

JULY
2019

Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS



Smart faith

TECHNOLOGY AND OUR CHURCHES



PLUS



Teens and the porn problem

Pray with Peter the barber

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Technology is great – most of the time. We look at how to use it to enhance church and faith life.

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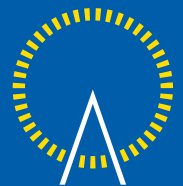


“...if God has opened the door, hopefully I can go with my husband to India for mission.”

Tin Thing Yow
Sydney News

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God's growth at Clovelly

Thriving ministry: Mark Taylor has fun with one of the kids' groups at St Luke's, Clovelly.

AS ST LUKE'S, CLOVELLY PREPARES TO CELEBRATE ITS 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY SINCE THE CHURCH'S "re-pot", rector the Rev Dave Rogers reflects on the significant growth the parish has experienced in its youth and children's ministry.

"There were four children in kids' church on our launch Sunday," he recalls. "We [also] had a small youth group... It was very small, but it was a start."

St Luke's now has a thriving network of Friday kids' clubs: Splash (K-2); Fresh (3-5) and Clovelly Youth (6-11) in addition to Sunday school, with a combined regular attendance of kids and youth of about 70 a week.

The Rev Mark Taylor, the church's kids and youth director, notes that, initially, despite a healthy attendance at St Luke's summer and winter programs, "we weren't really getting much follow-up. People would come to those programs [but] they wouldn't come to church".

After much prayer, God provided St Luke's with enough leaders to invest significant resources and time into developing strategic gospel ministry for kids and youth. So, where kids in the past might have drifted away, they now all have a tailored Friday group they eagerly look forward to.

"I think that a number of them have either become Christians or been able to take their faith on for themselves," Mr Taylor says.

He adds that St Luke's has a heart for the whole community and "sees the value of a church family that's intergenerational" – adding that if you ask yourself what the body of Christ look like, "it's people of all ages and different nationalities".

Yet the parish has focused particularly on kids and youth because it knows that a high proportion of people come to faith before the age of 20.

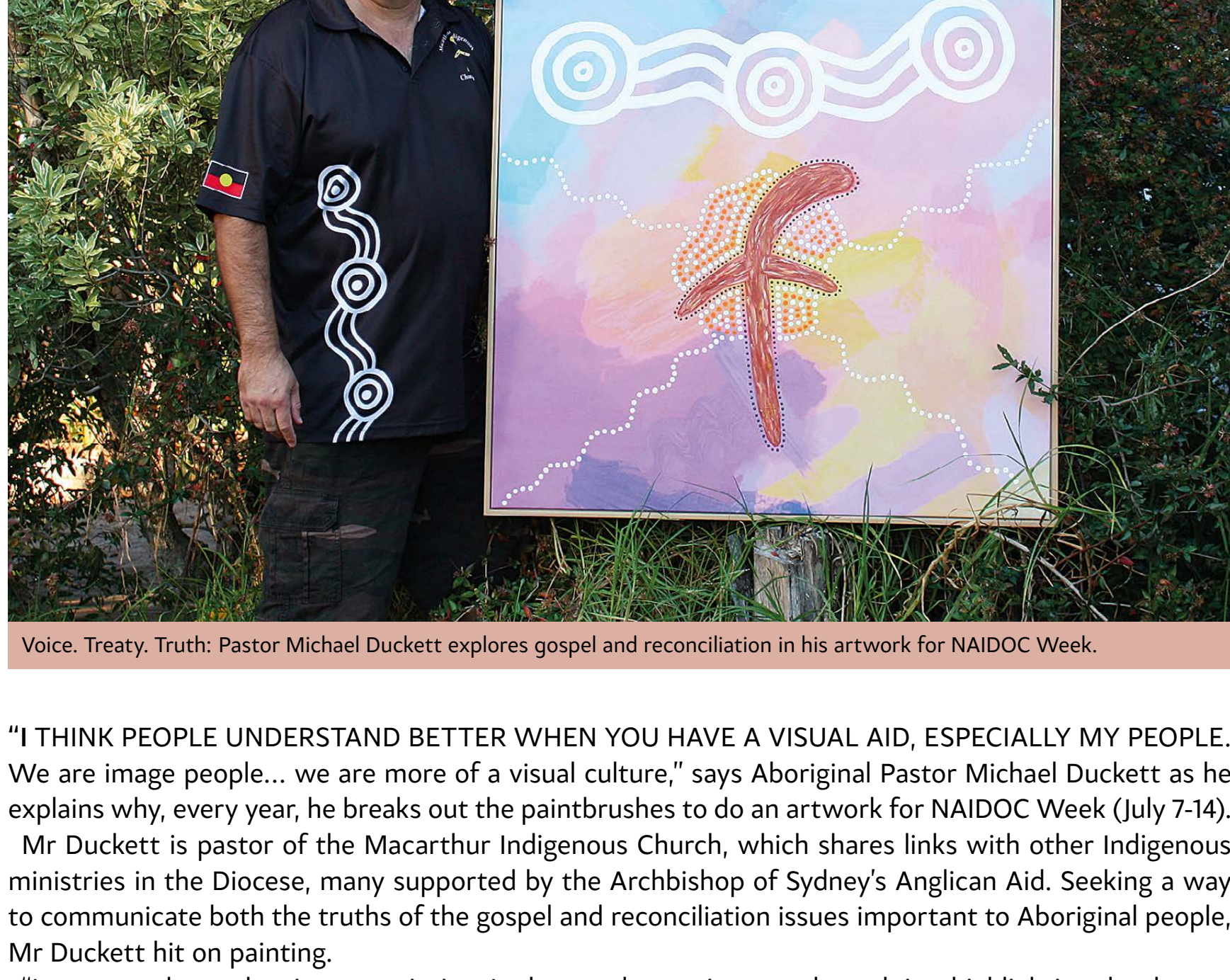
He believes the most significant contributor to the growth at St Luke's is the involvement of older Christians – whether parents or others – in the groups on Friday. University students and Year 12s are leading and discipling younger teens, while parents lead and invite their kids, and friends' kids, to take part.

"I think that's probably one of the biggest reasons why the groups have grown: because Christian parents have a heart for that ministry and want their friends and... families to come to know Jesus," Mr Taylor says. "[For children and youth] to have people who are invested in them – who are not just their peers or one step ahead of them – makes a massive difference to them, their experience and... growth in their Christian life."

Although St Luke's has steadily been growing since the re-pot, there are still many in the community who do not attend church and Mr Taylor is keen to reach out to them. "We're just desperate to try and help them to find Jesus and for that to change their lives," he says.

Mr Rogers says the church is praying that people's hearts in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs would soften towards the gospel, and that staff and congregation members would have "that magic mix of boldness, fearlessness and... wisdom" as they reach out.

Michael's mob gets the message



Voice. Treaty. Truth: Pastor Michael Duckett explores gospel and reconciliation in his artwork for NAIDOC Week.

"I THINK PEOPLE UNDERSTAND BETTER WHEN YOU HAVE A VISUAL AID, ESPECIALLY MY PEOPLE. We are image people... we are more of a visual culture," says Aboriginal Pastor Michael Duckett as he explains why, every year, he breaks out the paintbrushes to do an artwork for NAIDOC Week (July 7-14).

Mr Duckett is pastor of the Macarthur Indigenous Church, which shares links with other Indigenous ministries in the Diocese, many supported by the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid. Seeking a way to communicate both the truths of the gospel and reconciliation issues important to Aboriginal people, Mr Duckett hit on painting.

"I get up and preach using my painting. I take people on a journey through it – highlighting the themes of NAIDOC and the need to recognise them. Then I give it from a godly perspective, how we should also complement and recognise what God is saying."

So, as Mr Duckett preaches to the NAIDOC service on the lawn outside St Peter's, Campbelltown, the painting will convey the themes of NAIDOC Week this year: Voice, Treaty, Truth.

National NAIDOC co-chair Pat Thompson says that for, generations, Indigenous Australians have sought recognition of their unique place in Australian history and society.

"Voice. Treaty. Truth. were three key elements to the reforms set out in the Uluru Statement from the Heart," she says. "These reforms represent the unified position of First Nations Australians."

Mr Duckett says the themes work well in a Christian framework. "I think that what I have painted helps show the message I like to convey, that all languages come from God and we have to listen to all voices, especially our people. Then I have treaty – talked through the cross, which is an extra point of treaty through reconciliation. Then truth – I have the message of our history and then the message of the cross, which is truth. It is the beginning of truth."

Among the crowd at the service each year are members of the church, local community members, and brothers and sisters from "the mob" at St Peter's who are, as Michael Duckett says, "partners in the gospel: that's how I view it".

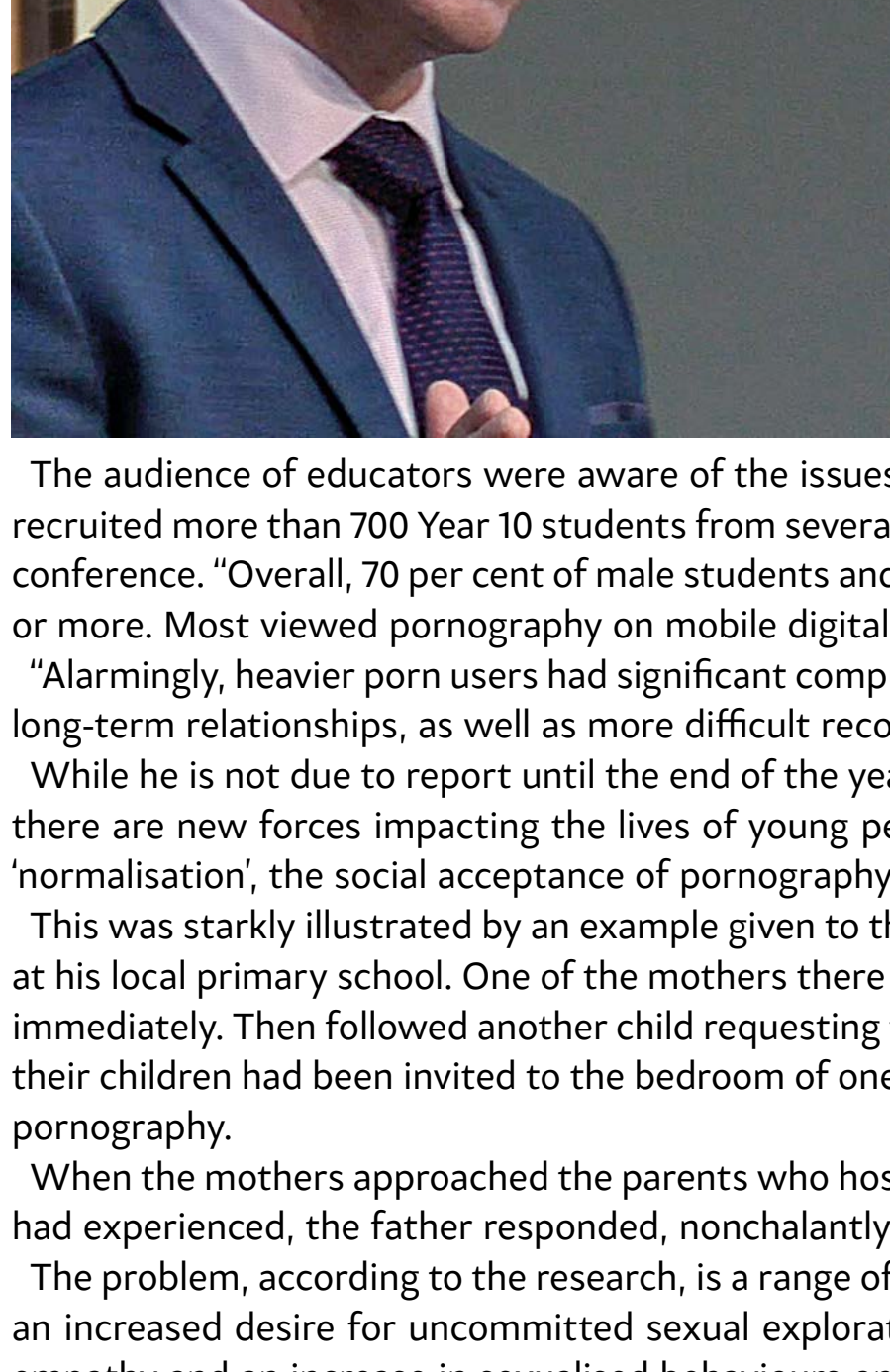
The partnership with Anglican Aid is important to the Macarthur church, as it is to other Indigenous ministries – including the Living Water Community Fellowship at Redfern, The Scarred Tree at St John's, Glebe, Rough Edges at St John's, Darlinghurst, One4Life at South Sydney Anglican Churches in Redfern and the Indigenous outreach in the Armidale Diocese.

Anglican Aid helps support community and outreach programs at these churches because, as Mr Duckett points out, "often our services are in the community. A lot of our community might not come to church but we go to them".

In Macarthur's case this includes chaplaincy services to the Dharawal men's group, crisis support such as food hampers, fuel vouchers, grief counselling, family dispute resolution, support for people arrested by police, assistance with referrals, youth group meetings and meals, Indigenous community gatherings, and reconciliation and cultural education activities within the local community.

It is an exhaustive (and exhausting) list of services around which Mr Duckett has to fit his painting. But he is convinced it helps. "I only just finished my NAIDOC painting last month. I know our people appreciate it but the other thing I find is that a lot of non-Aboriginal people get the different depths of it – depending on what they want to see. I can only guide people. As for what they interpret, well, I let God do that."

Porn and students: the reality



IT HIT THE REV MARSHALL BALLANTINE-JONES (left) in 2016 as he attended a university conference on the harms of pornography to children.

"I was overwhelmed with the broad research about how terrible this is and completely overwhelmed by the lack of solutions and resources for dealing with the problem," he says. "I knew my emerging teenage kids were going to be hit full frontal with this, as well as my nieces and my nephews and the kids at church. I wasn't satisfied."

That is what led this former Sydney Anglican rector to postgraduate work in the area of pornography – or, to give it a working definition, "sexual media intended to arouse". Although he is yet to complete his research, Mr Ballantine-Jones gave a preview to a seminar organised by Anglican EdComm entitled "The effect of pornography and sexualised media on students".

The audience of educators was aware of the issues but, even so, the figures presented were stark. "I recruited more than 700 Year 10 students from several independent schools for my research," he told the conference. "Overall, 70 per cent of male students and 21 per cent of females view pornography monthly or more. Most viewed pornography on mobile digital devices like phones, tablets and laptops."

"Alarmingly, heavier porn users had significant compulsivity problems, posing greater risks for healthier long-term relationships, as well as more difficult recovery pathways."

While he is not due to report until the end of the year, Mr Ballantine-Jones says, "It is crystal clear that there are new forces impacting the lives of young people. Other emerging research is suggesting that 'normalisation', the social acceptance of pornography, is on the rise."

This was starkly illustrated by an example given to the seminar of a party hosted by one of the families at his local primary school. One of the mothers there was approached by her child who wanted to leave immediately. Then followed another child requesting to be picked up early. The mothers discovered that their children had been invited to the bedroom of one of the older siblings in the home and were shown pornography.

When the mothers approached the parents who hosted the party to complain about what the children had experienced, the father responded, nonchalantly, "What's your problem? It's just a bit of porn".

The problem, according to the research, is a range of negative effects on children (and adults) including an increased desire for uncommitted sexual exploration, significant behavioural additions, less social empathy and an increase in sexualised behaviours on social media such as "sexting".

Mr Ballantine-Jones has been immersed in the statistics and his talk was loaded with charts and graphs. But, he says, the statistics can be translated into action in both schools and homes.

"The environment of parental rules in the home is a significant factor," he says. "This includes whether or not parents had rules against watching pornography, limitations on device access, or whether they maintain passwords for the student's accounts, and so on. Roughly, the stronger the rules, we saw a 40 per cent decline in the viewing behaviours of the students."

"Parent communication was influential but not effective on its own," he adds. "I found this very fascinating. Just because a parent has good communication with a child doesn't imply that the child's behaviour will follow [what the parent wants]."

As expected, the behaviour of peers is very influential on pornography viewing and being at a Christian or church school doesn't isolate students from the dangers of sexualised media. But, Mr Ballantine-Jones says, strong Christian influences help.

"On the whole [the research] is saying the kids who have a cultivated, active religious and Christian family environment are going to turn out much better."



Corrimal changes church to Hub

Church as a community hub: the relaxed vibe brings people in at Corrimal.

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR A PARISH TO HOLD EVENTS IN THE CHURCH BUILDING. WHAT IS UNUSUAL is for a parish to do a swap – holding its services in the hall, and day-to-day ministry and events in the church.

But that's exactly what Corrimal Anglican Church decided to do a couple of years ago: turning its hall into the location for church services, and the church building into "The Hub" for community engagement and outreach.

"We've been talking about pathways for evangelism, but to do it at this level where everyone uses the best building – the building that the majority of people would have preferred to have a service in – and to move into what was initially a cold, hard hall, is a big call," says rector the Rev Dave Esdale.

"On one level everyone knows that the church building is only bricks and mortar but there's a sentimental love for what God has done in the building. There's been a lot of grace."

Now, when you walk into the church building at Corrimal, there's a coffee machine, sofas, tables and chairs, a community library, kids' toys and a small op shop.

"We drag the op shop racks out onto the footpath each day – they're our 'flags'... along with a chalk sign saying, 'Second best coffee in Corrimal'," Mr Esdale says.

The Hub hosts "play and chat" every Tuesday, an art and craft group on Thursdays, a mobile community pantry, plus Explaining Christianity groups each term, along with other events such as the Mark Drama or parenting courses.

"It's a nice set-up – it's pretty cool," Mr Esdale says. "And the beauty of The Hub is that the playgroup is not just young mums, it's a whole lot of micro-communities coming together."

"At the beginning two of our older ladies thought, 'Oh, I'll just go and knit in a corner'. So, they were doing that, and as soon as the young mums walked in from school drop-off, they went straight to these women like magnets! It's great to have a range of demographics."

He knows all these ministries could have been done in the hall but says using the church building has been significant for those who aren't church members.

"People in the community recognise that it's a Christian church, so they walk in and it's them who will start conversations about the last time they were in a church, or why they've never been to church, or what their faith is," he says.

"They'll start talking about that without much prompting."

Visitors have made friendships with church members, rediscovered faith, felt safe for the first time in years, begun reading the Bible one-to-one and taken part in courses to help them understand Christianity.

"At a practical level, we trust that this is God's work and we'll be trained and equipped for any opportunities that come our way," Mr Esdale says. "It's been a big change, but I believe the impact it's made on people's lives has been worth the cost."

No distance with Moore distance

WHEN PEOPLE THINK OF MOORE COLLEGE STUDENTS they usually envisage a younger person sitting in a lecture theatre in Newtown – but the college has hundreds of other students who are studying in their homes, in school or even overseas.

That diversity was on show last month as the college hosted a graduation ceremony for students of its distance programs. This year 133 men and women received awards, with graduands coming to the ceremony from across the greater Sydney area, interstate and even from Hong Kong.

"The distance graduation is one of the true highlights of my year," says the Rev Dr Chase Kuhn, the college's Director of Distance Education.

"I most enjoy hearing the wonderful testimonies of how men and women of various ages and stages continue to study to be equipped for kingdom service around the world."

"This year we heard from high school students considering mission; from stay-at-home mothers who persevered in study while raising their children; from a man in jail who has been studying with his chaplain, and from a medical student who wanted to keep growing in biblical knowledge while she grows in biological knowledge!"

For more than 75 years, Moore College has been offering correspondence programs to train men and women, most notably in the Preliminary Theological Certificate (PTC). Through a network of partnerships, the resources of the PTC are now being used by thousands of people around the world in more than 18 languages. Some, like Tin Thing Yow, proceed slowly at first and then attain a higher level of qualification.

"When I first started it was nine years ago, and I started with PTC," she says. "The *Introduction to the Bible* is really good. It gave me the foundation. I came in with the intention to just equip myself so I would be ready to do anything in any way [to] defend the gospel and share the good news."

"So, moving forward from now on, if God has opened the door hopefully I can go with my husband to India for mission. We will see how God might lead us."

Likewise, Annette Calwell took some time to get through the course but graduated with first-class honours.

"I think it took me about four years to get through stage one," she says. "I've been more sure for myself that the Bible does all hang together and it's self-supporting. So that's encouraged me in my conversations with people outside the church... that I can talk with great certainty about the love of God and his power in their lives."

Several school students were among those graduating. Michael Walsh has been studying for two years through Pacific Hills Christian School and says the course has given him the big picture of "the wholeness of Scripture".

"I think the fact that the Bible was written over such a long period of time by so many different authors and yet it is interlaced, interwoven, it's full of references to different parts," he says.

"We might think of it as Old Testament or New Testament or prophecy [but] it's God's word. It's all God's word and being able to study that and see the wholeness of it is really cool."

Dr Kuhn says the college is committed to distance education. "As a college we see PTC as a valuable part of our mission to the world. We want men and women everywhere to have access to trustworthy resources that will help them grow in their love and knowledge of God."

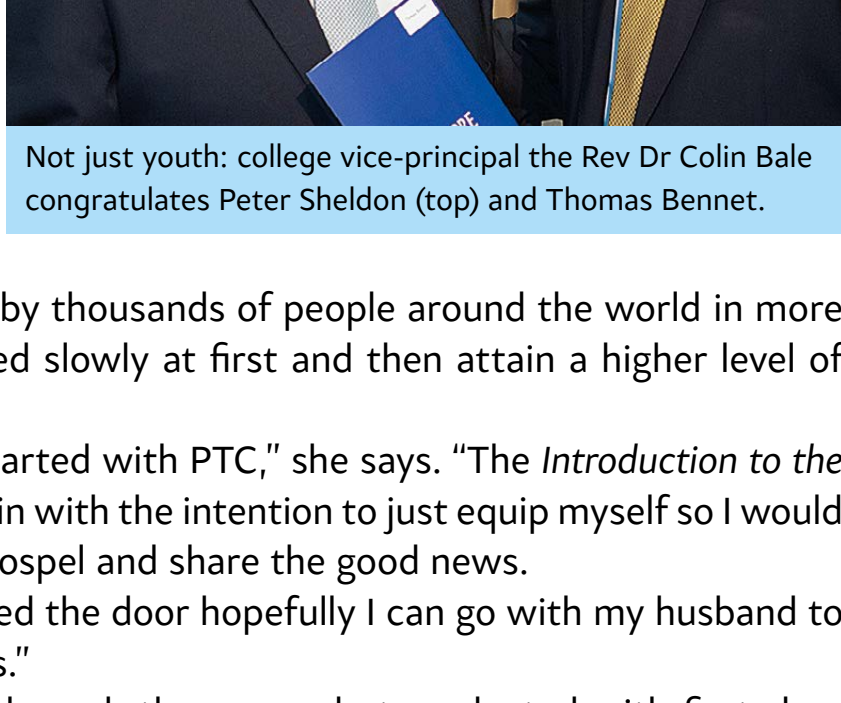
Janette McCool came from Hong Kong to attend the graduation ceremony.

"There have been times when it's been a love-hate relationship [with assessments]," she told the audience at the ceremony. "But the higher level of assessment is really where the rubber hits the road. I'm learning the material, but knowing that you can actually then apply it into real situations."

Her four years of study has now resulted in a position on staff at her church. "I am co-ordinating the women's ministry and trying to get the rest of the women in our church to be really enthusiastic and passionate about God's word," she said.



Not just youth: college vice-principal the Rev Dr Colin Bale congratulates Peter Sheldon (top) and Thomas Bennet.



Not just youth: college vice-principal the Rev Dr Colin Bale congratulates Peter Sheldon (top) and Thomas Bennet.

Sydney theologian on honours list

THE FORMER BISHOP OF NORTH SYDNEY, THEOLOGIAN and author the Rt Rev Dr Paul Barnett, is among Sydney Anglicans on the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

The Governor-General, His Excellency General the Hon Sir Peter Cosgrove, announced his final honours list before retirement, which comprised 1214 awards.

"On behalf of all Australians, I congratulate today's recipients," Sir Peter said. "They have made an enormous contribution to their local communities and to the entire nation and deserve our thanks, admiration and to be celebrated."

Dr Barnett, a prolific author, theologian and historian, was Bishop of North Sydney for 11 years until 2001 and is an emeritus faculty member of Moore Theological College. He was made a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to the Anglican Church of Australia.

"I am deeply honoured to receive the award," Dr Barnett said, adding, "My dear wife Anita has been my partner in our ministry. We are a team."

Among other honourees Dr Tom Frame, author and former Bishop of the Defence Force, was given an AM for significant service to higher education, to the Anglican Church of Australia, and to the community. Professor Jonathan Clark – a member of the parish of Miranda – received an AM for significant service to medicine as a head and neck surgeon, while Professor Carolyn Sue, of Lane Cove parish, was honoured for significant service to medicine, particularly to mitochondrial disease.

In addition the State Children's Guardian, Janet Schorer of Chatswood parish, was awarded the Public Service Medal for outstanding public service, particularly through the protection of children in NSW.

Sydney Anglicans awarded a medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) include the Rev Kevin Engel of Caringbah for service to the Anglican Church of Australia, and Ian Miller of Beecroft for service to the community through a range of organisations.

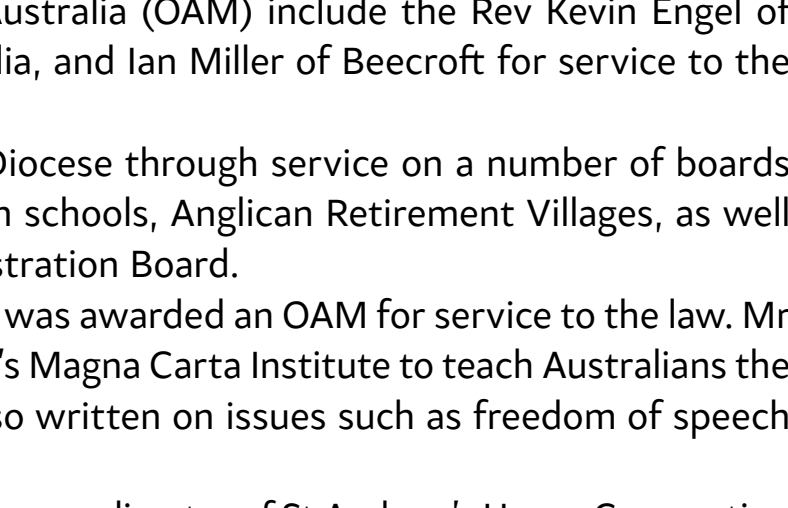
Mr Miller has made an extensive contribution to the Diocese through service on a number of boards and councils, including the councils of Barker and Arden schools, Anglican Retirement Villages, as well as Provincial and General synods and the Glebe Administration Board.

Lawyer Robin Speed, a member of Warrawee Anglican, was awarded an OAM for service to the law. Mr Speed established the Rule of Law Institute and Australia's Magna Carta Institute to teach Australians the fundamental principles about the rule of law. He has also written on issues such as freedom of speech and defended freedom of religion.

Other Sydney Anglicans honoured were Christopher Watson, a director of St Andrew's House Corporation and member of St Luke's, Miranda, for services to engineering (OAM).

Archbishop Davies congratulated all the recipients, paying particular tribute to the man he succeeded. "Dr Paul Barnett was not only my predecessor as Bishop of North Sydney but a mentor and friend to many others," Dr Davies said. "His contribution to biblical scholarship has received both national and international recognition and acclaim. His command of New Testament history is profound, but his commentary writing in both academic and more popular series – including the series of commentaries that he established and continues to edit – is without peer in Australia."

"Bishop Barnett's contribution to the life of our Diocese and the Anglican Communion more generally also makes him a worthy recipient of this award among the Australian honours."



Anita Barnett and AM honouree Dr Paul Barnett.



Outreach to our far reaches

Lord Howe Island: a longer term ministry plan will support this physically distant part of the Diocese. PHOTO: Franz Venhaus

MANY SYDNEYSIDERS DON'T REALISE THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY EXTENDS EAST FROM THE COAST of NSW to encompass Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island, where church life and outreach is very different.

Lord Howe is the smaller of the two, with an area of just 14 square kilometres and a population density of 26 people per square kilometre, compared with 407 people in the greater Sydney area. It is a ministry challenge that concerns the regional bishop, the Bishop of South Sydney, Michael Stead.

"After more than a decade of fruitful ministry under the leadership of the Rev Zac Veron, the time has come for a new phase in the ministry on Lord Howe Island," Dr Stead says.

"For the past 12 years the island community has been faithfully served by a succession of locums who have come to the island for a month or two at a time, under the oversight of Zac Veron. We now have an opportunity to pursue longer term ministries, commencing with the ministry of the Rev David Mansfield – who will assume responsibility for ministry on the island over the next two years."

Mr Mansfield, who retires as the director of Anglican Aid in August, now plans to spend the majority of the year on the island with occasional visiting ministers.

"I am very grateful to Zac for the leadership he has exercised over the last 12 years, and for the opportunity to serve in this honorary capacity in the first couple of years of 'retirement'," Mr Mansfield says.

"To get back into weekly expository preaching after many years on the road around the Diocese, and to work out ways to build relationships and share the gospel of the Lord Jesus with the wider community, is triggering all sorts of ideas and excitement!"

Former submariner plunges into The Murray

A HOME TOWN ADVANTAGE AND MINISTRY EXPERIENCE in both the bush and the city has put the rector of Gordon, the Rev Keith Dalby, into the leadership of Australia's most diverse diocese. Mr Dalby has been chosen as the next bishop of the Diocese of The Murray in the southeast of South Australia.

"I have spent about 10 years in country ministry and almost 20 years in the city," Mr Dalby says. "So I feel well equipped to serve a diocese that has both these elements in it."

"The southern suburbs of Adelaide – which are the fastest-growing in Adelaide – are in the diocese, as well as the whole southeast of South Australia, including the towns on the Murray River from the border almost into Adelaide."

The Bishop Election Committee of the diocese chose Mr Dalby to succeed Bishop John Ford as the fifth bishop over the 22 parishes in the diocese, which was created in 1970.

"I guess it's a good fit because it is God's timing," Mr Dalby says. "Gordon is in a good place for someone new to take it forward – I have been there for almost 15 years. We love the place, but it is time to go. The other great thing about The Murray is that it is home for us. I have both my sisters living in the diocese and my parents have lived there for close to 25 years."

Mr Dalby and his wife Alice have five children. He spent most of his early life in South Australia and began his ministry in Adelaide after serving as a submariner in the Royal Australian Navy for 12 years.

His theological training was at St Barnabas' Theological College in Adelaide and, during his time in Gordon, he was awarded an MA in theology from Moore College.

He is looking forward to returning home and the variety of the role. "I can go from dealing with everyday city issues to drought, Murray Water issues, and anything in between," he says.

"The opportunities for ministry are great. Bishop Ford has set the diocese on a course for mission and renewal and I am keen to take that forward."

"I am delighted to be able to continue encouraging the diocese to engage with the wider community and enable them to be more aware of the good news of Jesus Christ."



Gordon rector the Rev Keith Dalby with his wife Alice.



Tanzania welcomes Archbishop in whirlwind tour

Hand skills: Archbishop Davies and Canon Hoskins (second from right) join in the actions of a welcome song by students at the Shalom Primary School in Bunda.

ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES TRAVELLED 12,000 KILOMETRES TO HELP A STUDENT WITH A MATHS problem at Shalom Primary School in Bunda, Tanzania.

For the former maths teacher this was easy, but keeping up the pace of official engagements proved a little harder.

CMS missionary Canon Helen Hoskins visited Sydney last year with Deninsia Jerome, the headmistress of Bunda Girls' Secondary School, and issued an invitation for the Archbishop to come to Tanzania to officially open the school.

The Shalom Pre and Primary School, and the Bunda Secondary School, are among several projects being funded by the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid in the Bunda district, which is in the Mara region of western Tanzania next to Serengeti National Park.

In a week-long visit in May, Archbishop Davies opened school buildings including the Helen Hoskins Library, preached at Musoma Cathedral, conducted a seminar at Bunda Bible College as well as opening the refurbished Mothers' Union hostel in Musoma, donated by Mothers' Union in Sydney.

The secondary school celebrations included the baking of 400 cupcakes and an official tasting by the Archbishop. For more about the visit, see Archbishop Writes on page 17.



Archbishop Davies calls on his former job to help a student with a maths problem.

Across the border in Kenya the Bishop of Wollongong, Peter Hayward, was one of the presenters at the Bishop's Training Institute in Nairobi. The institute is linked to the networks that have grown out of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), and Bishop Hayward spoke on the development of strategic plans for dioceses across Africa including Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania.

New Zealand's new Anglican diocese



A NEW ANGLICAN DIOCESE HAS BEEN CREATED in New Zealand to be led by the Rev Jay Behan (left), who is now bishop-elect of the diocese.

According to a statement from the Synod of the Church of Confessing Anglicans Aotearoa/New Zealand, representatives from 12 churches gathered and formed themselves into a diocese. The churches had previously been part of various Anglican dioceses across the country, but had withdrawn because of the NZ General Synod vote to bless same-sex marriages.

The Synod announced on Friday, May 17 that "By the grace of God we are a new Anglican diocese in these islands, standing firmly in Anglican faith and practice, and structurally distinct from the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

"This new diocese is united in the crucified, risen, ascended and glorified Christ, committed to the authority of the Bible, and dedicated to our common mission of proclaiming to all the good news of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. We praise God for his guidance and grace, and the sense of unity and common purpose we shared as we met."

The Synod also "prayerfully elected" the Rev Jay Behan, vicar of St Stephen's, Christchurch, as its first bishop.

"Jay is a man of humility and grace, committed to the authority of the Bible and the Lordship of Jesus," the statement said. "He is an excellent preacher and caring pastor, and will serve and lead the diocese as together we seek to reach these islands with the transforming power of the gospel."

The meeting received greetings from many Anglicans around the world – including a message from Archbishop Foley Beach, chairman of the GAFCON Primates, who conveyed the text of a motion passed at the group's recent meeting in Sydney.

The motion read, "The Primates' Council thanks God for the courage and faithfulness of those churches and individuals in New Zealand who are remaining as Anglicans in the faith as we have received it, as they establish a new Anglican diocese.

"The council gladly endorses the new diocese, recognises it as authentically Anglican, declares itself to be in full communion and celebrates our common life. The council encourages the participation of GAFCON bishops in the consecration of the new bishop."

First and foremost, the Synod of the Church of Confessing Anglicans Aotearoa/New Zealand invited all Christians to join them in prayer:

"Give thanks to God for his grace and mercy towards us in Christ. Pray for Jay, his family, and the church at St Stephen's. Pray for the 11 other churches of the diocese in their mission and ministry, and for the many other churches we pray will join and be planted in our new diocese for the glory of God."



EUROPE BECKONS WITH CMS

The Rev Dr David Sandifer is leaving St Alban's, Leura to take up a teaching position in the Netherlands.

He says Tyndale Theological Seminary in Amsterdam is a missionary college, with all members of the international teaching faculty supported by mission organisations from their countries of origin.

"This is a theological college that I've known about for quite a few years, and that we were actually in conversation with some years ago about the possibility of going there," Dr Sandifer explains. "It didn't seem like the right timing then for a number of reasons, but [more recently] they invited us to consider coming, and for me to be on their faculty teaching pastoral ministry and ethics, so we began to pray about the possibility.

"It's an area that we felt I was trained for, and [my wife] Cathie and I are both very conscious of the needs in Europe. It's a gospel-poor area and the church, in particular, has a huge need for training – for people going into ministry, and pastors especially."

The Sandifers approached CMS NSW & ACT and, despite the Netherlands being a country to which it had never sent missionaries, the organisation has been enthusiastic and supportive of their desire to go.

"That was one of several potential roadblocks, but they felt they saw God's hand in this and wanted to come alongside," Dr Sandifer says.

The family leaves Leura this month and will spend five months in Melbourne at St Andrew's Hall before departing for Europe mid-way through 2020 – and they are delighted that St Alban's will be one of their link churches through CMS.

"It's been an amazing privilege to serve here and we've seen God answer many prayers and see ministry expand in some really significant ways," Dr Sandifer says. "There's a great leadership team... so we're confident that God will use them to prepare things for the next chapter.

"We felt like this was God's call and God's timing, and we're trusting that God will continue to bless the work that he's been doing here at St Alban's."

Dr Sandifer adds that even though their children, Annabelle and Josiah, are sad to be leaving friends and family, they are also getting excited about the next chapter of the family's ministry.

"We don't believe God's just calling us and we're dragging the kids along," he says. "He's calling us and he's calling the children as well."

MAC PRINCIPAL TO RETIRE

The principal of Mary Andrews College, the Rev Jackie Stoneman, will retire at the end of this year after nearly 12 years at the helm of the college, and 26 years as a lecturer.

Miss Stoneman joined MAC in 1994 with a decade of parish service behind her. "I didn't have to leave now but it just felt like it was right time to pass the baton on," she says. "It's not as though I've lost my energy and enthusiasm, but I think it's time for someone else to see under God how the college develops."

She says the number of students at MAC – who are mostly women – had certainly grown over the years, adding that the college's teaching purposely focuses on pastoral care.

"People think pastoral care is taking a casserole around or quoting Bible verses at people, yet they don't really know how to listen," she says. "You need to be prepared when the opportunity comes up to say something, but so often we have an agenda of trying to convert someone when what they really need is someone who's sensitively listening to what they're saying!"

She adds that students at MAC often start with a pastoral care subject and it opens their eyes to the broader value of the discipline as well as ministry possibilities.

Next year Miss Stoneman may continue lecturing at MAC, and she will keep up her work in Kairos prison ministry and teaching visits to Myanmar. "I haven't got anything in particular in mind, so I'll continue doing those things and see what God has up his sleeve," she says.



VALE

The Rev Stephen Semenchuk died on May 12 after a short battle with cancer.



Born Stephen Charles Semenchuk on September 16, 1958, he was brought up on Sydney's North Shore. After school he began a cadetship with BP, undertaking a BA in economics and accounting at Macquarie University as part of this work. After finishing university in 1980, Mr Semenchuk spent two years in Dubbo as BP's area manager.

He then began studies at Moore College, where he met his wife Leigh-anne, and they married at the beginning of their second year. In 1987 Mr Semenchuk became curate at Minto, followed by two years as assistant minister at Peakhurst.

In 1990, he became the curate-in-charge of Merrylands, also taking on the provisional parish of South Granville the following year. The two provisional parishes merged in 1993, and in 1996 Merrylands with South Granville became a full parish with Mr Semenchuk as rector.

"At the time we started at Merrylands it was the smallest parish the Diocese," Leigh-anne Semenchuk recalls. "Through our time there

we amalgamated with the South Granville parish, and then we amalgamated with Guildford, then Old Guildford with Villawood. It was a thing that Brian King, who was Bishop of Western Sydney at the time, and Stephen came up with together... the parish started with 40 people and we had about 300 coming by the time we left."

After 12 years in Sydney's west, the Semenchuks were called to Dapto in 2002. Mr Semenchuk's son-in-law Peter Gold said in a speech at his funeral that "they'd visited this church on holidays and hoped that whenever Dapto began looking for its next minister, they would come to see them – and they did".

He added that his father-in-law had "cast a vision for the growth of this church that would encompass the great diversity of people living in this parish" – a vision that included the building of the ministry centre in which the church now meets, as well as many ministries it runs for and in the community.

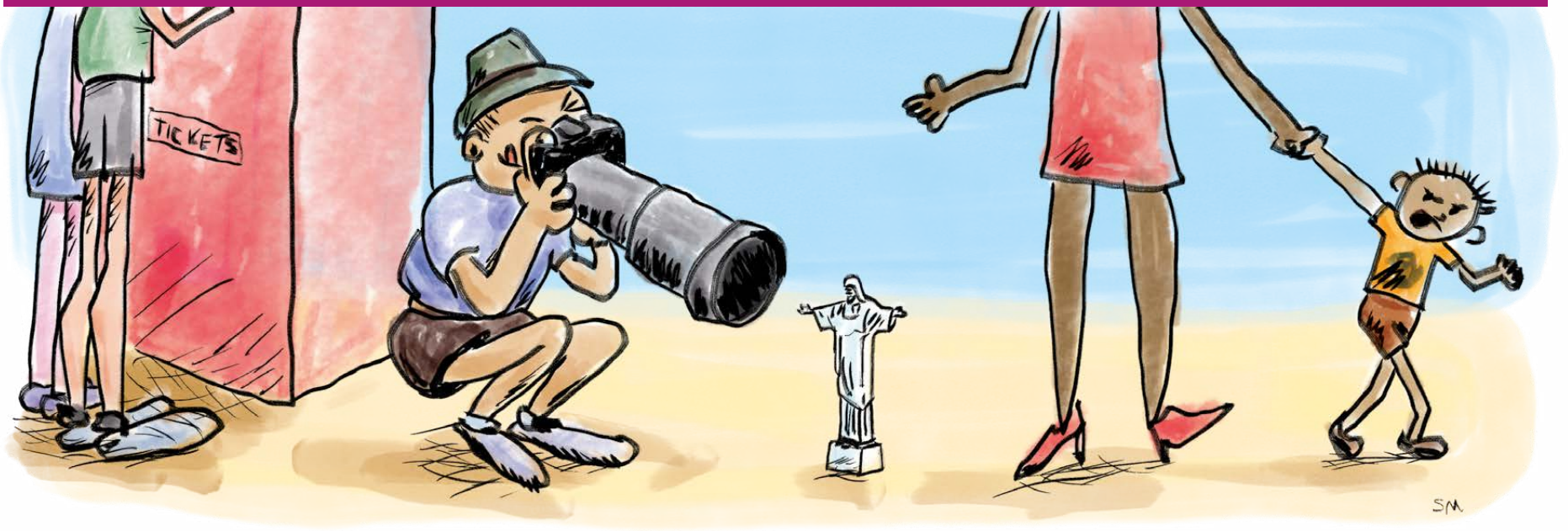
Shortly after the family's arrival at Dapto, Mr Semenchuk began a Masters in human resource management at the University of Wollongong. He achieved high distinctions for every subject while also running the parish full-time, winning the Dean's award. Leigh-anne Semenchuk said her husband was aware of the need to look after staff well, and "realised that a lot of a minister's job was managing change".

Mr Semenchuk's daughter Cassie said her father had wanted his life to be a witness to God.

"Dad believed in people and saw it as his place to encourage, support, and find a place for everyone to shine," she said. "He never wanted anyone to feel that they were outside of the reach of God's grace."

The Rev Canon Peter Rodgers – a close friend of Mr Semenchuk's from their teenage years at St Andrew's, Lane Cove – said at the funeral that "Stephen changed all of our lives, and he changed all of them for the better. He made everything fun... he was fearless, and he never worried that he might embarrass himself. He would do anything for the gospel."

A long-term worker in the Dapto parish, who led the funeral, reminded everyone of their ultimate hope through Christ: "It was Stephen himself who coined the phrase here at Dapto Anglican Church that, for a follower of Jesus, death is a graduation to heaven and should be celebrated".



Introduce people to the big Jesus

BILL SALIER

AUSTRALIA IS A BIG COUNTRY. WE ARE A BIG PEOPLE AND APPARENTLY GETTING BIGGER. WHEN we go on holidays, we like to look at big things. We have a big rock in the centre of our land; we have the world's biggest reef just off our coast. And if naturally big things weren't enough, we also like to make big things.

If a town wants to attract tourists, it simply makes a big thing and asks people to come and look at it. On our family trips north up the NSW coast the Big Banana was always a required stop. But there's more. You know them. We also have the Big Prawn, the Big Merino, the Big Pavlova, gold panner, oyster, trout, barramundi, cow, cassowary, crocodile, lobster, koala, strawberry, potato, lawnmower and golden guitar. Even as you read this list you will be thinking of your own favourite big thing.

It seems in Australia we really like everything big except Jesus.

Australia is the land of the small Jesus, the constrained Christ: he might be admired as a maverick or revolutionary, revered as a great teacher or perceptive philosopher, respected as a wise person, moral and upright individual. He's someone who is always good for a quote, liked as a great bloke – maybe even suggested as one of the most influential people that ever lived. All this may be true in its own way but it is not the whole truth.

As John introduces his biography of Jesus, he paints the biggest possible picture he can. In the first four chapters he introduces Jesus to his readers, and it is breathtaking. In John 1 alone, Jesus is referred to as the Word of God, the one who shares divinity as God, the light, the source of life, the unique Son, the one who truly reveals God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the one on whom the Spirit remains, the one who will baptise with the Spirit, the Son of God, Rabbi, the Messiah, the one Moses and the prophets wrote about, the son of Joseph, the King of Israel and then, finally, the Son of Man.

This is a vast array of titles, each with a background to be explored; each helping us to understand an aspect of Jesus; each contributing to a marvellous whole.

In chapter 2, John goes on to show how Jesus will bring life. Jesus hints that this will be though his death as he challenges the Jews to destroy his body ("this temple") and he will raise it again in three days.

John shows Jesus hinting at how he will make everything new as Jesus brings new wine (John 2), promises a new temple (John 2), speaks of new birth (John 3) and looks forward to a time when worship of God will be renewed (John 4). Finally, in John 4, Jesus is acclaimed by a Samaritan village as truly the saviour of the world. The big Jesus indeed.

As we teach youth and children about Jesus, we might be tempted to teach a small Jesus. Yes, to little people Jesus is our special friend in heaven. But as John and the rest of the New Testament writers help us to see, he is so much more.

Let's introduce the young people in our churches to the big Jesus in all his majesty, richness and depth. Because it is only a big Jesus who will be worthy of their (and our) trust and worship. It is only a big Jesus who will be followed in a world full of bewildering and attractive alternatives.

May our churches be places where all people – young and old – come and see, and trust, and obey, and serve, and love, and honour, and worship, the big Jesus.

The Rev Dr Bill Salier is the principal of Youthworks College. He has a special interest in John's Gospel.

A vision becoming reality in Africa

DR GLENN DAVIES



NEARLY 40 YEARS AGO, IVAN LEE AND I WERE SITTING IN A FOURTH-YEAR Moore College classroom soaking in the wisdom and scholarship of Broughton Knox, Donald Robinson and William Dumbrell, among other luminaries. It was a rich feast of learning.

Among that year of 1980 sat a young lady by the name of Helen Hoskins. Although our year produced a couple of bishops and a couple of theological lecturers, a few chaplains and a good number of rectors, it was Helen's ministry with CMS that was to stand out among us all.

After 35 years as a missionary in Tanzania, Canon Helen Hoskins continues to make the Diocese of Mara her home, where she is revered and honoured as a woman of great faith, joyful hope and constant love.

In May I had the honour of visiting the Diocese of Mara at the invitation of Bishop George Okoth. The occasion of my visit was primarily to open the Bunda Girls' Secondary School. Bunda is a small town in western Tanzania near the shores of Lake Victoria.

The school was Helen's vision to provide quality education in a Christian caring environment, enabling girls to qualify for higher education and so open doors for their contribution to Tanzania as educated professional women.

The principal is Mrs Deninsia Jerome who, with Helen, visited me last year in Sydney and first suggested that I come and officially open the school. I was delighted to accept and while my diary is ordinarily full of commitments within our own diocese, it was a real pleasure to see the work of the gospel flourishing under God's good hand in the Diocese of Mara.

From the beginning, the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid has been a supporter of Bunda Girls' Secondary School, along with the Grace and Mercy Foundation, based in Sydney.

For readers who donate to Anglican Aid, I can assure you your money is well spent. From its small beginnings in 2014, where 25 Form 1 students arrived to commence lessons in one classroom and stay in one dormitory building, within five years the school has grown to 265 students with 16 teachers and 15 support staff.

All instruction is in English and the school has graduated 116 girls, all passing the final national examinations. The academic standing of the school has enabled it to be placed 7th among the 157 schools in the Mara region – quite an accomplishment after only five years!

The celebrations for the official opening were huge. A representative of the Department of Education was present, along with the current and previous bishops and other community dignitaries. I also dedicated the new Helen Hoskins Library, honouring Helen's ministry at the school. I conducted a confirmation service where more than a dozen girls professed their faith in the Lord Jesus. I also addressed the staff on Christian pedagogy and discipline and held a Q&A with the whole student body. The article on page 12 also mentions the sampling of 400 cupcakes – but I am hoping my wife doesn't notice that!

It was an overwhelming experience to see the vitality and joy of these girls receiving a first-class education in a country where the contribution of girls to society is not valued as highly as it might be.

English is the required medium for all secondary education but not for primary schools. This often means that students enter high school with little or no English, and therefore struggle with lessons. This observation birthed a second vision for Helen Hoskins who, with the support of Anglican Aid and the Grace and Mercy Foundation, established the Shalom Pre and Primary School in Bunda, where English is the medium for teaching. This school opened in January 2018 with 95 students, and so it was fitting for me to open the new teaching block, as the enrolment is now 143 students across five classes. The photos on page 12 show the excitement students had in welcoming an Australian archbishop.

All CMS supporters will be aware that Helen Hoskins has been a great supporter of Girls' Brigade in Tanzania. Her commitment to the training of young girls (many of whom have little education) with skills in sewing and handcraft has been life-transforming.

It was therefore a delight to visit the Girls' Brigade Sewing and Handcraft Centre in Bunda, which opened in 2010. In its first decade it has enrolled more than 200 girls, with 181 graduating. Applications now regularly exceed enrolments, as the centre also accommodates many girls onsite. Some of the girls are unmarried mothers trying to make their way in life, and the Christian care and compassion of the teachers and chaplain provide hope for the future and into eternity. It brought tears to my eyes to see the joy in these girls' faces.

Both CMS and Anglican Aid are wonderful examples of the proclamation of God's love in word and deed. We are blessed to have such missionaries from our Diocese whose desire is to see a world that knows Jesus. We can support their work by our prayers and the grace of giving, as the apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians, whose service

Is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, people will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else (2 Corinthians 9:12-13).

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.

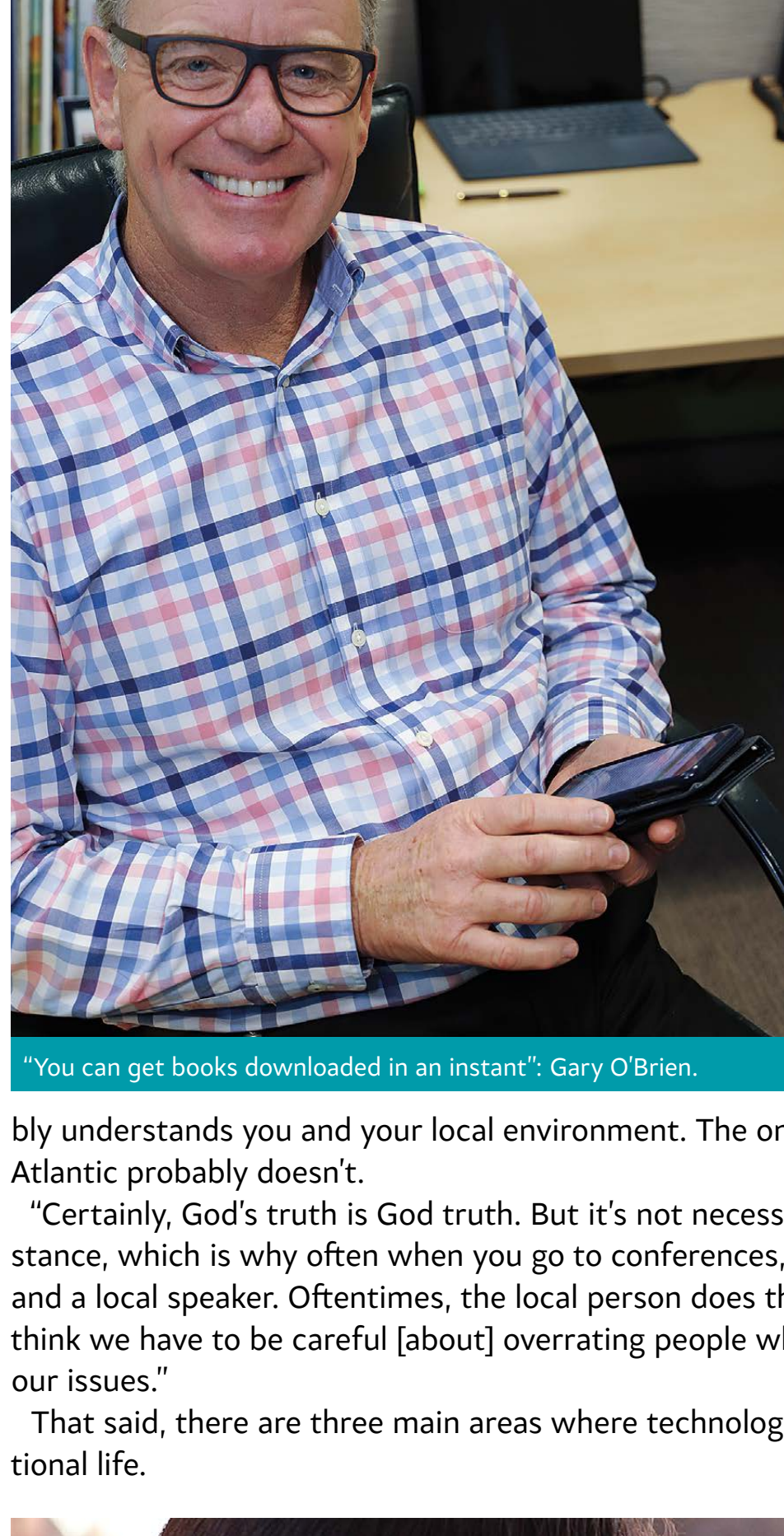
Amen

Getting the most from technology

Tech things are great for our churches and our faith walk – except when they're not. We need to strike the right balance, writes **RUSSELL POWELL**.

Southern CROSS
JULY 2015

10



"You can get books downloaded in an instant". Gary O'Brien.

"Now, you just click on the internet and listen to talks from any part of the world, either old standards from great ones like Martin Lloyd-Jones, or you can get somebody quite contemporary preaching last Sunday. So, that's a great thing. You can get books downloaded in an instant. You can read great leaders, people that you respect and you can explore issues that you're struggling with."

While we will go on to explore the benefits, O'Brien says there are two downsides we must remember from the start.

"First, there's not much of a filter on either who or what you listen to or read. There's also not a filter on how much time you spend on it. So I think people can get overwhelmed by it, waste too much time and not be discerning."

"You just go from one thing to the next and so on. In ministry, we can do the same thing. We're always looking for a silver bullet about how to do things better or how to resolve an issue, and sometimes we are just so busy in the searching that we actually don't do enough applying."

Secondly, O'Brien says, the local context is important. "People can sometimes listen to every other preacher except the one that's right in front of them. The person who's preaching in your church proba-

bly understands you and your local environment. The one who's speaking from the other side of the Atlantic probably doesn't."

"Certainly, God's truth is God truth. But it's not necessarily going to be applied in a particular circumstance, which is why often when you go to conferences, you know, you have an international speaker and a local speaker. Oftentimes, the local person does the best job because they get our context. So, I think we have to be careful [about] overruling people who are not familiar with our environment and our issues."

That said, there are three main areas where technology has improved our lives and our congregational life.



Tech time, but with God: Jackie Southon using Prayer Mate.

BIBLE STUDY WITH TECH

Jackie Southon is enthusiastic – not for technology itself, but what it can do for her as she juggles life with a family, as a member of Engadine Anglican Church and as finance and project manager at Youthworks.

She uses two Bible apps and a prayer app called Prayer Mate. Her regular Bible is the Olive Tree app which she says she uses "50-50" with a paper Bible.

"At the moment I am using First 5, which is a Bible reading plan with a devotion as well," she says. "That is not for jumping around in the text. I use the Olive Tree app just for reading in Bible study or church – you can get different translations and I like that aspect of it. But for my day-to-day plan, I use First 5 and the prayer app."

Prayer Mate is used increasingly by Sydney Anglicans, with a number of parishes sharing their prayer points as well as organisations such as the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid, CMS and Moore College.

Says Southon: "My husband [Mike Southon, the youth and children's co-ordinator for CMS NSW & ACT] is the one who got me on to it and helped me, but then I had a discussion with our ladies Bible study... and there are women there who use it much better than I do!"

The app allows users to add their own prayer points under various lists, to subscribe to others and even write their own prayers.

"Mostly I got it to keep track of people I want to pray for," she says. "I started using it for prayer points and then I was talking to my group and one of the women has written model prayers from the Bible for her children and for different aspects of their lives – personal godliness, for example. I thought that was really good. I just haven't had a chance to do that for myself."

Jackie Southon says others in the church have started using the app since her husband spoke about it in a sermon.

"He told the whole church and there was a good response as he explained how to use it. I don't think I would have known except for the fact that he was so enthusiastic about it. I find it helps me keep thinking about people at a time when my life has so many different things – it helps me focus."

While many lay people like Jackie Southon use a personal Bible on their phone or tablet, there are more sophisticated non-paper solutions. The Rev Ken Simpson, assistant minister at Summer Hill, is the lead Australian demonstrator for Accordance Bible software, an advanced study Bible suite.

"The software allows you to do very sophisticated searching of Bible texts in both original languages and in English, and other foreign languages such as Latin, Korean and Chinese and a growing number of translations," he says.

"It has an increasing parallel database of reference works like commentaries and Bible dictionaries, lexica and that sort of thing. All of which is accessible from within the Bible text directly. It also has a significant number of visual resources like photographic collections and maps, which I use quite extensively in preaching."

For pastors, the advantages are the same as for the regular Bible reader: convenience and flexibility.

"One of the things I love about it is that I have a huge library on my computer and on my iPad, wherever I go," he says. "So I can work anywhere, at any time, with the full range of my Bible texts, numerous high-grade commentaries or popular commentaries, and with all my language notes and that sort of material."

"I find it enormously helpful not having to carry around multiple books for whenever or wherever I want to do study, or if I find myself with a spare half hour away from the office."

"Also, and this is important as I get older, I find I don't have to change my Bible text in order to be able to read it. I just make the text a little bit bigger!"

Gary O'Brien agrees that searching is so much easier on electronic bibles, allowing deeper engagement with Scripture. "That's one of the main reasons I like it," he says. "I love the search function, which is so much better than the poor cross-referencing in many paper Bibles. So when I go visiting churches I just pull out the phone and go to my electronic Bible. The danger, of course, is, the temptation to check your emails and respond to texts. Aeroplane mode can help there!"

ENGAGE WITH QUESTIONS

For many people there is an expectation that church services will be interactive in some way, usually by way of a question time.

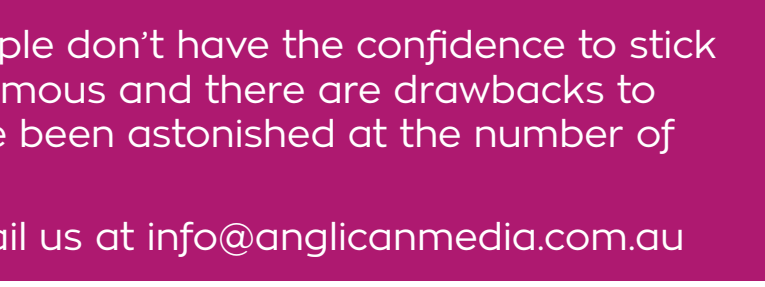
Churches have experimented with SMS questions, roving microphones and a new online service being trialled at Toongabbie called "slido". It is a website where you flash up an event code on the screen and people can go online and ask questions in real time.

"With a group of postmodern people, they want to engage and have a part to play in their learning and experience," says rector the Rev Dr Raj Gupta. "Not everyone is enthusiastic about it but, when we have question times, I just sense higher levels of engagement."

"The times we use it I notice a number of people not looking at me, they're looking at their device. I used to get annoyed about this until I realised they are looking at the questions coming in on slido. You can participate and ask questions, but you can also see the questions everyone else is asking, and you can then like them."

"It also gets around the problem that some people don't have the confidence to stick their hand up to ask a question. Sure, it's anonymous and there are drawbacks to that. But overall, every time we've used it, I have been astonished at the number of questions that have come in."

Got a useful tech tip for software or a site? Email us at info@anglicanmedia.com.au



Questions, anyone? Raj Gupta answers questions sent online during a sermon.

CARE FOR PEOPLE, WITH TECH

The advent of church database software has revolutionised "people care" according to the senior minister at Toongabbie Anglican Church, the Rev Dr Raj Gupta.

"There are now a whole lot of tools available that were just not available even 10 years ago, which make trying to care... more accessible for more people," he says.

"The way I think about it is that Jesus would leave the 99 sheep to go and search for the one. We now have a lot of technological tools at our disposal to facilitate that process. We use Elvanto, which does a whole variety of things. We used to use Church Community Builder (CCB) but we've moved away from that for various reasons."

"I don't necessarily want to promote one over another, I just want to say! I just think all churches should use something."

Software like Elvanto, an Australian product, allows for the integration of rolls, contact information, rosters and event organisation. But, according to Gupta, it also helps with participation.

"It means you can include more people in the caring process," he says. "The tools are cloud-based, so anyone who has a computer anywhere, or tablet or whatever, can be involved. It doesn't need to be restricted to staff; lay people can more easily be involved."

The other advantage is that it is more efficient at visitor tracking than cards or a visitor's book.

"I've talked to a lot of people in churches and I say to them, 'You're telling me you have all these visitors to church? How do you keep track of them?' And they say, 'Well, the [visitor] cards are on my desk'."

"One man even told me he would do follow-up, but he threw the cards out and that was his only record! So yes, I just think we can do a whole lot better. The tools are there to enable us to do it but the tools are only as good as the information put into them."

Simpson uses Elvanto at Summer Hill and agrees that people care is a strong point of that kind of software.

"Anything that allows you to be in contact with people regularly enables you to care for people, and Elvanto does make that reasonably easy," he says. "The bigger the church you are in, I think, the more crucial it becomes for keeping track of people. With Elvanto, people can log on and say when they will be on holidays. But if you haven't seen someone for a while it can remind you to connect with them. I haven't done that with a paper roll for years."

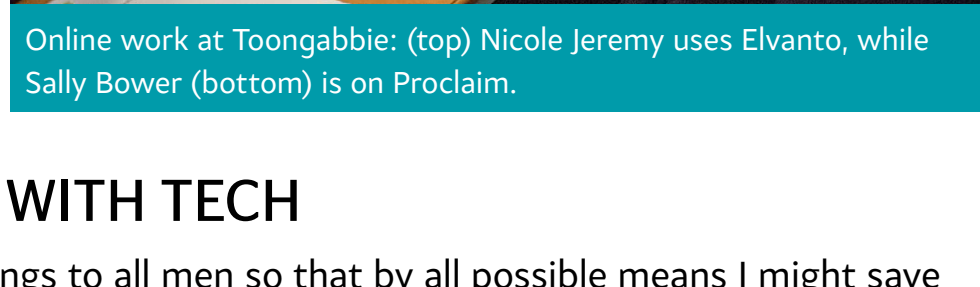
He agrees that the information is only as good as what you put in, in addition to how people embrace the system. "If your congregation doesn't know how to use it, then it does no good. I'd say 80 per cent of our congregation have active accounts but only about 40 per cent use it regularly."

"By active accounts I mean that get the emails... for example, 'You are on Bible reading this weekend' or other roster duties. But in terms of any sort of community building, I'd say only about 40 per cent are engaged."

Some claim that engagement with technological advances breaks down along generational lines and that you can't reach older generations because they are not connected. This is overblown, according to Gupta.

"The most reliable way to communicate with 70-year-olds is email," he says. "Now, this is not the stereotype. The least reliable way to communicate with a 20-year-old is email. They don't live on email – they live on social media."

"I suspect in every church there are one or two people who are well meaning but have the incorrect stereotype that older people don't have computers and aren't connected. But it is very, very rare for an older person not to be connected in some way."



Online work at Toongabbie: (top) Nicole Jeremy uses Elvanto, while Sally Bower (bottom) is on Proclaim.

MAKE GATHERINGS BETTER WITH TECH

The Apostle Paul says he has "become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Likewise, our church services – the front door for engagement with many people – have to be of a high standard in a society that is much more savvy than it used to be.

Says Gupta: "I think the standard of production in our society has increased across the board. People now have incredibly high expectations of what they're going to experience at church. I'm not saying that that's fundamental to church. But I am saying there is a perception that many of our churches are dinosaurs living in a bygone era, and just haven't kept up."

Ken Simpson agrees. "Expectations are certainly higher. I want to say this very carefully. I don't think the megachurches help us much in this way, in that they often make it more of performance than a communal congregational experience."

"That's not to say that everything they do is bad or anything like that. [For example] let's have good lighting everywhere – for the congregation, as well as the front of church. That's a good thing. I know it puts up power bills a little bit, but you can use it for what, two hours a week or something."

"Given the business that we are in – preaching and singing and word ministries – then good sound reinforcement is, to some extent, the heart of what we do. If you can't be heard then the word is not going to change people's lives."

PowerPoint is giving way to presentation software such as Proclaim, and preachers like Gupta and Simpson are working from iPads.

Says Simpson: "I preach from an iPad. Constantly. That's the way I do it. Chris Braga [Summer Hill's senior minister] still preaches from paper; I cannot get him to change over. I think he just doesn't trust his iPad will stay alive for him. But I've been doing it for seven years and haven't had one glitch at all. I love the fact that it's just there, it's well lit and it's sizable, and I don't lose my place."

"When you turn a page in front of people, it's much more obvious that you're reading things than when you just flick your hand over something. And I think that helps the experience as well."

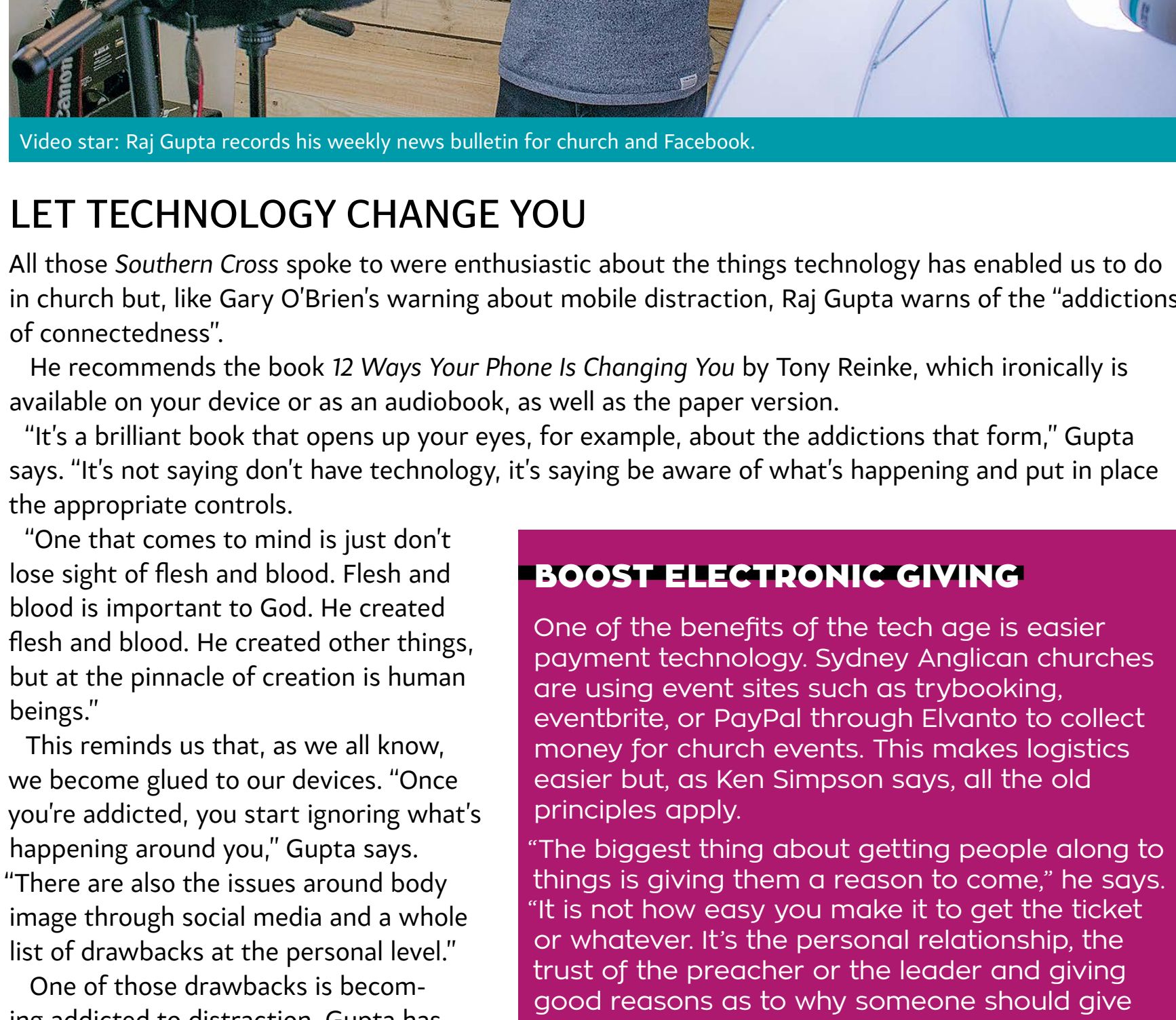
Gupta agrees. "I find preaching from iPad much better and I was surprised, because I didn't expect that I would. But I do. And the reason is, I don't have to navigate physically turning pages. You know, now it's the smallest of swipes on the screen. People don't even notice I'm doing it."

The Proclaim software can enable a collaborative approach to putting services together and even, with the use of companion apps, help people look up cross-references from the pew. Summer Hill's service outlines and news sheets land in people's inboxes on Sunday mornings – just another way to streamline the experience for members.

"We do nearly all our bulletins now via electronics," Ken Simpson says. "We do have a paper outline for people to take notes on and we have a paper connection card as well as an electronic connection card. But our church bulletin is now 90 per cent electronic. That is, we have a few there if people really want to take the paper one, but everyone else gets it electronically."

Toongabbie Anglican is also looking at ways to constantly improve, Gupta says. Already it has developed its own teleprompter for the regular video news bulletin it produces. "The video news takes some time during the week, yes, but it forces us to think more about what we want to communicate and to be more succinct."

The video news is played at each service and also goes up on the church's Facebook page. "What we try to do when someone walks in is to give them a contemporary – for want of a better word – experience of church," he says. "The gospel doesn't change, but the Church must constantly be changing."



Video star: Raj Gupta records his weekly news bulletin for church and Facebook.

LET TECHNOLOGY CHANGE YOU

All those *Southern Cross* spoke to were enthusiastic about the things technology has enabled us to do in church but, like Gary O'Brien's warning about mobile distraction, Raj Gupta warns of the "addictions of connectedness".

He recommends the book *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* by Tony Reinke, which ironically is available on your device or as an audiobook, as well as the paper version.

"It's a brilliant book that opens up your eyes, for example, about the addictions that form," Gupta says. "It's not saying don't have technology, it's saying be aware of what's happening and put in place the appropriate controls."

"One that comes to mind is just don't lose sight of flesh and blood. Flesh and blood is important to God. He created flesh and blood. He created other things, but at the pinnacle of creation is human beings."

This reminds us that, as we all know, we become glued to our devices. "Once you're addicted, you start ignoring what's happening around you," Gupta says.

"There are also the issues around body image through social media and a whole list of drawbacks at the personal level."

One of those drawbacks is becoming addicted to distraction. Gupta has a real-life example from church. "I was preaching once, and I just made the comment, 'If you're looking at Facebook now, please get off.' Thirty seconds later, somebody in the congregation sent me a Facebook friend request. The only reason I saw it was because I forgot to turn on aeroplane mode."

We can't close ourselves away from technology but we must learn to master it before it masters us. Perhaps we need reminders at the church door: "Please turn on aeroplane mode".

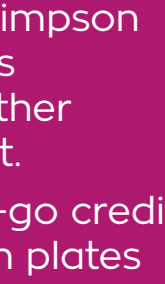
BOOST ELECTRONIC GIVING

One of the benefits of the tech age is easier payment technology. Sydney Anglican churches are using event sites such as trybooking, eventbrite, or PayPal through Elvanto to collect money for church events. This makes logistics easier but, as Ken Simpson says, all the old principles apply.

"The biggest thing about getting people along to things is giving them a reason to come," he says. "It is not how easy you make it to get the ticket or whatever. It's the personal relationship, the trust of the preacher or the leader and giving good reasons as to why someone should give up two hours or six hours of their time to come to an event."

As for weekly giving, software such as Elvanto has electronic giving integrated through the unfortunately named Tithely service. Simpson says interest in this has been slow in his congregation, with people preferring other electronic methods such as direct debit.

Some churches have installed tap-and-go credit card systems but tap-and-go collection plates were the subject of adverse publicity in the media last year when some Roman Catholic churches trialled their introduction.



Praying

WITH

Peter the Barber

Want tips on how to pray?
There's nothing like going to a master, writes **MARK EARNGEY**.

EARLY IN THE YEAR 1535, PETER BESKENDORF BECAME the most famous hairdresser of the Reformation. He was Martin Luther's barber and wrote to the great Reformer asking for advice on how to pray.

Peter not only had a reputation as the master barber of Wittenberg, he had a reputation for godliness and sincerity in his love for the word of God. He was one of Luther's oldest and best friends, so his request is not all that surprising. What is surprising, however, is that Luther took the time out of his immensely busy Reformation schedule to write a 34-page reply with theological reflections and practical suggestions about how Peter ought to approach prayer to the Almighty God. It was subsequently published and was so popular that four editions were printed that same year!

While this story teaches us a thing or two about Christian leadership and the pastoral care of individuals (read: a salutary reminder against the professionalisation of ministry), the letter itself provides some wonderful insights that may help trim our own prayer life into shape.

Luther begins by sharing some of his own experiences of prayer – and hopes that Peter might do better at it than himself! When he feels “cool and joyless in prayer” due to busyness (or more accurately the obstruction of the flesh and the devil), he makes it a priority to find some solitude in private or, if the time is right, solace at church. Luther shares that he quietly recites to himself – “just as a child might do” – the Ten Commandments or the Apostles' Creed, or some words of Christ or Paul, or the Psalms.

There is a realism here that we modern Australian evangelicals can surely relate to: busyness, dryness in prayer and the need for solitude. But there is a challenge in Luther's words, too: what scriptural truths can we easily meditate upon, or what credal truths flow from our lips with childlike ease?

Luther states immediately afterwards that it is a good thing to let prayer “be the first business of the morning and the last at night”. He advises his trusted tonsorialist to guard against those deluding ideas that say, “Wait a little while... first I must attend to this or that”. These thoughts get us into situations that arrest our attention and involve us such that prayer slides into the background of the day.

How true is this? It is all too easy to check the news or the social media feeds and, before we know it, the day has begun or the day has ended without prayer! Surely, we can think up some simple strategies to help with this – perhaps it may be as straightforward as leaving the mobile phone in another room?

Luther writes that when your heart has been warmed by reciting scriptural truths and is focused on God, to kneel or stand with folded hands, and to lift your eyes to heaven, speaking or thinking the following prayer:

“O Heavenly Father, dear God, I am a poor unworthy sinner. I do not deserve to raise my eyes or hands toward you or to pray. But because you have commanded us all to pray and have promised to hear us and, through your dear Son Jesus Christ, have taught us both how and what to pray, I come in obedience to your word, trusting in your gracious promise. I pray in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ... as he has taught us: Our Father in heaven, etc.”

The rest of Luther's letter provides models of how he personally prays through the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments (“use them as a flint and steel to kindle a flame in the heart”) and the Lord's Prayer (“I suckle at the Lord's Prayer like a child, and as an old man eat and drink from it and never get my fill”).

He breaks them into lines, or parts of lines, and then expands them into further prayer. Interestingly, he encourages each line of the Ten Commandments and the Creed to be fashioned into a garland of four strands: first the command or instruction, second a relevant thanksgiving, third a relevant confession, and fourth a relevant petitionary prayer. What is abundantly clear is that Luther perceives great depth to these standard features of the Christian faith – indeed, more so than many of us may perceive in them.

Given the absence of the creeds, the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer from some contemporary evangelical churches, one wonders whether we have lost some spiritual gems here? The creative recapture of these jewels of the faith may, in fact, bolster our corporate, family and personal prayer lives. If we are passionate about personal piety or church growth, then what good reason might we have *not* to be passionate about these scripturally sourced pearls of wisdom?

Of course, Luther is acutely aware of the danger of external religion and the danger of slavishly following a mere form of words (remember that Luther was a former Augustinian Eremitic friar – not a monk! – who knew a thing or two about religious adherence). He laments that in his own day the Lord's Prayer is “prattled and chattered so irreverently all over the world!” Indeed, he calls it “the greatest martyr on earth”.

But misuse of a good thing does not make the thing bad – especially when that thing is the living and active word of God. Therefore, says Luther, the Christian ought to pray in these trustworthy treasures to the heart, and in so doing, the Christian will warm and kindle his faith in the Lord Jesus.

After that, the simple letter is abruptly finished. And simplicity is what marks the letter from start to finish. In fact, the published form of the letter is entitled, “A Simple Way to Pray”. It is quite something, that one of the most erudite theologians of the early Reformation, and one of the most prolific authors of the same period, writes about prayer so simply. The reason is that, for Luther, the Christian life never moves on from the simple things of the faith.

One might write 95 thoughtful theological propositions to challenge the core tenets of late medieval Roman Catholic devotion and theology, but one never moves on from being a sinner in need of Christ. One might take a mighty and courageous stand before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (at the time the most powerful man on the planet, with the exception of the Chinese Emperor), but one never moves on from the struggle to pray after rolling out of bed in the morning, or before rolling back into bed at night.

One might turn the whole of Europe upside down with myriad publications proclaiming the saving slogan of “faith alone”, but one never moves on from the ABCs of the Christian life: the Apostles' Creed, the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer. And lastly, one might attain a senior and statesmanlike role in society, but one never moves on from a childlike prayer life: simple words, humble attitude, faltering at times but ever grateful.

We can only surmise how Peter Beskendorf prayed after receiving the great Reformer's advice. However, tragedy was to befall that beloved master barber. On the Saturday before Easter of 1535 he shared a meal with his son-in-law, Dietrich. And although the details of what took place are scant, we know that through intoxication the old barber fatally stabbed Dietrich and was subsequently exiled and spent the rest of his life ruined and impoverished. Perhaps Peter treasured Luther's words then, more than ever? One particular sentence of Luther's prayers would have spoken volumes into his sad situation: “in thy mercy, grant us a blessed departure from this vale of sorrows so that in the face of death we do not become fearful or despondent but in firm faith commit our souls into thy hands”.

There is something we can extract for ourselves from this historical context. For even struggling saints like us may find ourselves – or those we love – in hard times. Where is our God when we pray in such situations?

We can imagine Joseph praying to be rescued as he was sold into slavery, only to later say that “God meant it for good” (Gen 50:20). We can imagine Paul praying three times to have the thorn in his flesh removed – but God said no: “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor 12:9). And it is for this reason – God's hidden purposes – that we pray “Your will be done”.

In the meantime we must, amid the pain, hold onto God's promises that somehow he “causes all things to work together for good” (Rom 8:28) and cast our cares on him, knowing that he cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). We must keep remembering that he will give us strength sufficient for each day and that he has promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb 13:5; cf. Rom 8:35-39).

Personally, I'm always helped by what C.S. Lewis once said: “For most of us, prayer in Gethsemane is the only model. Removing mountains can wait”. I'm sure both Martin Luther and Peter the Barber would be in full agreement with that.

The Rev Dr Mark Earngey lectures in Christian Thought at Moore College.



So, a good and attentive barber keeps his thoughts, attention, and eyes on the razor and hair and does not forget how far he has gotten with his shaving or cutting. If he wants to engage in too much conversation or let his mind wander or look somewhere else he is likely to cut his customer's mouth, nose, or even his throat. Thus if anything is to be done well, it requires the full attention of all one's senses and members, as the proverb says, “He who thinks of many things, thinks of nothing and does nothing right”. How much more does prayer call for concentration and singleness of heart if it is to be a good prayer!

Martin Luther to Peter the Barber



How will it end?

CHRIS EDWARDS

IN LATE 2017 I OFTEN SAT AT MY FRAIL MUM'S BEDSIDE, CHATTING ABOUT THE LATEST NEWS. The marriage plebiscite was looming on the horizon and we talked about what the outcome might be. At 93 she was very concerned about what was happening in the wider world that her great-grand-children had entered.

People would visit her in the care home and join in on one side or other of the conversation. Passionate arguments rose and fell with a heat unseen since the Azaria Chamberlain inquest.

I'd come away confused. Why was the Christian view so misunderstood? I asked friends if they could explain what the Bible said about marriage. Some could. Others, no. I asked one, who confessed a foggy grasp of the issue, "How do you explain what you believe if you don't know what the Bible says?" He replied candidly, "I don't say anything".

Surely, after all the sermons, and all the Bible studies, we should be able to point out what the Bible says on such important issues. After all, more issues are heading our way.

For instance, law makers are looking into euthanasia.

Advocates for euthanasia, such as Andrew Denton, receive expensive air time to promote it. To rally support he addressed the National Press Club in 2016 complaining that "good people are dying bad deaths in Australia" and, not long after this, Victoria prepared legislation to legalise "assisted dying".

This year Victorians will have the right to request lethal drugs to end their lives. Premier Duncan Andrews said, "I'm proud... that we have put compassion right at the centre of our parliamentary and our political process". Is a lethal dose of drugs compassionate?

The NSW parliament has also considered this issue. In late 2017, sitting with Mum, a euthanasia bill failed in the Upper House by one vote. I suppose that's why Trevor Khan, the Nationals MLC who introduced the bill, said he would continue to talk with stakeholders to change the laws.

What will we say then? Will you explain what you believe on this issue? To be ready, I think we need to be aware of some falsehoods associated with the debate and what the Bible says.

1. Euthanasia "allows you to die with dignity"

This assumes living with chronic pain, dementia, disease or despair robs you of dignity.

But dignity comes from being created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 9:6). That's why people are precious even if they're suffering. They bear God's image. Dignity is bestowed by the very one who gives life. God values life so highly he outlaws murder (Ex 20:13) and places the wilful taking of life in direct opposition to love for your neighbour (Rom 13:9).

People should not be terminated because they think they're a burden, or because they feel useless. I watched Mum become frailer by the day. She couldn't dress, wash, or feed herself. She often just slept. She thought she was a burden to everyone. Yet she never had less dignity.

It is worth asking those who want to preserve dignity by terminating life how they define dignity. Is it usefulness? Is it happiness or health? If I am depressed, or my job is taken, or I am born with a physiological disorder, do I lack dignity?

The Bible is clear – dignity is bestowed by the God who created us in his image.

2. Euthanasia "is the answer to pain for the dying"

I want to say clearly I believe palliative care is the answer to pain for the dying.

The person who wrote Hebrews pointed out something that cannot be denied: *death wins* (Heb 9:27). Death's defeat will come when the new future comes (1 Cor 15:24-26) but, for now, we will know grief and pain.

Mum's decline brought a lot of pain and many tears. We knew the Hebrews passage would come true and we claimed the Corinthians promises as she declined. Palliative care gave us the time we all needed for precious conversations and for us to show her compassion and love.

Compassion is the real difference. Euthanasia brings a quick end. Palliative care provides time to be compassionate. The Bible has so many words for compassion: pity (Ex 33:19; Neh 9:19), mercy (Ex 34:6; 2 Ch 30:9), encouragement (Deut 32:36; 2 Cor 1:3). It teaches us that it comes from God (2 Cor 1:3; Phil 2:1), and it is something with which the Lord is filled (James 5:11).

Being compassionate is being like God. When someone is suffering and dying, palliative care is the best way to show them what God is like – compassionate and loving.

The sad fact is that palliative care like Mum received is not offered to many dying Australians. In some places there's no opportunity to receive it at all.

We need to talk to our friends, family, colleagues and Members of Parliament about the dangers of euthanasia and put forward the alternative pathway of readily available, compassionate palliative care.

Will you be ready to explain what you believe when this issue comes again? Having watched Mum die with dignity I can assure you I have plenty to say about compassion and love through palliative care.

The Rt Rev Chris Edwards is Bishop of North Sydney.

SC

Share the life-giving word

KANISHKA RAFFEL

Share the life-giving word

I WAS STANDING AT THE DOOR SHAKING hands after church when John* said to me, "Can someone please explain the Bible to me?"

I'd been praying for some time that God would lead me to someone with whom I could read the Bible. But, typically slow to see God's answers to my own prayers, I racked my brain to think of someone to read the Bible with John. "Come back next week," I said, weakly. Thankfully, John did return the following week, and by then I had worked out that I could read the Bible with him!

So we began reading the Bible together each week early on a Wednesday morning.

We started with Mark's Gospel and, on the first day, we read just the first three verses. "What is the Bible, anyway?" John asked. We didn't get far on that first day!

Over the weeks it was a privilege to sit alongside someone who had never read the Bible before and, as a result, had many original insights as well as many thoughtful questions.

John would often comment, "My culture is not like Bible culture, but Western culture is Bible culture". It was with some poignancy I had to inform John that Western culture is in the process of rejecting or forgetting its biblical heritage more and more.

As Mark's Gospel focused our attention on Jesus, John became more interested and challenged by him. Why did the disciples leave their businesses to follow Jesus, when that made them poorer, not richer? Why didn't Jesus heal the paralysed man straight away? Why did Jesus associate with people "below" him?

Eventually, we got to the death of Jesus and the curtain in the Temple tearing in two. We looked at what the Bible says about the curtain in the Old Testament and then in Hebrews: "we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body" (Hebrews 10:20).

John asked, "We can come into God's presence because of Jesus' death?" And then my friend paused for a moment and considered the outcome of Jesus' death on the cross. A trace of moisture appeared in his eye as he said, "This is amazing love".

After reading the Bible together for many months, John was baptised and confessed his trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins, and his desire to serve and follow Jesus as Lord for the rest of his life.

From the first chapter of the Bible we learn that God's word is sovereign and life-giving. By his word, God blesses and commissions the first humans and dignifies them, making them accountable for their obedience to the word he has given them.

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28).

The apostles teach the first Christians that it is through an "imperishable word preached to them" that they have been born again (1 Peter 1:25) and that they received the gift of the Holy Spirit when they believed the gospel that they heard (Galatians 3:2).

Scripture is able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 3:15) and the word of God's grace is able to build us up and keep us for our inheritance (Acts 20:32).

I know of no better way to share the gospel with others than simply sitting down together and prayerfully reading the Bible. Is there someone you long to see come to know Jesus, or grow in Jesus, who you could ask to read the Bible with you? It might be someone at church who is a young Christian, or someone who is just trying to find out what it's all about. Perhaps a neighbour or a work colleague with whom you could grab 30 minutes before work or over lunch?

Many of us have had the privilege of being fed the word of God for many years by faithful Bible teachers at church. Many "average" Sydney Anglicans are better trained in reading their bibles than the legion of evangelists and church planters who are taking the simple gospel message into unreached parts of Africa and Asia.

Chances are you could be a great encouragement and help to someone who would benefit from reading the Bible with a willing, humble and prayerful partner. And the encouragement flows in all directions!

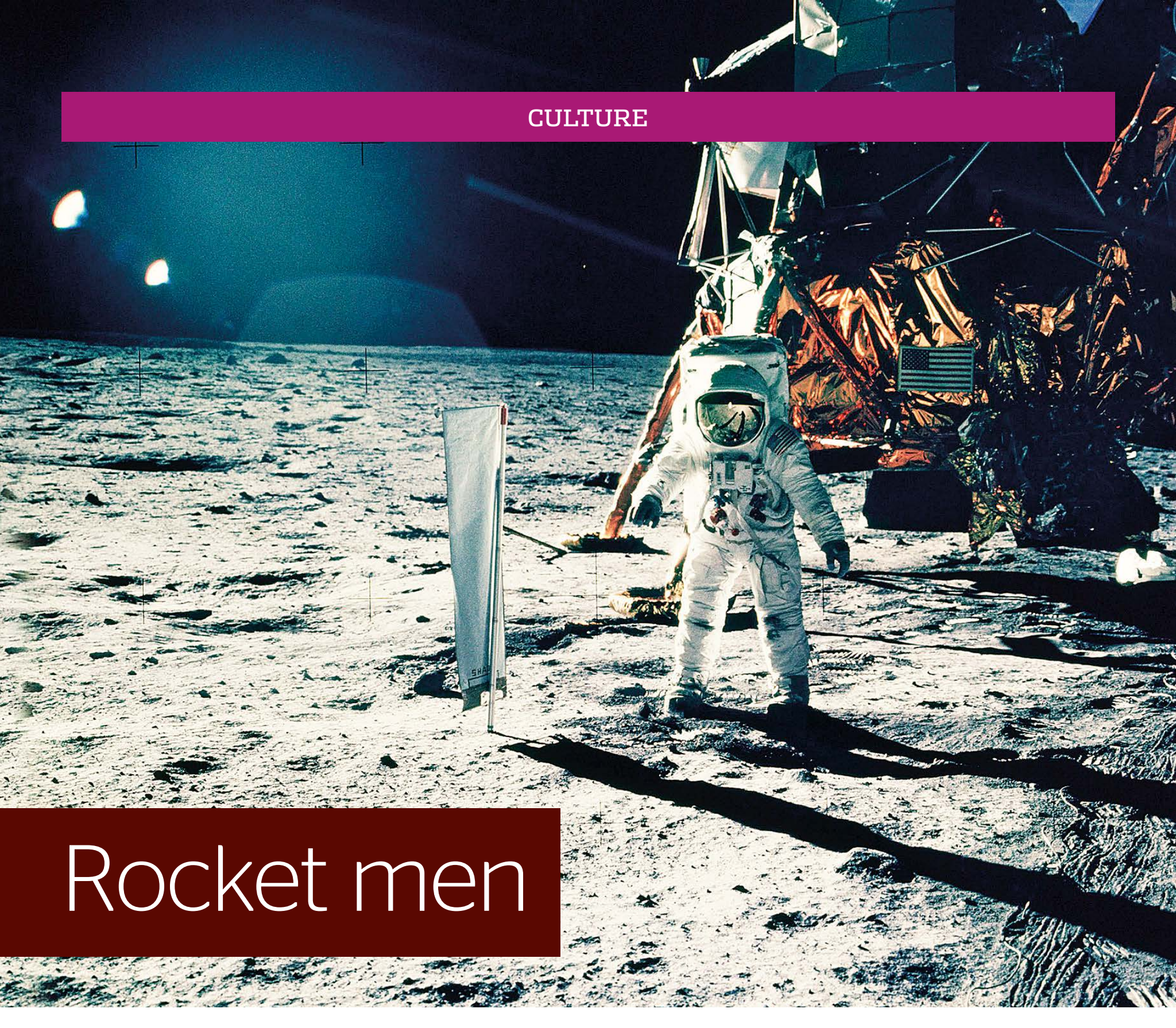
Why not ask your minister (and the Lord!) to help you find someone to read Scripture with? After all, we "do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God".

*not his real name

The Very Rev Kanishka Raffel is Dean of Sydney.

SC





Rocket men

JUDY ADAMSON

Apollo 11

Rated G

YOU KNOW HOW YOU GO TO THOSE true-story movies set in the space race era and wonder how accurate the details are? This documentary, which provides a fly-on-wall glimpse into the Apollo 11 mission, shows that – where it counts – the movie makers have been spot on for a very long time.

As the 50th anniversary of man's first landing on the moon ticks over this month, the makers of *Apollo 11* have gone through NASA's archives and knitted together a 90-minute film that takes the viewer through the mission rollercoaster: from preparation to lift-off, the moon landing and the jubilation following the astronauts' safe return to earth.

The film won an editing award at this year's Sundance Festival, and it's easy to understand why as you watch it. There is so much detail – so many names, voices, images and information – and it's a testament to the editors' skill that this moment in history has been brought so vividly back to life without bewildering the viewer. Rather, you're riveted to your seat as you watch the drama unfold.

Apollo 11 includes a good deal of previously unreleased TV and audio footage, and it's this that really gives the documentary legs. We see the thousands who camped out in cars and campervans near Cape Canaveral with their fabulous fashion, cameras and drinks of choice.

For them, it's a party. In the launch centre, it's deadly serious – although a few of the NASA boffins do turn around to take a look as the rocket lifts off.

Despite the viewer knowing what will happen, there is still remarkable tension as you watch those onscreen deal with last-minute problems the public knows nothing about. And, as the full-throated ignition sequence finally commences, you'd swear the whole rocket is exploding before your eyes before it slowly heads skyward.

Once the mission is off the ground the behind-the-scenes window opens further. We get to hear the camaraderie of the three astronauts, marvel at the distance they have travelled from earth, see vision from both sides as segments of the ship are jettisoned and hear Buzz Aldrin's music of choice.

We're also taken into mission control with three teams that work around the clock. The pressure level is always high – not because they don't know what they're doing but because any problem or miscalculation, however slight, could mean disaster.

Seen up close, the command module and lunar module look ludicrously flimsy. There is also the "burn" required to move in and out of different orbits, the in-space manoeuvres and the fact the astronauts are, well, ridiculously far away from home. After the fuel runs close to zero before the moon landing, mission control also admits there was "a bunch of guys about to turn blue" from holding their breath.

It's fascinating to see familiar footage in its proper context. For example, the footage of an astronaut often played in conjunction with Neil Armstrong's words as he steps onto the lunar surface is shown to be Aldrin, as Armstrong's exit (which I saw for the first time) isn't quite as good-looking – even though his steps are the ones that made history!

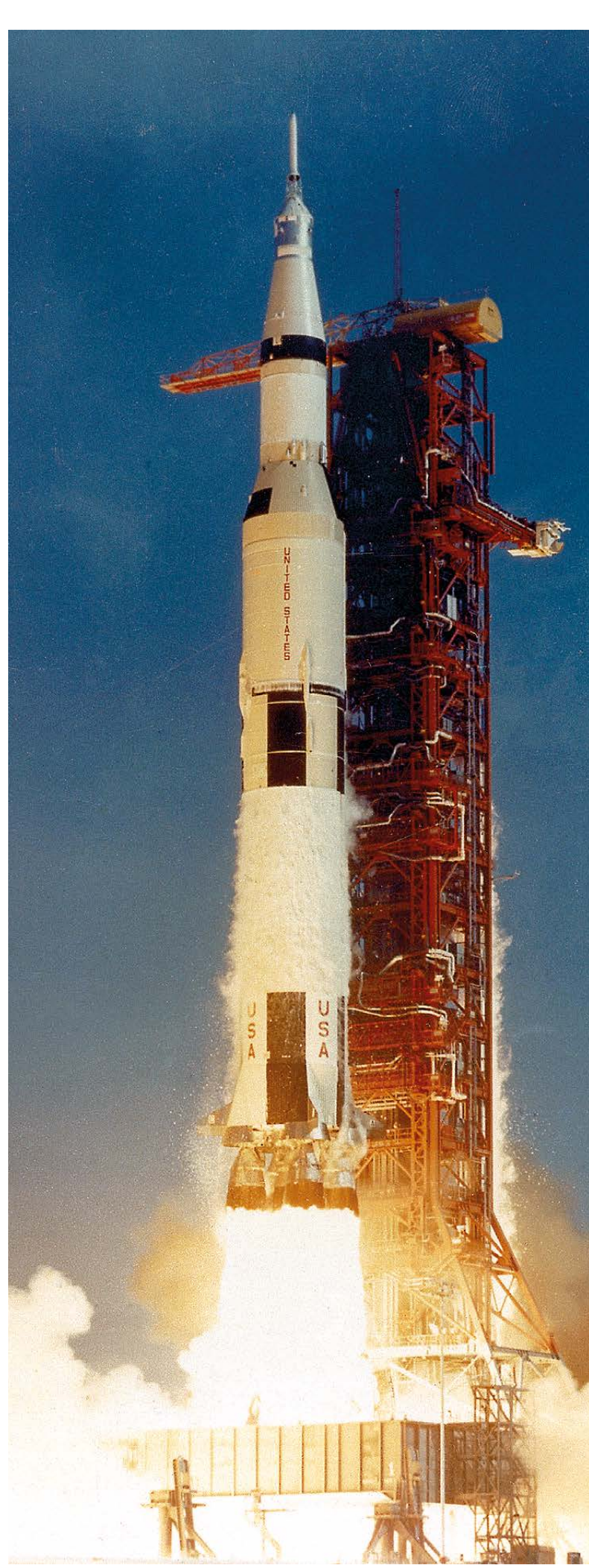
There's no voiceover or explanation beyond what we see and hear, and because of what we've been offered in past years through films such as *The Right Stuff*, *Apollo 13*, *The Dish* and *Hidden Figures*, you regularly feel like you're watching a movie about the events, rather than the events themselves.

It's an education to see these men (and yes, they were all men) do their jobs. It's also fascinating to see the technology available at the time, and how they were able to utilise it.

It was a different world, and in more ways than one. Several times we hear references to "godspeed" or prayers for the men's safety. In a video link from space Armstrong also wishes those watching "good night and God bless you, from Apollo 11".

Certainly many of those involved in the space program at the time seemed clear about whose world it was. These days, not so much. Yet, as you watch this, you not only glory in the God who "with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens", but marvel at the gifts and skills he has given us to make such feats of science and mathematics possible.

SC



Southern CROSS JULY 2019

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Well-aged beach boys

JUDY ADAMSON

Palm Beach

Rating: likely to be M

T'S A DELIGHT WHEN AN AUSTRALIAN FILM COMBINES TERRIFIC ACTING WITH A SMART script and great photography.

That might sound patronising, but it isn't meant to be. So many local films disappoint in one or more of these areas that I went to a Sydney Film Festival screening of *Palm Beach* without any real expectations. And that's despite a cast that includes Bryan Brown, Greta Scacchi, Sam Neill, Richard E. Grant, Jacqueline McKenzie, Aaron Jeffery and more, with Rachel Ward as director.

Plenty of great casts have languished in appalling films before now!

It isn't as though the central set-up – old friends getting together amid camaraderie, tension and songs from another era – hasn't been done before. What appeals is the way it's done.

The script, written by Australian playwright Joanna Murray-Smith and Ward, can be slightly play-like at times, but it fairly bubbles and fizzles with life. It's breezy, but not shallow and knowing without being obvious, allowing the viewer to learn the links between characters and the issues they face organically rather than having them spelt out.

The plot is simple: retired businessman Frank (Bryan Brown) is celebrating a birthday, so he and his wife Charlotte (Scacchi) host a houseparty for his days as part of a one-hit wonder band in the 1970s. The venue? Their jaw-dropping mansion, which overlooks Palm Beach. And when I say "overlooks", I mean you can see Barrenjoey Lighthouse from the balcony. Not bad.

There are old rivalries and secrets amid the earthy banter and clink of champagne glasses, but not only do the way these play out tend to avoid the obvious, the skill and experience of the cast makes the story utterly natural.

It helps that the actors are more than willing to be vulnerable for the camera. Wrinkles, extra pounds, grey hairs and weariness are highlighted rather than ignored by Ward, because part of the issue for these friends is their age.

This is the time of remembering and regrets for some, health reversals for others, wondering what the future will hold and worry about the capacity of the generation to come. And despite their uncertainties about the latter, it's the parents who provide us with the bulk of the swearing and alcohol consumption (there is also a short sex scene).

At one level it's a glossy ad for the northern beaches, or Australia in general. The feel of the movie is unashamedly Oz – the first image is of a sulphur-crested cockatoo, for goodness' sake – but thankfully Ward manages to avoid over-icing the cake. Having said this, there's clearly an eye to the overseas market, although in this case they'll be treated to French champagne and high-end seafood platters rather than Paul Hogan's beer and "shrimp on the barbie".

Prior to the screening Ward spoke of the genesis of the film. She and Brown, her husband of 36 years, spent a Christmas with friends overseas and observed that those in "the final quarter of their lives were having an existential crisis".

That's not how I would describe the experience of most of the characters in *Palm Beach*, although most of them are at a crossroads of sorts.

Some are regretting past choices, yet the choices they make now will also affect them, and others, for a long time – something all of us can relate to.

You don't have to be wondering if life has meant to be challenged by the questions the film raises. What is really important? Am I placing value in the wrong things, or beliefs, or people? Can I forgive, accept change and deal with imperfections in myself or others? And if I don't, will it one day be too late?

Palm Beach certainly isn't the best film you will see this year, but it is full of zest, good humour, a dash of drama, and great performances from a bunch of well-aged industry stalwarts.

SC

The film releases nationally on August 8.