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Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

Final farewells

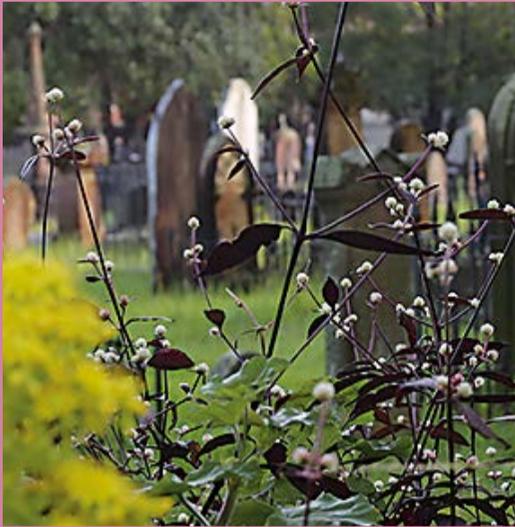
THE GOOD, THE SAD AND THE REALLY UNHELPFUL

PLUS

Fatphobia and rubbish TV

Ministry in Zimbabwe

CONTENTS



COVER

St Jude's cemetery,
Randwick. photo:
Katie Barget 10

Sydney News 3

Mission News 4

Australian News 5

World News 6

Letters 7

Essay 8

Archbishop Writes 9

Cover Feature 10

Moore is More 11

Events 12

Culture 13



**“We have Christians and
non-Christians walking
together, side by side”**

Kate Pearse
Sydney News

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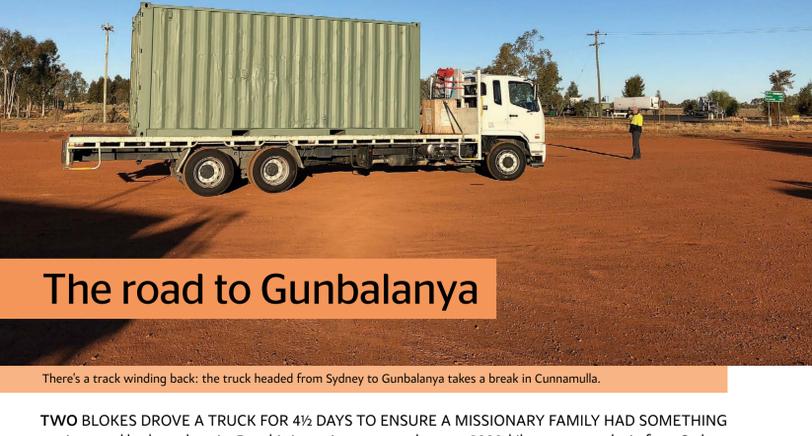
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The road to Gunbalanya

There's a track winding back: the truck headed from Sydney to Gunbalanya takes a break in Cunnamulla.

TWO BLOKES DROVE A TRUCK FOR 4½ DAYS TO ENSURE A MISSIONARY FAMILY HAD SOMETHING to sit on and beds to sleep in. But this is not just a story about an 8000-kilometre round trip from Sydney to Gunbalanya in the Northern Territory – Matt Pearson feels this is what it looks like for every member of the church to play a part in God's mission.

Mr Pearson, along with his wife Lisa and four young children, recently moved to Gunbalanya as missionaries with the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to support the Rev Lois Nadjamerrek at Emmanuel Church. But the family quickly discovered that getting their furniture and belongings to move with them was a bigger challenge than expected.

"Many people said, 'We don't do remote travel,'" Mr Pearson says. "We couldn't even find anyone, let alone pay the cost of transport!"

But when he mentioned the problem to two friends in his cycling group – Mark Stephenson from Church@thePeak and James Hunkin from Gymea Anglican – they sprung into action.

"Mark looked over at James and said, 'I'll drive it up!'," Mr Pearson recalls. "I thought, 'You don't know what you're signing up for'. But he meant it."

A trip of this size was a first for Mr Hunkin. "I've done up and down the east coast, but nothing to Darwin," he says. "We'd get up at 6am and stop at 7.30pm when the kangaroos came out. We listened to a series of talks on the way."

With the help of Lyndon Mitchell, the missions co-ordinator at Church@thePeak, and support from neighbouring churches such as Park Road Anglican, a team of people rallied to organise a truck, raise funds to cover the cost of fuel and pack the container with supplies for the Pearsons' pantry.

Despite plenty of obstacles, Mr Hunkin felt God's presence with him and Mr Stephenson the entire journey. "Satan was trying to thwart the efforts," he says. "We thought we could use Mark's truck, but then that wasn't possible. It was difficult to find a hire truck that could take a container. Then the crane broke down when we meant to leave."

"I wasn't concerned because we have an awesome God, and we know that whatever God's will is, it will be done. We just saw the providence of God in so many ways. God's hand really was in it. We didn't have to pray for a parking spot – all the time he just provided. Probably because Lyndon was at home praying for us," he adds with a laugh.

Humbled by the generosity of so many, Mr Pearson says the experience was a wonderful reminder of the grace of God and the body of believers working together.

"We saw them using the gifts that God has given them to be involved in what God is doing in the world," he says. "The logistics of getting things to Gunbalanya is challenging, but they volunteered with such a servant heart and attitude. It was something done for us from their own initiative and we can never repay them. These guys thought more of what they were doing than just driving – they were being part of God's work."

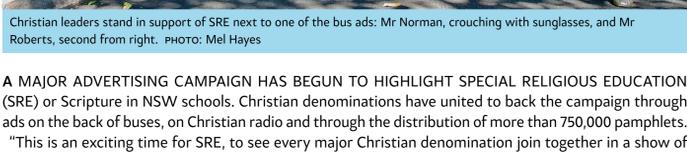
"Opening our container was like Christmas. It was filled with groceries and supplies. Getting food out here is challenging as well – a punnet of blueberries is \$14 and milk is \$6 for 2 litres. To open the container and see it filled with food, they've taken a lot of the stress from us. And we've been able to be generous and share what we have with people up here, too."

"It was an amazing act of kindness we will never forget."

SEPTEMBER 2018

Southern CROSS

4



Christian leaders stand in support of SRE next to one of the bus ads: Mr Norman, crouching with sunglasses, and Mr Roberts, second from right. PHOTO: Mel Hayes

SRE campaign targets values

A MAJOR ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN HAS BEGUN TO HIGHLIGHT SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SRE) or Scripture in NSW schools. Christian denominations have united to back the campaign through ads on the back of buses, on Christian radio and through the distribution of more than 750,000 pamphlets.

"This is an exciting time for SRE, to see every major Christian denomination join together in a show of solidarity behind the great benefits of Scripture lessons in our public schools," says Youthworks CEO, the Rev Craig Roberts, who was at the launch last month.

"The evidence is in: the freedom for parents to choose SRE for their children is good for the child, it's good for the school and it's good for the community. Youthworks alone has trained 2000 Anglican SRE teachers and helps this year to impact 200,000 students in building effective relationships between their local church and school."

The campaign is being backed by a website, faithlifevalues.com.au, which highlights parental choice and "building a better-balanced future" for students.

The campaign comes on the back of a survey by McCrindle Research that found 99 per cent of people believe it is important to teach values to Australian school students, with 84 per cent believing Christian heritage has been influential in shaping the values we teach children. The research also found that parents overwhelmingly want the choice of faith-based values education, with only 16 per cent of those surveyed opposed to giving parents this choice.

"Our experience is that the more information we provide parents, the more they are choosing the option of SRE for their children, so we are hoping this widespread campaign ensures that more parents are informed," says NSW Christian SRE spokesman Murray Norman.

"Education must be holistic and, like sports, music and other areas of education, we can't ignore the spiritual dimension and the need for children to question, explore and discover the values they build their lives upon."

Although atheist groups have attacked SRE in the media, it continues to have huge support across school communities with more than 70 per cent of primary school parents choosing to opt in to the program. Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk last month ruled out changing the way religious instruction is delivered in state schools. In NSW, Education Minister Rob Stokes last year pledged the Government would not be "revisiting its position" in support of SRE.

Says Mr Roberts: "We have nothing to be ashamed of in presenting Bible-based lessons to hundreds of thousands of students every week, informing them of the historic and life-changing claims of the gospel."

"Please pray for our Anglican SRE teachers, that they would use their training and the great news of the gospel to help answer kids' questions about life, explore the Christian faith and discover faith in Jesus. And thank God for the encouragement of both sides of Parliament and the support of the Department of Education in continuing SRE classes in NSW."



Sharing helps: Eden (right) speaks to the group as Trinity, one of the leaders, looks on

Help for kids after divorce

A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND PROGRAM IS RUNNING AT ST JUDE'S, BOWRAL TO HELP THE CHILDREN OF DIVORCED FAMILIES cope with the dramatic changes happening around them.

Divorce Care for Kids is a branch of the Divorce Care course, a 13-week program that supports separated families as they adjust to their new circumstances. St Jude's is the first parish in Australia to offer this alongside the adults program, with other churches soon to follow.

With almost half of all divorces in Australia affecting children, a program like this has the potential for broad community benefit.

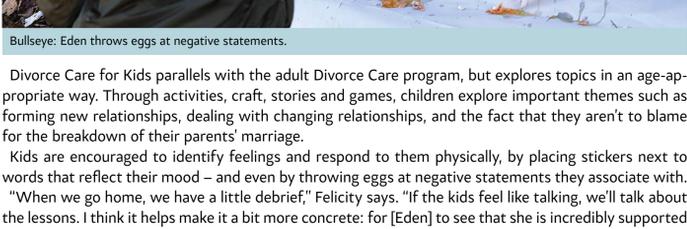
"We have had a few families from church experiencing separation, and we thought it would be a good thing to run something for the kids of these families," says Kate Pearse, the Community Engagement Co-ordinator at St Jude's. "It was a big need in the community too, and it's opened up doors in our community."

As more than one in 10 couples in the Southern Highlands are divorced, locals are also recognising the benefits of Divorce Care for Kids. Mrs Pearse sees this as a way St Jude's can show the love of Christ to those in tough situations.

"We have Christians and non-Christians walking together, side by side, loving and caring for each other," she says. "The gospel is being shown practically, and being explained theologically as well. This is done in both the adults and kids course."

Ten-year-old Eden has endured a rollercoaster of changes and emotions since her parents split three years ago, but the positive impact of Divorce Care for Kids is obvious to her mum Felicity.

"We had something very stressful come up, and Eden went off to do a breathing exercise," Felicity says. "She said to me, 'I am doing this because I feel very anxious.' She was able to use the tools she learned in the very first week [after the course]."



Bullseye: Eden throws eggs at negative statements.

Divorce Care for Kids parallels with the adult Divorce Care program, but explores topics in an age-appropriate way. Through activities, craft, stories and games, children explore important themes such as forming new relationships, dealing with changing relationships, and the fact that they aren't to blame for the breakdown of their parents' marriage.

Kids are encouraged to identify feelings and respond to them physically, by placing stickers next to words that reflect their mood – and even by throwing eggs at negative statements they associate with.

"When we go home, we have a little debrief," Felicity says. "If the kids feel like talking, we'll talk about the lessons. I think it helps make it a bit more concrete: for [Eden] to see that she is incredibly supported by friends and family and church, and for her to see that while Mum and Dad aren't perfect, God is. That's probably the biggest lesson she's got. That's something Eden says every week."

Mrs Pearse hopes to see other churches offering Divorce Care for Kids and caring for families that might feel ostracised by the church.

"It's about getting the gospel to people who are really hurting and who may feel church isn't for them," she says. "We want to say that Christ is for them, no matter what they're going through. It's a fantastic opportunity to bring the gospel to them, and it makes the church more open to the community."

Home chaplaincy a hit



A chance to be cheeky: Gordon Wilson shares a joke with his Anglicare At Home chaplain, Pip Russell.

IT'S BEEN A FEW MONTHS SINCE 91-YEAR-OLD GORDON WILSON HAS BEEN ABLE TO MAKE IT TO his church. An active member of Holy Trinity, Kingsford for almost 60 years, he can no longer attend due to health complications. However, he is greatly encouraged in his faith through the regular visits of his Anglicare chaplain, Pip Russell.

Miss Russell visits Mr Wilson every month as part of Anglicare Home Chaplaincy, a free service to all accessing the Anglicare At Home program.

The program offers personal support for older people who are living at home, and is part of Anglicare's vision to provide holistic care for every person on an Anglicare At Home package.

"Old age often isolates Christians from their church, so a chaplain's visit can be a vital support for their faith," explains the Rev Francis Chalwell, head of Anglicare's Aged Care Chaplaincy program.

For Mr Wilson, the visits from Miss Russell make a great difference to him. With a cheeky grin he says, "In the afternoons I'm normally at home, and I sit here so I can see the yard. When I see Pip's face at the window I try and run for it, but I can't run fast or far!"

Together they share a cup of tea, catch up on life, read the Bible and pray together. Occasionally she will take him on a drive to view the ocean. For Mr Wilson – who grew up always on and around the water – the ocean is a place with special meaning.

He always looks forward to Miss Russell's visits. "She really picks me up and gets me talking," he says with great appreciation.

There are nine Anglicare chaplains covering the wider Sydney area, with some travelling as far south as Batemans Bay, as far north as the Hawkesbury, and some further west than Katoomba. Miss Russell cares for more than 230 clients in the various suburbs and inner west of Sydney.

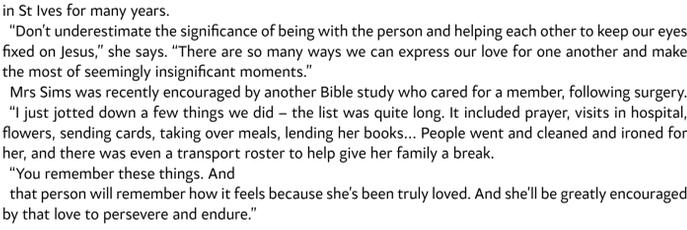
"I love seeing each one of my clients," she says. Some clients enjoy discussing faith, while others simply enjoy her company. "I see an Italian nonna with dementia," she adds. "We don't talk much, but she has a box of fabrics and we go through them, feeling and folding each piece. It gives her son, her main carer, a bit of respite. I love seeing her."

Mr Wilson feels that his faith is growing deeper every day, and he is thankful for the role that Miss Russell plays in supporting his faith.

"My minister asked me after my accident if it had affected my faith, and I said 'No'," he says. "I haven't turned sour. It's strengthened [my faith]. I'm thanking God more. I'm so blessed to have what I've got and the people around me."

"I thank God every day for the chaplains. Certainly makes a difference to me."

A study in everyday pastoral care



Long-distance lounge room: the growth group includes Lyn Ryan via Skype.

WHEN LYN RYAN CAME DOWN with health complications that made it hard for her to gather with other Christians, Lorraine Miller saw no reason why this meant Dr Ryan should miss growth group.

Nearly a year on from cutting back her social activities, Dr Ryan has continued to be part of a group of ladies from her church meeting for Bible study each week – she's just not there in person.

"It was a random idea – I said, 'We could Skype you in', and someone else said we should give it a try," says Mrs Miller, who leads the Tuesday night ladies' group at Dapto Anglican Church.

Dr Ryan is not the only person who has benefited from this arrangement. "She's a mature Christian lady with lots of wisdom, and she really benefits our group," Mrs Miller says. "It makes us more aware of including everybody. We keep saying, 'What do you think, Lyn?' because she's there on Skype."

While getting someone to join in on Skype might seem a simple thing for a group to do, it demonstrates a very important principle of pastoral care. "It's about doing ordinary things with extraordinary love," says Sally Sims, author of *Together Through the Storm: A Practical Guide to Christian Care*.

Mrs Sims has been helping to coordinate and train members of the Care Ministry at her home church in St Ives for many years.

"Don't underestimate the significance of being with the person and helping each other to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus," she says. "There are so many ways we can express our love for one another and make the most of seemingly insignificant moments."

Mrs Sims was recently encouraged by another Bible study who cared for a member, following surgery. "I just jotted down a few things we did – the list was quite long. It included prayer, visits in hospital, flowers, sending cards, taking over meals, lending her books... People went and cleaned and ironed for her, and there was even a transport roster to help give her family a break."

"You remember these things. And that person will remember how it feels because she's been truly loved. And she'll be greatly encouraged by that love to persevere and endure."

Pantry provider



Helping hands: Matt Madigan chats to a volunteer from Chester Hill Anglican.

THE MINISTRY OF ANGLICARE'S PANTRY VANS IS BOOMING ACROSS THE DIOCESE, WITH THE number of parishes running a Mobile Community Pantry (MCP) now standing at 41.

"I think we'll hit 45 by the end of the year, but the strategic growth plan is to have 100 in five years' time," says Anglicare's MCP manager, Matt Madigan. "If we can be in a third of parishes in the next five years that would be quite significant, and I think we'll reach that number easily."

"A number of pantry locations are just 'going off' – they're doing so well. In some ways that's sad, but it shows there's obviously a need out there. We're pleased that Anglicare can be part of the solution, sewn into the fabric of the diocesan Mission. It's really exciting for us."

The most recent additions to the Mobile Community Pantry service are Moss Vale, Cabramatta, Auburn, Sutherland and Rockdale parishes. Earlwood and Sadleir will begin hosting the service from next month.

The rector of Sutherland, the Rev Tom Hargreaves, says the timing was ideal for his church as a community housing block has just opened across the road. Congregation members have been quick to volunteer, also chatting to shoppers over afternoon tea beforehand – and the number of people using the pantry increases each fortnight.

"We now have contact with people from our community we have never seen before," he says. "The opportunity to demonstrate Christ's love in this context has been a real highlight for our team."

Community pantries began in 2016 with the desire to help parishes reach out to those struggling to make ends meet. People with pension, health or immigration cards can fill a bag with groceries – potentially worth \$60 – for \$10. A selection of pantries now also provide fresh food, and others operate from Anglicare shops.

Says Mr Madigan: "For churches in our Diocese gospel proclamation is so important but more are finding that people aren't coming on Sunday like they used to. A community development model can help build relationships... as well as providing opportunities to show mercy and compassion without becoming biblically lukewarm."



God at work in Zimbabwe

A group at the pastors' conference: (front row, left) Shupi, Tawanda and Unathi Masango; (front row, centre) Joe Radkovic; (middle, second from right) Jim Crowweller.

IMAGINE THE OUTCRY FROM AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS IF THE PRICE OF GROCERIES DOUBLED in a fortnight, or if banks wouldn't give customers their own money.

It might sound far fetched but this is everyday life in Zimbabwe, where Robert Mugabe ruled with an iron fist for 37 years, almost three quarters of the population lives below the poverty line and public debt stands at 82 per cent of annual GDP.

Yet final-year Moore College student Tawanda Masango knows God is still sovereign in his home country. "People learn about Zimbabwe's economy at university, but for us it's not an example in a textbook – it is the life we live," he says. "You have to cross the border to buy things because supermarkets start holding on to goods, ATMs stop giving cash, and pastors who might have come to our conference suddenly can't afford it.

"But despite these challenges, the most urgent need for Zimbabwe, and indeed for Australia, is the momentous news of the gospel, and by God's grace this gospel will be heard across all Zimbabwe!"

The conference Mr Masango speaks of is organised and run by the Australian branch of The Gospel Coalition of Zimbabwe (TGCZ), a group which began out of the desire to support the growth of the nation's evangelical ministry.

It is just one of many organisations (and individuals) in Australia keen to grow a healthy gospel ecosystem in Zimbabwe – from the national student ministry that Mr Masango will be working for out into churches and theological colleges. But it's a challenge on more than one front: the prosperity gospel is rife, pastors are under-trained and university ministry is under-financed.

Later this month the rector of Maroubra, the Rev Jim Crowweller, will return to Zimbabwe with Mr Masango, Maroubra parishioner Michael Neilsen and former CMS missionary in Africa, Joe Radkovic, for the third TGCZ pastors conference – which focuses on helping local pastors preach the gospel from the whole Bible.

"God's doing something in Zimbabwe," Mr Crowweller says. "People are doing amazing things there with threadbare resources to change the ministry ecosystem of the country."

A number of parishes across the Diocese – including Maroubra, Wild Street, Church by the Bridge, St Ives and Norwest – provide an array of ministry support for the work in Zimbabwe. MTS began running in the country last year, the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students is involved, and at Moore College a number of students take part in a prayer group for Africa, with members interested in potential future ministry in Zimbabwe.

In addition, Anglican Aid and CMS have provided financial support to Mr Masango and his family during his studies. Anglican Aid runs a community support program as well as a seed project for ministry in Zimbabwe, and CMS has its eye on a range of mission possibilities.

"We see Zimbabwe as a strategic place," says the international director of CMS Australia, the Rev Canon Peter Rodgers. "Our vision in Africa is to equip leaders, particularly in countries where the need is the greatest. Zimbabwe is such a place and we have identified possibilities to place missionaries into Bible teaching and theological education roles. Such workers would also be able to partner with Tawanda in supporting discipleship and training on university campuses.

"We would love to connect with people who share a vision to learn a local language and serve long term in Zimbabwe to build up faithful and committed leaders."

There's a lot to do, but there is also much happening under God already and Mr Masango is optimistic.

"God is building this up and they are stewarding it in Zimbabwe – it's his doing," he says. "I never thought we would have 30 pastors together from seven different denominations learning biblical frameworks and theology [as we did last year]! People drink it in the water in Sydney but in Zimbabwe some pastors have no training at all, and it's so important for them to receive it.

"I want people to go to Zimbabwe as theological lecturers. I don't know who God has in mind, but I've already been nagging people. We have two theological colleges that are open to people coming; the colleges are undernourished and the staff is threadbare.

"I have said, 'God, please bring me the people I need on this team.'"

Those interested in ministry updates can email tgcz.australia@gmail.com

A textbook could change South Sudan

WHEN WENDY NOBLE HEARD AND SAW the struggles that Bible college students with a non-English speaking background had when learning theology, she thought there must be something she could do. As an applied linguist, she began developing a course and textbook to help students fully engage with English academic texts and excel in their theological studies.

The call for such a course came from a Sydney theological college whose international students were failing the courses they had travelled so far to study. The need was reinforced when Dr Noble and her husband, Colin, travelled to South Sudan to teach for six weeks at Bishop Gwynne College (BGC).

Says Mr Noble: "Students are keen to learn at BGC, but they don't have the skills to learn, which is where Wendy's book comes in". Mr Noble is chaplain at William Clarke College and taught a short Old Testament course, while Dr Noble ran a pilot course teaching English based around theological content.

During their time at Bishop Gwynne in September last year, the couple – who attend St Matt's, West Pennant Hills – were blown away by the students' enthusiasm for learning, but heartbroken at the many barriers they faced.

"Students would be very grateful to be given a pen, for example," Mr Noble says. "They survived on one meal a day, because that's what the college could afford. They don't have money to buy basics like soap or pay for photocopying."

South Sudan is rebuilding itself after war, and Dr Noble says that training men and women at Bishop Gwynne College has the potential to help restore peace and advance development.

"The student cohort is intertribal, and English is their language of instruction, which breaks down the tribalism that is the root of such... division," she says. "BGC students are potential peace makers because, in developing countries, church leaders have great opportunities to bring peace, to start schools, clinics and bring in reliable funding from Christian sources."

With the working title of English for Theological Education, Dr Noble hopes the textbook and course will be a great help to students at BGC, as well as other students struggling to learn theology in English.

"Seeing the need face to face in South Sudan propelled me into an urgency for their sake, for these students who don't have a single textbook in common," she says. "They don't know how to use their library. I was teaching people how to read a Bible dictionary. They were so keen but there's no one there to teach them consistently."

Encouragement from the Australian College of Theology, and Anglican Deaconess Ministries through The Hub program, has indicated to Dr Noble that she is developing something useful.

"It's very unusual to feel you're in the slipstream, but I think God is really paving the way for this to work," she says.

"Different advisors who I didn't even know a year ago, such as our Hub mentor Kara Martin from Seed, have helped so much to coach this project along. It makes it seem that God wants this to get done [and] our hope is it will benefit many students around the world."

While the textbook will be a great blessing to many, the couple recognise that Bishop Gwynne College also desperately needs well trained local staff to teach the students. In addition to developing English for Theological Education, the Nobles and others have worked with Anglican Aid to establish a fund for South Sudanese theological training. This will raise money for college lecturers and create income generation for salaries through a micro-loan scheme.

"Student fees are \$35 a semester, and this doesn't even cover their food, so it is certainly not covering any salaries, power, water or anything else," Dr Noble says.

Through raising up local lecturers who understand theology and the South Sudanese context, the Nobles hope to see BGC make a big impact for the gospel in South Sudan.

Says Mr Noble: "There's a need for good understanding of the Bible. I think this will be best delivered by people who know South Sudanese culture... The ideal will be, in a decade, for Bishop Gwynne to have a full complement of South Sudanese teaching staff – local people who know the Bible well. They're the two ingredients to Bishop Gwynne's long-term success in the future."

To find out more about the fund see <https://anglicanaid.org.au/projects/bishop-gwynne-college>



Enjoying learning: Wendy Noble teaches students in South Sudan.

Prayers head up as help heads west

FUNDS FROM THE MORE THAN \$150,000 ALREADY RAISED IN THE ANGLICAN AID DROUGHT APPEAL are being urgently disbursed to struggling farm families.

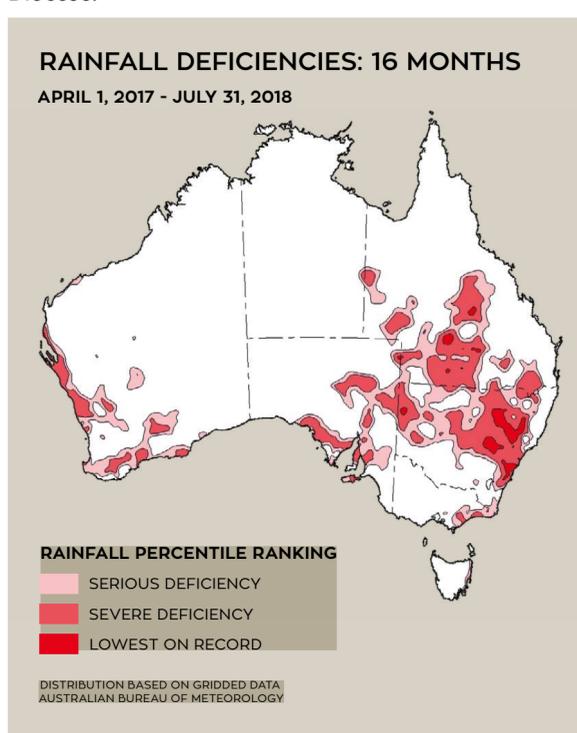
"We welcome the NSW Government's announcement of drought relief, but governments cannot do it all alone," said Archbishop Glenn Davies in launching the appeal last month.

"We as Christians with the bounty of our resources should show the generosity of Spirit – generosity prompted by the Holy Spirit – to give to those in need. However, we should also pray for rain. Our heavenly Father delights in his children bringing their requests before his throne, so I would also appreciate it if you could offer special prayers for rain."

Since the appeal was launched hundreds of churches across Sydney have made rain a constant prayer point and St Andrew's Cathedral held an official prayer service on Fathers' Day.

The public appeal is providing resources to churches in north and western NSW, which are already dealing with requests about practical support for families affected by what, in many places, is the worst drought since 1900. The entire state is now officially in drought.

An initial disbursement of \$60,000 went to the Armidale and Bathurst dioceses and there have also been discussions about assistance to Riverina, Canberra-Goulburn and the western region of the Brisbane Diocese.



In the Armidale Diocese the absence of winter rain has caused a rapid deterioration of conditions. At Walgett the Rev Tory Cayzer, rector of Barwon District Anglican Churches, spoke of a farming family being helped by the appeal funds.

"Our church has had contact with the family since 2014," he said. "In that time, we were able to pass on a small truckload of fodder and gifts of money."

"I visited them this week with some gift vouchers and bags of dog biscuits to see how they are going. They have about 1500 sheep left and are feeding them grain each day; the price of grain has risen to \$600 a tonne, without freight! \$1000 of the Anglican Aid [money] has gone toward feeding sheep. Please pray for this family and for drought-breaking rain."

Mr Cayzer said the family is thankful for the help, which means a lot to them.

The Bush Church Aid society is sending reserve trust funds to help out farmers and rural communities. "The short version is that it's pretty tough," said the Rev Ted Brush, BCA's regional

officer for NSW & ACT. Since stepping into the role in January, he has seen the broader toll the drought is taking.

"The reality is that when the farmers do it tough, the whole town does it tough," he said. "The guys who sell fertiliser aren't selling as much, the equipment repair guys aren't repairing as much. The whole economy of some of these towns cycles around the land and when nothing happens on the land, nothing happens in town. It's not just the farmers who are suffering."

Mr Brush suggested several ways city people could help. "The most obvious thing you can do is pray," he said. "The biggest need that anybody has in rural Australia is to find hope that goes beyond this world. I'd pray that people would find Jesus and find their hope in him in the first instance." Then, he said, pray for God to send rain in this season.

"When people find Jesus, pray they find the strength to persevere in a time of testing," he said. "Ask God to strengthen people and their states of mind. You can pick yourself up if your head is together. Pray in that direction."

Mr Brush has also been ringing rural ministers regularly all year, and encouraged city dwellers to get dialling.

"If you know people in the bush, then don't be shy. Stay in touch," he said. "They just want to talk about what's going on. They tell stories. They are feeling the weight of it. You can care for people. If you have relatives or friends in the bush, be in touch. They will need that encouragement."



BCA gets Real about Australian mission

Mission to rural Australia: the Rev Ted Brush (left) and the Dean of Sydney, Kanishka Raffel, talk about the work of BCA at its conference last month.

IS GOD FINISHED WITH AUSTRALIA? THAT WAS THE BIG QUESTION OF THE REAL AUSTRALIA Mission Conference, hosted by Bush Church Aid on August 11. It explored what it would take to reach our great southern land with the gospel, and showcased several ordinary Christians doing extraordinary things for Christ in the country.

One of the key aims of the Real Australia Mission Conference was to help Christians in Sydney hear the lessons of rural ministry and understand how they are also relevant to a suburban context.

"We are unashamedly trying to bring what we've learned doing ministry in the bush and show how well it can also apply to the city," says the Rev Ted Brush, the NSW & ACT regional officer for BCA.

Three electives demonstrated lessons the city could learn from country ministry. BCA's national director, the Rev Dr Mark Short, discussed "Ministry beyond the sandstone curtain", looking at the similarities and distinctives of bush ministry. Cheryl Hallinan, a former teacher and principal, told how she links country churches with local schools to enable Special Religious Education classes to start. James Daymond, a full-time evangelist in the parish of Narromine and Trangie, shared about the intentional evangelism work he is doing.

"If you think of the Narromine parish, it's tiny," Mr Brush says. "There are 3500 people in the town, they have 60 adults in the church, and more joining them."

"If I was going to say anything about James, it's that he just does it. More than anything he just gets out and [shares the gospel], and people welcome him. He's always talking to people about Jesus."

Mr Brush believes there is a lot that city Christians can learn from those sharing the gospel in the country.

"Many churches in Sydney have grown on a basis of 'We ask people to come and see,'" he says. "But in the bush, everyone's already been in your church for a wedding or funeral or baptism. There's not a 'churn' around the town like there is in the suburbs. You've got to shift from the 'Come and see' model to a 'Go and tell' model. Once you get outside of Sydney, ministry and evangelism works when you go and tell. That's learning we can apply in our Sydney parishes."

He also sees SRE as a fantastic way for churches to support families and rural communities, encouraging city churches to do the same. "Scripture is an incredible opportunity [to care for those who have opted in]," he says. "If we can find and recruit teachers, and continue to uphold them in the bush, why can't we do that in Sydney as well?"

So, is God finished with Australia? With all of the ministry happening in the country, it doesn't look likely.

Cape Town remembers church massacre



Kenilworth attack remembered: a wounded congregation member is treated at the scene in 1993 (archive photo courtesy of Michael Klein).

SURVIVORS HAVE RELIVED memories and shared testimonies 25 years after the night that masked gunmen burst into a service at St James' Church in the quiet Cape Town suburb of Kenilworth, firing wildly and throwing grenades.

In a crime that shocked South Africa, four terrorists of a group calling itself the Azanian People's Liberation Army killed 11 members of the congregation and wounded 58 others.

Although they claimed they wanted to kill white South Africans, who they assumed were complicit with the apartheid policy, this was a mixed-race congregation that also included Russian fishermen – who were part of the church's outreach to the Soviet fishing fleet. Many of the fisherman, who could not speak English, mistook the gunmen for actors in a church drama and were slow to take cover.

The carnage ended when a member

of the congregation, who was carrying a handgun, shot one of the attackers in the hand. It is believed the group originally planned to roll petrol bombs into the building but left quickly when they came under fire.

A 25-year memorial was held at Kenilworth on July 25, addressed by Bishop Frank Retief – who was senior minister at the time. St James' was part of the Church of England in South Africa, now Reach SA.

Bishop Retief was not in the auditorium in 1993 when the shooting broke out, but arrived soon afterwards. He spoke in a special 25-year memorial video, saying, "When I walked through that door and saw the bodies lying on the floor, and the pews blown up, and the groups of people huddled around each other – I cannot explain what was going through my mind."

The Rev Ross Anderson, who was leading the service when the gunmen burst in, probably saved lives by standing up and warning those who had not taken cover.

"They were still firing and lobbing hand grenades," he said. "I can remember thinking as I walked back up to the pulpit that I was probably about to die, because the moment I started speaking I would be singled out and they would shoot me. But I didn't process it. I was so anxious about the congregation."

Survivor Susanna Manley was grateful for that warning: "Only when I heard Ross say, 'Get down' did I actually react," she said.

Janet Gie was injured but survived. "In God's sovereignty if I hadn't ducked that split second when I went down, and because of Ross shouting to get down, I don't believe that I would be here," she said. "The bullet [that grazed my back] would have gone straight through me."

In the hours after the attack, and for weeks afterwards as the South African media put the church in the spotlight, Mr Anderson said the congregation's attitude was remarkable: "The response was one of prayer for those who attacked us and even love for our enemy".

The attack occurred during the transition to democracy in South Africa, and the unrest that followed the lifting of apartheid.

Said Bishop Retief: "The message of forgiveness – if you go back and Google it – it was the message of the day. It took the country by absolute storm and it was a counterbalance to what was happening in the rest of the country.

"God took one church, he put it through the fire, and then he put it on display. And as a result of that, the gospel was spoken to people in the furthest corners of this land."

The memorial video is online at bit.ly/capetownvideo

DIMENSIONS OF SINGLENES

Thank you for printing the revealing article "The problem with singleness" in the July 2018 issue of *Southern Cross*. Dani Treweek's very helpful review of the literature and surveys of singleness exposed a significant area for ministry.

However, in calling for a review of the "unbiblical and unhelpful elevation of celibacy" in the first 1500 years of the Christian church, the article does not develop the dimension of Matthew 22:23-32 combined with Matthew 19:1-12 and Matthew 10:1-12 to the topic. An exegesis of the Pauline teaching of 1 Corinthians 7 and 1 Timothy 5:11-15 would also have been helpful – although perhaps these elements are in the thesis she is preparing.

A few years ago, St Matthew's, Marryatville in the Diocese of Adelaide had a fellowship for single professionals and young adults called 21 Plus. It was a vibrant fellowship that enjoyed Bible studies, social activities and service in and through the church. It was regarded as an integral part of the parish.

Bob Duffield
Turramurra

ALCOHOL'S EVILS

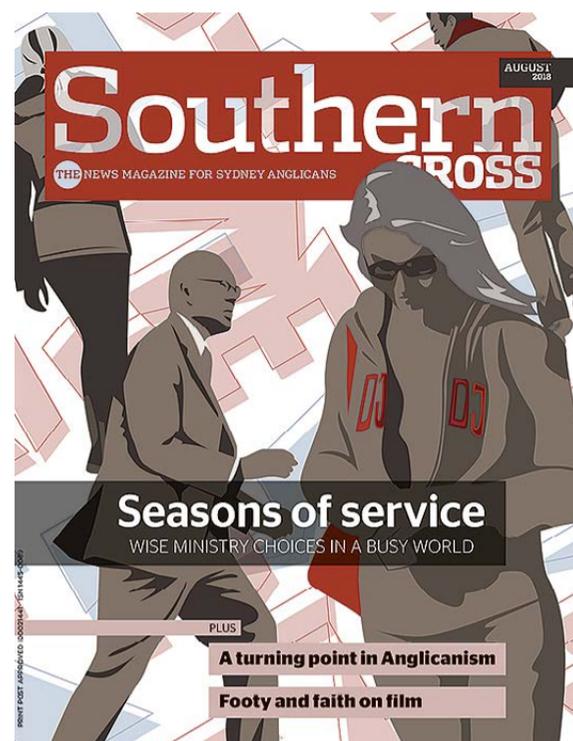
It was with disappointment that I read in the June 2018 edition that the Rev Andrew Katay thinks it is okay to use wine and cheese nights in his parish as a means to provide "entry points to the gospel" ("Wine, cheese... and God", SC, June). It is further disturbing that other parishes have acted in a similar way for community contact.

Surely other means can be used for contact instead of alcohol to bring the good news to the people who are outside the kingdom?

There are many references in God's word with warnings about alcohol use, about which many of our readers would be well aware. It is very clear in my mind that alcohol is an evil thing in our society, and certainly should not in any way be encouraged for use on parish premises with all its potential evils.

So, what do I think Jesus would do about it? I believe he would turn the tables over with righteous anger, smash the bottles of this evil stuff and say, "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13).

Athol Cooke
Moss Vale



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Playing by the rules

Delegates vote in favour of the GAFCON statement at the final session. PHOTO Stephen Nelson

DAVID MANSFIELD

I HAD THE IMMENSE PRIVILEGE, ALONG WITH 200 OTHER AUSTRALIANS, OF BEING AT THE RECENT Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in Jerusalem.

As this event was unfolding, so too was another event – far more famous, but also far more fleeting in its ultimate significance. In Russia, the 2018 football World Cup was being contested by 32 nations over 64 matches, pulling in big crowds at each stadium and watched by many millions more on television.

Something else was going on for me as my wife Helen and I participated in GAFCON by day and watched the World Cup on TV by night. I was preparing a talk on 2 Timothy for a church in South Africa where I would preach shortly after GAFCON:

“As for you, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard from me, pass on to reliable men who can teach others also... an athlete doesn't wear the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules” (2 Timothy 2:1-2,5).

Timothy was to “be strong in grace” as he passed the word of grace on to others, so that the gospel of grace would be embraced by generations and nations, and make its way down to the grace-starved people who populate the world in our own day.

Paul goes on to give three illustrations to help Timothy understand the single-mindedness (soldier), integrity (athlete) and fortitude (farmer) he needed to apply to his task. He takes Timothy to the battlefield, the stadium and the farm.

As Timothy was to be strong in grace in passing on the gospel of grace, he was to remember that an athlete only wins the prize if he competes according to the rules. Make no mistake, Paul is not reverting to a gospel of works. He has already debunked that notion in the first chapter (2 Timothy 1:9-10), as indeed he battled it for his entire ministry.

The gospel of grace, Christianity no less, has a certain character – an essence – such that if you contradict it, redefine it or revise it so that it's something other than Christianity, you have invented something quite foreign to the original thing. This is what Timothy, with the mindset of an athlete, must not do.

At the risk of it sounding like tautology on steroids, let me expand on just one of these illustrations. Football (soccer for the uninitiated) is defined by a round ball, peculiar looking timber structures called “goals” at each end of a pitch, sidelines, penalty areas etc. There are technical rules about things like being offside and illegal tackling methods.

But the essence of football is using your feet skilfully to kick and advance the ball from player to player into the goal. You are allowed to use your head, and even your chest occasionally, but most definitely not your hands or arms.

A defining moment in Australia's fortunes at the 2010 World Cup was when our star player, Harry Kewell, was red-carded for allegedly using his arm to block a ball in the penalty area. He was expelled from the field and Ghana slotted in a penalty goal. The game finished in a draw, ending Australia's hopes of advancing to the knockout stage of the tournament. Harry was judged to have broken a rule and was duly punished for it. He didn't flaunt the rules or try and invent a different game.

But in 1832 an outrageous thing happened in a football game. In England, in a small town called Rugby, a boy called William Webb Ellis decided not just to break the rules but to change the essence of the game altogether. He picked up the ball, tucked it under his arm and ran with it to towards the goals. You could call it a revision of football, but in reality a completely different game was invented.

Today, we have the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) and the International Rugby Board (IRB). They both govern their different sports and administer their own World Cup. They have a few similarities, but they are as different as cheese and chocolate. And everyone understands the history. No one doubts the origins. Everyone acknowledges what real football is. Nobody doubts that rugby is the breakaway, the schismatic sport. Not even me, a rugby nut from way back!

The biblical, credal and Reformed Christianity that GAFCON seeks to champion has always had those who want to revise certain aspects of how it is lived out. A little tinkering here and there. How much water should be used in baptism? How often should we celebrate the Lord's Supper?

But a few years ago someone came along and decided to pick up the ball and invent a different game altogether. They sought to revise it beyond recognition. Jesus didn't really rise from the dead. His death was only an example of sacrificial love. The miracles didn't happen. There's no judgment, heaven and hell. Scrap superstitious notions of the supernatural. Ignore the Bible's teaching on human sexuality. Can the creeds. Dismiss the great Articles of Faith.

There's no law against inventing your own religion. While the Bible has long called it idolatry, we nonetheless recognise the right to freedom of speech in a democratic society.

“Liberal” theology can, and will, say and do what it wants. But it shouldn't lie and pretend to be a legitimate part of biblical, credal and Reformed Christianity.

It should, if it had any integrity, go and buy its own paddocks, build its own stadiums and draw its own crowds rather than pinch our paddocks, steal our stadiums and damage or destroy the faith of the followers of Jesus.

Rugby, at least, had the integrity to walk away, set up its own structures and code, and not call football divisive or schismatic.

Theologically liberal Anglicanism should at the very least have the integrity to walk away, and it certainly shouldn't accuse GAFCON of being the very thing it is itself: schismatic or divisive.

That's the most lying, laughable, own-goal of all.

The Rev David Mansfield is CEO of the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid.

Celebrate a life with new life



DR GLENN DAVIES

NOVEMBER 7 WILL MARK THE CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF WILLIAM FRANKLIN Graham Jr, better known to us as Billy Graham. While many had hoped he would have survived till his 100th birthday, this was not to be, as he died on February 21. Yet in his own words:

"Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God."

This quote went viral after Billy's "earthly" death, at one point shared every 15 seconds on Twitter according to *Christianity Today*. Although the same sentiment was expressed by the great evangelist of the 19th century, Dwight L. Moody, it is not surprising that Billy echoed these words, as Moody was one of Billy Graham's heroes. Justin Taylor, in the same magazine, observes:

"Since the quote was not really about Moody but about their common identity in Christ and promised destiny, Graham apparently felt the liberty to apply it to his own mortality, especially since he was self-aware enough to know that news of his demise would one day be in the headlines."

Not everyone's death makes the headlines, barely making a few centimetres of text in the Death Notices. Yet God's gifted evangelists include not only the great public speakers like Graham and John Chapman, but less-known evangelists like Sheila Spencer – whose death last month aged 83 caused no great publicity but, as she entered into eternal glory, many (in heaven and on earth) thanked God for her as the human agent by which they had become Christians. Her insuppressible desire to see people won to Christ was captivating in both her ministry at St Stephen's, Willoughby and later in the Department of Evangelism.

Seeking the glory of God is the heartbeat of every Christian. Seeing people come to Christ is both the desire and delight of God and should therefore be our desire and delight. While not all may be evangelists, all have a part to play in promoting the gospel, defending the gospel and living out the fruit of the gospel in our daily lives.

Each of us can name the person who first taught us about the good news of Jesus, whether our parents, minister, Scripture teacher or friend. We may have grown up in a Christian family, never knowing a time when Jesus was not our Saviour, or we may have been converted in our youth or adulthood.

God's normal way is to build his kingdom through the use of human agents proclaiming his gospel. We therefore should pray regularly for God to raise up more evangelists, support those who do the work of evangelism and be ever "ready to give an answer to everyone who asks to give a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). A good question to ask yourself is how much of your prayer life and your financial giving is directed towards evangelism?

Next year marks the 60th anniversary of Billy Graham's first visit to Australia in 1959 where he led crusades across all capital cities over a four-month period. This was a remarkable time of an outpouring of God's Spirit as thousands of people committed themselves to follow Christ, including those who subsequently entered Moore College and became full-time ministers of the gospel.

To commemorate this work of God's Spirit in Australia, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has embarked on another Graham Tour. During the month of February 2019, William Franklin Graham III, known as Franklin Graham, will speak evangelistically in each capital city with a message of hope. In Sydney he will speak at the International Convention Centre on Saturday and Sunday evenings, February 23 and 24. Details are available at <https://grahamtour.billygraham.org/>

Some say that mass evangelism has had its day, or that Franklin Graham is not as effective an evangelist as his father. Some have even queried his credentials because of his support of President Trump. However, none of these reasons is sufficient to deter us from supporting this initiative of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Franklin Graham will not be preaching about American politics, but about Christ. He will passionately and persuasively invite people to put their trust in Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of humankind.

Sydney Anglicans can support this venture, as we did his father's tour in 1959. Churches can register for holding Christian Life and Witness classes, individuals can offer to become prayer volunteers, anyone can bring along a friend who does not know Jesus so that they might hear the good news and by God's grace be saved. While this tour is a celebration of the 1959 crusades, it is really a celebration of the goodness and mercy of God shown to a fallen world through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

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

When it's time to say goodbye

St Jude's cemetery in Randwick. PHOTO: Katie Barget/Captar Photo

Funerals are always hard but we need to remember who we belong to, writes **JUDY ADAMSON**.

IT'S ODD TO ATTEND A CHRISTIAN FUNERAL AND HAVE SOMEONE UP THE FRONT SAY what a relief it is people have got out of the habit of being miserable and wearing black.

Is it? When this happened to me, I looked around and a good many of us weren't wearing black but we were all in sober colours, and plenty of those present were shedding tears – or were clearly filled with sorrow at the loss of someone they loved.

What was most striking was not the unobservant nature of the fellow who said this, but the fact he felt it either needed or was worth saying.

Why shouldn't we be sad about someone's death? What's wrong with grieving the passing of a person we love, even if we know we will meet them again in the kingdom to come?

Dr Chase Kuhn teaches theology and ethics at Moore College (which includes consideration of the end times, death and judgment) and observes that, generally, people don't know how to respond to death, so often say or do things to trivialise it.

"People don't know what to do about death and that happens inside and outside the church," he says.

"In the church we have more theological richness and understanding, but in the face of death people try to make sense of things in the best way they know how.

"After my grandmother lost her husband I said to her, 'You must be very sad, Grandma', and she starts telling me so with raw emotion. Then Dad pops into the picture and says, 'Oh, that's enough of that, you're okay!'... [and] others come in and say, 'Let's celebrate this and not be down'.

"The poor lady was being denied a very natural and real experience that is very appropriate in the face of death, but it shows people's discomfort in trying to deny it. I think our confusion is in trying to deny a reality – a painful reality."

CELEBRATION?

As with many things in this life, Christians can find themselves responding to issues in much the same way as society around them. Perhaps not to the same extent, but still lacking the clear godliness and sure hope of heaven of which the Bible speaks.

A funeral is often regarded as a "celebration" of the one who died. Which is fine up to a point – we loved them and now they are gone, so we want to remember them well. The trouble is, if well-meaning family members or friends plan long photo tributes to music, five eulogies (make that six, because Cousin Arthur *really* wants to say something), everyone wears a particular foxy jumper and the coffin is taken down the aisle to "My Way" (see box below), are these really God-honouring options?

"If you think about the purpose of the funeral service in the prayer book, [it says] we're there to give honour to the person who's died, to show sympathy with the bereaved and, in prayers of faith and hope, to place our trust in God surrounding the person's death," says the rector of St Jude's, Randwick, the Rev Andrew Schmidt.

"But I think many people don't have those purposes in mind. All they really know is that we ought to celebrate this person's life somehow, and there's a real sense that they want to avoid the issue of grief and loss.

"In conducting a Christian funeral where people have come more with a purpose of celebrating and making it about the person, it can be hard to shift the spotlight to Christ and to the hope that he gives after death for those who've trusted in him. There's that sense of a tussle."



Earthly resting place: the Rev Andrew Schmidt in the cemetery at St Jude's.

The Rev Simon Manchester from St Thomas', North Sydney agrees, adding that in some cases the hope held out in the Bible becomes separated from the very real grief a loved one's death brings.

"Obviously the world has no real grasp of hope, but we [Christians] need to have a vigorous and grief as well," he says. "Sometimes there's a false piety that suggests everything is to be victorious and we miss out on the real aspect of farewell. Grief [at death] is inevitable, and we don't want to resist it or wallpaper over it."

A common form of grief "wallpaper" can be a badly chosen poem. A number of those SC spoke to mentioned "Death is Nothing at All" by the Rev Henry Scott-Holland ("I have only slipped away into the next room. Nothing has happened," etc). As unhelpful as this is, the words are made even more awkward by being extracted from the sermon Scott-Holland gave at the funeral of King Edward VII.

Schmidt describes as "absolutely appalling... its basic meaning is that if the person 'loves his fellow-men' it doesn't matter if they ignored God altogether".

THOROUGHLY MODERN FUNERALS

As society changes, so does the way funerals are perceived and held. To get an up-to-date snapshot of the attitudes of Australians, in 2014 McCrindle Research undertook a national survey of more than 500 people over the age of 50 for the Australian Funeral Directors' Association.

It's no surprise to discover that – when asked about their uppermost emotions in relation to funerals – 37 per cent described them as worrying, scary, or something they "really hate thinking about". Just over half regarded funerals as a normal part of life, while 12 per cent considered them an opportunity for reflection or the celebration of a life well lived.

Interestingly, when asked what kind of emotional tone they would want for their own funerals, almost 60 per cent voted for "relaxed and reflective", while 27 per cent were keen for their final send-off to be jubilant or irreverent. Twelve per cent opted for "dignified", and only 1 per cent wanted their funeral to be "solemn and serious".

And, underscoring society's move away from faith, McCrindle found that only 22 per cent of those surveyed considered a religious component to be extremely or very important to the planning of their funeral. In fact, 58 per cent of respondents would be more likely to choose a civil celebrant to conduct their funeral rather than a church minister.

Of course, another issue is that most of us aren't really prepared to engage with the idea of death: 86 per cent of those surveyed were not thinking about their funeral at all, and 57 per cent had no plans to make any arrangements in the next five to 10 years.

MY WAY OR THE HIGHWAY

The one song mentioned by every person SC spoke to for this story was Frank Sinatra's "My Way". It has even been included at the funeral of a Christian person with Christian family members planning the service.

"I tend to listen to the words of a particular song rather than the actual music," says the Rev David Clarke, rector of Hoxton Park. "It could be country and western or a metal song, as long as the words aren't totally inappropriate. And when someone wants to have 'My Way', it's an opportunity for discussion about what does that actually mean? When I'm before God and giving an account of my life, saying that I did it my way is probably not an appropriate way to be talking about my life."

While hymns and songs of faith are obviously still popular at Christian funerals, plenty of modern songs are also used – the particular favourites of the family member who has died, often during a photo montage of their life.

But it helps to consider what message the song is giving to non-Christian friends and family, and trying to keep a balance between honouring the life lived as well as the God whose care they are now in.

The Rev Canon Sandy Grant from St Michael's Cathedral in Wollongong, seeks to understand the impulse behind people's desire to include certain music. However, he says if one of the suggestions is "unintentionally unhelpful, or could be disrespectful or offensive to some people, I would try to raise it [with the family]."

"Occasionally you get 'My Way', and I find that a very sad choice, but I would introduce it as the song they've chosen to reflect on this person's life – and I make sure such songs aren't the last thing ringing in people's ears."

In 2014 the British public's favourite funeral choice was, incredibly, Monty Python's "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life" (first sung during a crucifixion scene in the film *Life of Brian*), although this has since been superseded by – you guessed it – "My Way".

In Australia, McCrindle Research found that sentimental songs were the most popular genre of funeral music for people over 50 (think "I'll Be Seeing You", "Over the Rainbow" and "Time To Say Goodbye"). Religious songs came in second, with "Amazing Grace" topping the list.

McCrindle described the third genre of choice as "defiant" – hardly surprising, given that it includes "My Way" and AC-DC's "Highway to Hell". The survey's list also contains unusual options ("Most People I Know" by Billy Thorpe), plus celebratory songs such as "Dancing Queen" by ABBA and "Happy" by Pharrell Williams.

WHAT A FUNERAL ISN'T ABOUT

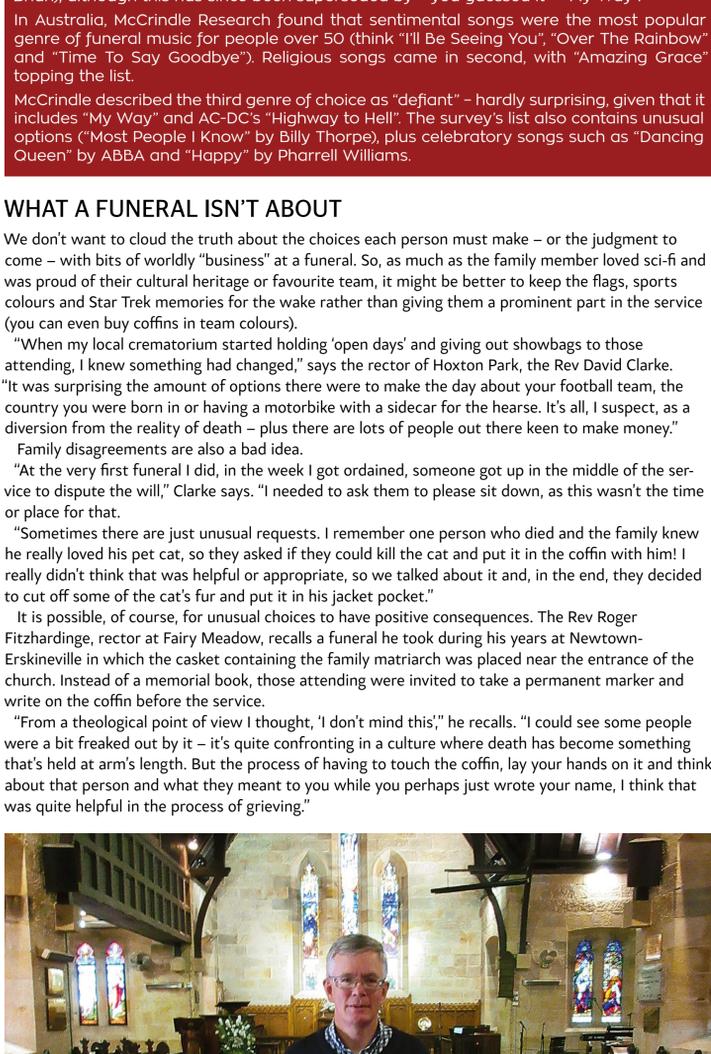
We don't want to cloud the truth about the choices each person must make – or the judgment to come – with bits of worldly "business" at a funeral. So, as much as the family member loved sci-fi and was proud of their cultural heritage or favourite team, it might be better to keep the flags, sports colours and Star Trek memories for the wake rather than giving them a prominent part in the service (you can even buy coffins in team colours).

"When my local crematorium started holding 'open days' and giving out showbags that would want," he says. "I often worry in the middle of my sermon that it is a bit too uncompromising, yet no one ever seems to be offended. I've found people are very appreciative and I can compromise of at least two people who've become regular attenders at church following funerals I've taken."

Simon Manchester adds that it's crucial not to give false hope about the person who has died. He says if he were taking the funeral of a non-Christian man, he would talk about how that man had his opportunities "and God willing he took them, but we don't know". He would then speak to those present about the road they might choose to take before they, too met with Christ.

"I don't think we can play a game that all is well with the person who died," he says. "Otherwise someone sitting in the pews might think, 'I know that person had nothing to do with God at all and if this [minister] says they're alright, then so am I'.

"It's too big an issue to give false hope. Really, you've become a false prophet saying, 'Peace, peace' where there is no peace."



Speaking to the unbelievers in the pews: the Rev Canon Sandy Grant at St Michael's Cathedral, Wollongong.

UNBELIEVERS

The departed family member may not have been Christian, but that's no reason why the message of the gospel should not be proclaimed just as clearly as if the person had died in Christ.

"My ministry is to the living, not the dead," says the Rev Canon Sandy Grant from St Michael's Cathedral in Wollongong. "I still recall David Peterson's lectures at college along the lines of, 'Weddings and funerals are a good chance to make a little bit of ground with a lot of people'. [At funerals] I want to say something sensible about the gospel so that if a non-churchgoing person heard it they might think, 'That made a lot more sense than I expected, and if I was go to church in the future, this would be the kind of place I would try out'."

Schmidt adds that by simply following the structure of the prayer book service, everyone will be presented with the gospel at an Anglican funeral.

"They've come to church for a funeral because of tradition, or because it's what the person who died would want," he says. "I often worry in the middle of my sermon that it is a bit too uncompromising, yet no one ever seems to be offended. I've found people are very appreciative and I can compromise of at least two people who've become regular attenders at church following funerals I've taken."

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THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Sixteen years as a funeral director in the Illawarra taught Ray McPhail (above) plenty of things about how people respond to death – not least of which that many begin preparing a funeral, in the midst of their grief, with no clear idea of what their family member would have wanted.



"The most important thing that people need to do is talk with their loved ones about what they want when they die," he says. "This is the most taboo subject of all, it seems. We know that death and taxes are the only sure things in life until Jesus returns, so we need to have that discussion before it is too late. I know of several people, for example, who did not know what to do with the remains of their loved ones. We must make it known to our families."

Now retired, Mr McPhail says that when the time comes to prepare for a funeral, people need to be aware the funeral director will ask a lot of questions about the service, its location, and what will be involved during and after the event at the church or crematorium. There are

also a number of forms that need to be filled in for legal reasons.

"This is all information that [as funeral director] you need to know," he says, adding that if people have no real knowledge of their family member's wishes this will make it harder.

"Yet all of the funeral directors I know do understand these difficulties and will be as gentle as they can, and as patient as they can, to gain the information that is needed to help that family."

Mr McPhail says that in his experience most funeral directors are also sympathetic to the needs of the Christian community – even if they have no personal faith – as their role involves care for families of all beliefs or none. However, in his own work he sought to build a caring relationship with the family of the deceased in which his own faith could become clear.

"When the opportunity arose I tried to make sure people would get the follow-up that was appropriate to their needs," he says. "When a church has been asked to be involved in a funeral service, how they communicate with the family can open up opportunities to continue the relationship-building process, and that can have eternal consequences."

"I know people who are members of the church as a result of that support, and people who have recognised, returned and renewed their relationship with their Saviour for the same reason. Someone has shown them Christian love."

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

While it's hard to speak generally about a Christian response to death, Chase Kuhn believes there is a real opportunity for witness in the way that we grieve.

"One author that I've read talks about how we can cheapen the work of Jesus when we trivialise death, so we say, 'Oh, this is a portal to a better life', or 'Everything's so much better now,'" he says. "That cheapens the real sting of death – that Jesus had to die for us that we could be rid of this thing. This is very painful, very real and very costly."

"But what 1 Thessalonians 4 shows us is that we can grieve differently. It doesn't take away the bite of death but we can have a certain peace through death that is appropriately Christian, especially when the loved one we've lost knows Christ."

"The truth of how awful death is still remains, but the hope that sees us through that time is very real. That affords an opportunity for gratitude and expectation, which is good."

Adds Manchester: "One of the things I say at a funeral is that we need an expert – someone who will go through the grave and come back. There's only one person who's done that, and if I'm taking a funeral I would like, if possible, to overwhelm the thinking of the people in the pews with the logic of the resurrection and the good news of the resurrection."

Because, after all, the best response is one that, by word or action, points to Christ.

Says Clarke: "Last week we had the funeral of one of our church members who died suddenly... and we had a big crowd of her extended family and friends. We said in the service that she had a certain hope in Jesus and we knew we could speak confidently about her faith, the assurance we have and the certainty that she was going to heaven."

"That really struck many people there who were Catholic and Orthodox and Muslim and Jehovah's Witnesses. This lady had been doing a wonderful job quietly witnessing to friends and neighbours... and there were lots of conversations afterwards about the sure hope we had in Jesus and that, in the midst of grief, we could have peace and joy knowing that she'd gone home."

"And that was not just a trite saying. We meant it. We don't grieve without hope. That's a fantastic verse. We do so knowing the certainty of the resurrection."

FURTHER READING

At A Time Like This
by Simon Manchester

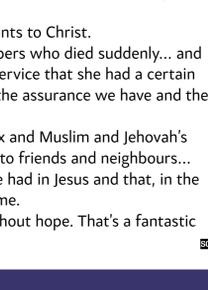
A Grace Disguised: How the soul grows through loss
by Jerry Sittser

Walking with God through Pain and Suffering
by Tim Keller

Suffering and the Goodness of God,
ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson

Blog: "I forbid you to say these things at my funeral"
by Tim Challies (right)

www.challies.com/articles/i-forbid-you-to-say-these-things-at-my-funeral



Death and the Christian

Dealing with death can be hard, but the faithful who have gone before us can light the way, writes **JANE TOOHER**.



Woodcut of Matthäus (Matthew) Zell on his deathbed, 1548.

CHRISTIANS BELIEVE THIS LIFE IS ALL ABOUT GETTING READY FOR THE NEXT. So it's no surprise that death is significant for us, and that death is something Christians have regularly written about.

There is great benefit to be gained from the writings of Christians about death – no matter where or when they lived – because we are united not only by the universal human experience of death but the glorious truth that it has been defeated by Jesus in his death and resurrection.

The contributions to the church of those who have gone before can help us reflect on our own thinking about death and the Christian hope, serving to challenge, encourage and refresh us. They also give us a timely word, whether we're experiencing a season of grief or not.

The following are some of the writings on death that I've found helpful in recent months.

DE VITA HOMINIS

The poem *De Vita Hominis* (*The Life of a Man*) was written to remind readers of their death. A key theme of the original pre-Reformation version of the poem is uncertainty – uncertainty about the moment of death, but also uncertainty as to whether you would be saved.

Danish pastor Anders Sørensen Vedel (1542-1616), who studied in Wittenberg in 1565-66 and was influenced by Reformers such as Philipp Melancthon, edited *De Vita Hominis* in 1571 and invited his readers to compare his version with the original. In contrast to the 1514 version, certainty is a key theme in Vedel's. Of course, you still don't know when you're going to die but you can be certain of salvation in, through and after death if you have trusted in Jesus alone. This real hope stands in stark contrast to the experience of those who haven't trusted in Jesus: only terror awaits them.

A WIFE'S EULOGY

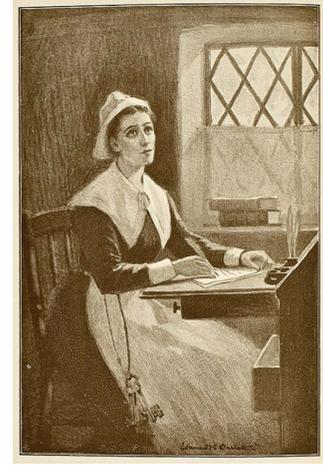
Matthew Zell (1477-1548) and Katherine Zell (1497/8-1562) were German Reformers who lived and worked in Strasbourg. Katherine gave a eulogy at Matthew's funeral that included a detailed description of her husband's final two days.

Why did she include such details? Christians at the time were intensely interested in how the Reformers died. Would they die a "good death" or die in the turmoil of doubt and fear? Would they abandon their new faith at the end and revert to the superstitious practice of the Roman Church? Would the devil come and claim them? Or would they die confident and faithful to the message they had taught?

Woodcuts were produced depicting high-profile Reformers on their deathbeds, and these were printed and distributed to encourage the Protestant cause. A striking note in these is that men like Martin Luther and Matthew Zell are depicted as calm and at peace. Importantly, there are no priests attending them, no one interceding on their behalf, no prayers to saints. The pictures promote the truth that we can have confidence at the time of our death because Jesus has secured a certain salvation for us through his death on the cross for our sins.

In her eulogy, Katherine Zell made this clear to Matthew's congregation: that her husband had died without any intercession or last rites or prayers to saints. In their deaths the Reformers reflected the certainty they'd taught in life: a certainty anchored in the wonderful truth of justification by faith in Christ.

ANNE BRADSTREET



The Puritan poet Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672) wrote numerous poems on a range of matters, including the deaths of those she loved. In the epitaph about her mother, Dorothy Dudley, Anne first describes her godly character. Towards the end she includes a line that makes it clear that Dorothy lived, not in denial of the reality of death, but rather the very opposite. Death focused and shaped her behaviour each day, and this focus remained true up to the moment of her death.

In a classically Puritan way, her entire life was all about getting ready for the next, as Bradstreet writes: "Preparing still for death, till end of days".

The tone of her mother's epitaph seems positive and straightforward. In poems for three of her grandchildren who had died, Bradstreet's grief is more obvious and more complex, yet each of them reveals her sure grasp of the Christian hope. This is seen in the poem for her granddaughter, also named Anne:

With troubled heart and trembling hand I write...
Farewel dear child, thou ne're shall come to me,
But yet a while, and I shall go to thee;
Mean time my throbbing heart's cheer'd up with this
Thou with thy Saviour art in endless bliss.

THE COWPERS

William Macquarie Cowper (1810-1902) was the first Australian-born clergyman, Dean of Sydney and was acting principal of Moore College when it first opened in March 1856.

In 1854 his first wife Margaret Burroughs died from breast cancer, aged 48. Cowper wrote an account of her illness and death soon after she died, which includes some of Margaret's own reflections:

With regard to myself; whether my time on earth be long or short duration, I do desire most earnestly to devote it *all* to His service (Dec. 1853).

But as to temporal matters, I have now done with them; I want to have my mind fixed only on the heavenly (Sept. 1854).

I want some supporting and strengthening portions of Scripture, to dwell on. Death is a great change, a solemn event, and I don't know how my faith may be tried, or I may be *tempted at the last* (Oct. 1854).

During the night I have been praying for all my friends, and all who have asked me to pray for them, and for all my godchildren. May they, and all who are dear to me, know Christ by happy experience, as their own Saviour (Oct. 1854).

If it were not for the blood of Christ, who is God, how *could* I be pardoned! *Thou* Lord must save, and *Thou alone!* (Oct. 1854)

Be Thou the God of my children, as Thou art mine! Through Christ my sins are all forgiven (this was her final prayer – which was for her own children. She then expressed her own hope of salvation and peace, Oct. 1854).

MIKE OVEY

The Rev Dr Mike Ovey (1958-2017) served as the principal of Oak Hill College in London before his sudden death on January 7, 2017.

Former Archbishop of Sydney Dr Peter Jensen preached at the thanksgiving service for Dr Ovey on March 13, 2017, and exhorted the congregation to be thankful to God for Dr Ovey's life: "When death breaks in, we have first of all a duty to the person who has passed away, to make sure that their mortal remains are properly taken care of. We have a duty to comfort the bereaved. To bring the comfort of the God of all comfort. But we also have a duty to give thanks. To give thanks for the life for the one who has passed... we who know Christ... our task is to thank God."

A moving example of just this kind of thankfulness was provided by the eulogy given in the same service by Nick Tucker:

"I am grateful to God for Mike Ovey. I am grateful to God for Mike's humour. For his constant concern for the wellbeing of others. I'm grateful to God for his and Heather's kindness, friendship and example over many years. And of course I'm grateful for what Mike taught me. On the Sunday morning after I heard the news, I realised that the person who had prepared me for that day was Mike Ovey. He was the one who had taught me what it is to trust in God in the dark. To recognise that there is an ultimately powerful and wise and good God behind reality. And that he specialises in bringing apparent disasters and defeats somehow to a glorious end."

CONCLUSION

As Christians we die in the Lord (Rev 14:13) and so we die a "good death" in that sense. Our sin has been paid for by the precious blood of Jesus, and so we have the certain hope of being resurrected to eternal life (John 11:25-26; Rom 8:38-39; 1 Thess 4:14). The circumstances surrounding our death and that of those we love may be absolutely horrific, as so many of us know all too well from our own experience. Yet those who die in the Lord die ultimately in peace, and therefore die a good death.

We will continue to grieve the deaths of loved ones, and at times that grief feels overwhelming and it can come at unexpected times. A familiar smell, an association, or the absence of certain things can remind us that the person we love is no longer on this earth. Yet during those dark times we can rest secure trusting in God's word to us, that one day the old order of things – that includes pain and death – will pass away and that we will enjoy the presence of God (Rev 21:1-4).

Ms Jane Toher is director of the Priscilla and Aquila Centre at Moore College.

Advocating for mission

CATHERINE MACBEATH CARES DEEPLY FOR THE missionaries her parish – St George North – supports and has sent out. But despite knowing them personally, and being very invested in them, the busyness of life meant that often her care didn't translate into tangible support.

When she received an invite to the CMS Advocates training day, which was described to her as a "missionary support training day", she figured there was room for improvement and decided to attend.

The CMS Advocates program is a new initiative by the Church Missionary Society to better equip parish members to champion support for the link missionaries in their churches. CMS initiated the program after seeing a trend of support for missionaries waning as their years of service continued.

"As the months roll into years, it remains critical to keep churches actively informed so a strong relationship between the missionary and the congregation can continue to grow," says the Rev Canon Malcolm Richards, the general secretary of CMS NSW & ACT. "Missionaries in secure or remote locations, who are unable to communicate as openly or as regularly, have a real need of passionate supporters who will help the church to pray even when there isn't a fresh newsletter."

Mrs MacBeath says she is now equipped with new ideas for helping her parish to pray and support their link missionaries – such as ensuring new members know who the link missionaries are, and finding ways for the church to offer assistance and help to missionaries when they return to Sydney.

She believes more people should have CMS Advocates in their parish.

"You would be in a position of keeping the church up to date with the missionaries they support, and also keeping the missionaries up to date on changes within the church," she says. "This would help maintain support for missionary families, and help with continuity for everyone."

Canon Richards also hopes to see more people volunteer for the role of CMS Advocate: "No matter how long a missionary has been serving for, or where, they always need our prayers and care," he says.



Mission thinking: Catherine MacBeath (right) has a cuppa with another delegate at the CMS Advocates training day.

SRE East gospel growth



A packed house at Kingsford for the SRE East trivia night.

A GROUP OF CHURCHES KEEN TO SEE SPECIAL Religious Education (SRE) go forward in public high schools in eastern Sydney have banded together for a trivia night at Holy Trinity, Kingsford.

The purpose of the event was to raise funds in support of Jono Campbell, a member of Wild Street Anglican Church, who was hired this year by the OurSRE East board to teach Scripture at Randwick Girls' and Randwick Boys' high schools one day a week.

More than 200 supporters from six local churches (Holy Trinity; Wild Street; St John's, Maroubra; St Paul's, South Coogee; St Jude's, Randwick and Kingsway Presbyterian, Kingsford) filled the Holy Trinity hall on August 4.

Each group of eight had paid to make up a table for trivia, but answering questions wasn't all they had to do. There was also a range of silent auction items to bid on, raising more funds for Mr Campbell, while from time to time there were extra points on offer, for which participants had to do everything from throw darts to squash balloons to dance the macarena.

In the end, well over \$3000 was raised on the night, while a separate \$2000 donation was also made to OurSRE East.

"It was fantastic – a great night," said the evening's MC, and assistant minister at Wild Street, the Rev Josh Ackland. "It was a sellout... we couldn't have had more people, and we really weren't expecting that. There was a lot of energy and enthusiasm for the cause and you really felt it on the night."

"People really wanted to hear from Jono and were supportive in all sorts of different ways about the stories he shared and all the conversations he had with people around the tables. They were just really excited about what the Lord is doing in schools in the east."

Mr Ackland said that, until recently, the local public high schools had no SRE presence.

"I know that for 30 years there was no Scripture at Randwick Boys'... so people at the trivia night were really pumped about these opportunities," he said.

"Jono was energised by the whole night. It gave him great encouragement to see the number of people who are praying for what he's now doing."

Revenge won't fix Fatphobia



HANNAH THIEM

Insatiable
 Netflix

INSATIABLE WAS PLAGUED BY CONTROVERSY LONG BEFORE ITS RELEASE LAST MONTH. Created by Lauren Gussis, it's a coming-of-age TV show which flirts with satire, fat shaming, black comedy and something vaguely pornographic.

It depicts the journey of "Fatty Patty" (Debby Ryan) as she is bullied, loses 70 pounds, becomes a beauty pageant contestant and seeks revenge on everyone who hurt her.

Based on the inflammatory trailer, a petition to ban the release of *Insatiable* quickly gained 100,000 signatures. Florence Given, the instigator of the petition, said the series would cause "devastation" to young girls. As of late last month, the petition had well over 230,000 signatures.

Actress Debby Ryan asked viewers to "wait and watch the show before passing judgement" so, now that we've watched it, let's break down the messages *Insatiable* champions.

THE VIRTUE OF BEING SKINNY

A large component of the drama is the suggestion that being skinny is the same as being righteous.

When Patty goes to court for an assault charge, her lawyer decides to reject the plea deal, relying on her beauty to win the case. Which it does. Patty uses her new body to seduce the key witness, leaving her free to walk into her new life. *Insatiable* continues to link virtue with health, as Patty adjusts to the temptation to indulge in chocolate bars.

The flashbacks to Debby Ryan wearing a fat suit, slow and clumsy, characterise Patty's fatness as repulsive. The fat suit reinforces the idea that she was of less value when overweight, deserving no positive attention but only bullying and abuse. By failing to explore more of Patty's character before her transformation, *Insatiable* suggests that it is only the skinny who have any value or virtue.

One thing the show does get right, however, is its representation of humanity. Rather than depicting character tropes, *Insatiable* is full of realistically conflicted individuals. The question "Am I a good person?" is asked throughout the series as characters understand their own brokenness and failings. Patty, in particular, spends the series asking herself if she is a good or bad person.

EXORCISING THE "FAT" DEMON

Insatiable goes much further than suggesting clean eating is a moral choice by characterising Patty's fatness as a demon. When Patty murders two people, considers lighting a man on fire and destroys a marriage for her own selfish intent, it isn't really her. It's the "demon" of Fatty Patty.

There's even an exorcism scene, which results in Patty throwing up. The idea that you can cleanse yourself through a behaviour typically associated with a major eating disorder further suggests that the only way to righteousness is through control over your body. This theme is vastly at odds with the message we see in the Bible.

Patty's wake-up moment in the season finale attempts to undo this damaging message: "It was time to write my own story. I wasn't a loser when I was fat, and I wasn't a loser now". Patty's realisation is one at the heart of Christianity, and it's one that the series could have explored much more helpfully. God doesn't care if you are fat or thin, but values people because they are made in his image.

YOU ARE NOT WHAT YOU EAT

Jesus spoke against moralising about food 2000 years ago: "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them" (Matthew 15:17-18).

In his own context, religious hypocrites were using laws around food and cleanliness to say people were unacceptable to God and Jesus corrected them, reminding them that it's not about what you eat, but what comes from your heart. So having control – or not – over our inner fatness demon does not define our morality because it's what's in our hearts that truly matters. Are we really still failing to learn this lesson?

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