

OCTOBER
2019

Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

Love, marriage and unbelief

CHURCH AND HOME LIFE WITH A NON-CHRISTIAN

PLUS

Do we really want God's will done?

Persecution in 21st-century Sydney

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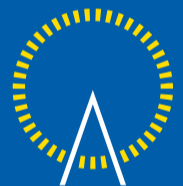


“I felt there was a real opportunity... to acknowledge God’s hand in the rescue”.

Simon Owen
Sydney News

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Abortion protests have limited success

Choose life: participants in the Sydney protest against the abortion Bill before NSW Parliament.

TWO MAJOR PROTESTS AND TESTIMONY TO A PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY BY ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES and other leaders has failed to stop a Bill that would allow abortion right up until birth. But the interventions and support of Christian MPs resulted in several amendments in the Upper House of State Parliament.

In the second rally, thousands of people opposing the legislation gathered at Hyde Park on September 15. The Catholic Archbishop Anthony Fisher opened the rally in prayer and it was closed in prayer by Archbishop Davies. Well over 8000 people attended, including Sydney Anglicans, Catholics, members of Greek Orthodox churches and the Armenian community, as well as people of other faiths. It was clear from TV pictures that it dwarfed a pro-abortion rally the day before.

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott spoke, expressing his disappointment in the NSW Government and describing the bill as "infanticide on demand".

A domestic violence counsellor told the crowd of a woman forced to drive to an abortion clinic by her abusive husband, who was then scared off by an anti-abortion protest at the centre. The woman then movingly revealed she was the baby that would have been aborted.

The crowd cheered and applauded when Chantelle, a pregnant woman, came onstage and, with the aid of a foetal monitor, broadcast her baby's heartbeat over the PA system.

Finance Minister Damien Tudehope spoke of the Bill's rush through Parliament with only a brief inquiry, despite 14,000 submissions. A bill about cruelty to battery hens drew only 500 submissions but was subjected to a lengthy inquiry.

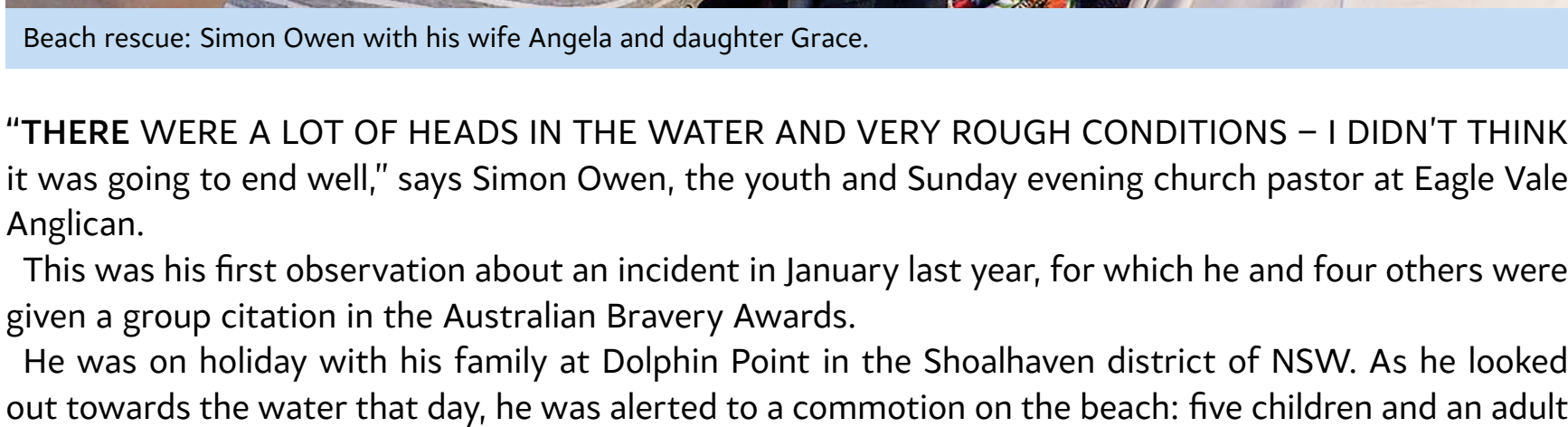
"The Bill that has been presented to Parliament does nothing to help doctors, it does nothing to protect women and it certainly does nothing to protect children," Mr Tudehope said. "The people of NSW deserve better than this."

Said Dr Davies: "We have never seen a Bill that has destroyed life like this Bill, in two centuries. Shame upon the Parliament."

"We are here today because we believe a child is precious to God, made in his image. Therefore that child is precious to us. We have heard the heartbeat of that unborn child in Chantelle's womb. There are so many other heartbeats which, if this bill goes ahead, will come to an end – ruthlessly, mercilessly and abominably. We must stand for life."

Mr Tudehope and MPs such as Tanya Davies and Kevin Conolly lobbied for amendments covering informed consent, sex selection and care for babies who survive abortion attempts. However, some amendments were watered down and at the time of printing the Bill was still under consideration.

Miracle at Dolphin Beach



Beach rescue: Simon Owen with his wife Angela and daughter Grace.

"THERE WERE A LOT OF HEADS IN THE WATER AND VERY ROUGH CONDITIONS – I DIDN'T THINK it was going to end well," says Simon Owen, the youth and Sunday evening church pastor at Eagle Vale Anglican.

This was his first observation about an incident in January last year, for which he and four others were given a group citation in the Australian Bravery Awards.

He was on holiday with his family at Dolphin Point in the Shoalhaven district of NSW. As he looked out towards the water that day, he was alerted to a commotion on the beach: five children and an adult struggling amid high waves, with only foam noodles and a boogie board for flotation support.

Mr Owen sees God's hand in the events that unfolded from there. His first thought was to grab his surfboard and dive in.

"Sometimes I just do things without thinking but I got down there and, thankfully, when I saw the heads in the water I thought, 'I could end up being another person needing rescue here'. You often hear those stories and my wife was pregnant at the time, so I had that in the back of my mind as well."

Seeing there was no safe way to enter the water with his surfboard, Mr Owen assessed the best way to help.

"People had already jumped in and they were getting swept towards the rocks, so the best thing for me to do was to climb down into the crevice part of the rocks. As they were getting swept in I was able to grab them and help pull them out. Thanks to God he helped me make a wise decision."

As rescuers in the water, on shore and on the rocks worked together, all the swimmers were saved.

"Amazingly, everyone got out of the water safely," Mr Owen says. "I think I was the worst injured, really. I had a cut that required five stitches but I thought it [the rescue] was a miracle." He had gashed his foot on the oyster-covered rocks but didn't notice until the drama was over.

"The most interesting thing was what happened afterward," he says. "I guess others thought it was down to luck, thank your lucky stars or good fortune or somebody is watching over us... As people were reflecting on what happened, I was able to say that I believe it was a miracle from God that everyone survived and we should give him thanks that everyone was okay."

"I felt there was a real opportunity there, immediately afterwards, to acknowledge God's hand in the rescue and that it wasn't just chance. I think God used people's abilities and I wanted to give him the credit and glory."

The mother of one of the rescued children nominated the group for the award.

"At first I thought, is it necessary?" Mr Owen recalls. "But that was the way she wanted to thank us, by nominating us for these awards. I thought, we will see where God leads this and it led to further opportunities."

He was able to share his faith with that young mum on the day of the rescue, reflecting "not only on the saving that happened that day but also to point back to Jesus being our saviour in all of life".

The awards were presented in August by the Governor-General, David Hurley. Mr Owen says the incident has had ramifications for that mum's family and for his ongoing ministry as well.

Seeing the ongoing thankfulness and gratitude of that family has made him think more deeply about his own faith in Jesus, his rescue from sin, and "Do I have that same attitude of thankfulness and gratefulness every day as much as I should?"

"I've got a second chance: my life is different," he says. "It has given me a deeper appreciation of just what it means to be saved through now being involved in a rescue experience."

"That's something that has been powerful for me personally and I now have an opportunity when others speak about it. Christian or non-Christian, I can share that view with them."

Religious freedom Bill moves to "critical stage"

ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES HAS WELCOMED THE release of the Federal Government's draft Religious Discrimination Bill but cautions more work is needed on the detail.

The Bill will be finalised late this month after a draft was released by Attorney General Christian Porter (right) in August.

"We welcome the Attorney General's clear statement that greater protections are needed for people of faith, or of none, concerning freedom of speech, conscience and belief," Dr Davies says. "Other attributes such as sex and race are protected – it is only logical that faith be among those."

While media has concentrated on the case of Israel Folau, the Archbishop says the issues are much wider:

"We want MPs of all parties to understand the framework of faith by which religious organisations operate in all areas of society, from care ministries to health and education."

Mr Porter described the proposed laws as a "necessary and difficult" balancing exercise, which would be used as a "shield" rather than a "sword". The Government would also establish a Freedom of Religion Commissioner in the Australian Human Rights Commission.

However, the chairman of the Religious Freedom Reference Group, Bishop Michael Stead, says there are several crucial issues still to be addressed in the Bill. One of these concerns the definition of religious bodies that undertake some commercial activities. As it stands, religious groups running hospitals or aged care facilities would not be considered "religious bodies".

"Many religious bodies use a market mechanism in the provision of goods and services, which in no way diminishes the religious character of those activities," Dr Stead says. "That clause needs amendment."

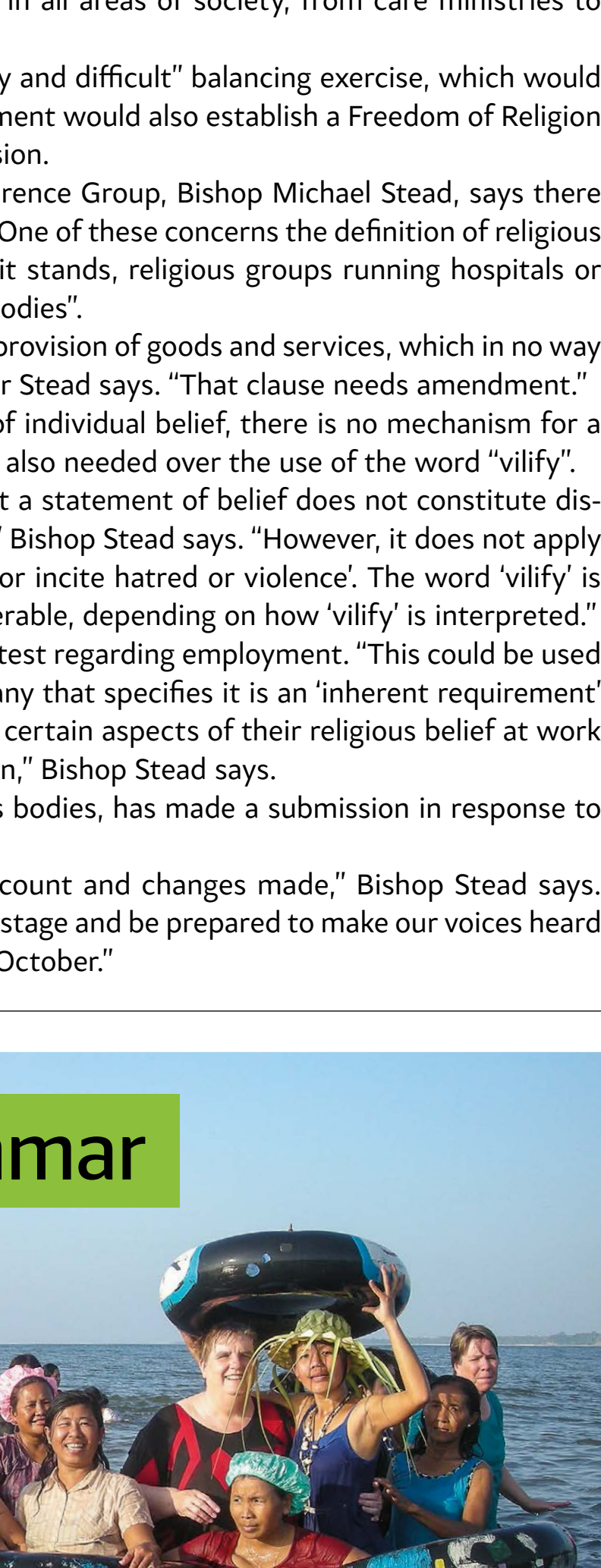
Furthermore, while the bill is clear on the protection of individual belief, there is no mechanism for a religious body to establish its religious beliefs. Clarity is also needed over the use of the word "vilify".

"We welcome Clause 41 of the Bill, which declares that a statement of belief does not constitute discrimination for the purposes of anti-discrimination law," Bishop Stead says. "However, it does not apply to a statement that 'would, or is likely to harass, vilify or incite hatred or violence'. The word 'vilify' is not defined, which may leave statements of belief vulnerable, depending on how 'vilify' is interpreted."

Another issue is the so-called "inherent requirements" test regarding employment. "This could be used to authorise religious discrimination by a secular company that specifies it is an 'inherent requirement' that, for example, staff must refrain from talking about certain aspects of their religious belief at work – this would have a chilling effect on religious expression," Bishop Stead says.

The Diocese of Sydney, as well as many other religious bodies, has made a submission in response to the exposure draft of the Bill.

"Much depends on our concerns being taken into account and changes made," Bishop Stead says. "Christians should be aware that this issue is at a critical stage and be prepared to make our voices heard with local MPs when the Bill goes to Parliament in late October."



Hope grows in Myanmar

WHEN GOD BLESSES THE WORK DONE IN HIS NAME, IT'S AMAZING WHAT CAN HAPPEN. This has been the experience of three Sydney women – who travel to Myanmar each year to teach the Bible and help care for two orphanages year-round.

The Rev Jackie Stoneman from Mary Andrews College, and Chris Gerardis and Lynn Pickersgill from Anglicare, were invited to go to Myanmar as part of a short-term mission in 2008. After their first experience, all three wanted very much to continue helping the local church, so have been going back ever since.

"There's obviously a great need because the women who come to these conferences, many of them can't read and they haven't necessarily got a good biblical background," Miss Stoneman says. "If you teach the women, they then pass it on to their children and other people in their churches, so the archbishop [Stephen Than Myint Oo] saw it as key to build them up because it would have the greatest impact."

The conferences, which host up to 150 women, are run through the Mothers' Union in Myanmar in different parts of the country – although some locations aren't always safe because Christians are persecuted.

Women travel for up to four days to get to each conference, so the Australians began Growing Hope in order to raise funds to pay for the women's travel, plus meals while the conferences are on. They pay their own expenses for each visit.

Over the years the conference teaching has included a big picture view of the Bible, working through a specific book such as Ephesians, as well as sessions on issues ranging from forgiveness to health, and conflict to budgeting.

"The Burmese culture's a rote culture... and we're trying to teach them some different skills for understanding the Bible," Miss Stoneman says. "We've introduced small groups, and the concept of asking questions. In their culture that's seen as very rude – if you ask questions, you don't respect the teacher!"

"That's something we've very carefully tried to work on, saying in Australia the teachers love it when you ask questions because it shows you're interested. This is the value of going long term, because when we go back we say, 'Do you have any questions?' – and people will ask them. But it's taken a long process to build that sort of thing."

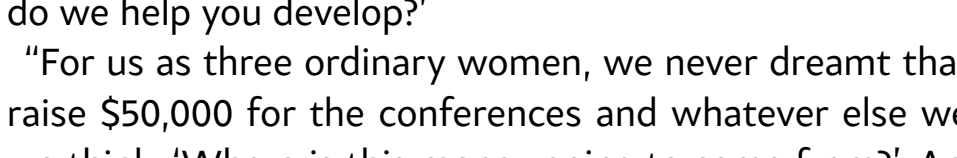
The women also linked up with a large orphanage on their first visit to Myanmar and have added another as time has gone on. The orphanages, known as "families", look after true orphans as well as children whose parents have sent them from parts of the country where it's not safe for them, or where there aren't any schools.

Both orphanages are run by Christians. In addition to paying for the orphanage directors' training at a Christian business school, the three women have raised money over the years to pay for projects that will eventually make the orphanages self-sustaining. The list of purchases has included land, a tractor, water purification equipment, chickens, rice, pigs and a fish pond.

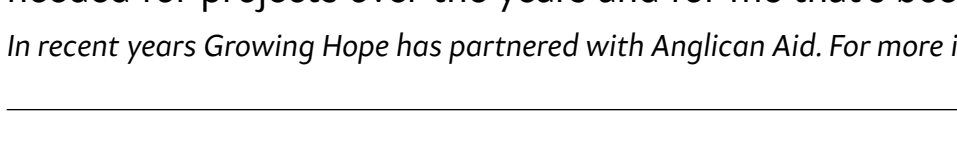
Miss Stoneman says... the larger orphanage, Galilee Family, is now almost self-sustaining "and that's been really exciting to see... It hasn't been, 'Here's what you're to do and we'll keep funding you', it was, 'How do we help you develop?'"

"For us as three ordinary women, we never dreamt that God would do what he's done. Each year we raise \$50,000 for the conferences and whatever else we can towards the orphanages, and each year we think, 'Where is this money going to come from?' And it does come, along with money that's been needed for projects over the years and for me that's been so encouraging."

In recent years Growing Hope has partnered with Anglican Aid. For more information about the ministry see <http://growing-hope.org>



Top: (From left) Chris Gerardis, Jackie Stoneman and Lynn Pickersgill.



Bottom: a Mothers' Union conference in Yangon.

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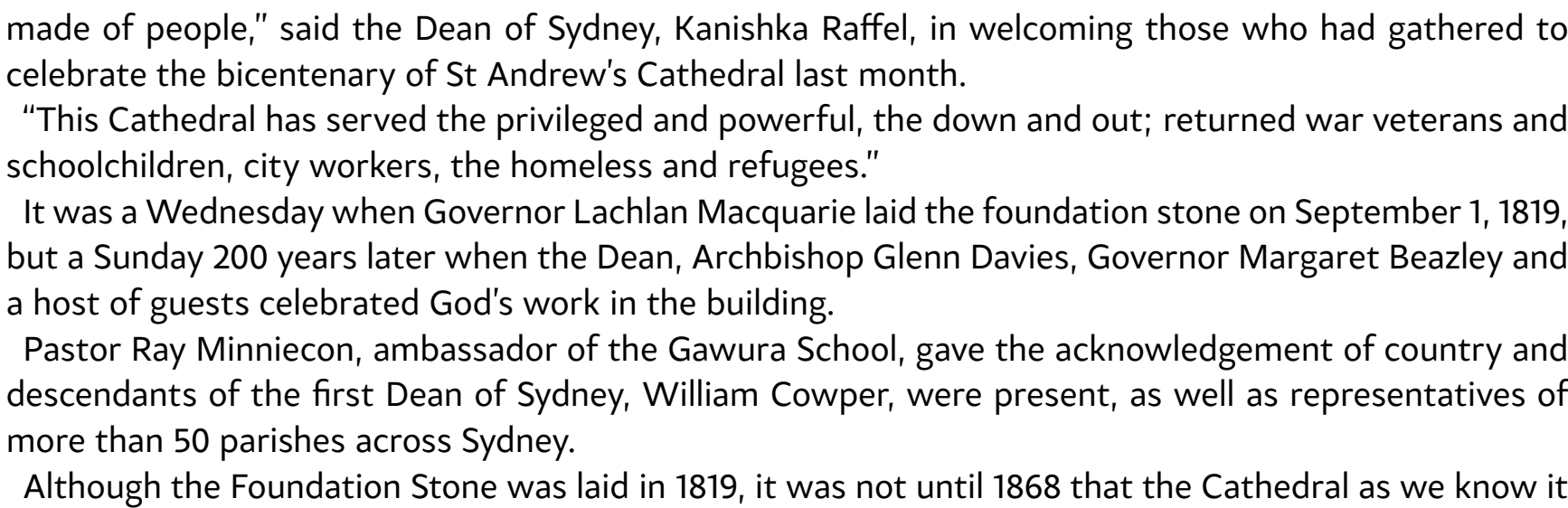
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Former Archbishop Peter Jensen and Pastor Ray Minniecon.

"GOD IS BUILDING FOR HIMSELF A TEMPLE – MADE NOT OF STONE AND SOARING ARCHES BUT made of people," said the Dean of Sydney, Kanishka Raffel, in welcoming those who had gathered to celebrate the bicentenary of St Andrew's Cathedral last month.

"This Cathedral has served the privileged and powerful, the down and out; returned war veterans and school-leavers, city workers, the homeless and refugees."

It was a Wednesday when Governor Lachlan Macquarie laid the foundation stone on September 1, 1819, but a Sunday 200 years later when the Dean, Archbishop Glenn Davies, Governor Margaret Beazley and a host of guests celebrated God's work in the building.

Pastor Ray Minniecon, ambassador of the Gawwra School, gave the acknowledgement of country and descendants of the first Dean of Sydney, William Cowper, were present, as well as representatives of more than 50 parishes across Sydney.

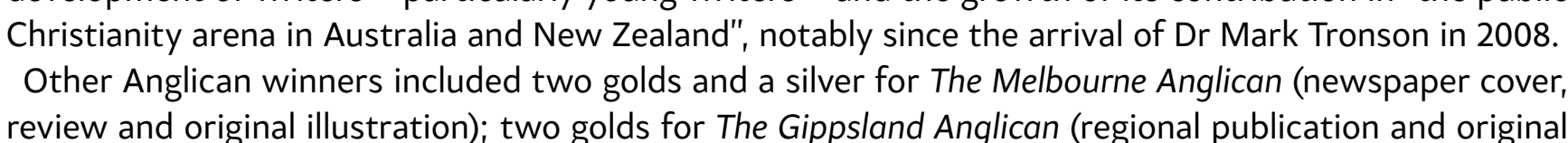
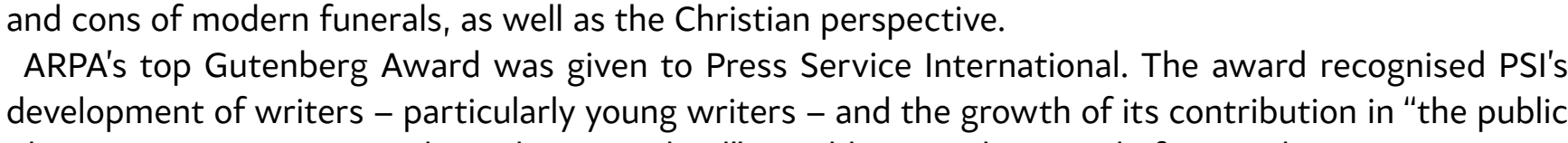
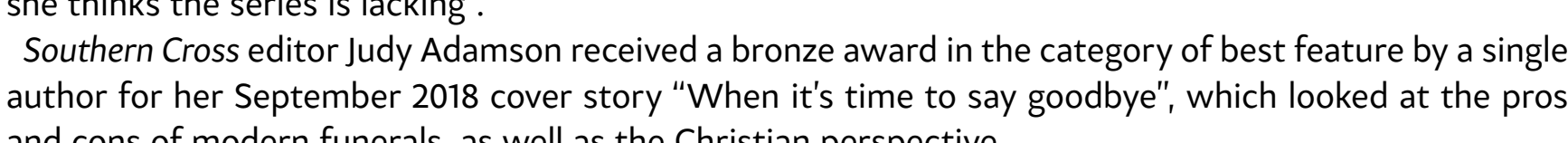
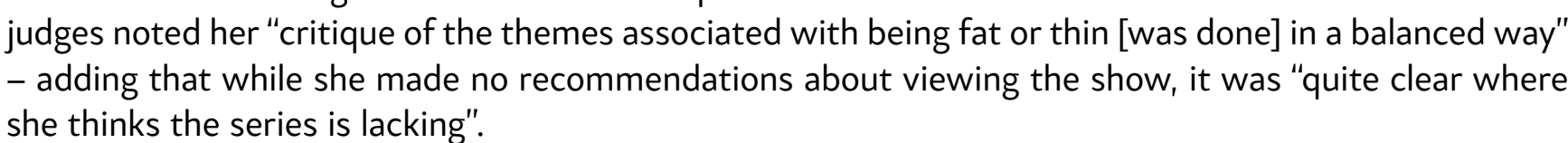
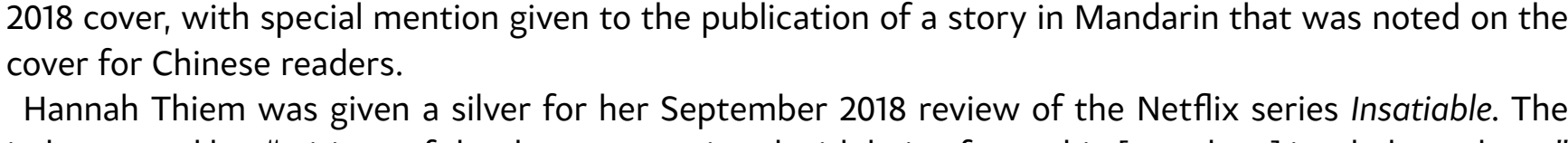
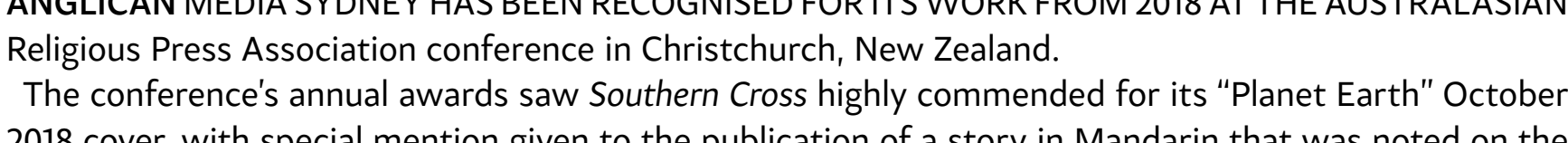
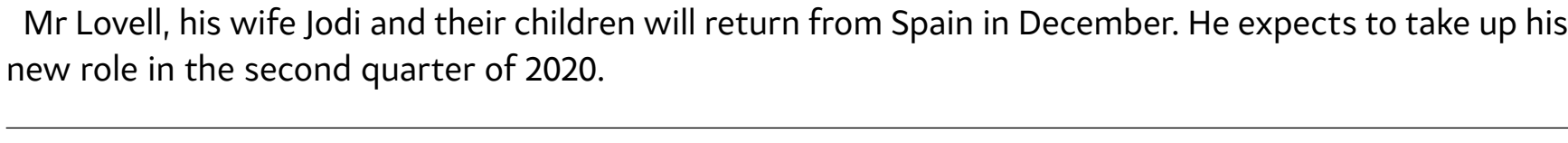
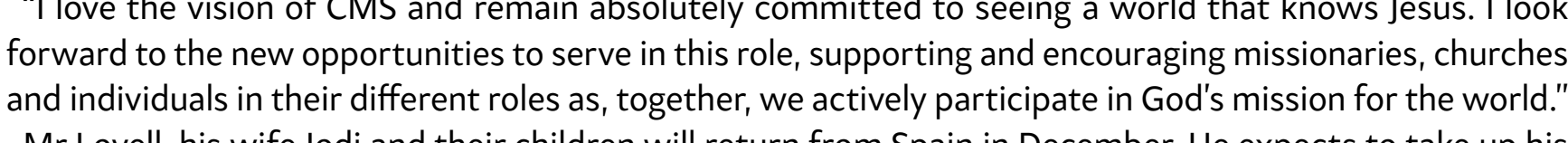
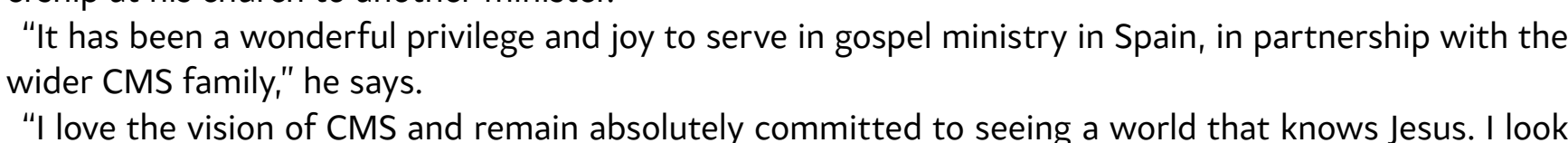
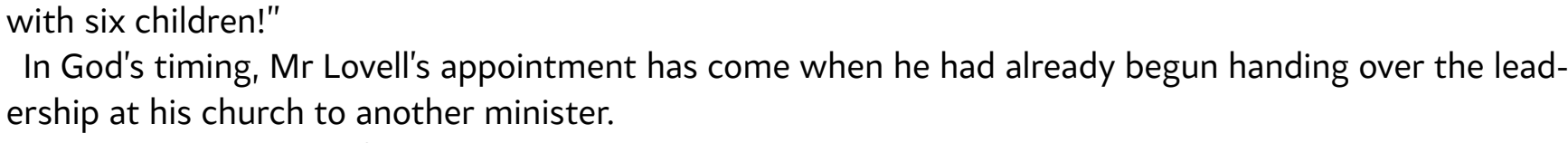
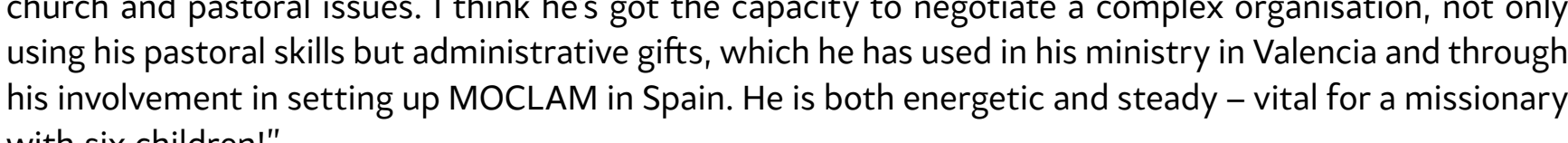
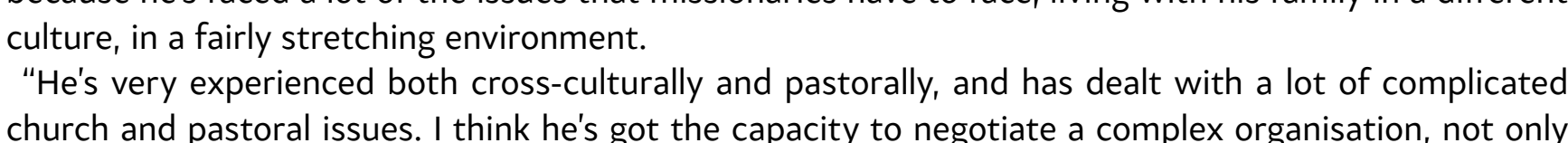
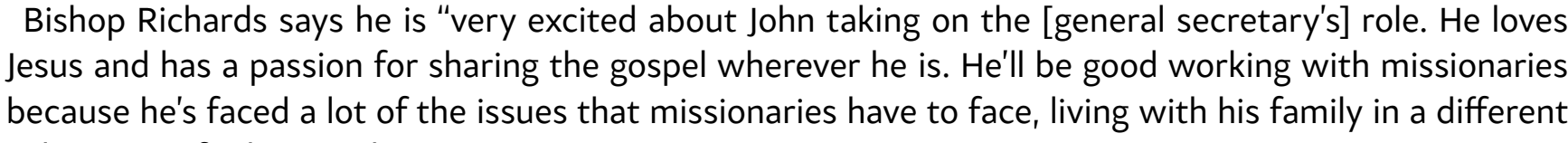
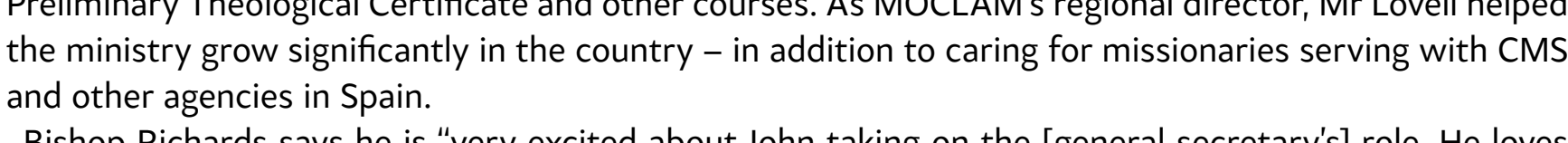
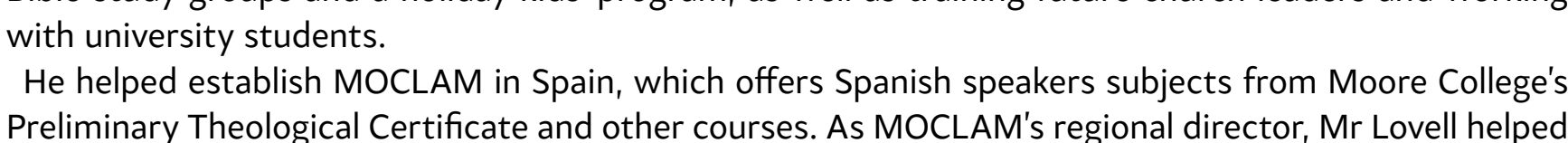
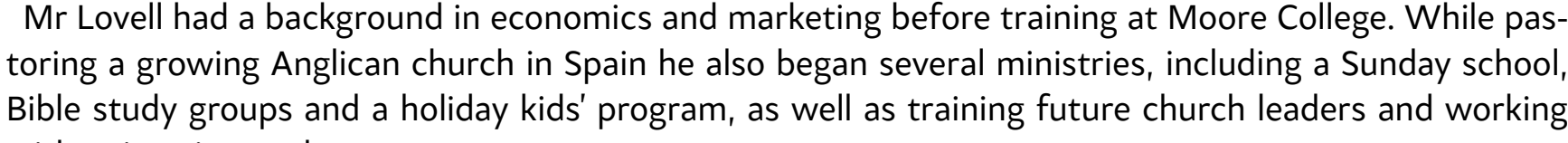
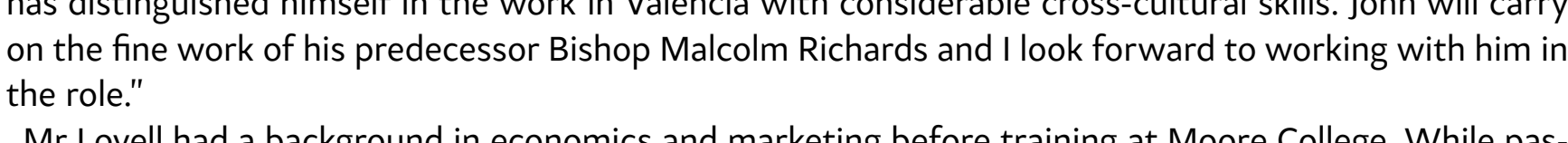
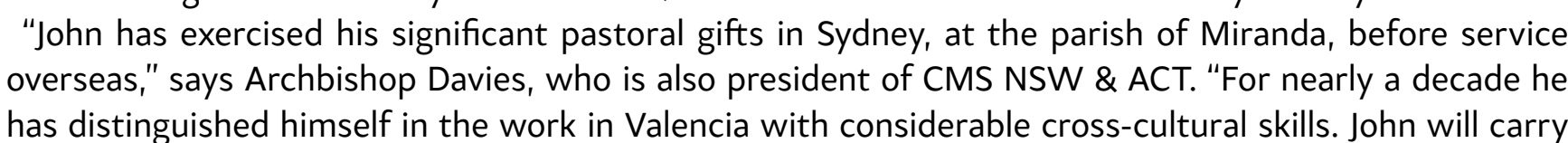
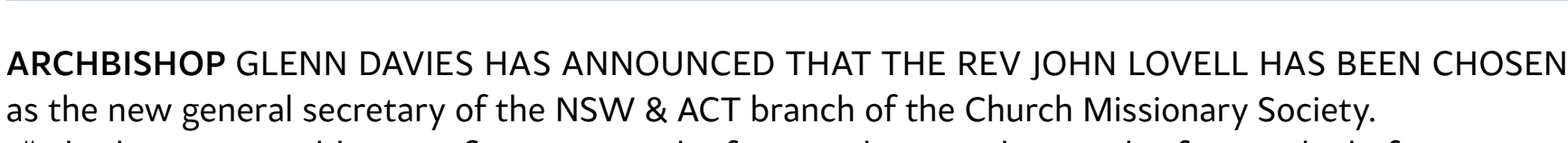
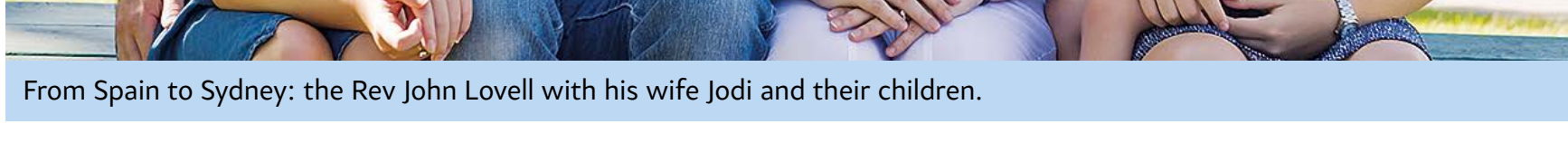
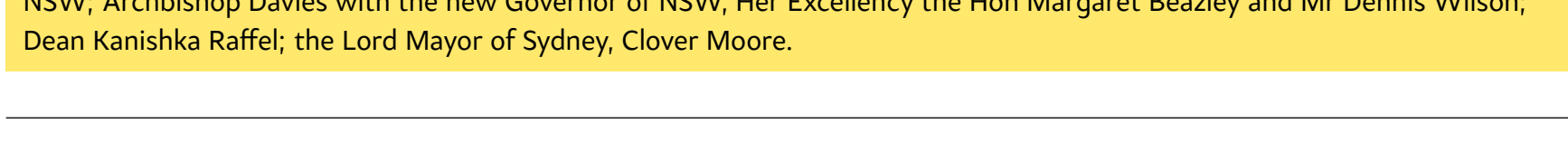
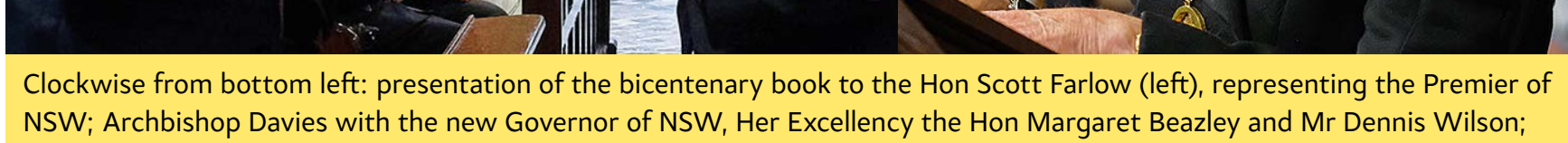
Although the Foundation Stone was laid in 1819, it was not until 1868 that the Cathedral as we know it today was opened. The bicentennial service also marked the launch of an official publication, *Proclaiming Christ in the Heart of the City*, a series of essays about three significant deans in St Andrew's history.

The book traces the ministries of Dean Cowper as well as later deans Edward Talbot and Lance Shilton. Moore College's Jane Toher also contributed a special essay on Mrs Margaret Cowper.

The present Dean declared, "Today we commemorate the laying of the foundation stone of this Cathedral. We have just acknowledged the inhabitants of this land long before that. But this Cathedral belongs to a much bigger story, of which we heard in the sentences from Paul's letter to the Ephesians".

Dean Raffel said, "Jesus is the cornerstone of God's temple – the light of life, the fountain of grace, the hope of the nations, the consummation of the ages. This Cathedral exists so that people may meet Jesus in his works of compassion, in his words of wisdom, supremely in his death-destrorying, kingdom-building work of death and resurrection; so that all may find refuge in his love and rejoice in his grace."

Symbolic of that new life was the fact that two adults, a man and a woman, were baptised and declared their faith in Jesus during the service. This, more than anything that was said, proved a fitting tribute to those who had laboured for the gospel at St Andrew's over the past 200 years.



New head for CMS

ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE REV JOHN LOVELL HAS BEEN CHOSEN as the new general secretary of the NSW & ACT branch of the Church Missionary Society.

"John has exercised his significant pastoral gifts in Sydney, at the parish of Miranda, before service overseas," says Archbishop Davies, who is also president of CMS NSW & ACT. "For nearly a decade he has distinguished himself in the work in Valencia with considerable cross-cultural skills. John will carry on the fine work of his predecessor Bishop Malcolm Richards and I look forward to working with him in the role."

Mr Lovell had a background in economics and marketing before training at Moore College. While pastoring a growing Anglican church in Spain he also began several ministries, including a Sunday school, Bible study groups and a holiday kids' program, as well as training future church leaders and working with university students.

He helped establish MOCLAM in Spain, which offers Spanish speakers subjects from Moore College's Preliminary Theological Certificate and other courses. As MOCLAM's regional director, Mr Lovell helped the ministry grow significantly in the country – in addition to caring for missionaries serving with CMS and other agencies in Spain.

Bishop Richards says he is "very excited about John taking on the [general secretary's] role. He loves Jesus and has a passion for sharing the gospel wherever he is. He'll be good working with missionaries because he's faced a lot of the issues that missionaries have to face, living with his family in a different culture, in a fairly stretching environment."

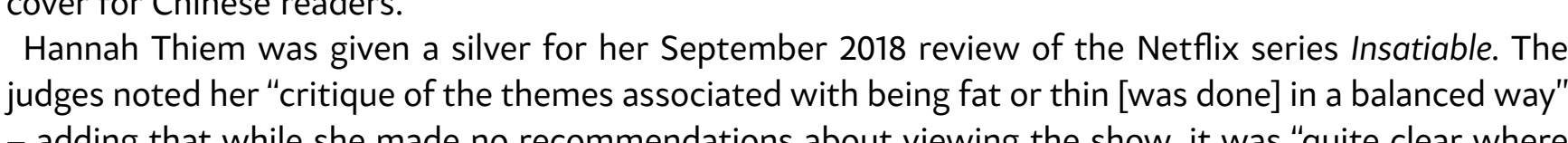
"He's very experienced both cross-culturally and pastorally, and has dealt with a lot of complicated church and pastoral issues. I think he's got the capacity to negotiate a complex organisation, not only using his pastoral skills but administrative gifts, which he has used in his ministry in Valencia and through his involvement in setting up MOCLAM in Spain. He is both energetic and steady – vital for a missionary with six children!"

In God's timing, Mr Lovell's appointment has come when he had already begun handing over the leadership at his church to another minister.

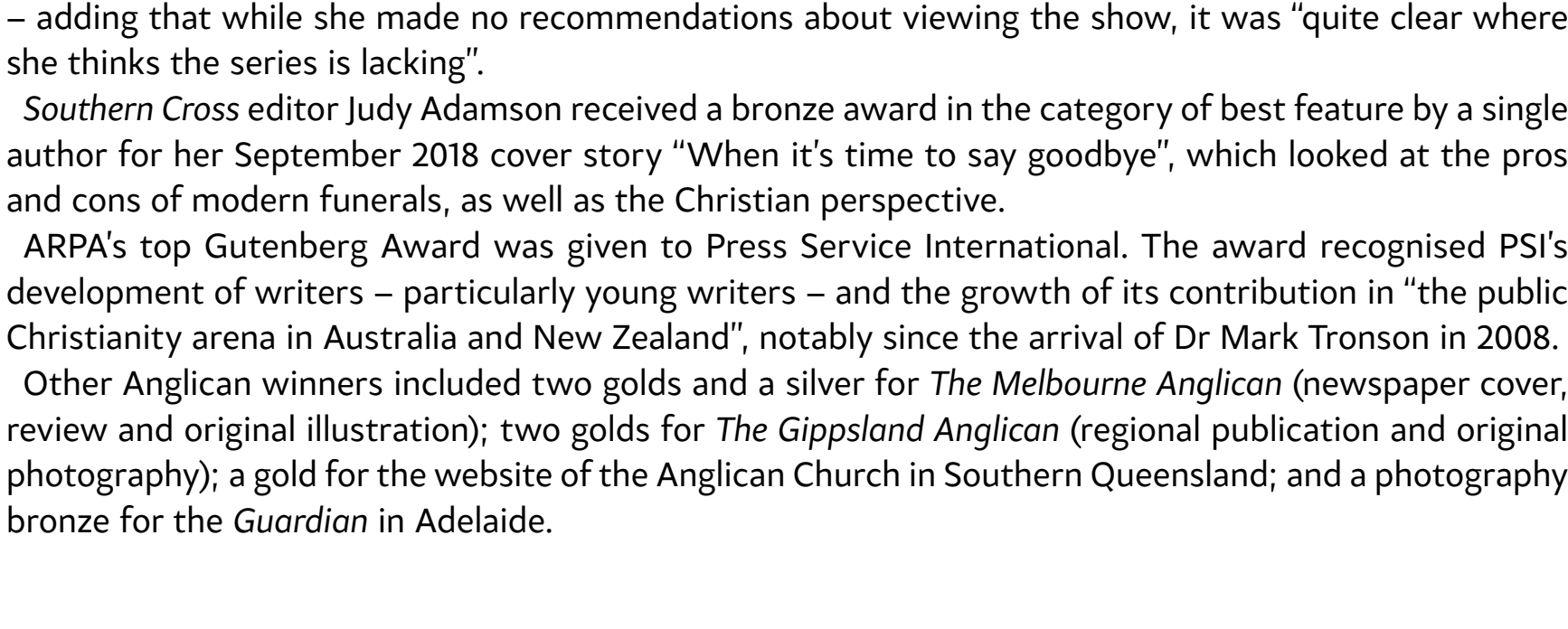
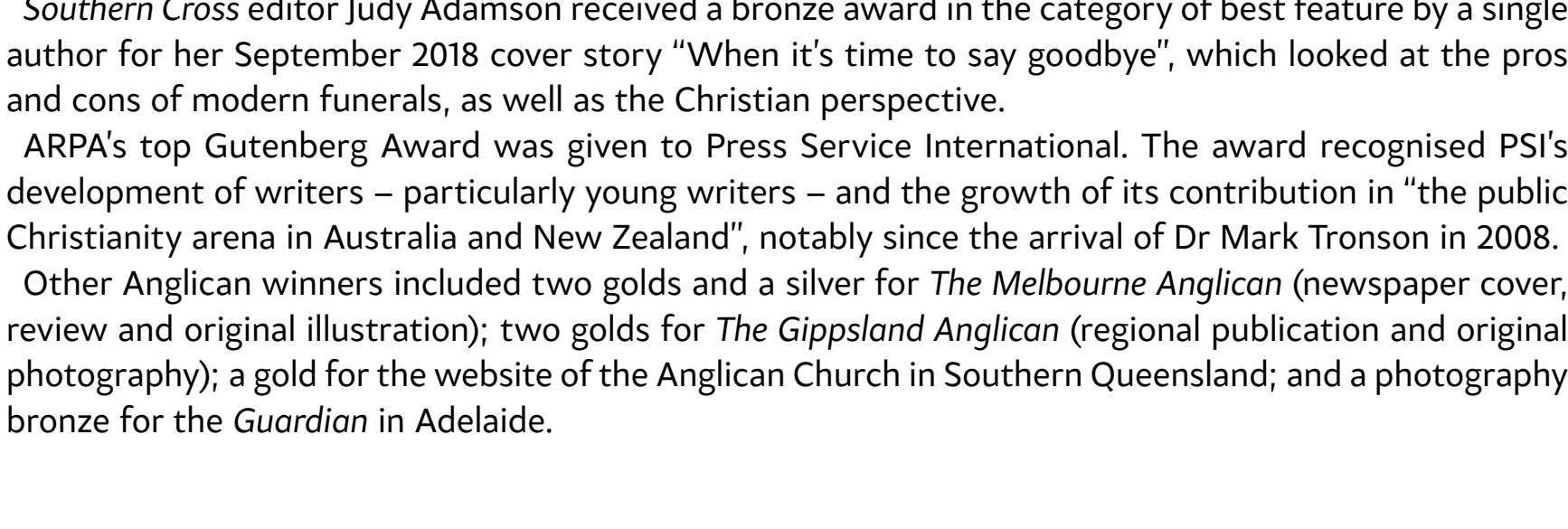
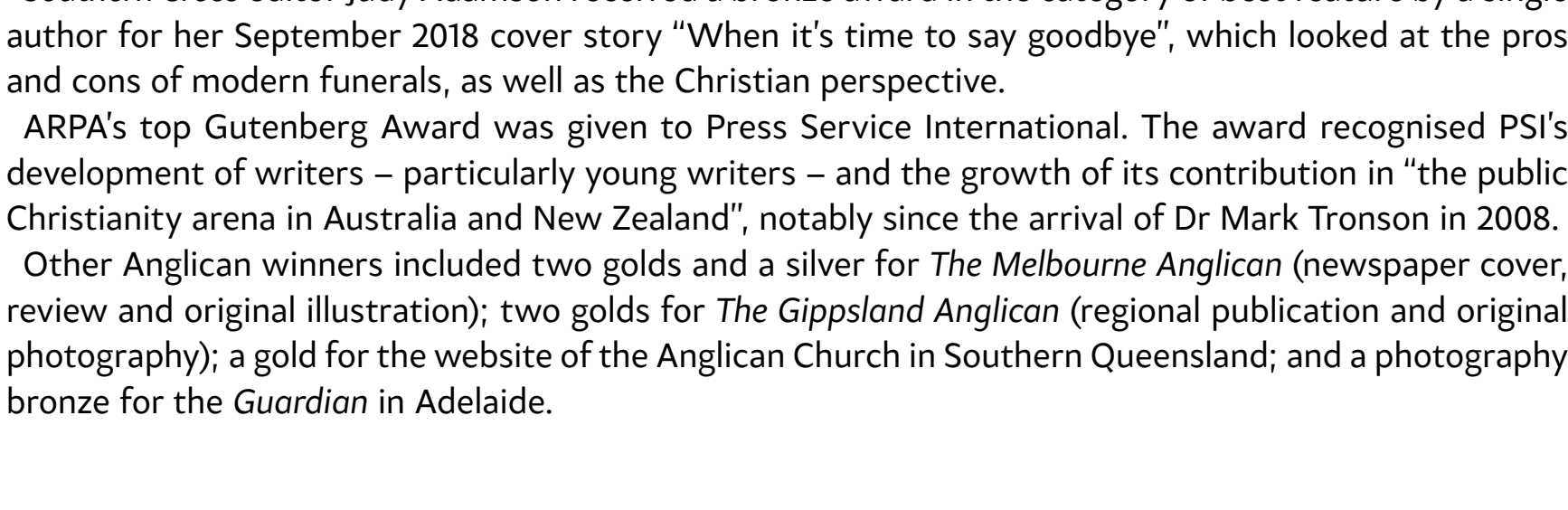
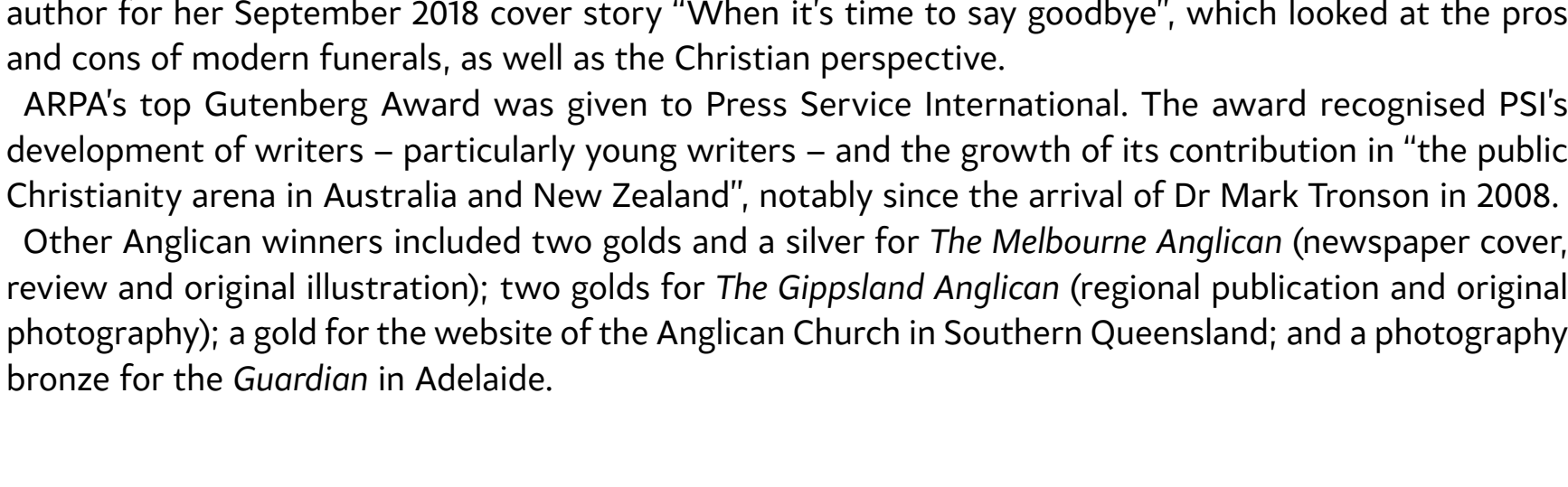
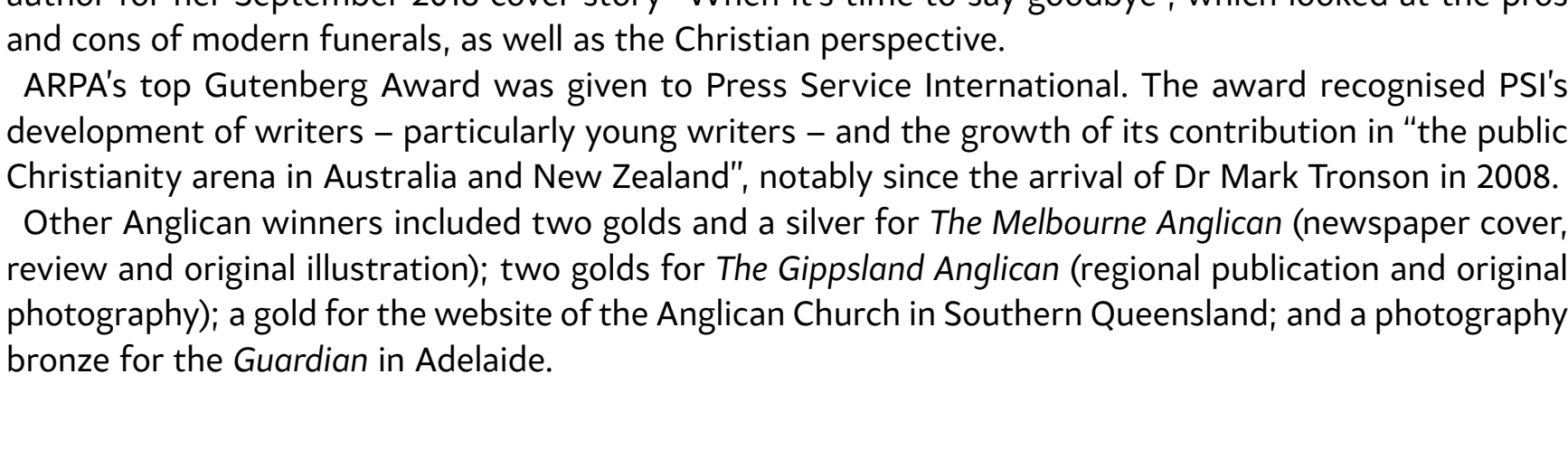
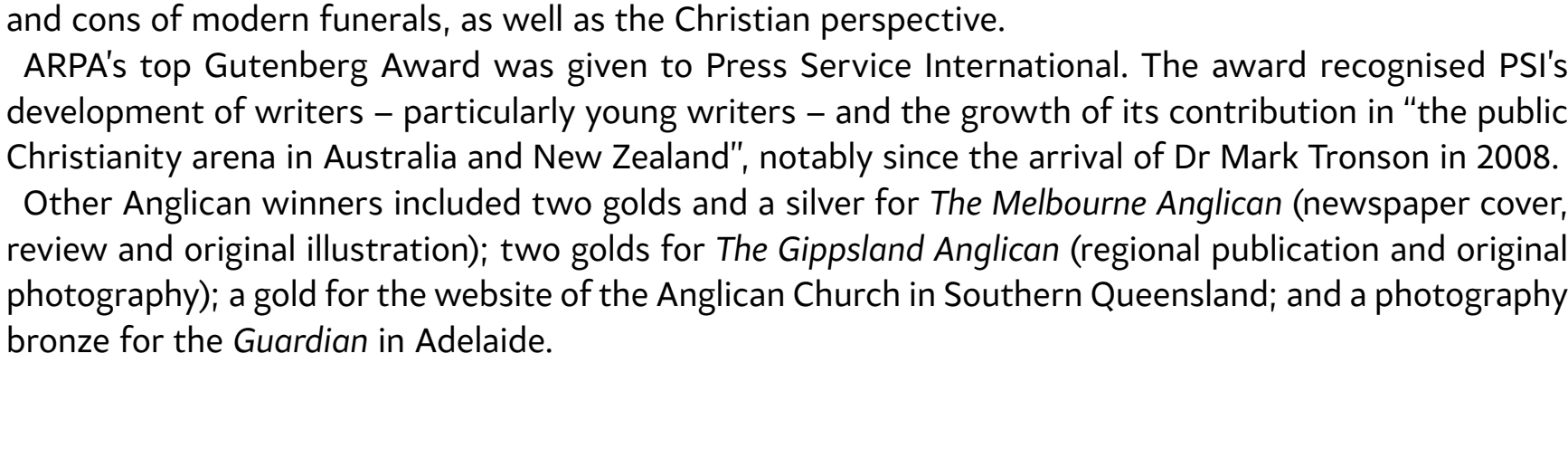
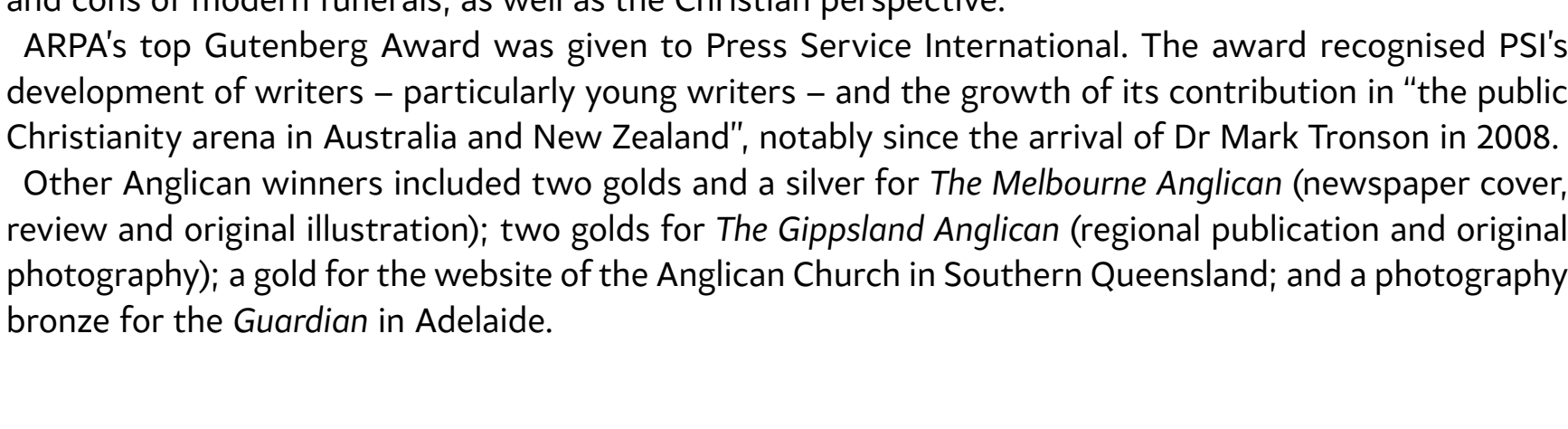
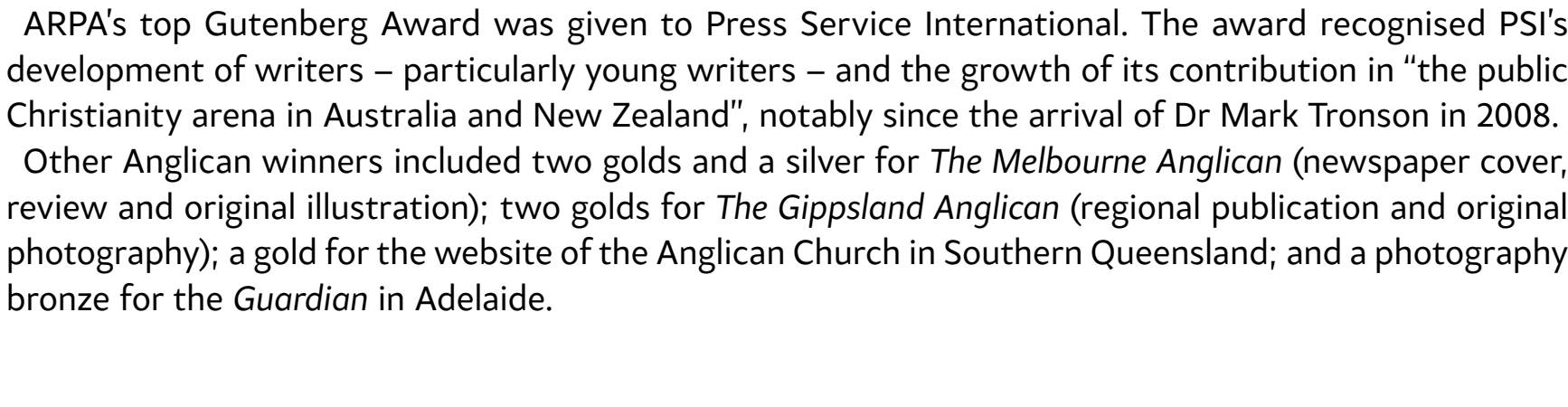
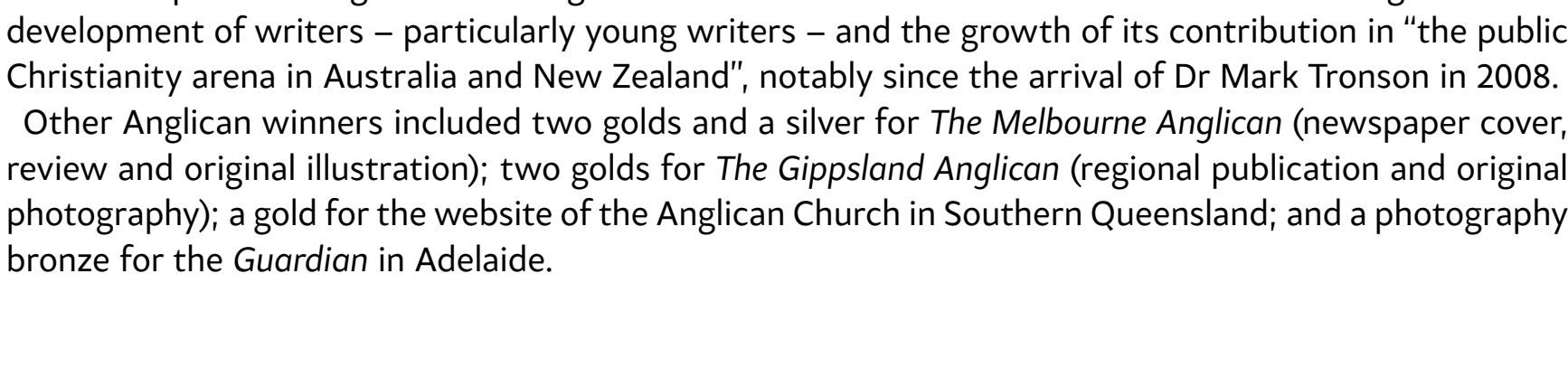
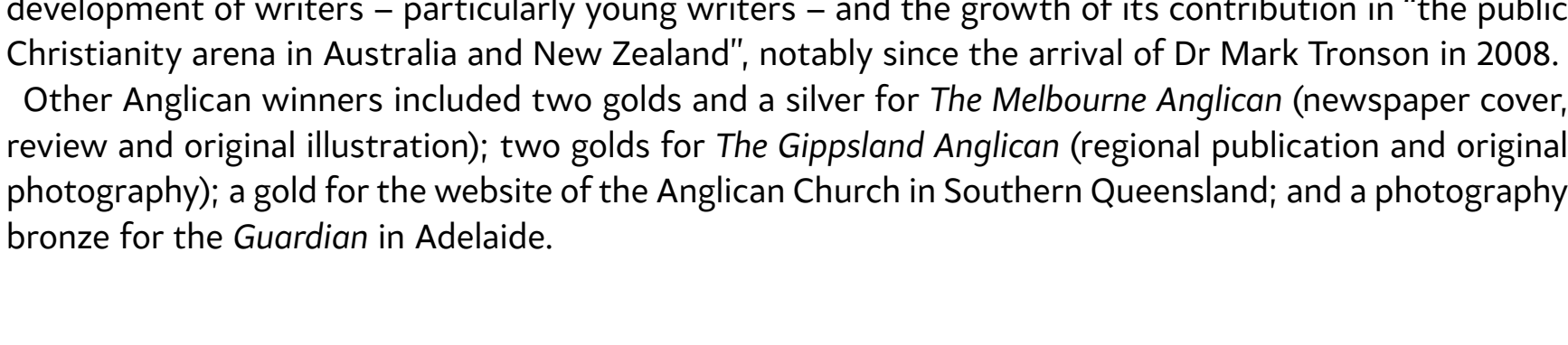
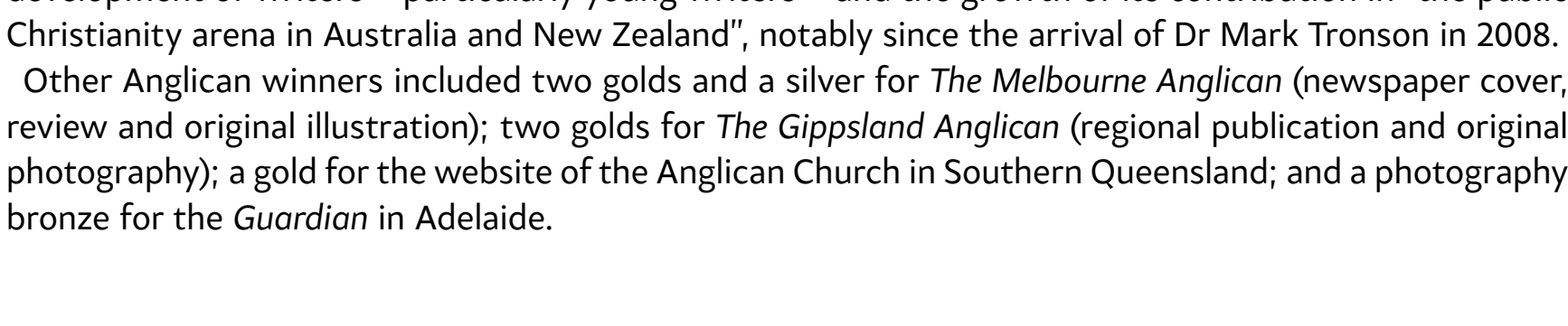
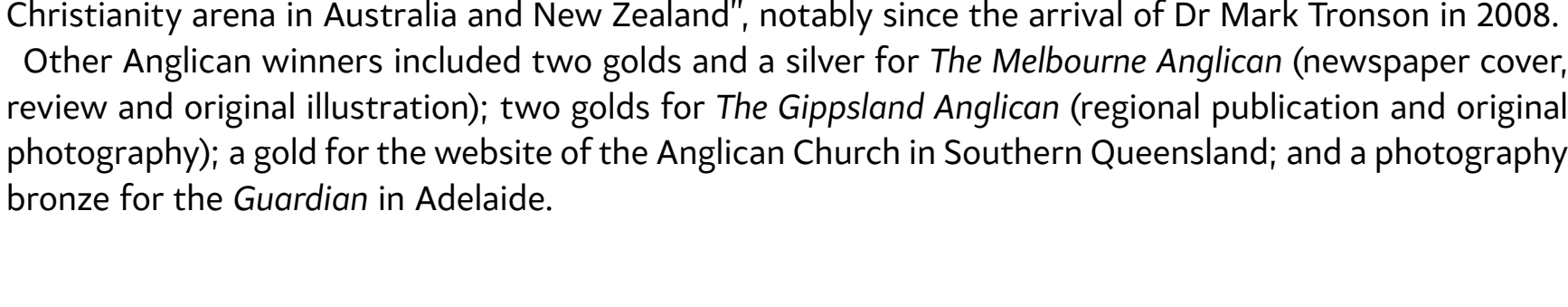
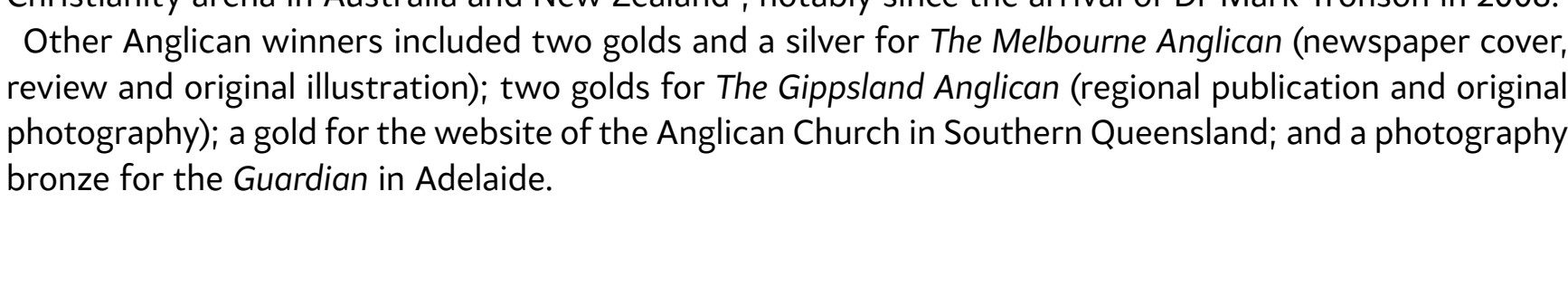
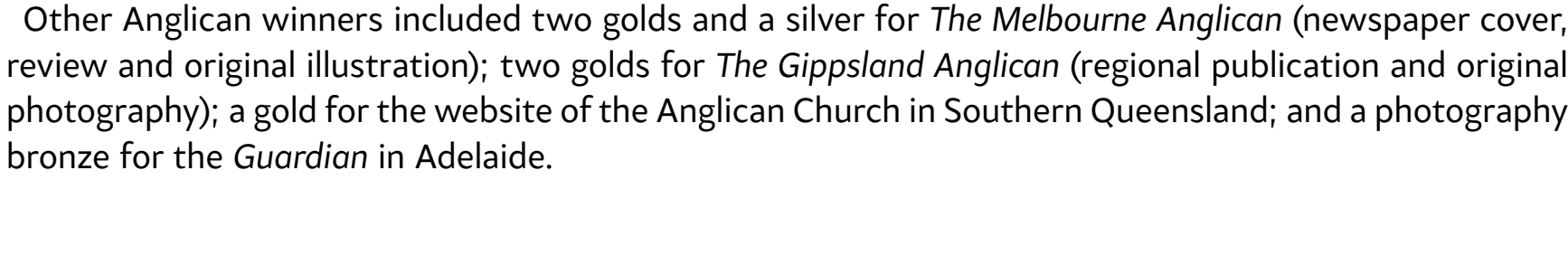
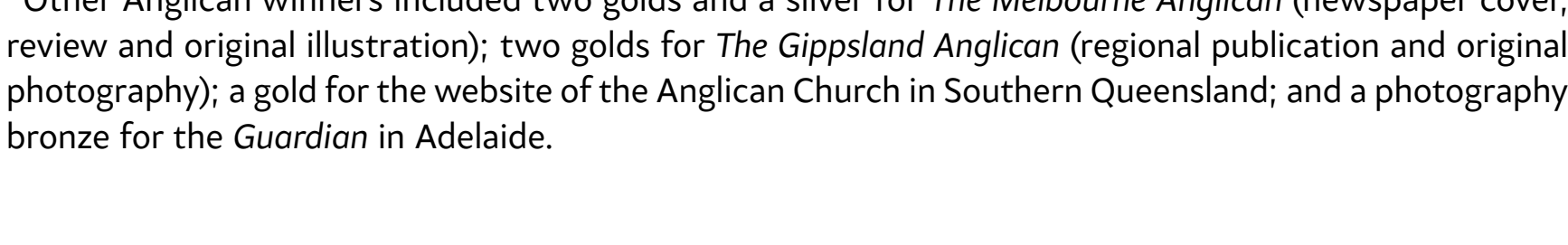
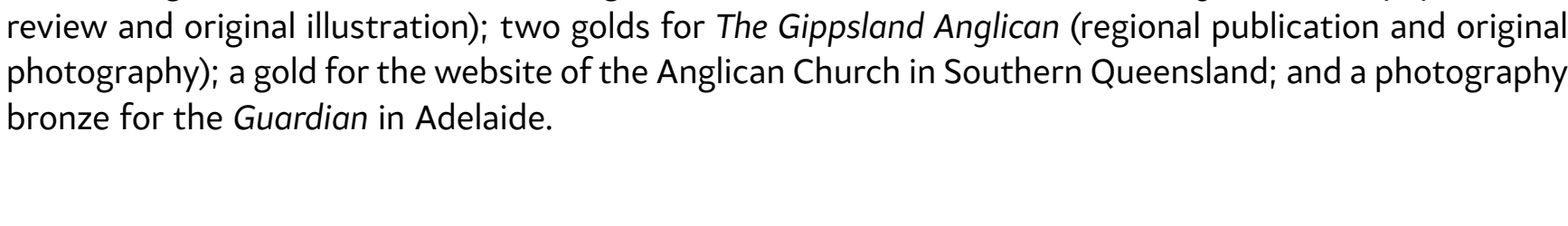
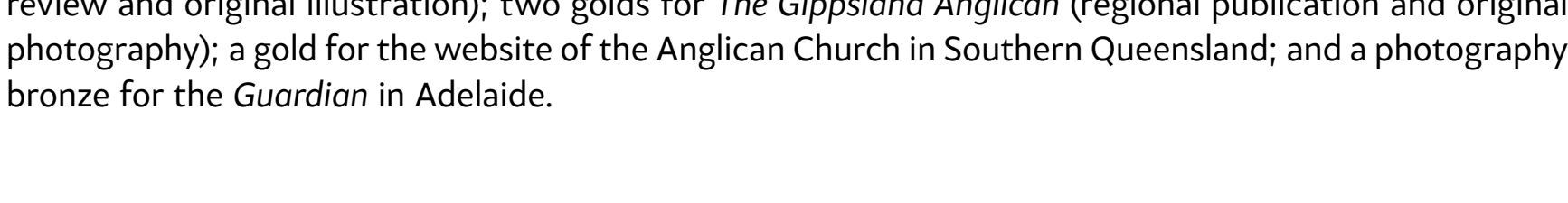
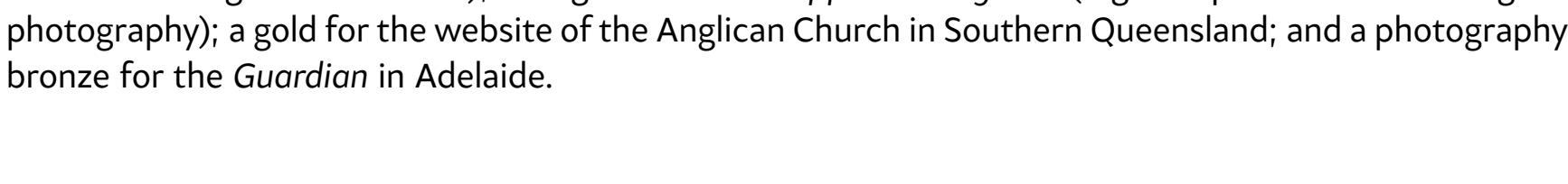
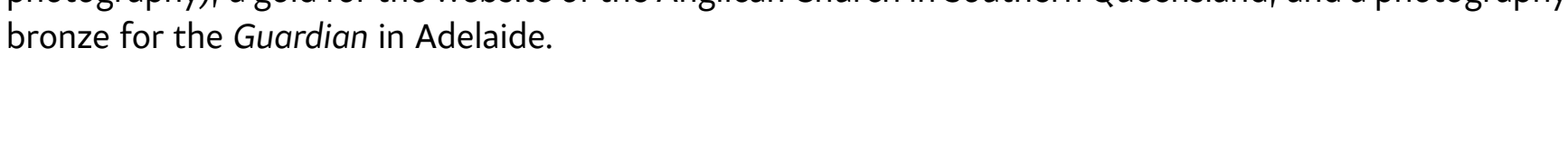
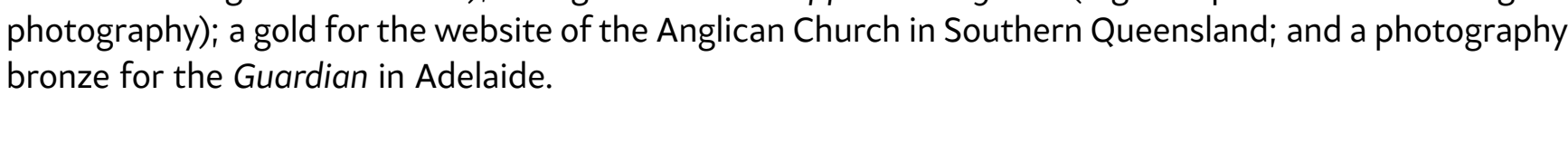
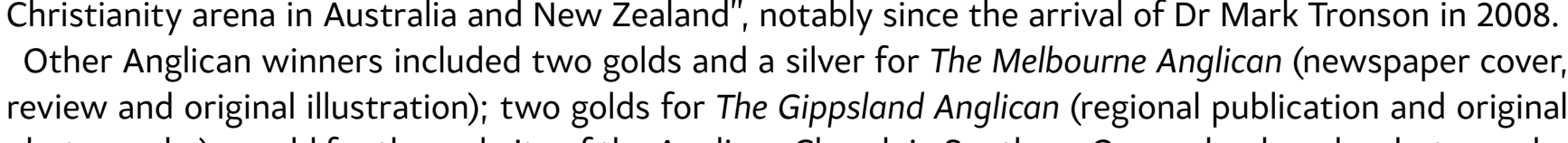
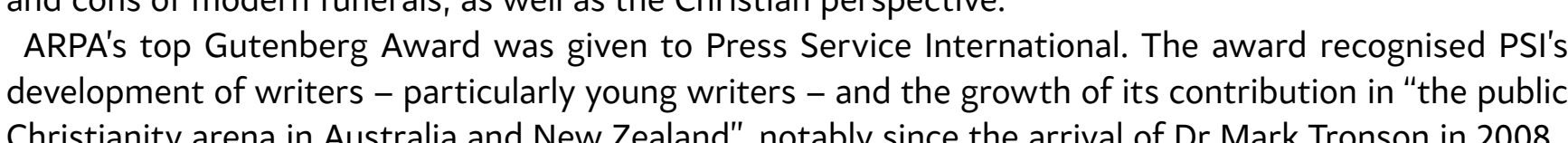
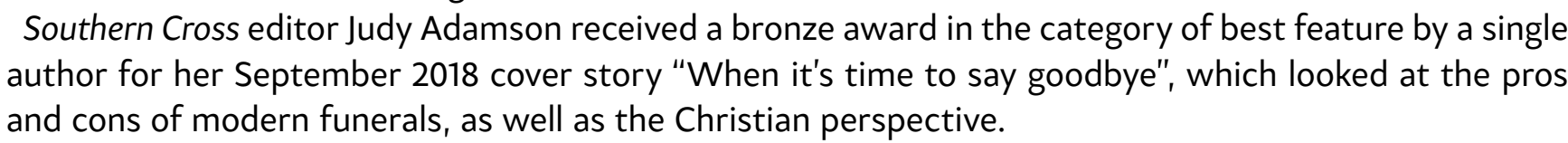
"It has been a wonderful privilege and joy to serve in gospel ministry in Spain, in partnership with the wider CMS family," he says.

"I love the vision of CMS and remain absolutely committed to seeing a world that knows Jesus. I look forward to the new opportunities to serve in this role, supporting and encouraging missionaries, churches and individuals in their different roles as, together, we actively participate in God's mission for the world."

Mr Lovell, his wife Jodi and their children will return from Spain in December. He expects to take up his new role in the second quarter of 2020.



From Spain to Sydney: the Rev John Lovell with his wife Jodi and their children.





Regional synod vote ignores “clear words of Scripture”

“Grievous” situation: Dean Kanishka Raffel speaks about the vote on *The Pastor’s Heart* with the Rev Dominic Steele.

THE PRIMATE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA, ARCHBISHOP PHILIP FREIER, HAS ASKED the small rural diocese of Wangaratta to refrain from using an order of service in which it claims to bless couples in same-sex relationships.

The synod of the diocese, and its soon-to-be retired Bishop John Parkes, voted in September to authorise a service to allow for a blessing of same-sex unions.

Bishop Parkes had claimed he would use the service to personally bless the civil marriage of two local priests.

The vote drew an immediate response from the Archbishop of Sydney and the board of the Global Anglican Future Conference (Gafcon) Australia.

“It is highly regrettable that clergy and lay people in the Diocese of Wangaratta have chosen to follow their bishop rather than the clear words of Scripture concerning God’s design for human sexuality (Matt 19:4-12),” Archbishop Davies said.

“The doctrine of our Church is not determined by 67 members of a regional synod in Victoria, nor is it changed by what they may purport to authorise.

“Time and time again, the General Synod has affirmed the biblical view of marriage as the doctrine of our Church. To bless that which is contrary to Scripture cannot, therefore, be permissible under our church law.

“The circumstances of this event are reminiscent of the actions of the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada in 2002.

“It is now universally acknowledged those events were the beginning of the ‘tear in the fabric of the Anglican Communion’. Moreover, to claim the authority of our Church to carry out a service of blessing contrary to the biblical view of marriage and the doctrine of our Church will certainly fracture the Anglican Church of Australia.”

Archbishop Frier has referred the matter to the Church’s highest court, the Appellate Tribunal, for a legal ruling. In the meantime he has asked the Diocese of Wangaratta not to use the service of blessing.

The board of Gafcon Australia also expressed its dismay over the decision of the Wangaratta synod.

“The resolution in Wangaratta is emblematic of a move in the Anglican Church of Australia away from our doctrine,” the Gafcon statement said.

“Several synods have now passed motions calling for services of blessings of same-sex marriage. Moreover, the Synod of the Diocese of Grafton showed its theological drift in June this year, by voting against affirming ‘the authorised standard of worship and doctrine of the Anglican Church of Australia as set out in the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling Principles of the Constitution’.”

Gafcon Australia board member, the Dean of Sydney Kanishka Raffel, called on the Wangaratta Synod to repent and withdraw its decision.

“I think it’s very grievous that our Church should be in this situation,” he said during an interview on *The Pastor’s Heart* podcast.

“Sunday by Sunday, in all of our churches, there are same-sex attracted or gay people who are living in a biblically faithful way, maintaining chaste relationships, finding in Jesus full satisfaction, membership, belonging, welcome and acceptance in the community of Christ where we are all sexually broken people being healed by Jesus.

“To take this step in a way which simply mirrors our culture... is a failure of love, as well as being a failure of doctrine and polity. It fails to care for people for whom Jesus died, and for whom Jesus is more than enough.”

New bishop for Bathurst



Ready to serve: Mark and Susan Calder.

THE BISHOP ELECTION BOARD IN THE Diocese of Bathurst has announced that the Rev Mark Calder has been elected as its next bishop.

The announcement came from the administrator and chairman of the Bishop Election Board, Archdeacon Brett Watterson, and reads:

“It is with great joy that I announce to you on behalf of the Bishop Election Board: the Rev Mark Norman Calder of the Anglican parish of Noosa, Brisbane Diocese, has been duly elected Bishop of Bathurst and the election has been confirmed.”

The bishop-elect has been rector of a multi-site parish at Noosa for the past decade and previously was rector of Roseville in Sydney for 18 years.

Mr Calder says he received a call from the nomination board in June asking whether he would consider the role. “Susan and I felt that we should at least allow my name to go forward and, by the end of June, I had submitted a response to the diocesan profile,” he says.

After an interview in Dubbo in August, Mr Calder says their resolve about the role had firmed.

“The diocese has been through challenging times but, in our conversation with the board, we could sense their desire to see change in the diocese – a change marked by sharing the good news of Jesus with others. They longed for a new bishop to come and lead and inspire such change. We felt soon after our visit that, if asked, we must go and partner with them in the work of the gospel.”

Following a fortnight of prayer and consideration, the board met again on Friday, August 30 and issued the invitation. “With dependence on our great God, I accepted,” Mr Calder says. “I am very humbled and a little overwhelmed.”

Archbishop Glenn Davies, who is also Metropolitan of NSW, said, “I welcome the election of the Rev Mark Calder as the eleventh Bishop of Bathurst. Mark has distinguished himself as the leader of two diverse parishes in Sydney and Brisbane, both of which experienced significant growth under his leadership.

“With a heart for the gospel of God and a heart for the people of God, Bathurst will be blessed by a man of his calibre, conviction and godliness.”

The previous Bishop of Bathurst, Ian Palmer, retired in April. Bishop-elect Calder will be consecrated in Sydney on November 21 and installed in a service in Bathurst on November 23.

Archaeological finds line up with biblical accounts



Above: the Mt Zion archaeological site.

Right (from top): earring; arrowhead; remnant from a church in Bethsaida.

"FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO" GOES THE OLD REFRAIN, AND RESEARCHERS WORKING ON MT Zion in Israel are finding artefacts which confirm the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, detailed in the book of 2 Kings.

In 586BC, the city was under siege from the forces of King Nebuchadnezzar. The Bible records that Babylonian forces "set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the imperial guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had deserted to the king of Babylon" (2 Kings 25:9-11).

Researchers from the University of North Carolina, digging at the Mount Zion Archaeological Project, have just announced they have uncovered clear evidence of that invasion. The discovery is of a deposit including layers of ash, arrowheads dating from the period, as well as Iron Age potsherds, lamps and a significant piece of period jewellery – a gold and silver tassel or earring.

"We know where the ancient fortification line ran," a Professor of History at UNC Charlotte, Shimon Gibson, said, "so we know we are within the city. We know that this is not some dumping area, but the southwestern neighbourhood of the Iron Age city. During the 8th century BC the urban area extended from the 'City of David' area to the southeast and as far as the Western Hill where we are digging."

The ash deposits are not conclusive evidence of the Babylonian attack in themselves but are confirmed by the other materials. "For archaeologists, an ashen layer can mean a number of different things," Gibson said. "It could be ashy deposits removed from ovens, or it could be localised burning of garbage. However, in this case, the combination of an ashy layer full of artefacts, mixed with arrowheads and a very special ornament, indicates some kind of devastation and destruction. Nobody abandons golden jewellery and nobody has arrowheads in their domestic refuse."

The arrowheads discovered are known as Scythian arrowheads and have been found at other archaeological conflict sites from the 7th and 6th centuries BC.

"They are known to have been used by the Babylonian warriors," Professor Gibson said.

"Together, this evidence points to the historical conquest of the city by Babylon because the only major destruction we have in Jerusalem for this period is the conquest of 587/586 BC."

In another excavation this year in Israel, archaeologists may have found the home town of Peter and two other apostles of Jesus. They believe they have found the lost Roman city of Julias (earlier known as Bethsaida), near the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel.

The New Testament describes Bethsaida as the home of Jesus' apostles Peter, Andrew and Philip. Jesus also healed a blind man there (Mark 8:22-26), while the book of Luke describes the feeding of the 5000 nearby.

Researchers have partially uncovered a large church from the Byzantine period, which was said to be built over the house of Peter and Andrew. Electromagnetic imaging around the church by the Centre for the Study of Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins reveals that a much larger settlement once stood at the site of Beit Habek (el-Araj), near the Jordan River estuary on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.



OCTOBER 2019

Southern CROSS

5

China removes the Ten Commandments



The Ten Commandments has been replaced by Communist slogans in Chinese churches. PHOTO: courtesy Bitter Winter

REPORTS FROM CHINA INDICATE DEEPENING PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS, INCLUDING THE closing of Sunday schools and replacing the Ten Commandments with slogans from Communist Party leader, President Xi Jinping.

Chinese authorities have reportedly become nervous about the rise of Christianity and the protests in Hong Kong, in which Christians have played a key role. Official estimates put the number of Christians in China at 30-40 million, but the persecution watchdog Open Doors estimates there are up to 100 million believers. China is forecast to have the world's largest population of Christians by 2030, overtaking the United States.

As well as in larger centres such as Beijing, Christianity is booming in rural regions such as Hebei, Henan and Anhui, with large areas of disadvantage or poverty.

The Christian population is split between membership of state-sponsored churches – such as the so-called Three-Self Patriotic Movement – and underground or house churches.

The religious liberty magazine *Bitter Winter* has reported several recent incidents that show persecution is worsening. The magazine says churches in the central province of Henan have been forced to replace signs showing the Ten Commandments with quotes from President Xi Jinping.

"The core socialist values and Chinese culture will help to immerse various religions of China," reads one of Xi's quotes. "Support religious community in interpreting religious thought, doctrines and teachings in a way that conforms with the needs of the progress of the times."

Church leaders say it is part of eroding Christian doctrine in the official Three-Self churches, which can be blacklisted or shut down if they don't display the messages.

Another report says the Communist Party has begun to restrict Christian activities for children, in line with a long-standing law against religious conversion under the age of 18.

The Religious Affairs Bureau has reportedly begun to enforce the law by closing Sunday schools and ordering churches to erect signs accordingly.

Police stations have even been given quotas that reward them for the number of Christians they arrest.

One Protestant pastor told the magazine that "The Communist Party's ultimate goal is to 'become God'. This is what the devil has always done".

A MESSAGE FOR READERS

FROM THE BISHOP OF THE WESTERN REGION, IVAN LEE



Dear brothers and sisters through *Southern Cross*,

I know you have persevered in many prayers for me, and I would like to share with you some good news, especially for those who have contacted me since the [June] *Southern Cross* article appeared.

I have just received CT scan results showing that the two tumours in the liver have both reduced in size, one by 50 per cent and the other by more than 50 per cent. This does not mean I am out of the woods and we don't know what the next scan will show, but my oncologist was very encouraged.

Chemo continues every three weeks, with the middle week being one of severe and painful side effects. However, I am thankful that I am able to

continue working most of the time for the region and Diocese. Thank you for your continued concern – I am deeply moved and grateful.

The Lord has given each of us a certain time on earth to enjoy his creation and to serve him wholeheartedly, even with suffering, while we wait patiently for the new heavens and the new earth. So I pray for you all, even as you pray for me.

Blessings,
Ivan

*Bishop Lee was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in August 2015. He has since had two major operations, a number of chemotherapy rounds, immunotherapy and periods of remission. The cancer spread into his liver in the second half of last year.

He says of his cancer: "You see each day as a bonus. And I do, but I've also said to people, 'Although you're really well and you don't have cancer, every day's a bonus for you as well. Every day God gives you. Each day's a gift.'"

CHURCH AND OUR PRIORITIES

I greatly appreciated your front cover article on the perpetual ecclesiastical battle that is regular church attendance (SC, September). While a side of me wants to say that an overall attendance of 67 per cent – two out of three Sundays – ain't bad, I also recognise that we are naturally prone to not make Sunday a priority; instead, opting to somehow fit it into our otherwise busy week like a Tetris block.

I would also wish to affirm that the thoughtful Christian straddles a very difficult divide of obligation with regard to both our congregational family and our network of unsaved friends and family.

I am currently part of a 4pm Anglican church plant in a part of Melbourne's north, where there has been a dearth of faithful, biblically robust churches. Part of the reason for gathering at this time is that, in my area, junior football is king on Sunday mornings, and the majority of our non-Christian friends have been established through involvement in AFL.

While this might be seen by some as a cultural capitulation, such is the challenge of mission to mainstream Australians that we do require a truckload of God's wisdom as to how we both keep the faith firmly within our own families and Christian gatherings, while also indeed not giving up meeting together or neglecting the impetus to shine like stars amongst a crooked generation (c.f. Philippians 2:15), which needs to learn to call upon the name of the Lord.

Peter Waterhouse
Craigieburn (Vic)

I was surprised that your cover story "Sunday Wars" made no mention of shift workers. I worked shifts for most of my working life and remember one conversation I had with a Catholic colleague about the difficulty of church attendance with some shifts.

The colleague told me how she went to mass after working a Saturday night, nodded off to sleep and fell out of her seat into the aisle. She was unhurt, just embarrassed.

Jane Good
Maroubra

GOD'S CLOSE, LOVING CARE

I appreciated Gary O'Brien's article "How active is your God?" in September *Southern Cross*. Thank you for reminding us just how close and caring our loving Lord is. It is so easy in our world today to attribute the affairs of life to bad or good luck, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, to chance, fate or fortune. I loved the five verses Mr O'Brien gave us and the quote from Calvin.

At the end of his article he raised some key questions and I sense they may lead to another article. How do we enjoy God when there's no water for farmers' crops? What do we do when we are suffering, and we cannot see the one with whom we are supposed to have a relationship? To what degree do we bother him – can our issues ever be too trivial – have we been led into thinking he's really only interested in the spiritual side of things?

Mr O'Brien gave us five promises. I wonder how we may help Christians know more and be helped to trust that God will do what he says.

Tom H. Treseder
Chiswick

UPS AND DOWNS AREN'T JUST FOR SINGLES

Dr Chris Thomson in his article "Rethinking Contentment" (SC, August) refers to singleness as a hardship. For some people it may be, but he makes this comment twice, pages apart, so I suspect he believes this.

As a lifelong spinster I can assure him that there is nothing in singleness that always means a hardship. We have our times of struggle and times of contentment – like everyone else – but it's not always tough.

Roselyn Drake
Coomera (Qld)

GET YOUR VIEW HEARD

Page 3 of your August edition alerted readers that the discussion on freedom of religion was moving swiftly, and we could soon see draft legislation ("Laws should enshrine 'positive right' to faith", SC, August).

That month three members of St David's, Thirroul visited Sharon Bird, the Labor MP for Cunningham, to discuss religious freedom. Ms Bird did not envisage legislation to be readily forthcoming, but she may be mistaken.

My 45 years' employment required relating, in various degrees, to state and federal members of parliament, all of whom I found welcoming and open to constituents' views – irrespective of their personal opinions and party policy.

Politicians are our elected representatives and Christians should be visiting them just as others do.

Reg Lobb
Stanwell Park



Letters should be less than 200 words.
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NORFOLK ISLAND MINISTRY PARTNER

Our story about the ministry growth on Norfolk Island (SC, September) failed to mention that the work of David and Crystal Fell since their arrival in early 2015 has also been invaluable supported by Bush Church Aid. To see the family's latest BCA update, go to www.bushchurchaid.com.au/our-people.php





HOBART TO OAK FLATS

The **Rev Sam Pursell** will become rector of the parish of Oak Flats south of Wollongong late next month. Not long after he graduated from Moore College, Mr Pursell and his wife Susan moved to Hobart, where he has been assistant minister at St Mark's, Bellerive for close on six years.

"Under [previous rector] Stephen Carnaby the church at Bellerive has been revitalised [by his] caring for people and preaching the word," he says. "It was great working with him – then I was the locum for eight months or so until the new senior minister came in.

"We're very sad about leaving because you look around the church and the different services and there's a story and a personal history... But we've seen people grow... and it's been really wonderful to see how God's been faithful in that."

About the time the Pursells were considering a change in ministry they were contacted by the nominators at Oak Flats. He has a real sense of gratitude that, even though the decision makers at Oak Flats didn't have much time to get to know him, with God's leading they were "willing to welcome me into their community to do ministry among them".

Before making a decision, the Pursells and their kids dropped into a Sunday service while up in NSW and found a very warm welcome for them as visitors. "That's what you hope for when you visit any church and that's how we were welcomed as newcomers," he says.

"The people are keen to grow in their faith, they're keen to reach out, they're concerned for the community around them and pray for those things.

"They were keen for someone to come and help make disciples to reach out, particularly to youth. They consider the role of connecting with local primary and high schools to be very important... and there are more and more houses [in the area] every time you drive past!"

ALL NATIONS AT ST JOHNS PARK



In July the **Rev Mark Dickens** became the rector of St Johns Park in Sydney's southwest.

The family spent a little over six years at St George's International Church in Singapore with CMS, and before that were based in Darwin.

Mr Dickens rejoiced in the ministry opportunities during their time in Singapore. "Lots of people became believers and grew as Christians so it was very exciting to be there. [My wife] Rosemary had a ministry among domestic helpers and the kids they look after. The domestic helpers were mainly from the Philippines, and the church had a Filipino fellowship [with] lots of great gospel opportunities."

They returned from Singapore to be closer to older family and, looking for the next step in ministry, "we were particularly attracted and encouraged by the nominators at St Johns Park and what was happening in the church – that they desired to reach out with the gospel to people in the area. More than 70 per cent [of the community] are from non-English speaking countries. There are also people within the church from all over the world, so that's very exciting.

"There are lots of Anglo-Saxons in the congregation, but they understand that the gospel is for everybody and they wanted someone to work and be part of teaching and leading and equipping them to... make and grow disciples of Christ from all cultures."

He says Mrs Dickens – who used to teach at Nungalinga College in Darwin – is also keen to teach the Bible at St Johns Park. She and others have undertaken ESL training, and this month the parish will begin an easy English Bible study.

"I was a Parramatta-Westmead boy," Mr Dickens says, "and at my commencement service I said I used to come to this area to play lots of sport... now I've come here not to play sport but to share the gospel."



NEW SEASON AT NORMANHURST

On November 16 the **Rev Baden Stace** will become rector of St Stephen's, Normanhurst after five years with Evangelism and New Churches.

"It's been a broad ministry working with rectors and staff teams... local missions, students at Moore College and Cornhill College, and pastoral and evangelical preaching," he says.

"I've also been completing PhD research into the history of Australian evangelical preaching and missions. With that research coming to an end, [my wife] Karin and I began seeking the Lord's leading as to where he would have us serve next. We both felt strongly that if God should open a door for us to take on another parish, that's where we felt we could serve the work of the kingdom most effectively."

Mr Stace describes Normanhurst as a "vibrant church community", and one in which he and his wife saw a clear match in terms of the ministries the church was hoping to build upon and the ministry they hoped to do as a family.

"We've always made sure [our kids] have been involved in ministry plans and decisions and we certainly involved them in this decision," he says. "As things became clearer, we spoke to them about it and the opportunity the Lord had placed before us... For them to be able to look forward to that is very exciting. They're thrilled about the new season God has opened up for us as a family."

He regards his wife as an excellent teacher of the word, adding: "Karin had a very strong ministry of teaching the ladies of our previous parish and I think she's really looking forward to doing that again... and getting involved at the pastoral level.

"[I want] to strengthen and nourish God's people at Normanhurst and see many people come to know the Lord Jesus. That's my long-term hope and prayer, and I will labour and strive towards that end."

THE WAYS OF THE FORCE

After seven years as a lay worker, Christian Studies teacher and school chaplain at Roseville College, the **Rev Suzanne Gorham** will join the Anglican chaplaincy team at NSW Police on October 14.

She has a background in lay and ordained ministry in parishes and high schools, as well as with Youthworks. While feeling it was time for a new season in ministry, she says the move into police chaplaincy came "out of left field".

"I was at a crossroads, wondering whether to take on another pastoral ministry or go into academics to teach people who do the pastoral ministry," she says. "Amid conversations I was having with a number of people about chaplaincy, this police role came up. So, I thought about it and prayed about it, and it became more and more apparent that it was God's leading for this next period of ministry."

"Chaplaincy is about walking alongside... that's the idea behind it. So if you've got those skills and that interest to walk alongside people, sometimes that's transferable between different ministry contexts. I love those pastoral relationships where you can care and nurture and encourage, and the police are people who see the worst of humanity and are the first responders, often, to strife – but at the end of the day they still need to go home to their families, so it's good to be able to offer them support."

She will be one of five chaplains to the NSW Police, and her role will focus on specialist departments such as the dog squad, water police, and PoAir – as well as helping mobilise volunteer police chaplains.

Mrs Gorham says she has developed many good relationships with staff and parents during her years at Roseville College. "I really love teaching, the girls are fantastic, so I will miss them – but my daughter is still at Roseville, so I have that ongoing opportunity to be part of the community as a parent."



VALE

The **Rev Bill Hayward** died on August 6, aged 95. He was born William Frank Hayward on July 16, 1924 in New Zealand, growing up in Christchurch in the Depression. In 1937, while at high school, he took part in a Crusader Union mission that changed his life.

"Up until this event Dad was involved in petty crime, lying, thieving, swearing and living by craft and cunning," Mr Hayward's son Ken said at his funeral. "[During the mission] he heard that one day he would have to give an account of his life to the judge of the whole world, or be forgiven if he accepted Jesus' death as being a death in his place. By faith Dad received Jesus as his Lord and Saviour and a great burden was lifted from his heart."

Mr Hayward studied architecture but was conscripted into the Army in 1945 and spent 14 months serving on Norfolk Island. With the encouragement of the island chaplain, Mr Hayward left university studies and began training for ministry – first in New Zealand, then at Moore College. He met his wife Thelma as a student minister, and they were married in 1953.

He was curate at Corrimall in 1952, rector of Riverstone from 1953-57 and curate-in-charge at Berowra cum Asquith from 1957-64. He was then at Belfield for nine years and spent the final 14 years of full-time ministry at Five Dock – retiring in 1987 after a serious bout of asthma.

Despite ongoing health issues, Mr Hayward took on many locums and short-term ministry roles after retirement. And wherever he lived, he was thankful for God's blessings – his greatest concern being for family and others to know the forgiveness they could receive through Jesus.

He wrote this undated note to his family: "I would want you all to know what a faithful master I have served and what peace I have this day. I trust in the finished work of Christ and not in my own works. I shall sleep in Christ Jesus, my Saviour and Lord, and when I shall awaken shall be satisfied with his likeness."



The **Rt Rev Dr Tony Nichols** died on August 24, aged 81, from injuries suffered in a car accident in Perth.

In a ministry spanning more than 50 years, Bishop Nichols was a lecturer at Moore College, a CMS missionary in Indonesia, the principal of Nungalinga College in Darwin, the principal of the CMS training base St Andrew's Hall in Melbourne and the Bishop of North West Australia.

"Tony was a remarkable man from so many perspectives," said Archbishop Glenn Davies. "He was a significant scholar... [and had] deeply rooted cross-cultural experience and skills from his time in Indonesia and as principal of Nungalinga College."

"We had deep fellowship together when we both studied in Sheffield and to me he was a personal friend, a colleague and a mentor whom I shall greatly miss."

Born Anthony Howard Nichols in Sheffield, England on March 29, 1938, his family moved to Australia in 1947 and settled in Wollongong. His wife Judith said at her husband's funeral that his Christian journey began when he was 14 and asked to teach Sunday school at his church, "so he thought he ought to read the Bible".

"The church he attended with his family was spiritually dead," Mrs Nichols said, "but he often claimed it was through the Prayer Book service that he learnt of the need to follow Christ wholeheartedly... His university days laid a strong biblical foundation for his faith through the Christian Union and he was challenged by the opportunity to share the gospel with overseas students."

After university Mr Nichols taught in regional NSW and then, in 1962, he was challenged to do short-term mission work with CMS. This took him to Tawau in Sabah, where he taught and founded a Christian teachers' fellowship.

Mr Nichols studied at Moore College on his return, was ordained in 1966 and asked to stay on as a lecturer in Biblical Studies. He and Judith married in 1968 and, in 1972 with their two eldest children (and a Masters of Education under his belt), they went to Salatiga in Indonesia with CMS to teach trainee ministers.

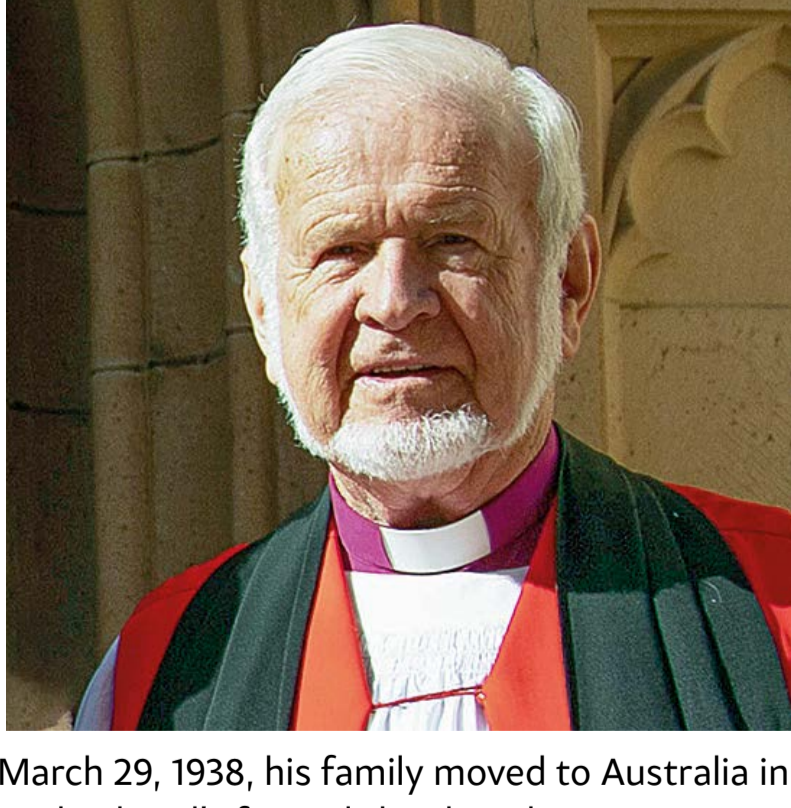
In 1981, Mr Nichols was invited to become principal of Nungalinga College, where, Judith said, he prepared the "first ordinands and community workers from a traditional background".

"He was appointed as the result of a dream from the Aboriginal students who overrode the decision of the white council. Tony adapted Aboriginal learning styles to the teaching curriculum, and he developed a strong empathy with Aboriginal people. During this time, he began his doctorate in Sheffield on translation of the Bible because he believed translation of the text often reflected a Western mindset."

Dr Nichols became principal of St Andrew's Hall in 1988 and was elected Bishop of North West Australia in 1991. On retirement in 2003, both Bishop and Mrs Nichols taught at Trinity Theological College in Perth and served in the parish of St Lawrence's, Dalkeith.

"Tony had a strong social conscience, but he believed that the only way societies could change for the better was through the preaching of the gospel," Judith Nichols said.

"We miss Tony deeply, but Tony is now in the care of that same Lord who kept him safe during the air raids of Sheffield, communist insurgency in Sabah, arrests in China and Indonesia, crash landings, a mugging in Jakarta, riots in Indonesia. How much more is that same Lord Jesus keeping him safe now in his glorious presence."



Prayer for revival in a divided Britain

LINDSAY JOHNSTONE

ON A RECENT SATURDAY IN LONDON FILLED WITH ANGRY BREXIT DEMONSTRATIONS, MANY FOLK streamed into Wembley arena for a very different purpose. They reflected modern Britain: Anglo, Afro, Euro, Asian; young and not so young. Thousands of Brits in a vibrant atmosphere.

While those outside Wembley gathered for political reasons, the many thousands of people inside saw the need of the nation as spiritual, not political. Some had banners and even shofars, which they used occasionally, and they were there to pray for spiritual revival in the United Kingdom.

And revival is needed. It is more than 2½ years since we came to live here, and we have been disheartened by the state of the church.

Christian faith has declined. There are churches that are syncretistic – in one place I know, there are weekly meditations advertised for people of any faith and no faith, with a Buddhist consultant. There are gimmicks in cathedrals such as a mini golf course. The churches seem to be side-tracked. Britain has become spiritually dry.

Those present at the prayer event came from a wide variety of denominations. These were not emphasised but, rather, that God breaks down divisions: “We are one body. United we stand in the glory of the name of Jesus”. What was significant was the unity in diversity, reflecting the fundamental authority of the Bible as God’s word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The event was led by 87-year-old English evangelist the Rev David Hathaway, who was imprisoned by the Communists in Czechoslovakia for smuggling Bibles in 1971 and has spent more than 60 years ministering across Europe – particularly in former Eastern Bloc countries.

There were no addresses as such, but the event was led by numerous pastors, evangelists and intercessors. We shared in the breaking of bread together. Input came from a group from the Ukraine, folk from Russia, Nigeria, Ghana, Germany, Australia and Israel. There were special prayers for those under 40, and we were introduced to an intercession team that meets weekly in Westminster to pray for Parliament.

A Russian and a Ukrainian prayed on the stage for each other, and they prayed for Britain. One African-born man emphasised that, prior to independence, the British presence in his country had facilitated the spread of the gospel. He described a Britain that now needed to be evangelised by the countries it had colonised, but which, after revival, could again fulfill a shepherd destiny at a deeper level unhindered by “empire”.

Around us in the arena there was an earnestness. People were determined and hungry for spiritual change. While there was anxiety about the state of the country, it was swallowed up by an overwhelming sense of joy and hope that God is not hindered or in crisis. There was a vibrant trust in his goodness and strength.

Perhaps the most frequently read and declared passage throughout the day was from 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land”.

There was much exhortation and intercession for repentance and a calling down of a fresh fire from the Holy Spirit, for unity of all God’s people to bring in the harvest.

As I left, I felt empowered and expectant that God will move mightily in Britain. May these prayers be answered.

The Rev Lindsay Johnstone is a retired Sydney rector and hospital chaplain.

Solidarity in standing for Jesus

DR GLENN DAVIES



ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19 IN CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND, THE REV JAY Behan will be consecrated a bishop in the Church of God. While the consecration of a New Zealander would not usually be cause for comment, in this case Bishop-elect Behan is not being consecrated for ministry in the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (ACANZP). Rather, he has been duly elected for episcopal ministry in the newly formed Church of Confessing Anglicans Aotearoa/New Zealand.

This new, authentically Anglican Church came about after the departure of a number of clergy and their congregations from the established ACANZP, when that Church decided to depart from the teaching of Scripture and authorise bishops to allow the blessing of same-sex unions in their churches.

Seventeen years ago, the Anglican world was cast into turmoil when the synod of the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada authorised a service for the blessing of same-sex couples.

This decision was widely seen as a repudiation of the teaching of Christ and God's intention for marriage from the beginning of creation.

Moreover, it was a clear rejection of the now-famous Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, which was passed by an overwhelming majority of Anglican bishops a mere four years earlier.

Lambeth Resolution I.10, plainly stated that the Lambeth Conference, *in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage; recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ.*

Some have misread this part of the resolution to imply that the Lambeth Conference was willing to accept homosexual practice as compatible with Christian discipleship. However, the reference to "believing and faithful" among the baptised is essential for understanding who "are full members of the Body of Christ".

Moreover, the clear expressions of the resolution do not support such an interpretation, where the bishops rejected "homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture" and could not advise "the legitimising or blessing of same-sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions".

At the time of the New Westminster diocese's decision, representatives of 11 parishes walked out of the Canadian synod in protest against the repudiation of the teaching of the Bible. Among them were the Rev David Short, the rector of St John's, Shaughnessy in Vancouver, whom my predecessor later made an Honorary Canon of St Andrew's Cathedral.

In the intervening years, we have witnessed the gradual decline in orthodox adherence to Anglican doctrine as we have received it, not only in the areas of sexual identity and practice, but also in the teachings of Scripture more broadly.

What began with same-sex blessings has evolved into solemnising same-sex marriages and ordaining men and women in same gender unions. The push for a libertine sexual agenda has been ruthless. Unfortunately, Australia has not been immune to these trends.

Nonetheless, our General Synod has repeatedly passed resolutions affirming that the doctrine of our Church is grounded in the teaching of the Bible, as reflected in *Faithfulness in Service*, the national code of conduct for Anglicans. Last November, the General Synod Standing Committee passed a resolution which, in the light of the decision of the ACANZP, said that,

this step is contrary to Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference and is not in accordance with the teaching of Christ (Matthew 19:1-12).

It also stated its

support for all Anglicans who have left the ACANZP, who will feel the need to leave, and those who remain yet struggle because of this change.

For these reasons, I have decided to attend the consecration of Bishop-elect Jay Behan in Christchurch this month. I shall be joined by three of my assistant bishops, the Archdeacon for Women's Ministry and the Registrar. We must show our solidarity with our brothers and sisters across the Tasman, who have sacrificially surrendered their property to stand for Jesus and the faith once delivered to the saints.

I invite all faithful Anglicans to join me in prayer for the new bishop and for his flock, as there will be many challenges ahead. As both Jesus and the apostles discovered, like the Old Testament prophets before them, opposition to God's word is not merely from the world, but sadly from within the covenant community. May God preserve us to continue as faithful Anglicans, committed to the authority of Scripture and to the narrow path that leads to salvation, rather than the wide and easy path that leads to destruction.

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

Marriage and (no) faith

Marriage is never easy, but how does a Christian spouse (and their church) love an unbelieving partner well, asks **MICHELLE HAINES THOMAS**.

YOU ARE SO IN LOVE, AND YOU KNOW HE'S NOT QUITE OVER THE LINE AS A BELIEVER but you're sure he will be one day – maybe even soon. Marrying him can only help his walk towards faith, right?

Or you are both Christians. You share a deep and fervent faith, you pray together, you encourage and rebuke and serve each other. But then one day she says she doesn't believe any more.

Or you are both non-believers. The idea of faith has never entered your heads and has never even come up between you. Then you meet Jesus and he tips your world upside down. But where does that leave your marriage?

There are many ways a Christian can end up married to a non-Christian, and not all of them are because people defy their youth leader to date a "bad" boy or girl. And even if they did, people in such marriages say they need the unconditional love of their church families, rather than the judgment and distance that many experience.

It turns out that our churches don't always know how to befriend and care for the believing spouse – let alone the unbelieving partner.

"Pastorally, churches haven't always supported or helped people in this situation," says Sarah Condie, who not only runs a highly regarded marriage enrichment course with her husband, Keith, but is co-director of the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute and director of wellbeing and care at Church by the Bridge in Kirribilli.

She adds: "I would like to say, 'I'm sorry,' and I acknowledge that failure. Churches tend to work well when you do what you're 'meant' to do – whatever that is – and we're good at making assumptions about people who are in different circumstances."

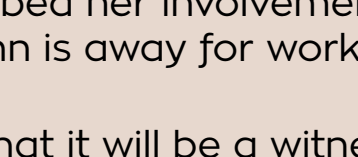
Condie points out that, just as all individuals are different, all marriages will be different, and the most important thing we can do is listen to each other.

"Have you ever sat down and asked a friend what it's like – the good and the bad? And asked how you can support them?" she asks. "We need to let them tell us."

In light of this challenge, here are three stories of Christians married to non-Christians, emerging from three very different circumstances, plus the experience of a woman who grew up with one Christian and one non-Christian parent.

*Names and details have been changed.

MIA, 55



"When I was 18 years old, already a Christian, I was praying for a Christian boyfriend. I started going along to a great youth group, full of hunky surfers – I was in heaven! So, I got a boyfriend, loved him to bits, thought he was the one, until one day he dumped me for a girl who wasn't a Christian."

So begins the tale of Mia, who rebounded into a relationship with a nice, non-Christian guy called John.

"I was determined to get married, so I created an Ishmael," says Mia, referring to the biblical Abraham's son with Hagar, servant of his wife Sarah. "I was too impatient for God to choose me another husband and also not mature enough in God to wait, so just made it happen and I've been paying for it ever since."

"I clearly knew the Scripture – that I shouldn't be unequally yoked [2 Corinthians 6:14] – but I thought to myself, 'How bad can it possibly be?'"

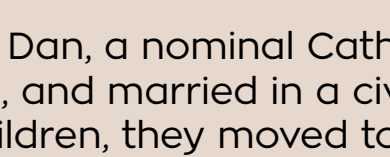
She was married at 21 and quickly started a family with John, which gave her more reason to stick with the marriage when the hard times came – which they inevitably did. The resulting 34-year marriage has had its share of bumps and trials, but Mia believes she has grown in faith because of them.

"The upside is I've grown in God, it's made me stronger," she says. "Because we're not wrestling against flesh and blood. I'm not wrestling against my husband. It's the devil." She knows that being married to a non-Christian has curbed her involvement in church and Bible study, which she only attends when John is away for work, and she does her financial giving in secret.

Most of all, Mia has tried to be the best wife she can so that it will be a witness to John, and makes sure to pray for him rather than try to talk him into faith, as she did at the start. She trusts God that he is in control.

"God is very good at recycling our mistakes into good," she says.

SIMON AND DEB, MID-30S



Simon and Deb met at Bible college, married quickly and almost immediately had their first child. While their love for each other and for Jesus was deep and sincere, this was the beginning of an incredibly trying time.

Deb developed severe post-natal depression, which recurred after her other births – with an incidence of cancer in between. After her third child, her depression worsened so badly that she was hospitalised and entered "three years of pure hell".

"I couldn't relate to anyone. I was in trauma, suicidal – it was just really hard not to kill myself," she says.

Deb's relationship with God suffered alongside everything else; her prayer life dried up and she found herself not wanting to engage with faith at all.

"Eventually the depression lifted but I still couldn't relate to God," Deb says. "Finally, I just thought – what if I just stop worrying about God? So I did that and I was... fine. Now I feel like I've lost all my faith and belief."

That was a couple of years ago. Her Christian friends responded by assuming her marriage was basically over, while Simon describes his own response as "not the most pastoral".

"I just insisted on her being a Christian, emphasising God's promises," he says. "I needed to listen to her – find out what she was feeling, where she was at. And to remember that God has for more love for Deb than I do, and I have a fair bit."

Deb points out that she hasn't lost her faith "on purpose", and it certainly wasn't her desire to hurt her husband or her Christian friends. But she adds that it's not their job to argue her back into the kingdom.

Adds Simon: "We tend to become Armenian – take the blame, second guess, think we can fix it. We don't have a good theology of doubt."

Both mention that there is not a lot of support for couples like them, and churches don't know how to treat them. But they believe that, contrary to expectation, they actually have a stronger marriage because of their experience.

"It's forced us to become better communicators, because we had just agreed on everything before," Simon says. "It was like a truck ran over my wife, but I can see God's goodness and provision."

Deb's final words on how to relate to those who fall away are: "Just love people as they are and where they are at. That's what I want people to know. But someone else might feel differently."

LOUISA, 40



Louisa was an agnostic university student when she met Dan, a nominal Catholic. They dated for eight years, living together for six of them, and married in a civil ceremony in their late 20s. Following the birth of their children, they moved to a new town and Louisa was looking for friends.

"That first Christmas, I saw an ad for a women's event at the local church," she says. "I didn't know anyone, but it was a night away from the kids! So I went along, and the minister's wife had prepped another mum to talk to me."

She subsequently joined a mothers' group with the Christian woman who befriended her, met a few other Christians, and started to have conversations about the gospel. When she eventually gave her life to God, she couldn't bring herself to tell Dan.

"I didn't tell him for four months because I was scared of what he'd think," she says. "When I did, he was supportive – he said, 'I'm a Christian too, just a Catholic one'. But then he started to notice the difference: I was 'taking it all too seriously' is how he would describe it."

Not long after that, Dan entered a bout of deep depression, which has affected his views on Louisa's faith. He goes through periods, she says, when he is not bothered by it, but then he is suddenly very antagonistic. He eventually set off on his own journey to explore spiritual matters, which ended with him embracing atheism more formally.

The result for Louisa is "two families" – one at home and one at church – that she has to juggle carefully.

"I have to keep them separate, as I think that is respecting Dan," she says. "On a deeper level, the way I respond to him, on a good day, is by showing grace. I have to consciously draw on that and love him despite whatever is happening. I don't always shut my mouth but, when I do, I reckon it's because of God's grace to me. When I let myself take over, that's when the fights happen."

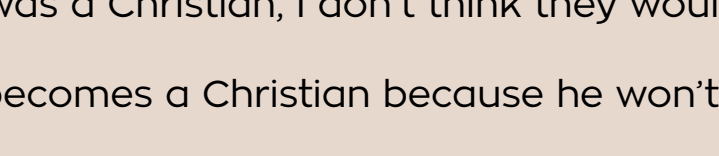
Christianity isn't the only area of conflict in their marriage. In fact, Louisa believes that if she hadn't become a Christian, they would no longer be married.

"My faith gives me the ability to be content even if the relationship isn't perfect," she says. "Not just to ride it out but find joy and happiness and contentment in the imperfections."

When it comes to their children, she hopes that having parents with different sets of beliefs will allow them to make a more mature decision if they follow Jesus themselves.

"It could help them own their faith, if they have one," Louisa says. "It won't be a given."

JULIE, 26



Julie grew up in a Chinese-Australian family with a Christian mother and a non-Christian father.

"My parents knew each other from primary school... my dad moved to Australia when he was 12 years old," she says. "I asked my mum when I was young why she had married my dad knowing that he was not a Christian, and she said she had hoped that he would become one because he had been to Sunday school and knew a bit of the Bible."

Julie and her brother were taken along to church by their mother during their childhood, even though their father would most likely have preferred to see them join in with his Sunday morning martial arts class. Conflict really only arose as the children became more involved in church after high school.

"This meant more time away from home, which was an issue, so we made sure we were home at least once a week for dinner," Julie says, adding, "I remember my parents arguing a lot and I think if my dad was a Christian, I don't think they would have."

I think Dad's character would change if he becomes a Christian because he won't be as self-reliant and be dependent on God."

Her advice to the Christian children growing up in such homes is this: "They need to obey and respect their parents equally, according to the Scriptures. Their obedience and their love for the parent and being a godly example could also 'win' their non-Christian parent over to Christ. Take opportunities to talk to their non-Christian parent about the gospel. Share with them what they've learnt in the Scriptures or at church. Invite Christians over for meals and hang out with Christians so the non-Christian parent can see Jesus in the Christians, and hopefully can see the difference that Jesus has made in their lives."

Maria Orr, a senior programs manager with Anglicare in Wollongong, has spoken to many couples balancing a relationship with spiritual differences.

She says conflicts and challenges can arise over matters such as child-rearing, time or money given to ministry, and the expectations of churches. But at heart, the matter is one of identity.

"One significant challenge is having a core part of one's identity unable to be shared with one's spouse," Orr says. "The believing spouse can share on some level, for example, about a sermon that has touched them, but can't expect their spouse to understand the depth of that experience. They may feel grief and loss in not being able to share their thoughts and feelings around their faith."

"This can be emotionally lonely for the believing spouse and can affect emotional intimacy between the couple. Similarly, the unbelieving spouse may experience a lack of connection with their spouse."

This goes both ways. "If the unbelieving spouse desperately wants the other to convert and puts pressure on them to do so, then understandably the unbelieving spouse may feel unaccepted and perhaps manipulated. This may impact the couple's emotional closeness."

Then there are all the external pressures and misconceptions put upon the couple by others. "Other people can make assumptions about the couple when they don't know their history," Orr says. "Believing spouses can feel this as a stigma which never goes away. And others may think that the marriage won't work or can't be fulfilling."

"However, these marriages can be safe and healthy where there is mutual respect and sharing of lives together. The couple will still share certain values, even though one of them may not be committed to God. The unbeliever may be supportive in lots of ways and have a lot to offer, including being a good provider and parent, and this may be overlooked by others."

The Christian in the marriage may also feel pressure to somehow "convert" their spouse, which is unhelpful. Instead, she suggests, while longing for their spouse's conversion, the believing spouse ought to live out their Christian witness while respecting the partner's integrity.

"A friend of mine reminds herself and others who live in marriages like this to be assured that God has an understanding of the situation far beyond your own," Orr says. "Both partners need to have a place to share what is significant to them within their marriage. For the believer, God will provide spiritual enrichment to you in various ways through his word, church and home group, friends and Christian work colleagues."

"It may be helpful to remember that every difference of opinion is not always related to spiritual things. Some differences between spouses would be present even if both spouses were believers. For both partners, finding areas of common ground is going to be helpful."

Orr adds that if someone has concerns about an imbalance in the relationship, professional support may be useful.

"Having differences in values should not lead to one or the other partner feeling pressured to change," she says. "Encouraging safe and respectful communication in all relationships is the key to living well with differences that are a natural part of being in intimate relationships."

"If you are a friend, the best advice is to hold back on advice. Be a listening ear and avoid judgement. Be empathic, not sympathetic. By this I mean being ready to walk alongside, seek to know, hear, and understand your friend. People in these relationships already feel under scrutiny. Be intentional about following up at a later date with your friend after they have shared their experience with you."

Sarah Condie urges Christian partners to be "fervent in prayer", modelling Christ-like behaviour rather than preaching, and to trust God.

"If you're married to someone antagonistic to Christianity, then that is very hard," she says. "It's not impossible to make it work – communication, respect and honouring each other are key."

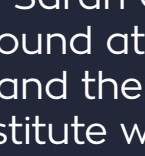
In terms of how Christian communities can operate for good in this context, Condie says that both partners feeling loved and warmly embraced can change everything.

"I have seen really good examples where the non-Christian partner is included, they're prayed for, and the church realises that it's a journey," she says. "And I've seen those prayers answered, too."

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

- The Old Testament prohibits marrying unbelievers (e.g. Deuteronomy 7:3-4).
- If a believer does marry an unbeliever, well-meaning friends or family need to remember Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:5-6: that, once married, the man and woman become one.
- The believing partner should not leave, but if the unbeliever leaves the marriage, the believer is free to remarry (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).
- Women married to non-Christians should stay as they are but, if widowed, should only marry a believer (1 Corinthians 7:39).
- 2 Corinthians 6:14 urges Christians not to be "unequally yoked" with an unbeliever. The context, though, is broader than marriage.
- 1 Peter 3:1-6 gives instructions for how women married to unbelievers should conduct themselves.

LEARN MORE



- The argument against knowingly marrying an unbeliever rests more heavily on a positive, whole-Bible theology of the nature of marriage and its purposes. For a fuller explanation on the theology, see <https://www.9marks.org/article/can-christians-marry-non-christians-a-biblical-theology>
- For more on the pastoral side, see <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/mismatched-marriage-when-one-spouse-is-an-unbeliever/> and <https://leadership.lifeway.com/2017/02/13/4-ways-to-help-counsel-those-who-are-married-to-non-believers/>
- Anglicare Counselling can be contacted on 1300 651 728.
- The website for Keith and Sarah Condie's marriage course can be found at www.buildingmarriage.com.au and the Mental Health & Pastoral Care Institute website is www.mentalhealthinstitute.org.au
- Sarah Condie's recommended reading: *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* by John M. Gottman and Nan Silver.

*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.
Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, Thou has brought me to the valley of vision,
where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains
of sin I behold Thy glory.*

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

*Let me learn thy paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be
high, that the contrite spirit is the
way to the victorious soul, that to have
a cross is to wear the crown, that to
be in the valley is to be in the place of vision.*

Give us day by day our daily bread.

*Openest wells, deepest wells, and the
well of life;*

Forgive every one that is indebted to us.

Be in my death, Thy joy in my sorrow,

Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty Thy glory in my valley.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

Do we really want to pray, “Your will be done”?

We say we want to do God’s will but do we really mean that in all circumstances, asks **MARK D. THOMPSON**.

A FEW YEARS AGO, A FRIEND AND MENTOR GAVE ME A BEAUTIFULLY BOUND COLLECTION of Puritan prayers entitled *The Valley of Vision*. It is quite well known, first published in 1975. The prayers it contains are old-style, not just because of their use of 16th-century English, but because they are suffused with a rich knowledge of and confidence in God. There’s nothing superficial here. I’ve found I’ve returned to them again and again over the years.

Among my most favourite of these prayers is one entitled “God the All”. The section that captures what it is all about it is this (I’ve modernised the English):

*I am well pleased with your will, whatever it is,
or should be in all respects,
And if you bid me decide for myself in any affair,
I would choose to refer all to you,
for you are infinitely wise and cannot do amiss,
as I am in danger of doing.
I rejoice to think that all things are at your disposal,
and it delights me to leave them there.*

These are wonderful words of faith. They express a trust that such is God’s character – infinitely wise, infinitely good, just, right and fair and yet also infinitely compassionate, gracious and loving – that his will is always the best option. It is always what is for our best in the end. It is always what will bring most honour to Jesus.

The caricature of the English Puritans that has come down to us is of dour, depressed and depressing killjoys who did not know how to delight in anything. They banned celebrations, festivals and entertainment, dressed in black, were preoccupied with death, and were so intolerant they cut the head off the king because he did not agree with them. It is a caricature, a distortion of history penned and spread by those who were opposed to the Puritans and all they stood for.

Yet this prayer speaks of pleasure and choice and rejoicing and delight. It is not an expression of legalism or resignation. And it is anchored in an extraordinary confidence in God and his goodness that is sadly absent in many Christian circles.

Against the lies of the Evil One that there is a better way, an easier way, a way that will prove more fulfilling and bring more joy than the express will of God, this prayer says, “No”. It says, “The God who made me and redeemed me is entirely committed to my welfare and so, even if he takes me through hard times, he will not abandon me and it will turn out for my most lasting good”.

There is a certain hard-hearted arrogance in suggesting that I or we know better than God’s written word, whether it be in matters of faith or doctrine, Christian living, the controverted issues of our day, or even the practice of ministry.

Of course, it’s rarely expressed in such a bold and direct fashion. “Of course, God’s way is best,” we say, “but is this really God’s way?” “In such a different context, in the light of recent developments, given what we now know about ourselves and our world, do we need to think again? Did God really say?”

Doubt about God’s will and purpose, and ultimately about his wisdom, goodness and love, has a long pedigree. And it most often begins with doubt about God’s word.

In the account of the Fall, given in Genesis 3, the serpent began by sowing doubt about what God had told the man and the woman. “Did God really say?” he asked. “Surely not. Surely that’s not what God meant. It flies clean against all that makes real sense. We all know better than that.” But what began as doubt about God’s word very soon became doubt about God’s intention and finally about God’s character.

Perhaps we’ve become more sophisticated in the way we sidestep God’s word. We can even convince ourselves that this is not what we are doing at all. We are being more careful about the historical context, taking responsible note of the remarkable advances we have made since biblical times, acting with compassion in the midst of a broken world. We have moved “beyond the Bible” as one writer put it, despite the fact that Paul warned the Corinthians that they should “not go beyond what is written” (1 Cor. 4:6).

I’ve deliberately avoided specifics so far in this article. I am sure you will be able to think of your own examples from the controverted issues of our day.

There are quite a number of examples of where those labelled “conservatives” are considered less generous, less truthful and less kind than those who offer a more “progressive” take on human sexuality, the sanctity of human life from conception to the grave, gender relations and the practice of ministry, the priority of gospel proclamation in a lost world, and much more besides.

However, what is worth very serious consideration, and what is my real concern, is the question of whether I want God’s will and word to prevail even in those areas where I have strong convictions and settled practice. Am I willing to have my mind changed by what God has caused to be written for us?

Since theology is simply the knowledge of God and all things in relation to God as this comes to us in Scripture, am I willing for my perspectives and decisions to be *theologically* shaped? Am I really willing to pray, “Your will be done”?

To pray like that is really only possible if you know and have confidence in the God whose will you are praying will be done. Since he

is who he is, since he is fully and entirely true, good, generous and kind, I can trust him and so I can trust his will.

It might not be what I would have chosen, what left to myself I would have decided for myself or for us. Yet as the Puritan prayed, “You are infinitely wise and cannot do amiss, as I am in danger of doing”. And the proof – the overwhelming, irrefutable proof – is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that people like us could be forgiven and reconciled to our heavenly Father in the Spirit.

In a month in which our diocesan Synod will meet, we need to be reminded of the goodness of God and of his will. Our world has no interest in following his will. Tragically, there is increasing evidence in various denominations, dioceses and churches that some Christians share that indifference, if not always the same hostility. We have an opportunity to take a stand, not on our own wisdom, but on the wisdom of God and what he has made known to us of his will in his written word.

May his will be done.

SC

The Rev Dr Mark Thompson is principal of Moore College and head of Department of Theology, Philosophy and Ethics.

Are we persecuted?



PETER LIN

RECENTLY A SMARTPHONE APP DEVELOPED FOR THE GEORGES RIVER REGION'S John 3:16 mission next year was rejected by both the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store. It simply helps people share the gospel using John 3:16.

We appealed to both stores. Google eventually allowed the app, but Apple wouldn't, rejecting us three times, with three different reasons. The last, ironically, was that it had "no lasting value" (as opposed to apps like the Candy Crush game). As I recounted the story a few times, several people mentioned the "P" word: persecution.

I've been hearing that more and more in recent years in relation to being a Christian in Australia, or in Sydney at least. Think, for example, of the same-sex marriage debate, the secularist opposition to Special Religious Education, religious freedom and even issues amid the abortion debate. We are now being persecuted.

Really? We are far from that, I would say. But behind the sense of persecution, I think, is a touch of panic – that we won't be able to preach Jesus or live out our faith freely. That we will be marginalised and mocked, even more than we are now.

Further, there seem to be louder voices exhorting us to believe and preach what is more palatable – to conform to the norm – so that people will listen to the gospel. If we'd only change our position, they say, then people would come back or start coming to church and turning to Christ. Pewsitters instead of persecutors.

I, however, want to encourage us all to stay the course, not panic and keep preaching Jesus. Why? Because God is sovereign! And because God is sovereign, the gospel cannot be thwarted, no matter what happens.

On the political and social front, even if we "lose" on any or all the issues, and the cynical me says eventually we will, God is still in control. The gospel will not be thwarted if we don't have some of the things we have had in the past. God will find another way for people to hear the message of Jesus.

Now, I'm not saying we don't fight. We should. We are. We must, graciously and lovingly, but firmly and relentlessly. But whatever the outcome, God is in control. We should stand up for religious freedom but it's not as though the lack of it can contain the work of the Holy Spirit. I imagine him giggling at the thought.

But the power of the gospel is not the power of religious freedom, nor the power of conforming views on marriage, nor the power of social acceptability. The power of the gospel is in God, through his Son, by his Spirit. No human hindrance can stand against God.

There will always be a way. Some ways might be harder or more inconvenient. Some may be riskier and some simply more creative.

There may even come a time when to live and preach Christ means you are breaking the law and you get locked up. Then we can use the P-word. But even if that happens, the gospel *still* will not be thwarted. So keep preaching Christ, with or without persecution, with or without panic. God's got it.

We still fight for the "right" but if it does not come to pass, while there are consequences, the gospel will still ring out. There is urgency at particular moments (like when we as Christian voters are presented with the abortion bill aka Reproductive Health Bill), but never panic for the witness of the gospel.

What would you do if put in prison for preaching Jesus? Would you still do it? Dumb question. Hypothetical. No one knows until the moment it happens. Despite what you would or wouldn't do, it still does not thwart the work of the gospel.

Sometimes, I think we fight for the *right* to preach Jesus more than we actually do it. The days are short, so let's use our religious freedom to preach Jesus.

No matter how bad, no matter the consequences, no matter the hardship, we preach Christ... and live his way.

SC

The hands of time move by the hand of God

KARA HARTLEY

T'S COMING ROUND AGAIN, SLOWLY CREEPING HAND, OF TIME AND ITS COMMAND, SOON enough it comes, And settles in its place, Its shadow in my face, Puts pressure in my day.

Those words are from "These Days", one of my favourite songs by Australian band Powderfinger. It captures the tyranny of time. We all have a love-hate relationship with it.

Why does 30 minutes in a café with a friend go so much more quickly than 30 minutes on the treadmill?

Over the past year or so I have spent many a Monday morning immersed in 2 Peter, working through it verse by verse in our senior clergy meetings. What a joy it's been. I've especially come to love 2 Peter 3 because it has reminded me once again about how I should use the time I've been given. So I thought I'd share three things that have struck me.

1. Scoffers forget but we remember

Students of biblical theology will know that the time between Jesus' first and second coming is known as the "last days". Peter tells us these days will be full of scoffers. And aren't they just!

Peter says these people scoff at God's word. They accuse God of not being true to his word. Yet Peter puts an accusation back to them – they are the ones who "deliberately forget" what God has said in the past and what he says about the future. In other words, they deliberately ignore the truth that when God speaks things do happen. They accuse God of not following through with the judgement he's promised. Their conclusion is because he hasn't acted, he can't act.

These scoffers are ignoring God's word to their own peril. What a helpful corrective Peter gives us. God's word is true and trustworthy. He's shown that in the past and the day of judgement will come because God has promised it will.

As we live among the scoffers today – and as in Peter's time these people would come from within the community of God's people – my job isn't to wilfully ignore God's word but these days are for remembering God's great promises.

2. God is patient and the days are urgent

While the scoffers forget, Peter wants believers to remember. Peter wants us to have the right perspective of time. These thousands of years of waiting is God being patient, with a purpose. He wants people to be saved.

He delays sending Jesus so a mother in a village in India, or a businessperson in London, a child at a Christian school in Africa, or a student, a young woman, a family, a dad invited to church somewhere in Sydney, can become a Christian. That is what these days are for: for people to become Christians. That's what 2 Peter 3 says.

God is delaying Jesus' return so our friends, our aunts, cousins, parents, our neighbours, work colleagues, fellow students, the person at the gym, might become a Christian. So as I go about my daily work, carry out responsibilities to care for my family, spend time with friends, get a haircut, go to the doctor, I do it all under the bigger, broader canvas that God's agenda is for people to know Jesus as Lord.

2 Peter 3 is such a blessing, isn't it? It rescues us from ourselves. Rescues us from slipping into some kind of thought that these days are all about me, my happiness, my success, my flourishing. They simply aren't. These days are about people needing to hear the good news of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. These days are for proclaiming the gospel. They won't go on forever. So this is the time to love those around us by continuing to be bold in our witness of Christ.

3. Be holy, look ahead

I love that Peter doesn't just give us the truth of what's coming but, like any good preacher, he then applies that reality to our lives. Given that judgment is coming, he asks, what kind of people ought you to be? Peter tells us there are three ways to live (sorry, couldn't resist!).

First, live with your eyes fixed on what's ahead. Second, live holy and godly lives. We are to be the spotless ones, the unblemished ones, living blamelessly, at peace with God. Living lives that honour rather than dishonour Jesus.

Finally, Peter says, keep sticking with Jesus. Not moving away from the secure position that comes when we put our trust in Jesus. Not falling for any other truth.

These days we Christians are engaged in many significant battles within our community. Battles about caring for the vulnerable, or fighting for religious freedoms. Battles to defend and promote God's ways as the best way for all of us to live.

It's easy to think that winning these battles is the most urgent thing, the main game. Yet, sitting behind these present, important battles is the truth that ultimately this world is heading for judgement and people need to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

I've been encouraged and challenged by 2 Peter 3 to make sure I am looking forward to that great and terrible "day of the Lord" and living in the light of it. That these days are days lived for God and the proclamation of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

SC



A glimpse into our history

Archbishop Glenn Davies looks at the Letters Patent, signed by Queen Victoria in 1864, to alter the limits of the Diocese.

THE ARCHBISHOP AND MEMBERS OF THE ENDOWMENT OF THE SEE CORPORATION PAID A VISIT recently to the Diocesan Archives and had a chance to see several of the treasures held in storage.

The Endowment of the See, which oversees the Archbishop and Bishops' offices, also has responsibility for the archives – which opened in 1977. The collection holds material dating from the origins of the colony up to the present, tracing the role the Sydney Anglican Church has played in the development of Australian faith, society and culture.

Items include the files of Synod proceedings, diocesan organisations and previous archbishops. The archives also houses a huge collection of parish registers, dating from the early years of the colony. Many births, marriages and burial entries have been digitised in a joint project with ancestry.com.

The Diocesan Archivist, Dr Louise Trott, introduced the visitors to the work of the archives and the challenges for record keeping in a digital era.

Dr Trott and volunteer archives assistant, Alan Ventress, prepared a display of key items including an early 19th-century register from St Luke's, Liverpool, the 1839 will of Thomas Moore and various elaborately decorated documents – known as Letters Patent – issued by the monarch, dating from 1825 onwards.

Life lessons in a buddy cop show

RUSSELL POWELL

Unbelievable

Streaming on Netflix

I'M SURE I AM NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO PUTS NETFLIX ON AND IS PLUNGED INTO A DILEMMA. So much to choose from but so little to watch. There are the standard docu-series about unsolved crimes (and crimes they thought they had solved) or dramas featuring detectives, zombies and even stranger things.

I chose a compromise with *Unbelievable*, an eight-episode US drama based on a true story, which proved uncomfortable yet compelling. It is also instructive and even uplifting at times. That may sound strange, but let me explain.

From the opening frames you are warned it is about rape and that there are depictions of sexual violence. The distress is not just from what you see onscreen but from the injustice jumping out at you (you may find the 10-second skip-ahead button helpful in difficult moments).

Unbelievable begins with the story of Marie Adler (Kaitlyn Dever), a foster child from the age of 3, who has been tossed around by the system and is trying to get a decent start in life when she is sexually assaulted in her unit at a group home.

Initially, people rally around and you see the police doing their job with reasonable efficiency but a minimum of empathy. Soon, cracks appear. Two of Marie's carers throw doubt on her behaviour. If she was raped, why isn't she acting differently? They have their own notions about what rape victims should do. The two male detectives on her case are cynical rather than caring. The case goes downhill from there.



In episode two, we are introduced to the complete opposite. A rape has occurred and along comes Detective Karen Duvall (Merritt Wever) with an SUV full of empathy and a verse from Isaiah stuck to her dashboard for inspiration.

Her initial contact with the victim is in sharp contrast to Marie's experience. When the victim keeps apologising for her reactions and choices Duvall says, "Take your time" and "Who and when you choose to tell, is entirely your decision". That's the first lesson, especially for men. People in trauma may not act the way you think, and that's okay. Don't rush to do anything but listen.

As the episodes progress Duvall is joined by Detective Grace Rasmussen (Toni Collette), who is investigating a case with stunning similarities to Duvall's. Enter the buddy cop team: hard-bitten,

cynical Rasmussen and empathetic Duvall, who by now is revealed to be a Christian. We see shots of her singing "In Christ Alone" at church and saying grace at meals – as well as explaining verses such as the Isaiah passage in her SUV, and Matthew 6 about carrying each day's burdens.

They make a formidable team. Every lead is chased down. Needles are found in haystacks. Victims are cared for the best way they know how – by working to catch the culprit before he ruins someone else's life.

No spoilers here: you need to watch to find out the ending. But here are some thoughts on the show overall. First, the acting is top notch. The three leads are perfectly cast. Toni Collette is now a Hollywood fixture, and with good reason. Wever was in *The Walking Dead* but is no zombie actress and Dever, who plays Marie, is touted as the next big thing. You can see why. Hers is the hardest role.

Second, *Unbelievable* proves you can pull off a Christian character without being cloyingly pious or preachy. There are a couple of points where Rasmussen responds to her Christian partner with warmth and respect for her faith. I had to check the credits because I thought the show might have been made by a Christian film company, but not so.

Finally, the lesson about assuming how people should behave amid trauma. Lindy Chamberlain taught our nation about the peril of judging from emotional (or unemotional) reactions. In churches, we need to learn how to read the signs of domestic and sexual violence and respond with empathy and action. We shouldn't need Netflix to teach us that.

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Faith amid fire

JUDY ADAMSON

Beautifully Broken

Rated M

Contains violence

NO MATTER WHO WE ARE OR WHERE WE LIVE, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE cry out to God in our distress. We ask why a certain thing has happened or not, why sin has seemingly been allowed to "win" and what God is doing.

In this true story, three families' lives across the globe are woven together in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 – when 800,000 people were murdered as the Hutu majority in the country turned on the Tutsi minority, and anyone else who stood in their path.

William (Benjamin A. Onyango), a Christian Tutsi businessman, flees from Rwanda with his wife and small daughter, narrowly avoiding death on a number of occasions. Hutu farmer Mugenzi (Bonko Khoza) doesn't want to join the wild-eyed militia but is given no choice if he is to keep his wife and baby daughter safe.

In the US, Rwanda is just a head-shaking item on the news for wealthy businessman Randy Hartley (Scott William Winters) as he rushes home from work to celebrate his own daughter's second birthday. But while the Hartleys might live in comfort, we soon see that they're not immune to the difficulties of life in a fallen world.

Fast forward 10 years and William and his family are stuck in a Kenyan refugee camp, Mugenzi is in a Rwandan prison for his part in the genocide, and in the Hartleys' Nashville home, their pre-teen daughter Andrea (Emily Hahn) is champing at the bit for more freedom. However, when her parents allow her to attend a local Independence Day celebration with friends, she is raped in a toilet block.

Ashamed and confused, Andrea withdraws emotionally and scholastically, strikes out verbally at her family and begins to hang out with the wrong crowd. Home life becomes strained and unpleasant, and Randy and his wife start second guessing their actions as parents, doubting each other, and questioning God. What is he doing?

Amid her pain, Andrea eventually confides in her pen pal, the family's sponsor child Umuhoza – Mugenzi's daughter, who still waits and prays with her mother for his release from prison. Around the same time, William is accepted as a refugee into the US and arrives in Nashville, where he hopes his wife and daughter will soon be able to join him. Linking up with Randy's church, he gains friendship as well as support as he tries to settle and find his purpose in a very different place.

Despite all he has experienced, William is not bitter. He chooses to forgive. His faith is unshaken, and his prayers about the wisdom of leaving his family in the refugee camp are eventually answered in more ways than one. Yet while he rejoices, Randy's family is falling apart, and Umuhoza still longs for her father to come home. What is God doing?

Beautifully Broken is a testament to the power of faith and forgiveness, and the possibly of redemption, even during the worst of times. It also reminds us powerfully that sin and suffering can occur anywhere; that we should never assume all is well with those around us because it looks to be; and that we should care for the needy and oppressed.

Menace and fear is palpable in places, so be prepared for some upsetting scenes – although the genocide violence is mainly suggested rather than shown, as is the rape.

While there are stilted moments of pat dialogue (why can't Christian movies get this right?) they don't occur often, and with strong performances from the cast, you will be kept thinking for some time after the credits roll.

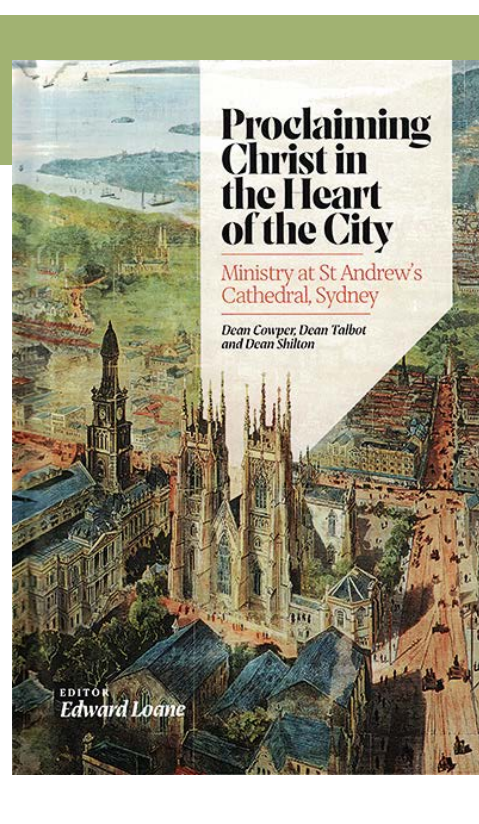
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A Dean's eye view

JOHN MCINTOSH

Proclaiming Christ in the Heart of the City: Ministry at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney: Dean Cowper, Dean Talbot and Dean Shilton

Edited by Edward Loane



AS WE CELEBRATE THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL, THERE IS much to discover about our heritage through the lives of William Macquarie Cowper, Albert Edward Talbot and Lance Rupert Shilton – the Cathedral's longest-serving deans. The editor of this book, the Rev Dr Edward Loane, also throws light on just where St Andrew's lies in the history of English cathedrals.

William Macquarie Cowper was dean from 1858 until his death in 1902, and the Rev Dr Peter Bolt delivers fascinatingly into rich primary sources to present Cowper to the reader.

Born in Australia, Cowper went to Oxford for his higher education and, after 20 years in what is now the Diocese of Newcastle, returned to Sydney only three years after Bishop Barker's arrival. Dr Bolt shows us the distinguished and fruitful ministry of this evangelical dean to a growing city.

After Cowper's death the Cathedral had no dean until 1912, when Archbishop Wright called Albert Edward Talbot, a brilliant Cambridge graduate. Moore College's head of the Department of Church History, the Rev Dr Colin Bale, sensitively and appreciatively records the ministry of this "liberal evangelical" (as those like him came to designate themselves), revealing a remarkable and attractive person.

In World War I, Talbot served as a chaplain at Gallipoli and we read how this compassionate man's sense of justice publicly supported the cause of the workers in the general strike of 1917. By the time the new archbishop, Howard Mowll, arrived in 1934 Talbot's health was in decline, but he served under him happily until his death in 1936.

Archbishop Mowll acted as dean until 1947, when Stuart Barton Babbage was appointed. A succession of shorter-serving deans followed until 1973, when Lance Shilton, a Melbourne evangelical, came from Holy Trinity, Adelaide, chosen by Archbishop Marcus Loane.

Dr Ed Loane carefully locates Shilton's ministry as dean in the context of the changing society of Sydney at the time. He first describes Shilton's conversion in his late teens through the ministry of the CMS League of Youth in Melbourne. The League had a profound impact on Shilton's Christian life and piety – through his war service, into Ridley College and beyond.

Warranted emphasis is given to Shilton's initiatives at Holy Trinity in Adelaide, where he learned to do so much of what he would continue at St Andrew's Cathedral during his 17 years as dean. Many older readers will recognise his engagement with the new moral issues of the increasingly secular society of 1970s Sydney.

Dr Loane uses Shilton's own accounts of his thinking and practice to help the reader assess his decisions and impact, concluding on a note of approval: "He was an evangelist at heart and under his leadership the Cathedral became a diocesan centre for evangelism".

Jane Tooher, director of the Priscilla and Aquila Centre at Moore College, has written the fourth section on Margaret Cowper – the first wife of Dean Cowper – and it is an attractive account of her love and Christian hope. The piety and love of Cowper's wife, and its impact on his own ministry, underscores the vital role the wives of the deans (and other ministers) have played, as Ms Tooher draws on Dean Cowper's moving *Brief Account of the Life of Mrs W. M. Cowper... Derived Principally from Memoranda Made During Her Last Illness*.

Our present dean, Kanishka Raffel, reflects that we are to expect the "public truth" of the gospel will be opposed, and previous deans did experience some opposition. Like Cowper at Stroud, Raffel brings to the fore the matter of injustice to our Indigenous peoples. But he also quotes Neville Naden's reminder: "the wonderful thing that the church did was to introduce the gospel to this country".

At the heart of the dean's reflections is his concern for the ongoing ministry of bearing witness to Christ. He concludes: "St Andrew's Cathedral exists to proclaim... Christ as Lord; the excellencies of him who brought us out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Through *Proclaiming Christ in the Heart of the City* the reader can gain an appreciation of the gospel-centred role of Sydney's Anglican cathedral church, and be encouraged as well as informed by a very readable book.

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The Rev John McIntosh sang in the choir of St Andrew's Cathedral in 1948-50, was ordained and married there, and served as Acting Dean from 2001-2003. The book is available from the Cathedral office (9265 1661) for \$30 plus postage.