

NOVEMBER  
2019

# Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY AND

## Guardians of the faith

THE CHALLENGE TO FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP

PLUS

**Growth in Sydney parishes celebrated**

**Light in the darkness of war**

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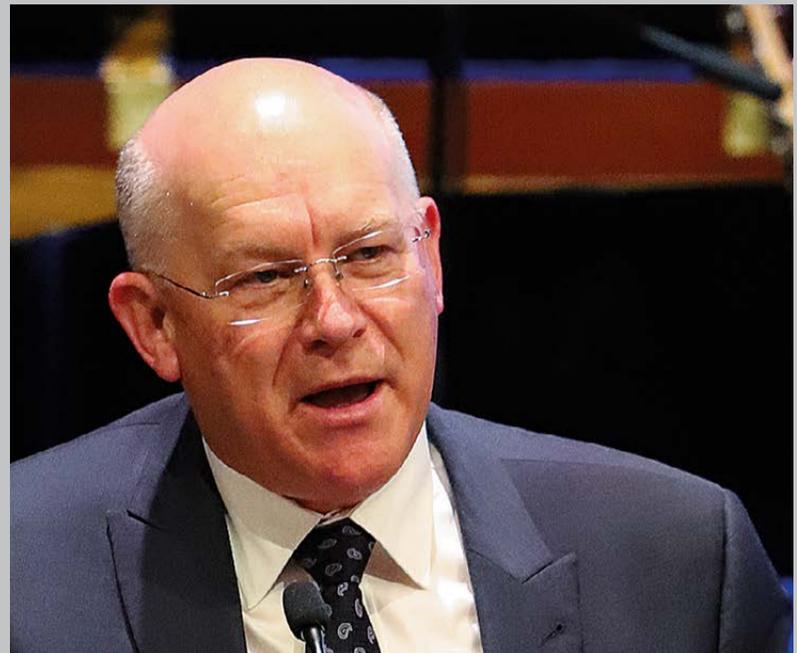
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**“We actually need to humble ourselves... we need training and help.”**

**Bishop Chris Edwards**  
Synod News

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## St Luke's clocks up 200 years

Liverpool's church of the nations: a Nepali group sings at the bicentennial celebration.

**THERE WAS A COLOURFUL LINE-UP BESIDE ST LUKE'S, LIVERPOOL ON OCTOBER 20, BUT THE** people were not lined up to get into the packed bicentenary celebration – rather, they were preparing to read the Bible in the more than 20 languages of people in the parish.

The different tongues ringing out from the congregation was in sharp contrast to the first meetings in the colonial outpost in 1819, when the countryside of Liverpool welcomed its new Georgian-style church.

"We are not celebrating the building," said the rector of Liverpool, the Rev Stuart Pearson – "we are celebrating 200 years of Christian mission in this place".

The celebration required a massive logistical operation, which was carried off with precision as the church welcomed civic visitors such as Governor Margaret Beazley, the Mayor of Liverpool, Wendy Waller and local MPs, as well as Archbishop Glenn Davies, the Bishop of Georges River, Peter Lin, and past and present parishioners.

Not only have languages changed at St Luke's, but so have the buildings. For the bicentenary, the original church held the overflow of the congregation and the main event was in the larger church ministry centre, built in 1981.

The topic verse for the morning, John 3:16, was read by native speakers from countries such as Mauritius, Egypt, Samoa, Malaysia, Italy, Hungary, India, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

A Nepali choir brought people to their feet singing "Days of Elijah", a popular song among Nepali Christians. The Nepali group, which began only eight years ago, is now one of the largest in the church.

"The multicultural nature of that welcome was appropriate," Archbishop Davies told the congregation, "because we welcome all people and want everyone to hear the good news of John 3:16.

"When Governor Phillip was given his instructions from England, he was to enforce religious observance and good order in the new colony.

"But there was a chaplain on the First Fleet, Richard Johnson, who saw that it wasn't moral instruction but the gospel which changed people."

Later, Governor Lachlan Macquarie commissioned St Luke's as part of the fledgling settlement at Liverpool and it was designed by convict architect Francis Greenway. Only two rectors of St Luke's are still living: the incumbent, Stuart Pearson, and the previous rector, the Rev Jim Ramsay.

Descendants of former rectors were present, including relatives of the first minister, the Rev Robert Cartwright, who conducted the first service on St Luke's Day, October 18, 1819. A history of the church, written by congregation member Dr Bryan Cowling, will be published next year.

"Governor Macquarie wanted a church in the centre of Liverpool because he wanted people to know about Jesus," Dr Davies said, pointing out that in the same year the governor also laid the foundation stone for St Andrew's Cathedral.

The church precinct still sits prominently in the centre of Liverpool, running services, Sunday school, playgroups and hosting community events through Anglicare and its own community chaplaincy.

"We serve the people of our community and hold out the message of Jesus," the Archbishop said. "Some people are not there yet – they are still stumbling over that message. But we continue to reach out to them as we have done in this place for 200 years."

## Prepare to love those struggling

**THE MENTAL HEALTH AND PASTORAL CARE INSTITUTE AT ANGLICAN** Deaconess Ministries has created a package of resources to help churches – and those in them – understand and respond well to mental illnesses in their midst.

Called *10/10* in acknowledgment of World Mental Health Day on October 10, the information is free and downloadable from the MHPCI website. It includes a range of prayers for people experiencing mental health problems and those seeking to support or care for them, options for church announcements or appropriate psalms of lament, plus further resources and reading.

The Rev Keith Condie, who is co-director of the MHPCI and put together the material with his wife Sarah and staffers at ADM, says, "There's a lot of great stuff out there that mental health professionals are doing, and we must work with them, but there are unique things that the Church can offer. Even a lot of mental health professionals will say that: the community, the sense of meaning and purpose in life. The hope that the Christian faith offers is profound."

*10/10* also contains 10 short videos to help personalise the mental health picture for churches and individuals. Each video focuses on a different person – health professionals, church ministers, people struggling with mental health issues or their family members – and each offers insight into certain conditions, how to care well for those who suffer or how to respond in faith.

The Rev Mark Wormell, rector of St John's, Glebe, speaks in his video about how the parish cares for locals with mental health problems.

Not only do staff and volunteers seek to be "alert to their needs", he says, but "we really try to make St John's a place where everyone is welcome – particularly welcome if they have mental health problems. So that often involves being very patient in listening to people as they describe their lives and the problems that they deal with – not trying to solve their problems, but really just trying to understand them.

"A very key part of the way that we manage things is to be a place where people make friends. We would love people – everyone – to know Jesus, but the way that we think is the best way to do that is to make friends first, whether it's at our Sunday services or whether it's through... our emergency relief program."

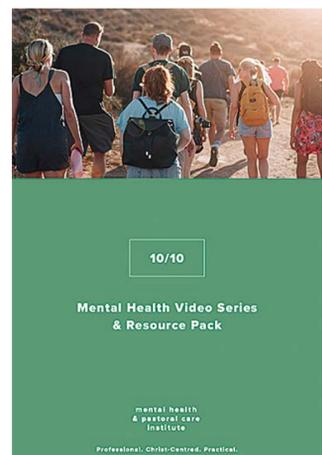
Claudia, who deals with severe depression and anxiety, describes in her video the burden of a "deep, overwhelming sadness in myself that I can't explain", in addition to feelings of shame she used to experience as she hid her illness from her family.

"My faith is everything," she adds. "I honestly don't believe I'd be here without it... Often there are lies in my head, and I think depression and anxiety does that, [but] I know that [God] has plans to prosper me and not harm me."

Adds Mr Condie: "When people hear about real experiences, it doesn't make it so foreign – and it raises empathy. We're just trying to encourage people to be there for others. You don't have to be an expert but just listen, ask what it's like and 'Thank you for sharing' and 'What can I do?'. Just little things, but they can make a real difference for people.

"Even if this just nudges a few people in a more caring direction we think that's really worthwhile."

The *10/10* package is available at [www.mentalhealthinstitute.org.au](http://www.mentalhealthinstitute.org.au)





# Hearts on fire in northwest NSW

THE SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE IS HELD just two weeks before Sydney's Synod but timing is where the similarities end. The circumstances of this regional diocese are much tougher than those faced by city churches.

The synod gathered in Tamworth last month amid the worst drought in a century, and with bushfires burning near Armidale. Major centres are approaching zero day – when they will run out of water – and surrounding rural districts in northwestern NSW have already become dust bowls.

Under such circumstances, city people may be taken aback by the synod address of Bishop Rick Lewers (right), where he described the “great opportunity” facing the diocese.

“Everyone understands the plight facing our communities as the drought has become the worst in our history,” he said. “To make matters worse, fire has ravaged a number of areas in the diocese.

“I want to commend the resolve of our farming communities, both in town and on the land, and I am thankful that this synod will provide us with the opportunity to pray for all who are struggling. I also want to express our gratitude to the many who have donated support, and for those organisations like Anglicare and Anglican Aid who have helped.”

The bishop went on to say that already more than \$250,000 in drought relief had been distributed. And, amid these hardships, the diocese has gone on the front foot and declared a major evangelistic program for 2020, with training for church members and prayer support for sharing the gospel.

“These are days of great opportunity for us to take the gospel of comfort to the people of our diocese and I look forward to 2020 as we focus on our evangelistic task,” he said.

Elizabeth Parker (right), the president of Mothers' Union in the Armidale Diocese and a member of St Paul's, Tamworth, said there had been growing interest in next year's program.

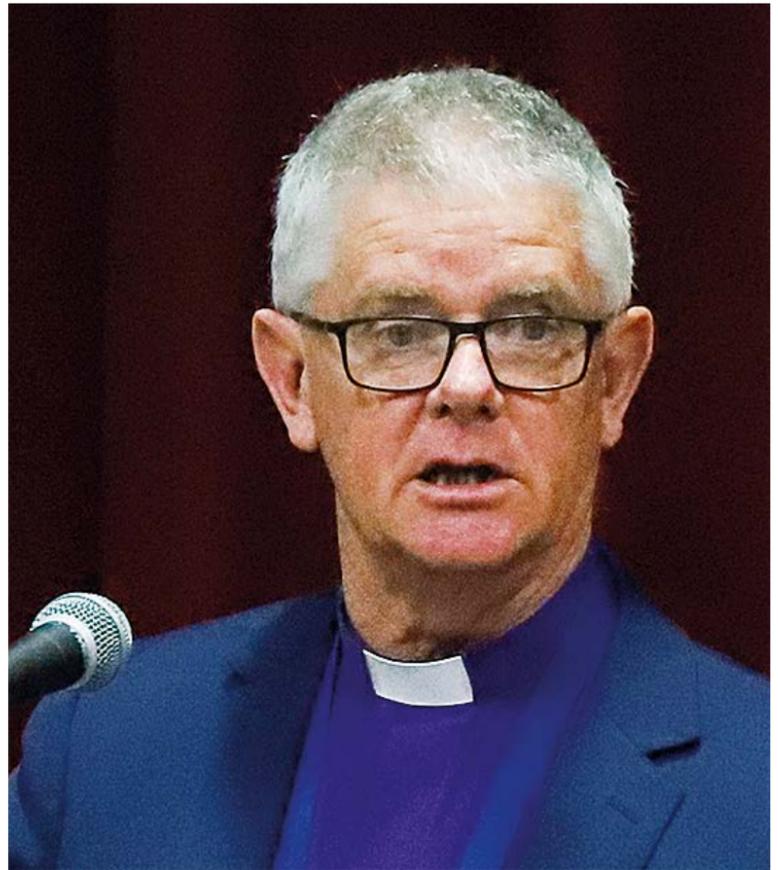
“We had a great turn-up to evangelism training,” she said. “Three weeks in a row we had 250 people attend on each of the three nights in Tamworth.”

Hundreds more turned out across the diocese for the training, which supports Armidale's Diocesan Mission statement to “glorify God by introducing people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven”.

“I guess it is about preaching in season and out of season, and you hope that hardship will bring people to God but it doesn't always,” Mrs Parker said. “The whole issue of ‘Is God hearing our prayers when we pray for rain?’, ‘Does he answer?’ and ‘What does it look like when he answers?’ – that's what everybody is thinking about.

“We need to show care, articulate care, for people when things are hard, so that if God works in them they will draw the connection between our kindness and the God who motivates us.”

Bishop Lewers wants Christians to speak up as people ask such questions. “I have no idea why God has allowed such difficult times to beset us but I do know that it is an opportunity for all of us to consider our relationship with God, repent of our sins and seek his mercy.”





## LAYSONS HEAD SOUTH

The **Rev Steve Layson** will become rector of St George's, Gerringong on December 1.

Mr Layson has spent 16 years at East Lindfield with his family and says that, before he and his wife Lorna were contacted by the Gerringong nominators, they had already been thinking it might be time for a ministry change.

"There's a reasonable amount of time 'til I retire, our kids have all left school and uni so they're free, but also it's probably a good time for [East Lindfield] to get some new ideas," he says. "We saw the opportunity at Gerringong and, hearing about the church, I thought it sounded like a good place and a place that could use someone like me. So, there were family things, personal things, our church and their church.

"The whole time we were in negotiation with [the nominators] I was trying to forget the fact that it was in Gerringong! I didn't want to go there because it's a beautiful place – I wanted to go there because it was the place where God wanted me to be."

Mr Layson says the move will mean a big change for their kids – who've been part of East Lindfield for as long as they can remember – as well as a big change for the church.

"I don't think people are looking forward to us leaving – they're saying, 'You can always change your mind, you know!'" he says. "But the church is now taking the opportunity to think what the shape of ministry is going to be like here... We're not living in the 1950s any more, and having a church every 500 metres is a bit silly. It's given the parish the opportunity to think about how they want to do ministry in the future, so that's probably good.

"We're really sad to be leaving our close family here – people we've known and loved for a long time – but we are also really looking forward to new family and getting involved in a new community."

He says Mrs Layson hopes to continue working as a nurse and has "always wanted to be part of a country town community, getting among people in ministry... so she's looking forward to getting to know the people and getting involved in their lives".

The members at Gerringong will also be dealing with building changes in coming years, as their existing hall only seats about 80 people and their "tiny" church seats even fewer.

"I'm looking forward to doing God's work there," Mr Layson says. "There are some interesting challenges that will push me a little bit and that will be good, but I think I can help them as we work through those things together.

"It's got quite a varied demographic, including holiday places... For the first couple of months we'll have no idea who's in the parish 'cause there'll be holiday people attending and the regulars will be away!"

## HEAD CHAPLAIN FOR ST CATH'S

The **Rev Kylie Wilson** has been appointed head chaplain to St Catherine's School in Waverley.

Ms Wilson has a Masters in Teaching and has been part of the St Catherine's community since 2010, when she joined the school to teach Biblical Studies after graduating from Moore College.

She became assistant chaplain the following year, was ordained a deacon in 2013 and became head of the Biblical Studies department at the beginning of 2018.

"Schools are just such exciting places because you get to tell students about Jesus," she says. "A lot of the students have no contact with Christianity in any other arena, so I really appreciate the opportunities to teach them.

"Recently I've been reflecting on the world, and how the hope that it offers is a really shallow hope. So, to really be able to show who Jesus is, and that what he offers is genuine hope – life now and forever – it's a pretty exciting job!"

The headmistress of St Catherine's, Dr Julie Townsend, says she is "delighted" Ms Wilson has accepted the head chaplain's role, adding that because of her "breadth of expertise and experience, we have brought the Chaplaincy and Biblical Studies departments together under her direction and guidance."

Adds Ms Wilson: "I'm really looking forward to the further opportunities I'll have to love and serve the St Cath's community."

She will take up her new role at the beginning of the 2020 school year.



## NEW PRINCIPAL FOR MAC

Anglican Deaconess Ministries has announced that the **Rev Dr Katy Smith** has been chosen at the 11<sup>th</sup> principal of Mary Andrews College – to begin in March 2020.

The CEO of ADM, Dr Kate Harrison Brennan, says, "I am truly grateful to God for his provision of the Rev Dr Katy Smith as our next principal... Katy brings personal experience of the significance of a Diploma of Theology, deep biblical understanding and demonstrated passion for mission and pastoral concern.

"I have every confidence in Katy to lead Mary Andrews College into the next season, continuing and building on its significant and distinctive mission."

The chairwoman of the ADM board, the Rev Jenni Stoddart, adds that "Katy's faithfulness to God's word is matched exactly with an infectious joy and passion, inviting others to come and discover the Lord Jesus whom she serves. My prayer is that God will use Katy and Mary Andrews College to grow its students in joyous, faithful service!"

Dr Smith has spent the past two years as branch director of CMS SA & NT, serving before that as director of postgraduate studies and lecturer in Old Testament at the Bible College of South Australia, and a lecturer at Ridley College. She has a Bachelor of Theology (first-class honours) from Ridley as well as a research Masters degree on a theology of God's grace in the Psalter. Her PhD was on "The Persuasive Intent of the Book of Leviticus".

Dr Smith says that, "as followers of Jesus, we are called to take up our cross and follow him, which includes how we manage and lead the organisations entrusted to us and also how we teach, train and coach others". She hopes to follow in the footsteps of Mary Andrews, who sought to help women flourish in their own ministry contexts. "So often women just survive in ministry, but flourishing is vital, too, for long-term faithful service.

"I am passionate to see gospel work multiplied and mobilised both locally and globally... this has motivated each step in a decade of experience in theological education. It is a great privilege to continue to use my skills both organisationally and academically to enable [the college] to continue moving forward, confidently focused on its purpose, mission and vision to God's glory."



## VALE



The **Rev John Robinson** died on August 27, aged 96. Born John Chorley Robinson on November 24, 1922 in the Chinese province of Guizhou, his parents were missionaries with OMF's precursor, the China Inland Mission. He and his younger brothers were all born on the mission field.

Returning to Australia in early 1937, Mr Robinson began an engineering cadetship but soon changed to interior design. During World War II he served for six months in the Citizen Military Forces, and then for two years in the Army, being discharged in September 1944.

For the following two years he studied at the then Melbourne Bible Institute, and in 1947-48 served with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan. From there he went straight to China, where he began working for OMF. He and his missionary wife Dorothy were married in China in 1950.

Following Mr Robinson's arrest on spying charges, the family stayed in Australia for a few years, returning to the field in the Philippines from 1954-68. In 1969 they

resettled in Sydney, where Mr Robinson became the regional secretary of Scripture Union and then ran its publishing arm, ANZEA.

Wanting to return to ministry, he became curate of Hunters Hill in 1977 while completing study at Moore College, and was ordained at the age of 54. He was precentor at St Andrew's Cathedral for three years, rector of East Lindfield from 1981-1986, then he and Dorothy spent another two years in Singapore with OMF prior to retiring in 1988.

Mr and Mrs Robinson continued to serve in a range of ways after retirement – from counselling casual visitors to the Cathedral, to ministry support in their local parishes, a two-month stint at Cairo Cathedral, and support wherever it seemed needed in their eventual retirement home in Castle Hill.

His daughter Helen observed that her father preferred not to be talked about, humbly considering what he did in ministry to be "what God wanted him to do".

However, a long-time friend of Mr Robinson, John Waterhouse, added that his was "a life worth celebrating... He exercised a strategic role for the gospel across many countries in East Asia, influencing a whole generation of emerging indigenous leadership".



# Guarding the faith in a changing world

DR GLENN DAVIES has delivered his final address as President of the Sydney Synod. Ahead of his retirement in July next year, he drew inspiration from the Pastoral Epistles in outlining the role of an Archbishop and the challenges to Christian faith in the Anglican Church. He also spoke of the progress of Mission 2020 and the shape of ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *Southern Cross* readers will know many of the issues the Archbishop spoke about; we present some highlights of the address.

## THE OFFICE OF BISHOP

The apostolic letters to Timothy and Titus, often referred to as the Pastoral Epistles, have been a regular source of comfort and instruction to me as a minister of the gospel for nigh on 40 years, but more especially as a bishop in the church of God these past two decades. While Paul's letters to his fellow workers, with their trustworthy sayings, clearly have application to all believers, they have particular application to those entrusted with the authorisation or ordination of the next generation of pastors, teachers and evangelists.

As Timothy and Titus appear to have a special portfolio of guarding the faith (1 Timothy 4:6; Titus 2:1), theirs was the responsibility of ensuring that those whom they selected and appointed as elders in the church of God were men of faith, godliness and ability – or as we express it for today's ordinations, persons of conviction, character and competency.

In the ancient church, the office of bishop developed as a reflection of the same responsibility that was given to Timothy and Titus. Anglican polity retained this ancient office of bishop as a means of guarding the faith, entrusted with the responsibility of ordaining, licensing and appointing ministers to serve the body of Christ. As guardians of the faith, bishops are charged to

*Be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word; and privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to do the same. [Ordinal, BCP]*

As the Doctrine Commission's excellent report on *An Evangelical Episcopate* expressed it: "The first priority of the Archbishop of Sydney is to be a guardian of 'the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3)".

This is true of all those who hold office as a bishop in the church of God.

## THE LEADERSHIP OF BISHOPS

It was therefore with great delight that I learned of the election of the Rev Mark Calder to become the eleventh Bishop of Bathurst. I have every confidence that Mark, currently the rector of Noosa on the Sunshine Coast, will exemplify the role of bishop as guardian of the faith. Synod will remember the decision we made last year to provide financial assistance to the Diocese of Bathurst for 2019 and the next five years. This was a risk the Synod took, not knowing who would lead the Diocese of Bathurst into the future. Many of us prayed fervently for the outcome of the election and I am sure we all thank God for his answer to our prayers. We pray for Mark and Susan as they begin this new ministry.

Regrettably, not all who are elected bishop are capable of being a guardian of the faith. As Anglicans, we recognise both the merits and the risks of electing bishops to exercise oversight of the church of God. Bishops must be held accountable for their guardianship of the faith. We have seen too many around the world over recent years succumb to the world's false values, with a revisionist agenda to reinterpret Scripture to their own destruction and the detriment of the flock of God.

By way of contrast, I am therefore delighted to have Bishop-elect Jay Behan of Christchurch, New Zealand with us this afternoon. He, like Mark Calder, will be a guardian of the faith. I am also grateful for the Dean's motion, now passed by the Synod, which effectively endorsed Jay's election as the first Bishop of the Church of Confessing Anglicans of Aotearoa-New Zealand. We heard this afternoon of the sorry tale of the departure of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia from the teaching of Scripture, when their General Synod passed legislation last year, authorising bishops to allow the blessing of same-sex unions in their dioceses.

It is therefore our privilege and delight to offer Bishop-elect Behan the right hand of fellowship this afternoon and to recognise him and his diocese as authentically Anglican. It matters little that the Archbishop of Canterbury is unlikely to recognise this new diocese. What makes it authentically Anglican is, as our Constitution expresses it, its allegiance to the Bible as "the ultimate rule and standard of faith given by inspiration of God and containing all things necessary for salvation", whose teaching is confessed in the Thirty-Nine Articles and given liturgical form in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

If one were to think of bishops breaking fellowship in the national Church, sadly one need not look very far. Six weeks ago the Diocese of Wangaratta, with the full support of its bishop, passed a regulation that authorised a liturgy for the blessing of a couple married in accordance with the Marriage Act 1961. That sounds innocent enough, and when no authorised liturgy exists for a particular service, the Canon Concerning Services 1992 allows a Synod to make regulations for such a service, so as to authorise it for local use.

However, the intention of this regulation was clear: it was to accommodate and facilitate the blessing of same-sex marriages. Apart from the repudiation of Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, our General Synod and our own Synod have frequently affirmed that marriage is between a man and a woman, an exclusive and permanent union – "forsaking all others... 'til death us do part".

Yet our view of marriage is not a popular one in Australia, nor is it consistent with the definition of marriage under the amended Marriage Act 1961, after 60 per cent of the population endorsed, by postal vote, a change to the Marriage Act, which would permit same-sex marriages. Nonetheless, God's intention for marriage has not changed. We honour him when we abide by his instruction. We cannot bless same-sex marriages for the simple reason that we cannot bless sin.

Friends, we have entered treacherous waters. I fear for the stability of the Anglican Church of Australia. These developments have the potential to fracture our fellowship and impair our Communion. I have stated this many times at the annual National Bishops' Conference, but sadly to little effect. If we return to the Pastorals, Paul predicts the decay that will threaten the church in the last days.

Next year the General Synod will meet in a special session to confer on the issue of same-sex blessings and same-sex marriage. It has been planned by the General Synod Standing Committee as a consultation, with no opportunity for making decisions. However, the time has come to take action and make decisions, and these recent events have made it all the more imperative to do so. The General Synod must make a clear statement about the teaching of the Bible on the sanctity of sex within the marriage bond of a man and a woman, so that marriage is held in honour among all and the marriage bed is not defiled (Hebrews 13:4).

My own view is that if people wish to change the doctrine of our Church, they should start a new church or join a church more aligned to their views – but do not ruin the Anglican Church by abandoning the plain teaching of Scripture. Please leave us. We have far too much work to do in evangelising Australia to be distracted by the constant pressure to change our doctrine in order to satisfy the lusts and pleasures of the world.

## MISSION 2020

Our vision is to see Christ honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community. We adopted this vision five years ago and it has been a helpful reminder of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and his unchanging commission to make disciples of all nations. We also adopted a Mission statement, referred to as Mission 2020:

*We commit ourselves afresh, in prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, to glorify God and love our neighbour by proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ, calling people to repent and living lives worthy of him.*

While one might have assumed that Mission 2020 will conclude next year, the Strategy and Research Group has recommended to Standing Committee that we continue using the Mission 2020 vision, mission, values and priorities for the foreseeable future. While the mission of the Diocese is never the personal fiefdom of the Archbishop, the opportunity for the next Archbishop to provide leadership in any suggested changes to Mission 2020, in consultation with the Strategy and Research Group, is a sensible way forward.

What may need tweaking is our measurable goals. One of the clear advantages of Mission 2020 has been the manner in which we can assess our impact on society through measures available in National Church Life Survey (NCLS) statistics. The number of newcomers, for example, or the growth in number of those who have invited someone to church, are all easily quantifiable. I commend to you the recent research on newcomers, initiated by the Strategy and Research Group and conducted by Dr John Bellamy of Anglicare's Social Policy and Research Unit. It is a valuable resource for assisting rectors to improve the attraction and retention of newcomers in our churches.

Some mission goals have been achieved, others have not been reached, and some may have been more aspirational than realistic. The projected number of 15 new churches in greenfield areas, or the expectation that we would have two new churches in each Mission Area by 2020, have fallen short. Yet, we have made progress in establishing new churches in greenfield areas and seen new churches planted in Mission Areas.

I believe we have a heart for mission across the Diocese. The Synod's reaffirmation, for example, of agreeing to a land levy of 2 per cent of each parish's net receipts, has been a wonderful illustration of sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom. I am also delighted to see the ongoing work of New Churches for New Communities (NCNC), which has raised \$4.6 million over the past four years, plus a further \$300,000 in pledges.

The commitment of many parishes and individuals to donate funds through NCNC, for the provision of buildings on the land purchased by the Mission Property Committee, has enabled the current construction of Stanhope Anglican Church and, in a few months, the construction of a larger building for Hope Anglican Church at Leppington. These buildings will enhance the tireless efforts of the respective church planters and their congregations to be bearers of light and grace to the new communities springing up in Greater Sydney's northwest and southwest.

We need more church planters, and Evangelism and New Churches has been critical in identifying and mentoring such people. We also need more rectors. Members of Synod will be aware of the unprecedented number of parishes with vacant incumbencies. The Rev Gary O'Brien, director of Ministry Training and Development, and Mr Peter Mayrick of Moore College's Centre for Ministry Development, have created an excellent program of support for new rectors, including coaching and mentoring.

Yet I fear that many assistant ministers do not see the opportunities that exist to lead a congregation in the ways of the Lord, maturing disciples and making new disciples. I hope the additional protections for assistant ministers we have made in the Assistant Ministers Ordinance 2017 have not enticed them to stay put!

It is also possible that the growth of the 5M model of ministry, which seems to have captured the imagination of some rectors, has unintentionally prevented assistant ministers from reaching their potential in exercising their ministry to the whole congregation, rather than a segmented ministry to some, or a quarantined exposure to only one form of ministry. Rectors have an important part to play in the professional development of their assistant ministers, especially presbyters, who should be encouraged and trained to become rectors themselves.

However, we should not be discouraged. It is easy to see all the problems without seeing the blessings of growth among us. We have this year a record number of six provisional parishes seeking full parish status. This is exciting, and I am so glad it is our custom in Synod to celebrate these achievements of gospel growth.

It is also heartening to see regional missions taking place across the Diocese. A couple of years ago the Wollongong Region joined together under the banner of "Jesus is..." with great success, under God. Next year the region is doing a reprise of this mission Endeavour. The Georges River Region has already begun a year of prayer and preparation for a John 3:16 mission for 2020, with the hope that every member of every congregation will be able to recite John 3:16, and commit to using it as a way of sharing the gospel with unbelievers. The Northern Region is also preparing for mission in 2020, as are churches in the Hills in the Western Region, climaxing on Easter Day – the day of resurrection.

*Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep... Therefore my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:20, 58).*

## THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The past 12 months have seen significant developments in the life of our nation and state, particularly in the areas of legislation relating to sex discrimination, religious discrimination and, most notably, abortion. If we are to be salt and light in our world, then we must not be silent on public issues where they concern the common good and the honour of Christ.

While we shall, I fear, become increasingly subject to forces within our society that seek to marginalise not only the Christian voice, but all faith traditions, our engagement with these issues must not be based upon seeking to preserve ourselves or the privileged status we currently enjoy. Rather, our concern ought to be for the glory of God in following his paths.

Since he has given us our charter for the care of God's world and its inhabitants, this should be our prime concern. "Doing the good", as the apostle Peter puts it, ought to be part and parcel of our Christian DNA. We are the true benefactors for the world. We not only have a gospel to proclaim, which will affect the destiny of every living person on the planet, including the unborn, but we have God's charter for humanity – as Walter Kaiser describes Gabriel's words to Daniel. God has told us what to do:

*He has shown you, O Man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).*

We know God's laws are good for humanity. We should never be ashamed of presenting God's ways to our fellow Australians as that which will bring harmony and peace within the world. Of course, we shall be opposed, or perhaps worse, misunderstood, as the media so frequently portray our views.

## THE ELECTION OF AN ARCHBISHOP

Many will be aware this will be my final Synod as President. My age was much publicised during the lead-up to the last archiepiscopal election, as I turn 70 next September. Some members of Synod kindly remembered my birthday last month – and I am grateful to both of you! I am also grateful to the Standing Committee for extending my term of office by two years, which is a provision of the relevant Ordinance, where a three-quarters majority of both clergy and lay members so decide.

If I were to continue until my 70th birthday, the Synod would ordinarily meet in October and then again in November for an Election Synod. This seemed an unreasonable impost upon Synod members, so I have decided to resign on July 19, 2020. The dates for the Election Synod have been set for the week beginning August 10 next year.

The synods over which it has been my pleasure to preside have been happy synods. We have had robust debate and strong disagreement at times, but also unanimous agreement at others – such as the amalgamation of ARV and Anglicare. I consider the candour of speeches has been imbued with love and respect.

It has been a distinct honour and privilege to serve as Archbishop these past six years. I did not seek this office, but found it thrust upon my shoulders by the will of the Synod, under the leading of the Holy Spirit – and I take neither aspect for granted. It is an onerous office in many respects, but I have actually enjoyed serving the Diocese in this capacity.

I have sought to discharge my office with integrity, transparency, courage and humility, conscious of the weight of responsibility and my own inadequacies, yet also conscious of the grace of God and the abundance of prayers from so many people that have been offered to God on my behalf. I could not have administered this office in my own strength.

Seven years ago, our Diocese was polarised by the early announcement of two nominees for the office of Archbishop. This proved to be an unhealthy aspect of our diocesan life, regrettably fuelled by many unrestrained comments on social media. I believe we have matured as a Diocese and especially as a Synod through that experience.

We should not wish for a person who "campaigns" for office, nor should we want him to! Rather, making nominations is a way in which we bring names of qualified persons to the attention of the Synod for their consideration, as to whether they have the gifts to exercise an "evangelical archiepiscopate".

Those who have worked with them in the past, or know them well, will inform the Synod at the proper time so that their gifts and skills, their character and convictions, might enable the Synod prayerfully and wisely, under God's leading, to elect the next Archbishop of Sydney.

We have been blessed in the past with good and godly men who have been nominated for this high office. We should not take that for granted. Nor should we encamp ourselves in factional groupings seeking to dispel the strengths of alternative nominees. There are a number of people who are capable of becoming Archbishop, and we should thank God for the richness of the gifted servants he has given us. We should therefore pray that God will enable the Synod to make a wise and godly choice when it meets next year.

## FINAL REMARKS

Paul was blessed in his ministry by having faithful co-workers such as Timothy and Titus, let alone the others he mentions by name in his letters. Paul was not a loner, apostle though he be, for he was collaborative in his ministry, always seeking the glory of God through the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the lordship of Christ with others by his side. I, too, have been blessed with the support, encouragement, wisdom and, at times correction, of my senior staff.

Finally, my wife, Dianne, has been unfailing in her love and support of me, not only in this office, but also throughout our 40 years of marriage. I thank God for her with all my heart.

I commend you to the work of this session of Synod, and may the words of Paul steer our path as we seek to do what is pleasing in God's sight and will bring honour to his name.

*Read the full address at [sydneyanglicans.net](http://sydneyanglicans.net) or download the PDF at [bit.ly/sydneyynod2019](http://bit.ly/sydneyynod2019)*

# Light in darkness:

## GOSPEL MINISTRY TO WORLD WAR I TROOPS

As we approach Remembrance Day, take time to recall those who were God's witnesses on the battlefield, writes **COLIN R. BALE**.

**T**HE CENTENARY ANNIVERSARIES OF World War I, which concluded last year, tended to focus on the loss and sacrifice occasioned by the conflict.

That was understandable and extremely worthwhile. We as a nation rightfully should remember those who served, and particularly those who died, to bring about peace and to preserve democratic freedoms. However, it is also important to remember that in the midst of the horror of war there were Christian people, lay and clergy, who were seeking to witness to the God who is both creator and reconciler. These people recognised the need to share the gospel of life with those who faced imminent death.

So, leading up to this Remembrance Day, I thought it would be good to recall the efforts made by the Diocese of Sydney, as well as other denominations, to have effective gospel ministry among Australian troops in the Great War – whether they were training at home or in a conflict zone beyond Australia.

Before troops headed overseas, there were opportunities to minister to them. The major denominations sought to provide physical comforts such as coffee/tea canteens and entertainment venues to the men in their training camps. More importantly, they worked hard to get bibles, testaments and religious books and tracts into the hands of all soldiers while they were still in Australia, believing that this would aid their spiritual wellbeing. It was overt, hands-on ministry.

There are anecdotal accounts of Archbishop Wright making pre-dawn walks to Woolloomooloo to farewell each troop ship heading overseas. He did this to show his pastoral concern for these departing men and remind them of his ongoing prayers for them. He sought to ensure that all soldiers leaving Australia received a New Testament and/or a Prayer Book. By doing this, Archbishop Wright said, the "Church is showing to the men that their Church does care for them and is prepared to do all in her power for their spiritual and social welfare".

The Diocese's magazine discloses the effort that went into this venture. The March 1916 edition of the *Sydney Diocesan Magazine* related how "5000 testaments have been given the men [at Liverpool Camp in Sydney] and a large number of Prayer Books".

The most obvious form of ministry was that provided by the chaplains attached to the units of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). A significant number of Sydney clergy volunteered for this pastoral ministry. In 1914 the Dean of St Andrew's Cathedral, A. E. Talbot\*, was appointed Anglican Colonel-Chaplain to the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the AIF. This was the Australian contingent that was involved in the landing at Gallipoli on April 25, 1915.

On the voyage from Australia to Egypt early in 1915, Dean Talbot recounted his ministry aboard in a letter home to the *Sydney Diocesan Magazine*: "At 8.45 [every day] the bugle sounds for parade, which is opened by short prayers". During the later morning he visited the ship's hospital to minister to the sick. In the afternoon there was "opportunity to get personal talks with the men".

In the evenings, if a concert was not staged, then there was "an evangelistic service on deck". On Sundays he presided at two services of Holy Communion (6am and 7.30am) to which there was, in his words, "a very fair turn-up of both officers and men". Later in the morning on Sundays a church parade was held for all personnel on deck.

Initially, at Gallipoli, Dean Talbot was a spectator on board ship of the landing and subsequent fighting. He commented on the ferocity of the fighting, noting the number of wounded who were being repatriated from Anzac Cove to the ships so they could be transported to hospitals elsewhere. He saw the importance of ministering to reinforcements prior to going ashore: "before they landed, I twice celebrated the Holy Communion with an attendance of 220... a deeper meaning than ever seems to invest the Divine words".

By mid-May he was ashore and able to conduct Anglican chaplaincy among the troops, especially among the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion to which he was attached. His correspondence reveals both the joy and distress of pastoral ministry in such a dangerous place.

He particularly recalled one young Presbyterian officer, who "came to me and asked if he might communicate at our morning Celebration. I said, most certainly, I would welcome him! He came and I noticed how devout and rejoiced he was". Sadly, a few days later, the Dean saw the man again "as he lay on his blood-stained stretcher: 'Oh! Padre, they have hit me badly'. Within a week I had committed his mortal remains to the deep". He also wrote of other men that had been baptised or had taken instruction in the Christian faith.

Other chaplains also commented on the deep spiritual hunger they saw among the troops. Two chaplains at Gallipoli, "Fighting" McKenzie and William Dexter, reported that men were eager to have the New Testament: when McKenzie distributed 1300 testaments in a two-day period, "the men rushed these... like 'wolves'." Dexter observed, "it is no uncommon thing to see a man in the trenches with his New Testament out, reading it".

Likewise, Charles Bean, the official Australian war correspondent at Gallipoli, recounts in his diary of coming across a number of officers reading and discussing the Bible.

Denominational differences between Protestant chaplains tended to be unimportant at Gallipoli and there are numerous instances of them working collaboratively. Chaplain Ernest Merrington, a Presbyterian from Queensland, kept a diary and this recounts such instances. For example, he wrote of a combined service on June 6, 1915, which "a goodly number of Australians and New Zealanders attended". Merrington preached on the text of Galatians 5:1: *Stand fast therefore in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage*.

He said the point of his sermon was a simple and practical plea to those gathered for faith in the Lord, who was "right and truth". He believed those who attended the service were spiritually refreshed by it.

On June 27, Merrington wrote again about another combined service at Gallipoli even as the Turks shelled the Australian positions: "At night we had a very fine united service, the Anglican Chaplain [Talbot] having agreed to join forces with us. About 300 men squatted in the gully, lifting the glorious hymns above the grim orchestration of the battle".

Merrington, along with other chaplains, believed the constant presence of death stimulated a living interest in religion for at least some of the troops. He said that when men saw their comrades killed, they wished to learn more about the mystery of life, and to appreciate Christ as not only a comfort and support, but the author of life.

What was evident about Gallipoli was also the case in other theatres of war where Australians fought. In 1916, the then Anglican Home Mission Society in Sydney sent the Rev A. Stoddard to England to work with the wounded in the hospitals. In a 1917 report to the diocesan magazine a correspondent wrote that,

One practical thing he [Stoddard] does is he gets soldiers to fill out a card with name, address, state of health, and the person in Australia for who the card is intended... thousands of these cards [are] forwarded to Australia where they are sent on to the various addresses. Many are the letters... received from mothers, wives and friends expressing heartfelt thanks for the cards. In some instances they were the only news relatives had received from some of their boys.

The October 1917 issue of the *Sydney Diocesan Magazine* printed excerpts from the letters of two chaplains at the front:

All the church parades are voluntary, and the men attend in very large numbers. My trouble is; that I have not nearly service books for them all... the fact that the men have often been out half the night, and you will see that it requires no small effort to make a church parade a success... We had a grand Communion service on Easter Sunday. It was held in an old tumbledown place, ankle deep in mud; that did duty as a sergeants' mess. It was just simply packed with men, many could not get in. Chaplain Richmond wrote,

Somewhat here where men are living on the brink of eternity, men are ready to turn to higher things... beginning to prepare another body of men for confirmation. They are coming forward very readily.

It is important to be reminded that in dark times, such as the awfulness of the trenches of World War I, the light of the gospel is never extinguished. God in his kindness ensures that gospel witness is available through the faithful ministry of believers such as the chaplains and others detailed above.

This 101<sup>st</sup> Remembrance Day we recall with thankfulness the ministries that occurred over a century ago that spoke about life in Christ to those who faced imminent death. We recognise the critical importance of similar ministry today in the Australian Defence Force.



Colonel-Chaplain Albert Edward Talbot  
PHOTO: Commonwealth of Australia (National Archives of Australia)

*The Rev Dr Colin Bale is vice principal of Moore College and head of the Department of Church History.*

\*Colin Bale wrote the chapter on Dean Talbot in *Proclaiming Christ in the Heart of the City: Ministry at St Andrew's Cathedral*, which was reviewed in the October edition of *Southern Cross*.

# Sharing Christ in the majority world



Joyful fellowship: Dean Kanishka Raffel (front, third from right) during his recent visit to Sri Lanka.

## KANISHKA RAFFEL

**I**N RECENT YEARS IT HAS BEEN A GREAT PRIVILEGE AND JOY FOR ME TO SPEND TIME WITH Christian pastors and ministry workers in Sri Lanka, the country of my family heritage. I've had the opportunity to meet with local Christians involved in church and parachurch ministries, and to encourage them in word ministry, especially preaching and Bible study.

The Christian church in Sri Lanka is small. Perhaps 7 per cent of the total population identify as Christian. Of that, more than half are Roman Catholic and the rest a variety of Protestant and Independent denominations including Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal.

Youth for Christ has a long history of bringing young Sri Lankan Christians together under one banner, and it's a delight for me to spend time with a number of young men and women serving with Youth for Christ across the island.

Among the issues faced by young people in Sri Lanka include bridging the gap between an "old world" traditional society and the globalised, technological world in which Sri Lanka seeks to participate; and recovering from the trauma of 30 years of civil war that ended just over a decade ago.

This year I was particularly keen to hear about the impact on Christians and local churches in the aftermath of the Easter bombings. On Easter Sunday this year, three hotels in Colombo and three churches, one in Colombo, one north of the capital in Negombo and one on the eastern side of the island in Batticaloa, were bombed within hours of each other.

The attacks have been described as the worst terrorist bombings outside a war zone since 9/11. More than 250 people were killed and more than 400 injured. In one church alone, a dozen children were murdered just minutes after completing their Easter Sunday school class in which they had confessed their trust in the risen Jesus as victor over death and Lord of life.

The bombings continue to affect life across the island, with increased security at churches and hotels. I noticed many more soldiers in public places than I have seen in recent years. An uneasy political situation prevails.

Nevertheless, I was told by one pastor, "The whole nation was discussing Easter. Everyone wanted to know what we [Christians] were celebrating on that day. Most Sri Lankans know about Christmas, but many are not so aware of Easter – which is the most important day for us!"

Overwhelmingly, the reaction of the small Christian community was peaceful and full of faith, amid the tears and grief, bearing witness to a spirit of forgiveness and trust in God in a way that was widely acknowledged across the nation. In a land that has been ravaged by civil war in the so-recent past, the prayerfulness and restraint of the Christian community did not go unnoticed.

As I shared with a few of these dear servants of the Lord from the book of Acts, we considered some of the struggles of the first Christians in the face of rejection and suffering for the sake of Christ. I was humbled and deeply encouraged as some of the brothers and sisters shared their own experiences.

One young pastor, who serves in the eastern part of the island where one of the bombings took place, told of sharing the gospel in the market in one village. Some people wanted to know more and he began a weekly Bible study. One day, after visiting the small group of inquirers, he was walking home when he and his friend were pursued by four men in a tuk-tuk (three-wheeled vehicle). They set upon the pastor and his friend with wooden clubs and beat them until they collapsed on the road, bruised and bleeding.

Later they returned to the village and were told that the tuk-tuk and its occupants had veered off the road and the assailants had fled. The local people believed that God had punished those who attacked them, and many more of the local residents joined the Bible study group! The brother said, "I praise God for the joy of preaching his word and the privilege of suffering for his sake!"

In much of the "majority world", where Christians are often in the minority, our brothers and sisters are prayerfully, humbly and joyfully making Christ known. They are sorely tested and materially resource-poor. But they are full of faith and patient in affliction, bearing witness to the grace of God in Jesus, and holding on to his promise that the Lord will build his church and nothing will prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

*The Very Rev Kanishka Raffel is Dean of Sydney.*

# Jesus is good for young people

## MICHAEL STEAD

**Y**OUNG PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA ARE EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AT AN alarming rate. The incidence of depression, anxiety, eating disorders and other psychological disorders are getting worse, not better. This is occurring, notwithstanding the best endeavours of parents, psychologists, school authorities and governments to the contrary.

Over the past decade, never have we done more to develop resilience in young people – and never had we had more young people with fragile resilience.

Though I am not a psychologist, I recognise that some mental health issues are intrinsic and some are triggered by external circumstances. Furthermore, causation is complex, and no one explanation is sufficient. Yet, nevertheless, I want to suggest a theological explanation as to why mental health issues are getting worse.

Part of the reason why our young people are struggling more is because our society has abandoned the foundations of a Christian heritage – a Christian metanarrative – that makes sense of ourselves and the world around us.

We have "freed ourselves" from the constraints of God without realising the implications, like sawing off a branch you are sitting on. For most of the past 2000 years, society has been building on Judaeo-Christian foundations, but when those foundations are abandoned, it's inevitable that society will break.

But society doesn't break immediately. We are a cut flower culture – the moment you cut a rose from the bush it begins to die, but the decay is not obvious for some time.

For a generation or two, the shared values of Australian society continued to be shaped by the memory of that Christian metanarrative, even if most people had little or no Christian faith themselves. But with each successive generation, the memory becomes paler and paler. The consequences of this lost memory are manifesting in the current generation of young people.

## THE FOUNDATIONS WE HAVE ABANDONED

There are three key foundations to a Christian understanding of the human person (a Christian anthropology).

First, we are made *in God's image*, which means that each human being has intrinsic worth regardless of ability, race, sex, status etc. God has made us in wonderful diversity, and each of us is the way that God made us. This foundation teaches a child that God made them and loves them, just for who they are.

Second, we are *rational, volitional and accountable creatures*. We are able to make choices and make a difference, and with that comes the responsibility for the choices we make. This foundation teaches a child that there is right and wrong, and that our choices matter.

Thirdly, we are *flawed but forgivable*. Not one of us is perfect – we are all flawed – but God knows this and, because of God's unconditional love for his creatures, he has provided the way for us to be forgiven through Jesus. This foundation teaches a child that their failures are forgivable, and that they need to ask for forgiveness when they do the wrong thing.

Our society has replaced these three foundations with counterfeits.

Instead of teaching children that God made them just as they are – made in his image and precious to him – we teach them that human beings are *self-made*. People can be "whoever you want to be", even to the point of choosing their own gender.

We artificially prop up their self-image – everybody always wins a prize; every child is exceptional – but the illusion can only be maintained for so long.

The fact is, some kids always win the running race, while some – like me – always come in last. Eventually, dissatisfaction with the self-made me sets in – a profound crisis of identity.

Instead of teaching children about right and wrong, parents let them have morality. Each individual becomes the arbiter of right and wrong; the ultimate moral judge: "no one has the right to tell me that I am in the wrong". This now manifests as a moral anarchy, even about facts and opinions. No one has the right to contradict the opinions (including opinions about facts) of others.

Instead of flawed but forgivable, we tell our children that they are *intrinsically good* and capable of being "a good person". The problem is, this is simply not true. Even though we know we should tell the truth, sometimes we tell lies. Even though we know we're supposed to love, sometimes we are not loving.

When a child discovers that, despite their best efforts, they are not intrinsically good – when they do "bad" things that need to be forgiven – what can they do? Our children have no way to come to terms with, and come back from the brink of, their own moral failure.

Strident voices claim that Christianity is harmful for kids. But the reverse is true. When we cut ourselves adrift from Jesus, our kids drift aimlessly with no anchor for the soul. Kids need to know that they are loved and valued for who they are, that they need to look outside themselves for a moral compass, and that failure is not final: forgiveness is possible.

Jesus provides all this and more – Jesus is good for young people.

*The Rt Rev Dr Michael Stead is the Bishop of South Sydney.*

## Faith, hope and love starts with trust

A nutty illustration: Archbishop Davies uses a peanut to talk about trust.

**ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES** POSED A STARTLING QUESTION TO THE AUDIENCE AT A SERIES OF public lectures at New College at the University of NSW.

For the first time, the Anglican college invited the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Anthony Fisher, to join Dr Davies for a three-part series on the influence of faith in Australian society. On the first night, Dr Davies had the audience enthralled by saying he had in his pocket something that no one had ever seen before.

"In fact," Dr Davies said, "I have never seen it. I'll allow the fact that God has seen it, but no human has eye laid eyes on it."

The Archbishop then asked for a show of hands of those who believed him. "Do you have faith in an archbishop that he is telling the truth? Or will your scepticism take hold of you, as you consider me to be either a deranged fool or a consummate liar?"

"The normal sceptical response is that, since you can't imagine I could have in my pocket something that no one has ever seen, then it can't be true," Dr Davies added. "In other words, you will be the arbiter of truth, because from the limitations of your own experience... you just can't see how it is possible." His Catholic counterpart, by the way, raised his hand to say he believed what he was told.

As the Archbishop drew a peanut shell from his pocket, opening it to reveal the peanut inside, he illustrated a valuable lesson about trust. "Faith is not inconsistent with reason; it is only inconsistent with scepticism," he told the audience. "Yet scepticism is its own enemy because of its limitations of experience and knowledge – as has been demonstrated tonight. Some of you just did not trust me!"

"Christian faith involves trusting God on his terms, not our own. We walk by faith, not by sight, but we walk because God beckons us so to walk, that we might enjoy the riches of his blessings as we walk in the obedience of faith."

Archbishop Fisher later spoke of the challenges to his faith during a recent serious illness. The second and third nights explored the hope and love aspects of 1 Corinthians 13.

The lectures, before an audience of New College alumni, students and visitors, were chaired by historian and broadcaster Dr Meredith Lake, who also interviewed the archbishops and moderated a question and answer session.

The lectures were recorded and will be broadcast on the Radio National program *Soul Search*, as well as being available by podcast.



# Razor-sharp wit

JUDY ADAMSON

**Knives Out**

Rated M  
Coarse language

**A**S THE TITLE MAY SUGGEST, THIS IS A MURDER MYSTERY – SET PREDOMINANTLY in the kind of posh country house at which Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple regularly uncovered who dunnit.

We also have a dead patriarch, a dysfunctional family crammed with suspects, uninspired police work and a razor-sharp detective – but that is where the similarity ends between this story and your average Agatha Christie.

For one thing, we're in present-day America. For another, the script is biting clever and laugh-out loud funny in places. And, thirdly, while it's not unusual for Christie reboots to be packed with star power, this collection of actors – stars and new faces – work exceptionally well together.

The mystery surrounds wealthy and respected author Harlan Thrombey (Christopher Plummer), who is discovered dead the morning after his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday party with his throat cut. The police are ready to brand it as suicide until "the last of the gentleman sleuths", Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig), is sent an anonymous missive raising the possibility of foul play. So, a week later, he is brought in by police to re-question the family and staff.



Harlan's family includes his daughter, businesswoman Linda (Jamie Lee Curtis), her husband Richard (Don Johnson) and their spendthrift son Ransom (Chris Evans, who is clearly relishing the opportunity to be a bad boy after years as Captain America). There is also Joni (Toni Collette) – the widow of Linda's brother – and her daughter, plus Harlan's other son Walt (Michael Shannon), his wife and their creepy, right-wing son. Oh, and great-grandma.

Everyone regales Benoit Blanc with their version of the birthday party and relationship to Harlan, talking up their importance in his life. However, through bits and pieces dropped in conversation, it gradually becomes clear that Harlan was about to pull the rug out from under most of them for everything from overspending to infidelity. So, nice, juicy motives all around.

Mr Blanc is intrigued and starts to investigate in earnest, asking Harlan's young nurse Marta (Ana de Armas) for help – partly because she is physically incapable of telling a lie without throwing up.

Marta, unlike some of the others, is shattered by Harlan's death as they shared genuine friendship and camaraderie. And while the family seem caring of Marta in return, the superficiality of their regard is apparent given they all think she hails from a different South American country.

Without giving away any of the plot twists – and there are many – let's just say it's not long before you realise *Knives Out* isn't your average whodunnit. Rian Johnson (*The Last Jedi*, *Looper*) has written and directed the film, and deserves a huge rap for taking a cliched story type and creating something fresh and engaging. Not to mention the healthy dose of irreverence. And unless you're as good as Benoit Blanc, you will be taken by surprise more than once – which definitely adds to the enjoyment.

Craig's Southern accent as Blanc isn't perfect, but you're ready to go with it because you're having such an enjoyable time with this slightly eccentric private investigator. De Armas as Marta is also a find. Surrounded by a great cast of famous faces she more than holds her own in a pivotal role, so expect to see more from her before long.

However, amid the appreciation of a very clever film, at the back of my mind is a real sadness about the lengths to which people will go for money, success or love. Murder mysteries always do this to me because, well, death isn't funny. While I'm grateful such tales are "just a story", it's hard not to think about the painful effects these attitudes have in real life. So, it's not a bad thing, in the light of this film, to do a reality check on our own lives and motivations.

That said, *Knives Out* is escapist entertainment and is meant to be so. Just pay attention and don't discard any small thing you see. You may need it later.

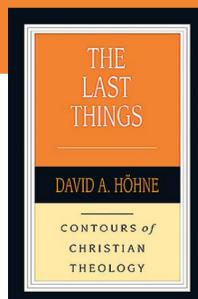
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## An epoch in eschatology

ROBERT DOYLE

**The Last Things**

by David A. Höhne  
London: Inter-Varsity Press



**T**HIS IS AN EPOCH-MAKING BOOK IN THE SERIES *CONTOURS OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY*, WHERE the author has tackled in a new way the Christian understanding of eschatology – literally, in English, "the last things".

As Christians we know that God's end-time purposes, the full reconciliation back to himself of this rebellious and blind world through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, are not remote events relegated to the distant future but have already entered our human history. As Paul assures us in Ephesians 1, for our sake Christ already rules, "not only in this age but also in the one to come" (1:21). Christians live in the overlap of the two ages or, as Dr Höhne has captured it, "life in the Middle".

With skill and care he has tackled this topic with three intertwining moves. First, systematic theology, which identifies and examines distinctive topics like resurrection, heaven and the millennium. Second, interpreting the Bible theologically as the apostles did in the New Testament, taking the great themes of the Bible and showing how they inform our understanding of and find fulfillment in the person and work of Christ.

Finally, an account of what eschatology means for our experience today. The focus is both individual and social, life together in the church. As Jesus has commanded, the fundamental response is prayer, calling on God as "our Father in heaven". In this way, then, eschatology is primarily a theological question: "what God does in and with history" (p.5).

Insightfully, David Höhne brings these three moves together through deployment of the Lord's Prayer, a thoroughly eschatological statement. In this prayer Jesus has instructed us to pray "for the perfection of life in the Middle" (chapter 2). Perfection, of course, is in the Christian sense expressed in Hebrews, the fulfilment of God's intentions, "the summing up of all things in Christ the Head" (Eph. 1:10). The following chapters are shaped by the six petitions. The first three elucidate the what, the how, and the why, of God's kingship and kingdom; the last three clarify our experience in history of that kingdom as preservation, forgiveness and deliverance.

In this journey Dr Höhne engages with a wide scope of biblical and systematic scholarship across two millennia, among them Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Walter Brueggemann, Bill Dumbrell, Raymond Brown, Colin Gunton, Douglas Farrow and Paul Ricoeur. Above all, though, his main interlocutors are Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann – two writers who "perhaps more than any others in the twentieth century, have dominated discussion of Christian eschatology" – and John Calvin.

Why is this book "epoch-making"? Because hitherto the main approach has been through systematic theology. David, however, develops each of the six main areas or themes indicated by the Lord's Prayer in a close and continuous exposition of the Bible through biblical theology. It is in that context that distinctive systems topics are identified and expounded, and various solutions or insights offered by theologians weighed.

So, the often-acute insights and questions of Barth, Moltmann and Calvin are appreciated, affirmed, and – against the truths articulated by biblical theology – criticised. It is the same approach to the Bible that informs the personal and communal responses we ought to make.

David Höhne is one of only a few contemporary scholars who have deployed biblical theology to address eschatological issues. But as well as the unique breadth, he is more explicitly theological in articulating the Trinitarian fabric of the economy of salvation, more explicitly ecclesial, and addresses the existential questions of now-but-not-yet through our ecclesial life of hope in the promises embodied in our prayers.

The series has been written for "theological students at all levels" and should "also appeal to ministers and educated laypeople". It more than fulfils those intentions. Its biblical theological approach, and the results, ought now be foundational to ongoing scholarship in this area. Highly recommended. Read it a chapter at a time, pause, summarise the main arguments and outcomes, and pray. Brilliant for a group meeting over an eight-week period.

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Robert Doyle is the author of *Eschatology and the Shape of Christian Belief*.