

JUNE
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Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

Podcasting pastors

HOW TECHNOLOGY IS REVOLUTIONISING
FAITH TIME ONLINE

PLUS

Inter-generational ministry

Country evangelism

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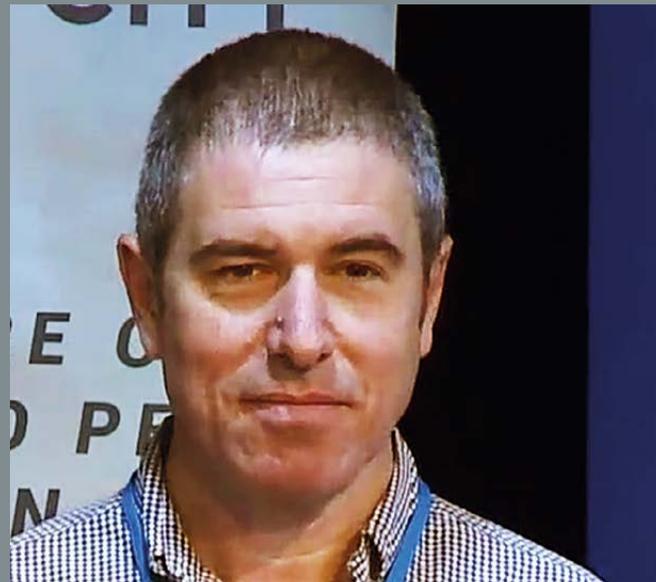
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“Evoking spiritual curiosity is our outreach goal, and then leading people to Christ”

Andrew Katay
Sydney News

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Staying in shape to serve

Push upward: Air Force physical training instructors, Warrant Officers Mick Bonasia and Steve Weaver, encourage chaplains James Cox and Karyn Ey as they kick off the Chaplains PT Challenge. PHOTO: Sgt Amanda Campbell

BEING AN AIR FORCE CHAPLAIN IS A CHALLENGING PROFESSION AND CHAPLAINS ARE PUSHING each other to keep in shape.

To help with that, the inaugural Chaplain's PT Challenge kicked off recently at RAAF Base Richmond in outer northwestern Sydney.

"In order for chaplains to continue to provide a high level of chaplaincy support, we need to be mindful of and actively engaged in caring for ourselves – emotionally, spiritually and of course, physically," said the director general chaplaincy, Chaplain (Air Commodore) Mark Willis, a member of the Church of Christ.

"Personal resilience is built on a number of factors and I, for one, can testify that being physically active is one of those factors."

Chaplains will partner with their local physical training instructors to complete a 12-week challenge that will see RAAF chaplains across the country divided into four teams. They will be awarded points for the number of push-ups, sit-ups and kilometres walked, run or cycled.

The team with the most points will be awarded the Chaplains PT Challenge trophy at the Chaplaincy National Conference in August.

While the challenge continues, RAAF chaplaincy staff are looking for more recruits by running an open day for clergy at the Richmond base on June 7. The program involves visiting various parts of the base, a tour of a Hercules transport plane and interaction with chaplains Air Commodore Kevin Russell, Flight Lieutenant Ey and reservist chaplain Armen Nalbandian.

"Permanent" chaplaincy in budget



Generate Ministries' James Flavin. PHOTO: Darryl Charles

AFTER MORE THAN 10 YEARS AND ACKNOWLEDGED SUCCESS IN PASTORAL CARE, THE NATIONAL schools chaplaincy program has had its funding renewed on a "permanent basis".

The 2018 Federal budget allocates nearly \$250 million over four years to extend the program on a permanent basis and adds a special anti-bullying focus.

Questioned about the religious basis to the program, Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham described it as "a program that in essence has been proven to work and be really popular, and it's worked perhaps because these individuals bring a slightly different perspective to the counselling, the care."

"The parish work, if I can borrow that term, that they provide to a school community, we've continued to support it because it works and has been very successful in the schools where it's being delivered."

Added Mr Birmingham: "The work is pastoral work, not religious work, and I've sat there with children whose parents have died, or parents whose children have cancer, and the care and compassion that those chaplains have brought to those families has been instrumental in them getting through tough times."

The funding decision was welcomed by Generate Ministries, the largest provider of school chaplains in NSW.

Generate Ministries commends the Federal Government's ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of the students in our public schools across the country by maintaining the National School Chaplaincy Program funding" it said in a statement. It commended the focus on bullying, saying Generate looked forward to "continuing in partnership through the program to address this serious issue in our schools, ensuring all students are enabled to enjoy a safe and happy educational environment".

James Flavin, the general manager of Generate Ministries, said, "Every week chaplains in NSW have nearly 2000 formal conversations with students, staff and parents. Every term chaplains deliver 4000 program sessions covering issues including bullying, relationships, grief and loss, family breakdown, resilience and school disengagement."

"The funding will enable schools to continue this valuable program and we look forward to seeing even more NSW students and their school communities benefiting from the support of a school chaplain."

"The opportunity to serve public school communities of NSW is a real privilege and a responsibility we never take lightly."

New Chapter chapter

IT MIGHT BOAST FINE ARCHITECTURE BUT THE 132-YEAR-OLD CHAPTER HOUSE NEXT TO ST Andrew's Cathedral is in major need of an overhaul.

The Cathedral was refurbished in 1999 and 2000, but its sister building was not – a factor that means its regular use by students of St Andrew's Cathedral School (SACS) is a mixed blessing.

The head of SACS, Dr John Collier, bluntly puts it this way: "I find at the moment that there's a narrow band of seats I can sit in where I'm neither frozen by the draft coming in nor asphyxiated by the mould and rising damp!... We [want] to renovate the upper Chapter House so it can be a performing arts centre for the school in a way it was 10 years ago".

The \$3 million-plus job of renovating and upgrading the building began last month, and is likely to take until the middle of 2019 to complete.

The Dean, Kanishka Raffel, says the Cathedral "could have undertaken a smaller project on our own, but the school – because it makes extensive use of the Chapter House – was open to the possibility of doing it together and getting the whole job done".

The school will pay for refurbishing the upper Chapter House (issues such as new seating, temperature control and audio-visual equipment for musical performances) while the Cathedral will pay for upgrading ministry spaces in the lower Chapter House – including a new kitchen and the creation of flexible spaces for Bible studies, and kids' and youth groups.

The Chapter House is also not compliant with modern standards for disabled access, so both groups will share the cost of meeting these needs – including the installation of a lift, an access ramp and new toilets.

Says Dr Collier: "This is a cost-sharing arrangement really, where the school is accepting two-thirds of the cost, and the Cathedral is accepting one-third... It will extend the potential spaces for the school because the school continues to grow".

In recognition of their role in funding the renovations, SACS will be granted a 20-year lease on the upper Chapter House, with access six days a week during school hours.

The Cathedral's costs will be met partly by the congregation and donations, but a good portion will come from the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation. "They have been incredibly generous and given us \$300,000 to kick it off," Dean Raffel says. "The congregation is being asked to contribute \$350,000 and the VFFF is going to match that, dollar for dollar. So we're keen for people to give generously!"

Adds Dr Collier: "We're looking to make the Chapter House a sparkling place for everybody's good use."

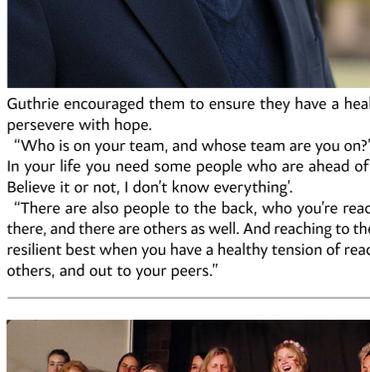
Give tax deductibility to the renovation through the St Andrew's Cathedral Christian Education Foundation.

For info email cathedral@sydney.anglican.asn.au.

Building resilient teachers

WITH THE ENORMOUS PRESSURE OUR TEACHERS ARE UNDER DAY AFTER DAY, IT'S NO WONDER that the risk of burnout is high. Up to 53 per cent of people who hold a teaching degree don't work in education, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Aiming to support teachers and biblically shaped education, Anglican EdComm recently invited Dr Donald Guthrie to its annual Christians in Teaching conference in May to share his expertise on what makes a resilient teacher.



Guthrie encouraged them to ensure they have a healthy network of people around them to help them persevere with hope.

"Who is on your team, and whose team are you on?" he asks. "Who is contributing to your flourishing? In your life you need some people who are ahead of you, who you can reach out to and say, 'Help me. Believe it or not, I don't know everything'."

"There are also people to the back, who you're reaching behind to help. There's lots of students back there, and there are others as well. And reaching to the side, these are your peers. You are at your healthiest, resilient best when you have a healthy tension of reaching up, back and out. Up to get help, back to help others, and out to your peers."

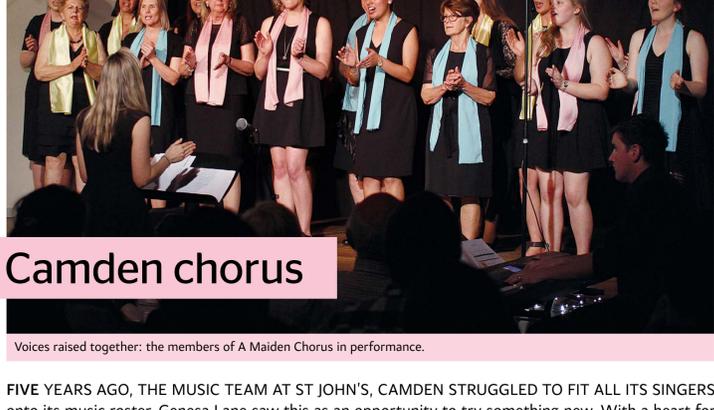
Dr Guthrie (left), from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School near Chicago, is co-author of *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*. He suggests the key to resilience is "struggling well with hopeful perseverance".

By remembering God is powerful to change hearts, and that each student is created by him and bears his image, teachers can trust there is hope for change in their students.

"The best teachers among us have the expectation that something will happen when they get there," he says. "They think people will change, and don't we think so, too? I believe the Holy Spirit can change people... but there's always one family, one colleague [where it doesn't seem possible]."

"For some it may drive us away, as it's driven many pastors away. Change takes time, it's iterative. It's a few steps forward and a few back. This is resilience, by the way. It is no straight-line march up the hill. Resilience assumes a fallen world with fallen people."

Asking teachers how they are also changing, Dr Guthrie encouraged them to ensure they have a healthy network of people around them to help them persevere with hope.



Camden chorus

Voices raised together: the members of A Maiden Chorus in performance.

FIVE YEARS AGO, THE MUSIC TEAM AT ST JOHN'S, CAMDEN STRUGGLED TO FIT ALL ITS SINGERS onto its music roster. Genesa Lane saw this as an opportunity to try something new. With a heart for God and music, Mrs Lane started A Maiden Chorus, a choir of women from the congregation and wider community.

With choir members ranging in age from under 20 to over 70, the eclectic combination of personalities, ages and lifestyle experiences has made singing together a joy.

"I was keen to do something community based that was connected to the church but was not solely for church people," says Mrs Lane, who works as a high school music teacher. "Being in a choir is an example of collaboration and teamwork, where many voices are coming together as one."

Many Camden locals have been to St John's for weddings and events, and some have a familiarity with Christianity, but still find the idea of walking into a church building daunting. Mrs Lane hopes that through connecting with the choir, people will feel more at ease.

"It's a building that means a lot to many people," she says. "I think being present in a church building already breaks down barriers. A lot of people are intimidated by churches, so to have concerts where people can visit is a nice way for them to come in and hear a bit more."

"I know for some, being in the choir has made them feel comfortable coming to church. We've seen some people start coming to church because of connections they've made through the choir."

Mrs Lane has found that the genuine friendships formed within the choir have been a great way for the Christian ladies to share the love of Christ. "Whether we talk about Jesus all the time or not, you would hope that our lives do shine a light. Our faith is living and active."

Over the five years of performances, Mrs Lane also sees that the Christian songs they sing have an impact on their listeners.

"People comment on how moving these songs are," she says. "The Christian ladies are singing them from the heart and that really impacts audiences. One time [when performing in a nursing home] we sang a Christian song they knew. A lady who had been silent the whole show started belting the song out. It brought the life to them again."

"It's hard to describe those moments. We think, 'Are we any good?' and then we see people really appreciating the effort we go to."



Happy birthday, MTS

Memories: a group of MTS apprentices at the inaugural G8 national apprentice conference in 2011.

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NSW, THE MINISTRY TRAINING STRATEGY IS celebrating 40 years of training gospel workers through ministry apprenticeships. More than 2500 people have been trained for ministry since 1979, with nearly half of these entering some form of vocational gospel work.

It all started with two uni students spending a few years after their degrees working alongside Phillip Jensen, the then chaplain at UNSW. Now, more than 200 churches across Australia, and several in countries overseas, are training people through ministry apprenticeships.

The apprentices train under a paid gospel worker, gaining skills and experience for ministry by having a go and being mentored on the way.

Ben Pfahler, the national director of MTS, is very thankful to God for the way the training is producing workers for the harvest.

"Hundreds of apprentices now serve as gospel workers overseas and across Australia," he says. "Past apprentices are evangelists, youth pastors, children's pastors, church pastors, military chaplains, college lecturers, authors, ministry founders... The web is wide and strong."

Brandon Bonnici, who started an apprenticeship in 2016 with MBM Rooty Hill, describes his experience in two words: "Absolutely fantastic!"

"I've had lots of opportunities to share the gospel, which is my passion," he adds. "I've also been in a full-time youth pastor role, which was a surprise, but I love it. I never felt drawn to youth ministry but now I look past the age and just see lost souls that need to come to Jesus, and other souls that need to grow in their love for Jesus."

Since finishing his apprenticeship, Mr Bonnici is now the youth pastor at MBM.

So what's in store for the next 40 years of MTS? There are no signs of slowing down, with Mr Pfahler focused on raising more trainers to guide and teach apprentices.

"We have recruited about 250 apprentices per annum for the past five to 10 years," he says. "We'd really like to work hard, under God, to equip past apprentices – who are now pastors themselves – to train their own apprentices and increase that number to 400 apprentices, without dropping the quality, without compromising on Christ-like character."

"Trainers are the key."



Wine, cheese... and God

Talk about it: participants discuss Christ Church Inner West's issue of the night with those at their table.

THERE ARE WAYS AND WAYS TO REACH OUT TO OUR LOCAL AREAS, BUT ONE OF THE STRATEGIES chosen by Christ Church Inner West is to invite its community in to talk about the big issues in our society.

Called "Wine, cheese and a conversation about [an issue] and God", the once-a-term events have been running for about two years and have covered everything from cancer to fake news, and science to same-sex marriage.

"There are topics that are important in our society and culture that are good to talk about," explains the rector of Christ Church Inner West, the Rev Andrew Katay.

"We surveyed the congregation in particular, asking them, 'What do you think would be interesting topics that we could put on that people might come to?'"

"The events are outreach in the sense that each topic is something to which we seek to bring the gospel to bear. It's not straight *Two Ways To Live*, and it's not meant to be *Two Ways To Live*. We recognise that we need different entry points to the gospel and this is one of our range of entry points."

He says that, at each night, attendees are placed at a table of five or six with wine, cheese and nibbles, and water. There is table discussion, presentations from speakers, and plenty of interaction between the audience and the panel.

The speakers are Christians chosen for their experience in the topic under discussion. For example, in March the conversation about euthanasia had Dr Megan Best on the panel, and last month's conversation about extremism heard from Louisa Hope (who survived the Lindt Café siege) and Dr Richard Schumack from the Centre for Public Christianity, who is author of *The Wisdom of Islam and the Foolishness of Christianity*.

"The whole thing is a conversation," Mr Katay says. "When I was [chaplain] at Sydney Uni, we used to do these things with students all the time... much better communication takes place if you let people ask questions and make statements, and don't just have the Christian voice making the points."

"It shows everyone in the group that we're not afraid of question or debate; we're not scared of conversation. If we have the truth then we don't need to be afraid about these things."

"The skill is in being able to take the question and find a way to directly answer it and, at the same time, take it deeper into gospel principles or issues."

Each event is advertised by word of mouth from church members and by a letterbox drop throughout the parish. Mr Katay says that because of these letterbox drops, everyone in the parish area – which comprises Ashfield, Haberfield and Five Dock – knows the church.

"It's part of our overall strategy to do letterbox drops 10-12 times a year," he says. "What it does is very, very effectively communicate two things: it communicates the actual event and that's useful, but it also communicates what kind of church we are. We're a church that's interested in engaging with contemporary issues, bringing experts in the field into play and we're not closed but open to conversations."

In the week after each conversation night Christ Church launches an inquirers group for those who want to learn more about Christianity. The responses for visitors vary. Some are ready to take a step straight into *Christianity Explained*, while others might go to a range of events, attend church for a while, and then join a course.

For Mr Katay, the point is to reach people in the community at whatever stage they are at, and "move them, where we can, even one tenth of one step closer to Jesus. Evoking spiritual curiosity is our outreach goal, and then leading people to Christ".



TESTIMONY

Using my tumour for God

MY NAME IS ZACK HANKIN. I'M 23 YEARS OLD AND I HAVE EIGHT TO 14 YEARS TO LIVE.

I have only wanted two things in life: to help and serve people and to become a pilot. I thought my best chance of fulfilling both these things was to become a search and rescue pilot. At age 18 I joined the Army.

It was while I was studying at ADFA [the Australian Defence Force Academy] that I went to my first church service of my own volition. It wasn't until I joined the Fellowship of Christian Uni Students that I realised I needed to decide whether to trust in Jesus or not.

The biggest stumbling block for me was science and faith. Once that was cleared up, nothing was preventing me from trusting in Jesus, so I did.

I graduated and was about to start basic flight training school when I began struggling with depression and anxiety. My psychologist referred me to a psychiatrist, who sent me for an MRI. When my doctor, who usually stands up, said, "Zack, grab a seat," I knew there was something wrong.

He just said, "You have a brain tumour". My first thought was "Here we go again", because my cousin had just died of cancer a month earlier. Looking after my parents was my primary concern. I knew that whether I died or not, I would be with Jesus in paradise, so I wasn't worried about me.

About a month later, after many tests, I started thinking, "This is really hard. I would much rather be with Jesus. Why am I still here?" Through months of thinking through that, I got to a point where I recognised God had given me this tumour for a reason, so how do I use it for the growth of his kingdom? How do I glorify God through this tumour? It is through using my story and encouraging people to know and love God.

Initially flying was my number one goal, and chaplaincy was number two. Once I was told I couldn't fly, I knew that God wanted me to become a chaplain. I had been so focused on becoming a pilot that nothing was going to stop me – unless something physically stopped me being able to fly, which God did. I'm very thankful for that.

I know God made us. He knows how we work and he knows what's good for us and bad for us. This tumour is a sign of grace, because it stopped me from going down another path. God had a better plan for me to do ministry and I was too blind to see it. Becoming a pilot had become an idol.

My life mission now is growing God's kingdom: I am becoming a hospital chaplain, a minister in a church or another job where I get to love God and love my neighbour. I am now studying at Moore College to be trained as a hospital chaplain.

Having lived in a hospital for three months and having to talk about my tumour has showed me good ways to support others. It excites me that I can go into a place where people are struggling and love them. I wouldn't wish this tumour on anyone, but I'm thankful that God gave it to me. I'm going to use my story and the continuing story until I die to point people to God.

The biggest thing I want people to know is that Jesus is Lord, and the only way to God is through him. We are not king of our own lives. It's so hard looking around this world and seeing that most of the world is going to be dead because they reject Jesus.

If I can play any part in building up God's kingdom, I will count that as a successful life. For me, the measure of a good life isn't what cards have been dealt, it's how we play them. And playing them for God's glory is the only way to truly play them. God gave me this brain tumour, and I think the best way to spend my last eight years of life is by serving Jesus.

One day I'll be too sick to be a paid hospital chaplain. I'll still be in the hospital, loving and caring for the patients around me, and for the nurses and doctors who are stressed. While I physically might not be able to walk around the wards chatting to everyone, that won't change the fact that I can still love people and care for them and point them to God.

Zack Hankin is studying at Moore College and attends St Luke's, Miranda. To continue following Zack's story you can sign up for updates and prayer points at www.zackhankin.com



Hanging his hat on Connect09

Old-style evangelism: James Daymond and his wife Brittany (left) chat to a local in Narromine.

IN JAMES DAYMOND'S HALLWAY AT NARROMINE THERE IS A LINE-UP OF HALF A DOZEN AKUBRA hats.

Friends from his home church of St Clement's, Mosman thought it essential for their fair-skinned exports, James and his wife Brittany, to be well shaded on the dusty roads of central western NSW.

Mr Daymond wore a battered Akubra through his teens and twenties as he worked with horses and went cattle droving on university breaks. Now he is a member of Bush Church Aid's field staff, working as an evangelist in the Narromine and Trangie Anglican churches, west of Dubbo, in the Diocese of Bathurst.

Soon after his conversion more than 10 years ago, Mr Daymond's rector at Mosman, the Rev Stuart Smith, recognised his gifts as an evangelist.

"He gave me some welcome cards, which had a Bible verse, 1 John 4:10, on them," Mr Daymond says. "He said, 'Look, this would be a good thing to hand out'. That ministry developed and then he invited me to join the staff as a trainee minister in 2008."

When Connect09's outreach began its doorknocking program to distribute *The Essential Jesus*, things just clicked. "Connect09 was a very significant 'hand fitting the glove', if that's the right expression," he recalls. "I was very excited because this was just me to a T."

James Daymond has been doing Connect09 ever since – he even has a stock of *The Essential Jesus* that is fast diminishing. Now, almost 18 months into his role with BCA, the idea of a dedicated evangelist has been a game changer for the parish.

The rector of Narromine and Trangie, the Rev Phil Howes, says, "Initially I had my concerns that somebody from Mosman might find things a little 'interesting' out here, but with James' love of the country, his love for people, and on top of that his love for the Lord, that was quickly put at ease.

"The idea of somebody else coming on just to do evangelism was completely out of the box but we were very thankful to have the Anglican Church at Miranda come up for two years in a row with a team from their Baby Boomers group. So that helped hugely for James to hit the ground running... people were more aware that we need to be outward looking."

On the day *Southern Cross* visited, Mr Daymond brought along Mark Unicomb, a congregation member being trained in evangelism.

"The really amazing thing with James' Bush Church Aid work is that it is feet on the ground, going out knocking on doors," Mr Unicomb says.

"That is the front-line evangelism that is needed in the country. People don't want to talk about Christianity any more, especially if they're not in a comfortable position like at home. If there's a chance that you can get the message through, you've got to be in their comfort zone."

They may run out of copies of *The Essential Jesus* but they won't run out of people to talk to. It is estimated that 750,000 people live in the central corridor of NSW west of the "sandstone curtain", as locals refer to the Blue Mountains.

"People said to me that the bush hasn't got any money – no one's going to be able to afford to support what you're wanting to do," Mr Daymond says. "I kept on saying, 'If it is God's will, he will provide'. He did provide and he did enable the doors into this diocese to open... I really do see the affirmation of God along the way very, very significantly."



Reaching the real Madagascar

Trained and able to train others: the Rev Al Lukabyo (centre) with Madagascan PTC graduates.

MADAGASCAR IS PROBABLY BETTER KNOWN AS THE TITLE OF A CHILDREN'S MOVIE THAN AN Indian Ocean island – except to a growing number of Sydney Christians who are reaching out to help the local Anglican Church.

Madagascar is about the size of the state of Victoria, yet it has the population of Australia.

Links have been growing between the Sydney Diocese and the Anglican Province of the Indian Ocean (which includes Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles) since Bishop Peter Tasker met the previous Bishop of Mauritius, Ian Ernest, more than a decade ago.

The relationship has grown with several exchanges, including the Rev Eric and Mrs Jacqueline Ma Fat studying at Moore College in 2010, Albert Lamoureux from Mauritius studying at Youthworks College in 2016 and the rector of Croydon, the Rev Al Lukabyo, making several trips to teach the Preliminary Theological Certificate (PTC) in French to local students.

Bishop James Wong from Seychelles replaced Bishop Ian Ernest as Archbishop and Primate of the Province last year, and in March invited five Australians to Madagascar to participate in strategic planning meetings to set the course for the province over the next five years.

Much of the work has been sponsored by the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid, and the latest exchange involved its director, the Rev David Mansfield, as well as Bishop Tasker, Mr Lukabyo, Elizabeth Richards from CMS and the director of the Centre for Global Mission at Moore College, the Rev Simon Gillham.

"The needs for the training of Christian leaders in the Indian Ocean are immense and complex," Mr Gillham says. "The vulnerability of a poor and poorly trained church is heartbreaking. Our brothers and sisters there long to know the word of God better and are asking for our help.

"We are translating more of Moore College's PTC material into French and investigating a Malagasy translation as well. Now we need men and women who will go and share their lives, as well as the gospel, with them."

Mr Lukabyo is continuing to train young leaders in theology and Anglican Aid is providing the first bursary for students from the province to train at Uganda Christian University.

During the latest trip, Mr Lukabyo also conducted a week-long PTC intensive for representatives from the six Madagascan dioceses. He was accompanied by the Rev Tristan Dallas – a recent Moore College graduate now working as an assistant minister in the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania – who has previously made two trips to Madagascar.

Says Mr Lukabyo: "Participants were given personalised certificates noting the number of units completed, and each student was also given a USB flash drive containing all six PTC units currently available in French, as well as *Introduction to the Bible* in Malagasy – the idea being that these resources can be used in the training of others."

Several of the Madagascan bishops are planning to join Archbishop Wong in attending GAFCON this month.

NZ resolution prompts "deep regret"

A MOVE BY THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND TO ALLOW FOR THE BLESSING OF SAME-sex unions has led to a strong statement from the Diocese of Sydney.

The Synod of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (ACANZP) passed a resolution which – while affirming the Church's teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman – calls for changes to the constitution to allow for "a non-formulary service" to bless same-sex relationships.

However, the Diocese of Polynesia will not implement this change. Members of the Synod of Polynesia are opposed to the blessing of same-sex relationships and the nations in this Diocese – Samoa, Tonga and Fiji – do not recognise same-sex unions.

After the decision, the Standing Committee of the Sydney Diocese passed a motion noting "with deep regret that the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia has amended its Canons to allow bishops to authorise clergy to bless same-sex unions".

The committee also conveyed to the Primates of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia that it "notes with regret that this step is contrary to the teaching of Christ (Matt 19:1-12) and is contrary to Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference".

Further, the Diocese expressed "support for those Anglicans who have left or will need to leave the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia because of its abandonment of biblical teaching, and those who struggle and remain; and prays that the ACANZP will return to the doctrine of Christ in this matter and that impaired relationships will be restored".

There has also been a statement about the same-sex blessings from the Church of Ireland. Bishop Pat Storey said the Church's marriage service "remains unchanged" due to a lack of consensus in General Synod, the House of Bishops and the church.

"Thus... marriage may be solemnised only between a man and a woman," the statement said. "No liturgy or authorised service is provided... for any other situation."



FAREWELL “AWESOME” BLACKTOWN

The **Rev Michael Robinson** is retiring from the parish of Blacktown on July 8 – a day before his 66th birthday.

“It’s been almost 13 years,” he says, “and it’s been brilliant – good fun. The thing that personally I’ve enjoyed most – and have all the way through my ministry – is being able to teach people the Christian faith from the Bible and see them come to Christ and grow in Christ.

“There’s always the disappointment of seeing people walk away from Christ, but overall to see people listening and thinking about God’s word and how that applies in their lives, that’s been a very encouraging and gratifying part of pastoral ministry working with the good people in Blacktown.

“One of the best kept secrets in the Diocese is how awesome Blacktown is as a suburb! It’s a lively place, good community, and a very ethnically diverse area... we have a Sudanese congregation that meets every week, with services in Arabic and a bit of English. That’s part of the nature of Blacktown – it’s an exciting place to be, I think.”

Mr Robinson has worked around the Diocese during more than 40 years of ordained ministry, with curacies in Manly and Dapto, eight years as rector in Kingsgrove, just over a decade as assistant and senior assistant at Castle Hill, and six years working with Anglican Television.

More recently, in the lead-up to his retirement, Mr Robinson and the leaders at Blacktown have been working on a strategic review of the parish.

“We’ve been doing the Vine project for the past few years,” he says. “All the nominators have been doing it and they’ve had that opportunity to think about the purpose of the parish, what direction we should be going in and what challenges face us at this point in our history.

“That’s been really helpful, and we’ve now hit ‘Pause’ to let the new guy do the finishing touches. He will have a team of people who can give him some helpful insight and be there to help him implement stuff if that’s where he wants to go.”

Mr Robinson is now thinking beyond Blacktown and is looking forward to having more time for his grandchildren, for reading and perhaps some more study. But ministry will never be far away.

“One of the things I’m looking forward to doing in retirement is locum work,” he says, adding that, in the 1980s, he attended an in-service about retirement at which a retired minister “spoke so eloquently about locums” that he’s been looking forward to it ever since.

“It’s not 30 years away any more!”



PERCIVAL BECOMES A YOUNG MAN

After 15 years in the South Coast parish of Berry, the **Rev Neil Percival** is heading to the farming town of Young in the Canberra-Goulburn Diocese.

“I think the time was right for a new challenge,” he says. “We love Berry – part of me would have been happy to have stayed here for another 15 years... [but] we enjoy ministry in country towns and rural communities, and so when Canberra-Goulburn got in touch... they suggested a few [parishes] over a while and this was the one that just clicked. I thought, I can see us working there and doing something good.

“There’s quite a lot of learning to do about how we do things in a different diocese but we can do that, because we want to preach the gospel and minister to people wherever we go.”

The big parish is known as Young District Anglican Ministry. Centred on St John’s, Young, it also includes churches at Wombat, Quandialla, Hampstead and Greenethorpe, and takes well over an hour to drive from end to end.

The new parish is also numerically bigger than Berry, which Mr Percival describes as “a close, tight-knit community where the church has a real place. I can walk about the streets and almost everyone in the town will know who I am – I like that dimension to a small town.

“And I think just being here long enough has given us the time to be involved in people’s lives. You do a lot of baptisms and weddings and funerals for one family. You build connections with families on a whole lot of levels, even if they aren’t regular members of the church community. You get to know them very well.”

Mr Percival says he and his wife Leanne will really miss the people in Berry. “It’s not a big church but it’s a small town, so percentage-wise it probably does better than many parishes in the Diocese. We have a lot of retirees in the town and the church reflects that fact, but on the other hand, we are constantly getting new people, which keeps the place very fresh and keeps that vitality there.

“Berry’s got active dairy farms in the area... but Young is a much larger town, a bit of a regional centre and it’s there in support of agriculture. There’s a lot of fruit growing plus wheat, canola and sheep. So we’re going to the real country now. We’ve had a taste of semi-country and we’re ready to take the plunge and go all the way!”

Mr Percival will be inducted into the new parish on June 30.

AITKEN TO ANGLICARE

The rector of St Stephen’s, Belrose for the past decade, the **Rev Michael Aitken**, has just begun work as Anglicare’s partnership development officer for the Northern Region of the Sydney Diocese.



“I’d been considering different options – I’m 57 this year and have been thinking, ‘What do I want to spend the next 10 years doing?’” he says.

“I’ve been very involved in different church and community partnerships in recent years as rector at St Stephen’s, and partnerships that involve school Scripture boards and refugee initiatives, so my heart’s there for engaging church and social justice issues.”

Mr Aitken says he will miss the close connections he has had as rector of Belrose with parish staff, parishioners and the community.

“I think St Stephen’s as a church is respected in this little pocket of the ‘Forest’ and a minister who’s willing to be known in these public places can always have a positive impact,” he says. “I’ve had 10 years going to the gym, and the local coffee shop where we run Alpha. We’re friends.

“The hairdresser’s is another little community hub. You’re having your hair cut and engaging in three to four conversations at the same time, and you can talk about church in a really positive and appropriate way.

“I’ve felt very much part of this community and also interacting with the local churches in other denominations... there’s just a really positive group of ministers that work very well together.”

As a partnership development officer, Mr Aitken hopes to “be an ambassador for Anglicare” – visiting rectors in the Northern Region and helping their parishes to engage more fully with the services Anglicare can provide.

“I think there are a lot of Anglicans sitting in the pews with a heart for social justice who aren’t being utilised – they’re going to parachurch organisations with their passions to serve and I think Anglicare has a lot to offer,” he says. “So I’m looking forward to convincing rectors that Anglicare can support their ministry really positively!”

DOUBTS ON THE JOURNEY

The Rev Harold Hinton (Letters, May SC) does not accept that believing Christians can “fall” or “fall away”, and quotes Marcus Loane’s comment that if you have any doubt about whether God means eternal life for you, you ought to be sure, and it is a sin if you are content not to be sure.

C. S. Lewis had no doubt that it was possible for a Christian to “lose Christ-life” and there are a number of texts which support his view that a person who sins wilfully and unrepentantly can lose salvation: 1 Tim. 1:18-20, Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-27. It is no help to deny any chance of taking a wrong turn.

God created our hearts and minds, and times of doubt are a normal human experience – as shown by the stories of many Christian leaders. The Christian life is a journey with God, and we will all meet occasional doubts along the way. Tennyson’s poem “In Memoriam” contains the helpful lines: “He fought his doubts and gathered strength, to find a stronger faith his own”.

James Moore
Kogarah

CHURCH TIME THAT WORKS

I was reading your article on churches changing or adding service times (SC, May).

It’s not unusual to see churches changing their service times or, in fact, adding services at 2pm, 4pm or even 5pm. We (Eagle Vale) have a Saturday night service at 6pm instead of Sunday night at 7pm, simply because that accommodates people’s busy lives – such as kids’ sporting activities, spending time with family and making it more practical for “new” people with alternative arrangements to fit into mainstream church.

New people coming to the Lord find it hard to fit in, considering the amount of people in a traditional morning service and the information overload it becomes to them. We have found that moving Sunday’s 7pm service to Saturday at 6pm seems to work and, if anything, new people that have been established there have been coming to the morning services.

The primary reason for changing the day and time was to increase the youth numbers. It just makes sense that parents would appreciate an earlier time and different day to accommodate their kids’ attendance at church.

Steven Behr
Campbelltown

ASYLUM AT A COST

In May’s *Southern Cross* a story was published expressing concern that “Federal policy changes leave limited support for up to 7000 people seeking asylum”.

This expression of concern that the cost of support is now “shifted to the community and churches and charities” is not a concern shared by others, who might well be justified in thinking that those who outspokenly encourage the expensive task of refugee resettlement into another culture should voluntarily bear the cost. In most instances unsafe places become safe again and this is confirmed when asylum seekers living in wealthy, secure countries often, eventually, return home for visits.

Charitable intentions are maximised if it is understood that needy people remaining in foreign lands or on their borders can be helped at a tenth of the cost of re-establishment in a different land, language and culture.

Refugee advocates should not expect to pass the costs to Australian taxpayers and can learn from the Good Samaritan, who himself covered the cost of treatment of the injured citizen in the land of that citizen. The injured one was not taken to Samaria but was given medical treatment for his injuries and, until recovery, given fully funded, secure lodging.

Governments must first seek the safety and security of their own citizens and Australians may reflect that within Europe there is justified concern about the dilution of European/Christian culture because of the unprecedented levels of immigration of non-Christians seeking asylum and then family reunion. As a consequence, 10 European countries in a survey have listed immigration and terrorism as the two items of greatest public concern.

Brian Doak
Lindfield



Missional communities – a go-and-stay strategy

MARTIN BRAGGER

THE ARTICLE “EAGLE VALE GETS A KICK OUT OF JESUS!” IN THE MAY EDITION OF *SOUTHERN CROSS* was very encouraging in its description of a number of ventures that are highly effective in reaching, indeed producing disciples from, the many in the community who will not (in many cases cannot) access the standard form of church centred on Sunday services.

It is worthwhile noting that this is part of a bigger picture, knowledge of which can be helpful for the mission of many parishes. This bigger picture is the development of what is called an “unbounded church”.

This is a church set free (unbound) from standard forms to express the principles for Christian community given to us in the New Testament in ways that are culturally accessible to, and can be accessed by, the millions of those without Christ in Sydney.

It should be noted that more than 40 per cent of adults and children either work on Sundays or are locked into recreational and sports commitments, so they couldn’t attend Sunday services even if they wanted to. For this reason, confining missional strategies only to those aimed at growing Sunday congregations will limit missional potential. To overcome this limitation, missional communities are sprinkled throughout the week.

The unbounded church concept is to create networks of missional communities that result from a “go-and-stay” strategy, rather than our traditional strategy to “go and bring” people into our Sunday services. This means going on mission into the multiplicity of microcultures that now make up 21st century Australian society and staying there.

This is in order to create designer, culturally appropriate Christian fellowships in contexts where those who need to know Jesus already gather (or are willing to gather) without expecting them turn up at our Sunday services, which are now culturally alien for increasing numbers of Australians – although experience shows a limited number will still come.

Such a concept is not to provide off-the-shelf models that can be copied – even though they may have worked well in their original context – and then transplant them into our own local context. Experience shows that such an approach has limited success. Rather, the strategy is to construct culturally appropriate missional models that can penetrate and be embedded in any local context.

The number and variety of missional communities that can be created is limited only by our imaginations but there is already a range in the Sydney area. For example: in coffee shops, pubs, clubs, an RSL, community centres, needs-based groups (such as for the lonely or intellectually disabled), re-engineered playgroups and more.

As the “Reach-out report card” in the April edition of *Southern Cross* reminded us, in general the number of newcomers in Sydney Anglican congregations (those who have joined in the past five years but were not previously attending any church) is declining. According to the National Church Life Survey, the average congregational newcomer component was about 8 per cent in 2016, declining from 12.5 per cent in 2001 (a 35 per cent decrease). The newcomer statistic is arguably the best measure we have of missional effectiveness.

In significant contrast, missional communities have a newcomer component of 50-80 per cent, the attainability of such a figure strongly reinforced not just by local but also by overseas experience. That is, they are highly effective in connecting with, gathering and discipling the lost around us.

There is no doubt this strategy does require a significant mindset shift from our longstanding ways of thinking about local mission. However, it is quite possible, with some creative thinking, for a parish to develop what is called a mixed economy church – that is, one comprising a missional community network in parallel with standard church and missional activities.

There are three other characteristics of missional communities that are particularly important in the light of the serious missional challenge we face in contemporary Australia. First, they are generally very low to minimal cost compared to many of our more traditional mission strategies. Second, because they are small, low cost and highly adaptable, they are far easier to multiply than standard church plants.

This latter characteristic is particularly important given the widening gap between Sydney’s rapid population growth and flat church attendance numbers.

The falling church attendance to population ratio, which declined 20 per cent in the 10 years to 2016, is important because it signifies an ongoing reduction in gospel influence (the “salt” of Matthew 5:13) on society.

Third, the organic flexibility and adaptability of missional communities means they are able to reinvent themselves when (and as often as) required in the continually, rapidly changing cultural kaleidoscope of modern Australia. This is something not possible with standard congregations.

For readers wanting more information on missional communities this can be obtained from Evangelism and New Churches and/or the booklet *Unbinding the Church – Missional Realities and Better Options*, which can be downloaded from www.newchurches.org.au/default.aspx

Dr Martin Bragger is the missional communities consultant for Evangelism and New Churches and the founder of Unbounded Church (www.unboundedchurch.com).

Proclaiming Christ to the nations



DR GLENN DAVIES

HIS YEAR MARKS THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOMENTOUS RESOLUTION CONCERNING human sexuality adopted by the 1998 Lambeth Conference of bishops from around the Anglican Communion. In essence, Resolution I.10 reiterated our long-held doctrine that only marriage is the God-ordained place for sexual relations. Hence one of the opening paragraphs of Resolution I.10 states:

[This conference,] in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;

The phrase “in view of the teaching of Scripture” is critical. It is the teaching of God’s word that must direct our lives, and despite its counter-cultural perspective in today’s society – as it was in the first century – our God-given sexual desires are not to be satisfied in casual liaisons or adulterous relationships, nor given expression through homosexual relationships, either male or female. For this reason, the resolution goes on to reject “homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture”. Yet it also endorses a pastoral response to those who are same-sex attracted and the need to care for those who struggle to be faithful to Christ.

The resolution, which passed overwhelmingly, reflects the doctrine of Christ. Furthermore, the General Synod of the Anglican Church in Australia affirmed similar teaching about human sexuality in *Faithfulness in Service*, the national code of conduct of all clergy and church workers.

Let us be candid. This is not how the Western world sees things. Many Australians do not believe this. Some of your friends will likewise disagree. Sadly, many church leaders are trying to change the doctrine of our church so that same-sex unions can be normalised in the life of the church. They have already succeeded in North America and Scotland. Only last month the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia authorised bishops to allow same-sex blessings in their churches.

Yet our Lord’s teaching is clear in Matthew 19:2-12. In answering a question about divorce posed by some Pharisees, Jesus said:

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’, and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

In speaking about divorce, Jesus taught about the fundamental union of a man and a woman in marriage, a union joined by God and not to be separated. Although Jesus recognised the exception of sexual immorality, the disciples considered this understanding of divorce to be so strict that:

The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry”.

To counter this misunderstanding Jesus explains that not all will marry, and therefore not all will engage in sexual relations.

Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others – and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.”

Note that those who choose celibacy do so for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. While there is honour in marriage, as defined by Jesus, there is also honour in singleness. Yet there is no honour in fulfilling one’s sexual desires in relationships which the New Testament elsewhere claims will place a person outside the kingdom of God (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Revelation 22:15).

Ten years ago 1100 bishops, lay people and other clergy gathered in Jerusalem to defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints. It was the first Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON). It was described by many at the time as an alternative to Lambeth – which met later that year – as nearly 200 bishops from Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda chose not to attend Lambeth. They believed the gospel had been compromised by the renunciation of the doctrine of Christ, and specifically Resolution I.10, plainly seen in the consecration of Gene Robinson as the first bishop living openly in a same-sex relationship.

Yet the movement did not form solely for this reason. It is mission focused. This month nearly 2000 bishops, lay people and other clergy will gather in Jerusalem for another Global Anglican Future Conference. We shall express our fellowship in the gospel, our support for one another in mission, and care for faithful Anglicans who have been disenfranchised by leaders who have departed from the ways of Christ. It is an opportunity to proclaim Christ faithfully among the nations. 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

TL:DR... OK?

As more and more people look for bite-sized ways to engage with online content, pastors and other Christians are turning to podcasts, writes **HANNAH THIEM**.

What they said: Moore College students Andrea Abey (left) and Polly Butterworth have begun the What She Said podcast.

Southern

TOM HABIB HAS SPOTTED A PROBLEM WITH THE WAY WE CONSUME ONLINE CONTENT, and found an effective way to help Christians engage deeply with the Bible. TL:DR, or "Too Long: Didn't Read", shows how the way we consume content on the internet is speeding up. Facebook users, on average, spend one to three seconds on each post deciding whether or not to fully engage with it. The average recommended blog length is somewhere between 500 and 750 words. "TL:DR" is often written at the top of a post. In case a reader chooses not to engage with the whole thing, they can grab the salient details in seconds.

Although people are increasing the amount of time they spend online, they are engaging in a superficial way with the content they consume.

LONG-FORM WRITING JUST DOESN'T WORK FOR BLOGS

Alongside recommendations, holiday plans, shopping and socialising, lots of Christians are going online to supplement the teaching they receive from church. There are online platforms growing to meet that need. However, as the Rev Tom Habib – the assistant minister at Yagoona – points out, most online content is unable to go deep into God's word.

"Online platforms are not designed for deep thinking that goes beyond," he says, citing things such as "Top 5 Tips" and "quick 1000-word reflections" as examples. With mobile internet usage on the increase, there physically isn't enough room on our screens to fit in the more extensive articles. A majority of video viewers on Facebook don't make it past the 10-second mark.

This leads to a culture of inspirational quotes, small grabs that are taken out of context, and a generation that is not in the practice of engaging deeply with God's word.

PODCASTS ARE DIFFERENT

We are in the middle of a second wave of podcasting. Podcasts first became popular in the early 2000s, but there was a renaissance in 2013 with the introduction of the podcast Serial. Since then, thousands of podcasts have been created, including some from our pastors.

Thirty per cent of Australians have listened to a podcast in the past year. As a medium it has grown 100 per cent during that time and will continue to grow.

"Unlike blogs, podcasts allow you to create long-form content and still maintain people's attention," Habib says. "This makes it an excellent medium for going deep into God's word."

Habib says his podcast works particularly well for young mums, who might miss out on hearing a sermon on Sunday but can easily listen to a podcast during the week: "People are really happy to listen to an hour-long podcast on the train or during a workout."

"God's word is amazing – and the moment that you delve deep into the word you are always surprised by how much you grow!"

The Rev Dominic Steele from Village Church Annandale has had similar reflections. He has recently started a live video podcast called The Pastor's Heart, saying there were only a few vehicles for Christian content, and that none of them specifically had equipping a pastor as their aim.

"I want there to be a place where pastors will be encouraged in the job they are doing and to stand boldly," he says. "I wanted to work out how to, as I thought of good things and help others, and also talk to people to help me do the job better."

Each week, Steele interviews a guest on a particular area of ministry and about their heart, thinking that if he wants to learn from them other people will find it helpful, too.

The Pastor's Heart is an interview show which goes live on Facebook every Tuesday at 2pm, and is then later uploaded onto vimeo and podcast streaming services. Steele says that by doing a live show he is ensuring everything is done in one take, which allows editing to be much simpler.

In his aim to be a blessing to senior pastors across Australia, he has seen an average of 2000 views an episode to date.



Challenging: Sandy Galea talks to the Rev Dominic Steele in an episode of The Pastor's Heart.

IT'S NOT JUST MINISTERS

Moore College students Andrea Abey and Polly Butterworth have also chosen to make a podcast, focusing on the untold stories of contemporary and historical women. What She Said aims to provide helpful and enlightening conversations, to encourage and equip women in their Christian walk.

"We've found this medium for us to speak and to be free from those constraints or things that make a conversation difficult," Abey says.

The pair see a lack of empathy as one of the key issues facing society and stopping different groups from listening to each other, and have structured their podcast as a conversation in which they listen to and discuss different views.

"We want to have a discussion and for the way we talk about issues to be a teaching point in and of itself," Butterworth says, pointing to their recent episode about polyamory as an example. "We don't position ourselves as experts, we position ourselves as two women who have the truth and are trying to find out what that looks like in our lives. This helps the listener to feel their way through the topic or the issue in a way that is a clear judgement."

Tori Walker is another example of a Christian woman excited about the conversational aspects of podcasting. She says with The Lydia Project she has created a podcast she would love to have listened to.

"I love listening to podcasts myself," she says. "I just found myself super excited when the person I was listening to being interviewed was a Christian, when they talked about how their faith impacted the decisions that they made."

Walker uses four basic questions to structure conversations with Christian women.

- How did you come to faith?
- What ministry are you involved in?
- What is impacting your life at the moment?
- What is keeping you going as a Christian at the moment?

"Everybody has a really interesting story to tell," she says. "I'm encouraged by hearing about how every person has come to faith in Christ, and how they are trying to stick to it and stand firm."

PODCASTS WORK FOR MULTITASKERS

One reason these women have turned to podcasting is that they are able to reach an audience that isn't likely to sit at a computer for hours on end.

Walker explains that part of her reasoning behind creating a podcast was because she wanted to consume Christian content when she was doing other things, rather than looking at a computer screen – particularly when her kids were around.

Abey and Butterworth agree, highlighting the ideal opportunity podcasts give women with children to engage with Christian content online. "You can listen to a podcast while you are also folding your washing and driving your kids to school."

However, they think it's important to note that the stories they tell are not just useful for women. "Sometimes people think women's stories are just for women. But that's just not the case," Abey says, pointing to stories of women in the Bible as an example of how much everyone can learn from listening to women's voices.

FOR THE UNBELIEVER?

While the podcasts highlighted are targeted primarily towards a Christian audience, it's also very important to be aware of who could be listening. Because podcasting platforms are quite democratic, it's an easy and non-confrontational medium for the non-Christian listener.

"We pray for the non-Christians who listen to it," Abey says, explaining that while their podcasts are targeting Christians, they always keep the non-believing listener in mind.

Ultimately, Abey is about defeating an "us versus them" mentality and reaching out, through whatever platform they can.

"God can use anything he wants and he often does... I hope they hear us earnestly speaking about the God we love and the way he has worked in human history," she says.

It sounds like podcasting is a great way to do that.

(For the clergy among us, podcasts also provide a way to communicate things with more depth. If you record your sermons, why not put them up as a podcast, too?)

SIX GREAT PODCASTS TO SUPERCHARGE YOUR COMMUTE

We are big fans of the podcasts pastors are putting together! Podcasting is one of the best ways to engage deeply with the Bible online, and there are some great Christian options out there.



The Word Grows

A bi-weekly podcast created by the Rev Tom Habib, The Word Grows is based on the deep conviction that life and growth in Christ come as we hear his word and his Spirit works in our hearts.

Each season Habib goes through a book of the Bible (or part of a book) and puts together episodes based on what God's word is teaching in the passage. But this is more than a sermon. Although he begins by looking at the themes and ideas of a passage, he also includes a range of segments and interviews that help unpack what these truths mean for life and ministry today.

Where to start Episode 5: Time to get to work.

In this episode, Habib looks at John 4 and explores how secularisation and how this impacts the role of the people of God. Bishop Peter Lin also makes a guest appearance, talking about ministry in Fairfield and how to reach southwest Sydney.

<http://thewordgrows.com/>

The Centre For Christian Living

The Centre for Christian Living Podcast is for Moore College initiative to explore different aspects of Christian life and provide insight for individuals looking to follow God. The director of CCL, the Rev Tony Payne, sits down with different individuals and discusses all aspects of life, from travelling as a Christian to how we can understand guilt and shame.

Where to start Let's change the story about domestic violence

This is a helpful, relevant and honest look at how the Church can and is responding to domestic violence. Archdeacon Kara Hartley is heavily involved in the support of women, and her interview reminds us of the grace that God gives.

<https://ccl.moore.edu.au/listen/podcast/>

The Lydia Project

The Lydia Project is a Gospel Coalition podcast featuring informal interviews with Christian women about faith, life and ministry. The series is the creation of Tori Walker and shows many different angles of what it means to be a Christian woman.

Where to start Club Mango, reflecting on 20 years of praying together

This isn't a typical episode of the Lydia Project but it's one of the most meaningful ones. Walker reflects with her prayer

group of 20 years through a car trip together. It's meaningful, and shows how all of life can point back to God.

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/the-lydia-project/>

The Pastor's Heart

Available through Facebook and as a podcast, the Rev Dominic Steele talks to a leading Australian pastor and asks them to reflect on how God has changed their heart. There's a focus on the joys, sorrows and frustrations of ministry as well as strategic and theological elements of being on mission for Jesus. You'll love it if you're a senior pastor, or working in ministry. There's a balance of strategy and personal insight.

Where to start Sandy Galea on Kids with Grief

Galea sits down with Steele to discuss how MBM helps kids deal with grief in the context of the gospel. The church has many families going through difficult times, and Galea's insight on how to support children is invaluable.

www.thepastorsheart.net/

Sermon series

Many churches put their sermons online each week. It's a great way to share the teaching and ensure it gets to a wider audience. Sermons between 30-40 minutes long can be a great way to grow while on the way to work.

Where to start New Life Oran Park

This is a relatively young church making big waves in southwestern Sydney. It was recently involved in the regional Jesus is _____ campaign and has a lot to teach others about living boldly for God.

<http://newlifeanglican.org.au/sermon-podcasts-all/>

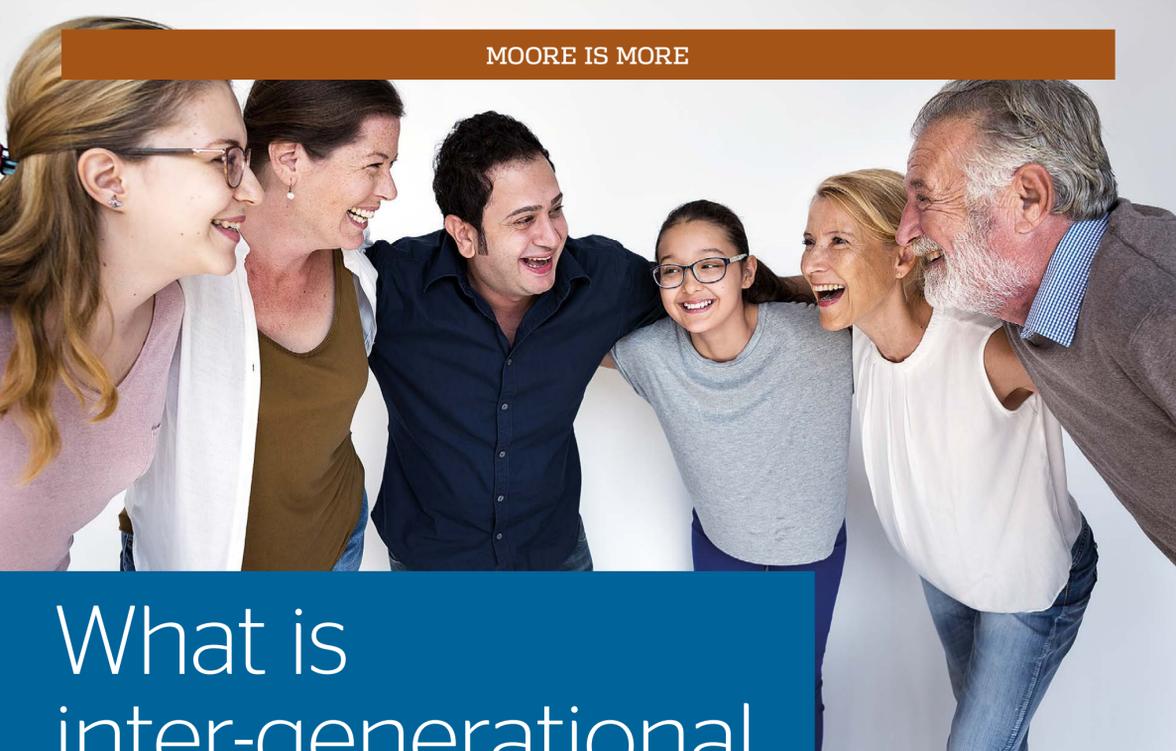
What She Said

This fresh podcast is run by two Moore College students who wanted to give people a chance to hear from the women God has worked through. What She Said focuses on historical, biblical and contemporary women to highlight God's promises and wonders.

Where to start Episode One: the Queen.

An excellent episode exploring our reigning monarch and how she has stood up for her faith over her long lifetime.

www.instagram.com/podcastwhatsaid/



What is inter-generational ministry?

If we want to love each other well as Christians, it's time to get out of our relational comfort zone, writes **ARCHIE POULOS**.

IN SYDNEY WE HAVE SOME BLIND SPOTS AND THEY DERIVE FROM OUR SUCCESS.

Psalm 78 (along with so many others) speaks of the privilege and requirement of one generation telling the next of the marvellous deeds of the Lord. Those older have the communal responsibility to the next generation to remind them of the character and commands of God.

But when friends from England visit, a common observation is that our ministries are very different to theirs, with one particular area that we strata our gatherings by age: 8am is the retirees' gathering, 10am is the family gathering and 7pm is for young people. "Back at home," they say, "all our gatherings are for any age."

I protest that maybe this is because of the English weather or, more helpfully, that "we are providing valuable, valued, focused and targeted ministry" by doing this. And a sharp response to me is that it's fine for radio stations to differentiate by age, but "where do you fulfil Psalm 78?"

It's a good question. This article is a call to both church leaders and all church members to think about how we structure our lives together to enable this generation-to-generation relating to be enhanced.

ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

How do we fulfil Psalm 78? What does one generation telling the next look like?

From the outset let me state that I think there is much to commend homogeneous ministry – groups gathering with people in like situations – but it is not sufficient, and sometimes dangerous. So what do we do?

It seems to me that at the heart of it is thinking through our church relationships, enabling a Christian to see a path forward as they navigate the various stages of life, one marked out by those who have gone ahead of them.

The diagram below is my attempt to visualise what these pathway relationships look like from the position of a young person, taking into account the relationships they are already a part of.

A young person is not an isolated being. They exist in a family (nuclear: father, mother, siblings) and in a wider set of relationships that their family participates in.

Now consider the family. Parents, no matter how wise they may be, need help in raising children. There is no manual of how to raise children and the wisdom comes from having experienced it and making the mistakes in doing so. The people who have developed this wisdom are not generally the parents, but those who have already experienced parenting. So the parents need older, wiser people to help them to raise this generation in knowing God.

A young person has a particular relationship with their parents, with all the relational, experiential and emotional complexities that go along with that relationship. While it is primarily the responsibility of parents to raise their children in the fear of the Lord, young people (and their parents) benefit greatly from having "uncles" and "aunts" in the faith, who may well say the same things as their parents but who are listened to more intently. If nothing else, having these aunts and uncles reinforces that this is not just a weird way of living that our family has. Of course, this is even more important for a young person whose parents do not profess faith.

Faith aunts and uncles are so valuable, but a person's identity and desires are significantly shaped by those just a little older or further along than them. So it is relationally beneficial for a young person to have an older "sibling", who is not of their genetic family, to model the way forward and to be an anchor – or at least a sounding board – through the circumstances of life. This illuminates the immediate path for the young person to take.

Also, young people are shaped by their peer group. From just before teenage years, they tend to draw their identity not so much from family, but from peers. So having a Christian peer group is significant, and this is one of the areas we do quite well in church ministry.

So far, the descriptions of relationships have been focused on the young person we are considering and how these relationships will benefit them. To consider only these relationships is a breeding ground for self-centredness. We must, therefore, not ignore two further aspects of relationships that young people have. The first is with those younger than themselves. Just as they benefit from having older siblings in the faith, so too, no matter what age the young person is, they should think of how they can help younger people become more like Jesus. This is simple Christian thinking.

Second, each relationship described in the diagram has a two-way arrow. That is, every person needs to think and recognise that they may be a blessing to others with whom they have a relationship. The spiritual "father" can be greatly blessed by seeing the work of God in others. The questions and responses of young people to issues can challenge and teach older people.

It is not just relationships that are enhanced, though. The web of relationships described gives a pathway for people to follow as they progress through the different stages of life. At every stage there are people just a little further ahead showing the way, showing that persevering is both possible and beneficial and acting as mentors through the difficulties to be faced.

Evidence abounds that people (often without intending to do so) stop serving Jesus at transition points of life. I wonder whether one reason is that there aren't those just a little further ahead investing in helping these people to safely traverse these changes.

WHY DON'T WE JUST DO IT?

If what I am proposing rings true, why aren't we doing it? There are so many reasons, and the significance of each varies in different situations. But here are some that spring to mind.

Our churches have been reasonably successful in their age-stratified ministry. Early services are still viable because we are living off church attendance and faith from a generation ago. Praise God for this. Family services are still well populated, but the evidence shows that about one quarter of those attending came to faith through our good university ministries. That is, we have had loss of people migrating to family stages from our youth, but it has partly been hidden by good evangelism and ministry elsewhere.

Young people's evening services have flourished, but in a diminishing number of churches. There is a buzz around being with people who are like you and a crowd attracts a crowd. So, while some evening services remain well attended, there is also a shocking number of churches in our own city that have now closed their evening services. I am arguing that one reason for not considering change is that we are doing quite well, but this will not last for much longer.

What we are doing satisfies our current members. Parents want their children looked after well. Young people love being with people like them. It is much harder and more costly for all involved to engage in inter-generational ministry. Our response is therefore to do what we have been doing, but just a little better each year. There is strong resistance to rocking the boat.

Our society has moved to the nuclear family and the outsourcing of tasks, and the ministry model we employ resonates with the way our society functions. We staff our ministries to maintain the status quo. It is usual that we ask our youth leaders to oversee the youth ministry, or if we have paid pastors we allocate the focused portfolio of youth ministry to them.

This division of labour makes it very difficult to structure inter-generational ministry; it requires a whole of church way of thinking. The impetus to create inter-generational ministry often comes from youth leaders, but they are the ones least able to execute it. They tend to not have deep relationships with older members, and sometimes have short tenure and so come and go in this ministry – leading them to be considered by others as not understanding the breadth of congregational life and issues, making it easier to dismiss their ideas.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Recognising the forces that operate to resist change, what might we do? Here are some suggestions to get us started. They are intended to begin a conversation. I am sure conversations will provide even better input.

Inter-generational ministry is about promoting relationships and this involves long-term concerted effort, so beware the short circuit, quick-fix solution. One quick-fix solution is to undo the homogeneous age stratification by having everyone in the same place at the same time. Merely doing this has normally resulted in disaster.

Every group has normal ways of engaging and to gather all together without helping to work out how we can build relationships actually harms the relationships – even within a homogeneous group, let alone the wider relationships.

If we are going to do this, it takes much hard work and time. We need to help every group think about how to use the time to best engage with others, and to know it will be initially be sub-optimal until we get it right or at least get used to it. Those preparing for this common time will need extra time to prepare themselves and others for the occasion.

Don't underestimate the important place for gathering by age group. Gathering in this way makes it easier for the time spent to be both pleasurable and profitable. But we also need a structure for creating the inter-generational relationships.

For starters, we could think about how we use our small groups. Could they become family group meetings? This increases complexity, but is worth considering.

We could ask people in different age groups to adopt someone from another group – for example, empty nesters deciding to regularly catch up and share with a young person after church. In our age where we are rightly concerned about predatory behaviour we must have good systems and policies in place here (for example, no email contact unless parents are also copied into the correspondence). In many churches there is the blessing of older widows praying regularly for every baby born into church life, and for their parents!

We could do things together across the ages. Most relationships are built as people do things side by side. The church working bee is a great opportunity, as are recreational activities: I notice men organise to go to sporting events with other men. How about if we went as families and sought to get to know others in the family?

Both Effective Ministry (www.effectiveministry.org) and Youthworks have done some excellent thinking on this matter. It is important for us all to engage with it.

I suspect we are now all feeling the cost of what is being suggested. To move in this direction will mean that what we start will probably be inferior to what we are used to, and it will take lots of effort to achieve even that! There will be pushback as it doesn't immediately meet our needs, but we must all take a responsibility for a real, effective and fruitful cradle-to-grave ministry. SC

The Rev Archie Poulos is head of the Department of Ministry, director of the Centre for Ministry Development and lectures in ministry at Moore College.



God's people together

THE PARISH OF EPPING MARKED 50 YEARS SINCE THE CONSECRATION OF ITS MAIN CHURCH, ST Alban's, with a weekend of celebrations centred on and around that building.

A dinner was held on the anniversary itself, May 12, while on May 13 parishioners gathered to give thanks for the many years of ministry on the site – 50 of them in the building consecrated by Archbishop Marcus Loane in 1968.

Anglican churches cannot be consecrated until any debts owing on their construction are paid, which Epping rector the Rt Rev Ross Nicholson regards as a "great little gospel illustration".

"We have a debt to sin and then Jesus removes that debt from us, and we become consecrated, or made holy, for the task God is calling us to do," he says.

He adds that Archbishop Davies, who came to help the parish celebrate, "picked up on that theme about us being the people of God – who are consecrated to that task of being his people, reaching out and being witnesses to the wider community".

The church has a copy of the original consecration service and included some of its prayers and choral elements into the anniversary service. And then celebrated some more over morning tea.

Bishop Nicholson says parish members were thrilled with the events: "The number of people who came up to me and said, 'That was a fantastic evening and the service today was so wonderful!'"

"It's so important to come together and celebrate – there are not really a lot of times in our life where we can do that. We have to create those opportunities where God's people can come together and celebrate who we are, what we've done in the past and where we're going in the future."

Tea and friendship at Lavender Bay



KEEN TO ENGAGE MORE WITH ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY, CHRIST CHURCH, LAVENDER BAY UTILISED its prime harbourside setting to host "High Tea by the Harbour" last month.

"The purpose was for us to be able to invite the neighbours," says Christ Church's rector the Rev Lachlan Edwards. "I've been here for a year now... we've all got to know one another, so the next chapter for the church is inviting the neighbours over: how do we do the next steps of outreach and engagement?"

Mr Edwards says the event, which was organised by one of his assistant ministers the Rev Evonne Paddison, was designed so parishioners could host a table and invite friends, family and neighbours, who were served high tea by another team of church volunteers (including assistant minister the Rev Di Nicolios, right).

Congregation members and friends also baked up a storm for the 110 guests – more than half of whom were visitors – and everyone sat in a marquee on the church lawns to eat, drink and chat.

There was also the opportunity to listen to guest speaker (and regular worshipper at Lavender Bay) former Prime Minister John Howard, who spoke about how Judeo-Christian values had "shaped us as a civilisation and a society".

Says Mr Edwards: "John Howard has a particular concern that we continue to uphold the Judeo-Christian values of our culture – on which our society, government and social welfare structures are built. He's concerned that this is being eroded away [but believes] there's good reason for us to remain with those historical values so we have a positive future ahead of us."

Feedback from the event was so positive that another high tea is planned for September, with the medical director of CareFlight International, Dr Noel Eatough, already pencilled in as speaker.

"There were some who were quite nervous about coming onto the church grounds," Mr Edwards says, "but they were pleasantly surprised by the community and love and engagement they received during the afternoon and even said they wouldn't mind coming back again!"

He adds that, in the spring, Lavender Bay will continue its outreach by adding another church meeting to its traditional morning choral service. A contemporary evening gathering is planned, "to engage a younger demographic from our local community".

MU goes to Wollongong

IT WAS THE SPEAKERS AND THE SUBJECT WHICH combined to draw so many to the May Mothers' Union seminar at Fairy Meadow: "I feel, I fear, I hope – living for God in a stress-filled world". It followed the very successful day at St Andrew's Cathedral in February that addressed the same issues.

More than 140 women from the Illawarra packed in to hear Archdeacon Kara Hartley address the key issue of what Archdeacon Kara Hartley address the key issue of what we should respond as Christians.

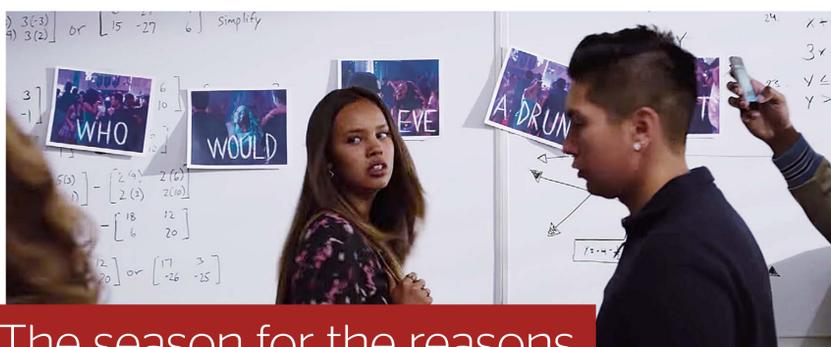
Of course, the world is God's good creation and we are blessed by its many gifts. But there is another sense in which the world can trap us, offering us pleasures that quickly fade and fulfilment that never truly satisfies. It was a very practical talk with clear life applications.

Sally Sims (pictured, right), author of the recent and popular book *Together through the Storm*, built on this foundation by talking very directly and straight from God's word about contentment and where it is found. One of the keys to what Sims said was that we need to help each other as we hold on to the hope that God alone gives in a world that makes us anxious and even fearful.

We need each other – and that's exactly what the seminar gave those who came.

As one of the attendees said, "Thank you so much. I really enjoyed both speakers. I was very encouraged. My daughter-in-law suffers greatly [from anxiety] and their words of wisdom were very helpful."





The season for the reasons

With the most tweeted about show of 2017 back for a second season, *13 Reasons Why* continues to stir up controversy by presenting some of the darkest moments of teens' lives as confronting entertainment. Why is a show such as this so popular, and is it really appropriate for people to binge watch things like this? Warning: some spoilers ahead.

TARA SING

13 Reasons Why, Season 2
Netflix

HE LIVES OF THOSE AT LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL WERE SHAKEN WHEN HANNAH BAKER suicided, and left 13 tapes explaining why she had taken this step. Season 2 picks up the story five months later, as locals are still trying to grapple with the lasting effects of her death on their community. While Season 1 was structured around Hannah's reasons, with one explored in each episode, Season 2 takes us through the court trial between Hannah's parents and the school. It continues to raise controversial issues, graphically depicting sexual assault and gun violence.

One of the biggest critiques of the first season was the carelessness of the way teen mental health issues were portrayed. Suicide was displayed as an act of revenge, where the deceased has the opportunity to see how others respond to her death and the tapes that outline her decision. The support structures that should exist in a teen's life (such as school, counsellors and other safe adults) were portrayed as incompetent and useless when Hannah Baker reached out to them.

Netflix and the creators of the show have listened to this feedback and taken a few steps in the right direction, by adding warnings at the start of each episode and pointing people to help lines and resources. However, there is still an unhelpful theme of teenage autonomy throughout. The most concerning is in the season finale where, instead of alerting authorities to a possible high school shooting, main character Clay chooses instead to jump in and resolve issues on his own.

"A young person could watch this show and think, 'No adult understands and is helpful or willing to help', and that's a source of frustration," says Leonie Fernando, from Rosemeadow-Appin Anglican Churches.

Mrs Fernando is a high school social worker and certified Mental Health First Aid trainer. She feels that the lack of support from adult characters for the teens is a concern.

"There's no positive experience showcased," she says. "In essence, the unhelpful stuff is that young people could walk away more vulnerable if they were already in that head space themselves. But if it does get young people reaching out, that's a good outcome. I happen to work at a school that is working very hard to raise the issues of wellbeing and advocate for seeking help both in and outside the school. I feel like *13 Reasons Why* set us back a little bit, because you could watch that show and think that your school would never understand."

The show's popularity makes one thing clear: its themes connect to the experiences of young people. Mrs Ingrid Peters, a Christian psychologist, says a show like this can be a helpful tool for sparking conversations. With 75 per cent of all mental health issues beginning in teenage years, as Christians we shouldn't shy away from discussing such topics.

"Teenagers make heaps of mistakes, and often because of their fear of judgement or being found out they stop disclosing to youth leaders or churches," says Mrs Peters, who has worked in teenage psychology for more than a decade.

"The wonderful thing is when they do watch a show like this, you've got an inroad to talk. Lots of people feel you have to wait. If your kid loves a show about mental health, they've opened the doorway for you to ask questions. And you can ask things like, 'Have you ever experienced this type of bullying? Do you think this is a fair way for them to manage it?' Talk through the broader concepts. Anyone who is considered a good connection by the teen can have these conversations."

The question isn't whether we should watch a show like this or not. There are Christians who will decide to watch, and Christians who will decide not to. Instead we need to be ready to help people as they wrestle with *13 Reasons Why*. Our churches need to be safe spaces for these conversations to take place, so be prepared to ask questions, be ready to listen and know where to point people for help if they need it. Most of all, be ready to help them think through these issues and fix their eyes on Jesus.

For mental health resources for young people, see www.headspace.org.au or www.beyondblue.org.au. The makers of *13 Reasons Why* have also collaborated with mental health organisations to create resources at www.13reasonswhy.info



In Han's boots

JUDY ADAMSON

Solo: A Star Wars Story
Rated M

A LONG TIME AGO IN A GALAXY PRETTY CLOSE BY, HAN SOLO FIRST APPEARED on our cinema screens in the original *Star Wars* film. I was 10 years old and thought he was the coolest thing imaginable – as did millions of others around the globe.

Small wonder, then, that the career of Harrison Ford shot into the stratosphere after *Star Wars: A New Hope*, while Mark Hamill's more serious, Force-driven character of Luke Skywalker didn't grab our interest quite as much.

Han Solo was a cheeky, irreverent bad boy makes good with courage in a tight place, and we loved him for it, so stepping into those boots was always going to be a big ask. Would the actor playing Han try and mimic Ford in word and action – and be roundly criticised when he failed – or take the character in a completely different direction?

Alden Ehrenreich as the young Han Solo seems to strike a middle path, and it works pretty well. The Han of *Solo: A Star Wars Story* is confident and plucky but hasn't quite developed the swagger and cynicism we see in *A New Hope*, and that's okay. He's still a teenager, after all (and don't ask me how I know that... suffice to say that the online world of *Star Wars* fandom is filled with many strange things).

The film begins on Han's home world of Corellia, where he and other parentless kids are given shelter, taught crime from the cradle and live in virtual slavery. Han and his girlfriend Qi'ra (Emilia Clarke) hope to steal enough to run away together, but it doesn't go entirely as planned, and Han ends up making an unexpected choice to save himself.

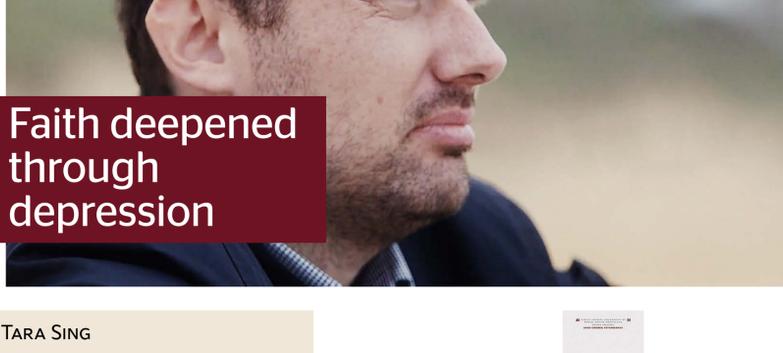
The story is long and complicated, but die-hard fans will find plenty to rejoice in. There are only minimal spoilers in saying we see the unlikely first meeting between Han and his eventual first mate Chewbacca, the card games between Han and Lando Calrissian (Donald Glover), the first appearance of the Millennium Falcon and the famous "Kessel run". There's also a big reveal near the end of the film, which had a major aficionado near me beside himself with delight. But my lips are sealed.

I did find the film over-long at 135 minutes – perhaps one too many action sequences (and there are plenty of those!). The length may be more of an issue for those who have never seen a *Star Wars* film and don't care as much about story background, although having said that, a complete newbie could follow pretty much all the action.

There's a load of entertainment value, lots of excellent special effects, some very enjoyable new characters – particularly Calrissian's sassy droid, L3-37 – and weird creatures/planets galore. If that's your thing, you'll be happy, even though some of the action ideas have definitely been seen before.

For those seeking something deeper, the film considers power, greed and their negative effects along with the oppression of people groups and individuals – all very topical in today's world. And, like many a *Star Wars* film before it, *Solo* also tackles love, loyalty and betrayal. Who are we when no one is looking? What does it mean to belong? Is real love and trust possible? What makes us who we are? Can we find redemption from our past?

The Force is never mentioned in this film as, like Han Solo himself, it's about action, adventure, taking crazy risks and travelling through the stars. And even if it does take a little long to get you there it's not a bad ride.



Faith deepened through depression

TARA SING

Down Not Out: Depression, anxiety, and the difference Jesus makes

by Chris Cipollone



WITH ONE MILLION AUSTRALIAN ADULTS SUFFERING FROM DEPRESSION – AND OVER two million wrestling with anxiety – in any one year, it's likely that you and I know someone struggling. In these times, remembering Christ is necessary but not easy. A new release from The Good Book Company seeks to help by showing the difference Jesus makes to anxiety.

Inspired by his own battles with mental health, the Rev Chris Cipollone (above) has written *Down Not Out* to share his story and help others who are struggling.

A week before his 30th birthday Mr Cipollone lay on the floor of a psychiatric hospital, unconscious. A father of two, about to finish studying at Moore College and enter full-time ministry, he found himself in the deepest of pits. "My identity was gone," he says. "When I was meant to be building to something bigger, I had nothing."

Mr Cipollone, an assistant minister at St Matthew's, West Pymble, hopes others who are suffering or caring for loved ones will fight to anchor their identities in Jesus.

"I've intentionally put a lot of myself in the book in the hope that those who are suffering know they're not the only ones," he says. "If the stats are true, then there are lots of people who are struggling and suffering in silence. Depression and anxiety are not just the belief that today is going to be hard, it's the belief that every day is going to be as hard as this one. That's when we give up hope."

"My hope in sharing this book is to show people that this is not true, in a loving way. There are brighter days among the darker ones. I want people to see that if it's true to live as Christ, and maturity in him is the purpose of life, then you can persevere – especially in the hardest days."

Down Not Out is written with raw honesty as Mr Cipollone describes his darkest moments. Each chapter ends with helpful reflection questions aimed to encourage readers to work through these issues themselves or with a trusted friend.

Most importantly, each chapter also unpacks the Bible, exploring what God has to say on key topics such as identity, anxiety, suicide, healing, discernment and more. There is a gentleness and warmth to the book, allowing people to read without feeling judged for their thoughts or feelings.

"I wouldn't wish [this experience] on anybody, but I'm not sorry it happened to me," Mr Cipollone says. "This has given me a depth of faith and trust and joy that I don't think I ever would have learned."

He's also thankful for the way his experiences have helped him serve. "The overwhelming feeling is one of gratitude, that [God] would equip me with this story with the ability to be a better pastor as a result of it."

For more information on the book, visit www.downnotout.com.au

The eyes of faith

KAY CLARK

They Shall See His Face: The Story of Amy Oxley Wilkinson and Her Visionary Blind School in China

by Linda and Robert Banks



IF YOU GO TO BEIJING AND VISIT THE MAIN GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL, YOU WILL SEE crosses carved on its stone entrance gates, a reminder of the hospital's Christian origins. In many parts of the world, hospitals, schools and caring institutions were founded by people motivated by the love of Christ. Such a one was Amy Oxley, whose story is the subject of this compelling book.

In Chinese churches it is not uncommon to find "Bible women" who are local evangelists in the villages. They are usually better received than their male counterparts because their coming is not seen as a threat to the authority of male village leaders. This trend was picked up by the early missionaries, most of whom were single women (including Sophie Newton, whose story is told in a previous book by the same authors, *View from the Faraway Pagoda*).

Amy trained as a nurse, being especially drawn to children with special needs, whom she befriended as well as caring for their physical needs. She applied to and was accepted by the Church Missionary Society in 1892. She spent the next two years at the CMS training school, Marsden Training Home, and then a further two years doing obstetrics and midwifery to complete her nursing training.

It was during this time that the chilling news of the first missionaries to be martyred in Kuching was received, so those about to go to China had no illusions about the safety of their enterprise. Despite the tumultuous times of the Boxer Rebellion and the Nationalist Revolution, they set out into this very uncertain world, trusting in God who had called them.

Amy began with a language tutor and four to five hours of daily private study. She was appointed to work in a dispensary at Lien Kong in Fujian province, where she saw "about a hundred patients in the first few weeks". She moved to permanent housing in Deng Doi and soon observed some of the region's pressing problems – opium addiction, infanticide, foot binding and lack of schooling.

During her first year in Deng Doi, Amy's eyes were opened to the possibility of a new work:

"In [my] homeland, I had passed the blind on the other side of the street, for I had no special interest in them. Now my heart was stirred to its depths on many occasions when blind children were brought to me in our dispensary... Going to a village one day, I stumbled across a helpless blind boy crawling in a ditch. He told me his father had wanted to kill him but seeing I was coming, had left him for me... to be blind is a terrible thing. To be blind of poor Chinese parentage is still more terrible."

The first Blind School began with one boy in Amy's own home. A major issue she had to confront was language – first, proficiency in the Foochow (Fuzhou) dialect, then learning how to write Chinese (it takes about 10,000 characters to read a newspaper!) and finally, and especially, inventing a Braille system to suit.

In Amy's own words, "God opened a door" in the form of a blind Scotsman at Amoy who taught her English Braille, from which she became the first to set down Chinese Braille from the Romanised form of the local dialect.

It was decided that henceforth Amy would be full-time in work with the Blind School. She changed the name from the prosaic Boys Blind School to the evocative evangelistic Chinese name of "Soul-lighted school". She rigged up an exercise room with long wires, which enabled the boys to run full tilt the length of the room – maybe the first time some of these children could enjoy any exercise.

The hospital now had a new superintendent, Dr George Wilkinson. The two worked well together and in 1902 George and Amy were married. The advent of World War I prolonged a family furlough so they and their two children remained in England and settled there.

There are many Chinese men and women (the school was soon opened to girls as well as boys) who enjoy a fulfilled adult life, thanks to Amy's work. The school these days has more than 80 pupils and is still carrying on its work, though sadly it is no longer Christian.

This book is an inspiration to take up the opportunities God gives us and, in his strength, to have the ability and ingenuity to fulfil his role for each of us.

"The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city and his servants will serve him. They will see his face and his name will be upon their foreheads... And they will reign for ever and ever"

(Rev 22:3-5).