

SOUTHERNCROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

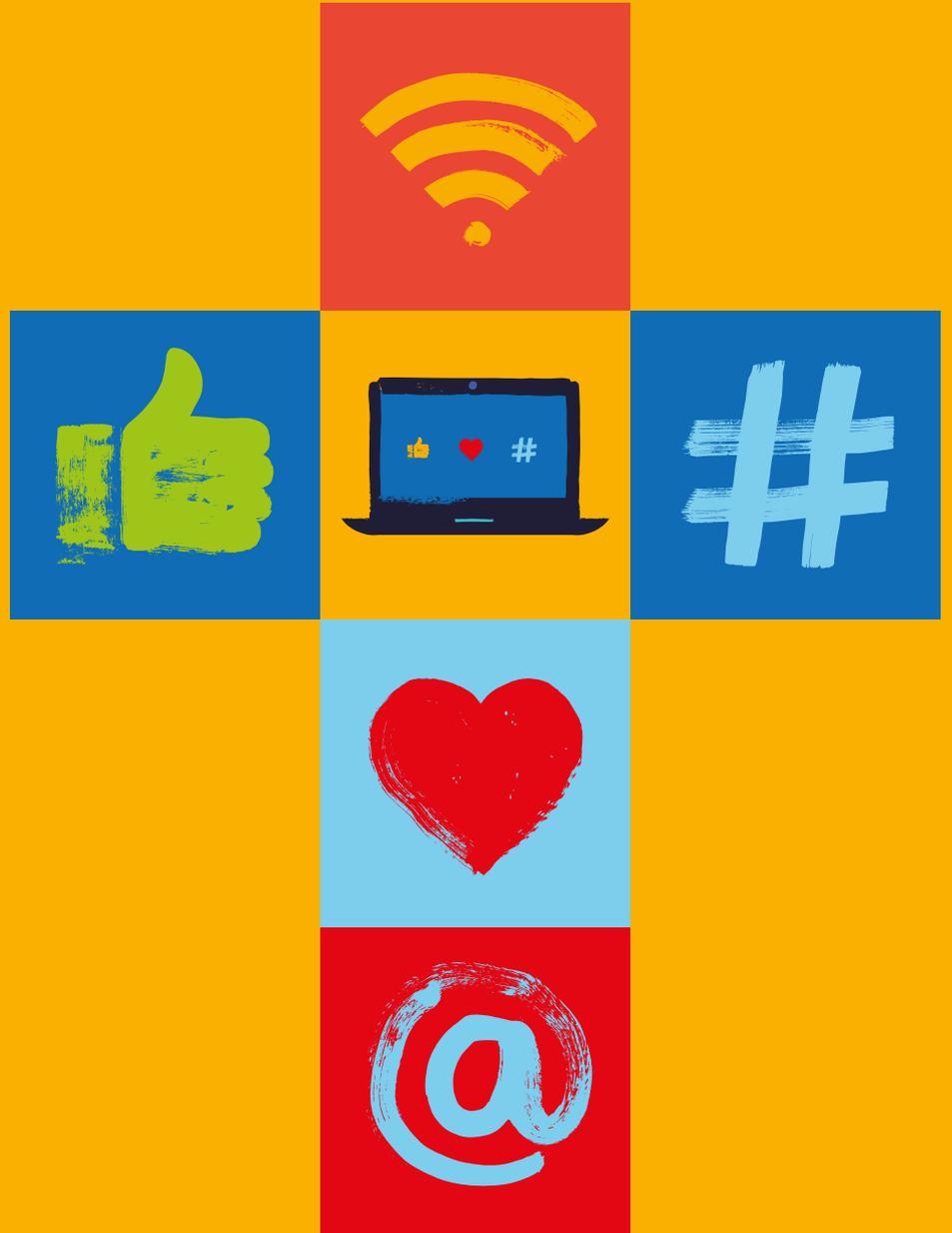
APRIL 2020



Church reimagined

FAITH LIFE DURING COVID-19

*Viral racism • Farewell Bishop Lee and Dr Hamlin
An anchor in life's storms • Film festival at home*



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Online churches off to a flying start

Church together, apart: The Rev John Gray preaches his Sunday sermon into cyberspace at St Paul's, Castle Hill.

Hundreds of Sydney congregations had just days to go online but managed to get around the closure of church doors and the social isolation and physical distancing brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I thank God for Sydney Anglicans who rose to the occasion and met the challenges of not meeting in churches as they have done all their lives," said Archbishop Glenn Davies after the first week of online services in mid-March. He announced the closure of church buildings on March 18 "as a demonstration of our care for people".

Dr Davies wrote to churches that they "must be places of safety and, in the current climate, safety is not assured in public gatherings. One of the recent deaths in Sydney from COVID-19 was a member of one of our own congregations". Since then, progressively tighter restrictions have been introduced.

As churches went online in the run-up to Easter, Dr Davies said services were now "reaching more people than would be coming to church normally", but said the challenge was "to find new ways of

addressing the isolation that people are feeling".

As live-streaming continues, techniques are being refined and technology bugs ironed out – although, as one pastor said, "We're all building the plane while flying it!"

Larger churches stream either by Facebook or YouTube, while others use interactive elements through video conferences on platforms such as Zoom.

"In our small church, with one minister, we have never live-streamed or video recorded before," said the rector of Hornsby Heights, the Rev Mike Begbie.

"We've chosen not to stream anything live or spend any money on new equipment. We've set up a little recording space in our church; I'm recording the video on my iPhone with a borrowed tripod and recording sound through the sound desk as per normal. Some people are gathering on Zoom. Some are just doing it on their own.

"Feedback has been very encouraging," he added. "We're also working hard to connect daily over the phone with the church and



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equipping them to connect with each other.”

Even the larger churches managed interaction, with a mammoth effort by St Barnabas', Broadway to use the Zoom software. “Across three services and a few smaller meetings we had 1073 participants on Zoom, with about 80 breakout sessions,” said Barney’s rector, the Rev Mike Paget.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Despite the high-tech start, Archbishop Davies, in interviews with TV stations and newspapers, stressed the challenges ahead. “Christians should respond in trust and humility,” he told the ABC. Echoing the word of Colossians 4, he added, “Let us be prayerful, thankful and watchful”.

March 29 was designated a special Day of Prayer and the Archbishop urged Sydney Anglicans to set aside time daily at 7pm to pray for leaders, health workers, and all people to be safe from COVID-19.

He also announced that cathedral bells in Sydney, Parramatta and Wollongong would continue to ring at midday on Mondays and Thursdays as a reminder to the cities to pray.



Challenges: Archbishop Davies is interviewed by the ABC and the 7 Network.

ARCHBISHOP'S TERM EXTENDED

In response to the emergency circumstances of the Coronavirus, Dr Davies' term as Archbishop has been extended to March next year.

An archbishop in the Sydney Diocese must retire at the age of 70. Dr Davies will turn 70 in September and, in order to allow a smooth transition, had given notice that he would retire two months early, in July. This would have allowed an election Synod in August and made it possible for the new Archbishop to chair the regular Synod in October.

However, the COVID-19 emergency means the election Synod will now not be held as scheduled, and the Standing Committee of the Diocese voted unanimously to ask Dr Davies to withdraw his

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Now is the time for Jesus



Dear readers,

Welcome to this special PDF edition of *Southern Cross*, which will be published online monthly during the pandemic before, we hope, we can return to normal with printed distribution as well.

Here at Anglican Media we continue to work to communicate Jesus to our society through mainstream media – whether that be online, in print or through the airwaves. We also encourage Sydney Anglicans by sharing news of what God is doing in our churches to help us to press on during this difficult season.

In these times, we have more opportunity for sharing Jesus and the work of our churches than ever before. You can help us. We are not asking for money. We just ask that you share.

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Russell Powell
CEO, Anglican Media Sydney

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resignation to allow him to continue until March 2021.

Several Standing Committee members spoke strongly in favour of the move, saying it would allow stability of leadership through troubled times and help the episcopal team remain at full strength to care for their regions.

The Archbishop absented himself during the debate and returned

to applause as the decision was announced.

“My wife and I have served Christ together in ministry for many years and are happy to continue to serve wherever we are needed,” Dr Davies said. “I am humbled and grateful for the support of the Standing Committee. More than ever, I am thankful for the many people who uphold us in prayer.”



How we're doing church: (clockwise from top) The Rev Mike Begbie at Hornsby Heights; Ray and Sandy Galea at MBM Rooty Hill; everyone gets involved with the Castle Hill service; Mandarin pastor the Rev Victor Chen speaks at St George's Hurstville; Bible reading from Engadine; discussion at Church by the Bridge.

Faith and fellowship in the time of Coronavirus



The church doors are shut, but God's still in charge – so let's continue to love each other and the community with our eyes fixed on Jesus, writes SCOTT MONK.

A Sydney pastor recently visited Balmoral Beach to enjoy a swim and clear his mind. He came across a woman and they chatted about the topic on everyone's minds: the Coronavirus. Both of them were surprised at how quickly our society had lost its nerve and, indeed, its compassion.

"Previous generations were asked or sent to war," she said. "We're just being asked to sit on our couches for a while."

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only seen people fight over toilet paper and shoppers fly through supermarkets like locusts, it has rattled secular society to its core. Letter writers, call-back radio listeners and Facebookers are all asking the same question: how could fellow Australians do this?

People are having an existential crisis as their secular belief in the "common good" has no moral authority and they themselves are powerless to stop it.

A small virus has locked down nations, crashed stock markets, grounded planes, closed borders, emptied universities, suspended

sporting codes, sent jobs into exile and killed indiscriminately. Australian churches have also been asked to do the unthinkable: close their doors to slow the infection rate.

Laws and penalties may help in combating the invisible threat, but they won't stop what's spreading faster... despair.

Yet Christianity has never had fear at its core. Nor has it turned to the government to be its guiding voice.

In times of trouble it has always trusted in God, his word and his Spirit to conquer all threats and to comfort the downtrodden, even when the last candle flickers in the darkness and death arrives as a funeral director.

Being paralysed by fear in such a time as ours serves no one and weakens all. Instead of hiding behind closed doors, a rare opportunity has opened up for rank-and-file Christians to boldly put their love of Jesus into action, serve their neighbours and possibly lead a revival among our own communities – and church leaders want all hands on deck.

The Bishop of Georges River, Peter Lin, who is a member of the

Diocese's COVID-19 task force, says that while the rest of society fears the consequences of a nationwide lockdown, the Church's role is still as clear and important as it's always been.

"I prefer not to use the term 'lockdown' but 'reimagined'," Lin says.

"There is no reason churches can't continue in their ministries of preaching God's word, building up his people, serving one another and sharing the gospel. We just need to think of new and creative ways of doing it. Some churches will livestream teaching ministry and church services; many are focusing on small groups for teaching and fellowship.

"We can continue to serve using the phone... calling one another, especially the older members of our churches, those in isolation, the fearful and so on. We can cook meals for each other, shop for one another. And we can keep talking to people about Jesus, and especially at this time.

"I know that Moore College is hoping to produce a stack of resources for churches to use, including resources for kids' and youth ministry.

"Nothing can thwart the plans and purposes of God, nor hinder the work of the Spirit. God's word is not bound by a virus, nor confined to the walls of our buildings. Paul continued to proclaim God's word from prison! We're far better off than that. Let's be creative! What a great opportunity we have right now."

SACRIFICIAL EVERYTHING

However, for the gospel to reach new audiences and challenge recalcitrant ones, more Christians are required to step up and be sacrificial with time, money and love.

"We are so blessed in our churches to have so many willing, humble, hardworking servants," Lin says.

"We'll need more now. Especially in looking after one another, I think. This is crucial as there is a disconnect from the larger gatherings. I'm hoping many will help with the pastoral load. Checking up on people regularly with a call or a message or a socially distanced visit. Best thing to do would be to ask your pastor how you can help.

"Check up on your pastor and their spouse, too. These are uncharted waters. With all the changes, they will be working even harder than normal. Encourage them to take breaks and have their day off. Cook a meal for them. Mow their lawn. Buy them chocolate.

"If they make decisions that would not be yours, support them because they would've made them carefully and advisedly, trying to do what is best in unusual times. Pray for them, then pray for them again."

Lin also suggests that we need to be wider in our Christian fellowship than just the Sunday circle of friends, otherwise people will fall through the cracks.

"Not meeting face to face means that it could be easier for people to drift away. For those who are less regular at church anyway, or those who are more at the edges, they could easily be forgotten. I also think that we could get lazy with caring for others and evangelism due to social distancing."

In addition, there are short- and long-term issues every parish and its parishioners will have to deal with, such as the inevitable financial hit to the collection plate.

Lin doesn't mince words about this. Temporarily shutting churches will hurt bottom lines, but the recession and the flow-on effect of job losses will also bite deeply.

"Some churches have already taken massive financial hits," he says. "I'm sure many more will, as will people in the congregation.

Our congregation members need to keep giving. I would suggest those who usually give in cash to move to electronic giving, or find a way to deposit their giving apart from at church on Sunday. I'm sure the wardens will help them out. But electronic giving will be the best.

"Further, for those who are able, please consider increasing your giving to help with the shortfall. Some in our churches will lose jobs or have wages reduced, and therefore be less able to give.

"And for churches who will weather the financial storm better than others, maybe they can help out churches in our more struggling areas."

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The Rev Mark Boyley, membership pastor and head of the pandemic response team at MBM Rooty Hill, says he's been heartened by how Christians have already shone in such a difficult time.

"People don't seem scared, just sober about the realities we may face," Boyley says. "Members have been very gracious about all the changes over the past weeks."

In the wake of the virus, his 1100-strong church in Sydney's west has a threefold philosophy: minimise risk, maximise confidence and multiply faith.

The first two are self-explanatory but the third is intriguing, especially at a time when people won't be able to attend church.

"We want this to be a growth time for our members," Boyley explains. "The Day of Christ is approaching and a time like this can refocus us on that. Meetings continue online, personal encouragement continues and opportunities for personal ministry abound.

"Also, we pray this would be a time of revival for our community. We are constantly praying for the west of Sydney to turn to Christ as Lord and Saviour. Part of the blockage to this happening has been



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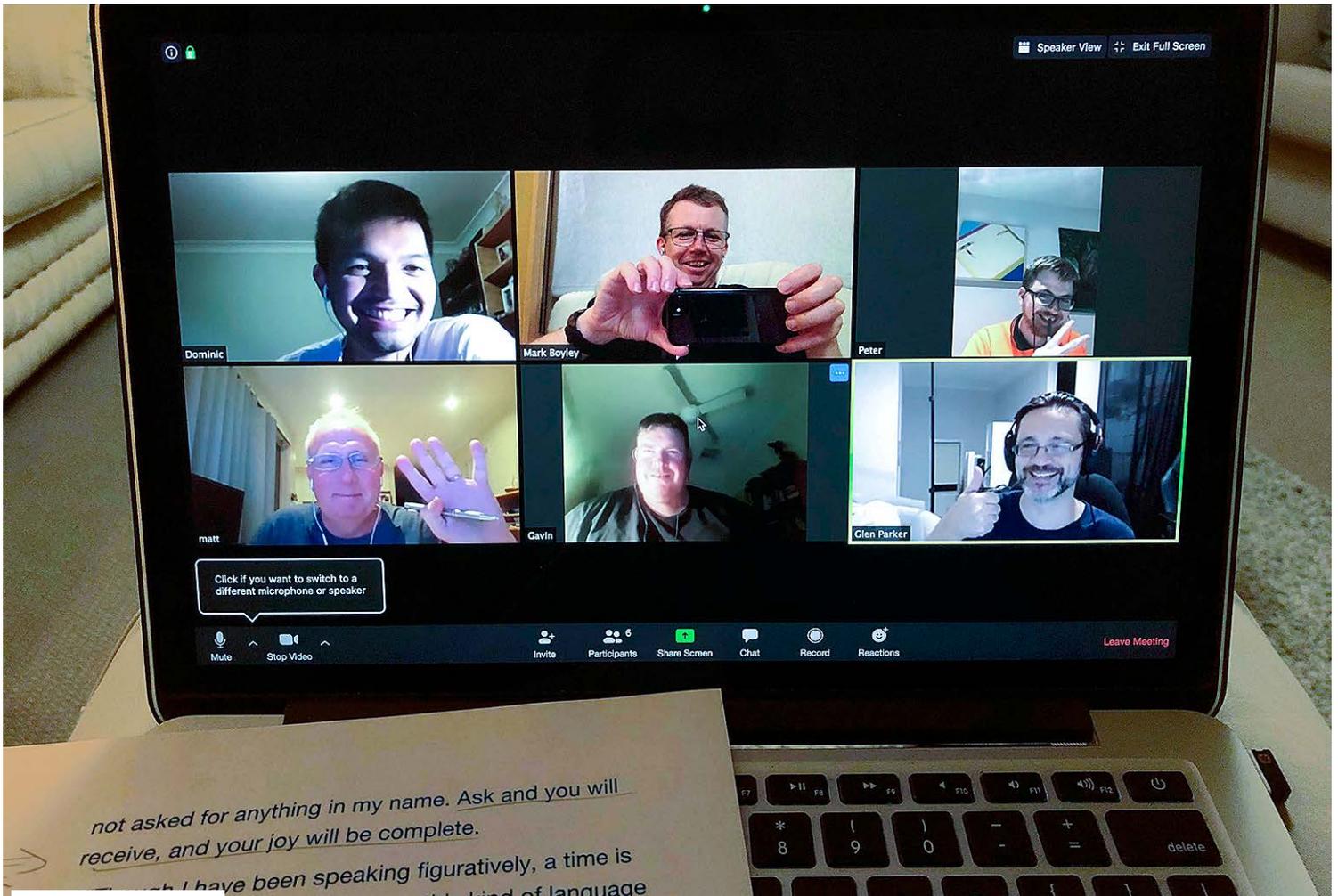
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Study in cyberspace: Mark Boyley (top, centre) takes a selfie of his men's group.

apathy: "When life here is so good why would I think about God?" May this be the time when people call on the Lord."

Like many larger churches, MBM has moved its services and Bible study groups online, using video conferencing software such as Zoom, with discussion questions and prayer suggestions built in so Christian households are not passive participants but "developing healthy one-another ministries".

"What is vital, though, is that when we go 'high tech' we also go 'high touch,'" Boyley says. "High touch is clearly not literal in this time of social distancing! It means that we work hard on personally calling growth group members. We also hope to be calling congregation members outside of growth groups.

"The last thing we want is for people to drift away at a time like this. We hope to ask them if, under the circumstances, they would like to join an online growth group. This could be a step towards greater church commitment for someone like that."

REAL HOPE

Boyley says people are naturally fearful for their elderly family, their jobs and their finances, but they also have new opportunities to enrich the lives of neighbours with the gospel.

"Our society aspires for heaven on earth, and in Australia life has been so good we kid ourselves we have it," he says. "May this be the time when people begin to hunger for the new heaven and earth, and the Saviour who loves them.

"Let's take this opportunity to think outside the box, finding ways to share our message of hope and point people to Jesus through generous-hearted living."

That hope is echoed by evangelist the Rev Ed Yorston, mission

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CONNECT, PRAY, LOVE

Although church doors have shut thanks to the worldwide pandemic, rank-and-file Christians are being strongly encouraged to become street-level ministers to their friends, neighbours and colleagues.

Evangelists have been networking about how best to turn the crisis into a major opportunity for the Great Commission, recognising that normal parishioners are not only vital in maintaining the work of the church for the next several months, but have a rare window to speak frankly and openly about Jesus to everyone they meet.

The Rev Ed Yorston says secular Australians have been shaken to their core and every conversation we hear now is about the panic surrounding COVID-19.

“When I look at these kinds of situations I see that, whenever everything goes wrong, wide open doors get presented for the gospel,” Yorston says.

“We know that God can break into people’s lives in any way, but our experience suggests that when people’s lives come crashing down and fall apart, their hearts become open and their spirits sort of seem to soften up. They’re ready to receive the words of life and to hear the gospel.”

Christians can share the good news of Jesus in several ways. Here are some suggestions.

- **CONNECT** people’s fears with Scripture. “You can start a conversation with anyone, anywhere, with [questions] like: ‘How are you coping in this uncertain time?’ ‘How is the Coronavirus affecting your next six months?’ Anyone and everyone is thinking about it.”
- **POINT** neighbours to Christ-centred churches that are providing online services if their local parish hasn’t got the facilities. Proclaiming Jesus always transcends parish boundaries.
- **PRAY** one-on-one with people. This will not only help ease anxiety but remind people that God is always in control of all situations.
- **SEND** viral kindness cards. Parishioners pop these in local letterboxes or under apartment doors with offers to pick up groceries, collect mail, buy supplies or just provide a listening ear, especially for those self-isolating. They witness through their care.
- **WRITE** letters of encouragement. “We all remember the wonderful joy of receiving a handwritten letter. Perhaps we can rediscover that joy if we write to people.”

Yorston believes the simpler the idea the better, as other Christians and churches can replicate the ideas and promote the gospel.

“We can often think: if only I had Rico Tice here or Tim Keller to give some perfect answer,” he says. “But that’s not who God’s got on the ground. He’s got you and me. And so just speak because we do have hope, and we do have life and peace and comfort and perspective to offer people.”

pastor at Church by the Bridge in Kirribilli and St Augustine’s, Neutral Bay. Everyone in ministry shares the same anxieties as the rest of the community, he says, but all Christians have a role in helping others conquer those fears by showing them Jesus.

“We have an opportunity to be a real, honest and open voice amongst our society – not as those who have it all together, but as fellow tremblers looking for some stability,” Yorston says. “For me, amazing conversations that are touching down are ones about, isn’t it good to know that there is some certainty in our world – that there is a God who’s not shaken by this [and] who never gets sick.”

Uncertainty and isolation are two big issues that are shaking people. So much so that, recently, Yorston had complete strangers walk in off the street, poking their heads into evangelistic courses such as Alpha and looking for answers.

“The fact that we can’t fix this virus or make it go away [and] we don’t have a vaccine is crumbling and crippling their gods of progress and science and technology,” he says. “If we can’t fix this worldwide problem, how dependable are these gods that we’ve all trusted in?”

The forced closure of churches comes at the worst time possible with Easter around the corner, but Yorston remains upbeat.

“Nothing has changed in the Easter story. Jesus still died for our sins and we have been guaranteed forgiveness. He’s risen and conquered the grave – a grave which might be closer to us than we thought.”

Churches running online services will fill the immediate void but, as Yorston notes, God is not only Creator but creative as well.

“A helpful thing to keep reminding people is that God has made

us humans with wonderful ingenuity,” he says.

“We can create new options when old ways close down. Say, if you took petrol away, we would discover new ways to power our cars. If you took plastic away, we would find new ways to keep our food fresh. If you take public gatherings away, we will find new ways because God has given humanity this God-given creativity, and above that he’s given us his Spirit and has given us love.

“We’re driven and compelled by the love of Christ, and if we use that creative spirit we will find new ways. I’m excited about the opportunities that will come as we get creative... I’ve really been praying that God would give us an opportunity to lead a spiritual army – and spiritual armies look different and weak. You know they don’t look like military armies.

“But there’s so much of God’s power behind his people in our world – so much time, so much energy. God can use this moment to direct us more towards promoting Christ and sharing his gospel, and it’s wonderful what might come out of it.”

Bishop Lin also calls on all Christians not to panic with regard to the future of our churches.

“This is God’s church,” he says. “He loves her more than we do. She is his bride. He is sovereign and wise. We need to keep teaching his word and preaching Christ crucified. We need to keep praying to him in our dependence. We need to keep singing his praises. If God is for us, who can be against us? God’s got it.”

Scriptures he recommends during this time are Romans 8, Hebrews 10:19-25, John 3, John 15 and Revelation 21-22 – as a start.

“I do know we want to keep our eyes on Christ and not Coronavirus,” he says.

Food, care, being there – even at a distance

Reaching out, listening, caring for the distressed, the sick, the poor and the elderly – this is what our Anglican pastoral organisations do. Now they need to add the stretching of resources, discovering new and creative ways to care, and combating social or health restrictions with whatever they can muster. All while socially distancing or working from home.

It isn't easy.

Sue King, the manager of advocacy and research for Anglicare Sydney, says the organisation's crisis team was activated more than a month ago, but with the COVID-19 goal posts changing daily – sometimes more often – “we're stretching ourselves to make sure we're on the front foot... that we're protecting everybody”.

HOW THE CARERS CARE

“The number one concern is the people who are coming to us, who are under our care,” she adds. “We've got a number of key stakeholders – people who access services, residential people who live in our villages, our parishes, clergy, pastoral care team. And because the situation is changing on a fairly regular basis, we have to keep updating people on what's happening so they know what the restrictions actually mean. It's had a significant impact.”

As of midnight on March 23, for example, no one is allowed to visit residents in Anglicare nursing homes except in exceptional circumstances, in order to keep the most vulnerable as safe as possible. However, the organisation's lifestyle team is providing a

number of electronic tablets for each of the nursing homes to help keep families connected.

“We're a relationship organisation, where much of the work we do is building relationships with people,” Mrs King says. “We're finding it very difficult in this new environment but we're trying really hard to make sure the people we care for are supported as best as we can do it.”

She adds that food for emergency relief is also posing a major problem.

“Basically, we get supplied by churches and Foodbank but both of those services have dried up. Foodbank gets supplies from supermarkets – food that's close to its use-by date – but things have been selling out, so Foodbank has actually got no food. As of Monday next week [March 30] we won't be providing food parcels to our normal food clients.”

What will happen instead, she says, is that clients will be given “e-vouchers” to take and use at a supermarket.

HAND WASHING AND THE CONTINUING DROUGHT

For Anglican Aid, the fallout from COVID-19 is also multidimensional. Acting CEO Eddie Ozols says the organisation's experience during the Global Financial Crisis was that revenue went down, “but this appears to be much worse than the GFC... so people won't have income for various reasons. Yet we've got commitments going forwards for our overseas partners and we want to meet those”.

In addition to an expected downturn in giving, any reserves the organisation might call on have dropped in value by 15 per cent in recent weeks because of the lower Australian dollar.

Mr Ozols has sent government information about hand washing and other measures to Anglican Aid's 100 overseas partners. “We know people wash their hands, but this is the time to really focus on cleanliness and making sure that people are aware of that,” he explains. “And it's been interesting hearing back from our partners... what are you supposed to do if you're in an area without water when you're being told to keep clean?”

“Angela Michael [from Miracle Ministries in Pakistan] is preparing to translate the information into Urdu, put it in the various communities to try and help people understand how serious this is... and provide of soap and sanitisers in the places where we've put in 15 water tanks over the past few years.”

There are also ongoing needs in the parts of NSW that are still stricken by drought. Mr Ozols says the drought “is off the front page... Coronavirus has overtaken the news”, but farmers and others in parts of regional NSW are “still in desperate need”.

One farmer from the Riverina told him recently that there had been rain, but not enough to make him confident enough to plant anything. This was “typical of what we're hearing from various people out west”.

People who are able to still need to give, so Anglican Aid can continue to provide a financial lifeline for those in the bush.

MENTAL HEALTH

People in regional NSW also need another lifeline – one provided by counselling as they struggle in the aftermath of disaster.

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JESUS. LOUD AND CLEAR.

Ed Hercus, head of the Anglicare Foundation, says that Anglicare is “not really an emergency-type organisation... we tend to deal with big-challenge, long-term strategic problems in our society. Yet, all of a sudden, we’re needing to adapt very quickly.

“What we’re anticipating is that the economic fallout of this is going to create a great deal more demand in terms of the most needy people in our city. And the more immediate one that we’re all conscious of is a particular demand upon our services with a mental health component to it.

“At the moment the foundation is looking to be involved with rebuilding communities affected by bushfires, and one area is childhood post-trauma... When children have been through a very traumatic experience, after a few months their lives begin to settle down and often it’s at that point they start to have all kinds of triggers, and more symptoms start to become obvious to parents,

“So, we want to establish a post-trauma counselling program for primary school-aged kids... but now we’re thinking, what does COVID-19 mean for that group of kids? They’re just beginning to settle down, and once again the rug’s been pulled out from under them. How are they going to cope with this? And how do we deliver that service? That’s potentially changed as well.

“The simple answer is that everything that we do, we’re going to need to do more of it and it’s going to be more complex than it has been in the past. But we can still be confident that God is in control and knows what he’s doing, so we’re trying to respond in faith to all these things.”

HOW TO RESPOND

Anglicare and Anglican Aid would value:

- prayer as they seek to care and reach out to the growing number of people who need their help, and manage an ever-changing work environment. Please also pray for those under their care.
- financial assistance – donations to help the areas in ongoing drought, to provide food vouchers, and to assist with technology to enable greater connection, mental health support and other assistance.
- those who are able to do so, to set aside some non-perishable food. Anglicare is looking at the practicalities of setting up a “tucker” drive to help bolster its emergency food supplies. If this happens, congregation members will likely be able to leave food at their local church.

COVID caution at colleges

Increased restrictions on meeting due to COVID-19 have sent Sydney's three Anglican theological colleges into cyberspace.

As of March 19, all classes at Moore Theological College are being delivered online until the end of the academic term in April. At Mary Andrews College (MAC), lectures were postponed for a week to prepare lecturers and students for a new eLearning platform. Students at Youthworks College had two weeks of study and research, while the Year 13 program moved to two weeks of supported study before scheduled holidays.

This change affects nearly 400 full- and part-time college students across all three campuses, plus the 73 participants in Year 13.

The principal of Moore College, the Rev Dr Mark Thompson, says, “We believe that this is the only responsible decision in the current circumstances.

“We have been paying careful attention to the best and most up-to-date medical advice, [and] the situation has been changing very rapidly indeed... What this moment gives us is an opportunity to act with godly wisdom and generous love in a way which commends the gospel we proclaim.”

For the new principal at MAC, the Rev Dr Katy Smith, it hasn’t exactly been a quiet first few weeks in the job. Yet she says she is thankful to be at the college during such a time.

“Entering the brokenness and messiness of life is part of what we do as women seeking to serve faithfully in the church and in God’s world,” she says. “Being able to support our students, staff, and faculty through this new messiness is a privilege.”

Dr Smith says the college will seek to recreate an in-classroom experience online, with opportunities for interaction and collaboration.

“It could well be that, when we re-emerge socially together again, aspects of the interaction and collaboration strategies will remain and so our learning strategies will be strengthened from this experience,” she says.

Youthworks College already teaches youth and children’s pastors (plus lay church leaders overseas and around Australia) through its online learning platform, which CEO the Rev Craig Roberts describes as “a helpful pilot” for running classes “in the face of imposed self-isolation”.

“We’ll be pivoting to online learning,” he says, adding that the entire Youthworks team is “working to respond to the ever-changing landscape with the sure and certain hope of the gospel in our hearts and on our lips”.

While Moore College was able to hold its graduation ceremony last month, the MAC and Youthworks ceremonies have been postponed until a later date.

Dr Smith says MAC will reschedule “once we’ve received public health advice that it is safe for the community to regather in person.

“We are looking forward to celebrating together, [although] perhaps there could be grief ahead for us, too. Coming together again as a community will be a significant marker that this period of self-distancing is over and to bring before God both our thankfulness and lament together.”

The residential retreat element of a Youthworks College diploma subject, which Mr Roberts describes as “a feature of term one”, has had to be cancelled, while Year 13’s annual mission to Fiji has been postponed until September, in line with Government travel advice. Moore College’s mission, which would have seen teams in the Solomon Islands, Bathurst, Armidale, Maitland and churches across the Diocese for a week from late March, has also been cancelled in its original form. Students will instead explore how it is possible to do mission when people aren’t able to meet face to face.

Says Mr Roberts: “In a time of such uncertainty, our culture, our country and our churches need – more than ever before – people equipped with a faith deeply rooted in the saving gospel of Jesus Christ”.

Creative for Christ WHEN YOUTH GROUP GOES ONLINE



Live stream: Youth minister Pat Jones and assistant youth minister Emma Sibley, from St Paul's, Castle Hill, present one of their daily videos.

In the past couple of weeks the majority of parishes have moved online – using prerecorded videos, live streaming and applications that allow video apps – to continue meeting together around the word of God each week.

But it's not just the formal Sunday meetings that have had to adapt. The way we minister to our teenagers has had to shift just as quickly. While young people live and breathe in the digital world, caring for youth online has many of its own challenges, particularly as we consider how leaders can maintain safe ministry guidelines and work well with parents to keep church communities strong.

Many are doing very creative things online, and offline, to take advantage of this new season of ministry.

Crossfire, at St Paul's, Castle Hill, is taking the opportunity to share content throughout the week rather than just focusing on the usual

Friday. They are sharing videos online each day, then live streaming a condensed version of their Friday night program.

"The same God that you worshipped last week... is with us today as we deal with Coronavirus and the ramifications," says youth leader Emma Sibley.

Similarly, Christ Church, St Ives has developed a weekly calendar of resources for its teens, which is also available to equip a wider community of Australian youth. They have developed a bi-weekly six-minute podcast, which shares what God is doing and acts as a "mythbuster" for key questions. Each week the church is also sharing a devotion and recording a shorter youth "church" service.

Youth minister Josh Hayward explains that the focus is on keeping the existing structures – meeting and opening the word on Friday nights and Sunday mornings – functioning.

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Ready to bat on: Josh Hayward from Christ Church, St Ives.

“We are trying to help them facilitate community, even if we are locked down in our homes, and answer big questions,” he says.

He explains that the team was cautious about jumping into an online platform for small groups, and is instead focusing on producing video and audio resources that will help the teens in their community, as well as teens across Australia.

“We really wanted to make Jesus great and build disciples of Jesus – not just in St Ives, but more broadly for less-resourced churches.”

And it seems to be working. Last week 250 people tuned in to their online service – over 100 more than their average weekend.

However, not all churches are focusing on replicating an in-person program digitally.

While many groups are focusing on the content you can consume, others are structuring their groups around engagement – aiming to provide ways to meet, discuss and share the word of God. Lots of

groups are turning away from live streaming and towards regular small group “chats” or “hangouts”.

Kristen Young, a key youth leader at St Paul’s, Lithgow, St Thomas’, Wallerawang and St Stephen’s, Portland, says the decision to turn to Zoom to connect with youth was to keep things “as normal as possible”.

“Although we couldn’t meet in person, we could still get together, find out how everyone was going, read the Bible and pray,” she says.

Toby Macgregor, youth minister at Village Church Annandale, says this is a key time – not just to be considering how to launch a digital ministry, but to focus on pastorally caring for people.

“Our strategy is to be equipping [our youth] for personal faithfulness, the same as when we could meet face to face regularly,” he says.

“This is not the time to be going digital because everyone else is – that may not be right for your flock. We must be continuing to ask, ‘How are we raising our young people to live lives following Jesus not on our strength but on the strength of Jesus?’”

Macgregor is convinced that, for his teens, it will become increasingly important to have moments of personal discipleship. “Digital is a great platform for ministering to groups [but] we must be careful not to forget that each person matters. This is one of the great challenges we are facing in a COVID-19 world.”

It’s a big learning curve, and there has been lots of collaboration.

There is also an emphasis on helping each other out and providing shared resources between communities.

Young says she has been helped by several ministry Facebook groups, where resources have been shared freely. She has also been encouraged by the model of the US.

“Youth ministers are sharing content and ideas – we are all learning lots and it’s fantastic to see what others are doing, too. We are so



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Games go online, too: St Paul's, Carlingford youth leaders try a little socially distanced craziness.

grateful for God for these gifted people who've been a great blessing to us."

That said, Young admits it has been a steep learning curve, which has led to many chaotic moments.

She shares some of her key tips for running a youth group discussion online:

- Make sure you are meeting together safely – “virtually, but publically”.
- Shut down 1:1 chat messages and disable screen sharing.
- Don't be afraid to use the “mute all” button!
- A good internet connection is key.
- Be patient!

Amidst all the innovation, churches are also focusing on how they can encourage their leaders.

Josh Hayward says it is important to remember that many volunteer

leaders at church have had their own lives turned upside down.

“As leaders lose jobs, do uni online and stop feeling safe leaving the house, it is important just to remind them that God is in control,” he says.

But amidst the chaos the gospel is still being shared with our teenagers each week, and for that we can praise God.

YOUTH RESOURCES

If you are looking for some resources for youth leaders, there are a few great places to start:

- Christ Church, St Ives Youth online
- The Sydney Anglican Youth Ministers Facebook group
- The Sydney Anglican FAQs

If your youth group is doing something creative we would love to hear about it. Email us: info@anglicanmedia.com.au

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Bible nerd alert!



A tech-head, and loving it: Bishop Michael Stead looks at Genesis 1 in his Bible Crawler app.

There are nerds and there are nerds – and then there's Bishop Michael Stead.

Perhaps that needs some explanation. The Bishop of the South Sydney Region isn't a nerd because he's a bishop (although he is also a scholar, but that's not it either).

In his life before Bible college Bishop Stead worked in IT. He's spent years working on a computer program that helps people find and link Bible words and verses with each other in their original languages – as well as digging deeper into the roots of the words themselves.

Called Bible Crawler, it began its life as a tool Bishop Stead created to help him in his own PhD research, which was about how earlier texts in the Bible are reused by later biblical authors.

"I found that existing biblical search tools weren't able to do the kind of complex searching that I needed for the PhD, so I built my own [search] engine," he explains.

"It was really for private use... and because I used to be an IT consultant, in the period after every Christmas when other people would go on holiday to the beach, I'd give myself a couple of days to play computer programmer again – and I just kept on developing the program into something that could be used by other people."

Over subsequent Christmas holidays Bishop Stead has reimagined Bible Crawler for use with a personal computer, has created a website and, last month, released it as a (free) app for iOS and Android systems.

The system allows the user to look up a verse and have it presented to them in three languages: English (from the ESV), the original

Hebrew (Old Testament) plus Greek (New Testament). In addition, "the real nerds" can download the Septuagint and the Vulgate.

Bishop Stead concedes that a specialist tool allowing people to search for words and phrases in the original languages is "probably more than the average user wants, but for people who need that, it's actually quite useful".

His time at the computer after last Christmas allowed him to complete a word linking tool in the app. Users can point to, or tap on, a word in the ESV, and it will highlight the corresponding word or phrase in the Greek or Hebrew. There are even more layers of information for those who want them, such as searching for a Hebrew or Greek word in all its variant forms.

Bible Crawler can also help users find synonyms. "I specifically built the engine because the book of Zechariah often uses synonyms instead of exact quotes when quoting other Scriptures, and existing Bible search programs couldn't search for synonyms," Bishop Stead says.

"I'd sit up until midnight working at it, and have that sense of satisfaction that I could still remember how to write the code to do these things."

To find a program that provides a linguistic analysis of Bible texts is unusual enough, but he says "there aren't very many, if any, programs that can do what this does for free". And he's done it simply because he could, for his – and others' – satisfaction and growth in learning.

"I've exposed all my nerdiness now," he adds with a laugh. "I can't hide it!"

Preach a binge-worthy sermon

There is a theory around that people's attention spans have grown shorter, so they won't listen to long talks or sermons any more. It's a theory that visiting English preacher, Nigel Styles, doesn't subscribe to.

"I think that's a load of nonsense," he tells *Southern Cross*. "Isn't it interesting people are saying that at the very time when people are bingeing on Netflix series? My kids will happily concentrate on a story for five hours watching it on TV. So, I don't think [the problem is] the length of concentration span!"

This doesn't mean the former actor and long-time senior minister, most recently of Emmanuel Church in Nottingham, isn't committed to improving preaching. He visited Moore Theological College last month as guest speaker for the John Chapman Preaching Conference. Now the director of The Proclamation Trust and Cornhill Training Course in London, he spoke to students on the topic of "Preaching Old Testament narrative".

"I think there are a number of things [at work]," he says. "The best preaching sounds like dialogue, even though it is one person speaking. It sounds like you're listening to somebody in conversation with the original author, [teasing out] the pastoral intention of the person who wrote this in Scripture. Then there's a dialogue between the preacher and me, the listener."

Mr Styles encourages preachers to "cut with the grain of the passage" to bring out its original meaning.

"I guess we've all heard sermons where the preacher has asked rhetorical questions that are not the rhetorical questions [listeners are] asking at all. But then, we've also heard sermons where the rhetorical questions the preacher asks, to which this sermon is providing answers, are absolutely the questions I'm asking."

That kind of dialogue, he says, "makes preaching come alive", because the preacher is bringing out the original intent of the passage to help listeners understand the text.

On a flying visit, Nigel Styles says he hasn't heard the preaching in Sydney, but admits that "amongst conservative evangelicals who think that preaching is really, really important... a lot of our preaching in the UK is very dull".

As an example, he talks of sermons that either bring out points the passage isn't making, or focus on verse-by-verse observation. Yes, there is plenty of effort to apply the passage, and yes, the sermons often include a lot of "story and example". However, he adds, "what it sounds like is, well, kind of exegetical thoughts and exegetical commentary. You know, it can sound very dull.



Make preaching "come alive": Nigel Styles (top) shares his wisdom on preaching skills at a packed Moore College preaching conference (below).

"I think what makes preaching exciting, and what really won me to believe in the power of God's word to grow the Christian and to grow the church, was the kind of preaching that really understood what the questions were to which this passage was written as an answer."

Mr Styles' preaching session was packed with students taking notes and asking questions. But he steered clear of naming the "ideal length" of sermons – believing instead that it is related to what a church's regular congregation is used to.

"It's amazing how our body clock... gets set to what we think is the 'normal' length of a sermon," he says. "So if the church you normally go to has 20-minute sermons, you go to a sermon in another church and it's only 18 minutes, you feel shortchanged. And if it's 22 minutes, it feels like an age.

"In the UK, some church sermons would be 50 minutes to an hour. I go to those and I think they last an age, but the people in the congregation don't think that at all."

He adds that, during the Cornhill course, students are trained to preach all kinds of lengths.

"Actually, it's amazing what you can say in three minutes! You can tell me what a passage is about in three minutes. Obviously, in 20 minutes you can say more than you can say in seven minutes, but what you're saying in those extra 13 minutes needs to be worth saying."

To use a word borrowed from Netflix, it has to be binge-worthy.





“A Christian woman of profound faith”

All smiles: Dr Hamlin in 2012 with some of the patients and staff at the Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa. PHOTO: Bruce Perry

World-renowned Christian obstetrician and gynaecologist, Dr Catherine Hamlin AC, has passed away at her home in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the age of 96.

Dr Hamlin, together with her husband, the late Dr Reg Hamlin OBE, created a network of treatment centres for women suffering from obstetric fistula. The crippling condition results from complications in childbirth and leads to social isolation in poor African communities.

“Not only the women of Ethiopia, but women throughout Africa are indebted to the work of Catherine Hamlin,” said the Archbishop of Sydney, Glenn Davies.

“In 1974 she and her husband, Reginald, both obstetricians and gynaecologists, founded the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. Over the past 45 years, the hospital has provided free fistula repair surgery to tens of thousands of poor women suffering from childbirth injuries.”

As an Anglican from Sydney, Catherine Hamlin and her husband received support from Christians in Australia and the then Archbishop, Sir Marcus Loane. Wider support came as the Hamlins’ pioneering work became known and obstetric fistula became recognised as a major issue for African women.

Both Dr Hamlin and her husband were recipients of Australian and international honours, which, for Dr Hamlin, included the Australian Centenary Medal and honorary Ethiopian citizenship.

“Catherine’s commitment to use her remarkable gifts for innovative fistula surgery arose from her deep commitment to Christ,” Archbishop Davies said. “Her legacy will continue into the future, but the world has lost a Christian woman of profound faith who has left an indelible mark upon modern medicine as well as the relief of the needs of the poor.”

The work continues, supported by Hamlin Fistula Australia and the Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation.

The chairman of Hamlin Fistula Australia, Dr Robert Tong, said, “Dr Catherine Hamlin’s dedication of her medical skills to the relief of the suffering of those least able to help themselves, and her firm,



History: photo memories from Dr Hamlin’s earlier years in Addis Ababa with patients, nurses and also – top right – with her husband, Dr Reg Hamlin.



A constant presence: Clockwise from top left: a life spent in the service of others; checking on a patient in 2008 PHOTO: Kate Geraghty; conducting fistula surgery in 2012 PHOTO: Bruce Perry; consulting with hospital staff, 2014. PHOTO: Nigel Brennan

quiet confidence in God's overarching blessing and provision, is seen in the establishment of the Addis Abba Fistula Hospital. Truly an outstanding example of Christian compassion in action."

The Hamlins took as their inspiration a Scripture verse from Matthew – chapter 25, verse 40: "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me". The verse is also below a photo of Dr Reg Hamlin that hangs in the hospital.

In her autobiography, *The Hospital by the River: a story of hope*, co-written with Australian writer John Little, Dr Hamlin wrote of the desperate situation that women with obstetric fistula face.

"I have sometimes been asked if these tragic cases ever test my

faith," Catherine Hamlin wrote. "I can truly say that, if anything, my faith has been strengthened and my soul more firmly anchored to Jesus as the only one to whom we can turn. Jesus never promised us a smooth or trouble-free passage through life. He did promise to be with us to share the sorrow and the pain.

"The joy I receive from working for these patients is something for which I thank God every day. This has been my experience and I know this is what Reg felt, too. I am sure that Reg and I were led here. At the time I did not know it, but in the end, this is the place where we were meant to be... we are doing something that is in [God's] will and the wonderful thing is that it is so enjoyable."



Shared joy: Dr Hamlin joins in the celebration in 2008 for a patient healed of her fistulas. PHOTO: Kate Geraghty

“We have lost a great champion for the gospel”



Gone home: Bishop Ivan Lee, who died last month after a lengthy battle with pancreatic cancer.

Long-serving Sydney bishop, Ivan Lee, passed away last month 4½ years after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Bishop Lee died on March 4 at Greenwich Hospital, where he had been receiving palliative care.

“We have lost a great champion for the gospel, for evangelism and for healthy churches engaged in ministry and mission,” said Archbishop Davies. “Our Diocese has lost a faithful bishop and teacher of God’s word. I have lost a good friend and loyal colleague. Virginia and her family have lost a loving husband, father and grandfather.”

Bishop Lee was the first bishop of Chinese descent in the Sydney Diocese and only the second in Australia. He served a record 17 years as Bishop of Western Sydney after his consecration in 2003. Even though his successor, Gary Koo, was appointed last year, Bishop Lee continued to serve as Bishop for Evangelism and Church Growth until he was forced to go into hospital in January.

Speaking to *Southern Cross* last year, he reflected on the fact that the cancer had been in remission after his initial operation and chemotherapy in 2015, until it reappeared in 2019.

“That’s a pretty good run,” he said at the time, adding that people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer “typically last months, not years... so it’s quite a blessing [to be given that time]”.

Bishop Lee also described his cancer as a personal test of faith. “There were lots of tears but not anger, not questioning why. None of the kids have said ‘Why you, Dad?’, and I haven’t either. I know it’s common for other people, but it was already an understanding in my head that anyone can get sick and Christians don’t get any special privileges in a fallen world.”

In the Western Region, Bishop Lee was known for his enthusiasm and love of evangelism, especially crossing cultures. In his last years, he had the chance to witness to many people, including fellow cancer sufferers.

He described this in last year’s *Southern Cross* interview: “People ask, ‘How do you get through this?’ and I tell them there are a lot of things, but right at the top is a trust in God’s sovereignty. If God says you’re to live, I’ll live, and if he says it’s time, then it’s time. And I believe God knows what he’s doing, in my life and in the world.”

Archbishop Davies paid tribute to Bishop Lee.

“Working alongside Ivan Lee as a bishop these past 17 years has been an honour and a privilege,” he said.

“We first met 40 years ago when I joined the fourth-year class at Moore College. He was the youngest student in the class and full of energy and desire for gospel proclamation. That desire did not abate throughout his four decades of ordained ministry. Even though his energy levels were affected by the cancerous cells in his body, his desire to live for Christ or, if necessary, to die for Christ, was a constant mark of his discipleship.

“Our hearts ache for Virginia and her three daughters in their grief. They have cared for him so well and for so long, and since he entered hospital at the end of January, he has never been alone. May God comfort them in their sorrow.

“We thank God for Ivan and for his ministry among us these many years.”



Serving together: Bishop Lee's consecration service in 2003.



Thomas Hassall's 20th birthday

Give thanks: College students bow their heads and pray during the anniversary thanksgiving service.

A Sydney Anglican school that began with 150 students and a dozen staff has just celebrated its 20th anniversary as one of the largest schools in NSW.

"It was terrific," says principal Ross Whelan about Thomas Hassall Anglican College's recent celebrations. "We're pretty thrilled at what's been achieved and thrilled about the prospects for the future."

Mr Whelan says the college – which this year has more than 1750 students as well as 250 staff – grew out of the Vision For Growth launched by Archbishop Donald Robinson in the mid-1980s.

"These newer schools, newer churches and newer expressions of the Anglican community, out in the west and southwest and northwest, are all expressions of that, really," Mr Whelan says. "It's a long-standing pathway for the Anglican Diocese of Sydney to grow the gospel on the boundaries of Sydney and we feel privileged to be part of it."

"We're a diverse community of nearly 1800 students and I think that means that 10,000 or more people... are directly impacted by this work every day."

The anniversary thanksgiving service was marked by joy at the school's growth and maturity, memories and music performances, as well as speeches and prayer.

Joining students and staff on the day were THAC's foundation principal, Dr Bryan Cowling, foundation council chairman, the Ven Dr Geoff Huard, plus Federal and State MPs, past students, Bishop Ray Smith (the local bishop in 1990), and the present Bishop of the Georges River Region, Peter Lin.

"The 20th anniversary was a wonderful occasion," Bishop Lin

says. "It was a celebration and a reflection of how the southwest of Sydney has grown and changed – and it was a stark demonstration of the need for the gospel in this rapidly growing and exceptionally diverse area."

Mr Whelan adds that there is a real sense of excitement about the future, as well as thankfulness for what has passed.

"Here's a college that's only 20 years old producing strong academic results, great diversity in programs, has gospel ministry central to its work and a lovely vision – our vision is growing and nurturing excellence in learning, wisdom and service," he says.

"[This anniversary] is a chance to reflect and praise God for the things that have occurred to this point, and a time to think and pray and dream for the next 20 years and beyond."



Time to celebrate: (from left) Bishop of the Georges River, Peter Lin; THAC's original council chairman, the Ven Dr Geoff Huard; THAC's first principal, Dr Bryan Cowling; the current principal, Mr Ross Whelan; and Bishop Ray Smith.

Does prayer work on COVID-19?

Dr Glenn Davies



This week I saw a video message by a young pastor in the UK, recorded from his hospital bed, warning that “Coronavirus is out to kill you”. His halting, breathless delivery, and his young age, spoke louder than any health campaign could.

Our usual lackadaisical Australian response to Government warnings is one of suspicion or disdain, and the large crowds at Bondi Beach and St Kilda last month bear witness to this trait. Yet this is not just a problem for young people but covers all ages, including those of advanced years.

However, I sense that Australians are losing their casual attitude to this pandemic. I sincerely hope many see and listen to the Government’s advice to keep themselves safe. We have seen how governments in other countries have tried to restrain the spread of the Coronavirus, with varying success rates. This is a global problem, even if the World Health Organisation took a while to declare it as such.

The sad reality is that the potential for infection could now be anywhere in Australia. The growth in community-to-community infection is of greatest concern as the origin of the virus is unknown, unlike those infected by contact with people coming from overseas. Therefore, more precautions are needed to combat COVID-19. More restrictions on our daily lives will become necessary if the viral spread is not contained.

What else can be done? Well, you might expect me to say that the missing piece is prayer – and it is.

I, like many other church leaders, have called for fervent prayer at this time. On the last Sunday in March, I invited our churches to

commit themselves afresh to prayer as they met virtually, rather than physically. However, it is not limited to Sunday prayers. The bells of our Anglican cathedrals in Sydney, Wollongong and Parramatta are ringing at midday on Mondays and Thursdays to remind people to pray.

Even though the NSW Health order prevents people from gathering for prayer, even at a social distance, God hears our prayers wherever we are. I also encouraged all Anglicans to consider 1900 hours (7pm) as a moment each day when they might pray for God’s mercy on a world enveloped by COVID-19.

Yet, as we hear of more and more Australians infected, and as our national death toll rises, there is a clearer call to prayer than any church bell I have ever heard. This is the same call I made during the bushfire crisis, although this time Coronavirus touches all Australians – not just those in the path of fire.

Late last year I was asked by radio journalist Richard Glover about whether prayer really worked.

It was an honest question and my response was, and is, an emphatic “Yes!” Prayer is an expression of our dependence upon God. It recognises that we humans do not rule the world, as much as we like to think we do. Our world is governed by forces beyond our control, one of which is weather, along with the disasters of flood, fire and drought.

When we bring our requests to God, he is faithful to his promise to answer our prayers as we offer them in faith. I firmly believe that the end of the bushfires, which had been predicted to last until April, was in response to the prayers of many. The unexpected deluge of rain not only quenched the roaring fires, but broke the drought

in many places with the resulting new shoots of growth bursting through the earth.

Yet, as Christians prayed, many still lost their houses or – in some cases – their lives. Have our prayers been ineffective in such cases? To this, my answer is an emphatic “No”, but the answer comes with the humble recognition that we do not know the mind of God in all things, only those things that have been revealed.

God does not merely give us what we want, but what we need. What is most needful, beyond our property and our very lives, is our relationship with him. That calamity, disease and death continue to haunt us in this world are reminders that our world is out of kilter with the Maker of heaven and earth.

As C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*,

We can ignore even pleasure. Nevertheless, pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

In a world engulfed by a microscopic virus, which is wreaking havoc and the fear of death around the globe, God is speaking to us. We all know we shall one day die, but we foolishly and conveniently forget

this reality. More importantly, we forget what will happen to us after death. Yet God has defeated death in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the focus of our Easter season. It is only our trust in him that can rescue us from the fate of death and give us life beyond the grave.

That is why our prayers are offered in the name of Jesus, the death destroyer. That is why we should pray to God through Jesus, that he would have mercy on our world and bring an end to COVID-19. He will no doubt do this through government restrictions and the finding of a vaccine, but he will also accomplish this through our prayers, for it is he who rules our lives and it is he to whom we must give an account. **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

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Gentleness, spiritual warfare and victim culture

Christians are called to cultivate gentleness – but what does that look like in practice? PETER ORR writes.

You are driving to work, and a car aggressively cuts you off. How do you respond? After a long and difficult work day, you are leading a Bible study and the always-awkward-and-disruptive member of the group makes another off-topic comment about their favourite hobby horse. How do you respond?

The way that God wants us to respond at such times – the response enjoined by Scripture – is that of gentleness.

The call to be gentle is made more frequently in Scripture than we often realise. Paul tells the Galatians that gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23) and reminds Titus that a Christian is to “be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone” (Titus 3:2).

The idea of gentleness can be present even when the word is not used. Famously, Jesus taught that “If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also” (Matthew 5:39). Jesus modelled this on the cross as he prayed for those who had so grossly mistreated him, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). In a similar vein Peter exhorted his readers not to “repay evil with evil or insult with insult” (1 Peter 3:9).

In fact, references to gentleness permeate the New Testament. Most obviously, Jesus describes himself “gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). To be gentle demonstrates that we are “wise and understanding” (James 3:13). When we answer an unbeliever, we are to do so with “gentleness” (1 Peter 3:15). As Christians we are to be “completely humble and gentle” with one another (Ephesians 4:2) and clothe ourselves with gentleness (Colossians 3:12).

MODELS OF GENTLENESS

Christian leaders are, of all people, to model gentleness. The overseer is to be “not violent but gentle” (1 Timothy 3:3) – Timothy is actually told to “pursue” gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11). Even when relating to opponents, the Christian leader must be gentle (2 Timothy 2:25). In the context where someone has sinned and been disciplined, they

must be restored gently (Galatians 6:1).

But what actually is gentleness? One helpful way of thinking about it I have come across is to consider gentleness as having two senses: one passive and the other active. The passive sense is calmness in response to a negative situation. So, in the scenario above where you are driving to work, the gentle response is to smile and let the other driver through.

The active sense of gentleness is the refusal to (even rightly) exercise our power. So, in the Bible study illustration above, the gentle response might be to calmly thank the group member for their contribution before directing everyone’s attention back to the passage. There may need to be follow-up, but that is also something to be done gently.

Gentleness obviously overlaps with other words and concepts in the New Testament. So, the passive side of gentleness has parallels with the ideas of patience and longsuffering. The active side – refusing to exercise our (right) authority – is picked up particularly in reflections on how a pastor is not to “lord it over” (1 Peter 5:3) his congregation, or how Paul strikingly describes himself as the Corinthians’ servant/slave (2 Corinthians 4:5) for Jesus’ sake and how he refuses to make use of his rights (1 Corinthians 9:15).

The other question is: must we always be gentle? Jesus’ words to the Scribes and Pharisees do not seem the most obviously gentle things to say: “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?” (Matthew 23:33). Similarly, Paul seems to give the Corinthians an option: “What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?” (1 Corinthians 4:21). Is gentleness, then, simply one option?

I think it is helpful to consider another passage where Paul considers the topic of gentleness, namely 2 Corinthians 10:1-11. He entreats the Corinthians in verse 1: “By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you – I, Paul, who am ‘timid’ when face to face with you, but ‘bold’ toward you when away!”

The two words that he uses here – humility and gentleness

– actually reflect the two senses of gentleness we have been considering. His basic stance to them, his basic motivation for appealing to them, is gentleness.

GENTLENESS, NOT “NICENESS”

However, this is not the only dimension of Paul’s stance in ministry. As he continues, he speaks about warfare:

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Even in his humility and gentleness, Paul is engaging in spiritual warfare. There is a negative aspect to his exercise of authority. Being gentle doesn’t mean that he just “lets things go”. The language is strong – he *demolishes* or tears down arguments and opinions which are raised against the knowledge of God.

There is a robust, negative aspect to Christian authority. Christian leadership involves warfare and warfare involves destruction. Christian leadership does not just involve preaching the truth, it means preaching the truth in a way that it exposes and destroys error. But warfare also has a positive goal. Paul notes that his aim is to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”. The goal is submission to Christ as Lord, and so Paul’s reason for acting this way is “for building you up rather than tearing you down” (10:8).

What this means is that gentleness is not niceness! Gentleness does not mean that we endlessly concede other people’s arguments. No, gentleness does not rule out warfare. Warfare is necessary – to protect God’s people with the goal of building them up. That is the goal of Christian leadership. But although Paul destroys arguments, he doesn’t destroy God’s people: no, he builds them up.

Spiritual leadership means being gentle with people (even our opponents) but being strongly aggressive against arguments. Again, perhaps our culture is not great at distinguishing those. We tend to conflate people and arguments – if you oppose my argument you oppose me. Yet Paul is gentle with people but aggressive with arguments – it is warfare, so that God’s people are built up.

BE GENTLE – NOT A VICTIM

I want to conclude with a verse that does not use the word “gentleness” but which applies the concept in a way that I think gives a profoundly radical critique of an aspect of modern life: victim culture.

In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul is discussing the case of believers going to court against one another. He rebukes them for this practice. Surely there are people in the church who can settle these disputes – after all, Christians will judge angels (6:3). But rather than sorting this out in-house, these believers are taking one another to court “in front of unbelievers” (6:6).

The whole situation is a mess. Paul’s solution, though, has three components, one of which I think is particularly striking. First, the whole practice of taking one another to court has simply got to stop. Second, they are not to “cheat and do wrong” to each other (6:8). But tucked away in these verses is Paul’s remarkable exhortation in verse 7, when he tells them not to sue one another but to “rather be wronged” (1 Corinthians 6:7).

Why not rather be wronged? This is Paul’s application of Jesus’ “turn the other cheek” teaching. It is important to clear away some misapplications – Paul is not talking about a criminal situation. He was very clear that those who do wrong in a criminal sense should remember that the state “bears the sword” on God’s behalf to punish

the wrongdoer (Romans 13:4). Nor is he talking about cases of family violence (again a matter of criminal law which is *not* in view here). No, the context here is that these are two equally empowered people taking one another to court.

However, in our right desire to clarify what this verse does *not* mean, we mustn’t evacuate it of its force. There is a basic Christian principle that *sometimes* it is actually right to allow someone to wrong us, to turn the other cheek, to “take” the insult. This goes against our culture’s weaponisation of victim status where even the slightest insult or “misspeak” results in the offender being “cancelled”. As Christians, in contrast, we follow a master who suffered unjustly, who turned the other cheek, who prayed for those who persecuted him and who “suffered wrong”.

I am not saying this is easy, nor am I saying it will always be easy to work out when and how we apply this idea. But if we cultivate the same character of gentleness as the Lord Jesus, we will be very slow to insist on our rights and fight back when someone wrongs us.

Gentleness, then, is a high calling for the Christian. Many of us, myself included, will recognise how far short we fall of the gentle character of the Lord Jesus. But to have this kind of control over our emotions and our actions is not something that we can produce in ourselves alone. It is the fruit of the Spirit’s work in us.

This is actually a wonderful encouragement. Even as gentleness is something that God commands, it is something that he supplies by his Spirit. Will you join me in crying out to God to produce more gentleness in your heart by his Spirit?

SC



Dr Peter Orr lectures in New Testament at Moore College.

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Viral racism... and forgiveness

Agnes Wilson

Fear. There's plenty of it going around these days. As the death toll mounts and intensive care beds fill, as supermarket shelves empty of everything and police are called to patrol the aisles, it is understandable for anxieties to take hold.

For some, that fear has turned to anger and blame against people who look like me. It feels like with the rise of COVID-19 that people of East Asian descent, whether Chinese or not (I'm not), have a target on their backs.

In London, where I live now, I've been on the receiving end of

strange looks. Some have moved away from me on public transport. Another covered his nose and mouth with his jumper as soon as he saw me. Then there is the close proximity coughing by strangers that is just enough to feed my paranoia, but not overt enough to call it a deliberate act.

It's not a great feeling.

At home in Sydney there has been talk of people deliberately coughing on elderly Asian Australians and calling them "Coronavirus". In Chinatown, one man died of a heart attack with no one coming to his aid for fear he had COVID-19. Then there are

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instances of overt racist talk on public transport, which I fear is becoming too common. A Sydney-based friend got on a train and sat down, only to have the man in front of her say, in a loud whisper to the woman he was with: "Be careful – an Asian just sat behind us".

FALLING INTO THE ANGER TRAP

I'm not sure about other Christian brothers and sisters in the same situation, but it's at times like these that I struggle with anger. My automatic reaction is not to be patient and kind but retaliate with righteous fury. Godliness goes out the window as I want to bite back, "It's not fair. This hurts. You're a racist moron".

I give in to it, more often than I rise above it, because in my mind that idiot deserves a good whack on the nose. And in that moment of anger, I fail to do good to my enemies.

I need to look outside my immediate discomfort and remind myself these people are scared. So scared their capacity to love others is diminished. They are objects of pity and compassion more than they are to be feared or hated.

As I look to the cross, I remember Jesus' words as he was crucified: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do". The world despised him but, even as he was dying, our Lord was thinking of us. Begging our Father God to forgive us.

LOVE OUR ENEMIES

We Christians are therefore privy to a great truth. We are loved beyond life itself. It is there in the costly grace shown to us by our God. Such love should transform us to love others. Especially when life gets difficult.

Jesus said, "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you". This isn't some passive aggressive blessing or praying he is commanding us

to do. We are to be genuinely caring for our racist abusers. Looking beyond our own pain and anger to their welfare.

It is difficult to do. But do it we must because God, who loves us so much, commanded us to get out there and love those who hate us. Just as he loved us who hated him so.

FINDING FORGIVENESS

Loving others without forgiveness can be difficult. Unfortunately, I have a long memory. I can "forgive", but I may never "forget". There is even a specific word for it in Korean. *Han*. A loss or pain so deep that people say is carried beyond the grave.

God's forgiveness is not like that. Our wrongs are no longer counted against us at the foot of the cross. We are forgiven completely when we repent, and God remembers our sins and our lawless deeds no more. We are to forgive others, because we have been forgiven much.

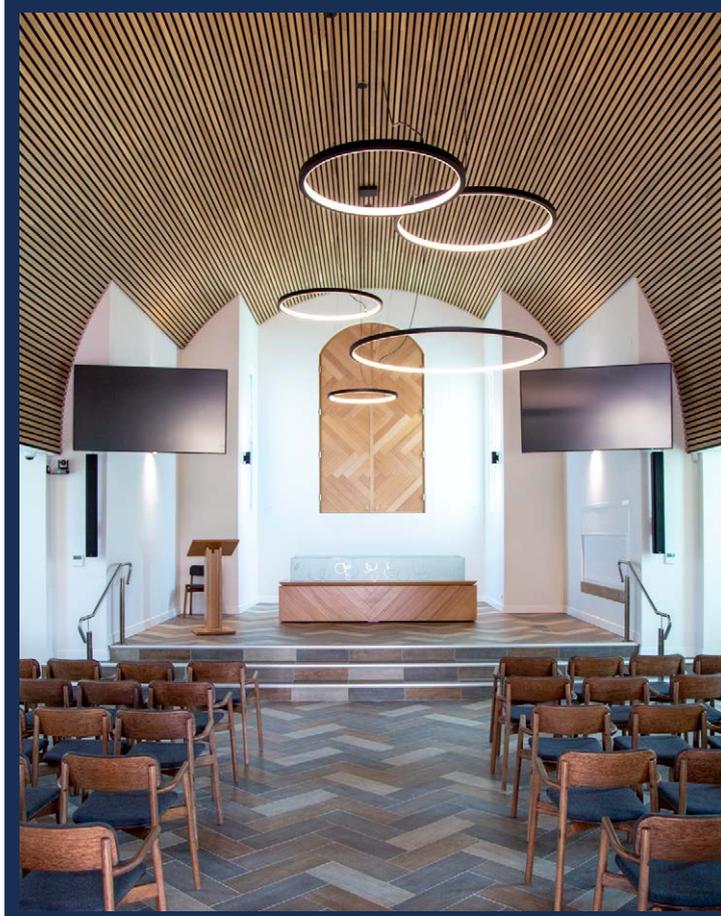
All I can say is I am trying. Desperately. But I swear, if another person without this lived experience comes up to me and tells me I must forgive my racist neighbour, I am going to be somewhat grumpy.

Please pray for God to help Christian brothers and sisters who are now subject to racist behaviour to keep looking to Christ on his way to the cross. To see how he was despised but endured it all for our sake. Help us to love others as we are loved. Please also pray for the people who hate us, that they will know God's peace and love in every way and be transformed.

SC



Agnes Wilson worked with Anglicare Sydney for 16 years. She and her family now live in London.



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An anchor for life's storms



Gary O'Brien

was ordained when I was in my 20s (in the photo accompanying this article you will see from my grey hair that was some time ago!). Over the years in parish ministry I have witnessed many of life's storms in the lives of people who were members (and not members) of our church. Grief and loss, fractured relationships, unfaithfulness, divorce, bad health, financial trouble, sickness, prodigal children and the list goes on. Then there have been the storms in my own life!

Sometimes the storms are big, sometimes small; sometimes they are brief, other times they last a long time. Sometimes you see the storms coming but often they come out of nowhere – a phone call, a text or a conversation.

I have frequently thought of the words of Jesus: "in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Many people have taken Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee as a partial metaphor of the storms of life, and found a challenge in his rebuke of the disciples for their fear and lack of faith in him as sovereign Lord over creation (Matt 6:23-27).

Some time ago, I read a blog from John Piper where he pictured a boat in a storm being beaten by the wind and waves. What did that boat need in the storm to stop it sinking? It needed an anchor to hold it fast. And what is that anchor? It's the word of God: the sword of the spirit (Eph 6:17); the truths or promises of God that speak truth

into whatever situation we find ourselves.

Another time I read a book by Jerry Bridges, who authored the bestseller called *The Pursuit of Holiness*. In the lesser-known but very helpful book *Trusting God* he structures his reasons for trusting God around three fundamental truths. God is:

- Completely sovereign
- Infinitely wise
- Perfectly loving

Those three truths are like three legs of a stool, and where do they come together? In Jesus, for he comes and demonstrates God's sovereignty, wisdom and love in his life, death and resurrection for us.

Recently, I found myself in a storm that came with a phone call, without warning, and it hit hard. I was reeling and, in the midst of it, I was running through my mind texts and passages of the Bible to steady me, but it was hard as the wind and rain of my circumstances beat down upon me. In the moment I couldn't recall some of the passages I needed.

When that storm had passed, I reflected that I needed to be better prepared for the next one. So, how do you prepare for life's storms? Get that anchor ready! Prepare now! Pull together a list of Scriptures, memorise them or at least have them recorded on your phone so at a moment's notice they are with you and you can turn to them. You

can throw the anchor down and steady your boat with the promises of God and prayer. I think Jerry Bridges' three truths provide a great structure for this. I'm preparing my anchor now and here is my start:

COMPLETELY SOVEREIGN

- *His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"* (Daniel 4:35)
- *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28). (Also, Isaiah 46:9-11)

INFINITELY WISE

- *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:8-9).
- *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?"*

"Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" (Romans 11:33-35)

PERFECTLY LOVING

- *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him* (Psalm 103:11).
- *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you* (1 Peter 5:6-7). (Also, Romans 8:38-39)

THE CALL TO TRUST HIM

- *Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God* (Psalm 42:5).
- *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight* (Proverbs 3:5-6). (Also Psalm 73:28 and Psalm 147:10-11)

So, why not pull your Scriptures together now and get your anchor ready? **SC**



The Rev Gary O'Brien is the director of Ministry Training & Development.




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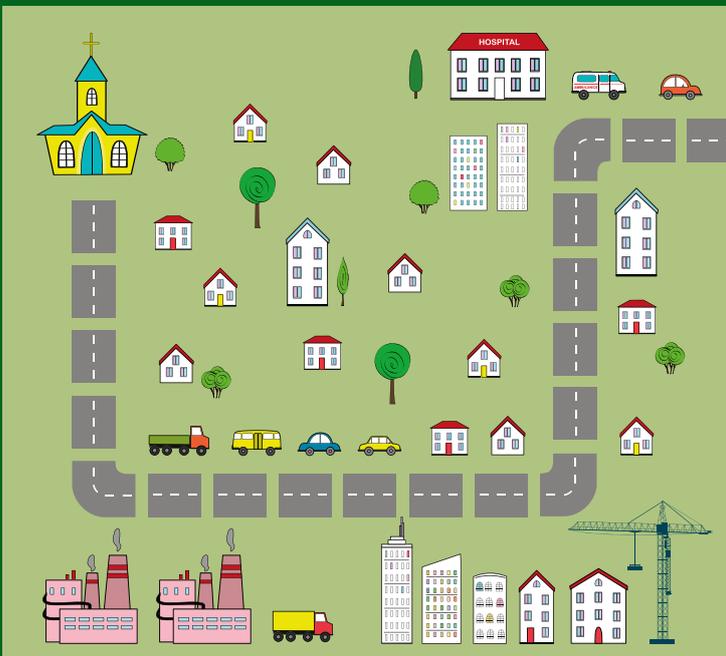
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Helping hands for healthier churches



Peter Hayward

The strength and resilience of our parish-based system has meant there are churches that continue to minister the gospel, making and equipping disciples, across the geographic spread of the Diocese.

It is an extraordinary kindness of God that we have such ministries, primarily through parishes but also with Evangelism and New Churches fellowships. Thank God for those who lead our churches and fellowships.

The days when membership of a local church was decided by tight parish boundaries have long passed. However, parish structures

mean there will be a particular ministry responsibility to reach those within the parish (even though most churches will typically draw anyone who lives within a 20-minute drive!).

Yet there are places in our Diocese where those living within parish boundaries almost exclusively define the reach of the church's ministry. We have 13 parishes in rural or coastal villages that have these characteristics. Most have very small populations, and we should acknowledge the extraordinary and underappreciated efforts of these rectors in sustaining ministry.

But there is another group of parishes with ministries that are

bound to local geography: those that minister in areas of high social disadvantage. To understand why this is, you need to appreciate the complex array of factors leading to social disadvantage such as social and economic distress, poor health, issues of community safety and poor education outcomes.

As these various factors interact, people often lead lives more closely connected to a discrete local area (the generalisation is that the more advantaged an area, the greater the mobility).

Again, thanks be to God that Anglican parish ministry has continued in these more highly disadvantaged places. Many denominations have stopped holding church meetings and, instead, focus exclusively on mercy ministries – which rely on sending in workers to provide services to help people.

As a Diocese, we have maintained a commitment to breadth of ministry, but such continuation can no longer be taken as a given. Every parish would agree that it is stretched in resourcing its current ministries, but the complexity for churches in more socially disadvantaged areas leads to additional challenges.

The often unstated assumption that ministry in these areas is the same as in other parts of the Diocese is simply not true. On one hand, the openness and local focus of the community means the opportunities for evangelistic conversations are extraordinary. But evangelism will go hand in hand with discipleship – which will patiently develop new life skills – and it is the latter issue that is significant.

The feedback from those who minister in these areas is clear: the added pressure of dealing with the limited people and financial resources to function as a parish can be overwhelming. Often, the skill reservoir needed to fulfil the compliance requirements of church life stretches the church beyond capacity.

As we are committed to seeing Christ honoured as Lord and

Saviour in every community, these ministries need to be given appropriate resources and profile. Why? So that parish complexity will not become an impediment to ministers accepting appointments in these areas, and the ongoing sustainability will not become an impediment to those on the ground. This is no longer a matter that can be taken for granted.

What are possible steps forward? In some circumstances, it will be targeted financial support. This is not always the case, but it is a growing need. Our parishes need to commit a portion of their mission giving to other churches in disadvantaged areas of the Diocese. What is needed are parish-to-parish partnerships that have a commitment in prayer and finance.

Another way to help is to provide assistance in administration and governance. This is already happening in a few areas. As an example, Berkeley Life Centre – established in a highly disadvantaged location near Port Kembla – has very few people with such skills. A number of folk from nearby parishes help with accounts and administration so that the work of ministry remains central.

Peter Kell, former CEO at Anglicare and a member of St Michael's, Wollongong, has provided administrative support at Berkeley Life Centre for the past five years, helping with strategy, finance and staff matters. His observation is that “without this help, this quite extraordinary ministry would be severely curtailed”.

He also adds, “I am struck by the way relatively small gifts from other parishes are so encouraging to the church”.

SC



The Rt Rev Peter Hayward is Bishop of Wollongong and heads the Ministry in Socially Disadvantaged Areas Committee.

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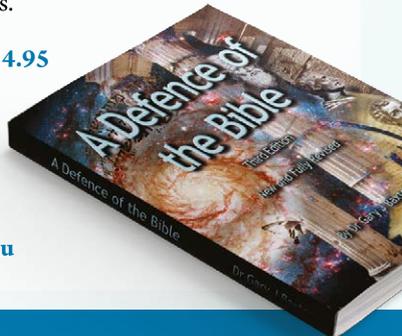
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CLERGY MOVES



REACHING OUT IN ASHBURY

After almost seven years in the western Sydney parish of St Clair and Erskine Park, the Rev Scott Blackwell became rector of Ashbury, in the inner west, on February 27.

“We are delighted to have been invited to St Matt’s, Ashbury, which is a congregation filled with so many young professional families,” he says.

“As a senior minister aged over 50, I am so delighted to be invited to work within a church that is actively seeking to inspire young professionals who are trying to balance work and family demands with the gospel. It’s also so important to maintain and develop deeper involvement in the local schools through SRE, and to be a place that is welcoming and encouraging to the whole community.”

Mr Blackwell says their time at St Clair was “a blessing and a challenge”.

“While it can be tough to be the only member of staff in a parish, the thing that was most encouraging was the way that the youth and senior members of the church took ministries and outreach by the horns and ran with them,” he says. “They really want the gospel to go forward in the area.”

He pays particular tribute to his wife Debby, who works full-time as a psychologist with senior students at St Andrew’s Cathedral School yet also co-ordinated the women’s ministry at St Clair, led singing in church, did pastoral follow-up and ran a holiday reading club.

When Ashbury nominators made contact, Mr Blackwell says, the core things they wanted for the parish were solid, evangelical Bible teaching and new, different ways to reach out to the area – so his history as a community development officer was very welcome.

“A big part of my motivation is how are we firstly going to get alongside the community, then introduce them to Jesus in a way that they haven’t experienced before – or that they should have experienced before!” he says.

“These days, in an environment where Christians are so harshly joked about, judged and labelled, the gospel is still changing lives and winning hearts in surprisingly powerful ways – particularly among those who are looking for a new beginning.

“Ashbury is no different. There is an outreach ministry here that is waiting to flourish. We simply need to keep watering the fields with the good news of Jesus.”



WORK IN THE VINEYARD

The rector of Bulli since 2007, the Rev Leigh Roberts, has resigned from his Illawarra parish for health reasons.

“It was disappointing to finish that way, but it was clear that it needed to be done, especially while the church is still strong and healthy,” he says. “We’re going to have a gap year now and see what level of health I have by the close of it. That will determine what we’re able to do in the future but it won’t be full-time any more – maybe a few locums – and we’ve also been greatly blessed by a couple of parachurch ministries like Vinegrowers.

“I feel a bit of an obligation, or privilege, to help other churches and pastors wanting to focus on disciple making. We were in on the ground floor with Colin [Marshall] before he wrote his second book, *The Vine Project*, and it did help us to be much more focused in the parish. With this strategy and my limited health I started delegating much more, training growth groups to be more intentional, and training up lay preachers, and I think that was under the hand of God – there are five to six young preachers at Bulli now who are really respected and appreciated when they stand up.”

Mr Roberts and his wife Merrilyn rejoiced in the farewell they had from Bulli, where they not only felt “honoured” by what congregation members said but were delighted when “each speech acknowledged the vision and strategy that we had been trying to fulfil... every member and every ministry designed to make disciples, who are in turn helping others to progress in Jesus.”

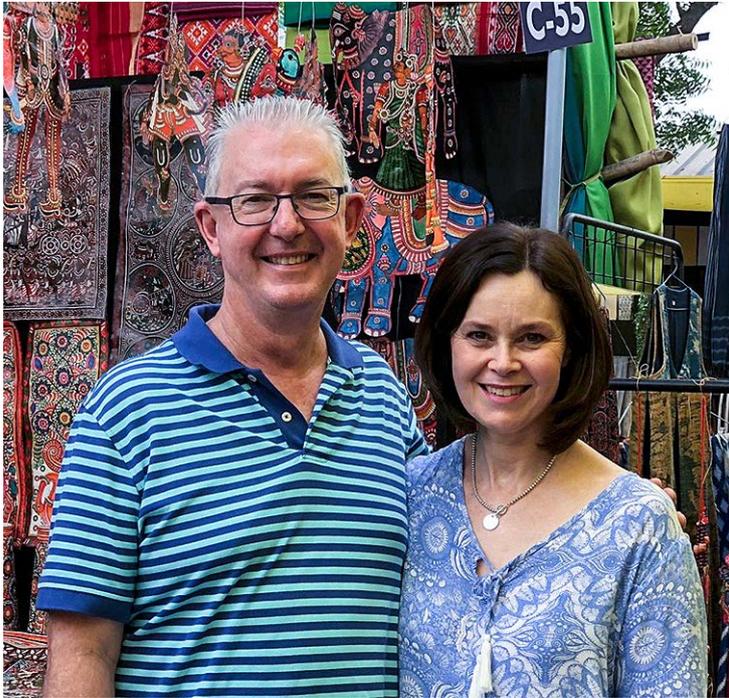
In the decade that Mr and Mrs Roberts were at Figtree Anglican prior to going to Bulli, they also learned skills in marriage and parenting training that they have since shared with others at conferences and seminars. While as yet they have no formal role planned after their gap year, this ministry will certainly continue “because there’s an amazing need”.

He also says of Mrs Roberts that, in every church where they have worked, “she’s really got beside people and nurtured and discipled them... and the bishop’s wife [in Wollongong] is keen for her to mentor clergy wives because she’s just got those skills and the experience, and the young ones coming through have really appreciated her getting alongside them”.

Mrs Roberts wants to underscore the importance of the help they received in recent times through the Clergy Assistance Program – which provides professional counselling through Anglicare to parish clergy and their spouses.

“We really benefited from that, particularly during the time my husband was very sick, and obviously it was a great help to me, too,” she says. “But we weren’t aware of it until we needed it! So, when others get to a point – and everybody does – now they can think, ‘Oh maybe I can go and access help.’”

As to what will come after their gap year is over, neither is certain but, says Mr Roberts, “We trust God for it”.



DELHI DEPARTURE

After 20 years at St Alban's, Lindfield, the Rev Michael Crichton finished up last month to prepare for a move to India, where he will pastor an expat congregation in Delhi.

He says the move came about for a couple of reasons. First, because Lindfield is becoming very multicultural, he and his wife Karen spent six weeks at St Andrew's Hall earlier this year to get better equipped for cross-cultural ministry. And second, because he's been involved with the Indian Gospel League for 25 years.

"Forty years ago, I came into full-time ministry thinking that God was calling me into overseas mission work," Mr Crichton says. "I'm now 59, so that's why we thought, 'There's not the time to get a position elsewhere – let's get equipped for where we are."

"But the minute we arrived at St Andrew's Hall I got an email out of the blue from a friend, a fellow minister, saying, 'You might be interested in this [job]'. And the reason he did that is because of my involvement with the Indian Gospel League... I've been to India many times to support that ministry."

They made contact with the Delhi International Christian Fellowship while at St Andrew's Hall, and Mr Crichton was flown over for an interview. "It's an independent expat church so I had to preach, they had to vote, and I had to get 90 per cent approval!" he explains. Needless to say, he got it.

The church where they will work has people from at least 25 nationalities, mostly in the diplomatic or business community, who are sent to India for a two- to three-year period. Turnover is naturally high but, Mr Crichton says, "people are keen for Christian community in a foreign land".

He adds that the women in particular are very excited about their arrival. "There's been a locum there for three years and they've missed having a minister's wife to support and encourage them, so they're very much looking forward to Karen coming and making her own contribution.

"This is a great opportunity to disciple the nations. We'll disciple them, grow them in God's word and send them back to their country or their next posting empowered and matured in the word of God."

The Crichtons' departure to India has been delayed because of COVID-19.



HEADING FOR HOBART

The rector of Balgowlah, the Rev Clif McDonnell, is moving to Hobart to become assistant to the Dean of St David's Cathedral, Richard Humphrey.

"I've been here at Balgowlah for almost 23 years, so I was reassessing how I should spend my last few years before retirement," he says. "This opportunity came along and my wife and I and our 15-year-old son went to Tassie, had an interview and God seemed to open the doors."

Mr McDonnell says most people in the congregation at Balgowlah "were a bit shocked" when they heard the news, "but then, as we discussed it, they could see the sense in it. I feel that it's a good thing for the parish as well, for us to move and give them an opportunity after 23 years to find someone new!

"We've loved being part of the family at Balgowlah. I'm very conscious of the loss because ministry is about relationships and they take time to build... that's why I haven't been afraid of a long ministry here. But [relationship changes] will be part of the process for both us and the church."

Mr McDonnell's main role in Hobart will be to run the two morning services and pastor the congregations at St David's. The cathedral still has a range of strong links in the community and the Dean is keen to increase his ministry and presence outside the church.

"Previously [the cathedral has] employed curates and they've been trained up and then left after a couple of years, so this is a remake of that position," Mr McDonnell says. "He [Dean Humphrey] won't have to train me. I'll take on the church responsibilities... and he will increase his involvement with the city."

Jenny McDonnell has had active ministries in hospitality and encouragement at Balgowlah, which Mr McDonnell envisages will continue in Hobart. "I couldn't do the job without her!" he says. "We really value hospitality and it's a great way to get to know new people.

"I'm excited about the prospect of working in another diocese... Sydney has got great ministry from one parish to the next, whereas other dioceses don't have that. Richard Humphrey is a Moore College graduate, as am I, and I'm thrilled at the prospect of having other opportunities outside the Diocese."

Mr McDonnell begins his new role at the beginning of May.

TILDSLEY ON A NEW BEAT



The Rev Wayne Tildsley has retired after 19 years at Richmond, and 30 years of ordained ministry in the Diocese.

Before going to college, he spent 16 years in the police force, and throughout his parish ministry – as an assistant minister in Camden (1989-1994), as rector of Sutton Forest (1994-2001) and then rector of Richmond – he undertook part-time chaplaincy work for the local police district.

Mr Tildsley's interest in police chaplaincy began before full-time police chaplains existed in Australia, and he was involved in researching stress management and chaplaincy for the police before going to college. "God was using me as a policeman, but I really felt like it was the calling of God to go to Moore College," he says.

Two months before he finished college NSW Police appointed its first full-time paid chaplain, so he immediately signed up for a volunteer role instead. "It just gave me an opportunity as a church minister to connect the church up with the community in a different way, and that's always gone very well for ministry," he says.

As Camden was his home town and he had worked there as a policeman, initially the Diocese was reluctant to send Mr Tildsley there after he graduated. But, he says, "I talked to the bishop [and said], 'It'll be much easier as a minister!' And it was true!

"And then in Sutton Forest – I'd been a policeman at Moss Vale for six years and it was the same thing there. People would come up and say, 'Do you remember me?' And I thought, well, I might have locked them up, issued them with a ticket or done something in ministry! It was a bit complicated, but even the ones I'd locked up or given a ticket, they were alright about it. They realised they'd done the wrong thing, so it was good."

He and his wife Trudy also have long-term links with Fiji. Mr Tildsley began praying for the country after a coup there while he was at college. When they came to Richmond, one of the first things to arrive in the mail was a postcard from link missionaries... in Fiji. They invited the Tildsleys to visit, "and God has just opened up Fiji ever since". They have taken people from the parish there on mission, and since 2008 Mr Tildsley has also been taking Year 13 groups.

He rejoices to see how God has raised up people in the parish to become its youth and children's ministry workers. Richmond now has programs for children "from when they're born right through [to young adulthood] – a strong, constant discipling ministry – and at the other end we've seen mature Christians... and that came about because we couldn't get an assistant minister! God just opened up better ways to go."

Mrs Tildsley, he adds, "has shared all this with me. When we had to take over the youth group, she helped me take it over; she came with me to Fiji many times with Year 13 until it was established. She's been part of everything I've done [at Richmond] and people know that."

While retirement naturally changes things, Mr Tildsley says Richmond's previous minister retired in the parish, and they are "probably going to do the same thing" – with the hope "to be part of things, if the new minister's okay with that... There's something about the place and the people that ministers want to stay long term!"

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LETTERS

THE SPIRITUAL BATTLEFIELD

Congratulations *Southern Cross* on the article about Lynn and Roger Kay and their message at the recent Summer School about their encounter with demon possession (SC, March).

Over the years I have had missionaries on home assignment admit to me about having such encounters on the field, but confessing they would not mention it openly in Sydney churches. I have also talked with clergy who have had some quite startling encounters in their parishes, but again, did not feel free to talk about it openly.

I myself have had similar encounters during several short-term mission trips in Africa, and also on a number of occasions in parish ministry.

Dr Kay's challenge "to take the spirit world – the principalities and powers – as seriously as Jesus did" needs to be given more consideration. After all, casting out demons was, according to the Gospel records, an important part of Jesus' ministry, and was something that he commissioned his disciples, and 72 others, to do as well.

It is a tragedy that we send missionaries and clergy out into the spiritual battlefield without training in this aspect of spiritual warfare.

John Davies
Glenorie

ALL TOGETHER IN CHRIST

Your truly wonderful story "From Africa to Oakhurst" (SC, March) was a delight to read. Sadly, in paragraph one, a comment was made about the suburbs of Bidwill and Plumpton, saying they are "usually known for featuring negatively in news reports". So many people in the Sydney Diocese would have read that hurtful comment.

My wife and I have lived in Bidwill since 1982. We have raised three (now married) children who are all Christians and doing well. A lot of people are public housing tenants and many have had a tough life, my wife and I included. Most people are good, honest and lovely people. I love living in Bidwill.

I attend St James', Mt Druitt – a church with lots of lovely people, many having life hard, who worship God together.

Media rubbishing of my (our) home is common. Negative news reports full of hurtful lies do just that – hurt.

Dave Vincent
Bidwill

STAND AGAINST SECULAR SOCIETY

Though I agree with the sentiments expressed by Tim Swan ("Jesus' response to rising opposition", SC, February), as an elderly Christian it is difficult to realise how cowed the Christian

church has become – both in Australia and the world – that it no longer reacts against a secular society that increasingly says God's word is not to be spoken of, or written about, publicly.

Laws passed by a Christian government, a Christian Prime Minister, within a Christian country, are contradictory and blasphemous to God's word, yet applauded in newspaper editorials and commentaries in the written and TV media; and by the public. Yet it would appear a recent article indicates that some LGBTQI+ people still feel they are not accepted within society.

Unlike Jesus, the church is much too afraid to offend the offensive within our secular society by standing against them and telling them that this is God's creation, not theirs: that they are not entitled to make political laws to please themselves at the expense of the biblical word of God, or denigrate the Son, Jesus, who died on the cross for them.

Peter Girdlestone
Bowral

HUMILITY AND SUPPORT

In reference to the theme of "humility" from the March cover story of *Southern Cross* about new ordinands, I would like to make some observations.

Humility is indeed a noble pursuit and a virtue that is sadly lacking in our society today.

The late evangelist Leonard Ravenhill made the following statement: "You can have 32 degrees, but still be frozen".

Yes, education is beneficial, but it is not a sure sign that one is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Could it be that the structure of the church is inhibiting the members of its congregations from using their God-given gifts to their full potential?

It seems to me that if you are a graduate from Moore College, you are deemed to have all the necessary skills and personal resources to be solely responsible for the spiritual health of the parish you are assigned to.

Perhaps it is time for the Church to have a close look at a lay eldership, to support the rector in the spiritual health of the parish and keep the rector on track and accountable.

From my perspective, humility should start from the very beginning at the source, being the Sydney Anglican Diocese and Moore College itself.

Murray Bolden
Mt Riverview

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Fun and games

Judy Adamson

The Personal History of David Copperfield

Rated PG

You might well regard a “new” version of a Charles Dickens classic as an oxymoron – incapable of surprise or the capacity to present such a well-known story in a different way. However, director (and co-writer) Armando Iannucci and his creative team have done both.

With *The Personal History of David Copperfield* the question isn’t so much “Have they done something new?”, but whether or not what they have done works. Do they take us deep into the world of young Master Davy and help us share in his youthful adventures, struggles and deprivations? Do they make us feel joy, sorrow, revulsion, anger and wonder?

Whether or not you answer “Yes” may depend on a few things: your imagination, your view of the novel and perhaps even the style of film you favour. Why imagination? Because those who can’t take a performance as a performance, no matter who the actor is, may well have trouble with this film.

Dickens’ original characters would most likely all have been Anglo, but the makers have cast whoever they wanted in each role – a rare onscreen example of so-called “colour blind casting”. And why not? In opera, singers regularly play characters decades younger (or older) than themselves, and of vastly different backgrounds, because they’re fabulous at it. All viewers need to do is get used to that in close-up – and it’s past time that we did.

Apparently, no one other than Dev Patel was considered to play the titular character, and it’s a stroke of casting genius. His David Copperfield is exuberant, busy, full of natural kindness, youthful

foolishness and lively curiosity, yet clearly marked by the pain of his past. These traits are well matched by Ranveer Jaiswal, who does such a tremendous job of playing the young David that you accept the character’s move to adulthood without a blink.

The length of Dickens’ novel means that elements of the original tale are necessarily compressed or excluded, but the essential story arc remains. So, too, do the characters and situations readers have loved and loathed for 170 years: the Peggottys and their boat house on the beach at Yarmouth; the optimistic, debt-ridden Mr Micawber (Peter Capaldi), the obsequious Uriah Heep (a truly creepy Ben Whishaw), the endearing Mr Dick (Hugh Laurie) and his obsession with Charles I, plus – my personal favourite – Betsey Trotwood (Tilda Swinton) and her pathological dislike of donkeys.

Iannucci has also chosen to have the same actor play David’s mother and his first love, Dora – a logical step given how alike the characters are in their childlike sweetness.

David Copperfield’s journey has plenty of sorrow and trial, and while these are included in the film there is a greater focus on fun – of which there is plenty. The creative team clearly love the source material, the script and costumes are as witty and eccentric as the characters, and the actors look like they’re having a ball.

The result is a joyous, delightful romp of a film, which sets a cracking pace from start to finish. Some may not appreciate this speed, or the way the story is told – and you do wish there was more time to take it all in. But two hours never went so fast, and hopefully you will be able to see why in cinemas before too long.

Loungeroom film festival



Faith and fatherhood: KoRn guitarist Brian "Head" Welch and his daughter Jennea share their story of music, drugs, love and redemption in Loud Crazy Love.

Judy Adamson

So, here's a thing: at the same time as society (by and large) snipes about Christians, their beliefs and their God, a major Australian cinema chain decides to screen a faith-based film festival.

Seems crazy. But it's exactly what happened. Then something even more crazy came along: COVID-19. And the Faith Film Festival, which was going to screen at Hoyts cinemas for three weeks, has become the Hope@Home Film Festival.

The CEO of Heritage Films, Rod Hopping, says that as the effects of Coronavirus became more widespread in Australia, the organisation knew its in-cinema festival wasn't going to fly.

"Initially we were very disappointed," he says. "It would have been, as far as we're aware, the first faith-based film festival curated in Australia and we were very excited about it.

"Heritage has a lot of true-story movies, and true stories contain powerful messages about courage and faith in the midst of difficult times. But as the [original] festival would physically draw people together, under the circumstances that didn't seem helpful. So, we pivoted very quickly to our existing, on-demand online platform."

By the time the Federal Government announced that cinemas would have to close, Heritage was ready to launch Hope@Home, which will run for 10 weeks from April 5, entirely online.

Three films will be available in the lead-up to Easter: *The Passion of the Christ*, *The Easter Experience* and "brick" film *The Passion*. Each Sunday another movie will be added, including *Loud, Crazy Love* (about Brian Welch from KoRn), *The Least of These* (the Graham Staines story), *Hacksaw Ridge*, *Beautifully Broken* and *The Heart of Man*.

The festival will also contain Q&A sessions about each movie



Lego and life lessons: (from top) The Passion presents the Easter story in "brick" format; a retelling of the prodigal son parable in The Heart Of Man.

with filmmakers and others, plus workshops and a linked Facebook group where people can discuss the films, their own experiences and simply be in community together.

"We've curated a selection that we think is the most hope-filled and uplifting content we can bring to a festival," Hopping says. "We believe there's going to be a need for people... to be pulled out of a sense of isolation. Here, they can have this dose of hope with something to look forward to.

"We're really excited about encouraging the online community across Australia and New Zealand – there's really no barrier to shared experiences with your family and friends. At the same time, you can meet and support others who might have the same or a similar story to your own."

An "all access" pass costs \$59.99 – except, really, it's half that.

Heritage wants to get the movies and linked content out as widely as possible so, at a time when income is an issue for so many, it has provided a discount on its festival website (hopeathome.com.au), dropping the price to \$29.99.

“We thought the best way for people to share that the festival is happening with others in their personal networks is a 50 per cent off coupon,” Hopping explains.

“Thirty dollars for 10 weeks of movies [is] as low we can go and

still honour the filmmakers involved and keep our doors open.

“This is a time that is outside people’s experience,” he adds. “No one is able to say, ‘The last time a virus closed everything down I did this and that’, and the unknown [adds] fear and anxiety into their lives. If the Hope@Home Film Festival can do something to... bring light and the hope that God is good, the Father is faithful and help people be part of a community where we can all grow in these dark times, we would be super-thrilled.”

SC

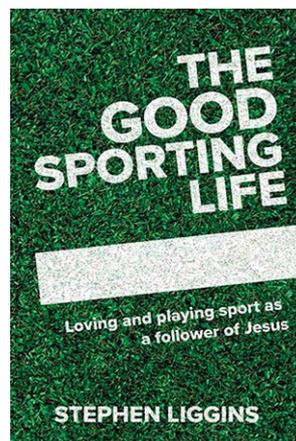
Religion to true religion

David Tyndall

The Good Sporting Life

by Stephen Liggins

(Matthias Media)



Australians are more “religious” about sport than about religion itself. Donald Horne – the Australian author of *The Lucky Country* – once said that “for many Australians sport is life and the rest a shadow”.

Eighty-four per cent of women and 80 per cent of men are involved in weekly sport. More than 86,000 people attended the Women’s World Cup T20 final recently. Yet only about 8 per cent of Australians go to church each week. It is a struggle for many Christians in our sports-mad country to integrate their sport and faith in Jesus.

Stephens Liggins, for many years an opening first-grade fast bowler, regularly had “first use of the wicket” – and now he has produced another first. With this book he has tied together his zeal for Jesus with his love of sport and given us some great coaching tips on how Christians can live in the sporting world. There is balanced advice to all who are involved with sport in some way, whether it is as a participant, coach, supporter, parent or pastor.

I have been involved in ministering to sportspeople for nearly 60 years and have waited a long time for a book like this. There are 12 bite-sized, easy-to-read chapters (except for the second chapter on the history of sport, which, unless you love history, you could skip!), and in all of them Liggins deals wisely with the questions many involved in the sporting arena are concerned about.

Some of the issues are: what does the Bible say about sport; how to live as a Christian sportsperson on and off the field; the sheer joy of sport; sportsmanship in an unsporting world; the opportunities for evangelism through sport; how to encourage sportspeople; how to get started in sport; and how to cope when you can no longer play. It also provides guidance for parents, coaches, referees and pastors.

While Liggins may have bowled a few bouncers and flung a few javelins in his day, his advice is kind and not authoritarian. For example, when talking about sexual morality, he writes, “again, we

need to realise and be convinced that engaging in sexual immorality is disobedient to God, does not bring glory to God, and can cause great damage to other people as well as harming ourselves. It is best to avoid situations where we know that we might be genuinely tempted.”

His practical, humble advice about such things as, can Christians play sport on Sunday, how to keep sport in perspective, how to deal with disappointment and how to share your faith in Jesus, is usually provided through stories about sportspeople such as Eloise Wellings (Australian long-distance runner and Olympian) or Nick Farr-Jones (Rugby World Cup-winning captain of the Wallabies).

However, because sportspeople are used to following instructions that are usually brief – “Do this and do it this way, and don’t do that” – a bonus would have been a brief summary of dos and don’ts at the end of each chapter.

Another strength of the book is that a chapter, or even sections of a chapter, can be read separately. For example, Chapter 3, which is about the development of a Christian sporting character, deals with cheating, selfish play, verbal abuse, physical abuse and spitting the dummy, and could be read on its own.

By writing this book Liggins has done Christians in sport a great service. Early in my ministry I found that many Christians, as they rose up through the ranks, could not align their faith life with their sporting life and often gave the former up.

I believe *The Good Sporting Life* may see a decline in that trend. It is not only theologically accurate and culturally relevant, but answers most of the questions Christian sportspeople confront as they try to follow Jesus.

SC

The Rev Dr David Tyndall is pastoral care co-coordinator for Sports Chaplaincy Australia. The Good Sporting Life is available from www.matthiasmedia.com.au