

DECEMBER  
2018

# Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

## Beach mission

SUN, SAND, SURF AND SERVICE

PLUS

**Christmas in the future**

**Holiday flicks**

# CONTENTS



## COVER

If there's a beach, you play games! Having fun at Culburra Beach Mission.

Sydney News 3

Mission News 4

Australian News 5

Letters 6

Changes 7

Essay 8

Archbishop Writes 9

Cover Feature 10

Moore is More 11

Events 12

Culture 13



**“I have also been blessed by leading two men to Christ and... discipling them”**

Rodney Crawford  
Australian News

## Southern CROSS DECEMBER 2018

volume 24 number 11



**PUBLISHER:** Anglican Media Sydney

PO Box W185  
Parramatta Westfield 2150

PHONE: 02 8860 8860  
FAX: 02 8860 8899  
EMAIL: [info@anglicanmedia.com.au](mailto:info@anglicanmedia.com.au)

**MANAGING EDITOR:** Russell Powell

**EDITOR:** Judy Adamson

**ART DIRECTOR:** Stephen Mason

**ADVERTISING MANAGER:** Kylie Schleicher

PHONE: 02 8860 8850  
EMAIL: [ads@anglicanmedia.com.au](mailto:ads@anglicanmedia.com.au)

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

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** Garry Joy

PHONE: 02 8860 8861  
EMAIL: [subs@anglicanmedia.com.au](mailto:subs@anglicanmedia.com.au)

\$44.00 per annum (Australia)

**PRINTED BY:** Southern Colour



## Engagement gifts with eternal value

Children working at the brick kiln. PHOTO: Eddie Ozols

WHEN CHELSEA ADKINS AND DAVID CAMERON CELEBRATED THEIR UPCOMING WEDDING THEY also used the opportunity to raise funds for important ministry work overseas.

Instead of presents for their engagement party, they asked friends and family to make donations to the work of Miracle Schools Pakistan, an organisation close to their hearts, and raised \$1100.

"We've already been blessed so much with stuff, and this stuff won't last for eternity, so for us the best gift was a gift that invested in the kingdom," says Miss Adkins, who attends Hope Church Leppington. "We thought, instead of engagement gifts, let's get people to spend that money on giving to the Miracle Schools. That brings us much more joy than a toaster would."

For Miss Adkins, supporting the cause was a logical choice. "David and I are so excited for when Christ returns and we get to enter his eternal rest and glory. We can also rejoice in seeing the fruit of these Pakistani children running into the Father's arms. That's a gift that is truly precious."

In Pakistan more than 2 million people, made up of religious minorities such as Christians and Hindus, are forced to work in dire circumstances in brick kilns. Children as young as three, along with their families, make bricks in 50-degree heat.

Many Christians don't fully understand the truth of Jesus, yet are suffering in his name with a hunger to know him. Miracle Schools Pakistan aims to help the poorest children by providing free Christian education with a holistic approach: practical aid and support, education and the good news of the gospel.

Amelia van Netten, ambassador for Miracle Schools Pakistan and a close friend of the couple, was overjoyed when she heard of their plans to direct gifts towards the ministry.

"It showed how great their understanding of the gospel is – they were willing to give up something in order to support something greater," she says. "I am thankful for people's support to Miracle Schools through Anglican Aid and their ongoing partnership in the gospel."

"Pray that God would continue to bring strength to his people in Pakistan, that they would drink deeply of his word and not lose hope. Pray that God would provide the resources, finances and strength needed to continue to be at work for his kingdom."



Chelsea and David at their engagement party. PHOTO: Dean Pan

## Saturday night shelter



Loving their neighbours: volunteers at Christ Church St Laurence serve food to guests at the shelter.

IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT AT CHRIST CHURCH ST LAURENCE. THE KITCHEN IS BUSTLING WITH COOKS, the hall is lined with beds and homeless men from the local area are here for "Cana", a charity shelter hosted in conjunction with the church, where they can receive a nutritious meal and a warm, safe place to sleep.

Run by a team of volunteers, mostly from CCSL alongside some other local parishes, Sydney's homeless men find physical nourishment as well as a sense of community and care.

"Some of the men will be people I've seen before, returning men, and others you might see once," says volunteer Francesca Jones, who has been serving at Cana for the past 18 months. "Being accepted, having others around you, having a charity to turn to helps you feel like people aren't just ignoring you or your situation."

Ms Jones likes to ensure each man who comes along feels loved. "We always serve and clear the table, so they feel a little bit special and cared for," she says. "I put a chocolate on each pillow so it feels like a hotel."

Christ Church St Laurence reflects the diversity of Sydney, according to rector the Rev Dr Daniel Dries. "We have a multicultural parish, with a lot of business people passing through and also a lot of homeless people," he says. "Our local community is not reflective of our congregations. People come from all areas to our church with a heart to serve the local community in all its diversity."

Alongside the Saturday night shelter, CCSL opens its doors every weekday and volunteers continue to provide for the homeless, offering sandwiches, tea and coffee.

Their passion is inspired by St Laurence, who was martyred in the 3rd century after being asked to hand in the treasury of the church to Rome. Instead, he brought the treasure that God values: the poor, outcast, blind and lame.

"He was a good figure to be inspired by because there was a sense that God has a special love for the outcasts," Dr Dries says. "I think it's wonderful if people see the church as a place that offers compassion, safety and hospitality."

The volunteers recognise the importance of their work in serving and caring for the surrounding community, and ask God to ensure their church is always able to provide help in this way.

"There's no shortage of homeless men to help," Ms Jones says. "But we pray we might have as big an impact as possible."



Hands-on work: Alex helps a farmer hand-feed sheep on a farm near Parkes.

## Helping hand stretches west

NO SOONER HAD THE INK DRIED ON THE FORMAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN SYDNEY AND THE Bathurst Diocese than a dozen people from Manly were heading west to help out. But the Synod vote this year to help Anglican churches in the central west of NSW was not the reason.

"I only made the connection with that in the car on the way up there," says organiser Paul Reid. "Apparently we were the first visit they'd had – but it came about differently."

The group from St Matthew's, Manly, was on a more personal trip. "It was more about wanting just to spend time with drought-affected farmers," Mr Reid says. "I've always had a passion for raising money for causes, but my bigger passion is connecting people and providing fellowship to those who are in need."

"We spoke to Neville Naden, one of our BCA partners in the central west, and straight away – without even thinking – he said, 'Call Ron Spindler at Parkes Anglican!'"

There was no lengthy planning. The trip was organised in six weeks and by early November the group was on the ground in the area around Parkes and Trundle.

"In the end, we had about 13 of us," Mr Reid says. "We were billeted out with farmers and Ron said to us, 'If you are willing to do anything, that's great'... so he found some farmers who just needed some jobs done."

"Some of us did painting, some did fence work and building sheds – it was a whole bunch of stuff. But I think the most important thing was that once we had met the farmers we started relating and sharing meals together."

Mr Reid and Alex, a younger member of the Manly congregation, were sent to help an elderly farm couple, Bill and Janice, 45 kilometres outside Parkes. "We spent our nights in tents because the house wasn't big enough to have us and we fixed fences and we built sheds," Mr Reid says. "It was full-on. It was the hardest I have ever worked, to be honest."

"They had cattle and sheep and we spent two days with Bill in the truck, hand feeding. We hand-fed cattle and sheep because there is no grass at all. Zero. So they have been hand-fed every day for probably four or five months now."

Manly's minister the Rev Ben Adamo and the Rev Michael Aitken preached at local churches and the people at Parkes are already looking to take the partnership further.

"We are planning to go early next year again to do exactly the same type of thing and take a bigger team with us," Mr Reid says, "but I think there'll be longer-term connections with Parkes Anglican and Ron."

"They would love us to send some youth up for the school holidays to do training and run a school holiday program, so we are thinking about that."

"This really is one of those partnerships that you would never normally create, but then you meet people and it goes from there."



## Armour of faith

MOST STUDENTS JUST WANT TO TICK OFF THEIR FINAL EXAMS AROUND THE TIME THEY TURN 18. Macinley Butson (above) was able to add accomplished inventor, TEDx talk presenter and winner of numerous awards, including 2018's NSW Young Australian of the Year.

A scientist at heart, The Illawarra Grammar School student has achieved more than good grades while at school. Her faith in God underpins all she does, with her passion for science leading her to improve the welfare of others.

Her latest invention is a revolutionary breastplate called Smart Armour, developed for women who are undergoing breast cancer treatment to protect the untreated breast from unnecessary radiation. She has been attempting to get Smart Armour into hospitals and treatment clinics across Australia for two years.

Miss Butson says juggling her schooling, passion for science and faith hasn't been easy. "There's never been a point, especially in the last year, where it has been easy sailing," she says. "But I don't think that's what life is about."

"There are times I can admit that, unfortunately, my faith did take a back seat. I wish it hadn't been like that. What would happen quite often is I'd go to bed and see my Bible, and it would remind me that I can't go through life with everything else taking priority."

However, as Miss Butson's achievements and opportunities have grown, she has aimed to keep her faith central.

"I found it difficult to adjust to the attention I was now getting," she says. "But I've said, 'I'm going to put my fears aside for a moment. How can I use this to shine God's light?' That was always at the forefront of my mind."

One word has been pivotal to her approach. "As a family, we each decided on one word that we wanted to guide our year. I didn't know what was in store, but I chose my word to be 'light'. I wanted to be a light for people. I asked, 'How can I use this award/opportunity/interview to make people aware of the issue that's the reason why I've done what I've done?'"

Miss Butson's desire is to use her opportunities for God and others, regardless of any nervousness she might feel. "God gives us these gifts, and it's important for everyone to use that to help others and to show the light of God to everyone," she says.

Now on the other side of her exams, Miss Butson plans to enjoy time with family and friends before pursuing a double degree in science and arts at the University of Wollongong – and she will continue to campaign for the introduction of Smart Armour to hospitals and treatment clinics.

"I thought it would be a few months and it would be in hospitals," she says. "My prayers used to be around getting into hospitals and helping people, but we've realised that it's less about what our plan is and more about what his [God's] plan is. My prayers have turned into 'His will be done'."

"It's hard to be so reliant on God when you don't have the whole picture, but it's having faith to know he does have a plan and nothing will stop it when the right time comes."

## MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY 1

# What your morning tea says about your ministry



**WHAT DOES A PLATE OF BISCUITS AND A CUP OF TEA SAY ABOUT YOUR CHURCH'S ATTITUDE TO** reaching the nations? More than you think, according to Bishop Peter Lin.

It's no secret that our city has become increasingly multicultural, and gone are the days when suburbs were ethnic hubs. According to the last census, one in four people living in Australia were born in a non-English speaking country, and more than one in three are from a non-English speaking background.

But we don't need data to prove this to us. We can simply walk down the street, or venture into a local food court and try to decide whether to have a kebab, pad thai or butter chicken for lunch.

The question for us is, do our churches reflect our neighbourhoods? And what does this have to do with morning tea?

"One of the things often neglected in thinking about cross-cultural ministry is the matter of what we might need to change inside our walls and gatherings," says Bishop Lin, who is Bishop of the Georges River Region.

"When we think about cross-cultural ministry, we tend to think about what we need to do when we go 'out there' to reach them. However, we don't often think about what we might need to change once they come in the door."

Many of our churches are welcoming and friendly, and there will usually be a smiling face handing a newcomer a Bible or a church news sheet as they enter our building.

"Keep doing that," urges Bishop Lin, "but understand how weird and unwelcoming it might seem for an ethnic person to walk into a service, engage with the back of someone's head for an hour, and afterwards be given a Tim Tam and a styrofoam teacup while standing in a hall that's possibly almost empty half an hour after the service. Will they feel like you want them to stay?"

Bishop Lin desires to have all churches, collectively and individually, think about how they can make their gatherings spaces that are friendly and welcoming to many cultures. This may mean changing the way we do things. One simple area we can adjust is the way we gather over food after the service.

"Most non-Western cultures are food-based," Bishop Lin says. "Community happens around food. Food is an expression of love.

"To cook for you is to love you, and to eat is to love the cook. When we serve one biscuit, we are saying that we only want to spend time enough with you to eat a biscuit. Lots of food says we want to spend lots of time with you!"

When it comes to what we serve, it's not just the quantity that's important. Does the food we prepare reflect the culture of those who are in our area?

"Include the food of the people around you: baklava, spring rolls, cannoli," Bishop Lin says. "And not just sharing your food, but eating other people's food. It shows you love them. Eat it even if you don't like it. Don't be precious."

At the heart of a multicultural morning tea, however, is not the food, but the heart behind it.

"Love is the most important thing," Bishop Lin says. "That's the key to embracing other cultures different to our own. Putting them and their needs first.

"Always ask what is the loving thing to do for them. Then you will listen carefully, you will be willing to change, to make sacrifices with regard to your preferences. You will truly embrace them if you love them.

"Love will always trump culture, and cover a multitude of cultural faux pas."

## God sends the Crawfords packing



A busy day's work on the farm: a local farmer in Narrabri, the new home of the Crawfords.

**RODNEY AND LAUREN CRAWFORD** FAREWELLED CITY LIFE A FEW MONTHS AGO AND HEADED 550km northwest at the suggestion of the Bishop of Armidale, Rick Lewers. A family friend, he knows the need for more Christians in the country towns of his diocese and asked them to move... and they said, "Yes".

They are now among the 6000 people who call Narrabri home. It's a stark contrast to their previous home in Liverpool, but it is not the "tiny, one-horse town" Mr Crawford imagined.

"It's a thriving hub set amidst a large farming community, coupled with mining and gas industries," he says. "The church folk are a mixed bunch; research scientists, agronomists and miners rub shoulders with teachers, nurses, tradespeople and, of course, farmers. Aside from the occupations though, church is very familiar."

Adds Mrs Crawford: "This has certainly pushed us out of our comfort zones. We had been [at] St Luke's, Liverpool for nearly 30 years."

Mr Crawford agrees. "Our prayers from the outset have been, 'Lord, if this is where you want us, please open the door. If not, please close it'. The number of ducks needed to align in order for this to happen have been considerable!"

God's faithfulness has not disappointed. The Crawfords arrived to a pantry filled by church members. Mrs Crawford realised she had everything to make pumpkin scones, minus the pumpkin, but the next day a neighbour arrived with one from their harvest.

And God has provided even more. "When we left Liverpool, I didn't have a firm job to come to. It was a leap of faith," says Mrs Crawford, who now works as a nurse in the local hospital.

Paid work for Mr Crawford has been "patchy". "The drought has hit Narrabri hard," he says. "Many of our new farming friends are toughing it out. If the farmer suffers, so does the town. This means the teacher's aide work I had hoped for has only amounted to two days since arriving. Competition for work has been fierce, the pickings scarce."

But the Lord hasn't left Mr Crawford twiddling his thumbs. With the minister, and others from church, he has visited farmers with relief packs and a message of hope in Jesus – and has had opportunities to speak at men's breakfasts, youth gatherings, camps and church.

"I have also been blessed by leading two men to Christ and am in the process of discipling them," Mr Crawford says. "This really is key to my ministry involvement, seeing men into the kingdom and growing there."

While the Crawfords miss family and friends, especially their three grandchildren, God has reassured them Narrabri is where he wants them for now – and they are working together to serve and trust him with things that are still uncertain, such as a permanent home.

"Please pray that we will grow in godly love and not forget the greatness and loving provision in our God and Saviour," Mr Crawford says. "That his will would continue to be done in Narrabri and country Australia, and that Lauren and I would clearly understand God's will for us."

"Most importantly, pray for rain!"

## Bush to Bishop: Dr Short for Canberra-Goulburn

**THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE BUSH CHURCH Aid Society, the Rev Dr Mark Short (right), has been chosen as the 11th Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn.**

The electoral Synod convened in Goulburn in early November and, in successive rounds of voting, chose Dr Short from a short list of five names.

The Synod consisted of 124 clergy and 175 lay representatives from across the diocese, which covers 78,000 square kilometres of southeastern NSW from Batemans Bay south to the Victorian border and west to Wagga Wagga, Junee and Young, as well as the ACT.

There are 62 parishes and mission districts in the diocese, as well as eight schools, the Anglicare agency and St Mark's National Theological Centre.

Dr Short, who is 51, has headed the Bush Church Aid Society since 2011. Before ordination in 1997 he worked as an economist and a journalist. His theological education was at Moore College and the University of Durham in the UK.

Before BCA, he and his wife Monica ministered at Turvey Park in the Wagga Wagga area. Dr Short was also Archdeacon of Wagga Wagga.

The Synod's chairman, Bishop Trevor Edwards, said: "Mark brings to the position a wealth of experience in national ministry with oversight and pastoral care of gospel workers across the country, as well as in parish ministry to regional and rural areas, where he has worked to develop sustainable and engaging ministry models."

The election was also welcomed by the Archbishop of Sydney and Metropolitan of NSW, Dr Glenn Davies, who thanked God for the election of a wise and godly pastor.

"Dr Mark Short will be an asset for the Province of NSW as he takes up this new role of leadership in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn," he said.

The chairman of Bush Church Aid, Fred Chilton, said that in Dr Short's seven years with the organisation BCA had "embarked on many new initiatives". He added that Dr Short "has led a team of godly men and women in reaching Australia for Christ, [and his] commitment to remote, regional and rural Australia has seen new ministries across the nation.

"We wish Mark and his wife Monica well as they conclude their time with BCA and commence their service in the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn."

Dr Short will continue as BCA's national director into its centenary year next year, concluding at the end of March. He will be consecrated and installed as bishop in a service at the diocesan cathedral, St Saviour's, Goulburn.



## GOD LOVES COUNTRY CHURCHES

So, the Bishop of South Sydney predicts that without city help “gospel ministry will slowly wither and die” in country Australia (SC, November). Current rural sociology would likely agree with such a depressing prognosis. But should we?

Our God is quite capable of looking after the country members of his flock, and city Christians have a part to play in his work. Sydney helping the Bathurst diocese is entirely consistent with Paul’s writing to the Galatians to collect and send money to support the floundering church in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16: 1-4), and the disciples’ helping the brothers in Judea (Acts 11:29).

Some city churches, e.g. St Matthew’s, West Pennant Hills, have for years sent short-term mission teams to country churches to support local outreach events. And helping Bathurst is merely a logical extension of some city churches’ existing practices of supporting work in a nearby parish across the Diocese (SC, July 2015).

Indeed, it shows that Sydney is not city-centric. The Bush Church Aid Society has for the past century supported country churches in sharing Jesus with people living in the bush.

Looking through a secular lens, the cultural practice of city supporting country Australia has a long history and is well expressed in the Australian agrarian ideology known as “countrymindedness”.

As for whether God would let his work “wither and die”, that is a much more sobering image, and is perhaps worthy of serious theologising?

Jim Longworth  
Cheltenham

## FAM! BAM! BIBLE JAMMING

In the October edition of SC we were warned, I mean advised, that Colin Buchanan has produced his 24<sup>th</sup> album. As grandparents we have many of his albums and they are within constant reach. They have to be if we want any rest.

Our two-year-old granddaughter was staying over recently and wouldn’t sleep, so I said: “Let’s put Colin on, Charlotte!” She immediately laid down as I went to get one of his albums. I put it on, daring to dream she would soon be asleep. No sooner was it on then came the tiny voice: “No, I want *Fam! Bam! Bible Jam!*”

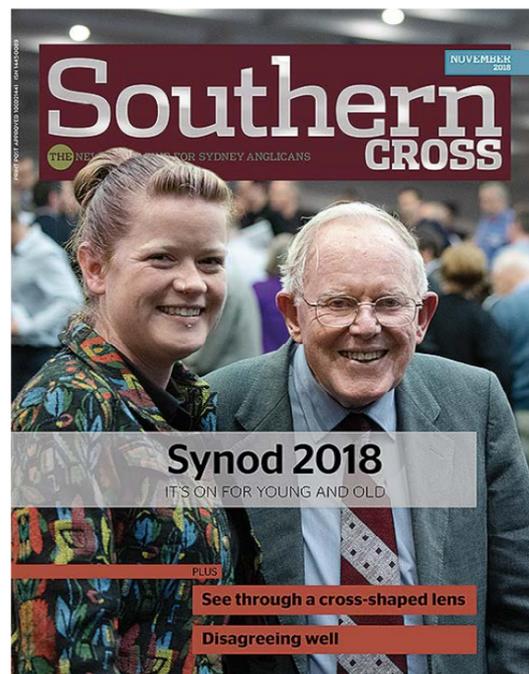
“But we don’t have that one Charlotte.” Response: got out of bed and refused to go to sleep. Thanks, Colin. Memo to son: next time you drop your kids off, don’t forget Colin’s latest CD.

Colin is ubiquitous. Every time you get into a family car Colin is playing. Go into any of the grandkids’ homes and they are dancing to his godly tunes.

One of my adult children once said: “I would not like Colin to know this, because I love his songs, but there are times after hours of his CDs playing that I think I will scream when, just after I turn him off, my kids in chorus yell out, ‘Put Colin on!’”

I am getting *Fam! Bam! Bible Jam!* for Christmas. It is another piece of extraordinary evangelism and entertainment rolled into one. Come Christmas when the cry goes out to “Put Colin on!” I will be ready.

Patrick Kennedy  
Heathcote





## GRANDSON THOMSON AT BLACKTOWN

Like his grandfather before him, the **Rev Luke Thomson** has become rector of Blacktown.

Mr Thomson has been working in the parish for three years – first as assistant minister, and since April as the senior assistant. He knew the previous rector, the Rev Michael Robinson, was retiring in July, and was open to the possibility of being the next person to lead the parish if the nominators were interested.

They were, and Mr Thomson was inducted as rector in October – 36 years after his grandfather Jim began in the same role.

"That's pretty rare!" he says. "My grandfather was here from 1982 to 1990... and there are quite a number of people still here who were here when he was rector. They've talked about my grandparents and their ministry, and how they felt really loved and cared for by them."

He adds the response from the parish to his appointment has "been very overwhelming, encouraging and supportive. I've had lots of people saying they were hoping it would be me, which is really nice. And others say that they're praying for me, and that's reaffirming the decision we made."

Having been in the parish for three years already, the Thomsons are familiar with the area and its people. Mr Thomson's wife Jennifer spends much of her time caring for their three preschool-age children but is also involved in creche and playgroup ministries – which are very strategic, given the area's demographics.

"We're in a suburb full of children and youth and young families, which is a specific area of passion of mine," Mr Thomson says. "So the opportunity to help lead a church in reaching out to our families and children and young people seemed a good fit for us and for what the church needs."

"In lots of ways we're very typical of who lives in Blacktown, so we will hopefully be able to make some easier connections with other young families and build relationships with those networks as well."

## HOOTONS FAREWELL GLENHAVEN



The **Rev John Hooton** retires from his role as rector of Emmanuel Church, Glenhaven at the end of this month.

Mr Hooton initially trained as a high school music teacher at the NSW Conservatorium of Music, taught at Galston High School and then subsequently worked for two Christian organisations for 18 years. He trained for full-time pastoral ministry at Sydney Missionary and Bible College in his early 40s.

In 2000 he joined the staff at St Paul's, Castle Hill as "administrative pastor", but soon became involved in pastoral ministry at St Paul's earlier services, as well as its branch church at Glenhaven.

"From my early days in the Castle Hill parish I had a growing ministry to the saints at Glenhaven – preaching, occasionally playing the organ and caring for them," he says. "Retired clergy had done a great job in the past but the congregation developed a fresh vision for the future... they wanted to grow and minister to their local community with the help of a full-time pastor."

"In 2010 we became a provisional parish... and a full parish six years later."

Mr Hooton recalls how the more senior members of the church at Glenhaven were willing to change and encourage new people to connect with God and his people.

"They graciously agreed to move their 9.30am service to 8.30am so we could start a 10.30am family-oriented contemporary service," he says. "About 40 people from Oakhill Family Church [a St Paul's plant] joined with the Glenhaven families to start the new 10.30am service in July 2005. We thank God for the way everyone embraced change."

The parish now has three thriving services, a ministry to four local retirement villages – including a chaplaincy partnership with Anglicare at Glenhaven Green – and employs two assistant ministers who oversee children's, youth and young adults' ministry along with music ministry and small groups. The physical footprint of the church has also grown, following the purchase of a house, a former dance studio and land next door.

"My wife Lyndall and I are really going to miss the ministry at Glenhaven," Mr Hooton says. "We love the people and the opportunities God has given us to share the gospel and grow people in their faith. As a first-time rector and as a couple, we've had a wonderful time... We hope we've modelled what it means to be part of a gospel-focused, caring community."

"God has done an amazing work in the life of his people here at Glenhaven and refreshed their passion for the lost. It's not surprising that our initials [ECG – Emmanuel Church, Glenhaven] have led one of our wardens to refer to Emmanuel Church as 'The heart of Glenhaven!'"

## WOLLONDILLY SWANNYS

In September the **Rev Stephen Swanepoel** moved from his role as Anglicare's partnership development officer for the Western Region to become rector of Wollondilly.

He and the Bishop of Wollongong, Peter Hayward, had been discussing a range of locations and their needs when the bishop started talking about Wollondilly – wondering aloud where Mr Swanepoel thought his future might be.

"I said I loved what I was doing with Anglicare but we'd loved working in parish and my heart's still in parish work," he recalls. He was happy for Bishop Hayward to give his name to the nominators and start a conversation, even though, at the time, he had no idea where Wollondilly was – or Tahmoor, Bargo and Thirlmere, where the parish churches are located.

"Going home from work one day I drove through the area, stopped out the front of each church and spent some time praying and looking around a bit," Mr Swanepoel says. "When I got home, I said to my wife, 'Would you go to Wollondilly?' and her response was much the same as mine: 'Where's that?'" he laughs. "But a couple of meetings later, it seemed right to them, and it seemed right to us – it was a good fit."

Mr Swanepoel is originally from South Africa, and says that, after 20 or so years in Australia doing ministry in a range of places, he and his wife Karen "wanted to put down roots somewhere".

"Wollondilly were looking for someone who had some level of experience in bringing about change, but who was also willing to stick around and just love the people over a significant period of time," he says. "They've got a history of clergy who've stuck around for a long while."

"Also, the whole idea of a multisite parish doesn't scare me at all. I learned how to do good multisite ministry [as an assistant minister] at Dapto – to work with the uniqueness of each centre but keep promoting gospel ministry in a way specific to each site. It was a great training ground for Wollondilly."

"When we arrived here one of the first things that happened is that Anglicare opened up a shop literally across the road from the Tahmoor church!... In God's providential work and provision, they were busy putting that together before I even arrived."



## STUART'S SABBATICAL

The **Rev Stuart Milne** left the parish of St John's Park late last month, after more than 8½ years as rector, for a year-long sabbatical in order to do an MA at Moore College.

"I'm going to do it full-time because I haven't done much study for the past 20 years, and the last couple of times I tried to start the MA something came up... and I just couldn't do it," he says.

"Leaving St John's Park is very sad, but we've seen lots of good things happen in that time. We built a new church building five years ago, which is a great facility. We've seen people come to Christ and grow in their faith and it's been a great blessing and honour to be part of that."

Mr Milne is looking forward to concentrated time to focus on his MA study, and doesn't know what the plan will be for him and his wife Mary after 2019.

"We're open to anything in the future," he says. "We may go back to parish ministry, we may go overseas or we could go interstate. I'll probably do a part-time locum or two during 2019 but we're leaving what happens after that quite open – which is part of the beauty of having a sabbatical. We have time to reassess and work out where God wants us to go in the future."

## BECKMAN RETIRES – MORE CHAPLAINS BEGIN

After 25 years in justice chaplaincy – first at the Long Bay Correctional Centre in eastern Sydney and then the more recently opened South Coast Correctional Centre in Nowra, the **Rev Ray Beckman** will retire on January 18.

Mr Beckman has spent 35 years in ordained ministry, first as curate of Camden and then as chaplain to Lord Howe Island. It was during his island ministry that he became aware of the need for prison chaplains through Anglicare newsletters, but didn't initially pay attention to it.

He then had ongoing contact with former inmates who were spending time working on Lord Howe as part of a community service order.

"They'd come and work around the church with me and help with things and I discovered they were ordinary people," Mr Beckman says. "So on one of my holidays I visited Long Bay Jail... and I thought, 'I could do this'."

"The amazing thing is that you just get to work with men – you don't get a whole lot of men's ministries where they're here all the time. And it's not like parish with a mixture of people. [The inmates] can also be brutally honest about things. They call a spade a spade and it keeps you on your toes!"

"You also see some really wonderful changes in guys – and you see a much more dramatic change... you see guys who become Christians who are doing life sentence and they become so different, and then others who go to their grave as angry as hell with no sense of empathy or compassion and forgiveness."

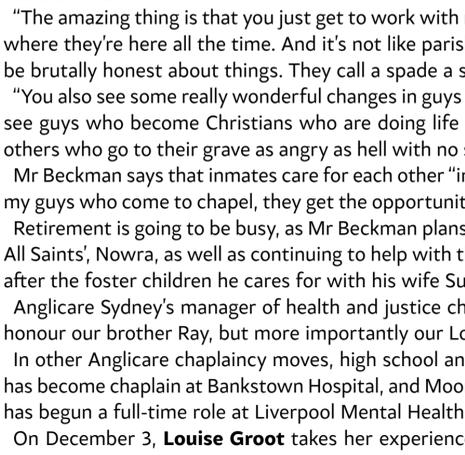
Mr Beckman says that inmates care for each other "in a way you wouldn't expect... The vast majority of my guys who come to chapel, they get the opportunity to put into practice what they've been learning."

Retirement is going to be busy, as Mr Beckman plans to be a community chaplain in his home church of All Saints', Nowra, as well as continuing to help with the parish's mid-week fellowship group and looking after the Lord Howe manager of health and justice chaplains, the Rev Canon Stephen Gibson, said, "we honour our brother Ray, but more importantly our Lord says, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'"

In other Anglicare chaplaincy moves, high school and university chaplain the **Rev Dr Penelope Brook** has become chaplain at Bankstown Hospital, and Moore College graduate and lay pastor **Matthew Baker** has begun a full-time role at Liverpool Mental Health.

On December 3, **Louise Groot** takes her experience in high school chaplaincy, foster care and other ministries into a full-time chaplain's role at Dillwynia Women's Correctional Centre just outside Windsor.

## VALE



**Deaconess Jean Hughes** died on October 11, aged 92. Born Jean Lucile Wright on August 6, 1926 in the USA while her parents were on secondment, Jean Wright grew up in Wollongong and attended Fort Street Girls' High School.

Miss Wright studied arts at Sydney University (where she met her husband, Wal Hughes, through the EU), then undertook a post-graduate degree in social work.

Busy as a social worker for some years, she and Wal married in 1949 and he began work as a GP. A decade later they moved to the UK with their children so he could study surgery.

Mrs Hughes retrained as a teacher after their return, teaching English, History and Commerce at Abbotsleigh, then Roseville College.

She retired from teaching in 1984 but, her daughter Janet Forbes said in a eulogy at her mother's funeral, "she really didn't like being at home and Dad, she never had a sign of retiring, so Mum decided to retrain!"

At age 60, Mrs Hughes began studying at Moore College through Deaconess House. She was the oldest student to graduate and was ordained a deaconess by Archbishop Loane in 1990 – the second-last ordination in the Diocese and, at 64, also the oldest.

Dss Hughes began working in All Saints', Waitara, spending the next seven years counselling, visiting the housebound, sick or dying, as well as preaching, volunteer chaplaincy work and starting new ministries.

Said Mrs Forbes: "Mum saw both opportunities and challenges for the new migrants in the area, so with her teaching background she started ESL classes – [among] the earliest in Sydney Diocese. She became very enthused with the idea of bringing local mums and babies together – also not so common at that time – [and] started a Wednesday playgroup."

Retiring again in 1997, Dss Hughes became an honorary deaconess at St James', Turramurra and served on the board of Hope Healthcare. After Wal's death in 2005 she moved into a retirement complex where she visited sick residents, drove people to church, organised communion services and ran a Bible study.

Last year Dss Hughes moved into a nursing home where, Mrs Forbes said, even a few weeks before her death, "Mum was preparing a Bible study... her heart was still in teaching about God, and caring and sharing with those around her".

# 150 Years of Cathedral ministry

ED LOANE

**NOVEMBER 30** MARKED 150 YEARS SINCE SYDNEY'S CATHEDRAL WAS CONSECRATED BY BISHOP Barker.

St Andrew's Day in 1868 was an occasion of celebration and dedication – not just because a building had been constructed, but that a centre for gospel ministry could prosper in the heart of the city. The prayer was that God would call people to himself as Christ was proclaimed by those ministering at the Cathedral.

Barker closed his sermon at the consecration reflecting on the ministry of St Andrew. He said Andrew "first found his brother and brought him to Jesus. It surely is the proper end of the ministry to bear witness for Christ! For a like purpose this Cathedral is built".

The building of the Cathedral was a protracted affair – the consecration taking place in the 50th year after the foundation stone was laid. August 31, 2019 will mark the bicentenary of that gathering of the colony's dignitaries on land south of the town.

Governor Macquarie wanted a cathedral, and the paradox of a cathedral without a bishop was not seen as an impediment. As it turned out there wouldn't be a bishop for 17 years, but this did not hamper the design enthusiasm.

Francis Greenway was the architect responsible for the original plans for the site, which included not just a cathedral in Gothic style but a bishop's residence, a seminary and a library – all of which were intended to form a cloistered quadrangle in the style of an Oxford or Cambridge college. Imagine the Cathedral, Moore College and Bishops Court all on the same block of land!

The walls had hardly emerged from the ground when things stalled, and it wasn't until Australia's first bishop arrived in 1836 that there was more impetus. The building was redesigned by Edmund Blacket and things moved slowly forward.

When the second bishop, Frederic Barker, arrived in 1855, at his first meeting with the building committee he discovered that the Cathedral was being built on land the church did not own. A diocesan property fiasco was averted as Barker immediately applied for the land, which was fortunately granted by the government.

At the building's consecration Bishop Barker outlined his vision for the ministry of the Cathedral. It was to be "a visible centre of union for the Church at large, where all who will may worship; where the word of God will be faithfully preached; and where the Sacraments of Christ's appointment will be duly administered".

As noted earlier, his intention was that the ministry of the Cathedral would bear witness to Christ and bring people to him. In other words, the Cathedral was to have evangelism at the heart of all its ministry endeavours.

This emphasis on the faithful preaching of the word and evangelism meant that Sydney's Cathedral ministry was to be conducted in line with the priorities of the Diocese as a whole. Unlike many other places where there is a large disjunct between Cathedral ministry and parish ministry, in Sydney there have been shared priorities.

The first Dean of Sydney was William Macquarie Cowper. He was the son of Archdeacon Cowper and grew up at the rectory of St Philip's, Sydney.

The first dean was also the first Australian-born clergyman and served as the first acting principal when Moore College was founded in 1856. He was widely respected, intellectually gifted and held firm evangelical convictions which made him eminently suitable to be Dean of Sydney.

He served in this office for an incredible 44 years and was instrumental in shaping the Cathedral's character.

The ministry of the Cathedral has maintained gospel priorities throughout its history. The location at the heart of the city and next to Town Hall has ensured there have been manifold opportunities to proclaim the salvation that is found only in Christ Jesus.

Over the years, those involved in the ministry of the Cathedral have done this both inside and outside the building. On the one hand, significant work has been done to help the marginalised and homeless living in the city while offering them an eternal home. On the other hand, business and community leaders have been evangelised.

We should remember that there is a disproportionate number of visitors to the Cathedral compared to parish churches and many who spend much of their working life in its vicinity live some distance away. Moreover, there are particular occasions that are specially afforded to the Cathedral for gospel proclamation due to its civic role.

All of this means that over the years the Cathedral has ministered to and evangelised countless people who have gone on to exercise significant ministry in their local parish church or, indeed, in distant countries.

There is much to give thanks to God for as the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cathedral's consecration passes us by. No doubt we are unaware of much of the fruit of this ministry and will not know about it until all is revealed on the last day. Nevertheless, we are sure that God's word is powerful and does not return empty but accomplishes what God desires.

As the Cathedral has consistently and innovatively proclaimed the gospel over the years, God has been at work. We ought to continue to pray for the Dean and all those involved in the ministry of the Cathedral that they may continue to follow the example of St Andrew's ministry, "who first found his brother and brought him to Jesus".

*The Rev Dr Ed Loane lectures in theology and church history at Moore College.*

# Cherishing our real freedom



DR GLENN DAVIES

**I**N THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE, EGYPT IS A PLACE OF SLAVERY AND DEPRIVATION FOR THE people of God. It is, of course, associated with the selling of Joseph into slavery.

This event in the Genesis storyline follows the corrupt behaviour of the sons of Israel, which the reader can easily infer is a judgment upon them for seeking to kill their brother out of envy and spite, and throwing him into a pit. Although Reuben sought to spare Joseph's life, hoping to restore him to his father, it was Judah who suggested Joseph be sold to the Ishmaelites (Genesis 37:21-27).

The irony that the child of the promise, a descendant of Isaac, son of the free woman, should be sold to the descendants of the child of the flesh, son of the slave woman, is not lost upon the reader (cf Galatians 4:23). Yet God's hand was upon Joseph. Moreover, despite the brothers' desire for evil, before they can exact their revenge a passing band of Midianites finds Joseph and sells him to the Ishmaelites.

Yet the guilt of Joseph's brothers is later confirmed, as Reuben grieves their sin in abandoning their own brother, despite the distress of his soul (Genesis 42:21), and their later deception of their father, Jacob, into believing his beloved son had been killed by a wild beast.

The unfolding story of Genesis sees Joseph, through his righteous acts and trust in God, rise from slave to free man, from servant to master, as he is given rule over all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself, with his revelation of the seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine.

As the famine spreads, Israel's family is forced to leave their homeland and come to Egypt in order to survive. In the providence of God, the selling of Joseph into slavery was to become the salvation of Israel's family.

Yet Egypt also became the place of enslavement for the people of God. When the days of Joseph's benefaction to the people of Egypt was forgotten, a Pharaoh arose "who knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). The Book of Exodus then reveals the salvation of God in redeeming Israel from slavery and setting them free to serve him in their own land, the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Throughout the Old Testament, Egypt is associated with slavery and bondage, the antithesis of all that God has in store for his people in the Promised Land. Egypt becomes a paradigm of all that is to be avoided. When Judah's kings put their trust in Egypt rather than God, God brings judgment upon them. Even when Judah is threatened with God's judgment they foolishly look to Egypt, despite Jeremiah's warning "not to go down to Egypt" (Jeremiah 42:19).

It therefore comes as a surprise to the reader of the New Testament to find that another Joseph, another faithful Israelite, departs for Egypt, taking his wife and child. He flees at God's command as God's Son is threatened with death, as was Joseph of old.

Why Egypt? Because God, in his sovereign purposes, was retracing the steps of Israel's flight from the land of slavery to the land of freedom. Jesus' identification with God's people, Israel, was from the beginning of his life an identification with their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, from bondage and fear to freedom and liberty.

Matthew saw this clearly as he records Jesus' departure from Egypt: "This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son'" (Matthew 2:15).

As we come to celebrate Christmas this month, it is easy to recall the angel's appearance to Mary and the angels' appearance to shepherds, but the angels' appearances to Joseph ought not to be underestimated.

Joseph was a righteous man who heeded the Lord's command, against what might have been his better judgment. In so doing, he was instrumental in displaying the Lord's purposes that Jesus, God's Son, would "save his people from their sins", by redeeming them from the slavery of sin and bringing them into freedom as sons and daughters of God.

"If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). This promise is not just for Jews but for all people, from every tribe and tongue – including Egyptians! (Isaiah 19:18-25)

While our politicians may or may not protect our religious freedoms remember that, as Christians, we already have true freedom.

May God richly bless you this coming Christmas, that the joy of Jesus' birth and the freedom he came to establish will be yours – not just in this festive season, but throughout the coming year, as you live as free men and women in the service of our God.

## A PRAYER FOR MISSION 2020

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

Amen



# Christmas in the future

Let's step back in time and understand the significance of Jesus' birth as those looking forward rather than back, writes **GEORGE ATHAS**.

**T**HE COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS 2018 IS IN FULL SWING. THE SHOPS ARE RIBBONED in red and girt in green. The halls have been decked with holly. Trees are gracing living rooms everywhere. Stockings are suspended from mantelpieces. And Michael Bubl  and Mariah Carey have been brought out of annual hibernation. Christmas is almost upon us!

For some, it marks holidays and an opportunity to relax at the end of a busy year. For others, it's a time to reconnect with family. For some, it means feasting on turkey, ham, prawns, or all of the above. For others it can be a difficult time, fraught with pained memories, poverty, disappointment or loneliness. We experience Christmas in so many ways, and it means different things to different people.

For Christians, Christmas is the annual festival celebrating the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ – an event that split history in two. We recall the God who acted in mercy by entering this fallen and broken world to redeem it. We remember that, in Christ, God is with us – Jesus, our "Immanuel". And while we, too, countdown to Christmas and the year's end that it signals, we reflect on the saving grace of our God.

We draw this significance of Jesus' birth from the accounts in the gospels, as well as the reflection of the New Testament writers generally. With another 2000 years of Christian reflection since, plus our favourite carols playing in the background, the importance of Christmas has been ingrained into us. Although the annual celebration is fixed immovably into our calendars, the Christmas event itself lies behind us. We have to look back over our shoulders, as it were, to see it.

But it was not always so.

There was a time when the Christmas event still lay in the future. When God's saving intervention was still being anticipated. When the magnitude of God's love and grace was promised but yet to be fully displayed. There was a time "before Christ".

The distance between that time and ours can blind us to some of the significance of Jesus' birth in its original context 2000 years ago. If, instead of just looking back at it over our shoulders, we travel back in time so that Christmas still lies before us, we might be able to see some of this lost significance with greater clarity.

Over a thousand years "before Christ", Israel was led by the prophet and judge, Samuel. He was a model leader and Israel flourished under his direction. But as good as Samuel was, his leadership came to an end, and his sons promised to be nothing but trouble. The dilemma facing Israel at the end of Samuel's life highlighted the two profound problems plaguing God's people, Israel: sin and death.

Wanting to deal with this, the Israelite elders asked God for a king to make them like the other nations around them. Their request had some good motives behind it, but it carried three negative aspects.

First, it effectively requested God to vacate his own divine leadership over Israel. The covenant that God had forged with the nation of Israel at Sinai enshrined him as its head of state. Asking for a human king was essentially a leadership coup.

Second, Israel's request would potentially obliterate the distinction between it and the other nations, nullifying the work of God in forming Jacob's descendants into a coherent people with special status due to their relationship with him.

Third, it showed that human beings do not really know how to solve their deepest problems. Having a king like other nations was not going to deal with sin and death. Those who are short sighted cannot actually see far enough into the distance to realise how far they are from a solution.

Fortunately, God is far from short sighted. Taking the longer view, he permitted Israel to have the kind of king they were looking for: Saul. But Saul's kingship merely demonstrated the pitfalls of having a flawed human being leading a flawed nation to be like all other flawed nations. And ordinary kingship, such as all the other flawed nations had, simply involved passing rule from sinful, mortal father to sinful, mortal son. Through Saul, God showed that human initiative was not going to solve anything for Israel.

So God brought a new man to the throne: David. At this point, God made an astounding promise to David:

"When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom permanently. I will become his father, and he will become my son" (2 Sam 7:12-14a).

With this promise, God changed the nature of kingship in Israel. No longer would it be an ordinary, garden-variety kingship, such as all the other nations had. It would be different. God promised to take the heirs of David, who would succeed him on the throne, and make them his own sons.

God himself was effectively entering the dynasty of David, becoming its father figure, so that the king who ruled Israel from Jerusalem ruled as God's son. In this way the perfect, immortal God would continue to rule as Israel's head of state, but he would do this through his son, the Davidic king.

This promise changed the nature of Israel forever. Ever since its inception, Israel was God's personal property, his treasured possession. But now, he chose to share his personal property with his son, the Davidic king, through whom he ruled Israel.

The symbol of this promise was the temple in Jerusalem. Before this time, Israel engaged with God at the Tabernacle, which had originally been set up shortly after God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt. The Tabernacle was a portable place of worship, made of fabric, leather and detachable frames, that could be packed down and moved as needs be.

But now with the promise to David, God ordained David's son to build a permanent place of worship for him. Its permanence was symbolic of the permanent commitment God was making to David and his dynasty – they would have an everlasting dynasty that would reflect his everlasting rule over his people.

Yet this was not the ultimate solution to Israel's problems with sin and death. God had taken a decisive step forward in dealing with sin and death but, like David himself, his heirs who ruled in Jerusalem on God's behalf were also sinful and mortal. In fact, they demonstrated these two problems acutely – so much so, that they led the nation into fracture, the worship of other gods, and then into complete destruction.

In the sixth century BC, there was no longer any Davidic kingdom at all. The king was ruthlessly removed from Jerusalem, and the temple – the symbol of God's commitment to David – was violently destroyed. The catastrophe led one psalmist to cast pointed accusation towards God:

You have disowned the covenant with your servant,  
dishonoured his crown on the ground...

Where are your original commitments, O Lord?

You swore to David in your faithfulness! (Ps 89:39, 49)

When we understand that the Davidic covenant was a step in God's intention to deal with the most fundamental human problems, we begin to realise that the fall of the Davidic kingdom was not just a national catastrophe. Yes, it was that, and the trauma left an indelible mark on the national Jewish psyche. But it also called into question God's goodness, faithfulness and interest in dealing with humanity's deepest issues.

But it was not the end of the story. Christmas had not yet come!

Although God's people were exiled from their land for three or so generations, God acted to allow them to return. When they came back, they rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. This wasn't only so they could continue relating to God, but also to re-establish the Davidic kingdom that had been destroyed 70 years before. The temple was that physical symbol of God's commitment to David.

The problem of the so-called "Second Temple Period" was that God's people had the very symbol of the Davidic covenant in their midst – the temple – and yet they never got the Davidic king back. It was such an incongruent situation. Instead, they spent the next five centuries being passed from one empire to the next.

In those five centuries, there were moments of hope. In the second century BC, the Jews even managed to gain their independence and set up their own kingdom. But this wasn't a Davidic kingdom led by a Davidic king who ruled on God's behalf as God's son. It was, instead, a kingdom ruled by a priestly family, who ended up looking very much like the kings of the nations around them.

In 37 BC, the Romans controlled most of the Mediterranean world. They appointed Herod as King of the Jews. There were a few problems with this. First, Herod was a lackey of the Romans, so the Jewish nation was not independent. Second, Herod was not a Davidic descendant. On the contrary, he was an Edomite.

Yet, Herod was politically savvy. He realised that one of the job descriptions of the "King of the Jews" was to be a temple builder. So he rebuilt the temple of God in Jerusalem in the most dazzling fashion, turning it into the biggest temple complex of the Roman world. Yet building a temple did not automatically qualify someone to be King of the Jews. Indeed, most Jews saw through Herod's ploys and still maintained the hope that there would one day rise a descendant of David who would free them from their enemies.

And then, some years later, "the hopes and fears of all the years" were met in Bethlehem one night with the birth of a male child to a Jewish couple descended from David. The angel that foretold his birth to his mother said to her:

"He will be great and called the son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his ancestor, and he will rule over the House of Jacob forever. His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

When Herod was informed of the birth of this child, he rightly feared for his own status as King of the Jews. His response in slaughtering the babes of Bethlehem demonstrates some of the worst excesses of human power. Herod was by no means a solution to the deepest human problems of sin and death.

When the child was presented for circumcision at the temple, the righteous old man, Simeon, took the babe in his arms and declared that he had seen the salvation of God – a light for revelation to the nations, and the glory of Israel (Luke 2:32). And the prophetess, Anna, thanked God for the coming redemption of Jerusalem.

When we look at such responses to the birth of Jesus, it all seems so political – talk of kingship and greatness and glory and redemption. And that's exactly what it was! We tend to lose this aspect of Jesus' life, often seeing such political implications as misguided. Yet, it is precisely what Gabriel announced to Mary, and was completely in step with the promises of God in the Old Testament. Jesus was born to be King of the Jews. And when, as an adult, he came to Jerusalem calling for the temple to be torn down and promising to build a new one, he was fulfilling the role of a Davidic king to be a temple builder, ruling God's people on his behalf.

What nobody was expecting was the manner of his coronation, or the significance of it. For when the child became a man, the crown placed on his head was made of thorns. The throne of his ancestor David was a Gentile cross of execution. And what placed him on that throne was the hate of humanity and nails driven into his limbs.

But as we look at what appeared to be his confounding failure, what we actually see is his stunning success. For the life Jesus surrendered on that cross had been perfect – from the moment of his birth through to his last gasp of breath. By allowing himself to be executed, he allowed humanity to give full vent to its sin. And in taking it upon himself as he died, he put sin to death.

Then, by emerging from his tomb alive again, he conquered death – never to die again. In ascending to the right hand of God, he took his heavenly throne over all nations. And in granting his Spirit to those who believe in him, he built a new temple – the Church, in which people of all nations, Jew and Gentile alike, may worship God in Spirit and in truth.

The political context in which Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again is not insignificant. For these were the very means God used to deal with our most fundamental human problems. And that means the political context in which Jesus appeared cannot simply be confined to history as a curiosity. It is how Jesus fulfilled the very great and precious promises of God that have brought salvation even to us today.

Christmas does not signal the birth of a religious genius who appeared out of the blue. It is God stepping into human history in fulfilment of his promises to Israel – the coming of the one to whom Israel belonged. It is the birth of one who did not become son of God by adoption, but who was God the Son by nature through all eternity.

Solve our deepest problems. God is the King of the Jews coming with salvation.

As we advance towards Christmas 2018, let's try to recover some of the significance of Jesus' birth from the time when history was still advancing towards it. Let's fall in love again with the Old Testament that promised and shaped the expectation of God's intervention in human history. Let the opening words of the New Testament thrill us: "The book of the birth of Jesus the Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham (Matt 1:1).

And let's fall in love again with the one who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to cling to, but emptied himself and adopted our nature.

"Glory to God in the highest places,  
and on earth peace among people of his goodwill."

A very blessed Christmas to all!

*The Rev Dr George Athas is director of research and lectures in Old Testament, Hebrew and church history.*

# Service remembered and celebrated



Australia remembers: Armistice Day 100 years on at St Andrew's Cathedral.

**CHURCHES ACROSS THE DIOCESE HELD SERVICES OF REMEMBRANCE AND RANG THEIR BELLS TO mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Great War on November 11.**

"To die for one's country is an act of love for your fellow beings and we honour them today," said Archbishop Davies, as the bells rang in St Andrew's Cathedral.

The Governor, Premier, Lord Mayor and hundreds of others gathered in the Cathedral, prior to the official service at the Cenotaph, to give thanks, even using some of the same words in the Cathedral service from 1918.

The Archbishop shared the awful statistics: 9 million soldiers, sailors and airmen killed and 6½ million civilians, plus 23 million military wounded. "It was a war of tragic loss on a scale the world had not seen before," he said. "Our own country's casualties included the death of 60,000 Australians as well as 150,000 citizens wounded, representing more than 6 per cent of the Australian population."

The tenor bell rang solemnly for one minute at St Andrew's Cathedral as bells from Anglican and other churches across Greater Sydney and the Illawarra also rang out. At St Michael's Cathedral in Wollongong congregation members wrapped 55 poppies around a large pine tree in memory of the 55 men on its honour board.

At St Peter's, Cremorne the bell was rung at 10.59am, but St Peter's was also the focus of a community ceremony earlier in the morning that included a choir and musical ensemble from SCECGS Redlands, cadets from Shore and Wenona, and many local dignitaries.

Cremorne's rector the Rev Tim St Quintin – a former Army officer and serving chaplain with the Army Reserve – invited members from his unit to do the readings, and said the community's response to the event was very positive.

"It made sense to do something big to commemorate it and I was keen to make it a community event," he said.

"Redlands and Shore were very willing to support it, and the RSL and the like – there was a real sense that people in the wider community were behind it. We had a full house, with extra seating out in every spare space, and it was all full.

"Another aspect of the service is that we wanted to be not just remembering the veterans from 100 years ago but those who are currently serving. We took a collection for a fairly new organisation called Integra Service Dogs Australia, which is training support dogs – companion dogs – for military veterans and first responders who are suffering from post-traumatic stress."

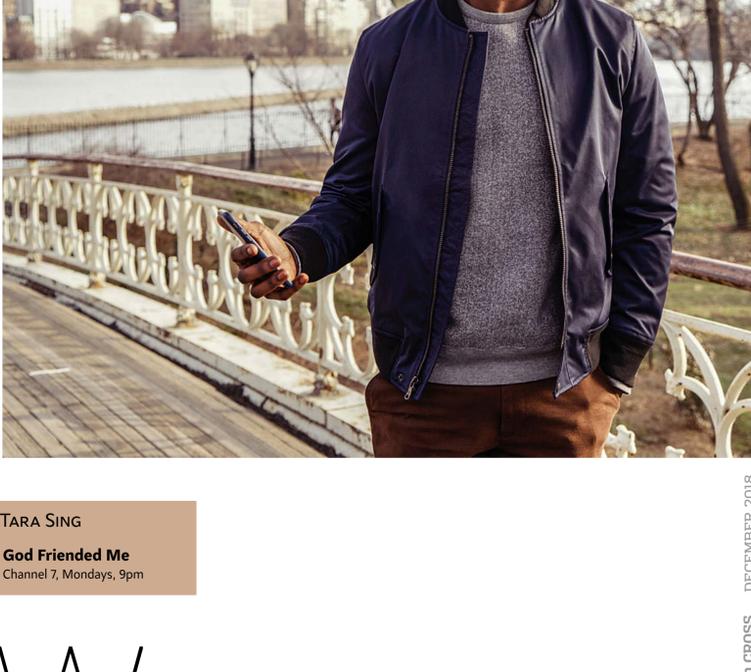
The service took on extra meaning for the parish and Mr St Quintin, as he and his unit were deployed within the week to an undisclosed location. At the end of the service the Bishop of North Sydney, Chris Edwards, and the parish wardens, laid hands on Mr St Quintin to commission him for the work.

"The wardens were very keen to do that," Mr St Quintin said. "The parish have been really supportive [of my Army chaplaincy]. They see it as very much them sending me – and me going, in a sense, on their behalf to do this work, so that's been very encouraging."



Shore and Wenona cadets form a catafalque party at Cremorne.

## Hoax or holy?



TARA SING

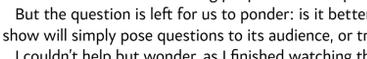
**God Frieded Me**  
Channel 7, Mondays, 9pm

**W**HAT HAPPENS WHEN AN ANGRY ATHEIST PODCASTER STARTS ENCOUNTERING strange coincidences in his life? Coincidences that could possibly be, dare he say it, miracles?

This is the premise of *God Frieded Me*, which began airing on Channel 7 last month.

Dubbed as the "Millennial Prophet", Miles Finer is an amateur podcaster trying to make it with his anti-God show. He works in a mediocre job, is estranged from his pastor father, and is just trying to make ends meet in New York when a "friend" request from God shakes his world upside down.

Miles initially ignores and rejects multiple friend requests from the Facebook account "God", assuming it is an elaborate hoax. When he finally does accept, his Facebook friend God suggests new friends for Miles on the social network. These are people he then crosses paths with in real life, changing their lives in substantial ways. In the first episode, he finds himself saving a doctor from suicide, then helping journalist Cara Bloom reconnect with her long-lost mother.



It's an interesting concept, especially in a world where we seem to have lost the ability to have good conversations about God. The episode raises some obvious questions that all such shows raise. Who is God? What does he want me to do? What does he want my next move to be?

The show also attempts to ask deeper questions, such as where do we find our hope? Miles' father challenges the podcast for taking away people's hope, whereas Miles sees his father's line of work as offering people lies in the place of real hope.

But the question is left for us to ponder: is it better to leave people with hope? As to whether the show will simply pose questions to its audience, or try to offer answers, we will have to wait and see. I couldn't help but wonder, as I finished watching the first episode, how the story would maintain interest for a whole season or longer. Even with the underlying mystery of who is behind the God Facebook account, I fear it becoming "miracle of the week", as each episode leads Miles, and his journalist friend Cara, to encounter and help different people. Could this be the Millennial version of *Touched by an Angel*?

The show is well produced, with likeable and warm characters. The show is clearly aimed at Millennials, with references to podcasts and hip Manhattan bars, and it also has diverse, single 20-somethings in lead roles. But I am unsure if this will be enough to cause people to seek any answers to the questions behind *God Frieded Me*.

While the show poses its main question as hypothetical, very similar to the classic 1990s song "What If God Was One Of Us?", we know it is a very real question that everyone will have to address at some point.

The gospels make it clear that God has not only sent us a friend request but, through Jesus, has done much more: he has come to seek and save the lost. God is not interested in subtle hints through social media. He came as the man Jesus to take away sins that were stopping us from being in a relationship with him.

The show is a lighthearted drama-comedy but it asks a very serious question of us all: what would we do if God friended us? And while we were his enemies? It's a serious question because God *has* reached out to us, and it's one we all need to answer.

DECEMBER 2018

Southern CROSS

13

## Not easy being green



TARA SING

**Is God Green?**  
By Lionel Windsor

**S**HOULD CHRISTIANS SAVE THE TREES? IT'S THE QUESTION LIONEL WINDSOR WANTS US to consider among the daily barrage of environmental causes and concerns the world throws at us.

With the single-use plastic bag ban in July, the drought, climate change conversations and an array of organisations and companies "going" green, it almost feels as though there isn't time to stop and assess whether these good concerns are gospel concerns, or what a Christian response to environmental issues looks like.

Many Christians compost, choose to recycle where possible, and even remember to bring their reusable bags to the supermarket. Are these token efforts enough? Should a Christian be doing more, or less, for the environment?

*Is God Green?* aims to challenge our attitudes in this area. Dr Windsor, a lecturer in Greek, New Testament and Hebrew at Moore College, began his professional life as an engineer at a solar research company. Working in this context as a Christian he desired to, under God, do helpful things for his neighbours and the world. However, he has seen the naivety with which many Christians aim to do environmental good.

"What I see happening is Christians thinking about environmental issues without a gospel framework," Dr Windsor says.

"One thing that can happen is that Christians will use whatever framework is around them, and listen to whoever's voice is the loudest. Christians will jump on the bandwagon and start to adopt that framework without realising it.

"That is a real problem because when this happens you're buying into an alternative gospel."

Through his short and easy-to-read book, Dr Windsor examines several different approaches to environmental issues. Discussing concepts such as pantheism, dualism and materialism, he helps readers to see the potential traps we can fall into in trying to campaign for environmental causes.

However, being wise about how we approach environmental issues doesn't mean ignoring or rejecting them.

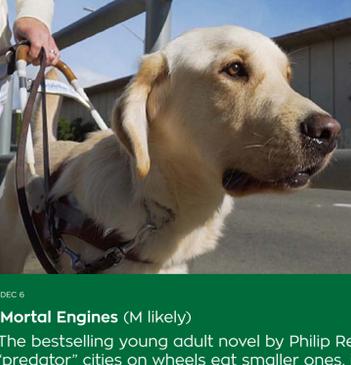
"What we need to do is read the environmental issues through the gospel lens, so we need to get the gospel right," he says. "The gospel is about God, humans and the world. The world is already saved, because Jesus is the one who has saved the world and will save the world.

"We have a responsibility to do what is right out of love of neighbour. Loving your neighbour is not the mission of the church, it is the response to the gospel that we all need to have. The gospel will reshape everything, and it should also reshape the way we respond to God's world and the environment and our neighbours."

*Is God Green?* is available from Matthias Media.

## HOLIDAY FILMS

## FLICK IT GOOD



DEC 6

**Mortal Engines** (M likely)

The best-selling young adult novel by Philip Reeve, set in a post-apocalyptic world where "predator" cities on wheels eat smaller ones, is given the epic screen treatment by Peter Jackson (*The Lord of the Rings*) and his screenwriting team. Think a rolling city kind of *Mad Max* and you get the vibe. The book's plot is complex – and has hopefully been simplified effectively for the screen – but the main points are that young Hester Shaw (Hera Hilmar) wants revenge on Thaddeus Valentine (Hugo Weaving) for the death of her parents. She joins with other outcasts to stop Valentine from rebuilding and using technology that will make London (on wheels) invincible.

**Elliot the Littlest Reindeer** (G)

A miniature horse dreams of being one of the reindeer pulling Santa's sleigh, and sets out to prove that you can do whatever you put your mind to. An absolute toothache.

DEC 13

**Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse** (PG likely)

"This could literally not get any weirder," Peter Parker says, as he discovers not one person with Spidey senses, but several – from different dimensions – in his new computer-animated flick. Dedicated Marvel fans will know of Miles Morales, an Afro-Latino schoolkid who, in the comics, becomes Spider-Man after the death of Peter Parker. Here Parker is still around but, as he trains Morales, more people with Spidey skills appear. And they have to band together to save each of their dimensions from destruction. It's got the Marvel tick of approval – and hallmark style – so it should keep fans happy while they wait for the next live action Spidey movie. It's also likely the last film comic creator Stan Lee saw completed before he died last month.

**Once Upon a Deadpool** (PG)

*Deadpool 2* returns in a reworked Christmas version with (apparently) enough of the profanities etc removed to reduce the rating from MA15+ to PG. Unlikely to make it that much more worth your time, or your money.

DEC 20

**Bumblebee** (M or PG)

Why filmmakers persist with this franchise is beyond me, given the regular drubbing from audiences as well as critics. This is a prequel to the *Transformers* series set in 1987, in which the title character is found in a junkyard by a teenage girl (Hailee Steinfeld). Cue bad guy behaviour and science fiction action.

DEC 26

**Aquaman** (M)

I had no expectations about this incarnation of *Aquaman*. Apart from the brilliant job DC did with *Wonder Woman*, the rest of the franchise has bored me to tears. However, this outing has the style and humour of an early Marvel film, which bodes well. Also, we get taken to a CGI-impressive Atlantis, of which Aquaman is arguably the heir (his mother – Nicole Kidman – was queen of the underwater city). Yet Aquaman's half-brother rules below the waves, and has designs on ruling the land as well.

**Holmes & Watson** (M or M15+ likely)

Given that Will Ferrell is Sherlock Holmes and John C. Reilly is Watson in this sight-gag heavy effort, it will be enjoyable if you're a fan of their cinematic humour. I'm really not.

**At Eternity's Gate** (M likely)

Critics and audiences are divided over this biopic about the later life of Vincent Van Gogh (Willem Dafoe). To some the film is overlong, the cinematography self-aware and the dialogue – taken in some cases from Van Gogh's letters – is stilted. For others, it's a masterpiece, filled with beauty and sorrow. Your view is likely to depend on the type of cinematic experience (and acting) you enjoy, but Dafoe has already received the best actor award at Venice for his portrayal of the troubled artist.

**The Favourite** (MA15+)

Queen Anne was a tragic figure, bearing 17 children, none of whom lived to adulthood. Played by Olivia Colman, she is physically frail and surrounded by pet rabbits (one for each child). Yet her history is merely a shell in which the director and scriptwriters go to town with humour, crude language, bawdiness and ruthless aggression – and that's just the three central characters: the Queen, who is also the lover of her closest confidante, Lady Sarah Malborough (Rachel Weisz); and Sarah's cousin Abigail (Emma Stone), desperate to regain her place in society. The film is highly regarded by most critics to date – especially in terms of the three women's performances – but be warned: this is not a polite English costume drama.

JAN 11

**Mary Poppins Returns** (G or PG)

Rest assured this is not a remake of the 1964 original. Emily Blunt makes a charming Mary Poppins in this sequel, returning to London during the Depression to help the now-growing Banks children. Michael is a single father with three kids and has support from his sister Jane but they all need the "practically perfect" Mary to get them through their troubles. Colin Firth is the villain of the piece and Meryl Streep provides an eccentric cameo (as does Dick Van Dyke). There should be much to like, including animation with live characters in the style of the original film. The potential snag is a clutch of new songs – the first film had so many crackers it's set a pretty high bar.

JAN 3

**How to Train your Dragon: The Hidden World** (PG likely)

In brief: man and dragon are living more or less happily together, Toothless finds a girlfriend who's able to vanish into thin air, and a dragon-hunting armada makes the locals of Berk realise that vanishing themselves might not be such a bad thing. This is touted as the final story of the HTTYD series, so ending with a rollicking good story rather than a money-spinning stinker would be good. Here's hoping.

JAN 10

**Instant Family** (M)

This is entertaining, with quite a lot of comedy, but it also dips a toe into what foster care is really like from those who have experienced it. You might roll your eyes at the idea of a childless couple adopting three siblings but that's exactly what the film's director and co-writer Sean Anders and his wife actually did. Truth really is stranger than fiction. Mark Wahlberg and Rose Byrne star as the couple whose life is changed forever – in so many ways – by these kids. Anders has said that, "the families that I met along the way all had these wonderful stories about how they persevered through difficult times and became a family. I wanted to tell a more complete story, something that doesn't shy away from some of the trauma and the tragedy, but really gets into the laughter and the love and really becoming a family." The film isn't for younger audiences but if it strikes the right balance it could be a winner.

**Storm Boy** (PG)

Colin Thiele's classic story gets a second cinematic outing, this time seen through the eyes of an ageing Storm Boy (Geoffrey Rush), telling his granddaughter about his childhood on the Coorong in South Australia, his reclusive father, Aboriginal mate Fingerbone Bill and best friend, the pelican Mr Percival. Whether this can capture as effectively Thiele's story of environmental beauty and fragility, friendship and love, discovery and loss remains to be seen, but it's a joy to see that David Gulpilil, the original Fingerbone Bill, will make an appearance.

JAN 17

**A-X-L** (PG)

The adventures of a boy and an escapee military robotic dog. The plot has more holes than a sieve, but the target audience will probably like it anyway. Only trouble is, you have to watch it with them.

**Mary, Queen of Scots** (MA15+)

This new version of Mary's tale (and Elizabeth I's) is big on the sisterhood. The men want to rule, but long live us queens against chaps who mock and connive behind our backs! Unsurprisingly, a lot of history goes out the window. Mary's view of herself as superior to Elizabeth and the rightful ruler of England is true, but we know who won that argument. With Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie as the queens the performances should be good, but be prepared for a lot of bodice-ripping and violence. Also stars Guy Pearce, Gemma Chan and (behind a huge beard) David Tennant as the Presbyterian Church's founder, John Knox.

**Pick of the Litter** (G)

A fabulous US documentary that follows five Labrador puppies for the first 20 months of their lives, as they are trained to become guide dogs for the visually impaired. Not only are you shown just how much work and care is needed to train one dog, you see the value they give to those who need them and the very high standard required to pass the test. *Pick of the Litter* was a big hit at the Sydney Film Festival last June, so there'll be no shortage of fans for this release.

**The Kid Who Would Be King** (PG likely)

This wasn't complete by the time SC went to press, but if it lives up to its promise it will be a rollicking adventure for your pre-teens. Alex (Louis Ashbourne Serkis) is your typical 12-year-old dealing with school, bullies and everyday life... until, when hiding from the bullies in the remains of an apartment block, he pulls the legendary sword of King Arthur from a block of concrete. Much to his horror, Merlin now expects Alex to lead the fight against the witch Morgana and her underworld army. Is this destiny or disaster? Should be good fun.

JAN 24

**The Nightingale** (MA15+ likely)

It's 1825 in Van Diemen's Land, and young Irish convict (Aisling Franciosi) joins with an Aboriginal tracker (Baykali Ganambarr) to pursue a sadistic English soldier (Sam Claflin) across the length and breadth of the island in revenge for his violence and cruelty. This chair-gripping thriller is dark, violent and not for the faint-hearted. Directed and written by Australian Jennifer Kent (*The Babadook*) it isn't perfect by any means, but it does pose strong questions about the value of humanity, justice and the right to revenge.

**The Front Runner** (M likely)

Anything starring the versatile Hugh Jackman is worth consideration, and this film will also resonate because of its parallels with recent US history. Jackman stars as Gary Hart, a popular, expected Democratic nominee for the 1988 US Presidential election – until rumours begin to circle that he is having an affair.

JAN 27

Mark World Holocaust Remembrance Day with a 25th anniversary rescreening of the haunting and utterly compelling *Schindler's List* (M). One day only.

JUDY ADAMSON