

FEBRUARY  
2019

# Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS



## Democracy or bust

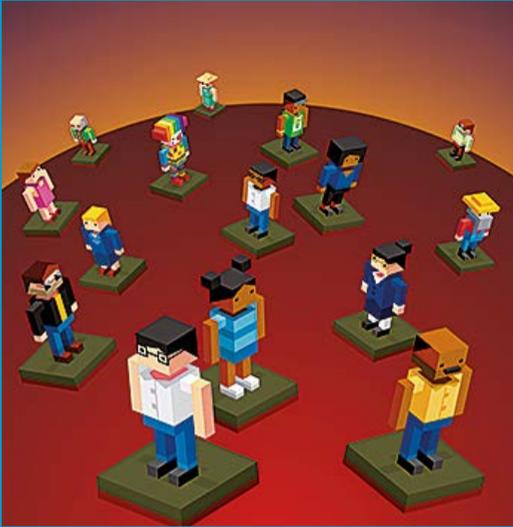
FOLLOWING JESUS IN A FRACTURED WORLD

PLUS

**Submission - for everyone**

**Going to your church AGM?**

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**"That's our mission;  
that's our statement.  
Everyone's included.  
No one's on the margin."**

Ruth Champion  
Sydney News

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## Hope grows in Leppington

New life: Des and his son are baptised by the Rev Luther Symons (right).

USUALLY IT'S A BAD THING WHEN YOU GROW OUT OF SOMETHING, BUT THE SAINTS AT HOPE Church Leppington are celebrating. Their first meeting was only in 2016, but the congregation now no longer fits inside the converted garage they use for a church building.

"We've run out of room!" the Rev Luther Symons says. "It's been very encouraging to see the gospel bearing fruit in our part of southwest Sydney. God's word is powerful and he is faithful. We've seen many grow to maturity as they've laid down their lives in many different ways for Jesus."

It was a small team of 40 that joined Hope in 2016; now 220 adults and children make up the Hope Church family. To accommodate these numbers, a second morning service launched a few months ago. While church members await the construction of a new building, they have erected a marquee to create more gathering space, dubbing their new morning tea area "The Grounds of Leppington".

"We were having people standing up the back, which is really unwelcoming to the visitor, so we knew it was time to move to two gatherings," Mr Symons says. "We want the empty chairs to reinforce that our mission is urgent and far from done. So many more people in southwest Sydney need to hear of the hope that is only found in Jesus!"

In the past year, 18 adults and kids have responded to this hope and become Christians, with several baptisms marking these wonderful conversions.

Des Stapleton describes his journey from disillusioned Catholic, to militant atheist, to follower of Christ, which started with a simple invitation from the Symons' family to visit the church. "We decided to go along to support our new friends, with no intention of becoming Christians," he says.

The first visit led to a second, and then to joining an *Introduction to Jesus* course. "The course allowed us to ask any questions that we had," he says. "I guess the biggest outcome from that was [I learned Christianity] is a personal relationship with your creator and his son, who died for our salvation."

Mr Symons longs to see Hope, and the kingdom of God, continue to grow in this way as the good news is proclaimed.

"Together with the other fantastic churches in southwest Sydney we see the need to work together to reach the 300,000 people moving here in the next 15 years," he says. "We're praying that God would help us locally and as a Diocese to plant five to 10 new parishes... The harvest is certainly plentiful and we are praying God would continue to raise up workers for this part of his mission field."

Southern CROSS FEBRUARY 2019



## Ground breaking day for Stanhope

Swing that shovel! Archbishop Davies turns the first sod at the site for Stanhope Anglican's church. PHOTO: Tina Gaddes

CONSTRUCTION WILL SOON BEGIN ON A BUILDING FOR STANHOPE ANGLICAN. SINCE PLANTING the church in 2006, members have met in Blacktown Leisure Centre and are looking forward to a space they can call their own.

Celebrating the turning of the first sod at the site in December, the Rev Steve Reimer is excited to see the start of a new chapter for Stanhope.

"It was a glorious day and pretty hot," he says. "People are keen to see construction begin... The land has been here since 2010, in such an ideal location, on a main road between Stanhope Village and the Anglican village, surrounded by thousands of homes."

Being in their own church will allow members to pursue new ventures, such as providing more community services. It also means they will finally be able to celebrate Easter and Christmas on the actual days, hopefully providing opportunities to connect with the community on the two most important dates in the Christian calendar.

Mr Reimer adds that he is enthusiastic to "have a space where we can operate English classes and connect with the community. It will also make it easier to connect with families and provide things for children and youth".

However, one thing they will miss about the leisure centre is having a pool in the room next door. "We've baptised people in the pool," Mr Reimer explains. "We do these baptisms amongst the public – they're in the pool at the same time."

While the new building will certainly help Stanhope spread the gospel to thousands of neighbours, God has proved he doesn't need a building to build his kingdom. The group of 15 that started Stanhope has grown to more than 140 adults and children on a Sunday morning, with many coming to know Christ, or joining the church after moving to the area.

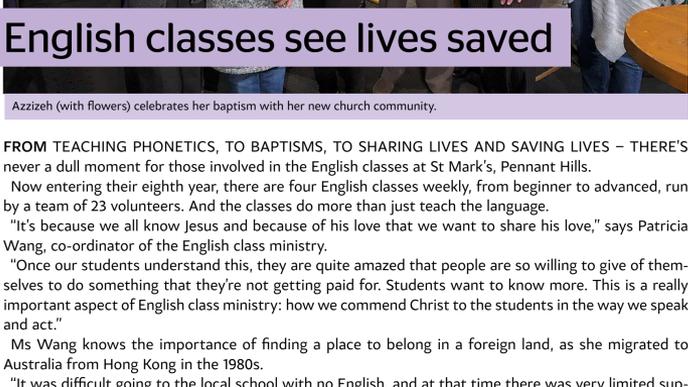
"I met Steve as they were singing carols at the Stanhope shopping centre," says Carolann Dartnell, who joined the congregation three years ago. "I was quite happy that I finally found an Anglican congregation I could attend. It has been wonderful – I've been welcomed in."

Mrs Dartnell says many church members have shown her love in practical ways, motivated by the love of Jesus: "whether it's in prayer or times where I've been sick and ladies have cooked meals for me. To me, it's like being part of a family. We all watch out for each other."

Although members hope to open the new church doors by Easter 2020, Mr Reimer is praying that no matter where the church gathers, it will be a light to the community.

"Under God, we pray we will see hundreds of people find hope in Jesus," he says.

"This is so much to give thanks for. We're praising God for the provision of the land, and for the Archbishop's New Churches for New Communities and our supporters who have given to the project. We're thankful to see everyone wanting to work together to build his church – the church being his people."



## English classes see lives saved

Azzizeh (with flowers) celebrates her baptism with her new church community.

FROM TEACHING PHONETICS, TO BAPTISMS, TO SHARING LIVES AND SAVING LIVES – THERE'S never a dull moment for those involved in the English classes at St Mark's, Pennant Hills.

Now entering their eighth year, there are four English classes weekly, from beginner to advanced, run by a team of 23 volunteers. And the classes do more than just teach the language.

"It's because we all know Jesus and because of his love that we want to share his love," says Patricia Wang, co-ordinator of the English class ministry.

"Once our students understand this, they are quite amazed that people are so willing to give of themselves to do something that they're not getting paid for. Students want to know more. This is a really important aspect of English class ministry: how we commend Christ to the students in the way we speak and act."

Ms Wang knows the importance of finding a place to belong in a foreign land, as she migrated to Australia from Hong Kong in the 1980s.

"It was difficult going to the local school with no English, and at that time there was very limited support because there weren't many migrant children attending school," she says.

"I still remember the foreignness of being in a new country. Even something as simple as hearing different birds singing brought a lot of grief and loss. It's really about giving back with that history and understanding."

God's hand has been at work in these classes, with several families baptised and now calling St Mark's home. In one such case, the Lord worked through a welcome pack to bring an older Iranian woman student into his kingdom.

"Azzizeh is part of the starters class, and received a copy of the gospel tract in Farsi," Ms Wang says. "One day her daughter walked in and said to a helper, 'My mum wants to be baptised in this church'. We were all taken aback. She never gave any hints!"

Azzizeh's whole English class came to the baptism to support her.

"This is a wonderful story, because it challenges our understanding of evangelism," Ms Wang says. "At the end of the day, if God wants someone to know him, he does the work. God works in his powerful way to bring people to himself in a way that is unfathomable to us."

Not only has the Lord used the classes to save souls, he's used them to save lives as well – in one particular case, a well-timed lesson in the starters class on health and the signs of a heart attack.

"One student thought, 'I am experiencing this now', and went from class to the doctor," Ms Wang says. "She got admitted to hospital and had heart surgery, all because of a lesson on health."

The Rev Rick Hall, assistant minister at Pennant Hills, is thankful for the gospel opportunities that have developed through the ministry.

"I think English classes have shown the church what a great mission field this is," he says. "Many from different backgrounds are not spiritually closed like some of our Anglo neighbours can be. I want to reiterate the amazing value this is, both in serving new migrants and doing that with the goal of sharing Jesus."



## Enmore opportunity

Ruth Champion (left), acting rector the Rev Philip Bradford and Jan Thomsett check stock at Enmore's new op shop.

THE GATES DO OPEN AND LOCALS WANDER THROUGH THE GROUNDS OF ST LUKE'S, ENMORE – JUST AS THEY ARE EVERY DAY. In the past they might have stopped for reflection time in the church, and prayer with the rector if they wanted it, but now there's an extra reason: the parish has moved its op shop onsite.

Says churchwarden Ruth Champion: "We were scared about the hike in rents in the Enmore area, so we decided to look to our own site to see how we could adapt it".

The result – even though it took three years to come to fruition – has delighted everyone. The builders took the old parish office with its soaring ceilings and created a mezzanine level, effectively doubling the space. The office is now upstairs, with plenty of room for meetings, office work and storage, while downstairs has been renovated and converted into the op shop.

Enmore-Stanmore's acting rector, the Rev Philip Bradford, explains that some members of the congregation had been concerned that moving from the old site on Enmore Road would result in less passing trade for the 20-year-old op shop. But plenty of residents walk daily through the grounds from laneways behind the church, so this – plus local advertising – has ensured everyone knows about the move.

"People feel very comfortable about the shop being here because they're used to walking though," Ms Champion says. "We always keep the gates open."

"If we try and close the gates people just climb over them!" Mr Bradford adds with a laugh.

The shop is open Tuesday to Saturday, and money raised is donated (through the Anglican Board of Mission) to the Al-Ahli Hospital in the Gaza Strip and to Anglicare's prison chaplaincy.

There's at least one parishioner in the shop each day – bringing one-on-one with residents, offering free clothes to those in greatest need, and inviting people to church or church events.

They have hired out clothes to people wanting retro style for a party, and received stock as varied as mink coats and cheap bracelets: "It's just amazing what comes in," Ms Champion says.

Shop visitors also include young mums, who have formed the basis of a weekly playgroup at the church. Others have become church regulars – including one lady who heard Father Philip preach and said, 'I finally get it! I finally understand the gospel!... and she got baptised.'

"Once they've been [to church here] they know they're always included," Ms Champion adds. "That's our mission; that's our statement. Everyone's included. No one's on the margin."



## Soul Revival spreads

Filling stomachs, feeding souls: a church service-linked dinner at Kirrawee.

FOR THESE BELIEVERS, JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING – INCLUDING THE WAY THEY DO CHURCH. And it's striking a chord in the Sutherland Shire.

Soul Revival Church has just expanded to three campuses across the region, now meeting at Kirrawee, Woollooware and Yarrawarrah, and there are no signs of slowing down.

"Since 2012 we've grown to include a Friday night service, a Saturday night service, a Sunday morning at Kirrawee, and at the same time as launching Woollooware and Yarrawarrah we're planting a fourth service at Kirrawee," says lead pastor the Rev Stuart Crawshaw.

"We were at six services in January, and in the second half of 2019 we want to plant another two gatherings, and then in 2020 plant another two. Ten gatherings by 2020, all up."

"What makes Soul Revival different?"

"We're trying to come up with a new approach in Sydney, and we're finding it working for the church," Mr Crawshaw says. "What we talk about is an all-age, all-stage church."

"We preach the gospel, we say Jesus changed everything when he died and rose, and that what we do as a church is we share the love of Jesus person to person, generation to generation, culture to culture, place to place. That's our own language for when people say we're community; we say we're a gospel community."

Every Soul Revival service is geared to building this gospel community culture. Each gathering includes a meal, which means the church feeds up to 400 people, and for the weekend.

"Everyone sits down together to a home-cooked meal, across the table," Mr Crawshaw says. He sees these meal times as an important aspect of growing and developing a culture that is cross-generational.

As the leadership works to help the new gatherings in Kirrawee and Yarrawarrah, the focus is on seeing the gospel shape and change lives.

"When we start a new gathering, we celebrate the people who come to know Jesus through the new gathering," Mr Crawshaw says. "We say we're keen to have conversations about faith with people."

"We preach the gospel clearly and welcome those who are Christian and not Christians to discuss what we believe. Every week we could have five or six non-Christians and the meal gives them a chance to chat with people about what they've heard."

Soul Revival's clear Bible teaching and low-key, yet creative approach to gatherings has resulted in one quarter of its congregation coming from a non-church background. In the future, Mr Crawshaw hopes to see even more people engage with Christ and be transformed.

"We just try and make Jesus the key person, so that everyone knows what we're on about," he says.

"It's exciting that we can be optimistic and positive about what Jesus is doing. It can seem like Christians are on the back foot in the media, but we're seeing the gospel grow and lots of people excited to respond."

## A North Shore partnership

THE REV PAUL DALE BELIEVES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH.

He and a small group started Church by the Bridge in Kirribilli in 2005 as a church plant from St Thomas', North Sydney. Over the past 15 years, a small service of 30 has grown to five services of more than 700. "God has been very kind," Mr Dale says. "We've seen a lot of new believers and a lot of people come to faith."

He credits community engagement as key to the church's success. He has worked hard – and drunk a lot of coffee – to get to know all the café owners in time. And he has seen local mothers, business owners and families engage with Church by the Bridge in times of difficulty.

"We've worked really hard at being part of the local community, building relationships [and] being a place where you can invite a friend every week and know they will be welcomed and hear a clear gospel message."

"Yet Mr Dale was surprised when approached to be acting rector of nearby St Augustine's in Neutral Bay. It was Dumbly to be asked to go to Neutral Bay in partnership with Kirribilli," he says. "It is a privilege to pastor the saints and to pastor the flock."

This involved a big change. The parishes have not amalgamated, but are instead engaging in a mutually beneficial partnership. Initially, for the people of St Augustine's, there was fear of takeover. For Kirribilli, there was the real pain of having a pastor who used to be around every day, but now couldn't be.

Despite the difficulties associated with change, there are also fantastic benefits to the partnership. Each church has seen the impact of mission events grow: courses that would have had just a few people attending are now seeing 30 people coming into church for the first time.

"When churches work together, we can do more for the kingdom than we can separately," Mr Dale says, pointing to the consolidation of administration, marketing and communications as well as training and mission. "You can do things better together."

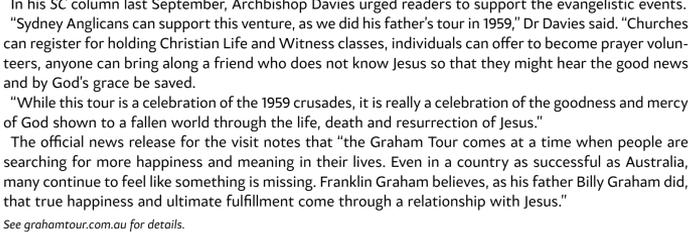
The churches seem to have found a good balance, with individual congregation pastors providing the love and community of a smaller group, yet able to take advantage of resources to which they lack access.

Building on this partnership, St Augustine's is launching a new evening service on February 3. "Church at 6pm" will be run by the combined staff group and led by the newest member of the team, Andrew West. It open to anyone, whether they have never gone to church, haven't gone for ages, are looking for a new church or just have questions.

"We shouldn't underestimate the value of the partnership when we see churches working together, rather than perceiving us as working against each other," Mr Dale says.



Women take part in a pre-Christmas craft event.



## Graham Junior on national tour

Franklin Graham speaks to 9000 people at one of his recent events, the Lancashire Festival of Hope in Blackpool, England.

ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF BILLY GRAHAM'S HISTORIC 1959 VISIT, HIS SON FRANKLIN IS VISITING six Australian cities this month, including two events in Sydney.

The 1959 Billy Graham evangelistic tour changed the landscape of Christianity in Australia, with tens of thousands of people converted – including those who would later become significant leaders, such as Peter and Phillip Jensen.

The tour begins in Perth on February 9, followed by Darwin, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide, and winds up in Sydney on February 23 and 24. The Sydney events will be held at the International Convention Centre in Darling Harbour and will also feature performances by Crowder, a Grammy-nominated music artist.

Franklin Graham is president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association as well as international Christian relief organisation Samaritan's Purse, which both have offices in Australia.

"We are excited to share the same life-changing message of hope my father preached in Australia 60 years ago," Franklin Graham said.

"I first went to Australia in 1975 with my good friend Bob Pierce, who founded Samaritan's Purse. Since then I've had the opportunity to preach in many locations across this incredibly beautiful nation. I'm looking forward to returning to share with the people of Australia that God loves them."

In his SC column last September, Archbishop Davies urged readers to support the evangelistic events. "Sydney Anglicans can support this venture, as we did his father's tour in 1959," Dr Davies said. "Churches can register for holding Christian Life and Witness classes, individuals can offer to become prayer volunteers, anyone can bring along a friend who does not know Jesus so that they might hear the good news and by God's grace be saved."

"While this tour is a celebration of the 1959 crusades, it is really a celebration of the goodness and mercy of God shown to a fallen world through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus."

The official news release for the visit notes that "the Graham Tour comes at a time when people are searching for more happiness and meaning in their lives. Even in a country as successful as Australia, many continue to feel like something is missing. Franklin Graham believes, as his father Billy Graham did, that true happiness and ultimate fulfillment come through a relationship with Jesus."

See [gramhamtour.com.au](http://gramhamtour.com.au) for details.



MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY 2

## Communicating cross-culturally

**WHAT WE SAY AND HOW WE SAY IT MATTERS ENORMOUSLY AT CHURCH. IF WE WANT TO TRULY welcome people from other backgrounds into our church family, we need to rethink what we do and how we communicate, says Bishop Peter Lin.**

It's natural for behaviour at church to be dictated by the dominant culture. However, are the things we do a help or a hindrance to people of other ethnicities? As we attempt to reach the variety of people in our neighbourhoods, we need to ensure they feel welcomed and loved when they come to church. This may mean sacrifices for the sake of the gospel.

"We need to cement a mindset that sees ourselves as a multicultural church," says Bishop Lin, who is bishop of the Georges River Region. "We need a mindset that is willing to change and sacrifice for others. Are there ways we can soften the cultural disconnect?"

The first step in building a church into a multicultural community of loving believers is simple. "Listen, listen, listen," Bishop Lin says.

"Listen to cultural cues. For example, hugging and kissing in some cultures is important. We can't do everything to meet everyone's needs, so we have to over-compensate in other areas."

And he has plenty of first-hand experience. As an Australian-born Chinese, Bishop Lin has found himself regularly out of his comfort zone for Christ.

"As my previous church grew, we started getting South Americans, Middle Easterners and Mediterraneans, who all come from hugging and kissing cultures," he says. "It was hard enough getting used to it with the women, but hugging and kissing men was a real challenge. They don't do the awkward pat-on-the-back hug, they bear hug you."

For those of us who preach, ask who your sermon illustrations connect with. "Try to use illustrations highlighting other cultures, or that are common to all cultures," Bishop Lin says.

He also suggests being mindful of sentence length and language complexity, and encourages churches in his region to get creative with helping people understand the sermon. "Some churches use translation loops and others even hand out the script of the sermon. Recording sermons is helpful as it allows people to listen again."

The way we conduct other upfront activities also needs to be assessed.

"No jargon and no big words!" Bishop Lin says, recommending churches refrain from in-house acronyms and unfamiliar terms. "Mix up the cultures upfront, and encourage everyone to be mindful of what they wear. For some cultures, respect is very important so using titles can be helpful."

The goal is to love and welcome people from all cultures into the church community. While we can change the way we communicate from the front, nothing speaks louder than getting alongside others.

"Who would know what to do if they went into a mosque or a Hindu temple?" he asks. "Would you know when to stand, sit or kneel? Why would people coming to church for the first time know what to do in church, or what the acronyms mean?"

"Let's have people sit with them and explain. Educate your congregations to do these things. Learn a couple of words in their language, even if it's just 'Hello', 'Goodbye' and 'Thank you'. They will love it and it shows you love them."

## How MOPS helped me come to Christ

JODIE NEICH

**WHEN MY FIRST BABY WAS BORN** my life changed dramatically. I was one of the first of my peers to have a child and I often felt out of the loop.

My husband regularly travelled for work, and we lived above shops next door to a noisy pub. The noise was loud and, when I rang my Mum in tears about it, she offered us room so that we could move in with her. We packed our things and moved – and then I found myself isolated.

I was part of an online mums group on Facebook and, when I expressed my frustration, one of the mums invited me to come to MOPS (Mothers Of PreSchoolers). Even though it was an hour's drive for me, I went because I was desperate.

This is my story about how Cranebrook MOPS has helped me come to know Christ. Even though I grew up in a loving home and I considered myself a non-practising Christian, in hindsight I can see that I didn't know God.

On October 26, 2012, I attended my first MOPS group at St Thomas's, Cranebrook. I remember feeling so welcomed! But Maddison – who was almost two – had a tantrum. She didn't want to stay in MOPS Kids; she wanted to stay with her Mummy.

I didn't know what to do. Then Sam, the mentor at my table, said she could stay with me and brought out a few toys for her. I felt so relaxed and decided we would continue to come.

The following year I was on Sam's table again and she said, "I've been praying for you and Maddison. Why don't you try her in MOPS Kids today and if she is distressed the carers can call you?"

I will never forget Sam saying this to me – I was in shock that someone cared enough about me and my child to pray for us. That week Maddison loved MOPS Kids and was asking if she could come again.

When Maddison was 2½ I fell pregnant with my second daughter and then my family went through another hard time: my pregnancy was complicated, my husband lost his job and my parents sold their house. Our next move was to a house that was an hour and a half away from Cranebrook! I was without local friends once again, and now I had a baby *and* a toddler.

Bec, the MOPS co-ordinator, kindly offered to get in touch with a MOPS group that was closer to me. However, within days of her doing this, everything changed: my husband got a full-time job and we moved house again – but this time much closer to Cranebrook.

We came back to MOPS and Maddison started asking questions about God and if we could go to church. It took a little push but I signed up to do a *Christianity Explained* course run by two of the MOPS leaders, Nicola and Michelle. They made it so welcoming – no question I asked was brushed off.

It was at this time Nicola gave me my first-ever Bible. I felt so touched. She also got my girls a kids' Bible, which they loved and wanted to read all the time. At the end of the course, I decided I wanted to know more about God and be in relationship with him.

My girls and I started going to church every week (my husband works on weekends and comes when he can). In August 2016, I got confirmed with the loving support of the MOPS team.

I remember thinking what a wonderful ministry these ladies were doing and how one day I hoped the Lord could use me to encourage others. I started being more involved in the church: I joined a Bible study, I started attending church events that I could make it to, I went to church on Sunday and I went to MOPS, which I always looked forward to.

I remember thinking, "I'm going to have to have more children because I never want to leave MOPS!"

In November last year my home life was looking very different to a few years earlier. Our biggest change was we now had the Lord in our lives. Life was full and busy. With our eldest in school I was working evenings and studying, driving my husband to and from work, caring for a toddler, plus normal mum life.

It was at this time Bec approached me and said, "I know you have a lot going on at the moment – and take time to think about it if you like – but I was wondering if you would like to join the MOPS team?"

Without even a second thought I said "Yes" and now I am part of this amazing team ministering to other mums!

To find out how to start a MOPS group in your church visit [mops.org.au](http://mops.org.au)



Leaders from the Cranebrook MOPS team (from left): Bec Gange, Sam Taylor, Jodie Neich, Michelle Gardner and Shallon McDonald.

## Doing it here before doing it there

JUDY ADAMSON

**IT HAS OFTEN BEEN SAID THAT YOU DON'T NEED TO GO OVERSEAS TO DO CROSS-CULTURAL** ministry – certainly in Sydney, at any rate – which is exactly the point behind the MENTAC (Mentoring Across Cultures) program running in a number of Sydney churches.

With the jokey title of "Not more training?!", those involved in MENTAC gave a presentation to attendees at CMS Summer School last month to explain that, yes, training in Muslim ministry here is of great benefit to those planning to serve in Muslim-majority countries in the future.

"There lots of opportunities in cross-cultural ministry, but [before MENTAC] we needed something with more training for people, to train them on safe ground while they were still here," said the outgoing organiser of MENTAC and rector of Greenacre, the Rev John Bales.

"Over the years 27 people have been involved in the program. Ten of those are now working overseas in Muslim-majority countries. Others are on track to do the same, while others are in different ministries elsewhere.

"I've seen people understanding how to help friends understand more of Jesus – and growing in the ability to speak with them – which has prepared them for serving overseas."

Key MENTAC mentor Margaret added: "Doing life together with people of different backgrounds and faiths is what we do... doing life and thinking about how the Bible speaks into our friends' lives and what to do about it.

"[If we're] finding it hard to connect, I'm thinking we haven't communicated to them with their worldview, their language and their life."

Most MENTAC trainees are based in the Lakemba area, which has a 60 per cent Muslim population. At the CMS session they spoke of their experiences in learning how speaking with people of other faiths is "very much based on relationships": listening, asking questions to understand someone's background, faith and worldview, eating together and loving them in practical ways. "We learn to trust one another and share our lives," Margaret says.

A former MENTAC trainee who is now serving with CMS in South-East Asia had this reflection about her time in the program:

"One of the things was being confronted with struggles in people's lives and feeling unable to help. Quite a few of our friends were experiencing domestic violence, many were in limbo waiting for visas, and nearly all found it difficult to understand English and the systems in Australia.

"But all these are opportunities to show love and care. It was also important to learn that I can't save them, but I can listen and point them to the ultimate saviour."

People can be part of MENTAC full-time or part-time, before or after theological study. But trainees are self-funded, needing to raise financial and prayer support for the two years of training through friends and churches.

For more information about the MENTAC program you can contact the Church Missionary Society at [mentacnswact@cms.org.au](mailto:mentacnswact@cms.org.au)

### MORE CMS SUMMER SCHOOL

To read one of Simon Gillham's evening talks, turn to [page 11](#).

# Gospel defence



From left: the Ven Kevin Russell (RAAF); the Ven Rob Sutherland CSC; Bishop Ian Lambert; the Ven Andrew Lewis RAN.

A NEW GENERATION OF ARCHDEACONS TO THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED at a service in the Royal Military College chapel at Duntroon in the ACT.

The Rev Rob Sutherland, CSC and the Rev Andrew Lewis RAN – both with many years' experience as servicemen and in chaplaincy – were set apart as archdeacons to the Army and the Navy respectively.

"The challenge for an archdeacon in Defence is that they have to operate across the ecclesiological spectrum," says the Anglican Bishop to the Defence Force, the Rt Rev Ian Lambert. "They need to know how the broad Anglican Church works... and have an ability to attend to pastoral matters within the denomination.

"There are three archdeacons – one for each service – and they represent their group of chaplains and provide an important link between them and the bishop, who is outside Defence. So when Defence wants to liaise with the senior uniformed member on Church matters... they will speak to the archdeacon. And when we've got to engage the national church and get people released for ministry in Defence, then I speak to the national church."

Archdeacon Sutherland joined the Army straight from school and spent 20 years as an infantry officer. He studied theology for part of that time, has been rector of Gordon, and has now also been a chaplain for 20 years.

His official new title is "principal chaplain to the Army" but, he says, "I prefer Rob. I say to the soldiers, 'I'm still a chaplain, just call me 'padre'".

At the same time, Archdeacon Sutherland appreciates what the special commissioning, or collation, service represents.

"The Army comes together and the Church comes together – bishops and generals, gathering in a church on an Army base," he says. "The Anglican Church was there saying, 'Soldiers matter to God', and the Army was there saying, 'Please remind God that soldiers are important'."

Archdeacon Lewis spent 20 years as a Navy logistics officer before going into ministry. His wife came to faith while he was on deployment in Somalia in 1994, and in the year after his return he also became a Christian.

"My naval career continued, promotions were good and I went and did further study but I really had this feeling in the early 2000s that God had more planned for me," he says.

Eventually a previous Archdeacon to the Navy, the Ven Eric Burton, told the young Andrew Lewis that he'd been praying for him long-term with regard to ordained ministry, and off Lewis went to Moore College. The Navy sponsored his training as part of a five-year program that included two years as an assistant minister at St Matt's, West Pennant Hills, "to train me and prepare me and hand me back to Defence".

"Chaplaincy to the Navy is missional," he adds. "The reason Christian ministers come into the Navy as chaplains is about growing the kingdom of God. It's about discipleship and evangelism and sharing the love of Christ to Navy members and their families.

"Being Archdeacon is about being chaplain to the chaplains but it's also about challenging and encouraging the Anglican Church to see the vision of Navy as a mission field and also owning that vision."

Says Archdeacon Sutherland: "What we're trying to say through all of this is that the Church cares about soldiers and their families and that's why we have chaplains – that chaplains make a difference, and Defence really wants more chaplains!"



## MOVE TO THE MOUNTAINS

The **Rev Ken Noakes** is making the trip across the Hay Plain with his family to take up the rectorship of the parish of Lower Mountains (which includes Lapstone, Glenbrook, Blaxland, Mt Riverview and Mt Sion) on February 23.

Mr Noakes and his wife Naomi both trained at Moore College and have previously held ministry roles in Sydney parishes.

The family is coming from Adelaide, where Mr Noakes has spent the past eight years as associate minister at Holy Trinity – pastoring one, and sometimes two, of the church's congregations. He has also been involved with training ministries around Adelaide.

Naomi Noakes has been involved in discipling women, leading a women's Bible study ministry and has also been president of CMS SA/NT.

Says Mr Noakes: "The way that Naomi and I have always made decisions about any ministry position has been 'How can we be most effective for the gospel?' And just over eight years ago, the answer to that question was Holy Trinity, Adelaide. What a joy and privilege it has been to serve with the saints at Trinity.

"This time, the team from Lower Mountains very patiently pursued us and painted a picture of the parish. Under God, we became convinced the time was right for a new season of ministry – this time with the saints in and around the Lower Mountains.

"We are excited and nervous about joining a new and wonderful team and hope to be effective for the gospel there."

He notes that, in ministry, "You proclaim the gospel with people that you love and who love you, and then you leave... to go and proclaim the gospel with a group of people you don't even know, who don't yet know you either. That is mission and ministry."

As they come, the family does it with humility – knowing that their skills and capacities are God-given and for his glory. "If we do anything right it's all by God's grace," Mr Noakes says.

## WELCOMED TO THE INNER WEST

After just over four years without a rector, the parish of Enmore-Stanmore welcomed the **Ven Jeff Parker** at an induction service on January 31.

Archdeacon Parker has spent the previous decade as rector of St James', Dandenong in the Melbourne Diocese, and was made Archdeacon of Dandenong two years ago.

"The nominators from Enmore contacted me back in July or August," he says. "I had met them at a conference the year before in Melbourne and they emailed to ask if I might be interested. I'll always have a look at a parish profile – and it just went from there."

There were a few things that prompted him to think seriously about the parish. First, its focus on being a welcoming place that reaches out to its community, and second, the length of time it had been without a permanent rector.

"I was really keen to help them in that way, because it can be terribly discouraging for people in a church when they can't get a minister," he says. "They have a very diverse parish, too... and the parish [of Dandenong] is also very diverse – very ethnically diverse with a great range of people from all socio-economic backgrounds. Enmore-Stanmore's a bit the same, so I thought it was a good fit."

Archdeacon Parker and his wife Michelle have four adult children – two of whom live in Sydney and two in Melbourne. Mrs Parker works as a teacher's aide but also had a busy hospitality and welcoming ministry in Dandenong.

"Michelle usually goes around to speak to all the people in church before the service and she's also been involved in Mothers' Union," Archdeacon Parker says.

The Dandenong branch of MU had been small – only five or six older ladies – but with the involvement of Mrs Parker and the local president it now holds regular evening meetings and activities with 20 to 30 people.

Archdeacon Parker says leaving Dandenong has been "a bit of a wrench, but most people were giving me and Michelle congratulations about the appointment at Enmore. They were very positive about it as a good thing for us to do."



## CHAPLAINCY MISSION

Two former workers with CMS have begun to work as chaplains with Anglicare Sydney.

Last month **Cathy Smith**, who spent 18 years in Japan with her husband Grahame and their children, began working two days a week at Royal North Shore Hospital – where she has already served as a volunteer chaplain for the past two years.

Since the Smiths came back from Japan in 2008, Mrs Smith has been a chaplain to women's students at Moore College. But after hearing pastoral supervisor Sarah Kinstead speak at a conference about compassionate listening skills, she became excited about the ministry possibilities in hospital chaplaincy and sought training in pastoral care.

"I did medicine before I went to Japan and worked for six years, so I've got that medical background," Mrs Smith explains. "I also did my medical training at Newcastle Uni, which was very much a holistic sort of program, and the idea of listening matched well with what I learned there – but with the added Christian element, which was great.

"Being in cross-cultural ministry for many years, you're always thinking about ways of hearing people's different situations and learning to listen well when you can't speak very well."

She says many of the Anglican patients she's seen at Royal North Shore don't go to church any more, so there are many opportunities for the chaplains.

"Some of the patients might be keen Christians and they're just too elderly to go – but many of them have just lapsed for some reason, and a lot of them have never actually understood what church is about. They just think it's some ritualistic thing that they used to have to go to as kids."

**Geoff Boye** is about to begin work as the full-time Anglican chaplain to the South Coast Correctional Centre in Nowra. He and his wife Martha, along with their three children, have spent the past five years in Tanzania, where Mr Boye was teaching at Munguishi Bible College.

After they came back to Australia in September, the Rev Roger Green – the previous minister at one of their support churches who now works for Anglicare – suggested Mr Boye should consider the Nowra job.

"He knew we wanted to re-establish ourselves as a family back in Australia in the Ulladulla area, but I still wanted to teach the Bible at a level that I enjoyed – and also the job required a cross-cultural element," Mr Boye says.

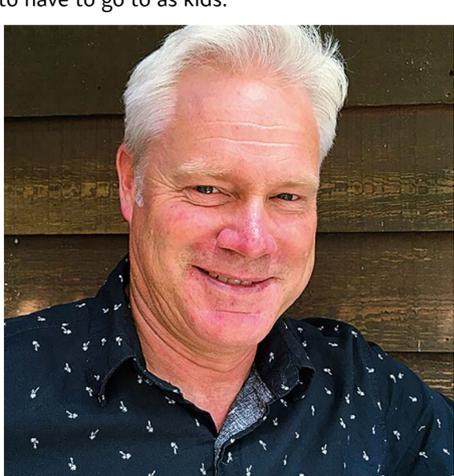
"I was pretty excited about the opportunity to do ministry and run Bible studies and preach in an environment that I'd never imagined... but it's also an opportunity to serve and use some of the gifts I have and things I learned in Tanzania.

"When I was teaching the Bible in Tanzania, I needed to distill things and make them accessible to guys who were from a rural background. Teaching the Bible to men who are in prison... some of them are illiterate or struggle with reading, but they want to learn the Bible. You just make no assumptions about what your audience might or might not know."

Mr Boye has had many conversations with people involved in prison ministry, and says that at CMS Summer School last month a number offered help or support should he need it, "and encouraged me that it was a great ministry".

Some of the inmates are involved in furniture building inside the jail, and have a more or less normal working week – which fits right in with Mr Boye, who has a trade background himself.

"It's just such a great opportunity," he says.



## WATSON'S CHAPLAINCY TO CHAPLAINS

Following more than a decade of ministry as rector of St Stephen's, Normanhurst, last month the **Rev Colin Watson** became the manager of residential aged care chaplaincy for Anglicare.

"I've been at Normanhurst for 11 years, so it's a good time for someone else to come in," he says. "The building work's been done, the children's, youth, adults and seniors ministries are going well and it's a good opportunity for someone else to continue that ministry – with good staff and a great group of people. It's been a really loving church and it's been a great privilege to be there.

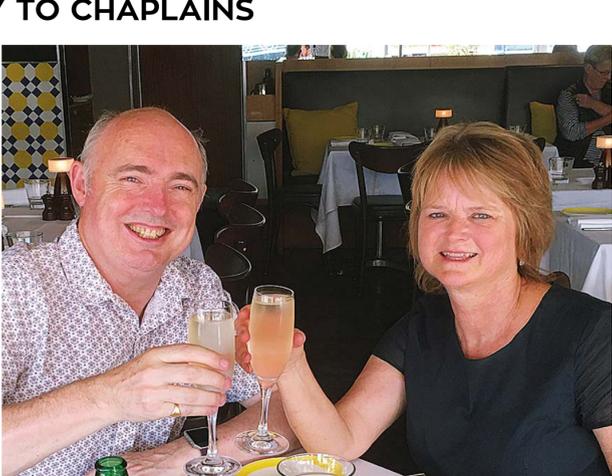
"My wife Allison works part-time in the church preschool – she's a special needs social worker, so she's been helping with special needs children. She's also been overseeing the creche and the welcoming at 10am, so she's been very involved."

He says someone approached him more than six months ago about the job, and the idea of focusing solely on seniors' ministry. This piqued his interest, "and the more we prayed about it the more I thought this could be a really important job, and a great thing to be doing".

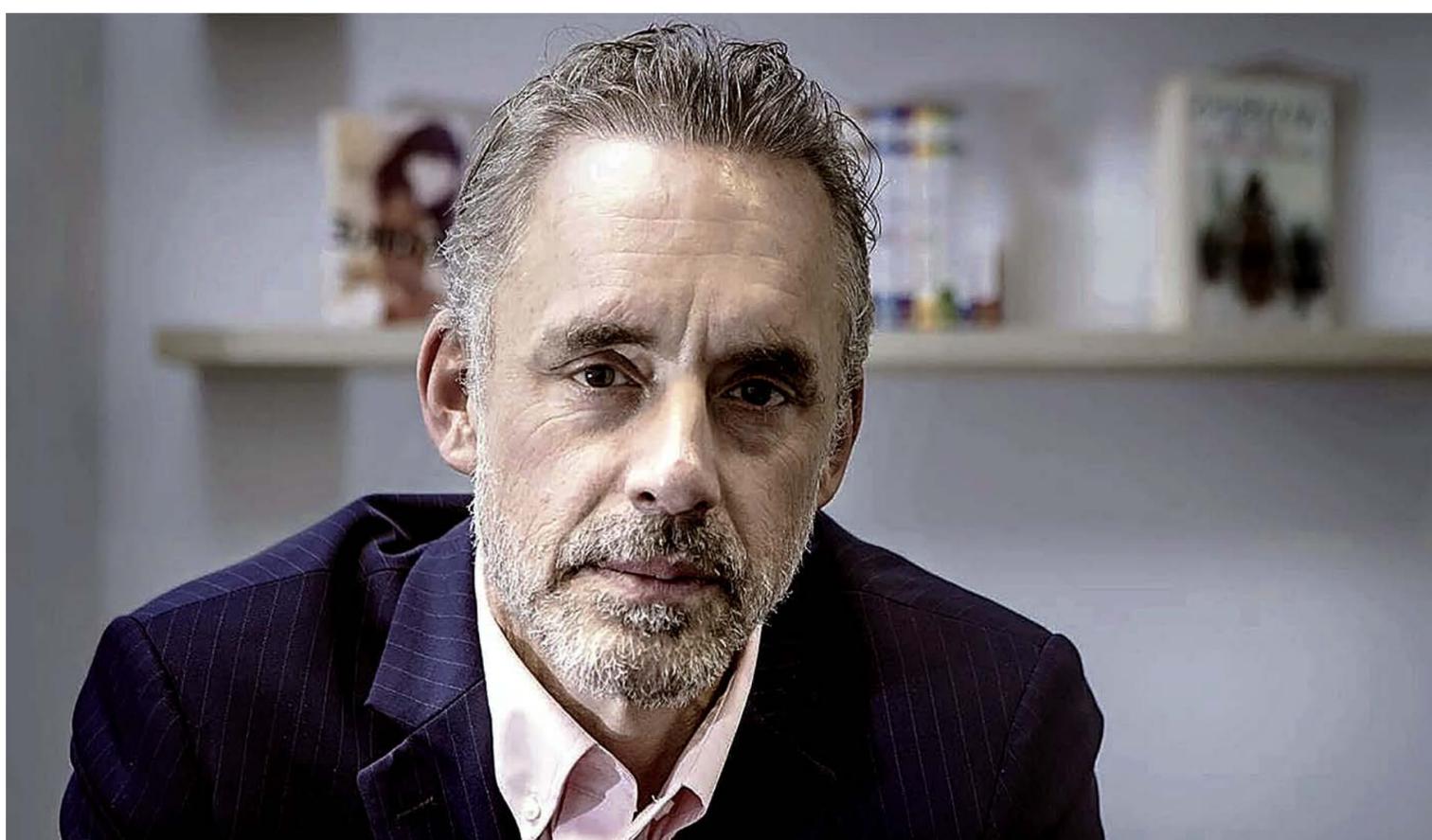
Mr Watson will be criss-crossing the Diocese to visit residential aged care villages and their chaplains – from Nowra to Warriewood, and Rushcutters Bay to Penrith – watching them work in their local contexts, visiting residents with them, and seeing how he can offer support.

The Watsons also want to be part of a local church and, given the 9-5 nature of his job, "it'll be important for us to find [a church] where we both can serve on a Sunday.

"But I'm looking forward to a new challenge in a different area, and I'm very, very excited about it!"



# Jordan Peterson and the Bible



MARTIN KEMP

**JORDAN PETERSON** (ABOVE) IS A PHENOMENON. OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS THE PROFESSOR OF Psychology from the University of Toronto has found himself riding an astonishing wave of popularity, penning an international bestseller (*12 Rules for Life*) and lecturing to sold-out theatres all over the globe.

His podcasts and YouTube lectures have been downloaded millions of times as eager disciples lap up his thoughts on topics as diverse as politics, technology and nutrition. Plenty of people – particularly young adults – are listening.

Of particular interest to *Southern Cross* readers is the fact that Peterson is a fan of the Bible. While not a professing Christian, he has dedicated a considerable amount of time to lecturing through the Book of Genesis, with promises of an Exodus series to follow.

Sometimes nearing three hours, these lengthy expositions have been met with intense levels of interest. As he arrives on the platform to rapturous applause, Peterson muses, "That's a hell of a welcome for someone who's going to speak about the Bible!"

So what should we make of this secular preacher of Scripture? There is no doubt that many people in our churches are listening. So what can we affirm, and what should we be cautious about?

When asked why his work is so popular, Peterson's response is to say, "I tell archetypal stories"; stories explaining the condition common to humans throughout history.

For Peterson, the stories passed on from generation to generation – folk tales, indigenous stories and the like – are how a culture prepares its members to operate in the rough and tumble of life; they're how morals and wisdom are formed. The biblical stories are no different, and he seems to think they do a very good job of helping us navigate the world we live in.

It's this appreciation of the Bible as story that means a typical Sydney Anglican will sometimes find him or herself nodding in agreement. Moore College teaches its students to appreciate the storytelling techniques employed by the biblical authors, and so Peterson will note many of the same things observed by our preachers: the descent into moral chaos as the Genesis story unfolds, the repeated pattern of brothers at war with each other, the struggle that many of the characters endure as they contend with a broken world.

As a preacher I've found myself making mental notes as Peterson picks up on narrative features that have eluded my own reading. Furthermore, his obvious admiration for the Bible makes him a helpful ally when battling against those sceptical of the Bible and its value for modern society.

But it doesn't take long to hear some strange things from Peterson, too. While our own tradition stresses the importance of placing a text in its historic, linguistic and wider biblical context, Peterson easily descends into allegory.

Joseph's multi-coloured coat comes to represent the wisdom of fostering a multi-dimensional approach to life: travel widely, meet lots of people, expose yourself to a variety of situations. While reading the Bible allegorically has a long history within Christianity, Sydney preaching has rightly avoided this style of interpretation as we wish to understand the text on its own terms.

But the far bigger concern is the godlessness of Peterson's reading. He would be the first to admit that he's reading the Bible as a psychologist, not a theologian. He's made an admirable career out of helping people help themselves, and he draws this background into his exposition. For Peterson, the heroes of Genesis are those who accept life's struggle and manage to overcome through a healthy mindset.

Those wishing to read Genesis as a Christian story notice the massive hole this leaves behind. We see that God is the star, that pain is a result of sin's entry into the world, and it's God's grace that engineers the fortunes of his people; a grace finding its ultimate expression at the cross of Jesus yet foreshadowed in the Bible's earliest chapters.

Heartbreakingly – both for him and his listeners – Peterson provides a helpful enough assessment of the human problem but with no sustainable solution. He helps us see the bitter reality of our world, yet he is still blind to the good news of God's gracious actions within it; you might call it "Genesis without the gospel".

I still find him immensely enjoyable to listen to – even beneficial. But what's more joyful and useful is the knowledge of God's graciousness towards a sinful people!

*The Rev Martin Kemp is rector of Waitara.*

# Taking our biblical rest



DR GLENN DAVIES

**A**S FEBRUARY ARRIVES IN OUR CALENDARS, AND THE HOT AND HUMID WEATHER continues for another month, we are all grateful for summer holidays to energise us for this New Year.

January is a well-loved month of holidays for most Australians, with special events spanning the month from New Year's Day to Australia Day. These festivities are only interrupted by the perennial "back to school" advertisements, which I loathed as a child as I thought the reminder was spoiling my holidays!

The word "holiday" is a contraction of the phrase "holy day", a day of solemn rest in the Old Testament and a concept that grew to such magnitude in medieval times that the Reformers substantially eliminated holy days – they had become days of superstitious observance, depriving the economy of sufficient working days.

Some Reformers – like John Knox – even banned Christmas, arguing that Sunday was the only day of rest and worship for the people of God under the new covenant. Even today, in some Presbyterian churches in Scotland and the USA, you will find no church services held on Christmas Day unless it falls on a Sunday!

We should be grateful for living in Australia, a country that not only recognises Christmas Day but also Easter Day and Good Friday. These statutory holidays are clearly Christian in character, though I have yet to meet a non-religious person who does not enjoy the added holidays! We have, of course, other secular holidays, but the three great Christian festival days (along with Anzac Day) have specific industrial provisions that protect workers, so that they, too, might enjoy some added rest, without an obligation to work.

In NSW, recent legislation allowed all shops to open on Boxing Day, where it had previously been generally the domain of city stores only. The legislation, however, allowed employees the right not to work on Boxing Day, though I fear this is often observed in the breach as I talk with shopkeepers. Too often employers pressure their employees to work on Boxing Day, when they could otherwise spend more time with their family.

The rhythm of work and rest is a biblical rhythm, founded in creation and expressed in the fourth commandment. The seven-day pattern of six days of work and one day of rest continues into the new covenant, because the end of the age when we enter God's Sabbath Rest has not yet arrived.

Adam was not created for an endless succession of days in the Garden; rather his days were modelled on the heavenly pattern of God's creative activity: six days of creation and a seventh day of rest. Accordingly, "God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it" (Genesis 2:2-3). After six days of work, Adam was to rest and contemplate the ultimate goal of entering into God's eternal Rest. In other words, eschatology was built into creation from the beginning.

Adam was, in a way, on trial: placed into a world where sleep was a necessity, physical tiredness a reality and temptation a certainty. If Adam had been faithful and obedient, he would have been transformed into a new age, a world without temptation and without tiredness, where he would "run and not be weary, walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31; cf Revelation 21:23-25). God's Sabbath Rest was created for Adam to enter, irrespective of the entrance of sin.

Paul alludes to this reality in 1 Corinthians 15:44, where he argues that Adam's existence in a physical body was indicative of his being prepared for a spiritual body. Of course, Adam's sin ruined this prospect. It was to be a second Adam who "to the rescue came". Jesus' perfect obedience redeemed us from the penalty of sin and opened up the prospect of entering God's eternal Sabbath. Under the new covenant, while we come to Jesus for rest (Matthew 11:28-30), the promise of eternal rest is still future. The reason for a weekly Sabbath, therefore, has not been abolished.

The author of Hebrews makes the same point in chapter four. Furthermore, by reference to Genesis 2 and Psalm 95, he declares that "there remains a sabbath keeping for the people of God". The word "sabbath keeping", often translated as "sabbath rest", is unique and does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament. It appears to be the author's own invention to pick up the verb for keeping Sabbath and make it into a noun. It refers not to the eschatological Sabbath, where the author uses another Greek word, but to the weekly Sabbath for Christians.

Although I realise this is contested by some Christians, the applicability of the Ten Commandments under the new covenant is clearly part of Jesus' teaching (Matthew 17-20), Paul's teaching (1 Corinthians 7:19) and the doctrine of the Anglican Church, as evidenced by Article vii. For this reason, Cranmer inserted the reading of the Ten Commandments into the service of the Lord's Supper, inviting us to respond after each commandment: "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law".

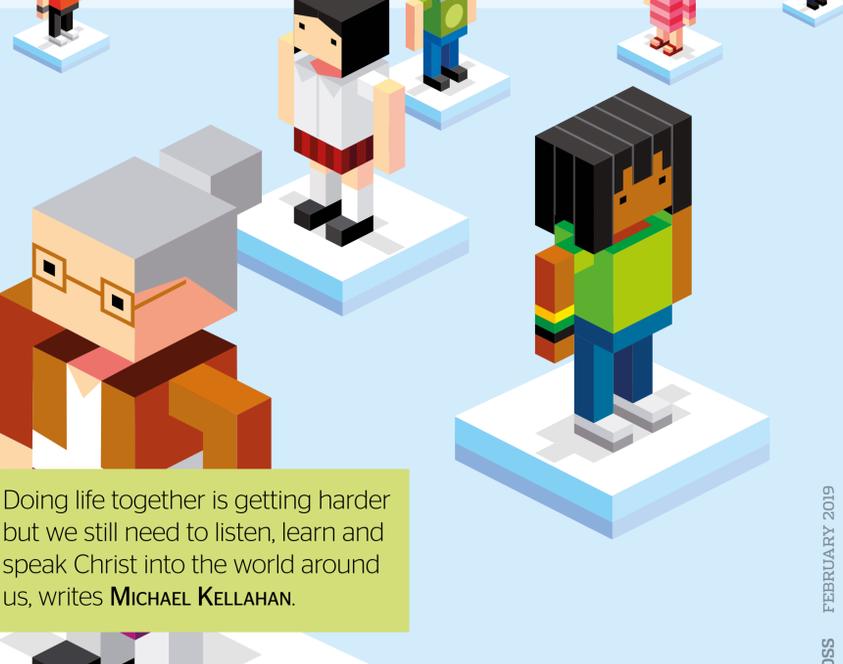
Let us all take advantage of the weekly rest that God has provided, and let us contemplate the work of Christ – who has enabled us to enter God's eternal rest in the new heaven and new earth. SC

## A PRAYER FOR MISSION 2020

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

Amen

# Faith amid the fractures



Doing life together is getting harder but we still need to listen, learn and speak Christ into the world around us, writes **MICHAEL KELLAHAN**.



Southern CROSS  
FEBRUARY 2019

9

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A HOLIDAY FROM POLITICS. A GETAWAY FROM THE ROUGH AND tumble of a tumultuous parliamentary year, which ended with a bitter debate and parliamentary stalemate on schools and religious freedom. A year that many labelled as politically chaotic and dysfunctional.

So, we were taking a quick breather in Melbourne before returning for what would be a busy election year. A chance to see the laneways. Drink coffee. See more laneways. Don't think about politics or religious freedom.

And so, to Christmas Day. We googled to find a nearby church. Christmas morning. A warm welcome. Coffee before church. Brilliant kids' spot. And then the sermon. It was going so well. Then the preacher said these words: "Democracy in Australia is broken". It wasn't his main point – that was, happily, about Jesus coming into the world to save people from sin.

And yet, that throwaway line! I think he said the words because he felt they needed to be said.

It was a way of connecting with the fears and concerns of the congregation. It should have been a shocking statement, even taking preacher's hyperbole into account. But nobody blinked. They were with him. Democracy broken? Of course.

There is a weary resignation that politics is dysfunctional and democracy is broken. We no longer find it easy to do life together, to negotiate differences, to chart a course into the future with confidence and hope. Everywhere we see chaos, confusion and polarisation.

That sense of frustration and despair is not just in Australia but throughout Western liberal democracies. At the time of writing Paris and Brussels were burning. Yellow-vested protestors battled the police.

Europe is seeing the rise of anti-Semitism, nationalist strong-man politics and a very real debate about what it means to be European. The UK is torn over Brexit. The US government is in partial shut-down and there are calls to impeach the President.

Nazis are marching on the beach in St Kilda. Twitter is a vile cesspit of influencers, trolls and echo chambers. Everywhere politics feels more polarised and bitter. And the speed of all this is disorientating. There is a plethora of books, blogs and journals trying to make sense of the same chaos.

## NOT OF THIS WORLD?

Some Christians will not be interested in all this. They will say God's kingdom is not of this world; we will simply live for that kingdom and not be distracted by the politics of this age. Kingdoms will rise, kingdoms will fall – that is not to be our concern. In tumultuous times, these Christians will feel vindicated that their hope is not in earthly rulers.

There are a few problems, though, with this approach.

- From Babel in Genesis to Babylon and the coming kingdom of God in Revelation the Scriptures have much to say about politics. Why would we ignore these riches? Yes, there are pitfalls of reading our own prejudices into the text, and it may be hard to move from the Scriptures to contemporary application. But this is an argument for more careful reading.
- Ignoring politics often produces a version of Christianity that is only private and personal. This is a capitulation to secular rules and an abandonment of public Christianity. Genuine Christianity is public. How else can our neighbour be loved or gospel proclamation take place?
- Christians are not free to ignore politics even if they want to. To paraphrase Lenin, it is not about whether you are interested in the revolution – it is about whether the revolution is interested in you. The debates around religious freedom since the plebiscite demonstrate this.
- We are called to pray for rulers so "we may live peaceful and godly lives" (1 Tim 2). The "godly" life here is the same word used for public religion. It is a prayer for freedom to publicly live out the faith. The rationale for that prayer is so "all people might be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth". Public faith is linked to public proclamation. Yes, the gospel can be declared and the church can grow in a North Korean prison, but we are to pray for freedom to live out the faith. The gospel does not always thrive under persecution. Those who have fled persecution are the strongest champions of maintaining our freedoms here.
- Democracy and Western civilisation have done a remarkably good job of providing freedom to live out the faith. Yet Christianity is far bigger than Western civilisation and the two must not be confused. And the West is not without its faults – rampant materialism and greed come to mind. But we ignore the freedom we have received under democracy at our peril. It is largely from the West that the gospel has gone to "the rest". This alone should give us cause to be thankful and not dismissive of this legacy.

The crisis in democracy has taken place at the same time that Christians in the West have faced increasing pressure from growing secularism. That is no coincidence. Democracy in the West largely grew out of shared and predominantly Christian convictions that there were great truths binding us together. Democracy came with the rule of law, freedoms of belief, speech and association, and the separation of powers – wonderful things that we rarely think about. Achieving democracy and freedom was costly for other Western countries but largely a gift for us.

In the US "these truths" were explicitly listed in its Declaration of Independence. The Australian Constitution is nowhere near as lofty in its language but was drafted from an uncontested assumption that we were to be a godly Commonwealth. Our democracy was built on this firm foundation. These beliefs were provided to individuals at birth. Whatever hopes there were for this future together, they were shaped on an inheritance of being that godly Commonwealth.

There was, of course, some fudging as to what that might mean. The Constitution guaranteed the Commonwealth would not establish a state church – this was sufficient to win the support of Catholics, Presbyterians and Methodists. So, while our history was sectarian, even this difference could be mostly papered over by the politicians. Conscript in the First World War would test this but, mostly, the nation lined up behind king and country, and being British and Christian.

Now historians write books filled with shame for our past. And there is real shame – colonialism and Terra Nullius, the White Australia Policy, the Stolen Generations. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw remarkable change: post-war migration, the sexual revolution, feminism, globalism. World War II saw us look no longer to Britain but America for our security. Now we have the strange unease of being a Western country on the edge of Asia.

But through all these changes nobody would say, "Democracy is broken". Australian democracy was strong enough to adapt to all these changes while delivering remarkable freedom and peace over most of the past century. Fears of democracy failing demand an explanation. What has changed?

## HIGH-SPEED CHANGE

The dismantling of long-held shared beliefs is the biggest change in the post-Christian 21<sup>st</sup> century world. The centuries-long Enlightenment project of European humanism has crowned the individual alone as the king. Independent of any law above him or legacy before him, the citizen is autonomous. Life together will no longer be done according to agreed belief in what is good or sacred. There is no common belief that binds us. Free of the authority of churches and dogma we can decide for ourselves how we are to do life together.

Interestingly, we have not seen a wholesale abandonment of the truths of the past. Even the most progressive politicians claim a central belief in the dignity of human beings as the basis for human rights.

This claim to maintain human rights while simultaneously jettisoning so many Christian beliefs about what it means to be human will likely be the cause of much future conflict. The marriage debate is but one example of that – marriage was reformed in the name of freedom, equality and individual choice. Political conflict over gender identity, euthanasia and abortion are symptomatic of this deeper conflict about what it means to be human and have human rights.

Consider the doctrine of original sin, which is no longer a shared assumption in Western culture. Once abandoned, two consequences follow: the cause of evil needs to be located somewhere else, and it becomes possible to hope for the elimination of evil. As the French philosopher Chantal Delsol warns: "A declared belief that evil can be eradicated from the face of the earth raises the question of how to accomplish this task of secular redemption. The only possible solution consists of isolating evil in certain groups – both visible and recognisable – which can then be eliminated..."

This sober warning sits at odds with the breezy confidence of those who believe in secular progress towards utopia: "Out with the old, in with the new. The future is going to be awesome". Delsol is right – there are unlearned lessons from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and we need to look back to the Holocaust and Communism to see how their dehumanising horrors sat alongside a confident belief in secular salvation.

## FRACTURES AND TRIBES

We live now in a fractured and incoherent world, with different beliefs, customs and cultures and no agreed way to arbitrate between them. What counts now is not seeking an objective common good but delivering a magnitude of consensus. If we can't agree to the rules that will govern life together then the majority will rule. Pragmatism will trump principles.

If we can't debate in ways that appeal to a grander narrative, then we simply shut down debate. Difference and diversity are understood as the enemy of progress: what we need is conformity. Of course, this same charge might have been brought against the medieval church and its dogmas. We don't have freedom from dogma – just different dogmas. The individual can no more express a politically incorrect expression today than they might have a theologically incorrect expression 500 years ago.

These changes have come at a speed and scale nobody anticipated. They leave us feeling disorientated and confused. Daniel Iceberg gives a great picture of this change: "Our fallen, fractured world resembles a whole plane of ice floes, floating close to each other with big cracks between... where the ice floes keep drifting in different directions". Without the word of God making sense of the world, I am stuck on my drifting ice floe without certainty.

I might have opinions, but they are ungrounded outside my subjective point of view.

Without objective truth or a shared set of beliefs we fracture into tribes. Just like the reality game show *Survivor*, safety is found in the dominant tribe. Dissent becomes harder and toleration of different views becomes a vice. Faux diversity, where people look different but think the same, now rules Twitter, campus safe spaces and corporate virtue.

The patron saint of this kind of revolutionary thought is Rousseau: "it is impossible to live at peace with those you regard as damned". This is the spirit of excising the past in the name of the future, of compelled conformity, of the Terror and the guillotine. When a society refuses to find ways to live together with deep differences it always ends with blood in the streets. Democracy, civic freedoms and tolerance of difference sound so mundane until you lose them. The diagnosis that democracy is broken is therefore one that should alarm us.

## WHAT NEXT?

In such confusing times we will be tempted to rush for easy explanations and quick fixes. Here are 10 temptations to avoid:

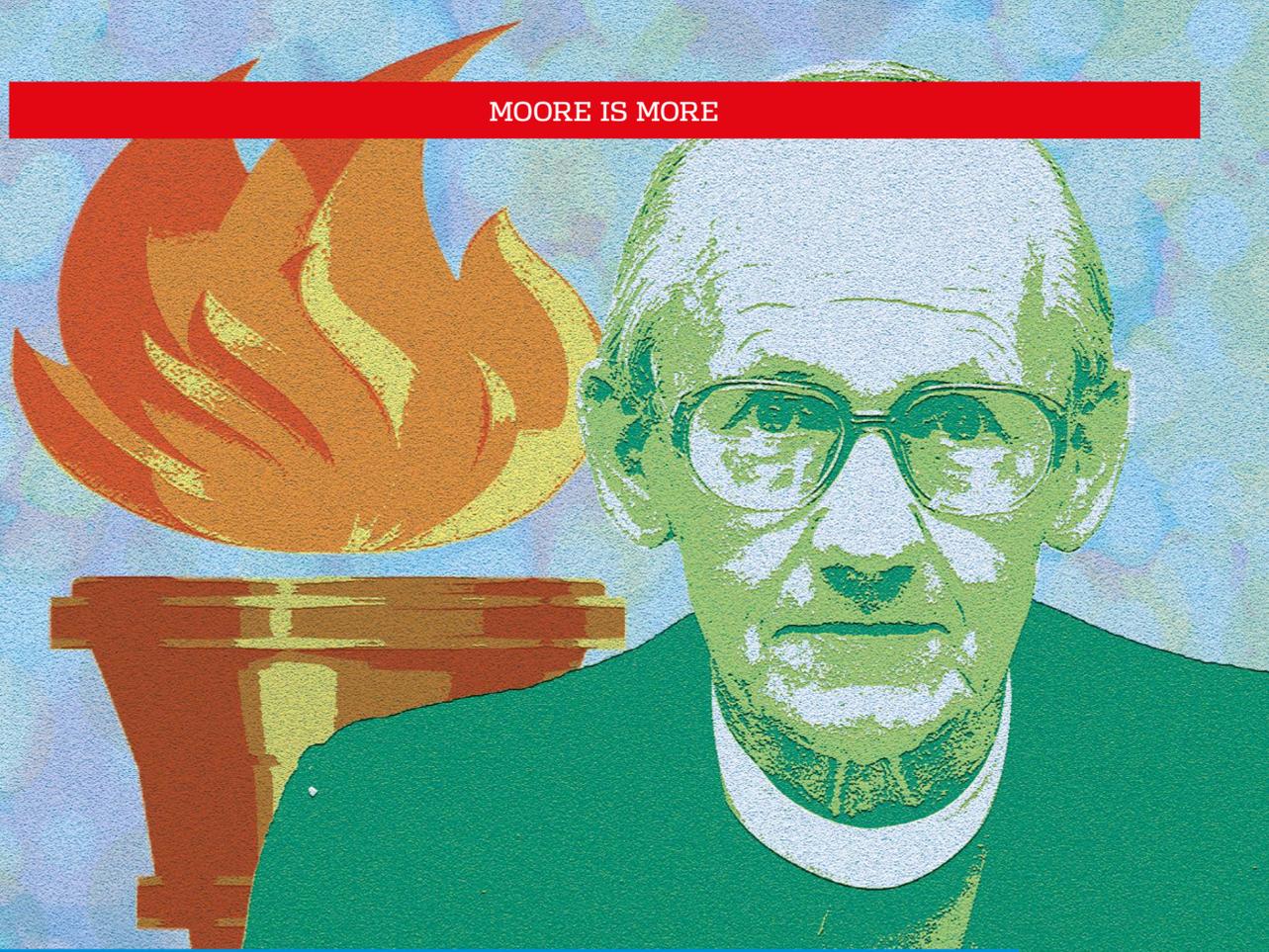
- 1 Fear. In tumultuous times fear is an understandable reaction. Perhaps that is why so often the Scriptures say, "Do not fear". There will be politicians and even Christian groups that spout alarm and harvest fear for their political advantage. As the great American novelist Marilynne Robinson wrote, "Fear is not a Christian habit of mind". Granted, we must not be naive about what lies before us, but we can not be fearful. God is sovereign and Christ is Lord. We know what the future holds so we can have confidence to be faithful in the present.
- 2 Cynicism. This may be an Australian trait but it is not a Christian one. Cynicism is the door to passivity and indifference; it is the opposite of love and the enemy of prayer.
- 3 Hate. Christ tells us to expect enemies and to love them. In times when hatred and tribalism are so rife, the Christian has to overflow with grace upon grace. This will be costly and painful and humiliating. We can only do it if we remember how undeserving we are of Christ's love and how gracious he was to those who crucified him.
- 4 Nostalgia. The good old days were not that good. If we think they were, we don't really believe in the Fall. There are some particular challenges the 21<sup>st</sup> century West faces – here we have picked up on the fractured nature of our politics. But each age has its own manifestation of fallen-ness and faithfulness. Rerunning the Enlightenment, reversing the sexual revolution or putting the internet back in its box are not realistic strategies.
- 5 Withdrawal. Do not withdraw into a "safe Christian space". That space will neither be safe nor Christian. Some are urging a return to a monastic-styled temporary withdrawal from a hostile world. That proposal deserves a more significant response than space here will allow.
- 6 Power politics. Say "No" to a Christian version of tribalism. We cannot just be concerned for advancing the cause of Christians. We are not to be one tribe among others using power to push for a privileged position. Instead, the Christian will be concerned with things that Christ is concerned about – all people, the poor, this fallen world and nothing short of that.
- 7 Partisanship. Yes, we do need Christians serving well in political parties. But we cannot identify the kingdom of God with one side of politics. Tying Christian hope to the mast of only one political party will see it sink with that party.
- 8 Utilitarianism. Principles aren't to be sacrificed (that isn't the same as balancing idealism with realism – working hard to achieve the possible).
- 9 Naive winsomeness. Don't think that being winsome will be sufficient. It is a judgment simply dismiss you as a nice bigot. This is not an argument to be less than gracious, but it will still be insufficient.
- 10 Skimping. Churches need to recalibrate how they relate to the world and rethink how to train the next generation for mission in a differently pressured environment. We need to relearn old lessons about what it means to be faithful in an increasingly pressured environment. That will take time and resources, and we can't skip on either.

## WHAT, THEN, IS THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO A CRISIS IN DEMOCRACY?

- 1 Prayer for rulers. The Prayer Book picks up the repeated scriptural commands to pray for rulers. Pray, pray and pray some more. Prayer like this will kill cynicism and despair.
- 2 Go back to the Scriptures – they are a powerful, sufficient, saving word that speaks wisdom this confused world needs to hear. Preaching for 2019 needs to equip God's people for works of service in 2019. One of these significant challenges is the idea of democracy being broken. More ministers need to equip God's people to think coherently, applying the great truths of the unchanging gospel to a confusing and fast-changing world.
- 3 Faith, hope and love. These great Christian virtues speak to the distinctively Christian way to engage in politics. Exercising these virtues in the political sphere is not some strange addition to the gospel – it is a grounded application of what it means for Christ to be Lord of all. Have faith in God's good purposes and sovereignty over us. Have hope in him bringing all things under the rule of Christ. Love as because he has first loved us – even those who would exclude Christians from the public square (then keep working in a similar way through other virtues).
- 4 Engage. Don't think that politics is the unique calling of the Christian politician or Canberra lobbyist. If the crisis in democracy is the crisis of the hour, then pastors need to help equip God's people to think and act and speak in Christian ways to respond to it. It should be normal and encouraged for there to be at least one person in every church who makes that connection with the local politician.
- 5 The local MP or councillor is your representative, so pray for her. Contact her and ask for a meeting. Don't wait until the night before a conscience vote and tell her this is what she must do on a controversial issue. Get to know what the issues are in your community and be committed to taking part. For some, this will mean membership of a political party or organisation. At a time when people are abandoning faith and trust in politics, this might be a time for some to step up and serve.
- 6 Speak a better story. We need to have a better story than that offered by those wanting to strip the past and create new worlds. We need to know the Christian story better and see how it speaks to the brokenness of this world. We also need to listen empathetically to what those seeking a secular salvation want. People want dignity, justice, identity and equality – these are good desires – and we need a compelling story of where these hopes can be truly satisfied.
- 7 We also need to be able to critique the false gospel of this "sexual" age, and we won't be able to do that unless we first understand it, and its appeal. It is easy to dismiss and parody beliefs we don't hold rather than engage and genuinely listen. But we need to move beyond respectful listening to confident and humble speaking of God's word, which will make sense of our world and offer a better way forward.
- 8 Read some history. Reject the non-reading, goldfish online culture – history is our friend. God's people have responded to crumbling political certainties many times in the past. God's providential hand is at work in even the darkest of days. What is happening around us is far bigger and more interesting than the last five minutes on Twitter.

It seems we will get to live in exciting times. Democracy may be broken and with it the vestiges of nominal Christianity. Perhaps these will be times God uses to bring revival to his church. Perhaps they signal darker days. Time will tell. But in these troubled and confusing times we have a hope far more solid to cling to than Western civilisation and democracy.

The Rev Michael Kellahan is executive director of Freedom for Faith.



# One among our cloud of witnesses

Donald Robinson left a legacy of faithful scholarship and fidelity to the word of God, writes **ED LOANE**.

**HEBREWS 11** IS A WONDERFUL CATALOGUE OF FAITHFUL ACTIONS MADE BY some heroes of the Old Testament. The men and women mentioned demonstrated firm resolve to honour God and live according to his word despite the opposition or the cost. They were commended for their faith and they are intended to be an encouragement for us.

Indeed, at the beginning of Hebrews 12, being “surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses” is put forward as a motivation for Christians to shun sin and wholeheartedly pursue the righteousness of Christ. Throughout history, the faith of other Christians has been an example to the church. As the apostle Paul said, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

We are fortunate in this Diocese that, although a relative newcomer in the history of Christianity, God has granted us so many examples of faithful obedience to his word. One such servant who was called home on September 7, 2018 was the former Archbishop of Sydney, Donald Robinson.

His impact on Anglicanism in Australia and wider evangelicalism was profound. He was a son of the Diocese, growing up in various rectories, which provided numerous opportunities. For example, Robinson remembered – as a three-year-old – meeting T.C. Hammond, who visited his father when touring from Ireland. That meeting was a decade before Hammond was appointed principal of Moore College.

From his earliest days, Robinson was exposed to the shapers of Sydney’s evangelical tradition and, from this background, he grew to be one of the most significant shapers himself. In the 1940s he was president of the Sydney University Evangelical Union and helped establish the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). He taught at Moore College for half a century, including 14 years as vice-principal.

He was an accomplished biblical scholar, an insightful historian, a brilliant liturgiologist and an efficient administrator. All of these traits were brought to his episcopal ministry when he was consecrated a bishop in 1973 and served as Archbishop from 1982 until 1993.

Robinson’s scholarship and godly example inspired generations of leaders. Rory Shiner recently described him as having “a radical, independent and curious mind willing to follow lines of evidence and avenues of inquiry to daring and adventurous locations”.

His convictions about the authority of God’s word and the sufficiency of Christ’s death were deep and, in many ways, those convictions liberated him to pursue his biblical studies to unpopular places. Similarly, his courage to stand up for his beliefs, sometimes in the face of an unrelenting barrage of opposition, was grounded in his submission to God’s word and his assurance of Christ’s grace.

He was a stalwart of fidelity to the Bible’s teaching and an example of publicly championing the cause of Christ. It is important that the contribution and example of Donald Robinson is cherished, as his witness will help us “run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith” (Heb 12:1-2).

The *Australian Church Record* and Moore College have joined together in a venture to bring the scholarship and ministry of Donald Robinson to a wider audience. In 2008 *ACR* and Moore College published two volumes of his *Selected Works* along with a volume of *Appreciation* essays.

The editors of those three volumes, Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson, had always intended that a third and perhaps fourth volume of *Works* would be published to complete the project. They had already selected some material that they believed worthy of publication. Unfortunately, however, the pressing demands of other important work meant that finishing this project was postponed.

The current directors of the *ACR*, most of whom are relatively new to the role, saw the value of the enterprise and, a little over a year ago, they kick-started it in order that the publication of Robinson’s *Selected Works* might be completed. With the goodwill of Peter and Mark, a new editor commenced from where they had left the task.

Ultimately, when everything previously collected was compiled with other items suitable for inclusion, the material was too large for just one volume, so it had to be divided into two. It was also felt that a scriptural and subject index to all five volumes would be a valuable asset for those using the *Works*, so this was added.

Completing the project of compiling and publishing the *Selected Works* of Donald Robinson enables a new generation to engage with and benefit from his scholarship and wisdom, as well as providing a useful compendium of previously scattered material for those who already know and have profited from his teaching.

Volumes Three and Four are divided into three parts, according to topics. Volume Three begins with the section focused on biblical studies. This includes various articles on both the Old and New Testaments, from focused explorations of particular word usage to commentary on entire books. The exegesis demonstrates both a depth of scholarship and a readability that is rarely found.

The second section of Volume Three is dedicated to the topic of liturgical studies. In his time as vice-principal of Moore College as well as Bishop in Parramatta, Robinson was a leader in the Anglican Church of Australia’s efforts to revise its liturgy.

As many churches in the Diocese of Sydney have jettisoned the liturgical richness that has historically been a hallmark of Anglican corporate worship, Robinson’s writing may function as a defence of this liturgical tradition.

Volume Four is a collection loosely called “historical studies”. These range in topics from studies on Reformation and early Australian Christian leaders to a history of the development of the Biblical Theology course at Moore College.

Not only do these volumes cover a wide range of topics, the writings represent a wide variety of provenances. The genres include articles, lectures, occasional sermons and more. The contexts are diverse. The writing spans more than half a century, from when Donald Robinson was an undergraduate to after he had retired as Archbishop. And yet, throughout it all, there is a fidelity to the word of God and a commitment to the building up of God’s people which is a mark of a great Christian leader.

In order to “launch” the two new volumes of Robinson’s *Works* and to appreciate his contribution more generally, a mini-conference is planned for the morning of Saturday, March 16 at Moore College. The speakers include Archbishop Glenn Davies, Dr Rory Shiner and Dr Lionel Windsor. The two new volumes will be available for purchase at the event (\$30 each), as will the earlier publications (\$20 each). They will also be available through Matthias Media.

The motto at Shore, Donald Robinson’s old school, translates as “They hand on the torch of life”. The phrase may remind us of Paul’s pastoral epistles, where he entrusted the gospel to others who would continue to proclaim the salvation found in Christ alone. Paul’s final words included his reflection: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7). These words are an appropriate summation of Robinson’s ministry and we can be confident that he now enjoys “the crown of righteousness” (2 Tim 4:8).

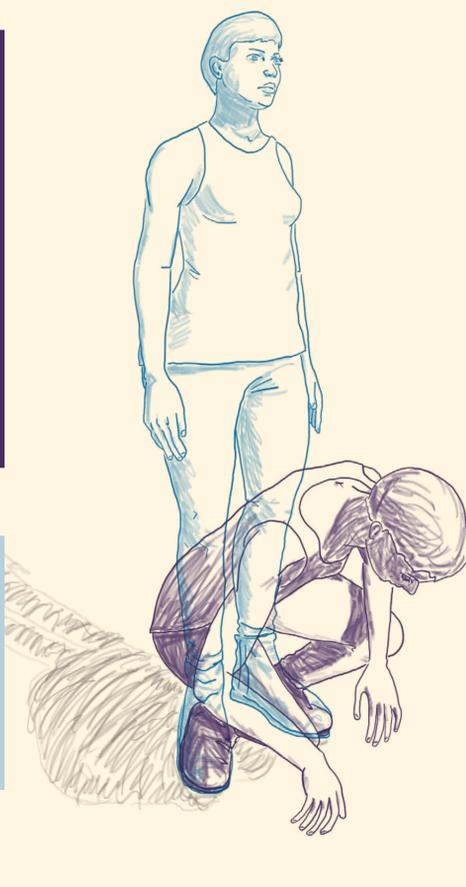
The challenge for us is to take up the torch of life and hand it on as he did.

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# Stand up, and stand out, for God

Submission might be a dirty word in modern Australia, but what does real, biblical submission (with no “out” clause) look like for Christians, asks

**SIMON GILLHAM.**



**G**LYNN HARRISON'S BOOK *A BETTER STORY: GOD, SEX AND HUMAN FLOURISHING* is a great account and analysis of the social shifts in sexual ethics in Britain, which are mirrored so closely here in Australia.

In the introduction he says this about how changes have impacted Christians in the UK:

*"In the space of just a few decades the Christian moral vision, which had buttressed the ancient institutions of marriage and family for centuries, effectively collapsed. And most people today would think good riddance.*

*Living in the shadow of this great revolution, those Christians who still cling to the old Christian morality understandably feel overwhelmed. As if from nowhere, the home team suddenly feels like the away team. Worse, after witnessing the junking of their moral convictions, they find themselves cast as an immoral minority, a kind of enemy within. Most Christians no longer feel comfortable even admitting to their beliefs in the public square, let alone advocating them."*

Exposed to public ridicule. Old privileges and prestige being dismantled. A Christian worldview is not just seen as something quirky or quaint or irrelevant, but dangerous and hateful and wrong. Around the world, and here at home, there are moves to restrict old freedoms – to restrict the public expression of the gospel.

## SUBMISSION TO HUMAN AUTHORITIES

Into this age, into this world, comes the Bible's command to submit to human authorities (1 Peter 2:13-14). Can you think of specific, concrete examples where submission to rulers either *would* or *would not* be appropriate for Christians? What does submission look like today? What are the boundaries or exceptions to submission?

Think about it: examples of exceptions to Christian submission to authority, and examples where it was right for Christians to submit to authority.

Notice anything? I do. As soon as talk turns to submission, we tend to look for loopholes. We go looking for all the reasons why we don't need to obey this clear command. Well, at least two reasons: first, we're sinners, and sinners always think they know better and should have the right to act as they please. We rebel against the rule of God and, if we think we can get away with it, we rebel against any other rule as well!

Second, to make matters worse, we're Australians – and Australians have a particular contempt for authority. Our founding fathers were criminals and convicts, our national heroes are bushrangers like Ned Kelly. One hundred years ago in wartime our soldiers were so successful, in part, because they habitually disobeyed stupid orders. From my time as a policeman I can tell you I very rarely felt the love and willing submission of my countrymen!

It is so ingrained into us that we don't even recognise how radically anti-authoritarian we are until we meet people from other cultures. My Christian friends from Africa and Asia are consistently amazed by how little submission and honour we give to our leaders.

I remember trying to explain to one mate how respect and honour looks different in different cultures. Just because we don't call people by titles, or offer them special privileges, or hold back in publicly questioning, disagreeing with or ridiculing our leaders, doesn't mean that we don't honour them. We just show it in different ways.

"Oh yeah," he replied. "Well, how do you show it? What does submission look like in Australia?"

I remember hearing the sound of crickets chirping.

We will follow the leader – as long as the leader is going in a direction we would choose anyway. But here's the thing about submission: it's not submission until you disagree. If you only ever submit to an authority that is telling you what you already want to do, you haven't submitted. You have retained your autonomy. You are the final authority.

That's very Australian of us. And if we struggle to submit to godly Christian leadership in our churches, how will we go with submitting to government or other human authorities?

Do you submit willingly when you pay your taxes? As you're driving your car, does it matter if there is a policeman around the corner, or are you always joyfully submitting? Do you submit to parking laws? I can actually tell you a sure-fire way to get out of any parking ticket for under \$5 – do you want to hear it? Does the sign saying "12 items or less" at the supermarket checkout apply to you?

Do you have an orientation to submit? Is submission a character trait that you are exercising throughout your life? It is about an orientation, so here's the rub. If we have no practice and no predisposition to submit to authority, how will we go with submitting to Jesus as our Lord – to God as our Father and judge?

## SUBMIT TO GOD

The idea of submitting to God and submitting to human authorities is absolutely connected. We are to submit to human authorities "for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13), because it is "God's will" (v15) that we do so, because, in fact, we are "God's slaves" (v16).

So, this is where the limits around submitting to human authorities are found: will this submission be for the Lord's sake; will it line up with God's will? And almost always it will – at least for us here, at least for now.

But did you catch that last description of us in verse 16? Slaves of God. Not a phrase we use that much. Probably not featuring in our evangelistic tracts very highly, I suspect. It's like the fine print we're a bit embarrassed about.

We like to think that freedom means the capacity to do whatever we want, but "whatever I want" is a form of slavery – to self, to sin, to my desires, which wage war against my good. And, in fact, perfect freedom is found in taking the strong decision to choose to submit to God as my master, my Lord, my ruler.

What does that look like? How do we live as slaves of God, in the midst of a world in which his people are slandered and maligned and ridiculed?:

"Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor" (1 Peter 2:17).

## HONOUR, LOVE AND FEAR

Showing proper respect or honour to everyone is un-Australian, because we choose to honour those who have earned our respect – the respectable ones, the honourable ones. But honouring *everyone* shows that we march to the beat of a different drum, where we recognise that the drummer has created every person in his image – even those who make our lives miserable.

To honour the king or emperor or Prime Minister or Premier or local MP or policeman or ATO official is very un-Australian, too. But, of course, the Bible tells us not just to honour them but to pray for them as well. I wonder how you're going with that right now!

The other two parts of the picture are the love for Christian brothers and sisters – which anyone who actually knows God will exercise – and the idea of fearing God.

It's fine print that we don't like talking about, but it's so important. Notice that God is the only one that Peter says we are to fear? Not the authorities who have the power to punish and kill. Not the slave masters who beat up and are cruel. We are to submit to them, even honour them, but *not* fear them. Fear is reserved for God and God alone.

This fear is not a cowering, immobilising terror. This fear is informed. It is those who praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us new birth into a living hope, that fear him. It is those who are shielded by his power, that fear him. It is those who have tasted that the Lord is good, that fear him.

It is those who are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that fear him. It is those who know God's mercy, that fear him. And those who fear God don't have to be afraid of anyone.

Last year I met up with some brothers and sisters involved in ministry training in the Middle East. They are training evangelists to work in places like, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Egypt. That is, they are training to be evangelists in countries where evangelising Muslims is illegal.

So many things struck me about their stories. They were filled with a joyful fear of God and so were unafraid – even of those who threatened them with death. They worked hard to obey their government in every way they felt they could, but their fear of God helped them to see the limits of this submission.

## SLAVES AND MASTERS

In 1 Peter 2:18, it is also the fear of God that Peter says controls the submission of slaves to their masters. There is so much we could say about this section on slaves, but I just want to make a couple of quick observations.

Slavery – the ownership and control of one person by another – is evil. Slavery is a present-day reality for some of the most vulnerable people in the world, and it is evil. Your work, the job you have, is *not* the same thing as slavery. You have choices. We live in a country with labour laws to protect workers, and using the protection of labour laws is one way of submitting to human authorities.

The Bible does not say to transform the unjust social structure of slavery. It also doesn't say *not* to work for such transformation, and I think the abolition of the slave trade stands as one of the great accomplishments of the evangelical awakening. Alongside it were all kinds of other dramatic and good social reforms, and the founders of the Church Missionary Society were amongst it all. But although many of the same people were involved, the mission society was not the group that did the political lobbying. We need to notice here, just as the founders of CMS did, the way that the New Testament approaches this.

Slaves, who had no power to change the structures, were given instructions about how to live in their horrible circumstances in a commendable way before God. Their status and identity in Christ, as part of the royal priesthood, the holy nation – was not endangered by their being slaves. So, they were encouraged to faith in Jesus, and to new life in him.

It is not the transformation of social structures, but of individuals and of the people of God as a whole, that is the priority. The transformation of me and of us into the likeness of Jesus. That is the priority.

We in Australia have the awesome privilege to be involved in the democratic processes of politics and decision making. More than ever before, I think, we need to take our place in civil service, public life and politics.

Now is a time for stepping up, not shrinking back. To seek to advocate and practice justice, especially for the vulnerable. This is part of what it will mean for others to see our good deeds.

But we must be very cautious about pulling the camel of transforming social structures into the tent of Christian mission. The bulk of the world's Christians and an increasing percentage of the world's Christian missionaries are from the countries that don't enjoy the economic and social privileges we enjoy, and we need to learn from them, again, that gospel ministry is not dependent on political influence and freedom and power.

As the debates unfold this year, we should absolutely be praying for the preservation of religious freedom in Australia. But the Lord Jesus will continue to build his church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it, whatever laws the Australian Government enacts. We should argue for religious freedom because it's good for the country, not because the gospel depends on it.

If we are not doing good – if we are arrogant or ignorant, objectionable or careless, lazy or selfish, and we suffer for that (v20), that's fair enough. Suffering for doing good, and enduring *unjust* suffering, is what Peter's on about here.

## SUFFERING AND JESUS

This is not just something for Jesus – it is core to Christian identity. Enduring unjust suffering is of the very character of the Lord Jesus who we follow.

This is the Lord Jesus as the suffering servant (Isaiah 53) that Peter is writing about. Jesus' suffering and death were both unique, and at the same time a pattern of the new normal.

It's unique because, as the sinless one, he bore our sins in his body on the tree. He takes our sin, dies a sacrificial death in our place, heals our wounds and we can do none of that. But the pattern of his suffering, we are told, is an example that we should follow in his footsteps (2:21).

What are these steps? He committed no sin (v22) – well, straight up we know we can't pull that off! But there are no free passes here. How about verse 11 – abstaining from sinful desires which war against your soul – or verse 24: "having died to sins".

Does your sin have the stench of death in your nostrils? Have you ever prayed for that? I have. I've prayed, "God, make pornography disgusting to me. Make me feel sick when I glimpse it". You might ask God to make your lust for new clothes, or new gadgets, or more money, a stench in your nostrils.

And look back at what the Bible says to us in 1 Peter 2:1: to "rid yourself of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind". If we took away malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander, what would our social media feeds look like? What would our dinner discussions at work sound like?

Can we work out ways of engaging in discussion with those who abuse or threaten us that follow the steps of the Lord Jesus?

How could you do this? How can anyone sign up for this? We can only do it if we are "conscious of God" (v19) or, more pointedly, if we "entrust everything to him who judges justly" (v23).

If we fear God and not people; if we desire our eternal inheritance more than fleeting comfort or pleasure; if we have tasted that the Lord is good;

If we treasure our identity in Christ – as God's royal priesthood, his holy nation – more than the approval of the cultured despisers; if we have confidence that God will put all things right in the end;

If we have died to sins and are ready to live for righteousness, if we have new birth into a living hope; if we have sincere and deep love for one another, we will be ready, like Jesus, to suffer on the way to glory.

If you are able to take this confidence into the New Year, and – despite all that others may do or say about you – you are ready to love them, honour them, and not retaliate but do right... well, you are going to stand out like a sore thumb! Like a star in a dark universe. Like a stranger, a foreigner, an exile.

We fear God, and for that reason I don't need to be afraid of anyone else, or any social change, or any difficulty that is coming. Our living hope is sure and certain. Our eternal inheritance cannot be taken away and will not perish or fade or spoil.

**5**

*The Rev Simon Gillham is head of the Department of Mission at Moore College. This an edited version of a talk he gave at the CMS NSW/ACT Summer School last month.*

### HANDY HINT

Have your Bible open to 1 Peter 2



## New St James' rises

Ready for visitors: chapel members (from left) Margaret McKay, Gladys Giltrap and Joan Elliott on "Come-and-see day".

TO THE GREAT JOY OF RESIDENTS, THE NEW ST JAMES' CHAPEL IN ANGLICARE'S MOWLL VILLAGE in Castle Hill has opened, after churchgoers spent 18 months having services in the village's community hall.

Named after the English church in Dover where former Archbishop of Sydney, Howard Mowll, had his first curacy, the "tired" original chapel and attached hall were knocked down and rebuilt to deal with a range of problems – in particular, aural issues and the need to separate the church and hall. Underground excavation has also provided the new chapel with 20 more parking spaces.

"We're still getting used to the facilities but it's a beautiful space," says the Rev Geoff Deutscher, an assistant minister at St Paul's, Castle Hill who is minister of St James'.

"We haven't officially opened the building yet – that's coming on February 27 with a visit from the Archbishop – but we prepared a 'Come-and-see day' on December 1, the day before our first service, to allow the residents on the Castle Hill site to look inside the chapel for the first time. It's a significant building and people have watched the old one be demolished and the new one rise out of the ground."

On "Come-and-see day" church members hosted a sausage sizzle, had live music and offered tea, coffee and cakes in the hall. More than 500 people were also taken on a tour through the building by church members – who all wore a church sash.

"I wanted them to wear a T-shirt saying, 'I go to St James', but they're not really T-shirt wearing people!" Mr Deutscher says. "They decided they would wear these blue sashes instead and it looked really nice."

Guides told visitors the history of the church – including how its interior cross is made from one piece of timber from St James' Chapel in Dover and one from a building in Dover Castle (both of which were bombed in World War II), and that the chapel bell hung for more than 50 years on a lighthouse at the end of Dover's Admiralty Pier.

"They also talked to the groups about why they come to St James' and what they love about it," Mr Deutscher says.

"We were praying for three groups on this day: for people who used to go to church and had stopped, that this might be a trigger for them to return, and for people who go to church outside the village to decide, 'It's time I joined the St James' community'. And we also prayed for people who were far from God... that this might be a motivation for them to come along.

"Our prayers were certainly answered... a variety of people have decided to join us, and we've grown by 10 per cent!"

He says many of those who come to services "have journeyed with Jesus for 60 to 70 years", and his reasoning is that they should be able to have church as they like it. "They enjoy good old hymns and having a good liturgical service, so that's what we primarily do – and they love it.

"In parishes it's often the older people who have to make sacrifices in a change of service time – or give, in some way, for the sake of the young people or the families. But they're the ones who've been there year after year, rector after rector... and to me it is a special thing that they get to really enjoy their church experience, grow in their faith and finish their journey well.

"People say to me, 'Geoff, I'm more in love with Jesus now than I've ever been before' and I think, 'Isn't that fantastic?'"



# Tough love

RUSS MATTHEWS

**Ben is Back**  
Rated M

**S**OMETIMES ONE LOOK IS ALL THAT IS NEEDED TO SET THE STAGE FOR A FILM. When Ben Burns (Lucas Hedges) surprises his family by showing up for the Christmas holidays, it is his mother's eyes that convey everything needed to set the tone for the ensuing story. Julia Roberts' expression shows all the emotion in Holly Burns – a parent who has been through extreme turmoil with her child, but who still holds out hope for his redemption.

This opening scene touches on the bitter experiences of so many families around the world whose lives have been deeply shaken by illicit drugs.

Peter Hedges' film, *Ben is Back*, depicts well the harsh reality of substance abuse and its ripple effects.

Ben is supposed to be in rehab for drug addiction, but his sponsor encouraged him to come home for the holidays. The young addict manages to win back the hearts of his mother and two younger siblings, but is his behaviour just a veneer?

The destruction Ben left behind soon returns to haunt him. Each small step in the family's day unearths ghosts from his life of addiction – just by travelling to the local shops, going to church for an evening service or through attendance at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.

Many people in the community, and some in the family, find it hard to believe that Ben has changed. The tension of the day builds until an unexpected event draws Ben and Holly into a drive through the suburbs, where the loving and protective mother learns more of her son's dark past. Even though he does not want her help, love for his family leads him to try to make amends for the years of pain he has inflicted.

The screenplay contains similar themes to *A Beautiful Boy*, which addresses the impact of drugs on the whole family and a parent's deep desire for restoration for their child.

Julia Roberts delivers a bittersweet portrayal as Holly, a mother who must work through all the extremes of parental emotion. As each layer of the family's story unfolds and Ben's murky past is made more evident, she reaches deep to deliver on this visceral and emotive role – balancing toughness to her wayward boy with a determination to pull him out of this self-destructive abyss.

While flawed herself, Holly still loves her son unconditionally, showing the hope parents hold onto as they fight for the safety and wellbeing of their children. And it's not hard to see, in this depiction of a parent's long-suffering love, the unfailing love shown by God throughout the Bible, and the forgiveness offered when we don't deserve it.

Lucas Hedges manages to hold his own with the Academy Award-winning actress by delivering an unnerving, convincing combination of addict and loving son. He manages to embody the physicality of the script – written by his writer-director father – with the simplest of looks and twitches that will be familiar to anyone who has been through such things with the people in their lives. This is best portrayed in the scene at a support group where Ben shows the unhealthy mixture of confession, manipulation and euphoria that can come during the public acknowledgement of an addict's ailment.

*Ben is Back* is not for those looking for a feel-good film. What it does offer audiences is outstanding performances from the central characters and, through them, a brief and gripping glimpse into the devastating effects of substance abuse. It's a story that should awaken those who think this could not happen in their family's world, and should motivate people to do all they can to discourage anyone they love from considering drugs.

And be aware that, thanks to the explicit portrayal of this darker side of society, the writers include coarse language, depictions of drug use and attempted suicide.

*Ben is Back* is more of a life lesson than an example of hope. The narrative shows the importance of parents in the lives of their children – that though we cannot always protect them from the evils in this dark world, mothers and fathers can be a constant example of love throughout the ups and downs of life.

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# Our picture of heaven is woefully inadequate

HANNAH THIEM

**The Good Place**  
Netflix

**I**N A RECENT EPISODE OF *THE GOOD PLACE* THE CHARACTERS FINALLY [SPOILER ALERT] make it to the REAL Good Place – well, at least the front door.

*The Good Place* is an exploration of morality, heaven, hell and the afterlife. Currently finishing up its third season, *The Good Place* has managed some superb twists. It has manipulated an audience into feeling sympathy for a demon, thinking seriously about moral philosophy and has given us a new and helpful framework to talk about what happens after we die.

Through three seasons we have watched the show meander through the "Bad Place", the "Neutral Place", the "Real Bad Place" and finally the "Good Place".

It's something of a relief. However, when our heroes finally do make it to the "real" Good Place, it is disappointing. The creators of *The Good Place* rely on some Ned Flanders-esque tropes to depict their moral equivalent of heaven. Sure, it's funny, but as we dive down into the stereotypes they are based on, we start to see some dangerous lies Western society believes about heaven.

So here are three lies *The Good Place* depicts about heaven and three truths that we need to focus on.

**Lie One: Heaven is all about me**

"Are you sure we are in the actual Good Place – it is rather carpeted", says Tahani (Jameela Jamil), an aristocrat obsessed with appearances. She is asking because her assumption is that a good place could not have carpet that she doesn't appreciate.

It's an assumption that is reaffirmed almost immediately. They are convinced they are in the real Good Place when they breathe in and can smell "whatever makes you happiest". Whether it is warm pretzels, absolute moral truth, or the curtain between first class and economy. They are content because they have found themselves in an individualistic heaven that answers their every desire.

**Truth One: Heaven is about God**

*"After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb... And they all cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God. Revelation 7:9-10*

As soon as we start to think that heaven is about us, we miss the point. God is not providing us with an individualised fairground to play in – he is providing us with true happiness: relationship with him.

**Lie Two: The agents of goodness are naive and incompetent in the face of injustice**

"Well, geez Louise, I hope you're okay! My name's Gwendolyn, and welcome to the Good Place!" says the first Good Place inhabitant we meet.

She accepts a series of far-fetched lies, is exuberantly cheerful and can't help but wave at the humans. She may as well be saying "Hi-diddly-ho!", she is that ridiculous.

The other Good Place agents we meet are a committee obsessed with following the rules. They discover injustice, and their response is to spend 400 years making a committee and another 1000 years checking there is no conflict of interest.

The agents of the Good Place have no way to stand in the face of injustice, other than shaking a fist, which may or may not turn into a cheerful wave.

**Truth Two: God has dealt, powerfully, with injustice**

*He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed until he has established justice in the earth. Isaiah 42:3b-4*

God isn't left wringing his hands. By sending Jesus to deal finally and perfectly with injustice, God ensures that justice is enacted.

**Lie Three: If you try hard enough, you will get to heaven**

This lie is threaded throughout *The Good Place*. It is what spurs the humans on as they confront demons and other obstacles.

It's the most dangerous lie of all, because it's the one we are often all too close to believing – that if we just try hard enough, we will eventually find a judge, or accountant, or committee, that will accept us as good people.

We haven't made it to the end of the show, but we can be pretty confident that it won't end up with the characters in the Bad Place, as they all deserve.

**Truth Three: It is only through Jesus that we can be accepted.**

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no man can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9*

Christians are saved some of the anxiety of the characters on the show in that we aren't wondering about our eternal fate. Thanks to Jesus' death, we can be confident that we will be accepted by God.

*The Good Place* is a fantastic television series. It gets people talking about important issues and also provides a medium to think about morality.

But it is important as we watch that we don't get sucked into the distorted view of heaven and humanity that it depicts. Because when you start to distort God's character, heaven, or the message of salvation through Jesus, you paint yourself a picture of a good place that isn't that satisfying after all.



# Life's not just about stuff – or the lack of it

TARA SING

**Tidying Up with Marie Kondo**  
Netflix

**A**T MY VERY BEST, THE WASHING IS FOLDED AND PUT AWAY ON THE SAME DAY I BRING IT in off the line. At my worst, I give up all hope and embrace the "floor-drobe" as a perfectly reasonable garment storage solution.

I am someone who struggles with stuff: managing it, cleaning it and keeping it orderly. So when someone like Marie Kondo comes along, promising a new method of cleaning that eliminates mess and clutter entirely, I'm all ears.

In case you've missed it, Marie Kondo is a tiny Japanese woman excited by mess, creating enthusiasm in the hearts of people around the world with her unique approach to tidiness. Her 2011 book *The Life-changing Magic of Tidying Up* has not only birthed a worldwide cleaning frenzy, but also a Netflix series where Kondo helps several families tidy up their homes and lives.

Her KonMari system encourages tackling clutter by category – rather than going room to room – handling every object and asking honestly, "Does this spark joy?"

Kondo's question of joy is so important because it gets to the heart of the issue of our relationship with our possessions. It points out something we all knew deep down: the things we own are not making us happy. This is a hard truth because, as a society, we have relied on stuff to fulfill us. Materialism and consumerism isn't satisfying anyone.

Marketers have worked tremendously hard to convince us to turn to gadgets, garments and gimmicks to solve our problems, but here comes Marie Kondo asking the obvious question – do these things really make you happy? All of a sudden, people are realising the answer is "No".

This materialism has left us dissatisfied, just as God warned it would (one example: "The sleep of a labourer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep" Ecclesiastes 5:12). We know that materialism, or the pursuit of stuff, can't fill the longing for more that we all have. All that we have on Earth is temporary and subject to rust and decay, unlike the treasures stored up in heaven for us in Christ.

Marie Kondo's message fits into the wider minimalist movement, where documentaries, blogs, podcasts and YouTube channels tell of lives that are enriched by rejecting consumerism, by clearing physical possessions and choosing experiences over things.

The movement preaches the gospel of "less is more" as an antidote to the failure of materialism. And, like the best false ideologies, it gets some things right. Materialism has not filled the void it promised it would, but Marie Kondo and a drawer of neatly folded shirts can't fill that void either.

Stuff – whether it's having more or living with less – cannot bring us lasting joy. Jesus does that.



# GETTING PEOPLE TO YOUR CHURCH AGM

## Is it worth the effort?

HANNAH THIEM

**I**T'S THAT TIME OF YEAR. THERE ARE PARISH COUNCIL NOMINEES TO BE ELECTED AND MINUTES to approve. There are people to nominate and church finances to audit.

Annual general meetings, when done well, can be a chance for church members to come together, remind themselves of their church's vision and values, and ensure they are on the same page for the coming year.

It is key to the growth of a healthy church to have people from all congregations and age groups engage with the vision and direction the church is heading.

BUT AGMs have a notorious reputation for being boring, slow and poorly attended – particularly by young people.

Here are a few thoughts on why it is essential to engage with all members of your church, and some hints for doing it.

**MAKE SURE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND HOW IMPORTANT THE AGM IS**

When Toongabbie held its Annual General Meeting last year, we thrilled to have 18 people from their evening service attend. Senior pastor, the Rev Dr Raj Gupta, recommends speaking to congregations in the weeks before the AGM about the importance of meeting together and thinking about the future.

"It's important to note that the younger congregations are the future of the church," he says. Toongabbie is also considering a major building project, so this helped add a sense of urgency to attending.

One of the parish's MTS trainees, Rachel Stabback, says, "Eighteen people doesn't seem like very many, but it's huge. It was nice to have everyone all together."

**ASK PEOPLE PERSONALLY**

Yes, it's easier to make general announcements at all your parish services in the week or two before your AGM, but both Gupta and Stabback are quick to say that personal invitations are much more effective than upfront announcements.

Talking to people personally also provides opportunities to talk about important issues in the parish before the AGM, including any questions that might be worth asking, and discussing potential nominations for parish council and other positions. People are much more likely to respond positively to offers to serve if they've had time to think about it!

**CREATE A CHANCE TO PRAISE GOD**

AGMs don't have to be solely planning and administration. By structuring the event around praising God for what has happened, and praying for the future of the parish and wider church, you can remind congregations of the spiritual implications of the meeting they are attending.

In addition to praising and worshipping him, an AGM can also remind us that our goals will only be realised by God's mercy.

**MAKE IT FUN**

Dapto Anglican Church engaged people with last year's process by creating a competition to see who could second the most motions.

They also offered pancakes. Other churches have their AGM after a morning service and host a lunch afterwards, which gets people chatting and discussing the decisions they've made together.

Toongabbie organised a pool party after its AGM, before a church service, which meant the AGM facilitated people hanging out before church. Although it rained, Stabback says it was a great time to reflect on what had happened at the meeting. "Sitting and chatting, it was a great time to see that the people in our congregation were engaging."

One last, essential thought: if congregation members have an issue about something that is or isn't happening in the parish, the AGM is the place to talk about it. So, if none of the above encourages people in your church to attend you could always remind them that, as the saying goes, decisions are made by the people who show up!

