threats to leaders in the church in its March cover story. However, I was struck by one very significant omission, namely church discipline.

It would have been great to hear about how crucial biblical processes of church discipline are whenever Christians backslide into sin and stubbornly refuse to repent (e.g. Matthew 18:16-17,

1 Cor 5:1-13). Church discipline is the "tough love" of the gospel and neglecting it is very unloving toward our unrepentant brothers and sisters.

Those stuck in sin desperately need their church family to have backbone enough to call their sin out for what it is, even if that sometimes means lovingly disassociating from them for a season. It is possible that this is what will save them from death (James 5:19-20).

Matthew Payne
Ingleburn

In an article in the March edition of *Southern Cross* the words "fall" and "fall away" were used. Over the years there has been confusion as to what these words mean, and I fulfil a long-held goal to write something on this, using the words of two former principals of Moore Theological College.

The words "fall away" mean for a Christian to so sin as to lose his salvation and subsequently go to hell. *It cannot happen.*

When he was vice-principal of Moore College, Marcus Loane published a booklet titled *That Ye May Know*. These words are taken from 1 John 5:13, which read, "These things I have written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God that ye may know that you have eternal life".

After explaining that God does not want any of his children in doubt of the fact that he is their Father – he wants us to enjoy here and now the deep, sweet peace of unreserved assurance – the vice-principal then concludes the tract with these words:

"If you are still not sure, if you are still in doubt, it would be wise to take it that you have not yet been saved, and then resolve never to rest until you can say from your heart that you know God means eternal life for you. Have you got it, or are you in doubt? You can be sure, you ought to be sure. It is sin if you are content not to be sure."

A Christian cannot fall away and lose his salvation. What, then, is the purpose of writing about it in the Scriptures?

The other former principal is Broughton Knox. In his book *The Everlasting God* he wrote that it is a warning: "just as the warning in front of a precipice is effective to prevent anyone from falling over... so too in Holy Scripture the warnings are to ensure our perseverance and by the grace of God they achieve this".

The Rev Harold Hinton
Fairfield

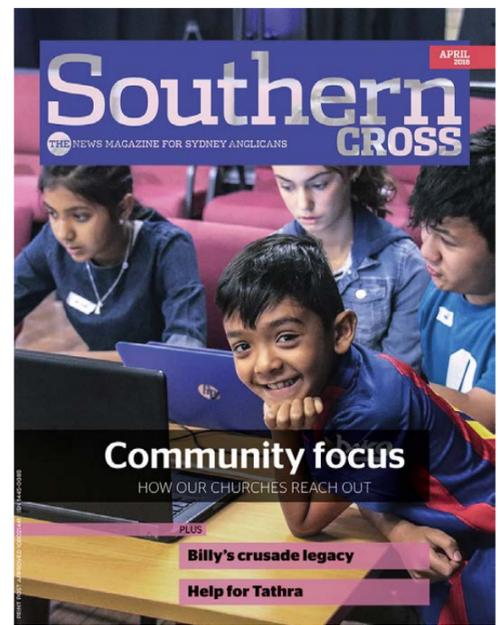
REACH OUT... DIFFERENTLY

I found it hard to read "Sydney's reach-out report card" (SC, April) after reading about the impact of the Billy Graham crusades only a few pages before.

Ruth Lukabyo explained in her article that Billy Graham went out to schools and universities calling people to "give their life to Christ". He spoke at racetracks and cricket grounds, not cathedrals, and his message sought to call people to God, not invite them to church. Yet the "Reach-out report card" was primarily focused on inviting people to church and statistics of newcomers. Growth in church attendance was a consequence, not a focus, of the Billy Graham crusades.

Bishop Peter Lin explained the numbers in the Report Card were important because "each number represents a person". The numbers are not important if we are asking the wrong questions.

Denise Lake
Silverwater



On the way with MLK

DAVID MANSFIELD

APRIL 4 MARKED THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASSASSINATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING. HE was 39 years old. April 1968 is also the month that I was rescued from the consequences of my rebellion against God through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I was 16 years young.

And strangely enough, although I “went forward” at the Billy Graham Crusade on the last Sunday of that month at the Wollongong Town Hall – where a crackly old loudspeaker was broadcasting Billy from the Sydney Showground – it was King, not Graham, whom God used to play the bigger part in getting me across the line.

In the years before, I remember noticing that my sister had been reading the Bible and praying, going to her school Christian group and telling me about the sorry state of the world, and my soul.

I started to take an interest in the genre of music that came to be known as the Songs of Protest. Dylan, of whom I was already a fan, featured prominently in my playlist. Then, again through my sister, I became more aware of the civil rights movement that King was championing. I was being forced to face some of the bigger questions of life.

Other factors were also at play. I had started going along to a church youth group. I wasn’t listening too closely to the talks from the front, but a very faithful fellowship leader had my ear on several occasions as he drew my attention to the claims of Jesus from John’s Gospel.

Then April 1968 came crashing in. We were driving to Canberra – Mum and Dad in the front seats, Liz and me in the back. King’s assassination headed a news bulletin as we drove up Macquarie Pass. My sister was in tears. I sat in bewildered silence.

Sometime in the previous month I had acquired a copy of King’s little book of sermons entitled *Strength to Love*. I can’t remember whether my sister gave it to me, whether I pinched it from her bedroom or whether someone at church gave me the copy. But it was my first “Christian” book and possibly the first book I ever read, apart from comic books and the novels I had to read at high school.

King occupied my consciousness for years to come. In 1972 I was conscripted and became a conflicted and involuntary soldier during the later stages of the Vietnam War. Had it not been for my father’s World War II service I may well have become a conscientious objector but it would have gutted Dad, and Mum. I chose a middle path and decided to decline any combat role. I was too naïve and immature to understand or embrace the non-violent civil disobedience that King espoused.

But at the start of my six months of boot camp a friend gave me a copy of King’s “I Have a Dream” speech on a reel-to-reel tape. I was in a training unit where we had the luxury and privacy of single room barracks rather than dormitories, so I was able to play my tapes quietly after lights out. I listened to that King speech every night before drifting off. It kept me sane, or saner than I would have otherwise been.

Strength to Love remained in my library and was readily referenced for decades, even though I suspect I developed a distinctly different theological position to King on many issues. It’s hard to tell. He died so young and wrote so little. But his undying conviction to put the words of Jesus in general, and the Sermon On The Mount (Matthew 5-7) in particular, into practice, has been a lifelong challenge to me.

Has there ever been a man in American history, black or white, president or preacher, who has caused so much controversy and yet given leadership to so much social change, that a national holiday is celebrated in his honour?

One of the most significant things I remember King writing was about forgiveness. Whether he taught me all of the following lessons from *Strength To Love*, or just some of them, I have been greatly challenged by these suggestions when gripped by the temptation to be unforgiving:

- 1 Keep a sense of proportion, remembering that the Lord has forgiven each of us massively more by comparison than we will ever need to forgive others
- 2 Temper our “righteous anger” by the self-awareness of our own shortcomings and prejudices
- 3 Remember that the offending person’s behaviour is not the sum total of who they are as a person

All good lessons to remember in the recent crisis engulfing Australian cricket.

I am all too aware of the suspicion that many conservative evangelicals have had of King. How orthodox were his beliefs? Was he one of the early fathers of liberation theology? Even if he was a personal friend of Billy Graham and believed in the need for personal salvation, did he eventually go too far and concede too much to a social gospel?

The alleged plagiarism and philandering deepened that suspicion. The FBI had so much surveillance on him that it makes the recent vigilance and the endless camera angles at the cricket in Cape Town look amateurish by comparison. He was as aware of his flaws as he was of forgiveness.

How far to the left King’s theology ended up is hard to guess. If his gospel was or became “revisionist” and “social”, was he drawn there by conviction or driven there by the racist, redneck, white hard-right Southern American Protestantism of his day?

I was chatting about this with a close friend in South Africa recently, and he proposed the same possibility about Desmond Tutu’s shift into theological liberalism. I am not suggesting this about King, but only confess that the complexities of the spiritual and social context in which he sought to live and lead as a Baptist pastor cum reluctant modern prophet are beyond the scope of this essay.

All I can say is, that when one of the most famous political mantras of the 1960s was “All the way with LBJ”, I am grateful to God that I:

Started on The Way with MLK.

The Rev David Mansfield is CEO of Anglican Aid.



Learning from Wilberforce

DR GLENN DAVIES

LEVEN YEARS AGO WE MARKED THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABOLITION OF slavery in the United Kingdom. Many celebrations were held throughout the world marking the bicentenary of this landmark achievement, which to a very large extent was the result of the commitment and tenacity of William Wilberforce.

Despite the economic arguments against his cause and the powerful members of the Establishment opposed to his campaign, as a member of the House of Commons and a Christian of Evangelical conviction Wilberforce had worked for many years to convince the British Parliament of the merits of abolishing slavery and the slave trade. This was finally achieved in 1807.

Sixteen years earlier John Wesley wrote to Wilberforce, which turned out to be the last letter he received from the gifted evangelist and Christian leader, expressing his confidence that God had raised up Wilberforce for this very purpose.

Balam, February 24, 1791

Dear Sir:

Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as Athanasius contra mundum [Athanasius against the world], I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O be not weary of well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

Reading this morning a tract wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a "law" in our colonies that the oath of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this?

That he who has guided you from youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of, dear sir,

Your affectionate servant,

John Wesley

Wesley had been teaching against slavery since 1774 when he read a Quaker tract denouncing the practice. His experience of seeing the black slave trade in the American colonies only amplified his concerns.

It was a matter of opposing injustice and cruelty that spurred Wesley and others, like Wilberforce, to preach against the slave trade, as indeed the apostle Paul had done in 1 Timothy 1:10, where he grouped slave traders along with murderers, the sexually immoral and liars as being subject to God's judgment.

While some may question whether the New Testament condoned slavery or was merely speaking of appropriate Christian conduct within an existing social order (1 Timothy 6:1-2), what is abundantly clear is that the whole Bible speaks of the dignity of human beings, made in the image of God and worthy of our respect, honour and care, especially the vulnerable.

On Thursday, March 8, the Hon Paul Green of the Christian Democratic Party introduced the Modern Slavery Bill into the Legislative Council of NSW. I was privileged to attend this historic moment, being the first occasion that a Bill addressing modern slavery had been promoted within any jurisdiction in Australia.

It is estimated that there are some 4000 people enduring slave-like conditions in Australia and some 30-40 million slaves around the world, more than there were in the time of Wilberforce.

As reported in last month's *Southern Cross*, a key part of the Modern Slavery Bill will see the appointment of an Anti-Slavery Commissioner, who will work with investigative agencies to monitor business regarding slave-proofing and supply chains, establishing a victim-centred approach to slavery crimes and strengthening laws with regard to cybersex trafficking.

As Paul Green said, "We have all unintentionally benefited from modern slavery in the clothes we wear and what we eat".

The Bill is due to be debated in the Upper House in either May or June, and God willing its passing will see it come before the Legislative Assembly soon thereafter. Let us pray that the obfuscation and resistance that accompanied Wilberforce's several attempts to get his Bill passed in England is not repeated in NSW. Let us pray that this Bill when passed into legislation will become a model for all states and territories in our nation.

They may not name a suburb and a parish after Paul Green, as they did in Western Sydney for Wilberforce, but I have no doubt history will honour him for promoting and championing this cause for the good of all people and the honour of Christ's name. SC

A PRAYER FOR MISSION 2020

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

Amen



New faith-based scholarship ensures 100 places at Shore

Archbishop Glenn Davies with schoolboy friend Mr Peter Conway (right), founder of the new scholarship.

AS A TEENAGER NEW TO AUSTRALIA IN THE MID-60S, PETER CONWAY FELT OUT OF PLACE IN many ways. Rejected from several schools due to the awkward timing of his family's arrival, Mr Conway says he wasn't sure where he belonged, or how to fit in to his new home. So when Shore made room for him in its classes, it changed his life in many ways.

Inspired by this impact, Mr Conway has worked with the school to establish a new scholarship program that aims to encourage the faith of the Shore community. The Peter F. Conway Scholarship targets families working in Christian service, other than clergy, who would not normally be able to access education at Shore. The means-tested, faith-based scholarship can subsidise up to 70 per cent of the cost of attending the school.

Mr Conway says there are two main aims for the scholarship. First, he hopes to provide access to education for families employed in Christian service, who may consider a place at Shore financially out of reach. Second, he wants to ensure that the school always has followers of the Lord Jesus present and active, promoting the ethos of the Christian faith within the school community.

"It has the promise of being significantly influential to Shore's Christian mission," says the school's acting headmaster Mr Rod Morrison. "The generosity of Peter Conway in providing this scholarship will not only enhance the Christian influence among the student population, but also do this through the wider school community by the involvement of the Christian families of these students, who we believe will be champions of the school's Christian foundation and purpose."

This Christian foundation and purpose is "the greatest legacy" Shore gave to Mr Conway.

"Of all the things that my time at Shore did for me, and there are many, it helped me consider my relationship with God and do something to get right with God," he says.

Through Christian studies, chaplains and older students, Mr Conway grew in his faith and was equipped for a lifetime of serving Jesus.

"The current archbishop was two years ahead of me, and was the leader of the school group just about the time I became a Christian. He took me under his wing and mentored me. He and I would have long chats about my new faith and he was a great encouragement."

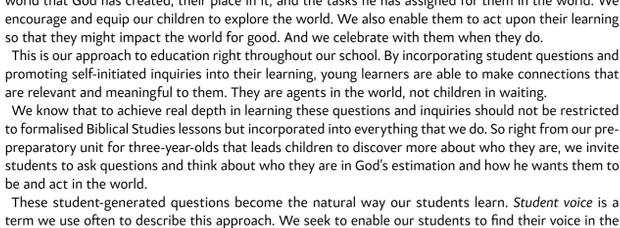
Mr Conway's desire is that every boy at Shore would be able to experience the same growth and fellowship. This desire, coupled with a deep sense of gratitude to those who made it possible for him to attend Shore, inspired him to develop the scholarship.

"The biblical phrase, 'to whom much has been given, much will be required' was taught at Shore along with the idea of giving back," he says. "I came away from Shore feeling I owed a great debt to those I'd never met."

"You take those various factors – finding faith, feeling a debt of gratitude, and also that the school had made room for me when there was no room – it inspired me to think of a scholarship that might tick all of those boxes."

The scholarship aims to provide a place for 100 students over the next 100 years. Ultimately, Mr Conway wants to see Shore's stance as a faith-based school maintained despite the changing culture.

"It gets harder and harder to stay true to that part of the mission, and that's only going to get harder in the next 100 years," he says. "We hope that there will be a significant group of the school's benefactors and boys who value that and want to make sure it's preserved."



Students find their voice

James Rogers and Karen Wallace

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS AFFECTS HOW WE TREAT THEM. WHEN JESUS' disciples denied children access to him they were working from a distinct understanding of the status of children.

They did not consider children worthy of Jesus' attention. Their attitudes towards children were probably shaped more by the Roman world in which they lived than their Scriptures which revealed God's will to them.

Jesus' own attitude towards children reflects God's intentions more clearly. Jesus famously said, "Let the children come to me" (Matthew 19:14) because he knew they were God's image-bearers. For this reason they were worthy of his attention and affection.

Moreover, by their very nature children express the key ingredients of relationship with God – humble dependence. They could teach adults a thing or two about rightly responding to God. Thus, in this simple act, Jesus affirmed the status of children.

At The Illawarra Grammar School (TIGS) we take Jesus' lead in how we think about and treat children. One of the ways we express the value of children is by giving them real ownership over their learning. Student-centred inquiry is not just a mantra at TIGS. It is a reality which flows from our understanding of the nature and status of children in God's world.

As people made in God's image, children are intelligent and creative beings with an ability to know the world that God has created, their place in it, and the tasks he has assigned for them in the world. We encourage and equip our children to explore the world. We also enable them to act upon their learning so that they might impact the world for good. And we celebrate with them when they do.

This is our approach to education right throughout our school. By incorporating student questions and promoting self-initiated inquiries into their learning, young learners are able to make connections that are relevant and meaningful to them. They are agents in the world, not children in waiting.

We know that to achieve real depth in learning these questions and inquiries should not be restricted to formalised Biblical Studies lessons but incorporated into everything that we do. So right from our preparatory unit for three-year-olds that leads children to discover more about who they are, we invite students to ask questions and think about who they are in God's estimation and how he wants them to be and act in the world.

These student-generated questions and think about who they are in God's estimation and how he wants them to be and act in the world. These student-generated questions and think about who they are in God's estimation and how he wants them to be and act in the world.

Students from TIGS have a reputation for being resourceful, reflective and responsible learners. This reputation is derived from the value Jesus places on them. As educators our aim is not to hinder their great potential as learners but stimulate it to higher learning.

The Rev James Rogers is chaplain at TIGS. Mrs Karen Wallace is the director of teaching and learning in the junior school.

Reflections on excellence

Tim Bowden
Headmaster, Trinity Grammar School

I HAVE BEEN THINKING A LOT RECENTLY ABOUT THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE. LIKE MOTHERHOOD and apple pie, it is hard to imagine a bad word about excellence. Surely we want our children to achieve excellent standards and we want them to aspire to excellence in whatever tasks to which they may turn their hands. I can't think of a school that wouldn't affirm excellence in principle, and that wouldn't consider the pursuit of excellence a legitimate drive. After all, who would want to pursue mediocrity in education? Who would want to attend an undistinguished school or to achieve unremarkable standards? However, like most aspects of life, it is no bad thing to examine some of our implicit assumptions and see whether they stand up to scrutiny.

I suspect most parents tell their children that they just need to do their best. I am reasonably sure every teacher has offered some equivalent encouragement. However, even that innocuous encouragement raises questions. The reality is that our resources are limited. The effort required to achieve excellence in one context limits the effort available to achieve excellence in another. On a very simple level, to give one's very best to music would require a limitation of the time available to maths. To give everything to one's career would leave very little to one's family. To do one's very best in one field must involve limiting one's capacity in another. Life entails trade-offs; we can't do it all.

Therefore, it follows that we all apportion our time and efforts according to our priorities. We make decisions about what is most important to us and act accordingly. Universal excellence, for an individual or an organisation, is a myth. Rather than pursue and expect excellence in all things, we would do well to prioritise our efforts around the things that matter most.

A second, and related, point about the pursuit of excellence is that it can be a false god. The biblical language of idolatry is helpful for us because it allows us to see the danger of idolatry in our lives. Sometimes we can elevate excellence as though it were God, as though it can give our lives and efforts meaning, as though it can provide us with our heart's desire, be that success or popularity or wealth or happiness. Therefore, we make sacrifices, put other things aside, and make achieving excellence our top priority.

As is always the case, idolatry comes back to bite us. A focus on excellence can so easily become a drive to perfectionism, an inability to cope with failure and an unrealistic expectation about the nature of life. Educators see these pressures in our schools. It is a heavy burden to believe that your worth is determined by the quality of your achievements.

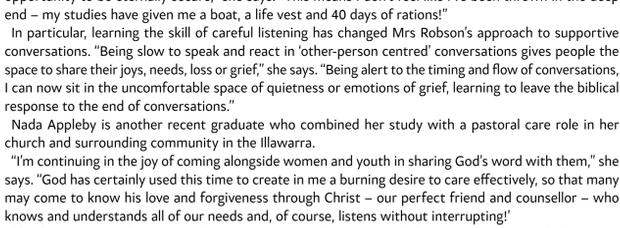
However, lest the above comments lead you to think that we should not advocate for excellence, let me be very clear that there are good reasons to pursue it. These reasons arise less from individual scriptural proof texts and more from theological reflection.

It seems to me the primary impetus for Christians to pursue excellence understands this pursuit as a thankful response to God. Through no worthiness of our own we have opportunities provided to us, whether by virtue of the point in time and space that we inhabit, or by virtue of the innate abilities and talents with which we have been endowed. In response to these gifts, we show our thankfulness by making the most of that which has been given. In this view, the pursuit of excellence is a moral obligation, incumbent on us.

However, this prompts another question. What does it mean to "make the most of that which has been given"? Is this a mandate for maximising our wealth? Is it a justification for maintaining a position of socioeconomic privilege? Is it grounds for self-indulgence or self-centredness of one form or another?

Our pursuit of excellence is shaped by our commitment to love others. From a Christian point of view, love for God is expressed through our loving service of our neighbour. The logic is that the shoe-maker glorifies God by making excellent shoes, which are a blessing to those who will wear them. So, too, the doctor's excellence is a blessing to those who are sick, the musician's excellence a blessing to those who listen, the teacher's excellence a blessing to her students, and the student's excellence is a blessing both in the present to those around them and in the future to those whom they will serve.

It is no bad thing thing for us to aim for excellence. However, excellence ought not be considered as an end in itself, nor as a means to secure our heart's desires. Rather, it is at its best an expression of thankfulness to God, directed in service to others.



Mr Bowden greets junior school students.

here; idolatry involves treating something that is not God as though it is. Sometimes we can elevate excellence as though it could guarantee us security and significance, as though it can give our lives and efforts meaning, as though it can provide us with our heart's desire, be that success or popularity or wealth or happiness. Therefore, we make sacrifices, put other things aside, and make achieving excellence our top priority.

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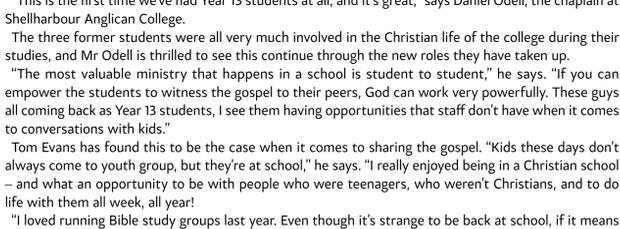
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MAC raises up community chaplains

Joy in pastoral care: MAC graduate Nada Appleby speaks at the graduation ceremony in March.

MARGUERITE ROBSON LAUGHS AS SHE RECALLS THE TIME SHE WAS DESCRIBED AS A "PASTORALLY frustrated administrator". It was while she was working in a church office that her senior minister encouraged her to take what she calls "a leap of faith" and pursue studying to be a community chaplain through Mary Andrews College (MAC).

Community chaplaincy is one of the fastest-growing vocations for Christian workers. Many Christians are seeking the opportunities provided by chaplaincy roles, whether paid or voluntary, to engage with, support and care for the community.

Increasingly, students are enrolling at Mary Andrews College (MAC) to follow the pathway the college provides into community chaplaincy. Already, a number of MAC graduates have been accredited by the Sydney Diocese as community chaplains, following the completion of their certificate or diploma course, which includes several pastoral care units.

Many of the 45 students who graduated from MAC in March this year – the largest graduating class in the college's 127-year history – are already working in community chaplaincy or pastoral care roles.

Mrs Robson now works two days as a pastoral care worker with Anglicare at Eileen Armstrong House in Woonona, and volunteers one day as a hospital community chaplain. She says the training she received at MAC gave her the strong foundation she needs to care for people.

"The skills and knowledge I have learned are a foundational 'tool kit' that has equipped me for chaplaincy ministry, as people seek to be understood, to have meaning and purpose in this life, and to be given the opportunity to be eternally secure," she says. "These 40 days of rationing!"

In particular, "being slow to speak and react in 'other-person centred' conversations gives people the space to share their joys, needs, loss or grief," she says. "Being alert to the timing and flow of conversations, I can now sit in the uncomfortable space of quietness or emotions of grief, learning to leave the biblical response to the end of conversations."

Nada Appleby is another recent graduate who combined her study with a pastoral care role in her church and surrounding community in the Illawarra.

"I'm continuing in the joy of coming alongside women and youth in sharing God's word with them," she says. "God has certainly used this time to create in me a burning desire to care effectively, so that many may come to know his love and forgiveness through Christ – our perfect friend and counsellor – who knows and understands all of our needs and, of course, listens without interrupting!"

Mrs Appleby's training and passion for pastoral care is bearing fruit in her local church at St Stephen's, Port Kembla, and in the community.

The senior minister of Port Kembla with Warrarong, the Rev Michael Turner, says, "Nada's impact on the church has been a blessing. She's thrown herself into intergenerational ministry among women. It's been a delight to see her utilise her training and evident gift. I'm very thankful to our heavenly father for Mary Andrews College, in seeing the need here in Port Kembla, and in helping train women for much-needed pastoral ministry."

MAC's director of studies, the Rev Jackie Stoneman, is thrilled about the impact college graduates are having in their local communities through chaplaincy work. "It is exciting to see students integrate what they are learning into their lives and to see the importance of loving people," she says.

Back to school: Year 13's new joint venture

WHEN TEENAGERS GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL, THE last thing on their minds is going back. But three Shellharbour Anglican College students have done just that – a "quirky move", according to former student Tom Evans.

They have returned, no longer as students, but on placement as part of a new initiative between Youthworks' Year 13 program and Anglican EdComm.

The purpose of the joint venture is to provide young adults with the opportunity to spend time in schools, experiencing the mission field of Christian education and encouraging them to consider teaching as a future vocation with huge missional need.

"This is a great opportunity for encouraging a work more collaboration rather than each of us working individually," says Gail Staples, one of Anglican EdComm's education officers, who is responsible for heading up the program. "Our schools are crying out for Christian teachers. We really want to encourage high-quality Christian people to consider joining the teaching profession."

Students involved in the pilot program will participate in Year 13 and serve their ministry placement in a Christian school. In addition to Year 13, they also participate in an online program developed by Anglican EdComm that focuses on faith-based education.

"This is the first time we've had Year 13 students at all, and it's great," says Daniel Odell, the chaplain at Shellharbour Anglican College.

The three former students were all very much involved in the Christian life of the college during their studies, and Mr Odell is thrilled to see this continue through the new roles they have taken up.

"The most valuable ministry that happens in a school is student to student," he says. "If you can empower the students to witness the gospel to their peers, God can work very powerfully. These guys all coming back as Year 13 students, I see them having opportunities that staff don't have when it comes to conversations with kids."

Tom Evans has found this to be the case when it comes to sharing the gospel. "Kids these days don't always come to youth group, but they're at school," he says. "I really enjoyed being in a Christian school – and what a opportunity to be with people who were teenagers, who weren't Christians, and to do life with them all week, all year!"

"I loved running Bible study groups last year. Even though it's strange to be back at school, if it means I can continue proclaiming the gospel then I'll do it. It's where God's placed me at the moment."

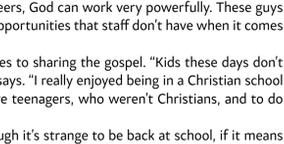
He continues to lead a lunchtime Bible study for Year 10 boys that he started last year, and is involved in the lunchtime Crusaders Christian group.

Being placed at the college has also helped Mr Evans really get a taste of what teaching is like, something he hopes to study in the future. "Schools are challenging but great places to be a Christian, because that's where the people are," he says. "It's great long-term ministry. Like mission, it's long-term work with people."

College principal Tony Cummins says, "This is one of the exciting things about 2018, having three students coming back [for Year 13]. I'm certain that this is a mode they're going to continue."

Mr Odell agrees, adding that other schools should consider taking part as well.

"I think this is significantly impacting the school," he says. "To have young, enthusiastic ex-students here on Year 13 placement is a real encouragement to me and I think it would be to other chaplains and staff in different schools. I think it would be great if more students considered the opportunity of doing ministry in a school. We have 7000 kids who turn up every day. Our mission field is there."



Year 13 student Max shares Bible stories with junior school students at Shellharbour Anglican College.

School spirits shine



Bible time: girls gather over the Scriptures at Shine.

IT'S FRIDAY AND THE BELL HAS JUST GONE for lunch. Over 40 high school girls pile into an empty classroom where several Year 12 students wait to meet and share God's word with them.

This is Shine, a student-run group at Thomas Hassall Anglican College, where Christian students are taking up their responsibility to share the gospel with others. The lunchtime group demonstrates what's truly at the heart of Christian schooling – students being given the gospel and then being equipped to share it.

Rebecca and Amelia Lin, twins in Year 12, are two of Shine's leaders. When they speak about Shine, their faces light up with excitement as they share the ways God is growing younger girls in their faith.

"It's so encouraging to see all of the girls, they come every week and just want to hear about what we're doing and they're so excited to find out things. One girl asked, 'Is God trying to test us to see if we will accept him?' They're really thinking about [faith]."

Adds Amelia: "It's encouraging when they talk about the things that they learn from the weeks before. They're learning about Jesus, and they seem to be enjoying it as well."

Thomas Hassall Anglican College is delighted to see student-led groups such as Shine meeting together. The chaplain of the school, Mr Stuart Tye, and other Christian staff members, ensure that students are given support in numerous ways, for which the girls are thankful.

"Establish" is one example of this support. Designed to equip students on a regular basis, Establish gathers the keen Christian students together and takes them through Bible teaching and leadership skills.

"What we try and do is help them to feel comfortable and share their faith in their peer groups at school," Mr Tye says. "We want them to grow in understanding and have opportunities to develop."

Adds Rebecca Lin: "At school there are so many opportunities to talk to people about Jesus. I think sometimes it can be more effective to talk about Jesus student to student."

Ready for 2030



Students at St Andrew's Cathedral School.

WHILE MANY OF TODAY'S KINDERGARTEN kids might dream of becoming astronauts, doctors and firefighters, when they leave school 12 years from now they will face an unknown world with new technologies and industries we haven't dreamed of yet.

Hoping to prepare students for this uncertain future, St Andrew's Cathedral School has launched an Enterprise and Innovation Centre.

"This is an exciting initiative for our school, which we hope will become distinctive as we try to position our students to their future advantage," says the head of the school, Dr John Collier. "We want to equip our students, while at school, for their employment futures. Modern education places an increasing premium on student thinking, including that which is enterprising and innovative in nature."

The newly appointed Director of Enterprise and Innovation, Mrs Corinna Bailey, hopes to see students connected with universities, entrepreneurs and businesses to prepare them for 2030. "What are the critical issues our students need in their backpacks as they head into an unknown future?" she asks.

Adds Dr Collier: "[This] involves design thinking, advanced technology and interdisciplinary thinking. It also includes and subsumes STEM subjects [Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths], which is one of the key areas of improvement being pursued by the Government system."

Mrs Bailey says the Enterprise and Innovation Centre aims to offer the opportunity for high school students to experience part of the adult world now – "developing programs with business mentors and spending time with university students, exploring opportunities for further studies at our neighbouring tertiary providers".

She predicts a future economy will rely on skills rather than knowledge, such as the ability to communicate, think critically and creatively, and access and assess vast amounts of information.

"Giving students opportunities to practise these skills and a shared vocabulary to discuss these skills is critical to their development."

The invisible women

TARA STENHOUSE considers the value of having a closer look at the women of early Christianity – and the danger of overlooking them.

HERE'S MUCH TO LEARN FROM OUR PAST – AND IF WE FORGET OR OVERLOOK THE past, that can be dangerous. It's valuable to do church history, but much of our history is done at the big picture level, focusing on the standout leaders and major events. This often overlooks what was happening on the ground in day-to-day life for ordinary followers of Jesus, which is much harder to find evidence for.

That's especially the case when it comes to learning about women in Christian history. Women are largely invisible. So, let's get out our magnifying glass to have a closer look at some of these women, particularly those in the first few hundred years of the church post-Jesus and his apostles.

Most of the evidence is fragmentary and through the eyes of the big (male) figures in the early church, who wrote for various reasons. We need to be careful not to over-read what we find, reading in our own viewpoint, or making blanket statements about the whole period as if every woman's experience, in every town, in every church was the same. We'll meet just a few of the individual women – some named, some unnamed – as well as learn about some ministry roles for women. Hopefully this will whet your appetite to read more.

Women were present everywhere in the early church, valued and active members, some even with leadership roles, seen as necessary to the church, with prayerful lives transformed by the gospel. They were courageous and deeply committed to our Lord Jesus before everything else. We have much to learn from them.

VALUED

Alce, Gavia, and the widow of Epitropus were important members of the church of Smyrna in the late first century through to the early second century.

Ignatius of Antioch, an early Christian writer and the bishop of Antioch, writes these greetings at the end of some of his letters: "I greet the household of Gavia, and pray that she may be firmly grounded in the faith and love both physically and spiritually. I greet Alce, a name very dear to me... I greet everyone by name, including the widow of Epitropus together with the whole household belonging to her and the children."

We don't know much about these women, or what role they played in their churches and communities. But we get the impression they were key members who were loved, respected and valued, and there is obvious warmth in these greetings. They seem to be co-workers with Ignatius, along with other men in this church; maybe they hosted church gatherings in their homes, or were benefactors like Phoebe (Rom. 16:1).

ACTIVE

Tertullian was a prolific early Christian author and apologist from Carthage, in the Roman province of Africa. In a letter to his wife he shows us how active the Christian women were in the late second and early third century church and society. They were visiting fellow Christians, going from street to street visiting poor people, looking after martyrs in prison, washing the feet of the saints, sharing their food and drink with those in need, yearning after people, showing hospitality to visitors they didn't know, including the generous provision of food. They were generous hearted, actively serving in God's kingdom.

LEADING

There are a number of references to women with leadership roles, particularly deaconesses and the order of widows. As early as 112AD we meet two nameless female slaves who were called deaconesses, whom Pliny the Younger (Roman governor of Bithynia and Pontus) refers to in his letters: women he spoke to and tortured as part of his investigation into the nasty spreading of Christianity. He probably chose them to challenge and torture because they were nasty leaders in the church.

From the *Didascalia Apostolorum* – the manual of church order from the early third century – we find much detail about the role of deaconesses as those who were involved in the discipleship and baptism of women, as well as caring for the poor and sick in their homes. The order of widows was another formal leadership role for women.

By at least the fifth century it seemed that churches had many widows in specific roles. The church manual called *The Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ* said there were to be 13 widows, along with 12 presbyters, seven deacons, and 14 subdeacons. Big team ministry, with multiple women an essential part of the team.

It is made clear in the *Didascalia* that women were not to be teachers in the congregation – however, we do meet Ammia, a prophet in Philadelphia. She's mentioned by early church historian Eusebius (probably writing in the early fourth century AD) alongside the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9).

NECESSARY

Women were seen as a necessary part of church life and ministry, especially the deaconesses, who had a special ministry to other women, as well as to people more generally:

The *Didascalia* talks of each deaconess as "a woman for the ministry of women. For these are houses whither thou canst not send a deacon to the women, on account of the heathen, but mayst send a deaconess. Also, because in many other matters the office of a woman deacon is required. In the first place, when women go down into the water, those who go down into the water ought to be anointed by a deaconess with the oil of anointing... the ministry of a woman deacon is especially needful and important.

"For our Lord and Saviour also was ministered unto by women ministers, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the daughter of James and mother of Jose, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee [Matt 27:56], with other women beside. And thou also hast need of the ministry of a deaconess for many things; for a deaconess is required to go into the houses of the heathen where there are believing women, and to visit those who are sick, and to minister to them in that of which they have need, and to bathe those who have begun to recover from sickness."

PRAYERFUL

The order of widows, those 50 years or over, was primarily to be devoted to prayer. They were often called God's altar, offering intercession and praying with purity before the Lord. Rather than being talkative or quarrelsome, widows were to be meek, quiet and gentle, sitting at home meditating upon the Lord day and night, without ceasing.

TRANSFORMED

In the mid-second century Justin Martyr (a Christian apologist) wrote about an unnamed wealthy woman with an unbelieving or intemperate noble husband. It's heartwarming to see how her life changed when she came to a knowledge of the teachings of Christ.

This woman used to delight in drunkenness and every vice. But she gave these up, even wanting her husband to give them up as well – she sought to persuade her husband to change, citing the teaching of Christ, and assuring him that there would be punishment in eternal life for those who did not live temperately.

Unfortunately, the conflict in the marriage got very bad – he didn't appreciate or rejoice at all in the wonderful changes in her life. She felt compromised in her transformed Christian life so initiated their divorce, not wanting to partake in his wickedness. In response her husband brought an accusation against her, probably to the Emperor, accusing her of being Christian.

COURAGEOUS AND COMMITTED

The women we've met so far have all been introduced by various Christian and pagan men, but in *The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas* from March 7, 203AD, we have the voice of a woman herself – Perpetua. It is the first writing we have in Latin by a woman.

Perpetua is a wealthy young wife and mum, a 22-year-old with a young child who is still breastfed. Felicitas is a pregnant slave, who has her baby just before the martyrdom takes place. They are martyred during the reign of Septimius Severus, as part of the celebrations for his son's birthday. We see two main areas where these martyrs are courageous and committed to Christ before everything else.

Firstly, Perpetua remains committed to Christ despite the persistent pleas and pressure of her father to give up her faith – he comes back at least four times begging her to change her mind, even tearing his hair out and getting beaten before her. While her heart breaks and she has to say goodbye to her son, she remains faithful to Christ. In the context of Roman society where the father of the house has complete authority, we see how great her commitment to Christ is.

Secondly, Perpetua, Felicitas and the men who were martyred with them showed their commitment to Christ to the point of death. They know they'll be killed if they confess they are Christian. They don't just resign themselves to die; they want to suffer for Christ, going joyfully and prayerfully to prison and to the day of their martyrdom. Perpetua sings psalms: "they rejoiced that they should have incurred any one of the Lord's passions". They did so trying to convince those around them to turn to Christ. The courage and commitment of these women to Christ before everything else is well worth a read. It's horrific, but heartwarming, and also challenging.

CONCLUSION

This brief look at a few of the women in the early church shows that women are present wherever we look – different ages and stages, rich and poor, slaves and free, in formal ministry roles as well as informally serving, actively, prayerfully and courageously alongside men in passing on the gospel message to others. This is consistent with the biblical evidence in the New Testament of women who are greatly valued by Jesus and the apostles, necessary in God's mission, valued by the gospel, serving in many ways with great courage and sacrifice in partnership with men.

Despite the fragmentary evidence and lack of details about women in early Christianity, there is great value in slowing down and looking through the magnifying glass closely – and also great danger in overlooking these women. As women and men it is important for us to notice these things, to be inspired by what we've learnt, and to let it reflect in our lives and ministries.

Here are some questions that might help us to do this, as men and women. Do we view women as valued, active and necessary in God's mission, to be serving alongside men, or are we limiting ministry to what is upfront, paid, high-profile and fairly male-focused? Are we encouraging women and men to live as active followers of Jesus, with lives changed by the gospel, sacrificially seeking to love the people around us, going out to make disciples of all nations?

Are we raising up, training and encouraging women in our churches and different ministries? Are we creating distinct and multiple leadership roles for women to be evangelising, discipling and loving women from different backgrounds and religions, and serving the poor and sick? Are we committed to the ministry of prayer, considering setting aside widows or others to be devoted to prayer?

And, most importantly, are we courageous and committed to Christ above everything else, including our family, and even our own life? Are we joyfully suffering for Christ, considering it a privilege and honour to bear his name, to follow him in this way, becoming like him through suffering?

In many ways this does not describe me – I often keep quiet about my faith, I seek to avoid conflict and suffering, or maybe just grin and bear it rather than delight in suffering for Christ.

All of these things (and more) are lessons to be learnt from looking through the magnifying glass more closely at women in the early church. We must not overlook these women! Not so that we can put them up on a pedestal – but because they point us to our Lord Jesus and how worthy he is to live for and die for. They are inspiring, but only because they are inspired by the Lord Jesus himself and seek to shine the light and glory on him.

Mrs Tara Stenhouse is Dean of Moore College and lectures in ministry.



Open mic night opens hearts

WHEN MARK ANTONIO BONJA'S PIANO WAS DESTROYED BY AN AIRSTRIKE ON HIS ALEPPO HOME, one of his great joys was destroyed with it. Playing the piano for more than a decade, the teenager turned to music for comfort and to escape the hardship of life in war-torn Syria.

In late March, 130 people were moved by the tale of his journey from Syria to Australia, and his piano performances, at an open mic night called Sounds of the Southwest.

The Sounds of the Southwest team believes stories can create change, so it encourages young people to perform a variety of acts (musical items, spoken word pieces, cultural dances and even circus routines) to raise awareness and funds for Anglicare's Migrant and Refugee Services. This recent event raised almost \$1000.

When the co-ordinator of Sounds of the Southwest, Sarah Milne, first learned of the injustices faced by those from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds, it made her "sick and angry". A member of St John's Park, she works with Migrant and Refugee Services helping those who have fled conflict and persecution to overcome the challenges of settling into Australia.

"Unfortunately they tend to be amongst the most disadvantaged in society, through no fault of their own," she says.

Through Sounds of the Southwest, Ms Milne hopes others will become more aware of the many obstacles migrant and refugee families face, and that this will increase community compassion and support while recognising the vital role they play in Australian society.

"This is important for people changing discourses," she says. "They are people just like us, who just want peace and certainty. We should support them however we can as their neighbours and friends, and we also need to recognise their contribution."

Those who attended certainly saw the contribution refugees can make. "It's definitely worth doing again," Ms Milne says. "Because we had refugee speakers, there's the opportunity for everyone to walk away with greater understanding."

You can see Mark's story in this interview with SBS World News: bit.ly/2vht5jB



Warts-and-all Christianity

JUDY ADAMSON

For The Love Of God

Rating: PG likely

AMID TODAY'S HOWLS OF ANGER AT CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL, AND BIBLE-BELIEVING Christians in particular, the Centre for Public Christianity has done something very wise. It's decided to tackle this head-on, acknowledging the ugly warts in the history of our faith along the way. This is why the subtitle of *For The Love of God* is: *How the church is better + worse than you ever imagined*. Because, of course, that is absolutely true.

As Christians we glory in the tales of love, humility and God-honouring service found throughout the past 2000 years. But we often get accused of hypocrisy. What about the Crusades? Colonialism? The complicity of German churches during the Third Reich?

As much as we might like to distance ourselves from the actions of others, we can't hide from the appalling things done in the name of God. And nor should we. What we should do, and what this documentary seeks to do, is provide a complete picture.

Presenters the Rev Dr John Dickson, Simon Smart and Dr Justine Toh take a three-pronged approach: showing the godly, life-changing efforts of Christians, many shameful failures, and what the Bible says about how Christianity should live.

The action takes us through time and across continents using historical records, interviews and pieces to camera to tell us of those who spent themselves in Christ's name and how this changed those around them, and society at large – even those who loathed Christians. Plus, how the sanctity of life and virtues such as humility and caring for the poor became more widely accepted because of the actions of Christian people.

We are also unflinchingly shown the reality of the Crusades (plus what sparked them in 1095), issues surrounding "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland, Nazism, and the shameful treatment of our Aboriginal people through murder, disease, carelessness or neglect.

Then, there's the Bible. The documentary begins with the words of Jesus to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. And that's a theme throughout. Who loved their enemies? Who cared for the sick, the poor and those being led astray, in Jesus' name? Who stood up against racism and injustice, even if it put their lives at risk?

One of the most profound stories is that of Father Damien, a Belgian priest who served a leper colony on the Hawaiian island of Molokai until leprosy also claimed him. Yet even when he knew his diagnosis he spoke of being "calm... and happy among my people", adding that "Almighty God knows best". It's also challenging to be told Gandhi was a great admirer of Father Damien and, while he liked Jesus, wanted more of Jesus' followers to exhibit Christ-like behaviour. Ouch.

There may be arguments to have about some of what is said but *For The Love of God* seeks to provide considered, researched responses to un-Christian behaviour over the past two millennia, balancing this against how Christians should and have behaved – noting the "powerful force [of their lives] for the common good". For those of us who do believe it also issues a challenge to live in a manner "worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil 1:27).

For The Love Of God is screening on demand in cinemas. See www.publicchristianity.org/documentary-screenings/

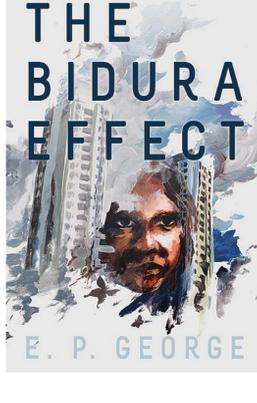
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Christ's child amid the casework

JANET SIMPSON

The Bidura Effect

by E.P. George



THESE DAYS IT'S COMMON FOR YOUNG ADULTS TO ATTRACT BAD PRESS FOR THEIR workplace attitudes. But in the pages of this book we meet an impressive young woman, nicknamed "Twenty-one" by colleagues to mark her age, as she begins a career in social work for the department previously known as DoCS (Department of Child Services).

While facts and names have been changed to protect families and caseworkers involved, the book is beautifully written and compelling. At times I couldn't put it down; at other times I had to put it down and take a breather.

The Bidura Effect takes us into the heart of DoCS, revealing both Twenty-One's courage and the fears and vulnerabilities lurking in her own heart as she faces new and confronting experiences as a young caseworker and a Christian. So it's no surprise the book won E.P. George last year's SparkLit award for Young Australian Christian Writer of the Year.

Twenty-one's role takes her into The Block in Redfern, a place previously known to her only as a news item. Here she first encounters the dark shadow of Bidura. When Twenty-one inherits Doreen as a client, she's introduced to a shameful period in Australia's history that was unknown to her. The recent Royal Commission has exposed the institutional mistreatment of children, but I suspect many of us have little knowledge of Bidura (a residential centre in Glebe for girls and young boys in the state welfare system, awaiting long-term foster care placement) and the ongoing damage to individuals and families that resulted.

This is the Bidura effect and why the book is so powerful to read. The driving motivation is to give voice to the "ghosts" of children so badly let down by the people supposed to protect them. Children like Doreen – a former Bidura girl and child of the Stolen Generations – now a feisty 60-year-old grandmother confined by fear within the cocoon of her tiny, dirty apartment in the Redfern "Suicide" Towers.

As Twenty-one uncovers Doreen's story, we begin to understand the devastating ways that Bidura, and places like it, continue to affect her and the lives of her children and grandchildren, now themselves entangled in state care.

Like every new graduate, Twenty-one has a lot to learn as the confidence of youth gives way under the emotional weight of complex and entrenched problems. Her questioning how she can survive this "sea of human suffering, let alone rescue anyone else" lies at the core of what it means to be a professional caseworker. This willingness to reveal her uncertainties and confess her failings engages the reader in the bigger questions of how we seek to honour God in our life and work.

For Twenty-one, survival is a process of reflecting on insights offered by experienced workers, friends, her pastor and the Scriptures, as well as learning to listen to others. As her pastor later reminds her, "Stories hold the key to both our identity and our purpose".

So begins her quest to acknowledge Doreen's story, which weaves throughout the book like the butterfly totem that is the fragile link to Doreen's Aboriginal identity. Interspersed with this is an unremitting flow of achingly sad cases drawn from real-life experiences coming across Twenty-one's desk.

A book of this nature – dealing with the Stolen Generations, broken families, foster care and a welfare system where hope can be in short supply – could be very heavy going. But the narrative moves well between tough cases and lighter moments where Twenty-one explores life and faith with her colleagues Ben and Lucy, and her church community.

In contrast to the past memory of Bidura, these "three musketeers" represent the genuinely caring, dedicated caseworkers in our child welfare system, together with a few who embody the attitudes of the wrong person for the job. We also meet some inspiring foster care heroes, but the sad reality remains that some problems can't be fixed and not every case has a happy ending. This difficult truth prompts Twenty-one's deeper observations about divine justice, mercy, forgiveness and love. And while Christmas is shown as a time to bring out the worst in humanity, it also offers Twenty-one a powerful time to reflect on the love of God in sending his Son to be our Saviour.

The book concludes with her leaving DoCS for a new role, which, given her progress and the trust placed in her by managers and clients, was mildly disappointing. Perhaps, too, the end of her relationship with Doreen is a bit neater than real-life cases often are. However, in showing her journey, Twenty-one opens our eyes to the pain and suffering still among us, and shows that being true to Christ takes courage and willingness to listen, learn and grow, knowing we do not face the darkness alone.

Janet Simpson is head of donor relations at Youthworks and a former social worker.

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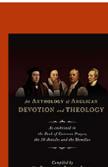
PRAYER IN PRACTICE

David Mulready

An Anthology of Anglican Devotion and Theology

Compiled by the Rev Jerryl Lowe

(Morning Star Publishing 2017)



Jerryl Lowe is a retired Anglican minister who has faithfully served the Lord in parish ministry for 40 years in the dioceses of Sydney and Tasmania with his wife Elizabeth. He has a particular interest in the writings of Anglican clergy over the past 500 years and is committed to the theology of Scripture found in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the 39 Articles and the Homilies.

This book consists of 54 sections following the Anglican Church year. Each begins with the Collect for the day, followed by an average of seven brief extracts from some of the 37 writers Lowe has chosen.

Among these are quotes from sermons and the writers include Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, bishops Hugh Latimer and John Hooper, and Dr Richard Hooker.

Take the Collect for the third Sunday after Easter, for example (AAPB page 213) – a prayer for God to "order the unruly wills and passions" of his people.

Lowe quotes from Bishop John Hooper (1495-1555) commenting on this Collect: "It is more easy for a man to hear the Gospel than to follow the life of the Gospel... Another may preach Christ, but the hearer must follow Christ. The science of the Scripture is practical and not speculative; it requires a doer and not a speaker only".

Many churches have moved away from the use of the collects and opted for extempore prayer. While this is fine in one sense, they have left behind the rich resource of biblically and beautifully expressed prayers that have been used for more than 350 years.

Having these prayers combined with the godly writings from some of the faithful Christians who have gone before us provides meaningful biblical prayers that can challenge our more pedestrian ones.

Lowe's aim is to "pedestal the heart and head; to edify, to encourage and to embolden". While I have not yet finished reading the book, I'm finding it stimulating and a great addition to my own prayers and daily Bible reading. Many of these authors were burned at the stake for their teaching. How could one not be challenged when we have it so easy?

I would encourage other Christians of any Bible-based denomination to buy a copy for themselves and maybe gift a copy to their pastor.

To obtain a copy contact Jerryl Lowe at jerrylcress@gmail.com.

THE LORD'S LOVE FOR ALL OF LIFE

Mark Wormell

Jesus Loves Me

by Ben Boland and Dana Gruben



When people have known Jesus for years, how can we help them keep and enjoy their faith when they get dementia? How can we share our faith with people living with dementia? How do we do it, and what resources work?

A great place to start is *Jesus Loves Me*, a short book of resources written by Ben Boland and Dana Gruben in HammondCare's "Faith for Life" series.

The brevity and simplicity of this book conceals broad research into the best way to communicate with people living with dementia and, in particular, a deep understanding of the effectiveness of liturgy, memorable church music and art. It arises out of years of experience of working in aged care facilities in Australia, and the trialling of various materials.

The key message that Jesus loves us recurs in the book in ways that will embed this truth. The common questions of "How do I respond to Jesus in dementia?" and "Why does Jesus love me?" are addressed. Useful texts such as John 3:16 and Psalm 23 are attractively presented, and the words of familiar prayers and songs are made available for easy use (e.g. The Lord's Prayer and "Amazing Grace").

This book is a well-conceived and valuable resource for people working in aged care facilities, as well as for pastors and carers who want to help people with dementia. The materials give permission to pastors and carers to stick with the resources that are most effective.

I join with others in highly commending this book.

The Rev Mark Wormell is rector of St John's, Glebe and the author of *Coming to Rest in Dementia*.