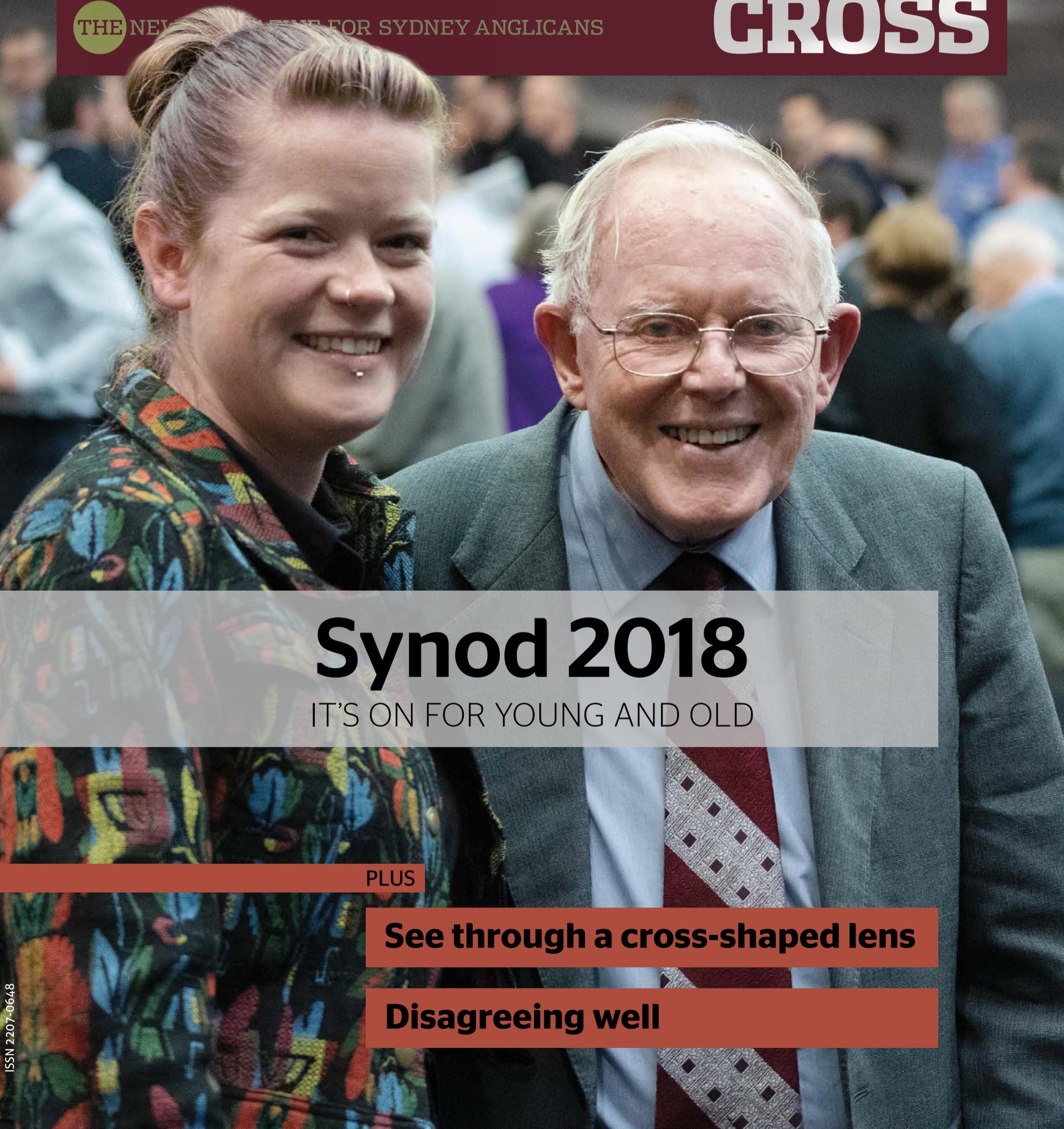


NOVEMBER
2018

Southern CROSS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS



Synod 2018

IT'S ON FOR YOUNG AND OLD

PLUS

See through a cross-shaped lens

Disagreeing well

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**“If Aboriginal ministry is
going to flourish anywhere
surely it is here, even with
all the hurt and the history.”**

Nathaniel “Jum” Naden
Synod News

Southern CROSS NOVEMBER 2018

volume 24 number 10



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

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\$44.00 per annum (Australia)

PRINTED BY: Southern Colour



Manly builds up

Knock down, build up: Rev Bruce Clarke (left) with Archbishop Glenn Davies at the start of the construction ceremony.

AT A CEREMONY AT THE CORSO ON OCTOBER 4, THE CONGREGATION OF ST MATT'S, MANLY GATHERED WITH MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY TO CELEBRATE THE FIRST TURNING OF THE SOD ON A NEW PROJECT.

For years, the wardens of St Matt's have been planning, saving and working hard to ensure that the retail space owned by the church since the 1920s could be upgraded in order to continue serving the community into the future.

"It's the first six shops on the southern side of the Manly Corso," explains the Rev Bruce Clarke, senior minister at St Matt's. "For the past 20 years the wardens have been working to redevelop them as they are old, decrepit buildings that don't meet the building codes of today."

The redevelopment is expected to take 13 months, weather permitting, and be complete by Christmas 2019. The whole project will cost the church \$12 million. "We've saved up about \$5 million in equity, which has enabled the project to pay for upfront costs as well as assist with loan repayments," Mr Clarke says.

Previously the lower level of the building was leased for retail, with the top level kept aside for ministry purposes. When the new building is complete, there will be an additional floor allowing for plenty of ministry to happen above the shops.

"We hope to have small group meeting rooms, children's ministry, youth ministry and ESL on the first floor," Mr Clarke says. "The second floor will be a 200-seat auditorium for ministry and also community use, and a rooftop terrace with a barbecue and a kitchen. We're hoping to provide a range of things for training, entertaining and fellowship."

Although the interior will be shiny and new, the façade of the heritage building will remain the same. The finished project will be christened the Darly Smith Building as a nod to key figures in the history of Manly: Henry Gilbert Smith, known commonly as the father of Manly, made land available for a church in 1857; Captain Benjamin Darly and his family also set aside land on The Corso for a new church building.

While this is an exciting project for the benefit of the Manly community, Mr Clarke is most excited about the added ministry possibilities the redevelopment will provide.

"It will give us increased space in terms of doing ministry," he says. "Our children's and youth ministry have grown significantly, so it will provide quality space for doing ministry and be a helpful bridge into the community."

Backing for #kidsoffnauru

ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES HAS SIGNALLED CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE CAMPAIGN TO remove children from immigration detention on the island of Nauru.

Fifty-two children remain on the island among approximately 650 asylum seekers, including 107 families. A further 626 men are being held on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. All the refugees were taken to the tiny island after their boats were intercepted.

The Anglican Diocese of Sydney was a founding member of the #kidsoffnauru campaign, which began in August to pressure political leaders to release children from detention.

"The situation of children in ongoing detention should concern every Australian," Dr Davies said, echoing comments he made in 2015 after the Human Rights Commission Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention.

"We know that the overwhelming majority of children suffer considerable trauma in custody – there is no safe level of exposure when it concerns children in detention."

In October, a group of 6000 doctors and health professionals called on the Federal Government to immediately release the children, citing serious mental and physical health concerns.

These included depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, with significant levels of self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts that included children as young as nine. Medical reports also say the children are at risk of abuse and neglect.

Nauru is a tiny island the size of Melbourne Airport and children in detention there have recently witnessed lip-stitching, self-immolation and other self-harm. Three refugees in Nauru have died by suicide.

There are limited places to play because of unshaded, hot phosphate rock and the fear of wild dogs on the island.

The Archbishop's backing for the campaign includes his long-standing call for parents and children to be removed from detention, together.

"It would only cause further heartache for families to be separated from each other at a time when they need each other the most," he said.



A tweet from the #kidsoffnauru campaign highlights the ongoing support of the Sydney Diocese.



Age shall not weary him

Hard at work: nonagenarian Don McPhail from Willoughby, and Kat McFarlane – a young lay representative from Summer Hill – listen to a speech at Synod.

LAY SYNOD MEMBER DON MCPHAIL, FROM WILLOUGHBY PARISH, CELEBRATED HIS 90TH BIRTHDAY on the second day of the 2018 Synod – an impressive milestone for doubtless the oldest parish representative in the auditorium.

Always present in suit and tie, Mr McPhail first came to Synod 60 years ago after being nominated as a lay representative by the then rector of Willoughby. He has attended 44 synods all told – including election synods that selected five of the six most recent Archbishops of Sydney – and has represented the parishes of Mittagong and Millers Point as well as Willoughby during that time.

When asked why he kept coming, Mr McPhail smiled and said: “Nobody else wants to get elected so I get elected! But I like it, I’m interested in it, so that makes a difference.”

Synod representation runs in three-year cycles for his people so in 2019, potentially, Mr McPhail will chalk up his 45th Synod attendance.

“If I’m still around, yes,” he said cheerfully. “My current election carries me through till next year. But age might get the better of me. Who knows?”

Sydney helps Bathurst

THE SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY HAS VOTED IN FAVOUR OF A SIX-YEAR PLAN TO HELP fund the infrastructure of the Diocese of Bathurst, to ensure the continuation of Christian witness in central western NSW.

The diocese has been beset with financial problems for the past decade and, with shrinking congregations, is at the point where it cannot support the office of the bishop and the registry, vital to the oversight of ministry in the region.

The Synod was asked to provide \$250,000 a year to run the essential functions. The Metropolitan of NSW, the Archbishop of Sydney, would also approve the candidates for bishop to be considered by Bathurst’s nomination board next year when the current bishop, Ian Palmer, retires. The board would have the choice of at least two candidates selected by them and approved by the Metropolitan.

Dr Karin Sowada (right) – who moved the motion with the Bishop of South Sydney, Michael Stead – said she was convinced help for a sister diocese was in the spirit of early church ministry.

“Bathurst has had to work through a great deal – not the least being the discharge of their debt,” Dr Sowada said. “That has now happened. The Bathurst Diocese knows things need to change just to survive declining church attendances, the crises in rural communities and encroaching secularism. Many rural dioceses around Australia are facing this challenge.

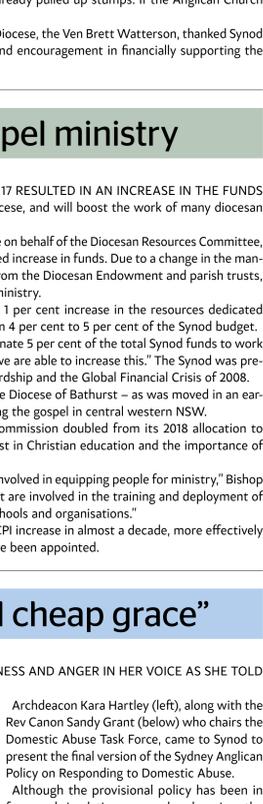
“The proposed arrangement will facilitate the development of stronger links between Sydney and the west to support hard-pressed rural churches and the many Aboriginal communities from Bathurst to Bourke. But there are other reasons to support this. If we don’t do this now, matters will decline in Bathurst and we may be faced with a more serious situation. The collapse of the Bathurst Diocese would be a disaster, not the least for the faithful brothers and sisters living there.

“But in my mind, there is a further reason, which is the most compelling of all. It’s just the right thing to do. I am convinced this proposal speaks into the history of the early church – the things read about in Paul’s letters. He calls on the believers in Galatia to help carry one another’s burdens. We are now called to do the same for a diocese right on our doorstep that was ‘birthed’ from our own in 1870.”

As second Bishop Stead said, “If we sit on our hands, it is lose-lose. If we act now and support Bathurst, it is win-win.”

Bishop Stead, who was one of the negotiators of the plan, added: “It is a win for the spread of the gospel in central and western NSW, because if we don’t help out, gospel ministry will slowly wither and die there. In many towns, the other denominations have already pulled up stumps. If the Anglican Church pulls out, there is no gospel witness left.”

Soon after the vote, the Vicar General of the Bathurst Diocese, the Ven Brett Waterson, thanked Synod for what he called its “generous act of love, support and encouragement in financially supporting the mission of God in our region”.



Extra money for gospel ministry

THE BUDGET PASSED BY THE SYNOD ON OCTOBER 17 RESULTED IN AN INCREASE IN THE FUNDS available for supporting ministry work outside the Diocese, and will boost the work of many diocesan organisations.

Presented by Bishop Peter Hayward and Mr John Pascoe on behalf of the Diocesan Resources Committee, the 2019-2021 triennium budget contained an unexpected increase in funds. Due to a change in the management of funds for St Andrew’s House, plus money from the Diocesan Endowment and parish trusts, an extra \$611,000 was available for supporting gospel ministry.

The Appropriations and Allocations Ordinance sees a 1 per cent increase in the resources dedicated to supporting ministry work outside the Diocese – from 4 per cent to 5 per cent of the Synod budget.

“If you remember the Synod of 2009, we wanted to donate 5 per cent of the total Synod funds to work outside the Diocese,” Bishop Hayward said. “This year we are able to increase this.” The Synod was previously unable to increase the funds due to financial hardship and the Global Financial Crisis of 2008.

In addition to these funds \$250,000 was pledged to the Diocese of Bathurst – as was moved in an earlier motion – to support the bishop and registrar serving the gospel in central western NSW.

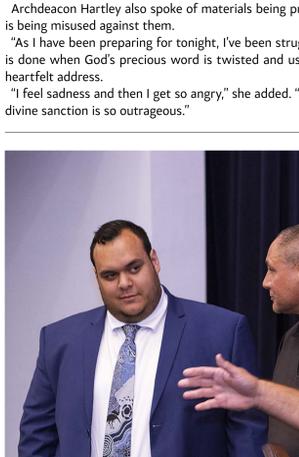
The budgeted amount for the Anglican Education Commission doubled from its 2018 allocation to \$120,000 as a measure of the Synod’s significant interest in Christian education and the importance of the commission’s advocacy work.

“A commitment has also been made to support those involved in equipping people for ministry,” Bishop Hayward said. “Synod will fund those organisations that are involved in the training and deployment of men and women for gospel ministry in our parishes, schools and organisations.”

Many diocesan organisations also received their fiscal increase in almost a decade, more effectively resourcing them for the gospel tasks to which they have been appointed.

DV task force: “Avoid cheap grace”

THE ARCHDEACON FOR WOMEN SPOKE WITH SADNESS AND ANGER IN HER VOICE AS SHE TOLD SYNOD OF the damage wrought by domestic abusers.



Archdeacon Kara Hartley (left), along with the Rev Canon Sandy Grant (below) who chairs the Domestic Abuse Task Force, came to Synod to present the final version of the Sydney Anglican Policy on Responding to Domestic Abuse.

Although the provisional policy has been in force and circulating among churches since the 2017 Synod, the task force had left the policy and guidelines open as it gathered further information on the best ways to combat the scourge of domestic abuse and family violence.

Members of the task force sat in the public gallery as Synod unanimously declared the policy was finalised and thanked them for their work.

“Over the last year, as you requested, we received feedback on the provisional policy,” Canon Grant said. “Importantly, two members of the task force met with a group of victims and survivors of domestic abuse who were former spouses of clergy and ministry workers. These women made many suggestions regarding the policy and guidelines.

“The task force thanks all who took the time to respond – and especially the courage of survivors – in offering their valuable perspectives. Many of their suggestions related to improving how our policy is more helpfully heard and received by victims, as well as avoiding a shallow view of repentance.”

Canon Grant outlined the changes the committee has made to the provisional policy.

“We underline that clergy and lay ministers do not typically have professional expertise in the area of domestic abuse,” he says. “[The diocesan behaviour code] Faithfulness in Service explicitly advises us to obtain professional advice.”

There were also clarifications that the safety-first priority for victims must include their continuing to stay safe – not just finding safety in an initial crisis.

In addition, Canon Grant said the task force noted the “sad possibility that perpetrators of domestic abuse can groom church members and leaders”.

He added that “yielding to domestic abuse that enables sin to continue without consequence is not good for her, for him, for their marriage, or for the children. It’s bad in every respect. So we must avoid cheap grace and shallow understandings of forgiveness.”

Archbishop Davies has urged parishes to follow through on the recommendations, including establishing a local domestic abuse policy, if they have not already done so.

Archdeacon Hartley spoke about the distribution of the policy’s publicity materials in several languages. “Not only will this help to educate but it helps to alert people to our church’s stance on this behaviour,” she said. “We know that clergy and church workers can feel out of their depth when dealing with cases of domestic abuse at church. We are pleased that the PSU has undertaken to develop a training module to help us navigate our way through.”

On abuse among ministers or lay workers, Archdeacon Hartley said, “The episcopal team is very committed to supporting the spouses of clergy and lay ministers who are victims of domestic abuse – especially knowing that if the marriage fails or there is a need to separate, housing may become a critical issue, as well as schooling. These are significant pressure points and vulnerabilities that need to be catered for.”

A ministry spouse support fund has been established for such situations.

Archdeacon Hartley also spoke of materials being produced to help victims recognise when the Bible is being misused against them.

“As I have been preparing for tonight, I’ve been struggling to capture my own feelings at the evil that is done when God’s precious word is twisted and used to excuse violence,” the Archdeacon said in a heartfelt address.

“I feel sadness and then I get so angry,” she added. “To act violently is evil in itself but to falsely claim divine sanction is so outrageous.”



“Strong and full of the Spirit”: Pastor Michael Duckett (right), speaks to Synod with his trainee Mark Manton by his side, as Nathaniel Naden looks on.

A SYNOD PRESENTATION ABOUT INDIGENOUS MINISTRY IN AUSTRALIA – AND PARTICULARLY THE Sydney Diocese – highlighted many positives but underscored the need for training, and for younger Aboriginal people to be in churches and in leadership.

A motion was also brought to Synod by Tony Willis and Pastor Michael Duckett to the MacArthur Indigenous Church. This asked for the Doctrine Commission to bring a report to next year’s Synod about a theological framework for reconciliation, and asked members to approve the establishment of a task force (containing three indigenous Christians, Mr Willis, the Dean and the Rev Stuart Crawshaw) in order to – among other things – help the Diocese work through how to acknowledge past failings as well as “find ways to become more intentionally involved with the ministry of the gospel to and with indigenous peoples”.

Mr Duckett, whose church meets in St Peter’s, Campbelltown – where there is a growing partnership and understanding between the two churches – explained to the Synod that while his people were “really strong and full of the Spirit”, they had no clear training pathways.

“When there are no pathways people get lost,” he said simply. There were week-long conferences and gatherings around the country, he added, but “no structure for training and equipping people, [and] if you’re going to serve the Lord you need more than a service’s training”.

Storylines

Another crucial element in the picture is the often misunderstood or underrated (by white people) connection to country.

“Western fellas want to train us up, take us from the storylines of our families for three years of training... then go back,” Mr Duckett said. “But the journey of our families and our community’s ministry must be in the storylines or it has no effect.”

“Aboriginal people are social people with a strong connection to our land and if you take them from that it minimises the effect of the training... [they] need to know how to walk in their community with the Spirit.”

With the support of the rector of Campbelltown, the Rev Nigel Fortescue, Mr Duckett has developed a ministry training model that will involve him and a trainee “journeying together” in faith for a year, “growing and learning together”, before that training moves on to a year of theological training. This method would then be replicated over and over again.

“Our desire is for the lost... for God’s glory and for the benefit of Aboriginal people for the future,” he said. “Is it going to be successful? Yes, it is. God will bless it.”

The future

Final year Moore student Nathaniel “Jum” Naden, who is headed for ordained ministry in the Armidale Diocese next year, spoke frankly to the Synod about the Aboriginal church – which, on the whole, “looks like an elderly, dying, mostly female gathering”.

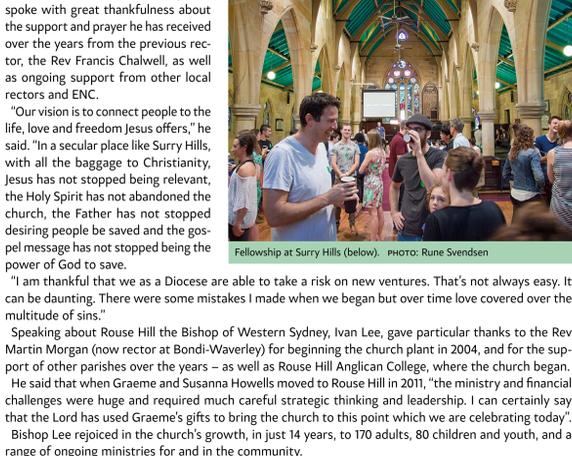
“Young Aboriginal people are staying away,” he said. “More young men and women have bought into the lie that putting faith in Jesus takes away their cultural identity. This is preached from black and white secular ‘pulpits.’”

Mr Naden spoke of the need to train and disciple Aboriginal men and women considering full-time gospel ministry, but said many men in leadership positions in Aboriginal churches had never been shown how to disciple someone.

He said the Church needed to think about how to effectively partner with Aboriginal ministries and consider how it could be involved in effective training of Aboriginal men and women.

“The biggest population of Aboriginal people in this country, they’re here, in NSW – a lot of them in this city,” he said. “If Aboriginal ministry is going to flourish anywhere surely it is here, even with all the hurt and the history.”

Mr Naden encouraged Synod members to remember they were “in a unique position to impact and influence the Aboriginal church, in ways probably some of you don’t even realise”. Together, indigenous and non-indigenous people needed to “live gospel-shaped lives and... reach the lost for the glory of God”.



Church use policy “a shield, not a stick”

A POLICY FOR THE USE OF CHURCH PROPERTY HAS BEEN PASSED BY THE SYNOD AFTER ORGANISATIONS for Synod to clarify its scope and implementation. The policy guides churches and Anglican organisations on renting out and leasing properties.

The use of church property has always been governed by various regulations and the latest policy consolidates these into a single document and, for legal reasons, spells out doctrinal issues.

Bishop Michael Stead (above), as chairman of the Religious Freedom Reference Group, moved the motion and told Synod the essence of the policy is that church property should not be used for purposes which are contrary to the doctrine of the Church.

“It arose in the context of the same-sex marriage debates last year, and the realisation that the changing legal landscape had put our Anglican institutions at risk of anti-discrimination complaints and other adverse action,” Bishop Stead said.

The bishop admitted the policy was a “clunky” way to protect the issue.

“The core problem is that there is almost no positive protection for freedom of religion in Australian law,” he said. “Instead, what little protection there is comes from carve-outs – exemptions – in anti-discrimination legislation.

“Exemptions are the wrong way to deal with this – it is a sledgehammer to crack a nut. However, it seems that there is no political appetite for a proper fix, and it seems we are stuck with clunky exemptions. And this policy and that is – also somewhat clunky – way to address this.”

Bishop Stead added that, “To rely on existing anti-discrimination exemptions, a religious institution must demonstrate that its actions conform to the ‘doctrines, tenets or beliefs of that religion’. To ensure that the courts know what “our doctrines, tenets or beliefs” are, we need a clear articulation of our doctrines.”

Before the legislation went before Synod there had been erroneous media reports that it would ban indigenous smoking ceremonies.

“The original ban was not a ban on all smoking ceremonies, only those with a spiritualistic inconsistent with Christianity,” Bishop Stead explained. “However, on wider advice from Aboriginal Christians, we realised that we need to consult more widely because the spiritual significance of smoking ceremonies differs in different places.

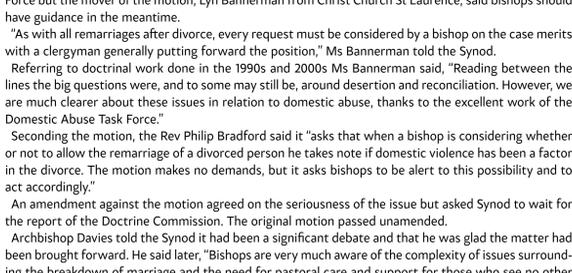
“Moreover, this discussion needs to be part of the wider conversation about reconciliation between the first peoples of this country and its later arrival and needs to be driven by indigenous Christians. It was clumsy to address this in a property use policy and I readily withdraw it, with deep apologies to the Aboriginal community.”

Bishop Stead fielded questions from parishes on how the policy would apply in certain circumstances, and – responding to criticism that the document was too negative – he said it was not meant to be a mission document, but one which would assist churches.

“I am aware of at least one church that ceased all external hiring of their church hall, based on legal advice that they could be in breach of anti-discrimination legislation if they refused to hire to certain groups and not others,” he said.

“Their legal advice was – don’t do this, unless there is a clear statement of your doctrines, tenets and beliefs, which explains that this was why you said ‘No’, rather than because you are discriminating. The policy and ordinance address this problem.”

“Please note – this policy is a shield, not a stick. It didn’t come about because someone wants control to correct wayward parishes or boards of Anglican institutions who are running amok. It is a shield to protect them from claims of discrimination or from other external pressure.”



Members of Rouse Hill.

SYNOD REJOICED AS THE LEADERS OF CHURCHES AT SURRY HILLS AND ROUSE HILL SHARED WHAT God is doing in their midst – and warmly approved the kindness of both as their parishes.

“We want to celebrate God’s irreducibly faithful and relational love,” the rector of Rouse Hill, the Rev Graeme Howells, told Synod members. “He has given us much joy as a church family by mercifully adding people to his kingdom through our ministries.”

Rouse Hill Anglican is a young church – planted in 2004 – while Surry Hills began in the 1830s as a church plant of Christ Church St Laurence, with an Edmund Blacket-designed church building constructed in 1854.

But there is also a newness about Surry Hills as, in 2015, Vine Church (an Evangelism and New Churches plant on the city fringe focused on 18- to 35-year-olds) merged with St Michael’s, Surry Hills to become a combined church passionate about reaching out to locals – including the homeless, the LGBTIQ community and sex workers.

The Rev Toby Neal, who planted Vine Church and is now rector of Surry Hills, spoke with great thankfulness about the support and prayer he has received over the years from the previous rector, the Rev Francis Chalwell, as well as ongoing support from other local rectors and ENC.

“Our vision is to connect people to the life, love and freedom Jesus offers,” he said. “In a secular place like Surry Hills, with all the baggage to Christianity, Jesus has not stopped being relevant, the Holy Spirit has not abandoned the church, the Father has not stopped desiring people be saved and the gospel message has not stopped being the power of God to save.

“I am thankful that we as a Diocese are able to take a risk on new ventures. That’s not always easy. It can be daunting. There were some mistakes I made when we began but over time love covered over the multitude of sins.”

Speaking about Rouse Hill the Bishop of Western Sydney, Ivan Lee, gave particular thanks to the Rev Martin Morgan (now rector at Bondi-Waverley) for beginning the church plant in 2004, and for the support of other parishes over the years – as well as Rouse Hill Anglican College, where the church began.

He said that when Graeme and Susanna Howells moved to Rouse Hill in 2011, “the ministry and financial challenges were huge and required much careful strategic thinking and leadership. I can certainly say that the Lord has used Graeme’s gifts to bring the church to this point which we are celebrating today”.

Bishop Lee rejoiced in the church’s growth, in just 14 years, to 170 adults, 80 children and youth, and a range of ongoing ministries for and in the community.

“But I want to set this growth in the context of the great challenges of northwest Sydney,” he said. “One of the first questions I was asked when I became Bishop of Western Sydney in 2003 was, ‘What are you going to do about the population boom about to hit the northwest sector?’ I was told over and over again, ‘A population the size of Canberra is moving in!’

“I firmly believe that we can reach this great Diocese of Sydney with the good news of Jesus, but only if we do it together.”

Mr Neal agreed: “By far the greatest joy I have experienced over the past eight years has been seeing so many people come to know the Lord Jesus... that’s what our Diocese is on about.”

Designing Bishopscourt

Explaining the plans: Peter Ireland (bottom left) addresses the Synod.

CLEVERLY DESIGNED PLANS FOR A MULTIFUNCTIONAL HOME FOR FUTURE ARCHBISHOPS OF Sydney was shared at Synod in a presentation by Peter Ireland, the general manager and co-principal of the project’s architects, Allen Jack + Cottier.

AJ + C won the brief to design the new Bishopscourt over five other firms, creating a flexible home, work and meeting space that provides for the wide range of uses needed in the Archbishop’s residence – while at the same time fitting into the surrounding area.

Mr Ireland explained to Synod that the site of the house, on a north-facing block in Forest Lodge not far from the University of Sydney, was in a conservation area and “a lot of the buildings around it are very small”. This made it important to ensure the overall character of the home was low-key and fits with conservation requirements, yet is still able to fulfil all the functions needed – making provision for meetings, events and the accommodation of visitors, as well as having the flexibility to be the home of a family with children.

“It was a complex brief but we believe that we managed to crack it!” Mr Ireland said. The architectural solution is a building “made up of elements rather than a single statement”. Four family bedrooms and a sitting room are upstairs – plus two guest bedrooms with ensuites and a separate sitting room. Downstairs is the Archbishop’s study and library, a living room to seat 20 and a dining room for 16. A meeting area is linked by a courtyard garden, while the family living space is off to one side with a garden of its own. Subject to approval, basement parking is also planned for 10 cars.

The site, which was part of a piece of land previously held in trust for St Barnabas, Broadway but originally for the Endowment of the See, also contains an old Porsche workshop – the shell of which is being incorporated into the design – plus a large tree the architects are aiming to retain.

The plan is to have the new Bishopscourt built and ready for the next Archbishop of Sydney.

Domestic abuse factors

A MOTION ON THE ISSUE OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE AFTER DOMESTIC ABUSE HAS BEEN approved by Synod, requesting bishops take domestic violence into consideration in remarriage applications.

The issue has already been referred to the Doctrines Commission by the Domestic Violence Task Force but the mover of the motion, Lyn Bannerman from Christ Church St Laurence, said bishops should have guidance in the meantime.

“As with all remarriages after divorce, every request must be considered by a bishop on the case merits with a clergyman generally putting forward the position”, Ms Bannerman told the Synod.

Referring to doctrinal work done in the 1990s and 2000s Ms Bannerman said, “Reading between the lines the big questions were, and to some may still be, around desertion and reconciliation. However, we are much clearer about these issues in relation to domestic abuse, thanks to the excellent work of the Domestic Abuse Task Force.”

Seconding the motion, the Rev Philip Bradford said it “asks that when a bishop is considering whether or not to allow the remarriage of a divorced person he takes note if domestic violence has been a factor in the divorce. The motion makes no demands, but it asks bishops to be alert to this possibility and to act accordingly.”

An amendment against the motion agreed on the seriousness of the issue but asked Synod to wait for the report of the Doctrine Commission. The original motion passed unamended.

Archbishop Davies told the Synod it had been a significant debate and that he was glad the matter had been brought forward. He said later, “Bishops are very much aware of the complexity of issues surrounding the breakdown of marriage and the need for pastoral care and support for those who see no other option than to end their marriage. The scourge of domestic abuse in our society has brought heightened awareness of the need to provide adequate and sensitive pastoral care to victims of abuse.

“The bishops are mindful of all of these factors when considering remarriage applications, yet I have noted the request of the Synod and I shall consult further with the bishops before providing my response. I shall also seek an early meeting with the Doctrine Commission to ensure this issue is considered as soon as possible and a report is delivered as quickly as possible.”

Growth corporation

A NEW ORGANISATION WAS UNVEILED AT SYNOD – THE ANGLICAN CHURCH GROWTH CORPORATION – which will provide oversight for the Mission Property Commission (MPC) and enable strategic co-operation between the MPC, New Churches for New Communities (NCNC) and Evangelism and New Churches (ENC).

Its role will also involve improving communication within the Diocese on property-related ministry growth initiatives, as well as providing advice to parishes and other diocesan organisations.

Corporation members will include the chairmen or chairwomen of the MPC, ENC and the NCNC, as well as others elected by Standing Committee and appointed by the Archbishop. The corporation will report regularly to Standing Committee.

Support for parish staff

SYNOD HAS EXPRESSED A GREATER COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT AND CARE FOR ASSISTANT MINISTERS and stipendiary lay workers in two motions passed on its final sitting day for 2018.

An amended motion, moved by Bishop Chris Edwards and Mrs Yvette McDonald, encouraged rectors to undertake further training to be better equipped to manage staff teams, among other recommendations, in light of the Appointment of Assistant Ministers and Stipendiary Lay Workers report.

“I commend this to you and pray that you would help clergy and their assistants and their lay workers to work together well,” Bishop Edwards said.

The second motion was brought forward by the Rev Michael Doyle of St James’, Berals and the Rev Anthony Douglas of Shoalhaven Heads, encouraging Synod to make the next steps in listening and taking action to ensure there are good ways forward for rectors and church staff.

The motion included the request for a group to be formed by Standing Committee to consider whether further mechanisms are needed to deal with failures in staff management, as well as suggesting other appropriate recommendations.

“There are lots of bruised people out there who are deeply hurt on all sides,” Mr Doyle said.

“I hope that by providing a safe platform for people to give input and for us to properly consider this input, we will have provided a small but significant step forward in not only moving towards helpful reform, but in healing hurts, building trust and mending relationships.”



Prayer through the longest drought

In God's hands: Jo Horton prays with other members of the Armidale Synod.

THUNDER CLAPPED OVERHEAD AND THERE WAS A SHORT, SHARP DOWNFALL AT THE START OF the Synod of the Diocese of Armidale in late September, but the region is still in the grip of the worst drought since Federation.

As representatives from across the northwest met in Tamworth, not a single farmer in the area will harvest a winter crop, which hasn't happened since 1965. Rainfall, soil moisture and plant growth measurements are all in the lowest 5 per cent ever measured.

"The realities of drought have brought significant stress to many and tears to others," Bishop Rick Lewers told the Synod. "It is a stress that will only continue for many through an incomeless next 12 months – and longer, if rain does not come."

As the drought appeal by the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid topped \$250,000, Bishop Lewers said partnership and friendships were vital.

"Our diocese, in partnership with Anglican Aid, has received financial assistance for those who are in need," he said. "We want to offer assistance to those most in need in a way that does not humiliate. I have found the saleyards and agents to be fertile ground for encountering those in need.

"We often complain about the big cities forgetting the rural world, but city populations have been challenged to partner with our rural communities and give generously. That partnership and generosity will suffer if those in need are too proud to receive the help offered.

"It is commendable to be concerned for those who are worse off than ourselves, but equally commendable is an honest humility that can receive some help and say, 'Thank you' when others offer it."

The Synod was dominated by prayer, both for the drought and the ministry challenges facing the Armidale Diocese.

An entire session was devoted to praying for churches – and the Synod stopped immediately to pray after a motion from Moree parishioner Jo Horton calling for regular prayer meetings with specific requests for rain and for the mental health of those suffering because of the drought.

"My husband is a wool broker and buys and sells sheep," Mrs Horton said. "He has had about four hours' work in the last five weeks. It will take years for the agriculture industry to come back from this and for farmers to rebuild their stock. Australian wool is now in high demand but we don't have the stock to export."

She also reported regular answers to prayer.

"We have been praying on Wednesday afternoons for a while now," she said. "We have people from other churches come and pray with us, which is really encouraging. Furthermore, it has rained after all our prayer meetings within a few days.

"Our God is a faithful God and I cannot encourage you all enough to be praying as a parish on another day [apart from Sunday] each week for rain for our communities. It is a fantastic witness."

END-OF-LIFE WISHES

I could not agree more with funeral director Ray McPhail ("When it's time to say goodbye", SC, September) about the need to discuss our end-of-life wishes with our families.

My father died in February this year, and while he had provided financially for his own funeral, my three sisters and I were left wondering exactly what he would have wanted when planning the funeral service, and what to do with his ashes afterwards. They are currently being held at the funeral home until we can make a decision.

I urge everyone to have these conversations with their loved ones.

Jo Staker
Rouse Hill

The articles on final farewells in September SC were a helpful reminder of the Christian approach to death, in a society that is not sure how to deal with it.

Funeral customs in our society have changed over the years, with a more lighthearted approach gaining sway. The funeral is often described as a celebration of life, and held at a football oval, beach or park. The music is variable – I've even heard *Pistol Packin' Mama* (the deceased's favourite) played at the end of a Christian funeral.

Funeral notices follow the same carefree pattern with expressions such as "rest in peace but keep partying" or "gone golfing". One contained the ambiguous comment "peace at last".

Joking comments about death may be a sign that people are trying to cope with things they fear, but the SC articles provide a surer base for Christians, living with the knowledge that God is with them both in life and death.

James Moore
Kogarah

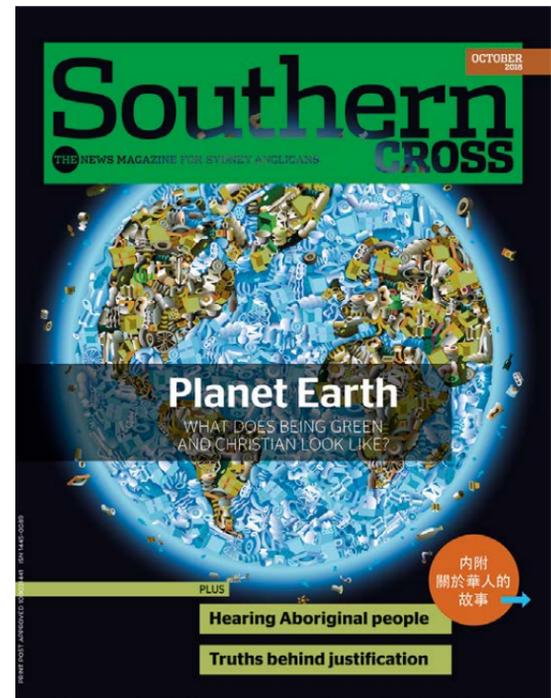
FLAWED CANDIDATES

S. Burgess writes that "to support Donald Trump is to support his disgraceful behaviour towards many individuals and groups in the community" (Letters, SC, October). It is hard to know whether that refers to actions or simply to words – the latter being a hazard for all politicians. Consider Mrs Clinton's reference to several million ordinary Americans as "deplorables".

One reason why so many Christians supported the election of Mr Trump was because they saw him as more likely to protect them, and religious freedom generally. Both candidates were the subjects of great controversy. Mrs Clinton was far more under the thumb of the political correctness that is infecting Western society and Mr Trump's sexual morality was rather like that of some Democratic presidents.

Voters had an invidious choice at the election. There were many issues to consider and Franklin Graham should not be unduly criticised for voting one way or another. He made his choice, just as Christians in Australia do when faced with flawed candidates in all parts of the political spectrum.

David Morrison
Springwood





NEW CHAPTER FOR PARK ROAD

The **Rev Gary Bennetts** is moving from Georges Hall after 11 years, and will become rector of Park Road Anglican Church (formerly South Carlton) on January 2.

"It was a slightly mysterious process of us just coming to being open to a move," he says. "Our time at Georges Hall has been wonderful and very fruitful, but [the nominators] gave me a call, we started talking... and I felt I had some of the skills and experiences that could help the Park Road Church keep on making Jesus known in the local area."

Mr Bennetts says the people at Park Road had been "very generous and thoughtful, very accommodating in smoothing the process for us as much as possible. And they're keen for [my wife] Deb and I to work together, which is how we operate in ministry: as a team."

"We want to support the ESL work that's going really well at Park Road – it's a very exciting part of the parish's outreach. It sounds like the people there have been putting in a huge effort in a range of ministries and we're looking forward to supporting these. We also look forward to developing relationships with people in the church, and through school and sport and other activities... just getting to build relationships with the people in the community."

In leaving Georges Hall the family farewells the immediacy of many friendships that have built up over the past 11 years. Says Mr Bennetts: "We're feeling pretty apprehensive about those relationships changing and saying goodbye... but we're excited about what the future holds, and we certainly feel like we're going with the encouragement and blessing of the congregation".

JODIE JUMPS TO JAMBEROO

The **Rev Jodie McNeill**, who has been rector of Oak Flats for six years and acting rector of Jamberoo since 2015, will become full-time rector of Jamberoo from January 1.

To support the ministry and outreach of both churches over the past four years, Mr McNeill chose to preach at all four services – made possible by moving one of Jamberoo's services to Saturday evening at 5pm. His wife Mandy has been running kids ministries at both parishes, and their children have also been involved in music, youth and kids ministry at both churches.

It's been a busy, rewarding time, but Mr McNeill is confident this is the right move to make under God.

"The people at Oak Flats have a huge mission heart and the Jamberoo opportunity was viewed as a way of providing gospel input to a church that needed us," he says. "The parish did not have a vibrant Anglican ministry in 2015. The average age was almost 80 and attendance was 20-something on a Sunday, and now I'd say we've halved the average age, doubled the attendance and doubled the giving."

"Oak Flats is thankful for how things have gone at Jamberoo and pleased our partnership has brought Jamberoo to this point of maturity. But they also, like me, are feeling sad, because the six years I've been there isn't a long time."

"Jamberoo has its own identity; it really wants to be itself," Mr McNeill continues. "The wardens of Jamberoo were most eager to have their minister living in the village. They knew it was our best chance of having a stand-alone evangelical parish, given that everybody else has pretty much moved out."

"One former Protestant church is now a function centre. Another is part of a nearby parish and has a service once a month. The Catholic Church meets each week but doesn't have a minister living in the village, so I am the only resident minister. I'm looking forward to knocking on people's doors and saying, 'My name's Jodie, I am your minister.'

"The really old-fashioned English parochial ministry is what I think I need to have in mind... I'm fascinated to explore what it means to be the local parish minister involved in local parish and village stuff, and to train and equip the people in the church to join with me in doing that."

"We'll give it the best shot we have under God."



GLOVERS TO CAMBODIA

After more than 20 years of ministry at St George's, Gerringong the **Rev Andrew Glover** and his wife Liz are leaving the parish on November 11 to work in Cambodia.

The couple will be CMS short-term workers from November 26, when they take up ministry at the Independent Christian Fellowship in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh.

"Put simply, I'll be the senior pastor at the ICF in Phnom Penh," Mr Glover says. "It's a normal church ministry role, pastoring and preaching in an English-speaking expatriate church."

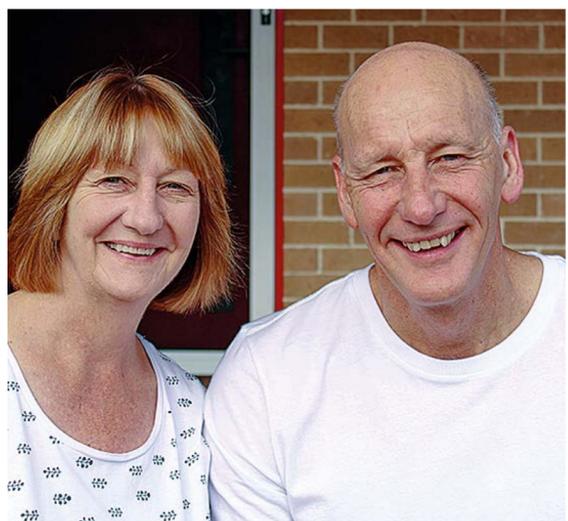
He says that since church members at Gerringong became involved in house-building ministry in Cambodia 12 years ago, he and Liz had been considering whether there might be a ministry option for them in the country.

They have talked about missionary service over the years with the Rev Canon Peter Rodgers, international director of CMS Australia, and his wife Marcelle, and heard about the ICF opportunity late last year.

Mr Glover says both he and Liz "have a heart" for Cambodia, as it continues to rebuild after the impact of Khmer Rouge rule decades ago, and they are keen to support biblical ministry, teaching and training in the country.

His hope is that they can "contribute to the extension of biblical training and teaching [in Cambodia] – we don't know what that looks like yet but that will come – plus the building up of expats during their time in Phnom Penh, as well as supporting evangelism and ministry in Cambodia".

He says that after 20 years people were "sad but not surprised" to hear they were leaving Gerringong, and "When we told the congregation what we were going to do they said, 'That makes complete sense, we're really happy for you' – because they know the connection with the country and the church. No one said, 'You're going where?'"



Disagree well

STEPHEN KINSELLA

WATCHERS OF Q&A ON THE ABC CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE THE INCREASING HOSTILITY DIRECTED toward those who hold a position contrary to the popular view on issues as diverse as climate change, the institutional church and, of course, politics.

Across society, a lack of respect for those that offer a conflicting perspective has become the norm. There are now cases where speakers are "disinvited" to events because of action taken by those seeking to silence a contrary point of view.

The noble sentiment "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" seems a long way removed from the spontaneous, personal and often vitriolic commentary (it is hard to call it dialogue) enabled by email, Twitter and online forums. When did a troll move from the pages of a child's fantasy book to become a predator on the internet?

Has the art of respectfully discussing ideas been lost? Is it possible to disagree well?

This is certainly an issue for schools, where questioning and the discussion of ideas are central to effective learning, and it is no less a challenge for society as a whole. How do we create an environment where ideas can be discussed openly, deeply and respectfully?

In an article written for Anglican EdComm I proposed four foundational attitudes that underpin respectful dialogue:

1 Listen well

At a recent Christians in Teaching conference Dr Donald Guthrie, from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, encapsulated the value of listening this way: "Listen to understand, rather than to gain advantage". The art of listening well is an acquired skill, particularly in a society where it is not widely practised. Teacher and researcher on leadership development, Michael H. Hoppe, identifies six components of good listening:

- Paying attention – creating a setting for productive dialogue
- Holding judgement – the intention should be to understand, not coerce
- Reflecting – restating the other person's position confirms understanding and creates empathy
- Clarifying – this avoids misunderstanding
- Summarising – demonstrates understanding
- Sharing – from a position of understanding comes the opportunity to share your ideas.

Listening well is the foundation of respectful dialogue and the sharing of ideas, not an attempt to coerce a person towards a certain point of view. This attitude reflects the character of God, who gives us all free will and choice in what we believe and how we live. We should afford the same freedom to those with whom we disagree.

2 Maintain an open mind

Research fellow at the Centre for Public Christianity, Dr Natasha Moore, observed at a recent Anglican Schools conference that keeping an open mind – especially with those with whom we disagree – is important for two reasons:

- We may not be right. We are not infallible, and failing to engage in the sharing of ideas could deny us the opportunity to learn.
- We might be right. Engaging with a conflicting point of view is useful in confirming and deepening our understanding of what we believe to be right.

3 Respect the person

Ideas that are different, challenging, confronting and even frightening will necessarily elicit a response. If the idea can't be dealt with through discussion, then the alternatives are to ignore the ideas or attack the person promoting the ideas.

The example and teaching of Jesus are instructive in this instance: "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you... [God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:44-45).

It is hard to fear, demonise or demean those with whom we disagree if we are loving and praying for them as Jesus requires. God's grace is given to all and in the same way we should be gracious to those with whom we disagree.

This particularly applies to those in authority: "The authorities that exist have been established by God... whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted" (Romans 13:1-2).

A particularly useful technique is to establish common ground with the person with whom we disagree. This creates a shared position from which to safely explore those points on which difference exists. This is the technique often used by Jesus:

- Dialogue with the Samaritan woman commences with the common ground of "thirst" at the well (John 4).
- Dialogue with Zacchaeus is enabled through friendship and hospitality (Luke 19:1-10).
- Dialogue with a young ruler begins through a common interest in eternal life (Matthew 19:16-22).

The Apostle Paul writes: "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Romans 14:19). If we are to make every effort to do what leads to peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ, then this principle should apply to all our conversations. Perhaps we lose something if we win the argument but lose the peace?

4 Explain our hope

We are called to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). In doing so we can expect that disagreement will occur; our skills in respectful dialogue will be tested.

Confidence can be gained in knowing a Christian is not speaking from a deficit position – that "the word of God is alive and active [and] sharper than any double-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).

The response of a Christian to disagreement is to be countercultural. We are to "live such good lives... that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Peter 2:12).

By disagreeing well we demonstrate love and respect for those with whom we disagree without compromising what we believe to be true. Respectful discussion and disagreement is possible. The maintenance of our civil society depends on it and Jesus Christ demands it.

Stephen Kinsella is executive director of Anglican EdComm. He has 40 years' experience as a teacher and administrator in government and independent schools – 17 years as the head of two Anglican schools.

Salt and light in society

Amid global change we must continue to lead people to the truth, says **GLENN DAVIES**.

WE HAVE A DISTINCT RESPONSIBILITY, AS MEMBERS OF THE DIOCESE OF Sydney, to see Christ honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community. Of course, it is so easy to be absorbed merely by the needs of those in our immediate vicinity, and sometimes that is even reduced to those in our church community. Yet the people of God from ancient times have always had responsibilities to those beyond their kith and kin, to the stranger and the alien without, as well as the widow and orphan within. We must resist the temptation to become a ghetto of contented congregationalists that only looks inward. We need to look outward, recognising the world's needs – spiritual, emotional and physical – if we are to fulfil our charter of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, as Jesus describes his disciples, with a warning:

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

I was delighted to hear recently that Sydney Anglicans have raised over \$325,000 towards relief in NSW. Having only launched this appeal two months ago through the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid, with an appeal for prayer as well as donations, it is heartening to see how we who live in the coastal regions of the State can assist those inland whose rainfall is so precarious and who have been suffering great hardships in sustained drought over several years. Your gifts and prayers have reflected the grace of God – good deeds that glorify our Father in heaven. Furthermore, it is humbling to see our heavenly Father answering our prayers for rain in recent weeks.

However, our mission is not merely to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and house the homeless, for "mankind does not live by bread alone". We have the living bread that nourishes the soul; the living water that springs up to eternal life. We have the greatest gift of all to share with others. We want to lead people to the true light of the world – Jesus Christ, who saves them from their sins and satisfies all needs. As Jesus says to those who believe in him: "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free". [John 8:32]

THE DIOCESE OF BATHURST

Sometimes situations become so desperate that gospel work is threatened by a lack of resources. In recent years, the Diocese of Bathurst has fallen on hard times. This has been in part due to the flow of people from the bush to the city, especially young people, and the lack of employment opportunities in many parts of the State. Drought and bushfire have added to the woes of rural NSW.

However, the poor administration of the diocese at the beginning of this century through ill-advised borrowing beyond its means, most notably its accumulated debt to the Commonwealth Bank, plus the scandal of historical cases of child sexual abuse by church workers in the diocese, has brought the diocese to its knees, both spiritually and financially. Although the diocesan leadership has now received a deed of release from the Commonwealth Bank, it is no longer able to pay for its bishop or its registrar from central funds, nor can it call upon its parishes to increase the significant contribution they currently make to fund these essential positions.

The Diocese of Bathurst was formed out of the Diocese of Sydney in 1870, after Bishop Barker considered the reach of western NSW was too far for his effective episcopal oversight. For the past 150 years, the Bathurst Diocese has sought to grow Anglican churches across its vast geographic area through gospel proclamation under the leadership of its bishop.

However, if the diocese is unable to provide the finances to support a bishop, then the diocese will lack effective leadership, which is essential to Anglican order.

What should we as Sydney Anglicans do about this situation? We could, of course, ignore it. We could resort to the oldest excuse for not wanting to be involved: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Yet this is not the way of Christ. Should we not be concerned that the 275,000 people who live in central and western NSW, and especially the 64,000 Anglicans – only a fraction of whom attend church – have opportunities to hear the word of God?

Several options were canvassed, including the break-up of the diocese into neighbouring dioceses of the Province, as well as the return of the Diocese of Bathurst to the Diocese of Sydney. Apart from the logistics of these suggestions, the unknown component of future payments of redress for survivors of child sexual abuse makes it difficult for any diocese to assume responsibility for these liabilities.

After an independent audit of the financial viability of the Diocese of Bathurst, it was estimated that the diocese would need \$250,000 of additional funds each year to support its bishop and registrar. Where the bishop and his support staff had previously been paid by the Endowment of the See, this source is now effectively without funds to support even the bishop.

If we as a Diocese can raise more than this amount in aid of farmers in the drought, then it seemed possible that we could spend this amount to promote the work of the gospel in our neighbouring diocese.

The proposal was therefore put to Bishop Ian Palmer and his leadership team that a grant forward could be for the Diocese of Sydney to provide \$250,000 per annum over six years. Such a grant would be conditional upon the Synod of the Diocese of Bathurst being willing to change their Bishop Election Ordinance 2006 such that no nominee would be considered for election to become Bishop of Bathurst without first gaining the written approval of the Metropolitan.

This measure was important to safeguard the use of the money from Sydney in supporting gospel ministry, so that only a bishop who had the confidence of the Metropolitan could be elected. Such a bishop would need to teach God's word faithfully and effectively, pastor the people of God wisely and compassionately, and lead the diocese in evangelistic endeavours so that Christ is proclaimed as Lord and Saviour throughout central and western NSW. Of course, it was evident from the beginning that any proposal of this kind would also need the endorsement of the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney.

Under the dedicated and diligent leadership of Bishop Palmer, who traversed the Diocese of Bathurst addressing deanery meetings on a number of occasions, the members of the Synod of the Diocese of Bathurst were well prepared to evaluate the options with all the facts clearly laid out before them. With grateful hearts, the Bathurst Synod enthusiastically welcomed the proposal without dissent, and voted accordingly to amend their Bishop Election Ordinance 2006.

For those who know the history of relations between the Diocese of Sydney and the Diocese of Bathurst, this is a significant step forward in our mutual relationship and our desire to partner together in the proclamation of the gospel. Furthermore, as an indication of his goodwill, Bishop Palmer has announced his resignation at the end of April 2019, in order to allow the process of electing a new bishop to commence as soon as practicable.

This proposal now comes before this session of our Synod by way of a motion for approval. I consider that it is an expensive proposal for the Diocese of Sydney. However, it is a proposal worthy of realisation, as it is probably the only proposal that will enable viable gospel ministry in its Anglican formation to continue in central and western NSW. We have an obligation to our brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Bathurst, and indeed to those who live in rural NSW who are yet to hear the claims of Christ. There are many ways to spend money, but not all are strategic uses of such money. For the sake of the gospel this proposal comes to the Synod, and I heartily commend it.

GAFCON 2018

The third Global Anglican Future Conference was held in Jerusalem in June this year. Like its predecessors in 2013 and 2008, it proved to be an extraordinary gathering of Anglican clergy and lay people from around the world, and one of the largest gatherings of Anglicans at any one conference. Part of the genius of GAFCON is its involvement of clergy and lay people, as well as bishops. In this regard, it stands in contrast to the customary occasion when the Anglican Communion is seen to be gathering, namely at the Lambeth Conference, which only bishops attend. Moreover, with 50 countries represented, GAFCON was a genuine manifestation of the Anglican Communion in conference. Around 300 Australians were present. Of these, 180 Sydney Anglicans not only participated but many were instrumental in its organisation, planning and execution, chief among them our former Archbishop, Dr Peter Jensen, and Canon Daniel Willis. I am glad we have been given notice of motions thanking God for these men, and others, who contributed so much to GAFCON 2018's success.

The question is often asked: Why GAFCON? Is this not merely a "ginger group", as some have labelled it? Is it a rival breakaway group from the Anglican Communion? Such facile observations are, in my opinion, both fatuous and misleading. GAFCON represents 70 per cent of church-attending Anglicans around the world. It would be just as foolish to ignore its existence as it would be to describe it as anti-Anglican.

The reason why GAFCON came into existence is that parts of the Anglican Communion had departed from the doctrine of Christ. While the presenting issue was concerned with human sexuality, the underlying problem was the authority of Scripture. GAFCON is a reforming instrument of the Anglican Communion and calls all faithful Anglicans to stand firm for the teaching of Christ, explicitly recorded in Matthew 19:1-12.

Yet it is not a single focus movement. The establishment of nine strategic networks last June, from theological education to ministry to children and youth, reflects the global reach of GAFCON in seeking to proclaim Christ faithfully to the nations. GAFCON is no threat to the Anglican Communion. It is only a threat to those who consider the Bible's teaching on sexuality is outmoded and irrelevant, or to those who want to maintain a mere façade of unity, where no real unity exists.

It is for this reason that the "Letter to the Churches", overwhelmingly endorsed by the whole assembly of GAFCON 2018, expressed the view that attendance at the 2020 Lambeth Conference could not be contemplated if bishops from provinces which had departed from the teaching of Christ were invited. While I have a personal respect and affection for the Archbishop of Canterbury, he carries a grave responsibility upon his shoulders. If our Anglican Communion is merely defined by historical connections and heritage, rather than a doctrinally grounded commitment to Christ and the Bible's teaching, then our *koinōnia* is not the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. GAFCON seeks to reform and renew the Communion by reclaiming its doctrinal foundations.

NEW ZEALAND

The Episcopal Church of North America, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Scottish Episcopal Church all seem so very far away, so that their endorsement in principle or in practice of the solemnisation or blessing of same-sex marriages makes little difference to our life in Australia. However, the recent events in New Zealand are much closer to home and will have a more profound effect upon us.

In May this year the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia decided to allow diocesan bishops to authorise the blessing of same-sex marriages and civil unions. While ostensibly stating they had not changed their doctrine of marriage, the General Synod has effectively allowed the blessing of a same-sex marriage, which is contrary to their doctrine. How can the bride of Christ justify the blessing of a sexual union that is not in accord with Christ's teaching? Just as we cannot pronounce a blessing on an adulterous relationship (notwithstanding a couple's claim that they are deeply in love), so we cannot pronounce God's blessing upon sexual acts God declares to be sinful.

As Bishop Donald Robison once told me, the most important part that the minister plays in solemnising a marriage is to pronounce God's blessing, and God does not bless sin. Regrettably, there are church leaders in Australia who see no problem with these developments in other Anglican provinces, and would even wish such innovations were made lawful in the Anglican Church of Australia.

Following the decision of their General Synod a number of clergy and their congregations decided to leave the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, while still wishing to remain Anglicans. They felt they could no longer stay in a Church that had abandoned the teaching of Jesus and compromised the fundamental principles of their faith. Unlike Australia, a change in the canons in New Zealand automatically takes effect in each diocese.

It became obvious to me that the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (ACANZP) had already embraced the normalisation of same-sex marriage, as clergy in such marriages hold senior positions as deans and archdeacons. There had clearly been no appetite for discipline among the bishops, despite the charge to exercise discipline that the Ordinal declares to be one of a bishop's duties. I soon recognised that after 30 years of debate, the pressure to change the canons and "conform to the standards of the nations" had come to pass and there was no turning back.

I therefore proposed a way forward for the Primates to consider. Since the report coming to their General Synod had recognised there would be those who would dissent from its recommendations, the Church should therefore deal graciously with those who could not accept any foreshadowed changes to the canons. I suggested the ACANZP should therefore allow those clergy and churches who could not stay in the Church to leave and start a new, parallel Anglican Church, and to do so with their property. Parallel jurisdictions are not unknown in the Anglican Communion, as continental Europe has two independent ecclesiastical jurisdictions and two extra-provincial jurisdictions aligned to the See of Canterbury. All four are recognised as authentic Anglicans on the Anglican Communion website.

I argued that the way the leadership of the Church could demonstrate their genuine commitment to the gospel of grace was to allow those who dissented from the General Synod's decision to leave peacefully and honourably. I suggested that the adversarial, litigious approach adopted by The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada ought not to be repeated in the South Pacific.

I am still awaiting the outcome of their consideration of this proposal, the full text of which may be found on the Sydney Anglicans website. However, at the end of September, there were nine clergy and four congregations, representing approximately 1000 members, who have or are planning to disaffiliate from the ACANZP, in addition to a parish in West Hamilton that has already disaffiliated in anticipation of these developments. We should support these faithful Anglicans who wish to remain part of the Anglican family as they seek to establish an extra-provincial diocese. GAFCON Australia has launched an appeal to assist them as they set up this structure and I commend this to members of the Synod. Non-tax deductible donations may be made through the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid.

FREEDOM

Having endured what seemed like a marathon national debate on same-sex marriage over the past year, I suspect Synod members are weary of the topic appearing again in my Presidential Address. Yet the issue is not going away. This year the Uniting Church of Australia changed its laws to allow ministers to solemnise same-sex marriages, and thereby abandoned the historic teaching of the Church and of Christ. The explanation was interestingly couched in the language of freedom. In the reported words of the Church's president: "We accept the diversity in our midst and we are allowing our members the freedom to decide on whether they conduct same-sex marriages or not".

This misconceives the nature of true freedom. True freedom is not the absence of all constraint – "freedom from" – but rather "freedom to" – the freedom to be what we were made to be. For example, God is free, but that does not mean that he is free to lie. The freedom that the gospel offers is a freedom that draws us to the doctrine of Christ. Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are truly my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." [John 8:31-32]

The truth that Jesus offers liberates. It frees us to serve God and to care for others, as we follow Christ's teaching. I am therefore pleased that the long-awaited Human Sexuality Pastoral Guidelines have come before us this session. This is the result of an extensive study of the issues flowing from the Doctrine Commission's "Report on Human Sexuality and the Same-Sex Marriage Debate" that was presented to the Synod in 2015. It is full of wise advice for pastors and lay people seeking to address the manifold pastoral issues involved in caring for all kinds of people in our church, especially those struggling with same-sex attraction.

For we all experience temptation in different ways. We live in a fallen world, and while we may each be susceptible to specific kinds of temptations, as the Devil surely knows our weaknesses, the transformative power of the Holy Spirit ought not to be underestimated. It is he who brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, whether that be an added measure of patience, kindness, gentleness or self-control as required. For it is by his power we resist temptation and seek to live lives of godliness and purity as disciples of Christ. "It is for freedom, that Christ has set us free" [Galatians 5:1]. Or in words of the collect for Peace.

"O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: Defend us, thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

This prayer may well be one we regularly return to in the days ahead, as we find the freedoms we once enjoyed being pared back.

In this past week, the enemies of religious freedom have been hard at work. The selective and distorted leaking of the recommendations of the Ruddock Review has been nothing more than anti-religious activism masquerading as journalism. This week has exposed the hypocrisy of those who, during the same-sex marriage campaign, repeatedly told the Australian public that same-sex marriage would have absolutely no consequences for religious freedom. Now they have revealed what has always been their agenda – to force religious schools to play by secular rules.

Although I am wary of reporting upon a report that has yet to be released, the Ruddock Review, after a careful and thorough analysis and extensive public consultation, has proposed a set of sensible recommendations to ensure Australia protects all human rights, including freedom of religion.

There is, in fact, nothing objectionable in the Ruddock recommendations. But in an attempt to scupper the Ruddock ship while still in the docks, its recommendations were mischievously misrepresented. Then ensued handwringing hysteria about an imaginary epidemic of gay students being expelled from religious schools, and this was accompanied by much ill-informed knee-jerk reaction.

Let's be very clear. Anglican schools in Sydney do not expel students for being gay. It is an absurd proposition and it is certainly not something we asked for in our submission to the Ruddock Review. We would gladly support any amendment to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 that would obfuscate this. This issue was nothing more than a smokescreen to discredit the Ruddock report and obscure the real issues.

What we have asked for is simply this: freedom of religion. People of all faiths and none should have the right to speak and act according to their fundamental convictions. Church schools should not be forced to play by secular rules. It goes to the very heart of religious freedom that religious organisations should be able to operate according to their ethos. Anglican schools, if they are going to remain Anglican, must be able to employ staff who support the Christian values of the school.

Yet our real weapons are not political or strategic – however much we may engage in the national debate – but spiritual, requiring the whole armour of God. It is ultimately the gospel that change's our people's hearts and minds. We must never forget that, even while Christianity is being marginalised in our society.

The aftermath of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has weakened the Church in the eyes of many, and rightly so, I regret to say. Although we have over the years developed a pastoral care and assistance scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse, Standing Committee has rightly agreed that our Diocese should also participate in the Commonwealth National Redress Scheme. This reflects our ongoing commitment to child protection and the care of the most vulnerable in our churches. One cannot underestimate the importance of the Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2018, recently passed by Standing Committee, as it strengthens the screening, training and support of volunteers and paid church workers working with children.

Our allegiance to Christ should galvanise our renewed calling to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that people may put their faith in the Lord Jesus and find true freedom.

ARMISTICE DAY

On November 11 this year we shall celebrate 100 years since the end of World War I. In the war to end all wars, more than 10 million military personnel lost their lives in pursuit of freedom, and about 8 million civilians were killed, let alone another 23 million wounded military personnel. Australia's casualties included the death of 60,000, with 150,000 mangled. Sadly, such freedom from tyranny was to last barely 20 years before another horrific war was unleashed upon the world.

At the 11 hour of the 11 day of the 11 month in 1918, the bells of Christian churches rang out across our city and our nation. While bells were first introduced to call people to church, this was an appropriate gesture for inviting people to give thanks to God for the end of the war. It would be a fitting reminder for this generation, therefore, if all our churches could ring their bells on Sunday, November 11 this year. While wars and rumours of wars will continue until Christ returns, we should be ever thankful for the peace and security we enjoy in our land.

Many Christians around the world struggle with limited resources, lack of freedom, political oppression and religious persecution. Yet they rejoice, knowing that God will bring an end to suffering, an end to deprivation, disease and death. They know the true freedom that sets them free and which will last forever.

Wisdom through weakness



While we glory in the strong and impressive, God looks at us through a cross-shaped lens, writes **PHILIP KERN**.

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE COINED THE PHRASE “FAMOUS FOR BEING FAMOUS” when the world still watched TV in black and white. Celebrity culture has been around for a long time and has never been particularly discriminating.

We might lament that actors and athletes are more recognisable than those who save lives, but few would turn down their own 15 minutes of fame. How should we evaluate this aspect of our culture? And how can we avoid the pitfall of using pop-cultural criteria to evaluate Christian ministry?

Such questions have been around longer than we might imagine. In Paul’s day, as in ours, people enjoyed many forms of popular entertainment, of which public speeches and poetry recitations were arguably the most significant.

Perhaps better known to us are the sporting events. Every four-year cycle offered the Olympics, the Nemean Games and – the Corinthians refusing to be outdone – two editions of their Isthmian Games. Even here, however, it should be noted that while the games included a mere handful of sporting events, they offered a rich variety of other activities including the presentation of poems and speeches. These word-based events played a leading role in cultural life.

Furthermore, just as surely as athletes could become famous, so too could the speaker – especially the “sophist”, a term with wisdom at its root. A well-presented speech became an opportunity for the sophist to become a teacher of his craft. If successful, he would attract a crowd of fee-paying students, called disciples, and thus prosper as an instructor to those who wanted to harness the power of words for political or legal purposes, or for the entertainment of the masses.

Here is where wisdom and power converged in the ancient world, so this became the destination for those who combined a desire for fame and fortune with uncommon talent.

THE RULES

The rules for such activity were settled. The speaker could send an advance team into a new city to announce his imminent arrival. The team might whisper about it in the marketplace and thus build up his reputation. In this way they could announce the time and place of the sophist’s coming, and mark it out as an important civic event.

All this was permissible. One thing, however, was not: preparing the speech in advance. In order to impress, the speech had to be spontaneous – even a response to a topic shouted from the crowd. So, we have speeches from the ancient world on reasonable topics (what caused the Persian war) and on absurd topics (baldness or gnats). The more obscure or ridiculous the topic, the more obvious the talent of the orator.

If all went according to plan, and the sophist successfully addressed the topic put to him, the more likely would be his ability to attract disciples to himself – usually young men who convinced their fathers to underwrite their study in the school of oratory (yes, there were – and still are! – such things).

In the first century AD some were tempted to view Paul through this lens. After all, he travelled from city to city. He gave public speeches at venues such as the lecture hall of Tyrannus and even the Areopagus of Athens, the home of wisdom and eloquence. Here he was able to attract a circle of learners around himself.

Was he the sort of orator the first century prized? Was he playing the same game, with the same set of rules and motivations, or was he doing something radically different? What power defined his speech?

BREAKING THE RULES

We get a glimpse of how Paul views his apostolic ministry in his letters to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians, he is especially concerned to heal rifts in the church caused by their evaluation of preaching. Some prefer Apollos, who Scripture describes as an eloquent man. Others align with Peter or Paul.

The world’s value system has seeped in with the result that the church in Corinth was disintegrating both theologically and morally, a collapse manifest in its response to Christian leaders. Paul simply doesn’t measure up to their standards. He writes impressive letters, but, well, have you seen him? Have you heard him deliver a speech? His presence is weak!

Rather than defend himself, Paul attempts to untangle the knot of the Corinthian church’s worldly evaluations. In 1 Corinthians 1 he talks about the world’s definition of wisdom and power, showing how it is antithetical to the cross.

Can it be otherwise? The world, in its wisdom and power, crucified the one sent to save it. They pronounced their verdict on the Christ. But God overturned their verdict in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. How can we be drawn to systems of power and wisdom, whether pagan or Jewish, that have been so thoroughly exposed by God himself?

In Chapter 2, Paul turns more directly to his preaching ministry. It is as though he says, “Let’s set my ministry side by side with your expectations of an orator”. He begins with a direct opening, moves to a couple of points of contrast, and finally explains why his approach benefits the church in Corinth.

In verse 1, Paul writes: “When I came to you, brothers, I came not with elevated words or wisdom as I proclaimed to you the mystery of God”. Paul is rejecting the very things they delight in.

What’s wrong with highbrow speech and wisdom? And what does Paul’s ministry look like if it is so out of step with other speakers of his day?

Paul then confesses that he chose his topic beforehand (verse 2). That’s cheating! The topic was supposed to be determined by the crowd, and the speech was supposed to arise on the spot, or at most the next day. That’s how you showcased your skill, and how you attracted people to your cause. But Paul decided these things before arriving in Corinth.

He continues by admitting in verse 3 to weakness, fear and trembling. How could the Corinthians respect someone like that? That’s not what they were looking for in an accomplished speaker!

But Paul states the reason for his fear. Not only was the topic determined in advance, it is something unspeakable. Doesn’t he know the cross is a first-century obscenity? One doesn’t mention such things in public, yet Paul keeps talking about Jesus and his crucifixion. No wonder he is fearful. Both method and message offend common decency.

Nevertheless, after giving everything away in the worldly sense – after showing that he himself is weak and foolish, and investing in a message that is weak and foolish according to the world’s evaluation of these things – Paul goes on to say that a profound supernatural power works in and through his preaching. This is not the power of the world. It is the power of God. And his own weak presence and presentation are the vehicle by which God makes his power known, a cross-shaped power which gives life to the dead.

SHAPED BY THE CROSS

And so the shape of Paul’s ministry is not incidental to the message he preaches, as though word and deed are separable. They are fully aligned: God’s message of weakness and foolishness is proclaimed by those who are weak and foolish – at least by the standards of the age. The result of ministry shaped by the cross is that faith rests not on what people do but what God has done in Christ, not on the wisdom and strength of humanity but the foolishness of the cross and the weakness of the one who died on it.

What is the basis of genuine faith? Is it the good argument? Is it the impressive display of power? Paul teaches that genuine faith is prompted by the Spirit of God, the power of God, as we hear the message proclaimed and respond to it.

When Paul says he doesn’t want faith to rest on human wisdom, he implies that faith built on this foundation is vulnerable. If we attach ourselves to Christ because we have been won over by a good argument, does this leave us vulnerable when the better overcomes the good?

Few of us believe because a philosopher persuaded us of the truth of the gospel. We believe because someone, probably simply, perhaps over time and within a relationship, told us about the expansive love of God expressed in the giving of his Son. We believe because the Spirit welded this truth to our being. It is his power, his work; therefore he receives all glory and praise as we humbly acknowledge his grace in overcoming our stubborn hearts.

Paul says these things in the context of evaluating his ministry. If our salvation is the work of the Father, through the Son who died for us, applied by the Spirit, then what is our role in proclaiming the truth of the gospel? Why work so hard to get it right (2 Tim 2:15), since it is all God’s doing anyway?

THE GOOD PREACHER

And how should I think about my minister? Does it matter if he is a good preacher? And what is the essence of good preaching?

Paul’s answer focuses less on good preaching than on good preachers. He has committed to preaching a crucified Christ because he himself has been crucified with Christ to this world and its power structures.

Preaching in a manner consistent with this message can only come from those who experience in their own lives the reality of Christ’s crucifixion, who bear in their bodies the “brand marks of Christ” and know the weakness and emptiness that comes from identifying with the scorned Lord Jesus.

That is to say, message, messenger and method are of a piece. There is plenty of evidence that Paul could have done “better” – that he could have crafted his message in such a way that his audience would have been responding to him rather than to the Christ he preached. But he has consciously chosen to reject this world’s way of doing things and instead build on a firm and lasting foundation, Christ himself (1 Cor 3:11).

Paul knows nothing else will be there in the end. Everything else, like the world to which we are so easily drawn with its wealth and celebrity, falls under God’s judgment. But at the cross Jesus overturns the world’s wisdom and power. And there he wins salvation for those who trust in him. **SC**

Dr Philip Kern is head of the Department of New Testament and Greek at Moore College.



Chalking up 60 at Winmalee

From left: Chris Sheerman and Dave Boxwell, and the Rev Noel Paddison's daughters Ruth Gilmour and Louise Carr.

WINMALEE ANGLICAN CHURCH HAS CELEBRATED ITS 60TH BIRTHDAY WITH SOME OF ITS ORIGINAL members, as well as friends and church family from over the years.

"It was the sort of day that puts a smile on everyone's face," says the Rev Stephen Liggins, who is assistant minister in the broader parish of Springwood with responsibility for Winmalee.

"It was a great opportunity to get people together from Winmalee's different services and reflect on what God has done here over the past 60 years, as well as recently. Everyone was thankful and grateful for things past and present."

The two-congregation church was planted in 1958 by the then rector of Springwood, the Rev Noel Paddison. Two of his daughters were at the church's first service in September of that year and are still members today.

Mr Liggins says the involvement of the elder of the sisters, Ruth Gilmour, goes back to before the church was built. "The Springwood parish used to have church services in private homes [in Winmalee] and Ruth used to walk here, five or six miles, to help with music and the Sunday school!"

The church held its birthday celebration on September 16, with reminiscences at each of its services and a joint morning tea between the two – including a birthday cake and the reburying of a time capsule by some of the church kids.

The capsule was originally buried outside the church on its 50th anniversary in 2008, but recent renovations meant it had to be dug up or be covered in concrete. Its contents were updated so those who dig it up in 2058 can see what church was like for their fellow congregants decades earlier.

Mr Liggins is enthusiastic about the renovation changes – which include a large awning out the front of the church to shade people in the summer or cover them during rain. The church entrance is also much wider and more welcoming, and it and the bathrooms have been made wheelchair accessible.

"We've tried to redevelop the building to make it look more welcoming to visitors from the road, and also be more useful for ministry," he says. "Later this month we're putting on a traditional Sunday school picnic in the grounds... get all the kids to invite a friend and invite their family along, and have kids' and parents' games out on the lawn.

"We're planning events that can take advantage of the facilities we now have."



Helping kids count the cost

TARA SING

Barefoot Investor for Families

by Scott Pape



AFTER TEACHING THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE TO GET ON TOP OF DEBT, START SAVING money and prepare for financial emergencies, Scott Pape is back with *Barefoot Investor for Families*.

His first book, *The Barefoot Investor*, sold more than 1 million copies and saw Aussies everywhere start using orange ING bank cards labelled "splurge" and "daily expenses". With more than 53,000 pre-orders for the new book, it seems families everywhere are keen to start their kids on a similar financial revolution.

Talking about money is uncomfortable for some. We tend to avoid bringing it up, and there are many clear warnings in the Bible about our attitudes towards money. How should Christian families approach a book written to help us educate our children about wise money management?

Pape's book comes from a concern that 18-24 year olds are the most financially illiterate generation in Australia, with many in some form of credit card debt. He believes financial education should begin at home as early as possible.

His system involves "three jars, three jobs, three minutes". Three jars to teach kids to split their money three ways: for spending, saving and giving. He insists children earn cash by doing three jobs around the house (on top of the regular ways they help), to reinforce that money comes from hard work. He recommends families then spend three minutes a week over dinner to pay and discuss what they've earned that week.

It's interesting that Pape encourages parents to teach children about giving from the very moment they start to earn money. He says the give jar is a "brat-buster", which encourages kindness.

He hopes this kindness leads to happiness, more meaningful relationships and results in kids growing up to be more decent human beings.

The Bible gives us a different motivation to tithe. We know that everything we have, including our money, is an undeserved gift from God. We are to be good stewards of what we have been given, seeking first the kingdom of heaven. We are warned repeatedly about the dangers of chasing money and serving it instead of the one who provides.

How are we teaching these things to our children? Are we actively teaching our children to be good stewards, full of thankfulness and humility, and teaching them to tithe the money they receive?

At the heart of *Barefoot Investor for Families* is Scott Pape's desire to equip parents to teach kids to work for their money, and then be smart with it once they earn it. He hopes parents can have some assurance that they've helped their children avoid the financial traps and troubles that many fall into.

Barefoot Investor for Families is a great resource for helping young people to grasp the tricky concepts of money management. However, just giving people the right tools and equipping them with the knowledge doesn't mean that our children will always make savvy and smart decisions. We know that even with every tool in the box the human heart can stubbornly make bad choices.

Whether we are good or bad with money, we need to beware of our hearts, which can taint even the most effective of money management decisions. Our hearts lead us to be selfish and greedy with the good things God gives us.

As we teach children to be good stewards, how will we teach them to also guard their hearts?

Remembering Jesus' harsh words towards the rich, and his warnings that we cannot serve both God and money, we must pray that our desires to manage money well and teach our children to do the same don't become desires for selfish gain.

Good money management is a wise thing, but it does not provide security. Our efforts must first and foremost be for the kingdom that lasts.

SC



Scripture in song

Words for the soul: Ken Lai conducts a choir practice for *Sacred*. PHOTO: Ballyhoo Photography & Video

IT'S A PATH MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE TRODDEN IN DIFFICULT TIMES: READING PSALMS FOR comfort, for teaching and for understanding that God's love and purposes are central at all times.

This is where composer Ken Lai turned – particularly to the psalms of David – when faced with the painful betrayal of people he had trusted.

"It was pretty tough to take," he says. "But in turning to the psalms and reading many of them, it was apparent to me that a lot of my troubles were insignificant compared to what the psalmists were going through, and I found it quite therapeutic to set a lot of those pieces of Scripture to music... the anguish and ultimate redemption through a trust in God."

These difficult experiences, and the music that flowed from them, has formed the basis of *Sacred* – a production that will premiere in Sydney later this month. There are more than 20 pieces in all, which will be performed by a choir, orchestra and a group of three soloists: Broadway actress Jessica Grové (who worked with Lai on a previous production in the US), Anglican Aid ambassador Henry Olonga, and Linda Nixon from St Andrew's Cathedral.

Lai has mined passages from elsewhere in Scripture (such as the Beatitudes and Isaiah 9), but about half the works are inspired by the psalms, and they are the emotional heart of *Sacred*.

"I think rather are several things going on," Lai says. "First with the praise of the great creator from David and the other psalmists' perspective. Also in terms of having to face death, as we all must at some stage, and how we can face that with some degree of courage and certainty."

"There's one work that I've written called 'Come to the Wedding Feast' that describes what heaven might be like... and the hope for something more beyond this life. That's a great theme of several of the works."

The assistant minister at Revesby, the Rev Andrew Lim, is one of the producers of *Sacred*, having been involved with Lai's work for some years – including commissioning music from him for conference events at the Cathedral, where he used to work.

"I think Ken's music sits in a fairly neat category of its own," he says. "In the contemporary Christian music scene there are a lot of great bands, but there's no one I can think of writing contemporary classical – new orchestra and choral works – from a Christian perspective."

"It brings together a number of different threads and styles into a musical tapestry. There's a sense of musical theatre but this is infused and ungirded by his Christian conviction and expression."

Lai is an alumnus of the BMI Engel Musical Theatre Writers Workshop in New York, whose graduates have created musicals such as *Beauty and the Beast*, *A Chorus Line*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *Nine*. After he won a place in the workshop program, he put aside his training in aeronautical engineering and has focused solely on music ever since.

It's not an easy ride financially, but the music is an outworking of Lai's faith. With *Sacred*, his hope is that the words of Scripture he has put to music will speak to those with faith, and also to those without.

"These passages are certainly relevant to most people... and how they can find hope in a saviour God who genuinely cares for them, whoever they are," he says. "It's certainly a great desire of mine to share that with people."

"My hope is for many people who do come who don't have that connection with God, to find it and to be reminded of the power of God's word... and that he will plant seeds in hearts."

SC

Sacred will be presented at the Chatswood Concourse Concert Hall on November 27. See www.sacredconcert.com