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2019

Southern CROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

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Star Wars, Colin and holiday films

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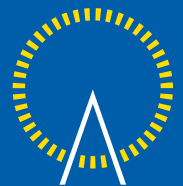


"Youth work and youth leadership in the villages... is a big focus for me."

Bishop Tennyson Bogar
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All hands for NTE

Mango mission at Maroubra: students Julianne Baldock and Joshua Gremaldo.

WHILE EARLY DECEMBER SEES MOST PEOPLE TRYING TO SQUEEZE WORK, CHRISTMAS SHOPPING and end-of-year events into an over-tight schedule, for many Christian university students this time of year means just one thing: NTE.

The National Training Event, run by the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students and held each year in Cobarra, gathers between 1800 and 2000 university students from across the country for a week of biblical training and encouragement in the faith. Many then spend the following week serving and stretching themselves in a parish elsewhere, and a number of churches across the Diocese are hosting teams this month.

Laura Maddock, a senior staff worker with AFES at the University of Adelaide, will be leading a group of more than 15 students at St John's, Maroubra and says, "It benefits our students enormously to see how a church in a different place operates.

"Walk-up evangelism at Maroubra Beach is also a really good experience and we've had a number of students who've tried that for the first time or done 'mango mission' [doorknocking with event invites and a mango] and come back really excited about it. There's been a huge benefit back on campus... and we're aware that we want it to be beneficial for the church, too!"

An Adelaide NTE group has been coming to Maroubra since 2012, and rector the Rev Jim Crossweller says that "it's a way any church anywhere can invest in the student Christian movement, and that's a great thing. I've watched numerous young folks from Adelaide grow year by year... and some become ministry apprentices as well, which is exciting to see.

"Also, there's no doubt personnel power dims at Christmas... if you want to do broad promotional evangelism at Christmas you can really use the troops!"

Mission pastor at Fairfield with Bossley Park, Vincent Chan, agrees. His parish will welcome a group from the University of Sydney again this year, and in addition to providing students with the "cultural immersion" experience of life and ministry in southwestern Sydney, the locals will be helped by having extra hands on deck.

"We're running a few bigger events to build connections with our neighbours as we prepare for Mission 2020," he says. "We have carols for Bossley Park on December 7, and we have a community barbecue over at Fairfield after the church service. Because [the two churches] are quite separate in terms of distance, there are two different communities that we're seeking to invite.

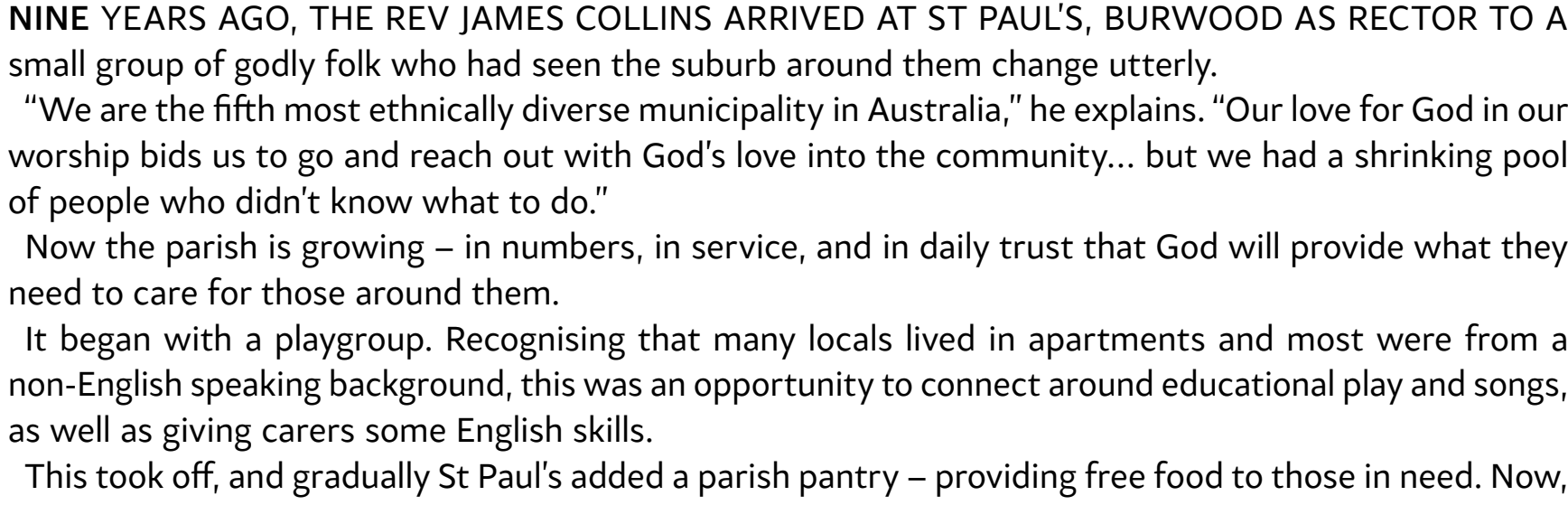
"The mission team will help us have more resources to be able to do that... they become our arms and our legs so our people are freed up to chat with the locals we invite."

The ultimate goal of an NTE team's visit to any parish, Mr Crossweller says, "is to get a slightly underconfident university student next to a slightly underconfident church member, get them to do a slightly hard thing together and get them to walk away with more courage than they would have had apart. That's brought me the most joy.

"It's been great to see someone from Adelaide and our church go out a little fearful and come back excited and more confident in the Lord. What could be better?"



Faith in action at Burwood



Lifejacket for locals (clockwise from top): a church volunteer helps set up; vet services for furry friends of rough sleepers; the Rev James Collins. IMAGES: Desmond Chu

NINE YEARS AGO, THE REV JAMES COLLINS ARRIVED AT ST PAUL'S, BURWOOD AS RECTOR TO A small group of godly folk who had seen the suburb around them change utterly.

"We are the fifth most ethnically diverse municipality in Australia," he explains. "Our love for God in our worship bids us to go and reach out with God's love into the community... but we had a shrinking pool of people who didn't know what to do."

Now the parish is growing – in numbers, in service, and in daily trust that God will provide what they need to care for those around them.

It began with a playgroup. Recognising that many locals lived in apartments and most were from a non-English speaking background, this was an opportunity to connect around educational play and songs, as well as giving carers some English skills.

This took off, and gradually St Paul's added a parish pantry – providing free food to those in need. Now, it offers literacy classes, computing classes, refugee care and a Lifejacket ministry for rough sleepers, which provides clothes, toiletries and pet food plus medical and vet services. And there's a team of volunteers for each ministry.

There's also a bi-monthly community hub, where people on the margins (through issues such as domestic violence, age and illness) can access 20 service providers under the one roof: from Centrelink to Dressed for Success.

In addition, the parish advocates for the needs of the homeless and marginalised.

"We're just reaching out in every way," Mr Collins says. "Each month more people are coming for help from different ethnic groups and in every age bracket – so the need is exponential, but God provides.

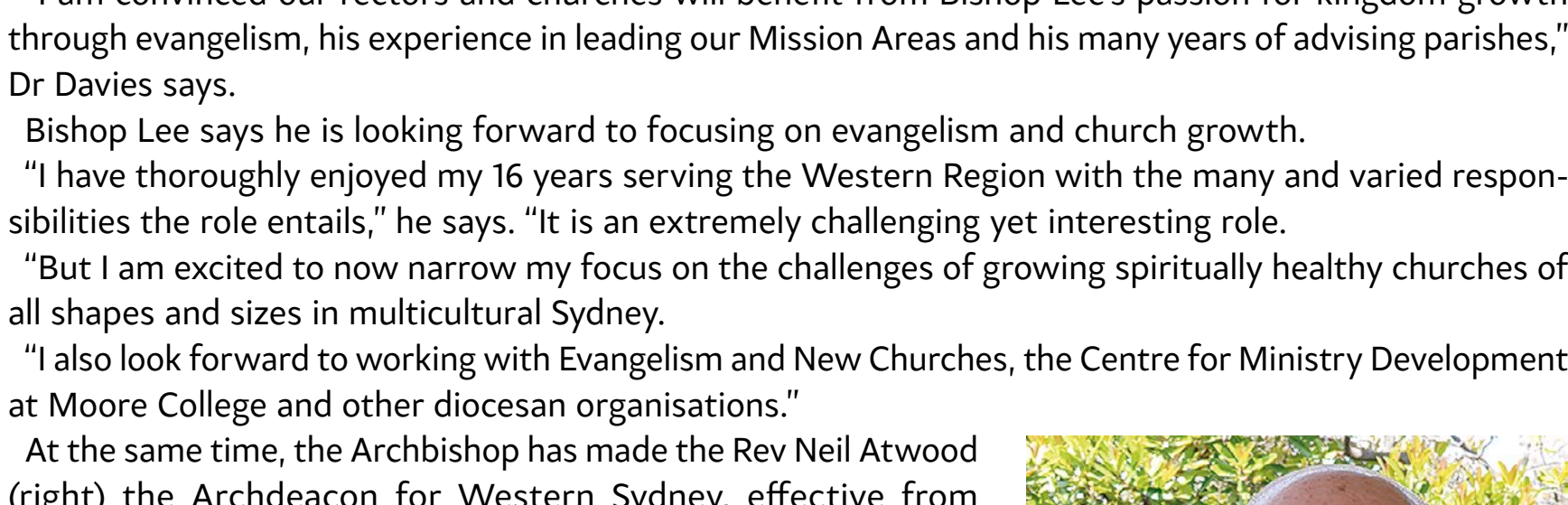
"Every week we run out and every week the well fills up, and it's a wonderful journey trusting God. The church has gone from being an inward-looking building that people walked past to now being embedded into the community."

He says the parish doesn't exploit its position – not giving to the homeless and expecting them to attend church, for example. Rather, locals are seeing or hearing about what is being done and are linking up with St Paul's in response.

From an ageing group of 60 "beautiful old souls" – many of whom have gone to their reward since Mr Collins' arrival – the church now has well over 100 people attending each week and continues to grow.

"We're here to bring love – that's the God-shaped hole in every person," Mr Collins says. "That's our role. "We know that God who raised Christ from the dead is able to breathe new life into this world and that's why we do all these things... it's a profound expression of love for God and our neighbour and our hope in the resurrection.

"We're coming alive and it's only by God's grace... and it's very exciting."



Passion for kingdom growth: Bishop Lee at Synod this year. PHOTO: Russell Powell

ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES HAS ANNOUNCED HE IS SECONDING BISHOP IVAN LEE TO WORK ON strengthening church growth in the Diocese, in a new portfolio for the experienced bishop. Bishop Lee, who was appointed by Archbishop Jensen in 2003, is the longest-serving assistant bishop in Sydney.

"I am convinced our rectors and churches will benefit from Bishop Lee's passion for kingdom growth through evangelism, his experience in leading our Mission Areas and his many years of advising parishes," Dr Davies says.

Bishop Lee says he is looking forward to focusing on evangelism and church growth.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my 16 years serving the Western Region with the many and varied responsibilities the role entails," he says. "It is an extremely challenging yet interesting role.

"But I am excited to now narrow my focus on the challenges of growing spiritually healthy churches of all shapes and sizes in multicultural Sydney.

"I also look forward to working with Evangelism and New Churches, the Centre for Ministry Development at Moore College and other diocesan organisations."

At the same time, the Archbishop has made the Rev Neil Atwood (right) the Archdeacon for Western Sydney, effective from November 1.

"During Ivan's battle with cancer, the Rev Neil Atwood has carried extra responsibilities as Ivan's executive assistant," Dr Davies says.

"I am very grateful for his willingness and goodwill in bearing an extra load during this time.

"Neil has also been spending half of his time as a resource for Safe Ministry with the Professional Standards Unit... I have decided to increase the hours he spends in the Western Sydney Region so that it reflects 60 per cent of his time."

Archdeacon Atwood says he feels "privileged" by the appointment, adding, "I am genuinely touched by Glenn's words to me... and I'm also pleased for Ivan – it's a role in an area that he loves but it's self-paced for him.

"It's my job [in the region] to try and make things run smoothly. I'm a process person – I love to make processes that will take care of things efficiently and effectively, and I'm quite excited at the chance of working together with the new Bishop of Western Sydney (see right) to encourage and facilitate parishes in their gospel ministry."



Next bishop for the west

ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES HAS APPOINTED THE REV GARY KOO (ABOVE) TO BE THE NEXT Bishop of Western Sydney. Currently the senior minister at St Paul's, Carlingford & North Rocks, Bishop-designate Koo has extensive experience in multi-congregational churches and in Chinese ministry in Sydney's west.

The son of a Malaysian migrant, Mr Koo was raised an atheist until he decided to follow Jesus while studying medicine at the University of Sydney.

After graduating from Moore College, he served as a pastor and church planter for the Chinese Christian Church Sydney before beginning work at St Paul's, Carlingford & North Rocks, where he has been rector for seven years.

"I am delighted that Gary has accepted my offer to become the Bishop of the Western Region," Archbishop Davies says. "Gary is an able minister of the word of God with a pastoral heart for people and a desire to increase the hours he spends in the Western Sydney Region."

"He has honed his skills at Carlingford over many years but has a broad interest in diocesan matters, being a member of the Moore College council and a former member of the board of Anglicare.

"Gary has a strong interest in seeing young men and women trained for gospel ministry and has been involved in training young people to use their gifts to expand the kingdom of God. I believe he will be an asset to the episcopal team, and I look forward to working with him."

The Bishop-designate follows the present bishop, Ivan Lee, who has moved into a new episcopal role to strengthen church growth in the Diocese.

"To be offered this role is a great honour and privilege," Mr Koo says. "I pray under God I'll be able to make a real difference for the gospel. I've learnt so much from my 15 years at St Paul's and I look forward to being able to share some of the things God has taught me, and to be a support and encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the west."

Mr Koo is married to Pearl and they have two children: Tomas and Annabel. The new bishop will be consecrated in western Sydney's regional cathedral, St John's, Parramatta, on December 20.

Helping newcomers into church life

A DIOCESAN THINK TANK, THE STRATEGY AND RESEARCH GROUP, HAS IDENTIFIED SEVERAL KEY factors which can boost the attraction and retention of newcomers to Sydney Anglican churches.

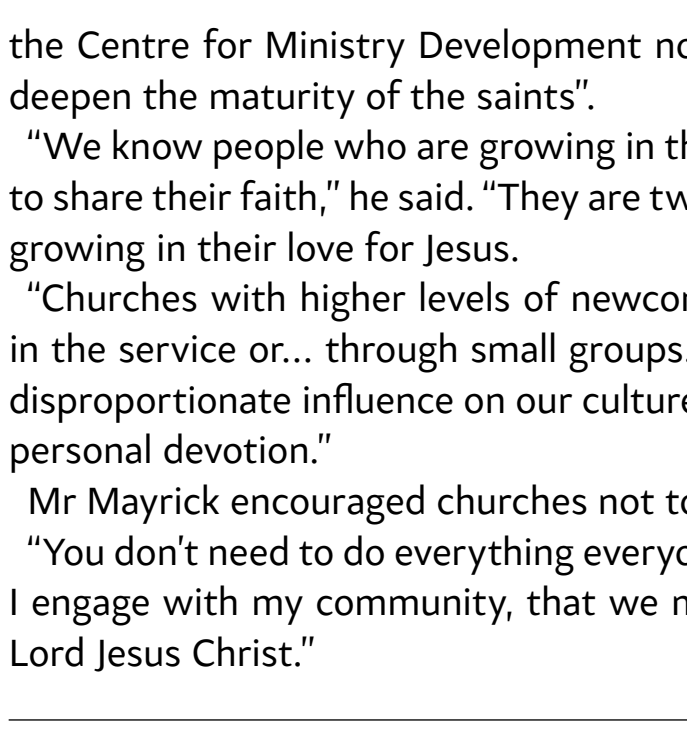
A newcomer is defined as a person aged 15 years or more who has joined their current church within the past five years and, before then, was not regularly attending a church. The mixed-method study included quantitative data as well as qualitative information from interviews with rectors whose churches are attracting large numbers of newcomers.

Overall, the number of newcomers has been in decline since 2001. While attraction and retention of newcomers is a key goal of the Diocesan Mission, raising the level of newcomers to 12 per cent of attendees by 2020 is a target unlikely to be met.

The study, by Anglicare researcher Dr John Bellamy, found there are a dozen factors that influence newcomer levels. These include churches having a passion for outreach, a strong profile in local communities, and running activities meeting wider needs such as playgroups, ESL, special-interest groups and parenting and marriage courses.

"Rather than being inward-facing activities for church attenders, these are outward-facing to the community," Dr Bellamy says in the report. "There is evidence here of a strong commitment by churches to assist their communities, leading to churches becoming significant local institutions right at the heart of community social networks."

The study also found churches that retained newcomers had a defined pathway into church life. In particular, the report said, there was a need to be aware of "how church and community activities link together to provide a pathway people can follow, from outside of church life right through to eventually joining an adult small group. This was not something seen as being left to chance but rather a process to be planned and followed".



A typical pathway could be a course such as *Introducing God* run by Village Church, Annandale. Jessica Brouwer (left), the mission pastor at Annandale, illustrated this in the report with the example that Village Church ran seven *Introducing God* courses in 2017, four of which became Bible study groups in their own right. By the end, 40 per cent of participants had become Christians.

"The key is to work out how to connect people to the next step in the process," Ms Brouwer said.

The quality and accessibility of Sunday services has also been identified as key in attracting and retaining newcomers. Contemporary services with modern music have already been identified as one element, but "jargon-free" language is also important. Ms Brouwer said the way language is used in church at Village "always acknowledges that non-Christians are here".

Speaking to Synod about the report, Peter Mayrick from the Centre for Ministry Development noted that the second priority of the Diocesan Mission was "to deepen the maturity of the saints".

"We know people who are growing in their faith are four times as likely to be looking for opportunities to share their faith," he said. "They are twice as likely to have invited someone. So we want to see people growing in their love for Jesus.

"Churches with higher levels of newcomers tend to recognise the importance of that, whether it be in the service or... through small groups. With 60 per cent of people in our small groups, these have a disproportionate influence on our culture as a church and they have a focus on growing people through personal devotion."

Mr Mayrick encouraged churches not to be overwhelmed by the number of suggestions in the report. "You don't need to do everything everyone else is doing. But I would encourage you to think, how could I engage with my community, that we might bring them in... and bring them under the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Cross-cultural head for Anglican Aid

A FORMER MISSIONARY HAS BEEN CHOSEN TO HEAD THE ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY'S ANGLICAN Aid following the retirement of founding CEO the Rev David Mansfield. The Rev Tim Swan (above) will lead the organisation from April 2020.

Mr Swan brings strong mission, biblical, and cross-cultural credentials, having served as a CMS missionary at the Centre for Pastoral Studies in Chile for 10 years – and, on his return to Australia, led a church plant in Sydney's north.

Anglican Aid supports activities in 34 countries serving needy communities, empowering women, advocating for disability inclusion and children's rights, as well as training community and church leaders. Through local partnerships it provides relief and aid, emergency assistance, development, education, health, income generation, water/sanitation/hygiene and Bible training.

Mr Swan has lived day to day with the complex relationships around aid, development and church work. "I have seen... that development work is weak if not paired with the gospel," he says. "I am therefore keen to bolster Anglican Aid's support for training Christian leaders in developing nations, that churches might become beacons of hope amidst communities in despair.

"Under God, we can all work together to see churches thrive on every continent in faithfully proclaiming the gospel, and to see Christians working for the good of their communities, bringing transformation that lasts. I'm really looking forward to leading Anglican Aid in helping churches partner with like-minded Christians around the world. I thank God for the amazing work he is doing."

The chairman of Anglican Aid, Bishop Peter Tasker, says, "Bishops in many countries are asking for assistance in the theological training of clergy and laity. With Tim's experience and commitment to theological training in Chile, his leadership... in this area will be vital."

Archbishop Davies is delighted by the appointment. "The Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid shows the love of Christ for all people. I am so pleased that Tim will lead this vital work around the world as his gifts, experience and passion are well suited to [it]. We pray that God will bless him in this new venture and that his work will bear much fruit and redound to the glory of God."

Tim Swan is senior minister at Willoughby Park on Sydney's lower North Shore. He holds a Bachelor of Theology from Moore College and his wife Sally is a contributor to *For the Joy: 21 Australian Missionary Mother Stories on Cross-Cultural Parenting and Life*, compiled by Miriam Chan and Sophia Russell, and published by Anglican Aid.



Prayer and love in the face of catastrophe

PHOTO: bertknot

"OUR FIRST RECOURSE SHOULD BE TO PRAY, AND I HAVE ISSUED TODAY AN APPEAL FOR CHRISTIANS to pray fervently that God in his mercy would spare lives and property in the path of the fires," said Archbishop Glenn Davies the day before the catastrophic fire warning last month. "Please be in prayer and consider how your church community can respond."

As fires burned in northern NSW and southern Queensland, Dr Davies also announced an appeal by the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid to raise funds for those affected.

It's the herald of a difficult bushfire season to come with drought, climate change and blustery conditions playing a part in extreme danger for many areas. The fires particularly hit the mid-north and north coast of NSW and central parts of Queensland.

"We have people who have been here for 80 years and never seen fires like these," said the rector of Taree, the Rev Peter Tinney, who was part of Anglicare's Disaster Recovery response on the mid-north coast.

"Our role was supporting people as they came to the evacuation centre," he said. "There was lots of desperation because things changed so quickly and people were stunned by their losses. They had to leave in a hurry and when they went back, there was nothing to go back to in some cases. That's tragic."

Anglicare is one of four recognised community partners in Disaster Welfare Services for the Department of Communities and Justice under NSW emergency management arrangements. When officially activated, teams of trained Anglicare volunteers are mobilised.

The Anglicare team leader for Murwillumbah, Jennifer Booth, says it is a good way for older people to help, "because I can't actually fight fires and older people can't do as much physically as we used to – but we still want to contribute".

She and her team were called to help in the aftermath of fires that hit Mt Nardi National Park and affected the towns of Uki, Mullumbimby and Byron Bay. The fires were the worst in the area since 1964.

"My whole team has been to all those places over the past week," she told *Southern Cross*. "We have been helping prepare meals, providing clothing, bedding and towels for showers and helping with their pets. There is a lot of need.

"We work with the Red Cross and the Salvation Army in the centres and with the volunteer clergy who come in. We have a wonderful team. People just help each other and help where the need is. Anything you can do is important to people and it is very gratifying for the person who volunteers."

In Taree, the evacuation centre was open for five days and then the recovery centre opened.

"Volunteers are again providing material aid and also an encouraging, supportive presence," Mr Tinney said. "That's important and it aligns with our gospel commitment to love one another and care for those around us.

"It is going to take years for people to recover from this. It is going to take that sort of time emotionally and psychologically and – for some people – obviously spiritually."

Funds from the Anglican Aid appeal will be disbursed using established churches on the ground in the places most seriously affected, providing an existing network for the communication of needs and prayers.

"NSW Government emergency response will provide the majority of funding but our appeal aims to ensure help to people who may miss out on official assistance," the appeal announcement said.

"Importantly, just as with the NSW drought appeal, funds from this appeal will come with prayer and human connection. The funds are a tangible symbol of God's grace to us all."

The Archbishop's plea for prayer as a first recourse was criticised by some in social media amid a secular pushback on prayer being mentioned in time of trouble. But the man who became a symbol for the victims of the fires, 85-year-old Owen Whalan from Koorainghat south of Taree, is adamant about the power of prayer.

Mr Whalan was evacuated to Taree RSL Club as fires raged around his property. When the Prime Minister visited the centre he broke down in tears as he wasn't sure whether he had lost his home and his border collie dogs. He hit the front pages of newspapers as Prime Minister Scott Morrison knelt to pray with him.

"We're Christians and so is he. We prayed together for strength and guidance," he told reporters. "I believe in the power of prayer and it's what has kept my family safe."

Mr Tinney says the emotion is understandable. "It is easy to get emotional. Owen was actually quite fortunate because I understand he didn't lose his property. He thought he was going to. So that was really a great blessing."

For information about how to become an Anglicare Disaster Recovery volunteer see anglicare.org.au. To donate to Anglican Aid's bushfire appeal go to anglicanaid.org.au.



The arresting front page photo in *The Australian* newspaper on Monday, November 11.



Milne Bay's soul battle

(from left): Bishop Tennyson Bogar (Anglican), Bishop Ledimo Edoni (United) and Kwato Bishop Dago Walino (Congregational).

MOST AUSTRALIANS ARE AWARE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S KOKODA TRACK, THE SITE OF Australian battles with the Japanese in World War II.

Another part of that campaign, the Battle of Milne Bay, is just as important but often forgotten. Now, senior figures in the Diocese of Sydney are fighting a battle to ensure this area is no longer overlooked. A remote region on the eastern tip of New Guinea, it is in dire need of support for essential services and gospel proclamation.

And the Anglican Church is in a unique position to help. The Diocese of Dogura was set up as a mission area for a town of 7000 people, and the church supplies most of the essential services – including a hospital, primary and secondary school. The diocese used to receive support from Australia, but since PNG's independence and Australia's withdrawal, it has been largely cut off from local support.

Last month, three bishops from the province flew to Sydney to meet with Anglican Aid officials and other organisations. The Anglican Bishop of Milne Bay Tennyson Bogar, United Church Bishop Ledimo Edoni and Kwato Bishop Dago Walino (Congregational Church) have appealed for help. Sydney churches already support a water project and a team led by Evangelism and New Churches recently ran a two-week training conference for 30 ministers from all three denominations.

"A big challenge for us is a lot of weird teaching," Bishop Edoni said. "Unfortunately a lot of my clergy are untrained, so when faced with these newcomers will think, 'You are right'. Theological training... will equip our clergy to respond: to defend the gospel against these people; to maintain the gospel."

Bishop Bogar is very concerned about the next generation. "You'd be lucky to get five [high school] children who go onto higher learning," he said. "Government funding ends at Grade 12. It's beyond the means of subsistence farmers to fund higher education, so the youth are frustrated and angry. Some consume homebrew, or worse... Youth work and youth leadership in the villages – on the coast and in the hill country – is a big focus for me."

LOVE THROUGH OBEDIENCE

While I am deeply sorry for the pain felt by people in response to the speech given by Archbishop Davies (SC, November), I am equally concerned by the persistent misrepresentation of Jesus' teaching. Jesus was clear that love was to be expressed in obedience, not in sinful self-determination. Indeed, it was obedience to the Father and judgement for sin that led Jesus to the cross. Paul reminds his readers in 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 that love and holiness are intertwined in the lives of believers.

Sydney Anglicans should be thankful that we have a shepherd who responds to the prayer of Jesus that his followers be in the world but not of the world.

Philip Cooney
Wentworth Falls



PROTEST SUCCESS

I was somewhat disappointed with the title of your article in October's edition of *Southern Cross*: "Abortion protests have limited success". From my perspective, they were hugely successful. I attended the rallies in Martin Place and Hyde Park and was greatly encouraged by them, with thousands attending both rallies. I was so impressed by the love shown at these peaceful protests.

I believe us Sydney Anglicans were caught off guard and were slow to respond to the fight. This was clear at the rally in Martin Place, which was dominated by the Catholic, Maronite, Greek Orthodox and Armenian churches. While our Archbishop spoke at this rally, it was not widely known by our congregations that it was taking place.

I believe we have a long way to go to even come close to showing the same zeal that our brothers and sisters from other faith traditions do when it comes to these important social issues.

The question should be asked – will we be ready to "Stand for Life" when euthanasia inevitably comes to the table in NSW?

Murray Bolden
Mt Riverview

THE CHURCH OF PRAGMATISM

Many aspects of modern parishioners' irregular attendance at Sunday services were examined in your article in the September edition of *Southern Cross*. We have obviously taught the importance of "not neglecting to meet together" (Heb 10:25). My question is not about what we have said but what we have done and what our actions have taught.

We have endeavoured to make our services appropriate for the 21st century. We have developed different service styles for different generations. Parishioners can choose to fellowship on the basis of common interest, not on the basis of having "one Lord, one faith..." (Ephesians 4:1-6).

Ministry leadership is increasingly professionalised. Paid ministry numbers have grown much faster than attendance on Sunday. Parishioners can do ministry but increasingly it is under the leadership of professionals. There is a glass ceiling that was not always there. It's not even necessary to come to church to pay for this leadership while we have direct debiting.

We have taught that the most important thing about our services is the teaching – but if you are not there you can download the sermon from the church's website. Better still, you can listen to a better preacher from another church. We want people to be "in the world" so that they can share Christ, but not on Sundays when the world socialises.

I have supported this unspoken curriculum. It seems pragmatically sensible in the face of a changing ministry environment. But if pragmatics guide our church life rather than theology, can we blame people when they make attendance decisions on a pragmatic basis?

Geoff Collison
Katoomba

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CMS missionary the Rev Canon Helen Hoskins writes from Tanzania that Junior (above), who was pictured in July SC at the Shalom Primary School with the Archbishop helping him solve a maths problem, was delighted to receive a copy with his photo so prominently displayed.



MISZTALS GO WEST

After almost eight years as assistant minister at Lane Cove and Mowbray the **Rev David Misztal** became rector of Wentworthville on November 11. He says he and his wife Christy "felt really loved" in their previous parish: "We had our marriage celebration with them and they threw a baby shower for Christy – it was really sad for us to leave... but we saw this as a good use of our gifts".

Both want to spend more time working together as a ministry couple and, with Christy Misztal involved with ESL programs through Pioneers, a move to a local parish makes that more practicable.

"She wants to be involved with the ESL program here," Mr Misztal says. "It's a big Hindu suburb, and that was another big attraction for us – doing international ministry. Even though her focus [until now] has been with Muslims, there are people of many ethnic backgrounds here."

"I grew up in Kings Langley so for me it's a bit of a coming home to this area. And there's lots to do! I'm excited about opportunities with international students in this suburb, and to meet with leaders and contribute to their ministry."

"People here are very serious about being involved in the life of the church. They want their minister to teach them God's word and shepherd and feed them, so that they can get on and do the works of service to build up the body of Christ. I thought that was quite impressive."



COUNSELLING MOVE

This month the **Rev Steve Roberts** and his wife Trish will leave the parish of Albion Park to begin a counselling and training ministry.

"The need is just massive," Mr Roberts says. "We did a training event for 15 ministry couples in the Illawarra in March... based on the PeaceWise course. It looked at how to balance the pressures of ministry and work impacting on marriage. Some couples have also connected with [Bishop] Peter Hayward and his wife Julie... and they've asked us to spend some time with them."

PeaceWise is a group that works with individuals, families, churches and businesses to help those dealing with conflict and, Mr Roberts says, "We're looking forward to having more time to partner with them."

"We also made a proposal to the Wollongong Regional Council and they'll be partnering with us for one day a week. We're not working for the region, but the region is going to assist us, and when ministry couples approach Peter and Julie and say, 'We'd love some support', they'll get us to contact them."

They're sad to leave their parish but, he says, the church is "at the right point for transition". A planning and support team is also in place so members can know "ministries and people are going to be looked after".

While the move was "a step of faith", once the couple announced their plans word got around. They're currently counselling three couples, and others will start when they officially begin work next year.

START-UP MINISTRY

The **Rev Ed Vaughan** left St John's Darlinghurst at the end of last month, and next year will become founding director of the St Michael's Institute. He says it was "created by a group of Christian entrepreneurs who are looking to provide leadership training, ministry development, church planting and development – working in that kind of space".

Mr Vaughan describes his reasons to leave with the numbers 9, 30 and 60. First, he has been at Darlinghurst for nine years and says, "It's been a great ministry... and I'm going to be sad to leave... but our HammondCare development will be completed next month and a number of ministry things are coming to fruition now so it's a good time to go."

"I was ordained 30 years ago, and I've been in parish ministry that entire 30 years... I want to continue to do ministry but out of a different role. Also, I turned 60 this year, [so] I have a block of time to have a crack at doing something else!"

His wife Jane will continue to be involved in *parakaleo*, an international ministry of support for women whose husbands are involved in church planting.

As to why *this* organisation, Mr Vaughan says, "I do a lot of things outside of Sydney in terms of leadership development and so on, and my – and Jane's – big passion is, who are the leaders of the Australian church going to be in the middle of this century, and what's the church going to look like?"

"It's going to be different and it's going to be difficult. I want to invest in raising up the next generation of leaders in the Australian church, so I thought whoever offers me a role to do that I would say, 'Yes!'"



GOD IS THE ANSWER

When asked why he is moving to Christ Church, St Ives after being rector of Campbelltown for almost 10 years, the **Rev Nigel Fortescue** laughs and says, "That's a good question. God is the answer!"

"We went into ministry to serve God and preach the gospel... "There are a thousand things about Campbelltown that we love and delight in, but as we looked at St Ives we recognised many exciting opportunities we are gifted to take up. As you weigh these things up you have to prayerfully listen to mentors and friends, consider the sovereignty and providence of God and work out where you're best going to be used in the next phase of ministry."

Given Mr Fortescue and his wife Nicky both had a background at St Ives they had to ask themselves if moving there now was "the easy option". But, he says, "in 22 years we've changed a lot and the church has changed a lot... and, like every church, from time to time this one needs new leadership, direction and encouragement and we have been nominated to provide that."

Nicky Fortescue has been involved in music, pastoral care and teaching the Bible to women at Campbelltown and, Mr Fortescue says, while she doesn't know what her role will be at St Ives, she is looking forward to the new opportunities. And both are "really excited by the large numbers of youth and young adults at St Ives and the opportunity to be involved in shaping the next generation".



THANKS AND EXPECTATION AT LORD HOWE

Lord Howe Island prepared for a new season as it farewelled its part-time rector, the **Rev Zac Veron** (second row, second from right), and its most recent visiting minister, the **Rev Graeme Marks** (second row, third from right).

Mr Marks says of his six-week stint that, "From the time I arrived, I was considered part of the community. "Zac and his wife Sheree [front row, right], together with their family, have ministered on the island, on a part-time basis, over the past 14 years. When Zac was not here, the ministry was shared with others like me."

He says each of the visiting ministers served for between four and eight weeks – running a morning service, an afternoon service, Bible study and taking SRE with the help of other church members.

And while the growth in attendance since 2005 might be numerically small, Mr Marks observes that "6.5 per cent of the island's population are members of the church... that's not including the many visitors who come to church when holidaying on the island!"

Mr Veron says it has been a "great privilege" for he and Mrs Veron "to minister among the remote island community, see people converted to Christ and have their lives changed in so many beneficial ways."

"I have valued the partnership of the 20 other [visiting] ministers who have travelled over there [to] look after the church's ministries... We will miss the people very much."

VALE



The **Rev Murray Endean** died on August 25, 2019. Born James Edwin Murray Endean on February 2, 1928, he grew up in Roseville. He and his wife Linda were married in 1951.

The family lived in Dorrigo and Corowa, where Mr Endean was a typesetter at local newspapers, before returning to Sydney. His daughter Jane Robinson says that, at work, he fell and "smashed his elbow and broke the bone in his upper arm. [There were] bone fragments everywhere". Told there would be permanent damage, Mr Endean – recalling his Sunday school classes – prayed to Jesus for help.

Next day, doctors re-examined and X-rayed his injury and were surprised to find the bone fragments and breaks had realigned. "Dad committed his life to Christ after that diagnosis," Mrs Robinson says.

Mr Endean began Moore College studies at the age of 40. He was ordained in 1975 and became curate in the parish of Liverpool. He was rector of Dulwich Hill from 1978-81, resident minister at Tregear from 1981-86, and assistant minister at St Jude's, Randwick from 1984-86.

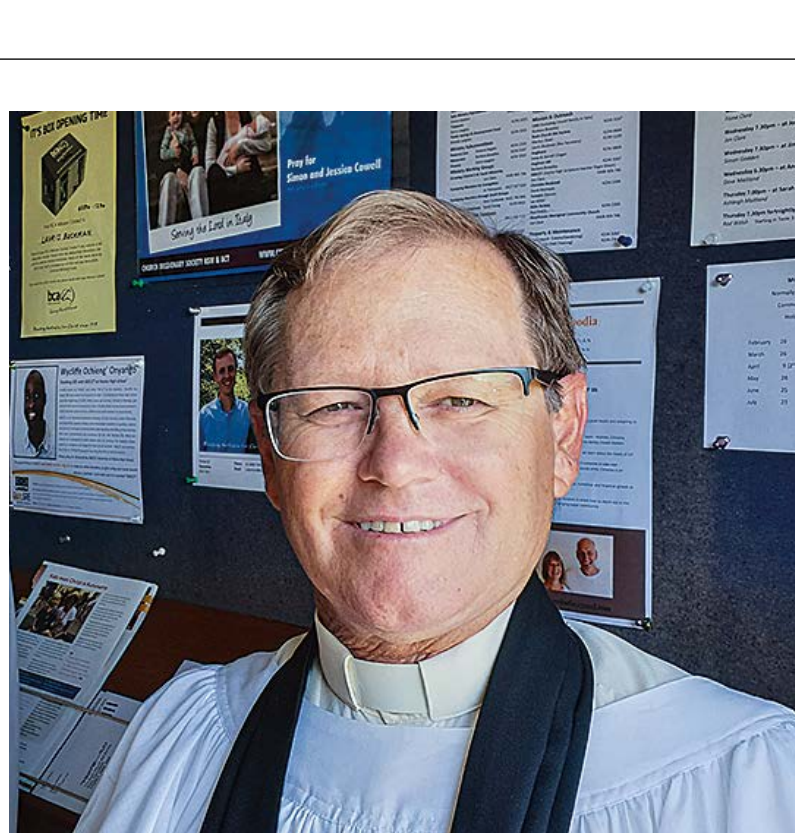
After retiring in 1989, Mr Endean was actively involved in Bowral parish for many years before moving into ARV Castle Hill in 2014.

The **Rev Robert Stubbs** died on October 11. Born on September 12, 1956, he became a Christian during his teens. A carpenter and joiner by trade, he worked while leading youth groups, CEBS groups and beach mission teams. In 1979 he and his wife Jenny began studies at Denistone East-Marsfield.

In after years he was youth worker at Dundas, a manager with Youthworks and Mission Australia, taught carpentry and led a range of church and school ministries. He eventually became a Christian Studies teacher at St Paul's Grammar School in Cranebrook and a director of Youthworks' HSC study camps. He and Mrs Stubbs were also founding members of the church at Penrith Anglican College.

In 2007 they established the Dusty Boots Program with Bush Church Aid and, after much work among rural communities, Mr Stubbs was ordained in 2010 by Bishop David Mulready and became minister of Dongara-Mingenew Church in WA.

Diagnosed with cancer in late 2013, he continued ministry in WA until the cancer returned in 2015. Retiring to Gerringong, despite his ill health he did locums and was Rural Fire Service chaplain for the Illawarra.



The battle of church

DAVE PARKER

I LOVE MY CHURCH. IT'S FAR FROM PERFECT, BUT IT'S FAMILY AND PART OF THE GREATER CHURCH. I love that it is an active church, encouraging the involvement of parishioners in all areas of church life. I am particularly attracted to the global church, the different cultures, diversification in how we worship, and ultimately how it's the instrument God chose for changing the world.

I find the ongoing conversation about church attendance (such as your September cover story by Antony Barraclough) fascinating. Often Hebrews 10:24-25 is pulled out, and appropriately so, to encourage Christians to continue meeting, reading the Bible and encouraging each other in their faith. But where I find it a limiting application is to simply say "attend church", ignoring all other areas of life in which we meet up as "church".

Rest assured, I think it's important to have regular attendance at a local church where we meet, encourage each other and are challenged by the word of God. But how do we encourage God's people – Christian men, women and children – to turn up on Sundays?

Traditionally we quote Scripture, identify that we need to continue meeting each other, equate that to Sunday morning church, and there's your application – sometimes sounding more like a sentence than a joyful, willing activity of the saints. I want to suggest this doesn't cut the mustard any more.

I work in a creative business environment, with a background in marketing and sales. There are two ways to invoke a customer response: provide something people have to have for survival (a need) or provide a product or service they would like to have (a want). I suggest the church has been applying the former and ignoring the latter. Applying the stick and carrot mentality, the application of Hebrews 10:25a has traditionally been the stick, but perhaps it's time to start thinking about Hebrews 10:25b as the carrot?

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

What if we looked at what it is in our services that draws people in? Equally, what in our services might cause people to think twice about attending church? I'm not talking about performance and production, but about content and delivery. Where is the carrot? And it's not just a theologically sound sermon, as important as that may be.

The world has changed, but our Sunday services remain much the same. The gospel doesn't change, the word of God doesn't change, but I suggest that we need to look at how we present this content. If our desire is for community, how do we achieve this in a positive way?

For example, singing is an activity that brings people together and a corporate choir can stir an emotion that words alone cannot. Singing during our Sunday services achieves this with the obvious focus on praising God, but is there a different way to deliver it? Are our services a song sandwich?

Have we recently refreshed our song list? Have we considered what men and women like to sing – they can be different and it's worth asking people for their preferences. Singing should evoke joy and other emotions. After all, we are here to serve each other.

Could we deliver the message differently? In no other part of my life do I sit inactive for a period of 25-30 minutes (and I hear for some churches that's a short sermon!) and listen to a talk. I am accustomed to business meetings where they have a greater interactive component of questioning, presenting and challenging. What if we made sermons just one point and limited it to 10 minutes (or two points in two 10-minute sermonettes)? Could we present as a panel?

It may not be the solution for every service, or every week, but have we ever tried it? The format of a lecture each Sunday is out of step – not only with how I interact, but how I learn.

Which raises another topic: how do we learn in 2019? I know people who work in a variety of education outlets and I keep hearing the lecture model is ineffective. Schools are trying new models, even letting children self-teach. What does that look like for our Sunday gatherings?

All this said, we meet as church in our home groups, workplace Bible studies, industry fellowship groups and prayer groups. Let's be reminded that many people in our church meet multiple times throughout a week.

So, let's "spur one another on towards love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24) by providing an engaging Sunday gathering that inspires, encourages and challenges. For some of us we may need, as Antony Barraclough's story said, to "recover a deep desire to be with our Lord and each other" – and where appropriate let's consider how we do that as 2020 approaches.

Is there a spiritual battle going on when we decide whether to attend church? Perhaps. I certainly wouldn't discount it. But there could also be a spiritual battle going on in our attitude and willingness to adapt our church services. Imagine if Satan kept telling us, "Don't change the run sheet, keep it all as it is, this is what we know works", and all the while he's thinking, "Let the progress and change of the world make church so ineffective it self-deteriorates".

We have the best news in the world: Jesus Christ is risen and there is an open invitation for everyone to know and trust in him. It's not a sentence to attend church. We shouldn't need a stick or guilt or blame to get people to our Sunday gatherings.

Let's be creative and think through what we are trying to achieve and how it could be done differently so that people *want* to come to church. Consider what a modern church service could look like using modern communication methods in your modern community.

Rejoice that He is with us

DR GLENN DAVIES



EMMANUEL IS, FOR ME, ONE OF THE MOST PRECIOUS WORDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. The Greek word is a transliteration of the Hebrew phrase, meaning “God with us”. Although only occurring once in Matthew 1:23, where it is a translation of the Hebrew phrase that appears in Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8, it is rich in meaning and has become regularly associated with both Advent and Christmas carols. Jesus is our Emmanuel (or Immanuel to reflect the original Hebrew).

Jesus is not merely human in origin, but also divine – God with us. Yet Emmanuel speaks not only of God’s coming to earth in the incarnation of the Christ, but of God’s dwelling with us now through the breathtaking intimacy of Christ’s dwelling in us by his Spirit – Christ in us, ‘the hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27).

The most memorable of the Advent carols is “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”. The text of this hymn is usually dated to a Latin text of the 12th century, but was translated into English by J.M. Neale in 1851. Ten years later, he revised it for the first edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, and it became widely popular having been associated with the uplifting tune we know today, appropriately titled *Veni Emmanuel*.

Originally, J.M. Neale translated the first line as “Draw nigh, draw nigh, Emmanuel”, later changing it to the familiar and more evocative words, “O come, O come, Emmanuel”. The hymn’s first stanza speaks of the coming of Emmanuel to ransom captive Israel. This reflected Isaiah’s prophecy of a sign that God would rescue Israel from the threat of foreign invasion, yet Israel’s deliverance from Babylonian captivity in the years ahead provides an echo of Isaiah’s promised Emmanuel. The refrain reminds the people of Israel that, as God rescued them in the past, so he would rescue them again: “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel”.

The hymn also recalls how God came to the tribes of Israel on Mt Sinai to give the law, “in cloud and majesty and awe”. As he came then, he shall come again. The refrain is not merely a wish or even a prayer, but a declaration of the certainty of the coming of Emmanuel.

Advent, of course, is not just a time to reflect upon the coming of Jesus to Israel in his incarnation, but also a season for reflection upon the second coming of Christ to save people from every tribe and tongue. Thus the hymn broadens the horizons from national Israel to King David, Jesse’s son, who will be an ensign to the peoples, whom the nations would seek (Isaiah 11:10).

*O come, O Branch of Jesse’s stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o’er the grave.*

It is not just ransom from human captivity that the writer contemplates, but victory over death. The Son of David would open the door of heaven to all believers and God would dwell with them forever (Revelation 21:3).

*O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road
and bar the way to death’s abode.*

Finally, Jesus is described not just as King of Israel, but as “King of the nations”.

*O come, O King of nations bind
In one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease
And be yourself our King of Peace.*

The refrain now naturally widens the compass of Israel, for Jesus has reconstituted the 12 tribes of Israel through the 12 apostles of the Lamb. It is now truly multi-ethnic, as it includes the nations of the earth. As Christians, we rejoice at the coming of God to us as his Israel of the new covenant.

The Old Testament refrain “I shall be your God and you shall be my people” is associated with God’s dwelling among his people, symbolised by his presence in the temple. This theme resounds throughout the Scriptures (Genesis 17:7; Exodus 6:7; 29:45; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 14:11, 37:27). However, the new covenant fulfilment of this promise is not just the coming of God in the flesh, but also the coming of the triune God by his Spirit to take up temple residence in the heart of every believer. “My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them” (John 14:23).

As we celebrate this Advent season, we usually reflect upon the incarnation and the second coming, which is right and proper. However, the gift of God’s Spirit strengthens us to live by faith in this age, as we await the age to come. We live in the overlap of the ages, while we await Christ’s return. Let us therefore celebrate the gift of Emmanuel in the present – God with us in the here and now. May we rejoice this Christmas in the incarnation of God’s Son, but may we also rejoice in Jesus’ final words to his disciples: “Lo, I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20).

A very blessed Christmas to you all.

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

TRUTH v FAKE NEWS

SCIENTISTS DISCOVER CURE FOR HOMOSEXUALITY BRAD PITT: "ELITE
HOLLYWOOD PEDOPHILES CONTROL AMERICA" BERNIE SANDERS PROPOSES
A BILL FORCING CHRISTIAN OFFICE HOLDERS TO WEAR A SCARLET CROSS
CHRISTMAS LIGHTS BANNED, CAIRNS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS STARTED THE
CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES PARENTS' PLEA-DON'T SILENCESCHOOL CHRISTMAS
CAROLS ATHEIST ICELAND ISSUES A TRAVEL BAN AGAINST WHITE SOUTHERN
BAPTIST NASA ADMITS THAT CLIMATE CHANGE OCCURS BECAUSE OF CHANGES
IN EARTH'S SOLAR ORBIT, AND NOT BECAUSE OF SUVs AND FOSSIL FUELS

Amid perpetual media outrage and invention, how do Christians sort truth from fiction and respond accordingly? **SCOTT MONK** writes.

WHO CAN EVER FORGET THE WONDER OF LEARNING THAT THE FIRST LIFE forms found on the Moon were bat men? Don't scoff. It's true. I read it in a news-paper.

In August 1835, New York's *The Sun* exclusively reported that "They averaged four feet in height, were covered, except on the face, with short and glossy copper-coloured hair, and had wings composed of a thin membrane, without hair, lying snugly upon their backs, from the top of their shoulders to the calves of their legs". Their faces looked somewhat like an orangutan, although "more open and intelligent in its expression, and having a much greater expansion of forehead".

These humanoid bat men were just the start of the fantastic life forms found on the lunar Eden. In its six-day account, *The Sun* chronicled how highly respected astronomer Sir John Herschel (1792-1871) had seen this world of valleys, waterfalls, forests and inland lakes through his telescope and, with each sweeping gaze, found new animals such as Moon bison, horned bears, unicorn goats and walking space beavers.

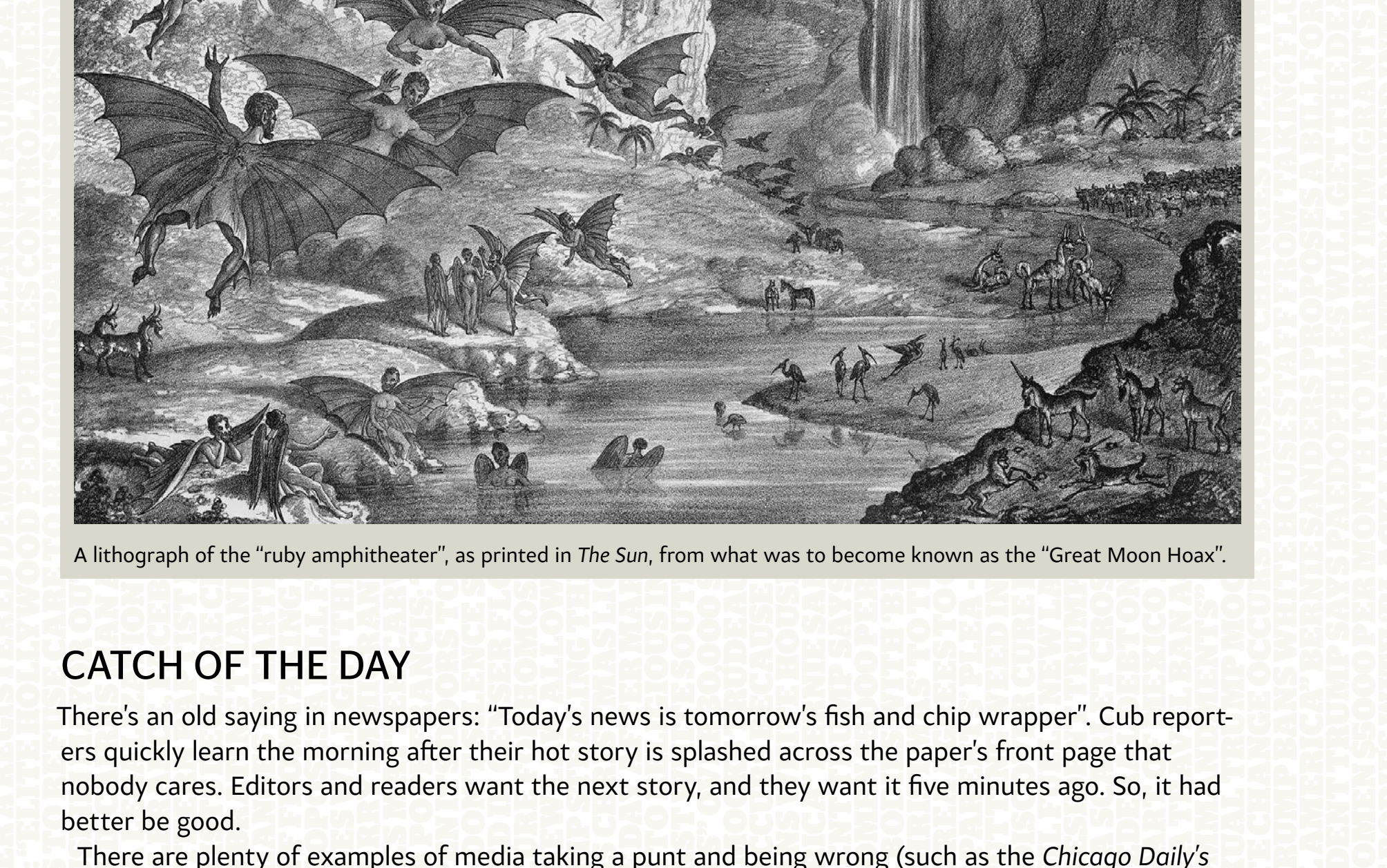
Understandably, this world-first news sold papers. Bundles of papers. One estimate pegs it at about 20,000 copies. And you'll forgive Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin for not beaming back any images of Herschel's discoveries during the Moon landing, as all life on the lunar surface was wiped out by 1969 thanks to climate change. Or had moved to Canada. Or was part of yet another NASA conspiracy. Trust me. I'm a journalist.

Actually, the Great Moon Hoax of 1835 captured the public's imagination for weeks before *The Sun* finally let everyone in on the secret: it was fake news.

Fast forward and fake news is no longer rare, or even easy to spot. Good, honest journalism still exists but the media are infected daily with lies, propaganda, clickbait, self-interest, political agendas, omission of facts and flat-out hoaxes.

And Christianity is clearly in the crosshairs. The enemies of the faith are constantly attacking God, the Church and the Bible through misrepresentation, and with little challenge.

Bible believers are cast as homophobes, misogynists, anti-intellectuals, anti-science, pro-slavery and mega-church money-grabbing hypocrites – potentially without the journalist, commentator or interviewee actually talking to a Christian, let alone presenting even-handed information.



A lithograph of the "rubby amphitheater", as printed in *The Sun*, from what was to become known as the "Great Moon Hoax".

CATCH OF THE DAY

There's an old saying in newspapers: "Today's news is tomorrow's fish and chip wrapper". Cub reporters quickly learn the morning after their hot story is splashed across the paper's front page that nobody cares. Editors and readers want the next story, and they want it five minutes ago. So, it had better be good.

There are plenty of examples of media taking a punt and being wrong (such as the *Chicago Daily's Tribune's* front-page assertion that Dewey had defeated Truman in the 1948 Presidential election – he hadn't – or the global embarrassment of publishing the invented Hitler Diaries in 1983).

However, when it comes to reporting Christianity, the media are masters at concocting news, reporting in a biased way through omitting facts, selective interviewing or reporting scandalous claims without checking their accuracy.

There are regular attacks on the historicity of the Bible – from the existence of Old Testament towns and peoples, to the life of Jesus, to his crucifixion. The best known is the proliferation of stories about Jesus being married to Mary Magdalene, thanks to American author Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003). *The Huffington Post* was still recycling this fake news in 2014, with the headline: "Jesus' marriage to Mary the Magdalene is Fact, Not Fiction". No quotes from any peer-reviewed academic, mind you, just a filmmaker pushing... oh, there we go, his book and documentary on the subject.

Another example is this howler in 2010 from London's *The Telegraph*, which trumpeted: "Jesus may not have died nailed to the cross because there is no evidence that the Romans crucified prisoners two thousand years ago, a scholar has claimed". A glance at first-hand accounts of crucifixions by former Roman general and historian Josephus (c37-100) might have been a start for the Swedish scholar and "committed Christian". And two years after his claim, a story resurfaced about a real 2000-year-old heel bone with an actual nail in it. It was definitive proof of a crucifixion (although it was found in 1968!).

As recently as two months ago, in an interview with British atheist Richard Dawkins, UK tabloid *The Express* announced online: "Jesus Christ discovery: Missing gospel reveals 'amazing story' of Messiah's childhood". Not a single qualified academic in the field, secular or religious, was quoted to refute such a claim about the Gospel of Thomas – the fake news of its time.

In 2011, when Anders Behring Breivik tragically massacred 77 people and injured at least 110 in two attacks in Norway, police were quick to label him a "Christian fundamentalist", giving headline writers at *The New York Times* a chance to blare: "As horrors emerge, Norway charges Christian extremist".

The story opened with: "The Norwegian man charged Saturday with a pair of attacks in Oslo that killed at least 92 people left behind a detailed manifesto outlining his preparations and calling for a Christian war to defend Europe against the threat of Muslim domination..." The problem with this is that Breivik was a "cultural" Christian, who fully rejected Jesus and practised the Norse religion of Odinism.

Right now, there's also the debate over religious rights for schools to employ teachers who uphold their faith values. If a McDonald's employee was turned away because they pushed KFC, or a Qantas salesperson spruiked Virgin, then there wouldn't be such confected outrage by the media. And don't anyone mention the separation between church and state!

The irony is that 20 years ago, I heard a senior editor warn a young reporter that he'd fire anyone who joined a certain religion.

The one clear-cut case where the media have got it right is the child sex abuse scandal. The Church deserved a whack for allowing such unspeakable evil to go unchecked and destroy people's lives. It's one example of why the media exists, and how it can be used for good. It is supposed to record history and challenge corruption.

But to do that, it must have truth at its foundation.

OUT WITH THE OLD

Truth has become a hitchhiker in the rear-view mirror, however, and the turning point in history is clear: the Old Media vanguard of newspapers, radio and free-to-air TV has been superseded by the New Media (such as Google, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube).

In the Old Media, if you as a journalist ever published fake news, you'd be sacked, as witnessed last year when Germany's news magazine *Der Spiegel* removed award-winning reporter Claas Relotius, who had invented facts in at least 14 of his 60 articles. Your co-workers and company would be ridiculed, your audience would abandon you and your publisher might possibly be sued.

In the New Media era, which has wonderfully democratised information sharing, anyone with a keyboard can write what they like. Real news is usually pilfered from Old Media websites and reshaped, usually without sourcing. Facts are optional. Opposing sides aren't allowed rebuttals. Opinion is king. You don't get sacked, because it's just one person in front of a keyboard or camera and the more sensational you are, the more clicks (and advertising) you get. And legal action? Good luck with that.

It's lucrative business. In 2016, America's NPR network tracked down the proprietor of a company *purposely* devoted to churning out fake news, who admitted advertising brought in \$US10,000 to \$US30,000 a month across the industry. All they had to do was target conservatives through Facebook sites.

If the modern media landscape was a game of chicken, the Old Media have blinked. Rather than take the high moral ground and rebuild trust by reporting news as they are ethically bound to do – with all sides covered and free from bias – their editors and producers have responded by going low. They're more focused on aiming for greater clicks on their own websites to drive subscriptions and advertising dollars.

This year, News Corp copped a backlash when the *Herald Sun* offered its journalists financial bonuses (believed to be \$10-\$50) if they managed to lure new subscribers behind its payroll. At the same time, some newsrooms within the company began publishing inhouse the metrics of how many eyeballs were reading reporters' stories – and for some, the numbers weren't pretty.

Sport is king. Breaking news usually does well. Anything with "sex" in the headline get zero views. And pretty much everything else that's worthy but dull just flatlines. Some stories will see a spike. There's a real fear that your ability as a journalist will soon be linked to how many people are clicking on your story rather than its importance in the public sphere.

The truth is, people just *don't* google news about industrial relations, superannuation or any other straight news story. We're more interested in reading: "Morgue employee cremated by mistake while taking a nap". Which was, you guessed it, fake news.

One thing is clear, however: religion brings in the clicks. Christians are the most connected community in the country and retweet articles. Atheists love a good religious story, even if just for a laugh or a bit of trolling. Add a controversial topic – and bam! – you've got an instant hit that is likely to run for days, and not just within a 24-hour news cycle.

Here's where the two camps collide. If Christian articles create more online traffic, especially when the issue is volatile, it stands to reason that Old and New Media will be more likely to run sensational headlines, blatant claims or fake news such as the crucifixion and fake gospel examples.

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS, OPINION AND BIAS

1. JOURNALISTS INTERVIEWING Just because Harvey Norman sells washing machines doesn't mean its employees know how to build and repair them. It's the same with the media. Look for professionals, academics and community leaders who work on the frontlines rather than journalistic talking heads.

2. FACTS v OPINION In the Old Media, opinion is easily spotted in a newspaper by the pronouns "I" and "we", or a small headshot near the writer's name. In the broadcast media it is normally a program driven by a media personality. When it comes to New Media, nearly everything is opinion.

3. CROSS-PROMOTIONAL "NEWS" Ever noticed a lot of Kayo, Foxtel or HarperCollins stories in *News Corp* papers? Or *The Sydney Morning Herald* promoting Channel 9 online with stories such as "The Block 2019: How much has each house on the show sold for?" The owners are promoting their products through their multiple media brands.

4. THE "SHILL" MEDIA Entertainment sites are infested with them. These New Media influencers are stooges pushing a company line in return for money, tickets, gifts or – worst of all – access to newsmakers who'll help increase their website traffic and advertising subscriptions. They never criticise major brands, unless everyone else is doing it.

5. THE END OF IMPARTIALITY The Old Media has given up any pretence of being even-handed in covering politics, falling into the Right (News Corp) and Left (SMH, *The Age*, ABC, SBS) camps they believe reflect society. An editor once said, "Let's run the [left-leaning] piece, so our all columnists can pummel him the next day".

6. CULTURE WARS The media love pigeonholing people into Left and Right, or worse, Far Left and Far Right, to create straw men. Christians are increasingly being lumped with the last of these, which includes Nazis, nationalists, racists and any chauvinistic group. Christians shouldn't identify with any of these, just as Jesus himself wasn't a Pharisee or a Sadducee.

7. FAKE NEWS AND SATIRE WEBSITES There are hundreds of these. Wikipedia lists some of the better-known ones. Links to scandalous stories are usually seeded among New Media forums. *Always* reputable-check a story with several more credible sources.

8. ADVERTORIALS These are advertiser-friendly stories passed off as news. Coverage that promotes a product, school, company, website, industry or travel destination in glowing terms without a hint of criticism is usually paid for – or is free in return for taking out an advertisement. "Special lift-outs" for schools, the Defence Force or industry are examples, as are a lot of real estate features.

9. THE ENVIRONMENT If there's one toxic area of reporting, it's climate change. The truth has been buried under so many claims, counterclaims, opposing scientific studies, UN meetings, policies, government grants, personal attacks, agendas and economic and advertising pressures, the whole issue is becoming impenetrable – just as the public relations firms intend.

10. POLITENESS If this is absent amid an unfocused spray from one or more people, this should raise a red flag. Listen/read carefully to see if what's being said is based on facts. Check and read further, before making your own assessment.

ROAD TO NOWHERE: TALKING HEADS

So why should people be concerned?

The press as we've always known it are dying. Old Media are laying off staff – good, smart, ethical, experienced people – who are the knowledge banks and checks and balances of the industry.

The worst affected are newspapers, which, for all their faults, set the agenda every day. Turn on morning radio and they're most likely rehashing what's in print. Watch the nightly news and most of what they now offer is footage of car crashes, shootings and wars overseas. The words in a TV bulletin would barely fit on the front page of a broadsheet newspaper.

And to hold onto their readers and viewers, the Old Media have trended towards opinion rather than hard news. They want to tell you how to think and feel, rather than present you with facts. And they want you permanently angry, fearful and ready to get onto social media to vent and bring in more clicks for them.

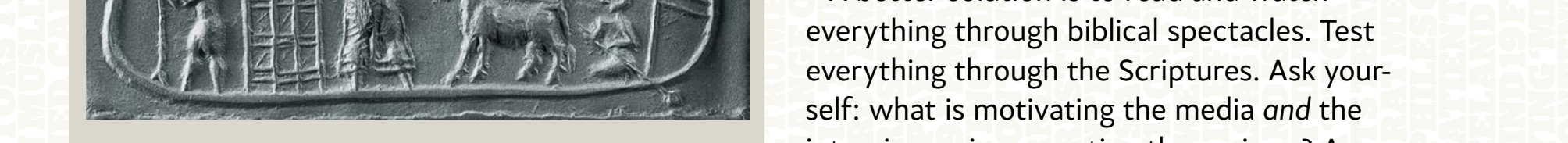
The problem is a lot of people cannot tell the difference between real news and opinion. Pew Research this year polled 5035 American adults, asking them to read five factual news statements and five opinion statements, and then identify them as such. It found "that a majority of Americans correctly identified at least three of the five statements in each set. But this result is only a little better than random guesses. Far fewer Americans got all five correct, and roughly a quarter got most or all wrong."

Turn on Sky News, the ABC or the afternoon news and you'll see a swag of journalists pontificating about a range of issues. Likewise, newspapers have always run opinion pieces (normally columns and editorials), and these have been clearly marked as such – although they haven't avoided manipulating readers.

It's more subtle with news stories and headlines, which are increasingly slanted for a political purpose. The West's newspapers have all but given up any pretence of being bipartisan or objective and are now cheerleaders for major parties and ideologies – not because they believe they have better policies, but because they better reflect their readers' views.

They've abandoned another (cynical) journalistic adage: how do you know a politician is lying? His lips are moving.

SUGAR BAGHDADI



The Washington Post gave terrorist Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi the sweeter descriptor of "austere religious scholar". IMAGE: from an Islamic State propaganda video

MORAL MINORITY

Why should *Christians* be concerned? Because the future reporting of Christianity will only become more sensational and designed as clickbait. We'll get more stories like allegedly Christian students at New York Union Seminary confessing their sins to plants.

The representation of Christians will not only be dire among the media but also the public, which hasn't a clue about orthodox teachings – let alone that there are evangelical and liberal camps of the faith. Voices who deny the authority of God's word are sought because they align more with society than Scripture, and they won't offend audiences.

To navigate such choppy waters, Christians need to remember five things:

1. Nearly all the Old and New Media publishers are secular. They have no allegiance to Christianity. No Christian must ever expect them to be or become defenders of the faith.

2. The overwhelming majority of Old Media journalists are agnostics or atheists – mostly the latter.

3. Nearly every reporter, subeditor and editor I've worked with is bitterly illiterate. An old subeditor I worked with, who is now dead, once asked loudly for everyone to hear: "If Jesus loves us, then why didn't he get rid of taxes?" Walking by, I quoted Mark 12:17 – "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's". It was met with stunned silence.

What most journalists know about Christianity was gleaned from Sunday school, a Catholic college "full of hypocrites" during teenage years, or what they consume in the news themselves in their minds, most Protestants – read, evangelical Christians – go to churches like Hillsong or Westboro Baptist Church.

4. In this vacuum, journalists share one common belief system: cynicism. They distrust everyone and everything, even their own employers. It leads to a culture of combativeness.

5. When you pull back the curtain, the wizards in the media have no moral authority whatsoever. What they do have is influence and reach.

Together this presents a large problem for Christianity. If opinion is king, and the general public on average cannot spot the difference, truth is no longer the driving factor in having civil discourse – it's emotion and pride. Arguments have to be won at all costs, rather than illuminating a subject. And if their views are parroted and spread through the New Media, then it creates an illusion of consensus.

The easiest solution would be for Christians to turn off their screens and cancel their subscriptions. However, that would only make the secular echo chambers louder, and our democracy needs a plurality of voices.

A better solution is to read and watch everything through biblical spectacles. Test everything through the Scriptures. Ask yourself: what is motivating the media and the interviewee in promoting these views? Are they glorifying God or trying to subvert people away from him?

Also, train yourself in apologetics. Go down the rabbit hole and find out the truth about the elites and their current social justice agendas.

GENESIS AND GILGAMESH

In the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, Ziusudra is urged by the water god, Enki, to build an ark and so survives The Great Deluge. IMAGE: A cylinder seal impression showing a boat loaded with livestock and goods, Uruk, 4th millennium BC.

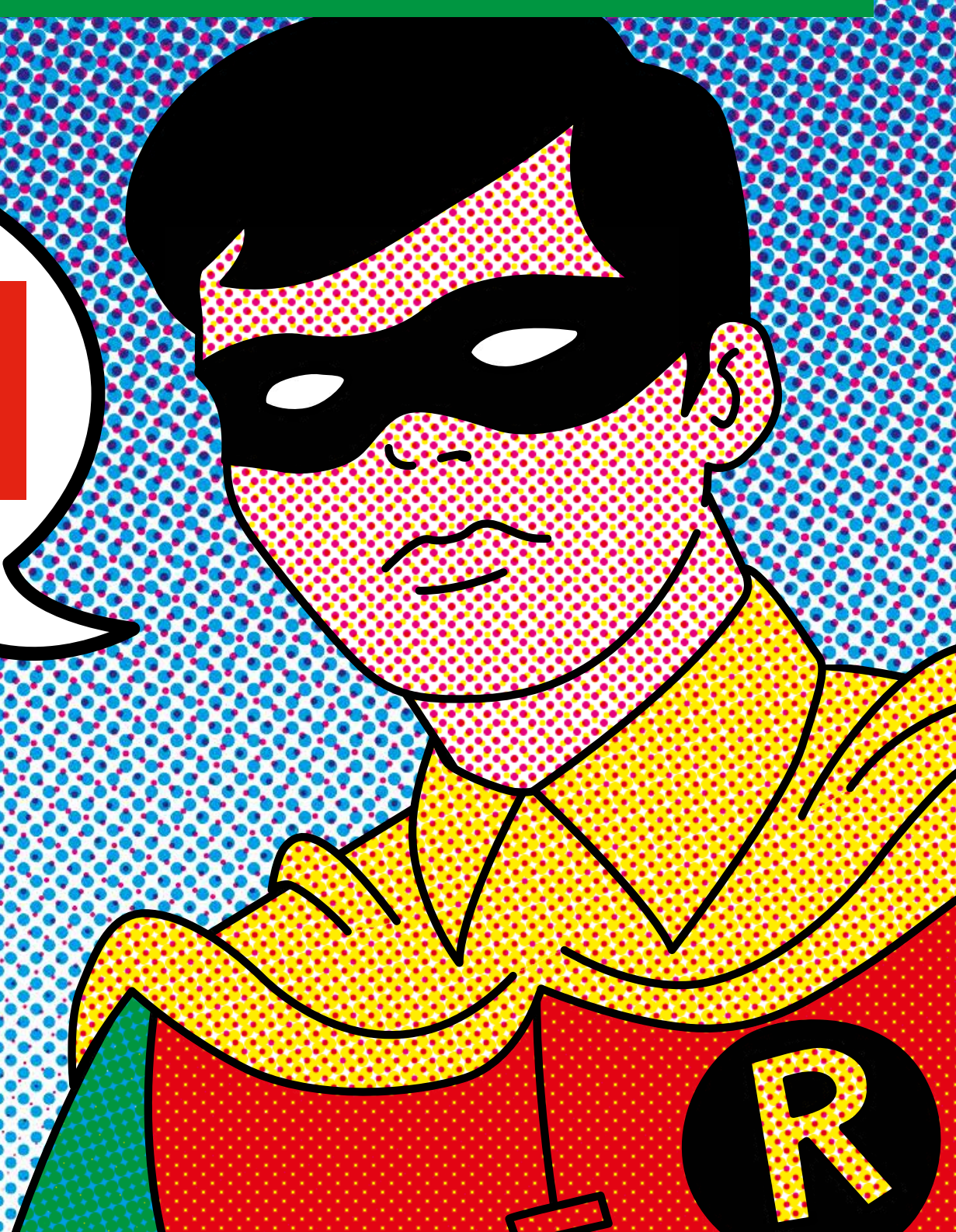
a subject. A lot of the claims about false gospels, the lack of camel bones found among Abraham's time and similarities between the Genesis flood account to the Epic of Gilgamesh have good answers to them. Usually they're old heresies wrapped up in new clothes.

Aim to be good witnesses. If the media keep presenting Christians as bigots and bogeymen, then show your neighbours what we are really like.

Finally, give news articles some time to settle down. Fake news and false reporting normally come out in the wash, as did the Piltdown Man, crop circles and those pesky space beavers.

Scott Monk has worked in the mainstream media for 24 years. This is an opinion piece.

Holy talk



God calls believers to be holy in their speech – even if it sounds strange to others, writes **LIONEL WINDSOR**.

HUMAN BEINGS ARE SOCIAL CREATURES. WE NEED TO BELONG. ONE OF THE most obvious ways we do that is by the way we speak. Whenever we speak, we're signalling to others how and where we belong. Often our nationality, our social class (or our aspirations!), our generation, our allegiances, influences and personalities are revealed by the way we speak and the words we choose.

This is entirely natural; usually we don't realise it's happening. As small children, we're hardwired to learn language by imitating parents and other family members and listening for their responses. As we grow, we pick up mannerisms from people we care about, so that we can show we belong and connect with them.

Believers in Christ have a particular reason to use our speech to connect with people: we want to share the great news of salvation through Christ. We don't want to alienate them unnecessarily with expressions that make them think we're weird. So, we adapt our speech to the way everyone around us speaks. But of course, our motivations are often more complex than that. Sometimes, even unconsciously, we're motivated by fear rather than by love. We're afraid of what other people think of us. And sometimes that leads us, without even thinking about it, to speak (or communicate online) in ways that are wrong.

That's why it's important for us to hear what the Bible has to say about our speech. The Bible says a great deal about it; in this article I'm focusing on what the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5:3-4. Paul is talking here about certain kinds of speech (and this applies to online communication, too).

In this area, Paul is saying that those who believe in Christ must *not* adapt our speech to the people around us. In fact, this is an aspect of life where it's important for us to sound a bit weird.

SAYING PORN

Verse 3 begins: "But sexual immorality and every kind of impurity or greed should not even be named among you". To get the idea across here, I've created a new English word from some of Paul's original words: *pornolalia*. You know the English word pornography: this means images of an inappropriately sexual nature. It's wrong. But here, Paul is talking about *speech* of an inappropriately sexual nature: *pornolalia* (*lalia* means speech).

The original word for "sexual immorality" (*porneia*), especially in a Jewish setting, means sexual activity that goes beyond the good boundaries that God has put around it, i.e. marriage as the Bible describes it. And here Paul isn't just ruling out sexually immoral activity. He's not even just ruling out sexually immoral images. It's even stronger. He's even ruling out *pornolalia*. He's saying: don't even *talk* about it. Don't name it. As Christians, what we say and how we say it matters deeply. There are things we just shouldn't say.

Why does our speech matter? Because of who we are. Believers in Christ are holy (Ephesians 1:1). That means we need to speak in a way that is fitting for holy people. God himself is holy: excellent, supreme, distinct from all that he has made. When God saved us and loved us, he called us, too, to be holy (Ephesians 1:4).

God has chosen us to belong to him, to be set apart for his service, to live for him, to be pure and to live right lives. And this holiness must be reflected in our speech as well as in the way we live: sexual immorality shouldn't be on our lips. We should use our speech to show who we belong to: God.

Now of course, in some contexts there might be good reasons to appropriately mention or describe something about sexual immorality, in order to help people to deal with its consequences or avoid it. Paul's point, though, is that we shouldn't talk about sexual immorality casually, for the sake of it, as a topic of conversation. We are called to be holy. There are lines we shouldn't cross. And talking about sexual immorality, just for the sake of it, is one of them.

But it's not just sexual immorality. Paul also mentions "every kind of impurity or greed". Uncontrolled desire goes beyond the bounds of sex to all sorts of other areas of our lives.

I remember a trend on social media to use the word "porn" to refer to all sorts of things beyond sex. Someone would share an attractive or enticing image of food, or property, or alcohol, or coffee, or cars, etc to show how desirable it was and to get others to join with them in feeling that desire. And they'd tag it "food porn" or "car porn" or "coffee porn".

It was kind of a joke. But it wasn't entirely a joke. Because it was about pushing the bounds of desire. That is, it wasn't just about rightly appreciating something good in the world; it was moving into the area of sharing and encouraging greed and uncontrolled desire. And this is the kind of thing that Paul is ruling out here. We shouldn't speak to encourage people along in their greed and uncontrolled desire in any way.

Our mouths are intimately tied to our hearts. Jesus himself said: "What goes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this is what defiles a person" (Matthew 15:18).

SAYING FILTH

Paul then goes on to make it even clearer: "so no filth, and no stupid talk or witty innuendo, which are out of line" (Ephesians 5:4). "Filth" is gutter talk: language that goes into detail about sex just for the sake of it. "Stupid talk" and "witty innuendo" are about using sex for a laugh: in Paul's day, "stupid talk" was the low-class version used by the poor and uneducated masses, and "witty innuendo" was the high-class version used by clever, rich people. But God isn't class conscious. Both are ruled out.

It doesn't matter how clever or witty you are: don't talk filth. Of course, very little has changed since Paul wrote his letter. This is still the cheapest way to get a laugh, and it sells. It's the stuff that pervades so much comedy, movies, music and huge swathes of social media. Paul is talking here about a very common way that the world speaks. And he's saying that it's not fitting for God's holy people.

But won't that make us sound a bit weird? Surely, if we do that, we'll be scoffed at for sounding like Victorian-era prudes, won't we? Yes, probably. This is how pious Jews must have sounded in the sexually saturated Roman Empire that Paul is writing to, and people constantly scoffed at them.

Are you afraid of sounding uncool? Are you afraid of not fitting in? Because that's a large part of Paul's point here. Being holy is about *not* fitting in with the world. It's about fitting in with God, to whom we belong. And it means wearing the uniform of specialness, separate from what's impure. God calls us to clean living, and so he calls us to clean speaking. That's what it means to be holy here.

SAYING GRACE

So, if there are certain kinds of speech that are ruled out for God's holy people, what's the alternative? Should we make up clean Christian swear words instead: "Golly gee"? "Shucks?" No, the alternative is something far more powerful. Paul calls it "thanksgiving".

Thanksgiving is a grace word. Thanksgiving is what you do when you've been given a great gift: you return thanks to the giver. It's literally "saying grace". And it's the kind of speech that God's dearly loved children are always to have on our lips. As God's forgiven and holy people, we don't need to spend our lives speaking the filth, foolishness and innuendo of the world. We have something far more affirming and transforming to say: thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving isn't just being vaguely thankful to the universe for our existence. It's about being thankful to the God who loved us, saved us and brought us from death to life. It's about being thankful for this gift of salvation – and it's about being thankful for all the gifts God has richly provided us with in this world.

Christian speech is to be saturated with thanksgiving; it's to be pervaded with thankfulness for God's great gift and his goodness to us in Christ, and the life we've been given. And this applies to online interactions too, doesn't it? It's a good habit to develop.

When you find yourself about to talk (or type) in a way that promotes impure sex or lust or greed, or a way that casually uses these things for a laugh, think of something to be thankful for instead. It can be something big, or something small. You can use sentences that start with "I'm glad...", or "I'm thankful..." or "Thank God..." or "It's so good..." or anything else that expresses thankfulness for something. It might take a while to develop the habit. But it's a very powerful habit to get into. And it's vitally important for God's holy people.

FITTING IN

So, in this area of our speech, we need to be different from those around us. We naturally want to fit in, but here we need to fit in with *God's* holy calling instead. Does that mean our ability to share Jesus with people will be compromised because we won't fit in? Not at all. In fact, being different and holy in this area is part of our task to act as "light" towards the world for the sake of Christ (Ephesians 5:13-14).

There are plenty of other ways that we can and should adapt ourselves to reach others. But to reach people we don't always need to be the same as them. In this area, to reach people, we need to be different. Thanksgiving, not filth. This is our holy talk.

The Rev Dr Lionel Windsor lectures in New Testament and Greek. This article is adapted from a series of reflections on Ephesians called Lift Your Eyes. You can read or listen to the whole series at www.lionelwindsor.net



After retirement – what next?

CHRIS EDWARDS

WE ARE UNDERGOING MASSIVE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE. MARK MCCRINDLE forecasts that by 2028 Australia will have more people over 60 than under 20. This has never happened before. He calculates that right now there are about five workers for every retiree. By 2048 that will drop to just 2.4 workers for every retiree. Consider the impact on taxation!

Also, people are living longer. Apparently we should now expect 30+ years in retirement. But what will we do with it? A recently retired university lecturer was speaking to a group of millennials when she found herself wiping away a tear: "I just want to know what's next".

She is typical of millions of baby boomers who are wondering the same thing. Women and men who were once important find themselves increasingly overlooked.

A Google search for the word "retirement" returns a host of financial calculators along with images of grey-haired couples romantically holding hands, walking along white, sandy beaches. This constant vacation idea in retirement has led to a number of disappointed older Christians.

"At first, we enjoyed the novelty of it. I felt like I was on a permanent holiday," says one retiree who hitched up the new caravan and joined the grey nomads on a clockwise trek around Australia (why does everyone go clockwise?). "The problem was, no matter where we went, the 'nowhere-to-be' and 'no-need-to-get-back' thing kept hitting me like a brick... I feel like there's a massive hole in my life. I don't belong anywhere any more."

One author puts it this way: "Retirement is an illusion because those who can afford the illusion are disillusioned by it, and those who cannot afford the illusion are haunted by it."

Bob Buford's 2008 book *Halftime* highlighted an alternative to the constant vacation idea. He suggested Christians should move "from success to significance" when they retire. He swapped consuming for serving, and acquiring for giving. After all, retirement isn't "biblical" – which is, of course, true. Retirement was invented about 120 years ago. Dwight L. Moody once said, "Preparation for old age should not begin later than one's teens. A life which is empty of purpose until 65 will not suddenly become filled on retirement."

This is probably true but even if, like me, you didn't think of being over 65 when you were 16, it isn't too late to consider what you might do. And there's plenty to consider. Andrew Cameron has written a short book, *Living in the Next Phase*, which contains some things that sound a little brusque at first, like, "being old isn't a qualification to do anything". And, "good intentions never guarantee good performance". But he's right.

To give ourselves in competent service to others may require some more training. Yes, you might need to learn some new tricks! Why not a Moore College course like the PTC? This is a great course with flexible options like online or correspondence study. If you're in the Sydney region you even have the option of attending PTC evening lectures.

Or how about training as an Anglicare volunteer? Your gift of time and energy can really create a positive outcome for your community and contribute to a vibrant and caring neighbourhood. Anglicare has more than 2300 volunteers helping with Christian-based community projects. They will train you and connect you.

There's plenty to consider.

Not all the questions about retirement have easy answers for the nearly 78 million baby boomers worldwide who are facing it. But many older Christians across the developed world are dropping the vacation mentality. They are simply being ever-renewed (2 Cor. 4:16) and continuing to serve God and neighbour in their spheres of influence.

Retirement needs a new story. Or better yet, a very old story.

SC

The Rt Rev Chris Edwards is Bishop of North Sydney.

How Jomo got his mojo

DAVID MANSFIELD

JOMO MCHUNU IS A ZULU MAN FROM A RURAL AREA OF SWEETWATERS IN PIETERMARITZBURG, South Africa. Jomo is the rector of Christ Church Hillcrest, serving the thriving multi-racial suburbs of Hillcrest, Waterfall, Kloof and Bothas Hill. The church is at the foot of Bothas Hill in Kwa Zulu Natal (KZN), a stone's throw away from the home of Alan Paton, author of the classic novel, *Cry The Beloved Country*. A member of Jomo's congregation owned the house until it was sold recently.

Bothas Hill is part of KZN's beautiful Valley of a Thousand Hills. It feels a lot like the Southern Highlands southwest of Sydney, but much warmer and more scenic as it nestles in the spectacular hill country halfway between Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

Being a rector of a local church is just Jomo's day job. He moonlights as a regional bishop with the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa (or REACH SA). To say that Jomo is a busy man is something of a wild understatement!

Jomo was a guest of Anglican Aid and the parish of Pymble for a week in mid-September. He also preached and spoke at Menai, Narellan, Sadleir and a couple of retirement villages. He engaged passionately about the three-way partnerships Anglican Aid has with various Sydney parishes through Bible training, leadership and social development projects in many parts of South Africa.

It's hard to pinpoint when Jomo got his mojo. Converted at a tent meeting in a village close to his own, Jomo was unstoppable when it came to sharing Jesus' love for him and the whole world. After graduating from university as a journalist he, perhaps not as wisely as he might, couldn't be contained in letting the whole newsroom hear the greatest news of all.

IS THIS HOW THE MOJO BEGAN?

So constrained was he to get the best news out that his boss came to his workstation one Friday afternoon, slammed his hand on the desk and said, "Jomo, my office. Now!"

Fearing termination on the spot, Jomo did the death march to his boss's office. Behind closed doors his boss asked, "Jomo, have you ever considered Christian ministry as a career? Because you are driving everyone mad around here".

Until that moment, the idea had never crossed Jomo's mind. The conviction grew over the following months. His wife Brenda shared the vision and, in 2001, they packed up their worldly possessions and trundled off to a city they had never seen before, a thousand miles to the south.

On their first day at George Whitefield College (GWC), situated in Muizenberg near Cape Town, Jomo encountered a white guy of slight build, dressed in daggy old clothes. Jomo thought he must be the gardener or janitor, or even one of the many homeless men from the streets of Muizenberg. But then the white man spoke – with an Australian accent. "Oh no!" Jomo realised. "It must be the college principal, David Seccombe, I have heard so much about."

IS THIS WHERE THE MOJO BEGAN?

Jomo and Brenda have three children – a son (21), a daughter (15) and another daughter (10). Unlike their parents, they all have long Zulu names: Siyamthanda (*We love him*), Siyamthemba (*We trust him*) and Owethu (*He is ours*). As Jomo explains, "It is the Lord we love. It is the Lord we trust. The Lord is ours".

Five years ago Jomo returned from a fundraising trip to Australia for George Whitefield College. The next day he went to his doctor for routine annual bloodwork. He had an emergency appointment with an oncologist the next day. Prostate cancer had spread like wildfire and he had multiple tumours up and down his spine. He was given 12 to 18 months to live.

Between the mandatory treatments of chemotherapy, radiation and hormone injections, Jomo dragged himself into his office and around his parish with whatever energy he could muster. Jomo says, "I kept telling myself, 'March on my soul, be strong in the Lord, this is not your home. Yours is not build by human hands but by God himself. March on my soul, for the Lord is the strength of your heart'."

With a sharply focused mind, Jomo prayed for wisdom in his remaining days on this earth. The identification, selection and training of young men and women for gospel leadership became his consuming priority.

In the hills and valleys around his home town of Hillcrest are hundreds of thousands of precious people who don't yet know the Lord Jesus, including orphans, widows, child-headed households and whole communities struggling with poverty and the aftermath of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that swept through the province a generation ago.

Today, two young men from these rural areas are studying at GWC. One of them, Mxo Ngiba, is partly supported by Pymble Anglicans and other churches through Anglican Aid. These are the first two in a cohort of potential young gospel leaders that Jomo, in a season of remission, prays for and trains to win this generation for Christ.

IS THIS HOW JOMO GOT HIS MOJO?

Jomo is a funny name. It means "burning spear". It was a nickname he was given in his soccer days, after the famous South African soccer player, Jomo Sono – described as "the black prince of South African soccer" – who himself was named after Jomo Kenyatta, the famous first President of Kenya from 1964 to 1978.

But our Jomo has another meaning for the name. In a world, especially in the West, and even in Christian subculture, where the fear of missing out (FOMO) is raging like a disease, eating away at the human heart, Jomo says with a twinkle in his eye, "JOMO stands for the joy of missing out".

There's the mojo of Jomo.

For Jomo knows that small sacrifices in the short term mean joy in the long term, as he follows his master's example: *Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame* (Hebrews 12:2).

SC

The Rev David Mansfield retired this year as director of Anglican Aid. He now ministers on Lord Howe Is.



Hospital hope and care

The Rev Stuart Adamson (Anglican), Fr Pawel Kopczynski (Catholic), Ayesha Ahmad (Islamic representative), Debbie Whitney (Buddhist), Sharon Jory (Salvation Army), Cindy Oxley (staff), the Rev Bronwyn Kyngdon (Anglican), Elizabeth Browne (Director of Operations, Shared Clinical Services), Rabbi Mendel Kastel (Jewish).

FOR THE FIRST TIME, CHAPLAINS AT THE PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL HAVE RUN A CAMPUS-WIDE multifaith service to remember those who have died in recent times at the Randwick hospitals.

The co-ordinator of the chaplaincy department, Anglicare chaplain the Rev Stuart Adamson, said the service was an important step. "There's a real sense that there's a lot of unexpressed grief here," he said. "We wanted to care for people – family, friends and staff – who had lost loved ones at the Randwick campus's hospitals.

"While there are sponsored services held offsite run by other hospitals, there's never been a remembrance service run by chaplaincy here for staff, families and friends."

The service was held at the hospital during Pastoral Care Week in late October, and was attended by family members, executive and clinical staff, social workers and the chaplains themselves – from a range of Christian denominations and other faiths.

"One of the things that stood out in the service, among the contributions of chaplains from a variety of faiths, was a clear articulation by the Christian chaplains of the ground of the Christian hope," Mr Adamson said.

"That reflects the reality of chaplaincy in a busy public hospital, because there are people of many different faiths and no faith in this community."

He added that there was deep mutual respect among the chaplains, but "we don't pretend we all believe the same thing".

"The service was an opportunity for the chaplains who identify as Christian to present something at the heart of their faith... alongside chaplains from other faiths who also presented fully out of their own faith traditions," he said.

"I believe there was enormous power in that, because Christianity was clearly presented as an historical faith with the grounds of the Christian hope residing in the cross and the resurrection."

The manager of health and justice chaplains at Anglicare, the Rev Stephen Gibson, added that, "People don't tend to realise the tremendous impact hospital chaplains can have for the gospel.

"A senior doctor at the Prince of Wales recently said that the chaplaincy department 'humanises' the hospital – which is a sensational thing to say! The chaplains are first and foremost there for the patients, but they also have a wonderful role for staff as well.

"I think most Aussies have their lives pretty stitched up most of the time, but [illness] is like a transition in life, and it can make you open to spiritual things."

After positive feedback from those who attended the remembrance service, plans are already in place to hold another event next year.



He's with Jesus

JUDY ADAMSON

DECEMBER 2019

Southern CROSS

14

IT WASN'T JOSH GOSCOMBE'S PLAN TO WRITE SONGS, BUT IT JUST STARTED HAPPENING while he was doing Year 13 at Youthworks.

"We led on a Youthworks camp for adults who are wheelchair bound and have [other] handicaps," he says. "One day we were having a discussion in a group and a guy who found it very hard to talk, so he talked very slowly, said, 'It makes me so happy that someone would want to love me so much' – and that just stuck with me. Jesus' love for him brought him so much joy."

"Near the end of Year 13 I was sitting on a rock overlooking the ocean, spending time with God, and I just wrote a song, using his exact words: 'It makes me so happy'. I didn't really expect anything to come from it."

What has come from it is a CD of children's songs called *Jesus' Team*. It didn't happen overnight – Goscombe has since spent three years at Youthworks College and another four as the youth and families' minister at Cranebrook Anglican – but, along the way, more songs have been written as he has taken part in holiday kids' clubs, school Scripture and various ministries at church.

"When I started doing Scripture, I wanted to teach memory verses and it was just easier to do it in a song," he explains. "I really enjoyed doing that, and then it just progressed from there."

"Pretty much anything that's had kids in it we've used the songs for. We've done some of them congregationally when the kids are in. We've done them during kids' church, at a mid-week kids' outreach club that we run, and we do lots of them at Scripture. We also run a school lunchtime group at a primary school and they get used at that... we've found that it's worked very well."

Some of the primary-age songs are simple Bible verses, while others contain "more complicated" theological truths such as righteousness or penal substitutionary atonement that Goscombe, his wife Larissa and others have taught and explained over a longer period.

He adds that penal substitutionary atonement "is such an important concept to teach and understand, so I asked myself, 'What's a good way of explaining it?'" The result was the song "Switcheroo" – with Jesus doing the switcheroo on our behalf.

"It teaches something that's hard for kids to understand but in a simple way that I've found to be really helpful. Also, you're not just explaining what these concepts are now. These songs get inside kids' heads and they don't fully understand them yet, but when they're older they'll still be able to remember and recite those words... they'll be gospel truths they'll be able to understand more as they grow older."

As more people heard Goscombe's songs, more copies were asked for, so the next logical step was to put a CD together – with some of the Cranebrook kids helping out – and it was launched last month with a children's concert at MBM Rooty Hill.

"It's been quite amazing to see the way that God has opened the doors to make it happen," Goscombe says. "There are a million places this year where the whole thing could have just fallen over, but it never did and God always put the right person in my path at the right time to keep it moving forward."

"The weirdest part is seeing a cartoon of myself on the album cover! But I'm excited to see what God does with it. I just want to give all the praise to him... I really enjoy performing and I really enjoy kids' music and helping young people to understand God and what he's done, and I want to keep doing that."

Jesus' Team is available at Koorong, online or through streaming platforms.

LEARN YOUR CATECHISMO

Catechismo Kids

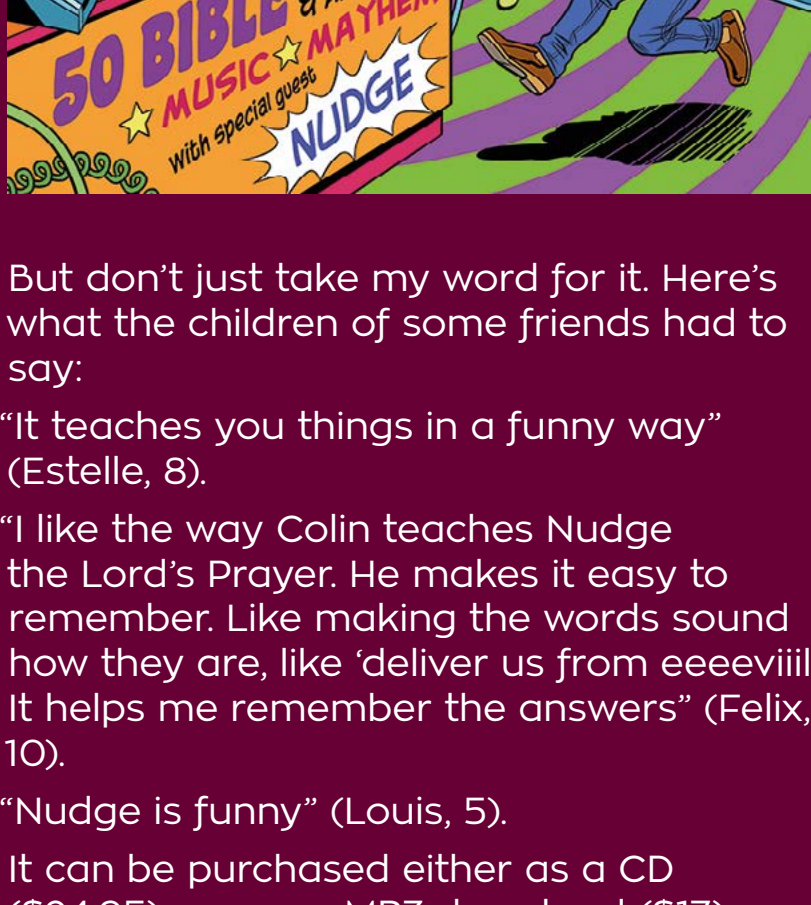
By Colin Buchanan

Well, Colin (and Nudge) have done it again! *Catechismo Kids* is a winsome and winning combination of music and mayhem in the form of a madcap radio show, threaded through with a series of important Bible questions and answers. This is where the word "catechismo" comes in. For at the heart of the album is a 50-question catechism of Colin's own creation – although adapted, at various points, from a range of Reformed children's catechisms. Coming in at just under 80 minutes (perfect for long family car rides!), the album has a total of 37 separate segments (tracks), 16 of which are clever, catchy, amusing but always edifying songs. Most of these are brand new compositions written especially for the project, but there are also a few Colin "classics" (like "10,9,8... God is Great", "Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves" and "Big Words That End In Shun") thrown in at strategic points.

In between the songs there is plenty of Colin and Nudge banter, zany interludes, sound effects (including burps) and, of course, The Catechismo Q&A segments.

Starting with the question "Who made me and all things?" The Catechismo skilfully works its way through all the major Christian doctrines: the attributes of God, the importance of human beings, the reality of sin, the person and work of Jesus, the way of salvation, the fruits of faith (including a few big words that end in "shun"), the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the Bible, the nature of prayer, the place of the church, the return of Jesus, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment and the final destinies of both believers and unbelievers.

From start to finish the CD is a rollicking ride of musical fun and biblical faithfulness.



But don't just take my word for it. Here's what the children of some friends had to say:

"It teaches you things in a funny way" (Estelle, 8).

"I like the way Colin teaches Nudge the Lord's Prayer. He makes it easy to remember. Like making the words sound how they are, like 'deliver us from eeeevill'. It helps me remember the answers" (Felix, 10).

"Nudge is funny" (Louis, 5).

It can be purchased either as a CD (\$24.95) or as an MP3 download (\$17). For an additional \$9.95 the full script, song lyrics and, most importantly, The Catechismo Q&A (replete with Bible references) can also be downloaded as a 100-page PDF from Colin's website. The script booklet is a particularly valuable addition for family devotions, Scripture classes and kids' church.

Catechismo Kids achieves what Colin's work always aims to achieve – helping kids of all ages (including "grown-up" ones) love Jesus more, and grow in our knowledge of God and his word.

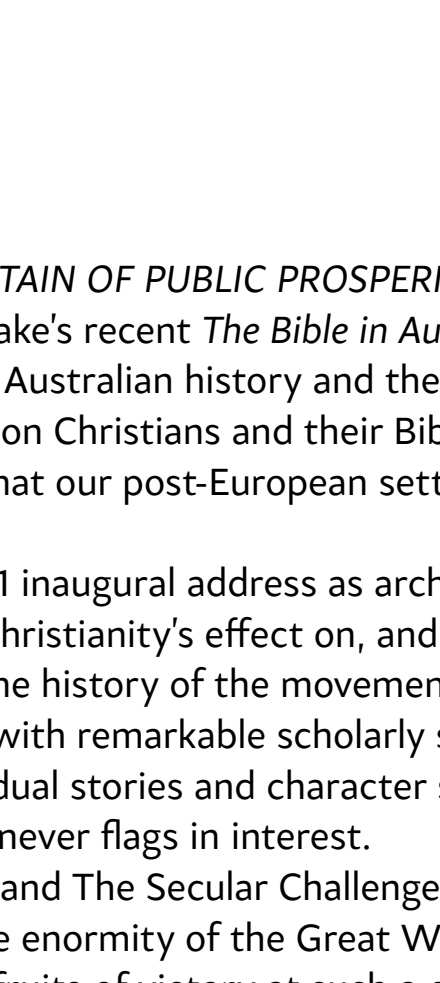
Rob Smith

Our evangelical soul

ROBERT FORSYTH

Attending to the National Soul: Evangelical Christians in Australian History 1914-2014

By Stuart Piggins and Robert D. Linder (Monash University Publishing)



THIS BOOK, TOGETHER WITH ITS FIRST VOLUME *THE FOUNTAIN OF PUBLIC PROSPERITY: EVANGELICAL Christians in Australian History 1740-1914*, and Meredith Lake's recent *The Bible in Australia: A Cultural History*, represent a significant milestone in the writing of Australian history and therefore in our self-understanding. All three highlight the profound contribution Christians and their Bible have made to this country and successfully challenge the assumption that our post-European settlement heritage is largely secular.

The title – a phrase apparently coined by Peter Jensen in his 2001 inaugural address as archbishop – expresses the authors' intention to tell the story of evangelical Christianity's effect on, and ministry to, the Australian people and nation, rather than simply recount the history of the movement itself. It is an enormous and complex task that Piggins and Linder tackle with remarkable scholarly skill and thoughtfulness. By combining broad historical sweeps with individual stories and character studies they provide breadth and depth to an easy-to-read narrative that never flags in interest.

The book is in two parts; "Faith under Fire 1914-1945" and "Faith and The Secular Challenge 1946-2014". In the first we learn of the shifting responses at home to the enormity of the Great War, of the faith of many soldiers and the ministry of chaplains, of the bitter fruits of victory at such a cost, the subsequent responses to political turmoil and the crisis of the Great Depression in the interwar period – as well as reactions to the challenges of theological modernism and growing secularism.

It was also the time of the election of Howard Mowll as Archbishop of Sydney – whose episcopate, in the view of the authors, "turned out to be the most momentous in the history of the Sydney Diocese". The treatment of World War II contains moving descriptions of the faith of evangelical prisoners of war.

The second part tells the quite complex story of the nearly 70 years from the end of World War II to today. It starts with the time of the most religious decade in Australia's history, when "the evangelical movement reached the zenith of its influence on Australian society and when it experienced its most exponential growth". But that is followed by what the book calls "the shock of the 1960 and 1970s", which were "probably the most radical decades in Australian history".

A variety of different evangelical responses follow. Piggins and Linder argue that three strands of the divergent evangelicalism evolved from this time and persevere in modified forms today – conservative, exclusive evangelicalism; more radical, inclusive evangelicalism; and charismatic, Pentecostal evangelicalism. These differences are seen as largely positive, so much so that the authors suggest by the beginning of the 21st century "the three houses which had replaced the single house of the evangelical movement may be stronger than the one it replaced".

It is impossible even to summarise the rich and compelling narrative *Attending to the National Soul* provides at this point. But it is worth noting that, as the account draws closer to the present day, it becomes a little more contentious. The authors are not mere observers but turn out to be advocates for a particular way forward – an inclusive, vibrant evangelicalism that is socially involved and egalitarian in its treatment of women. This position shows in the treatment of those they take to be holding alternative views. For example, the women's ordination debate is presented as one of black hats v white hats, and theological nuances in the so-called "social action versus gospel issue" are not recognised.

This is simply to say that, for all its brilliance and scope, *Attending to the National Soul* is not going to be the last word on the topic. But it is to be hoped that such a superb and ambitious treatment on how evangelicals attend to the national soul will only stimulate further research and publication in what is becoming a renaissance of evangelical history in Australia.

(A last word. The only error of fact this reviewer found was the claim that the signboard exchange between St Barnabas', Broadway and the hotel opposite occurred between the wars. It didn't begin until 1985.)

Bishop Robert Forsyth is a former Bishop of South Sydney and rector at Broadway (where he was an enthusiastic participant in the signboard exchange).



The end of all things

As the story arc of Star Wars comes to an end this month with *The Rise of Skywalker*, will fans be inspired or vent their spleen on social media – again? SCOTT MONK writes.

FORGET LIGHTSABERS. FORGET WOOKIEES. FORGET DARTH VADER. EVEN FORGET the fastest hunk of junk in the galaxy, the Millennium Falcon. One scene in the original 1977 *Star Wars* movie sums up why millions of fans still love the greatest science fantasy epic 42 years later.

When wet-bether-the-ears farm boy Luke Skywalker steps from his igloo-shaped underground home into a purpling dusk punctuated by the binary suns of Tatooine, he literally kicks stones as he wrestles between staying with his uncle for the next harvest or following his friends off-world.

A lonely French horn swells into a full orchestra as Luke stops, stares into the sunset and aches for adventure, before turning around and succumbing to his family duty.

Even now, fans admit to crying at this scene. Undeniably, it talks to some of the deepest yearnings of our hearts, too: the sense that there's a galaxy out there that's bigger and greater and more amazing than we can imagine, just waiting to be discovered.

It's one reason why kids who fell in love with the galaxy far, far away rushed out to buy their 3.75-inch Kenner action figures and *Star Wars* pyjamas – and why those adults, today, still hold onto those same toys and wear similar pyjamas, albeit a little tighter around the paunch.

This month the greatest, if not the greatest, adventure series of cinematic history wraps up with the ninth instalment of the *Star Wars* franchise, *The Rise of Skywalker*. Long gone are the days of Luke Skywalker and the heroic Rebellion of the original trilogy (1977-1983), in which Darth Vader and the evil Empire were defeated at the forest moon of Endor.

Skywalker is dead. His allies in the new Resistance have all been wiped out, except for a handful of survivors including young Jedi knight Rey, ace fighter pilot Poe, former stormtrooper Finn, robot soccer ball BB8 and the ever-loyal Chewbacca.

Chasing them are the dictatorial First Order, led by the tantrum-prone Kylo Ren, that has risen like a dark phoenix from the ashes of the Empire to blow up the odd planet between a lot of pouting and screaming at the camera.

If the rumours are true (*spoilers ahead*) the two outmatched sides will come together one last time for the biggest and most ferocious battle, where main characters aren't guaranteed to survive.

Joining the adventure will be fan favourite, smuggler and ladies' man Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams), whose classic line, "Hel-lo, what have we here?" upon meeting feisty Princess Leia would never have made it into modern cinemas without upsetting the Perpetually Offended. It's also been rumoured that Wedge Antilles, the X-Wing pilot who appeared as a bit character in the original trilogy, will make an appearance.

Mysterious newcomer, the helmeted Force Bliss, will be thrown into the action – possibly as a bounty hunter or mercenary – as will the fish-faced alien Aftab, son of beloved Admiral "It's a trap" Ackbar.

If the trailers are anything to go by, there will be the surprise return of destroyed space station the Death Star, possibly Endor, plus the Big Bad Himself – Emperor Palpatine, who had been pulling the strings all along behind the Empire.

And for us uber-nerds, there's also a blink-and-you-miss-it return cameo of The Ghost spaceship (from the *Star Wars Rebels* cartoons and *Rogue One*).

While *The Rise of Skywalker* is expected to easily surpass \$1 billion at the box office worldwide, for the first time there's a sense that this *Star Wars* film may have to earn its pay cheque.

The previous film, *The Last Jedi* (directed by Rian Johnson), was acclaimed by critics (who don't buy tickets) but ended up dividing its loyal fan base (who do). Johnson's plan to subvert expectations by "killing the past" was met with such hostility that dozens of YouTube channels (such as Geek+Gamers, RedLetterMedia, Vito and Robot Head), railed against *The Last Jedi*, some attracting up to 7 million views.

They pilloried major story flaws such as the dumbing down of villains, unfunny comedy routines, space donkeys, Princess Leia surviving in space by turning into a futuristic Mary Poppins, the ignobility of Luke Skywalker and an error-riddled martial arts scene where prancing stuntmen obviously have to avoid killing Jedi knight Rey even though they have a clear shot.

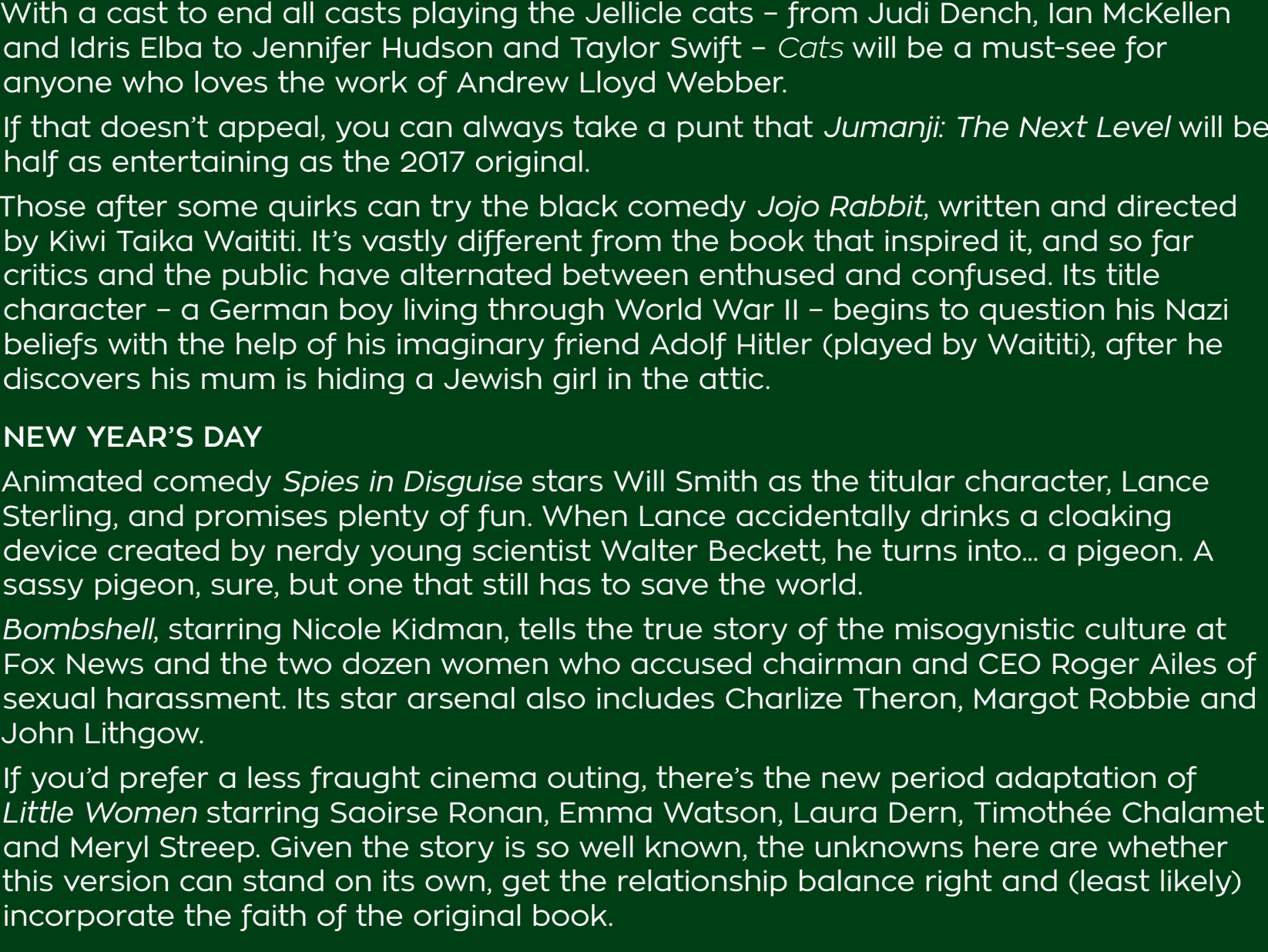
Many also criticised the film's heavy-handed social justice agenda such as the elevation of Rey to unbeatable superwoman status and the undercurrent that only women make rational decisions – per sonified by the one-dimensional, purple-haired Admiral Holdo.

And in the social media age, 7 million views translates into a lot of tickets.

The time between films hasn't cooled people's passions, either. Moviegoers have allegedly troglodyed *The Last Jedi* actress Kelly Marie Tran with racist tweets, Johnson has doubled down by labelling angry fans "man babies" and a spinoff movie, *Solo: A Star Wars Story*, crashed and burned.

Disney has a major headache in trying to protect its multi-billion dollar storytelling with the new film. However, if *The Rise of Skywalker* returns to the roots of good, emotive storytelling and keeps its battles onscreen, it will finish a remarkable 42-year legacy – and fulfil that sense of adventure we all yearn for.

SUMMER FILM HIGHLIGHTS



BOXING DAY

With a cast to end all casts playing the Jellicle cats – from Judi Dench, Ian McKellen and Idris Elba to Jennifer Hudson and Taylor Swift – *Cats* will be a must-see for anyone who loves the work of Andrew Lloyd Webber.

If that doesn't appeal, you can always take a punt that *Jumanji: The Next Level* will be half as entertaining as the 2017 original.

Those after some quirks can try the black comedy *Jojo Rabbit*, written and directed by Kiwi Taika Waititi. It's vastly different from the book that inspired it, and so far critics and the public have alternated between enthused and confused. Its title character – a German boy living through World War II – begins to question his Nazi beliefs with the help of his imaginary friend Adolf Hitler (played by Waititi), after he discovers his mum is hiding a Jewish girl in the attic.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Animated comedy *Spies in Disguise* stars Will Smith as the titular character, Lance Sterling, and promises plenty of fun. When Lance accidentally drinks a cloaking device created by nerdy young scientist Walter Beckett, he turns into... a pigeon. A sassy pigeon, sure, but one that still has to save the world.

Bombshell, starring Nicole Kidman, tells the true story of the misogynistic culture at Fox News and the two dozen women who accused chairman and CEO Roger Ailes of sexual harassment. Its star arsenal also includes Charlize Theron, Margot Robbie and John Lithgow.

If you'd prefer a less fraught cinema outing, there's the new period adaptation of *Little Women* starring Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Laura Dern, Timothée Chalamet and Meryl Streep. Given the story is so well known, the unknowns here are whether this version can stand on its own, get the relationship balance right and (least likely) incorporate the faith of the original book.

JANUARY 9

The tidbits offered so far for *Dolittle* are not encouraging, so this only makes it in by virtue of its cool CGI and talking creatures. Robert Downey Jr stars as talk-to-the-animals vet Dr John Dolittle (what is that accent he's attempting?) – who goes haring off on a quest, animals in tow, for the sake of Queen Victoria's health. It's not clear whether we'll get a decent story out of this, but time has shown that, without one, no amount of feathers and fur will save you. Approach with caution.

JANUARY 16

A big release day for true stories. *The Biggest Little Farm* is a brilliant documentary about a couple who brought a moribund farm in southern California back to life through rejuvenating the natural ecosystem. Food for thought.

Just Mercy follows a young lawyer who goes to the American south to help people wrongly convicted because of their colour.

There's also *1917* which, while it's not based on fact, had the germ of its mainly fictional story stem from the war stories of director Sam Mendes' grandfather.

Judy Adamson