

Southern CROSS

AUG
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2017

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

Break the silence

CHRISTIANS AND MENTAL ILLNESS

- + God and the value of human life
- & Exile and death in South Sudan



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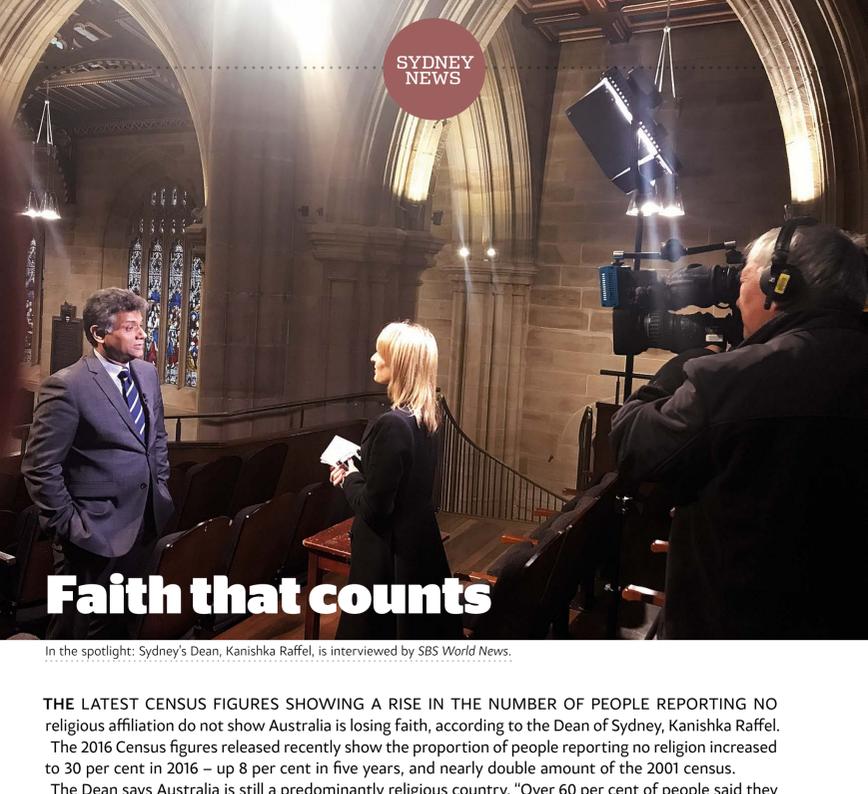
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Faith that counts

In the spotlight: Sydney's Dean, Kanishka Raffel, is interviewed by SBS World News.

THE LATEST CENSUS FIGURES SHOWING A RISE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE REPORTING NO religious affiliation do not show Australia is losing faith, according to the Dean of Sydney, Kanishka Raffel. The 2016 Census figures released recently show the proportion of people reporting no religion increased to 30 per cent in 2016 – up 8 per cent in five years, and nearly double amount of the 2001 census.

The Dean says Australia is still a predominantly religious country. "Over 60 per cent of people said they had some affiliation with religion and the number of people who say they have no religion – it doesn't really tell us much about them.

"Some of those people are decided atheists, perhaps. Many are just not committed and we know that some would certainly say they have... some kind of connection with God but they just don't identify with institutional religion. We don't get the whole picture from the figures."

The Census form also changed last year, putting "no religion" as the top choice. Over half of the population, and the majority of those identifying a religion, claim Christianity. That figure is 51 per cent of the population, compared to 74 per cent in 1991 and 88 per cent 50 years ago.

The number of Catholics dropped from 25.3 per cent in 2011 to 22.6 per cent in 2016, and Anglicans from 17.1 per cent to 13 per cent. Islam at 2.6 per cent and Buddhism at 2.4 per cent were the next most common religions, with Islam up half a per cent in five years and Buddhism down 0.1 per cent. Hinduism is the fastest growing religion. NSW is the most religious state with 66 per cent of people claiming to be religious.

"Sixty per cent of people say they identify with some religion, and for more than 50 per cent that's Christianity," the Dean told SBS World News. "This means that religion is important to a lot of people and so there is quite properly a religious perspective on the topics of importance in our society."

The greater Sydney area has been identified as more religious than the rest of the country, with the proportion of people who identified with any religion rising to 66 per cent, compared to 61 per cent nationwide.

But there were large variations across the suburbs, with inner-city areas showing the fewest adherents of religious belief, while in Sydney's southwest more than 80 per cent identified as believers. Suburbs such as Bossley Park and Abbotsbury registered figures of 88 per cent, while in Erskineville in Sydney's inner west the number of religiously affiliated dropped to 45 per cent.

The Dean says the figures tell us something important about our culture. "Most people don't necessarily say a lot about their religion and that might make you think they aren't religious. But if you ask them, you find something that is personally important to them and is no doubt shaping their whole engagement with the community, even if they are not wearing it on their sleeve."

The fact one in five migrants are from Asia or the Subcontinent is also being reflected in our churches. "The Census tells us there are now more migrants from India and China than from England and Europe, and we are certainly seeing that at the Cathedral," Dean Raffel says.

"People who might not necessarily have had much contact with Christianity in the past in their own home countries are very eager to find out about Jesus, and so we have a large number of Subcontinental and South East Asian people coming with questions about who Jesus is and what he is about. We are really delighted with that and we're seeing that change being reflected here at the Cathedral and in many Anglican churches around Sydney."

The Dean also believes there has been an increase in commitment among those who do claim adherence to Christianity.

"In the 1960s there would have been a higher proportion of people saying they identified with the Christian religion and that number is certainly smaller now but those people are more deliberate and intentional. It is not just a matter of habit or social expectation."

NAIDOC at Campbelltown



Sharing culture: Pastor Michael Duckett plays and sings with his daughter Tori and her friend Mariah.

MACARTHUR INDIGENOUS CHURCH AND CAMPBELLTOWN ANGLICAN CHURCH HAVE RECENTLY celebrated their continuing partnership with a NAIDOC Week service and celebration.

The events were an opportunity for the two churches, as well as visitors from the area, to celebrate Aboriginal culture together along with recognising the partnership between the churches, which began in 2011.

"We wanted to bring some of the richness of our culture and language to St Peter's," says the leader of Macarthur Indigenous Church, Pastor Michael Duckett. "So we sang in language, my daughter and I sang in our Gumbaynggirr language from North Coast NSW, but there were other languages and gospel songs.

"Cooking in the ground is part of our way as well, so we built a *hangi* [an underground oven] and put around 120kg of product in the ground, both meat and veggies. It was about blessing our brothers and sisters in God's church and sharing the Aboriginal culture of this land."

Pastor Duckett also spoke from Genesis 11 about the Tower of Babel, highlighting the way language can cause harm and damage, but also how God has spoken to us and saved us with his language and word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The partnership began in 2011, when Macarthur Indigenous Church began looking, not just for another location for ministry, but a church to partner with in its mission to local Indigenous people. The Macarthur region is host to the second largest Aboriginal population in NSW.

"I had a chat with Nigel [Fortescue, rector of Campbelltown] when he was pretty new, and suggested we work out a way to partner for the sake of the gospel," Mr Duckett says. "He said he was in for that, and I think that's been our strength – two men with the desire to see people saved. We've journeyed together under God, and God has blessed it."

Adds Mr Fortescue: "We do provide some background support such as dealing with financials and things like that, but in the foreground we are involved together in all sorts of things in hands-on ministry. That goes all the way from caring ministries – food hampers and things like that – through to missional activity, to Michael and people in his team joining us for staff meetings to discuss and plan and to give each other ideas.

"In many ways it looks like we're one church, but in reality it's actually a close partnership between two different churches."

Both men say they and their churches have benefited enormously from the partnership, personally and in terms of ministry fruit.

"One thing I've learnt is that when working alongside Aboriginal people, trust, friendship and then fellowship are earned in long-term love and listening," Mr Fortescue says.

"There have been fly-by-nighter ministry groups and agencies that have come here and then disappeared six months later, but what has made our partnership together so lovely is it's long-term and real. Often it's just sitting down and listening, which is something we miss in our culture, I think."

English for all nations



Members of Campsie church, young and old, celebrate at a church Christmas party.

CAMPSIE'S GRASSROOTS FOCUS ON NON-ENGLISH BACKGROUND LOCALS IS CONTINUING TO bear fruit, as a once Anglo suburb continues to reflect the increasingly multicultural blend of Sydney.

The rector at Campsie, the Rev Omar Anheluk, began at the church overseeing its Easy English service under then rector the Rev David Gilmour.

Now the main service at Campsie, the Easy English service includes an English lesson, with attendees provided a transcript of the sermon in advance. The sermon is also followed by a discussion time.

"When David retired and then I took over, the church as a group decided to actually stop the main English service and focus on the Easy English service," Mr Anheluk says. "That dovetailed nicely with English classes that I think have been running for about 30 years."

According to Bureau of Statistics data, roughly 75 per cent of people in Campsie were born overseas in non-English speaking cultures, and almost 22 per cent were born in mainland China.

Mr Anheluk says one of the key things he has learnt in the ministry is the importance of language to in-depth, relationship-focused ministry.

The church put on a new Mandarin worker, David Chang, in the Easy English service. Mr Chang and Mr Anheluk often trade preaching roles, with Mr Chang preaching at the Easy English service, and Mr Anheluk preaching in English, with translation, at the Mandarin service. Mr Anheluk says this is to avoid stratification in the church and to maintain its vision of being a church for all nations.

Restored and reopened



From left: the Rev Ben Boardman, his wife Kate, the Mayor of Wollondilly Cr Judith Hannan and her husband Neil, under a plaque that indicates the height of last year's floodwaters at St Mark's, Picton. PHOTO: Amanda Keats, afphotographer.com.au

REFURBISHED AND READY TO SERVE, ST MARK'S, PICTON REOPENED LATE LAST MONTH MORE than a year after a torrential storm caused flooding that affected not just the church but the wider community.

The 151-year-old church suffered extensive internal damage as a result of the flood on June 5, 2016, and since then the congregation has met for services in the nearby Wollondilly Shire Hall. While some elements of the previous church, such as the pipe organ, are yet to be reinstalled, the building can now once again host regular Sunday services and other activities.

"It has been a long 413 days, but we're thankful for the support of Wollondilly Shire Council, our insurers and our builder, Pagewood Constructions," says the rector of Picton, the Rev Ben Boardman. "We're also particularly thankful to God for the resilience he's given to his people in the inconveniences and difficulties of the past year."

The reopening service was followed by a barbecue lunch open to church members and the community, which also provided opportunities for visitors to explore the history of the site and chat to people from St Mark's.

"By one count we had 142 adults and 18 children on the day, so it was standing room only," Mr Boardman says. "We also had a barbecue lunch, live music and historical tours through the property."

Still to be repaired is the church's graveyard, a site of much historical significance for the local community. Many headstones were toppled by the floodwaters, and the graveyard itself is not covered by insurance policies.

St Mark's has established a repair committee to oversee fundraising works and community co-ordination to restore and secure the site, and aims to raise \$70,000 for the project.

Liberty grows

LIBERTY CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES IS PUTTING A different spin on its annual conference this year, splitting into three different events including, in a first for Liberty, a regional youth event tackling the question of whether God is anti-gay.

The new event is an attempt to broaden the scope of Liberty's work, branching into ministry to youth – for whom questions of sexuality and gender are often front and centre among their peers. The extended conference schedule has also dovetailed with an opportunity to invite a noted speaker on issues around sexuality and same-sex attraction, Sam Allberry, to Sydney.

"It actually came about through friends of ours with Living Hope SA in Adelaide," says the pastoral worker for Liberty Ministries, Allan Starr. "They'd booked Sam to come out and speak for this year but had the presence of mind to think that Liberty may be interested as well. It also happened to [link up] with a desire we've had to try and take our annual conference event further, particularly doing something for young people who may be trying to work out just what to make of faith and sexuality."

Mr Allberry (right), a pastor with St Mary's, Maidenhead just west of London, is the author of the book *Is God Anti-Gay?* and is himself same-sex attracted. He says in many respects the way we respond to issues around sexuality shouldn't be that different to how we react to any other kind of human failing.

"Most significant for our good pastoral care and witness to the world is for us to understand that the gospel treats us all the same," he says. "All of us are fallen in our sexuality; we all have disordered desires and afflictions of one kind or another. Therefore, we're all in the same boat. We're all sexual sinners in need of grace."

For the younger generations in our churches who, compared to their seniors, are far more conversant in issues of sexuality and of gender, the need to hear clearly how to approach such issues from the standpoint of faith is greater than ever, and it's a conversation that needs to go public.

"Those of us over 30 have migrated into this new cultural moment; we remember the time when society held to a broadly Christian view of sexual ethics," Mr Allberry says. "But those under 30 have never known anything else... we need to help the younger generation to understand not only the clarity of what God says on all these issues but also the goodness of what God says. My suspicion is that we've been weak at this."

Adds Mr Starr: "It's really the churches who should have been leading the way in opening discussion on these issues, particularly with the new generation. Ideally, we would have been having discussions about same-sex attraction in our churches 50 years ago, but we dropped the ball. We ignored it and people suffered in silence as a result.

"It's good that we can talk more easily about something that we should always have been prepared to discuss, even though it is a tragedy it took this long."



West conference open to all

FOR THE FIRST TIME, SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR LAY MINISTRY WORKERS AND LEADERS IN Sydney's Western Region will be part of the area's annual regional conference this month.

The event will continue to be an essential component of mandatory professional development for paid clergy in Sydney's Western Region, but the Bishop of Western Sydney, the Rt Rev Ivan Lee, is also keen for lay people working in a range of ministry roles to be supported and equipped by what the conference has to offer.

"We often talk about lay people and lay involvement, but we generally don't give them enough opportunities for training," Bishop Lee says. "Really, this year's conference is about training God's people, not just training our leaders, because everyone needs support in ministry."

Bishop Lee says that while there are often many specialised events and conferences throughout the year for the professional development of clergy, there is often very little for lay members in terms of equipping them for the particular roles they are regularly called to fulfil in local churches.

"This is, from my perspective, really an opportunity for us as a region within the Diocese to try and support lay people in a way that goes beyond provision of training through local churches themselves... as a region to be directly involved in the training of our lay people, so they can feel supported and confident in the work they are doing."

The basic structure of the conference will remain the same, but because of the widening of the target audience it will shift away from preaching towards more general ministry needs.

Workshops will cover a wide variety of different areas, including dealing with stress, how to serve effectively without having to burn yourself out to do so, church financial management, youth leader development, and starting and running women's ministries.

Bishop Lee and Archbishop Davies will speak at the main session, along with National Church Life Survey researcher Sam Sterland – who will give a presentation on the recent survey's findings – and Christian psychologist Valerie Ling, who will talk about stress.

"Valerie is a very good psychologist and we wanted to get her up there to speak," Bishop Lee says. "But [stress] is also a very general area that applies to everyone. Clergy and lay leaders can be equally vulnerable to stress and burnout, so it's an important topic for everyone to hear about."

"We tried to have a number of workshops this year which might be useful for people who are in both paid and unpaid positions."

Bishop Lee says people in volunteer positions in their church across a range of ministries and leadership roles in the West should feel invited to attend the conference for all or part of the day. It will be held on August 19 at MBM Rooty Hill, and is free.

"The key thing is that we're looking to those people who are in important leadership positions, in their churches, and are not staff, and to equip them through this conference along with the clergy," he says.

"So if you help out at the youth group or Sunday school, if you're involved in running a women's ministry, if you're running another ministry at your church, you're probably not on staff and are unpaid but likely would benefit from support and from further training.

"That's really what's motivating this change."

Provision for Pilbara



Get arty: team members create a mural at Tom Price Primary School.

A MISSION TRIP TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S PILBARA REGION BY YOUTHWORKS COLLEGE, BUSH Church Aid and Norwest Anglican Church has been a success for the third year in a row.

The annual trip grew partly out of ministry links between BCA's worker in Wickham, the Rev Richard Goscombe, and Norwest Anglican. It takes place over two weeks in Wickham, Wakathuni and Tom Price, in a range of different communities.

It's also an opportunity for Youthworks College students to gain ministry experience while providing support for the ministries of Mr Goscombe and BCA's worker in Paraburdoo and Tom Price, the Rev David Morgan.

"It's always a great time," says the college team leader, the Rev Tim Beilharz. "It's an encouragement to see strong local ministry and get involved in the work. In fact, one of our students on a previous trip, Mat Walk, was so impacted that he came home and took his whole family back over there to live and be involved in the ministry long term!

"Richard [Goscombe] does a lot of work, but there's just so much that could be done that to have a growing team just in Wickham is fantastic."

Ministry is provided to diverse communities and people with a range of social experiences, from mining centres and FIFO workers to remote Aboriginal communities – particularly Wakathuni, about 20km southeast of Tom Price. Youthworks students engaged in a variety of tasks, including running youth groups in Wickham and Wakathuni.

"One of our biggest things as Youthworks, of course, is running things with teens and families," Mr Beilharz says. "So we ran some kids clubs under BCA's 'Dusty Boots' label. That has traction now... families and other community people know that Dusty Boots is coming and get excited about it.

"Having that long-term connection and impact has helped with the effectiveness of the mission – and we did that in both Wickham up the coast and then Wakathuni further south. The more often we go back, the more response we get from the community. I think that [shows] the importance of annual mission."

More sales for Bathurst



Sold to pay debts: Trangie Anglican Church.

THE BATHURST DIOCESE IS IDENTIFYING MORE ASSETS TO BE SOLD – THIS TIME TO PAY FOR compensation for survivors of sexual abuse.

It comes just a year after the diocese was forced to sell its historic All Saints' College to defray debt repayments to the Commonwealth Bank.

The Supreme Court ruled last year that the Diocese of Bathurst had a legal obligation to repay borrowings which, with interest, had mounted to \$40 million. Those sales did not include churches or graveyards.

Now the Bishop of Bathurst, Ian Palmer, has appealed to parishes to identify further assets that could be sold to help fund a \$2 million compensation bill, on top of \$1 million already paid out.

Bishop Palmer wrote to church members saying the Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses To Child Sexual Abuse had highlighted the obligations of the church with regard to historical cases of abuse by members of the clergy.

"Often the damage to life, relationships, work habits, employment and such like can only be adequately met through the payment of redress," Bishop Palmer wrote. "I see it as a moral responsibility to respond with practical financial assistance."

The bishop appealed for parishes to identify assets surplus to requirements, although in some cases essential buildings have been sold.

He cited as an example the sale of the church building at Trangie in the parish of Narromine. Ministry has continued in partnership with the local Uniting Church.

Church flees into exile



Exiled: women who are yet to join other refugees in Uganda wait at the Logo camp inside South Sudan.

AN ENTIRE DIOCESE OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF SOUTH SUDAN IS OPERATING FROM NORTHERN Uganda after being forced to flee from civil unrest, leaving the main centre, Kajo-Keji, a ghost town.

The diocese was home to hundreds of thousands of Sudanese, including 280,000 Anglicans. As long-standing partners of the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid, operations and project manager Eddie Ozols flew to Uganda last month to investigate further ways of helping a church plunged into exile in makeshift refugee camps.

The first sign of imminent danger was in January, just four days after the consecration of diocesan Bishop Emmanuel Murye. Sudanese government soldiers carried out summary executions, torture, kidnapping and rape in Kajo-Keji.

"I sat stunned as Bishop Emmanuel reverently recounted that fateful day, listing six people executed as pawns in a national game of chess where the winner retains power and control of assets of this dirt-poor nation," Mr Ozols says.

"The bishop had spoken to each person's family, consoling them. Among the victims was a 32-year-old mother of seven: systematically raped, enduring grotesque obscenities before being eternally dispatched by bullets riddling her battered and abused body."

The attacks, designed to instil fear in locals, sparked an exodus of 98 per cent of the population across the border into Uganda. Those who fled are now housed in refugee camps, including Bidi Bidi – said to be the largest camp in the world with more than 250,000 people. The diocese's Anglicans are scattered across an area westwards to Rhino camp near Arua, which has 90,000 refugees.

"The diocese leaves behind buildings established over generations with the assistance of brothers and sisters worldwide – schools, hospitals, parish buildings and the diocesan headquarters," Mr Ozols says. Anglican Aid has helped secure offices for the bishop and his leadership team, overseeing a church in exile with 66 parishes and more than 100 ordained clergy.

"The needs, as expected, are enormous. Trauma counselling to address the spiritual emptiness of so many, again forced to resettle. The greatest need expressed by people in all the camps is education for their children, not food, [but] monthly rations are being reduced from half to quarter... this means instead of the recommended 25kg of maize per household it is being reduced to 6kg."

Mr Ozols says the Ugandan government generously prepared land for camps in anticipation of the people they knew would come. "Uganda knows a thing or two about persecution, many having spent years in camps in Sudan and Congo during Idi Amin's reign of terror. Aid organisations have come in to do the basics: food, water, health care."

Sadly, trauma and helplessness has led to some suicides. "I am told of a man who slashed his wife's throat, killing her and then cutting his own throat and living," Mr Ozols says. "Other people have eaten poisonous bush food to end the pain."

During a camp tour he was a guest at a makeshift school. "The romantic notion of Africans sitting under trees to be educated is quickly shattered as the reality sinks in of sitting in the open under the hot African sun, subject to seasonal rains, flies and other insects and the impracticality of a chalk board hanging off tree stumps."

He and Bishop Emmanuel were invited to speak. "What to say to children who have been through the horrors? I mention Australia. Some of them have relatives there. I explain Anglican Aid has provided support to the diocese to assist people in the camps. I tell them God loves them and many in Australia are praying for them and South Sudan. I speak about hope... God providing a better future for them."

GOSPEL EAST TO WEST

I was pleased to read of the Archbishop's recent visit to Norfolk Island (SC, July) and his description of the Christian ministry that commenced there nearly 230 years ago.

Countless thousands of visitors to this "speck under the finger of God" (James A. Michener's description in his *Tales of the South Pacific*) have heard the gospel preached from Australia's most easterly pulpits over many years.

Having served as the island's rector in the early 1990s, recently I was also given the opportunity of a short locum at Australia's most westerly church, St Andrew's-by-the-Sea, Shark Bay in the Diocese of North West Australia. Another fascinating, tourist-attracting church, unique in the world, built of local shell block.

Due to their remote locations, both Norfolk Island and Shark Bay present similar challenges: staffing, finance, resourcing. Yet in both places, as Dr Davies observed, "There is valuable gospel work to be done building up the saints and reaching out to the inhabitants and tourists".

We neglect ministry in remote areas to our peril. We need agencies like Bush Church Aid to keep reminding us there is a pressing and constant need for prayer, people and resources so that congregations of Christ's people may grow and flourish, far from the city limits.

Ron Watts
Haywards Bay

PREACHING, FROM THE PEWS

In reply to the June essay in *Southern Cross* ("Good news about preaching – a response") I would like to respond as one who sits in the pews.

Good preaching is a gift. Having listened to weekly sermons for more than 60 years, I would like to say some sermons may be academically excellent but do not connect with the person in the pew. Often they are far too long for the average concentration span so a lot of the content is missed when thoughts wander to other things.

If a vital section in the development of the point is missed, a totally different understanding may be reached by the person in the pew to the intention of the preacher.

John Scott suggests in his essay that the views and experience of the laity might be sought. I believe many preachers might be alarmed at the results if the congregation were asked to review the sermon, especially being asked what they now understand on the topic that was new or interesting to them. This would potentially be more alarming if their responses were anonymous.

The purpose of the sermon is to build up, to increase the knowledge of those sitting in the pews and spiritually encourage them.

If a preacher is not a gifted communicator/teacher (1 Corinthians 12) then they would be better giving a short sermon that seeks to get only one or two points from God's word across and concentrate on their area of giftedness for ministry. From time to time the minister/preacher could invite a known spiritually gifted preacher into their pulpit for the benefit of their congregation.

Not everyone can be a great preacher but everyone has been given spiritual gifts for the building up of God's church. All of us, including the minister, should be using the gifts God has given us.

S. Milling
Parkes NSW



MINISTRY... AND TRAINS



The **Rev Trevor Oakley** retires as rector of Lawson Anglican Church on August 13. Arriving in the parish 11 years ago, he was keen to offer support and encouragement to a church that was “struggling after some divisions, [in order] to help them to gain trust and offer for service again”.

“The people here have really desired to be fed on God’s word,” he says. “When they quote a sermon back to you a couple of weeks or months later, you know they’ve been listening!”

Mr Oakley has been asked to stay on as part-time acting rector for the next few months, which he’s very happy to do. He has always felt great warmth in fellowship and friendship from the people at Lawson, and receives a great deal of joy from what he calls “the privilege of ministry”. So, for him, ministry will go on wherever he is, regardless of his official work status.

“I feel blessed and honoured that I have been allowed many years to serve God’s people from the Shire to the southern highlands to the multicultural area of Punchbowl to the inner west and the Blue Mountains,” he says. But there’s a real strangeness when you retire. With other parishes you feel a call to move on. When you retire there’s no sense of call to move on, it’s just you’ve come to your use-by date!”

One of the things Mr Oakley is looking forward to is having more time to devote to his hobby of model trains and the ongoing ministry opportunities he has with fellow train enthusiasts.

“When you’re standing around a [train] layout the conversations that can come up are quite challenging,” he says. “I’ve been told about some of their struggles spiritually, with their marriages and other things. It’s an opportunity for them to just talk. And because a number of us are getting older I visit them in hospital, talk with them, pray with them before operations – even for some who’ve never been to church.

“That’s one of the things I hope to be able to continue doing. Linda and I would also like the opportunity to be able to do ministry in other parts of Australia. I’d just have to take some models there to build!”

CASTLE HILL CHAPLAIN

After almost seven years as rector of Beverly Hills with Kingsgrove, the **Rev Paul James** has joined Anglicare’s Castle Hill aged care chaplaincy team.

“Highlights of my time in the parish were seeing people grow in their faith and step into ministry roles, which has been a really great encouragement... the relationships we formed there will be the thing we really miss,” he says.

“Yet one of the things I think God has used to prepared me for aged care ministry is the wonderful group of older, mature Christians at Beverly Hills. They were just a real joy to serve and a great encouragement and I learned from them how to minister to them at their age and stage of life, and can now apply this to the way I minister to people here at Brian King Gardens.”

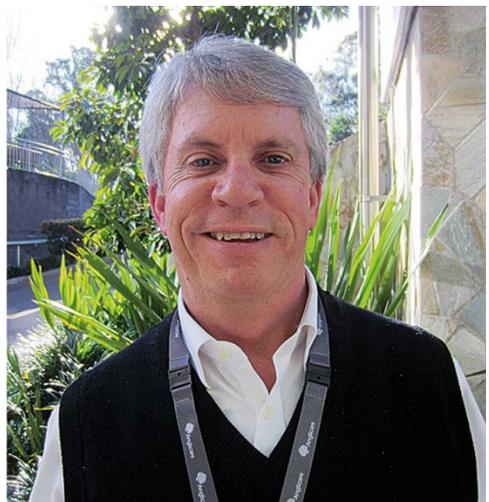
Mr James has dealt with depression for some years, and made the difficult decision in February to step away from parish ministry. He says the members of Beverly Hills with Kingsgrove were “wonderfully supportive” of him and his ministry, but he knew the most productive choice in the long term for them, and for him, was to “seek something else that would use my gifts and abilities”.

Within a month of making the decision to leave, Mr James caught up with a friend working in hospital chaplaincy, who told him “chaplaincy would be something I was very well suited to”.

“So, I pursued that and spoke to two of the chaplaincy managers at Anglicare, the second of whom was Andrew Heron at Castle Hill who I’m now working for!... I asked him whether he thought my gifts and abilities might be a good match. He gave me positive encouragement... there was a vacancy open which he encouraged me to apply for, and in God’s grace I was engaged to become the chaplain of Brian King Gardens at Castle Hill.”

Mr James began in his new role in mid-June and can now see how the move, and the timing of it, was “absolutely God’s doing”.

“I’m loving the work, and the people, and feel very much at home there already, which was something I’d anticipated would take much longer,” he says. “It just feels like an affirmation that, yes, this is what God had in store for me all along. It just strengthens you to trust for the ongoing future as well, that you literally don’t need to worry if you can’t see where God’s taking you.”



50 NOT OUT

It’s no small feat to clock up 50 years in any profession, and when **Dr Bryan Cowling** retired from his role as executive director of Anglican EdComm at the end of June, those who came to celebrate his work and wish him well weren’t just those he’d worked alongside for the past decade.

“[For my farewell] they managed to get people from each stage of my working life – people I’d taught with that I hadn’t seen for umpteen years!” he says. “I was able to celebrate that whole 50 years rather than just the past 10.”

Dr Cowling has done just about everything one can do in the education sphere. He’s worked as a classroom teacher, a consultant, a researcher, school inspector, regional director of education, state director of curriculum, director of vocational education and director of policy.

He was founding principal of Thomas Hassall Anglican College in 1999, and would have been happy to stay for the long term – but former archbishop Peter Jensen wanted him as the first head of the Anglican Education Commission and didn’t take “No” for an answer.

“He worked pretty hard to get me to come,” Dr Cowling says with a laugh. “I resisted at first – I wanted to stay where I was – but sometimes that’s the way God works. Whatever you learn in one context you take with you to the next one, and it opens the door into doing things with other people that you would never have done otherwise. It’s been a journey, and an exciting and challenging one – and I’d still be doing it if I thought I had the energy of a 30 year old!”

Archbishop Davies said he was “very grateful for [Dr Cowling’s] leadership in educational thinking and his holistic understanding of a Christian perspective on education, particularly in our Christian schools. Bryan leaves a legacy for future executive directors and a foundation on which to build for the future.”

For Dr Cowling, it’s important to “step up the efforts to recruit more Christians into teaching... We’ve made strides in the past few years but that needs to be maintained.

“We also need to get a lot more teachers who aspire to be leaders to start to think Christianly about leadership well before the jobs become available. If we want Christians who have maturity in their faith as well as education they’ve got to be thinking about that before they’re in their 40s!”



Making a name for yourself

IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG WITH AMBITION AND TAKING PRIDE IN YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS? **BRIAN ROSNER** INVESTIGATES.

MY SON'S PRIMARY SCHOOL HAS A TRADITION OF PLAYING A SONG OF THE WEEK TO GIVE THE preteens something to hum and ponder. One that caught my eye recently and got stuck in my own head was *The Script's* "Hall of Fame" (2012). It strikes all the right notes for a catchy tune as well as delivering an upbeat message of aspiration and ambition. Here's a sample:

Yeah, you could be the greatest, you can be the best
 You can be the King Kong banging on your chest
 You could beat the world, you could beat the war
 You could talk to God, go banging on his door
 You can throw your hands up, you can beat the clock
 You can move a mountain, you can break rocks
 You can be a master, don't wait for luck
 Dedicate yourself and you can find yourself
 Standing in the hall of fame
 And the world's gonna know your name.

Inspiring lyrics, no doubt. But what interests me is the way in which the call to shine and excel is framed. The goal is not just to do your best but to outclass your peers, to stand out from the crowd – or, in the words of the song, to "beat the world".

Two lines in particular piqued my interest: the notion of "banging on [God's] door" and the hope that "the world's gonna know your name". As it turns out, both ideas have a long prehistory, being used in the Bible as descriptions of hubris and prideful ambition.

My purpose is not to criticise the message of an uplifting song but rather to think about the inherent danger in all human ambition and the profound solution to the sin of pride that Christian faith offers.

Intriguingly, two texts from the Bible deal with making a name for ourselves and thinking the sky is the limit. Consider first the famous story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. Here, human beings set out on an ambitious plan that leads to the judgment of God: "They said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves'" (Gen. 11:4).

The builders were hoping to become famous for their achievements. Ironically, they did make a name for themselves, but it was not the one they were hoping for. Instead of gaining notoriety, as a more literal translation of the Hebrew of verse 9 indicates, God said of their city and tower that "its name was [to be] called Babel" (ESV); in Hebrew "Babel" sounds like the word for "confused". The name they made for themselves (v. 4) was one of derision.

Genesis 11 is not even the first time in the Bible that sin was associated with making a name for oneself. The first city in Genesis was also a place where someone hoped to immortalise a name: when Cain built a city in Genesis 4:17 "he named it after his son Enoch". Likewise, in Genesis 6:1-4 the "sons of God" also sought to make a name for themselves by marrying "the daughters of humans". Verse 4 describes the sons of God in question as "heroes of old, men of renown" or, literally, "men of name." To use a modern idiom, the sons of God were intent on "big naming" themselves.

God sees the aspiration of the builders of the tower of "babble" in Genesis 11 to make a name for themselves – just like Cain in Genesis 4 and the sons of God in Genesis 6 – as an act of rebellion. In the context of Genesis, to make a name for someone is God's sole prerogative. Gordon Wenham explains: "God promised to make Abram's name great (12:2) and also David's (2 Sam 7:9, fulfilled in 2 Sam 8:13). But elsewhere in Scripture it is God alone who makes a name for himself (e.g., Isa 63:12, 14; Jer 32:20; Neh 9:10). [With the Tower of Babel] mankind is attempting to usurp divine prerogatives."

We may add from the New Testament that Paul believed Jesus Christ's humiliation in death on a cross led to God giving him "the name above every name" (Phil. 2:6-11).

The tower builders' aim was not merely to excel or to make some outstanding contribution to society – something Scripture does not condemn. They sought fame and independence from God. In modern terms we might describe them as egotistical and narcissistic. The Bible equates such motivations with pride. And as the Tower of Babel demonstrates, "pride goes before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

However, the Tower of Babel was built with a second express purpose, that of "reaching to the heavens" (Gen. 11:4). It might be possible to regard building a tower as high as the sky as simply an exercise in human ambition. However, Genesis views it as a sacrilege.

Gordon Wenham notes that "the sky is also heaven, the home of God, and this ancient skyscraper may be another human effort to become like God".

God's response to the building project in Genesis 11:5-7 is in fact, dripping with irony. If the tower was meant to reach to heaven, God has to "come down" from heaven even to see it! As Isaiah 40:22 says, the Lord "sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers". Apparently God regards even our most outrageous ambitions as puny and insignificant.

As Marilynne Robinson writes in *The Givenness of Things*, "However triumphant our achievements may seem to us, to an all-competent observer we might appear entangled in a small, dense web of our own weaving".

As it turns out the Hebrew root of the word for "pride" means "lofty" or "high". And in the Old Testament pride, with its associated words, also carries this sense of vaunting oneself above others and is translated "loftiness", "height", "majesty", "exaltation" and so on. In Isaiah 2 the proud are compared to tall trees and tall ships.

Similarly, in the New Testament pride is to have an exaggerated self-conception, to be puffed up – as in, for example, 1 Corinthians 8:2: "knowledge inflates with pride" (HCSB).

The English language has the same understanding of pride reflected in idioms such as "looking down your nose at someone" and with terms like "arrogance", "haughtiness" and "big-noting yourself". Pride is thus a sin of comparison whereby a person sees themselves as superior to others. The proud want to be "looked up to" and inevitably look down on others.

It is thus no coincidence that God's resolve to punish the proud in the Old Testament is often expressed in terms of bringing them low. The judgment of Isaiah 26:5 is an echo of the demise of the Tower of Babel: "God humbles those who dwell on high, he lays the lofty city low; he levels it to the ground and casts it down to the dust" (cf. Prov. 15:25; 29:23).

Pride seeks the ultimate supremacy, not only over other human beings but also over God himself. At worst such "reaching for the sky" is enacted in deliberate defiance of God, or it is simply a matter of ignoring God. The proud act as if God does not exist – or at least will not hold them to account. They are too busy seeking elevation so they can look down on others to look up and notice God.

In Luke 10 Jesus sent out 72 disciples to preach about the kingdom of God and heal the sick. When they returned they were elated and reported to Jesus with joy: "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name" (v. 17). Jesus did not dispute their achievements. He responded: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (v. 18); he judges their work to be a "sky-high" achievement!

But then Jesus offers a gentle but firm correction: "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (v. 20). Apparently being known by God in heaven is worth more than the impressive achievement of causing Satan to fall from heaven or having fame on earth.

It is not that Jesus was teaching we should take no pleasure in our achievements. We must be careful not to take Jesus' rebuke of his disciples too absolutely. The "don't do this, but rather that" construction is a Jewish way of speaking that seemingly negates something in order to stress the importance of something else.

Luke 10:20 offers a salutary lesson for wannabe "high achievers". Jesus is saying don't seek your significance in your achievements, no matter how impressive they might be. We are worth more than our greatest accomplishments, which in the grand scheme of things are of little significance.

Those who look to such things to secure their identity and boost their self-esteem will be let down in the long run. God's esteem is of much greater value.

Our successes matter to us and to God. But finding our identity in our achievements is unwise. Having our names known to God and inscribed permanently in heaven gives our fleeting and feeble lives genuine and lasting significance and should lead to a healthy and realistic humility.

*Dr Brian Rosner is the principal of Ridley College in Melbourne. This article is adapted from his book *Known by God: A Biblical Theology of Personal Identity* (Zondervan), and first appeared in *The Melbourne Anglican*. Dr Rosner will deliver this year's New College Lectures from September 12-14 on the theme of personal identity.*

Honour marriage



DR GLENN DAVIES

MARRIAGE IS ONE OF GOD'S WONDERFUL GIFTS TO HUMANKIND. IT IS THE first "institution", so to speak – a personal and intimate relationship between a man and woman, each made in the image of God, and made for each other in the complementary union of a husband and wife. It is a gift not only to the man and woman united in marriage, but to their children born of this union, and to society as a whole. It is in essence a loving union, a stable relationship of two people, devoted to each other in an exclusive and permanent bond of body and soul.

Well, that is the ideal. It was initially true for Adam and Eve, but that changed when personal ambition, selfish desire and distrust in God's goodness all unravelled when they succumbed to the seduction of the Evil One, resulting in disobedience to their Creator God. Since then marriage has been between two sinful people, whose own personal ambitions and selfish desires need to be curbed if the union is to reflect marriage as God ordained it. The Form of Solemnisation of Marriage enshrined in the *Book of Common Prayer* encapsulates this well, by ensuring that the vows of the husband and wife reflect their wholehearted commitment to each other: "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance".

At each stage of the marriage service, God's holy ordinance is before the couple, reminding them that this new relationship is God's idea and not of human invention. Yet, as the narrative of the Old Testament unfolds, it becomes all too obvious that human sin distorts the loving intentions that should characterise a marriage, resulting in injury and damage to individuals, even to the extent of destroying the marriage altogether. For this reason, Jesus declares, Moses gave the people of Israel regulations for divorce. Owing to Israel's hardness of heart, God permitted, under certain conditions, the separation of married couples, with the freedom to remarry, notwithstanding this was not God's original intention (Matthew 19:1-12).

Marriage is currently under threat in our society, where the importance of keeping sexually pure before one's wedding is mocked by many commentators as old-fashioned and unrealistic. Many who choose to marry have already had a number of sexual partners; while many prefer the fruits of marriage in cohabitation, but without the covenant promise to do so "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance".

In recent days there has been a flurry of media reports about domestic violence and Christian churches. The accuracy and balance of these reports has been subject to criticism, not least by the ABC's own *Media Watch* and the quoted researchers themselves. However, I assure you I do not, and we should not, miss the underlying point. Exaggerated claims cause people to think domestic violence is everywhere; defensiveness causes people to think it is nowhere.

We should never be complacent about instances of domestic violence, wherever they may occur, as it is a travesty of the nature of marriage. Even one example of such evil behaviour, especially in the church, is one too many. For this reason, a task force was established to address the issue, to inform church members of the dangers of spiritual or emotional abuse, as well as physical abuse, and to provide counsel and assistance to those who are suffering such abuse. It will report in October. Secondly, the author of one of the cited reports (W. Bradford Wilcox, Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia) has responded: "My research indicates couples report significantly higher quality relationships if they attend church together... Indeed, in the US, the evidence suggests religious attendance reduces the odds of domestic violence".

Yet we need to be vigilant so that teaching from our clergy and lay leaders within the bonds of genuine fellowship in our churches encourages us to love each other, and especially for husbands to cherish their wives with that sacrificial love whereby Christ loved the church.

At the last Ministry Wives Conference a new resource was released written by the Women at Moore College group, with excellent articles and points of contact for those counselling women who are in abusive marriages and also those who find themselves in that situation.

As I stated in my Presidential Address to the Synod in 2015:

While I welcome this Task Force [on Domestic Violence], it grieves me that we need it. It is a salutary reminder of the corrosive effects of sin even in the believer, that men who profess Christ should treat their wives with such contempt, inflicting either verbal or physical abuse upon those whom they have promised "to love and to cherish, till death us do part". This is not the way of Christ. It should not characterise the bride of Christ... That Christian women are caught in such a vulnerable situation at the hands of those who abuse their responsibilities as husbands is both horrendous and inexcusable. It is therefore important that we address this issue with honesty, compassion and resolve, so that we may protect those who suffer any form of domestic abuse and find ways to prevent its reoccurrence, especially in the household of God.

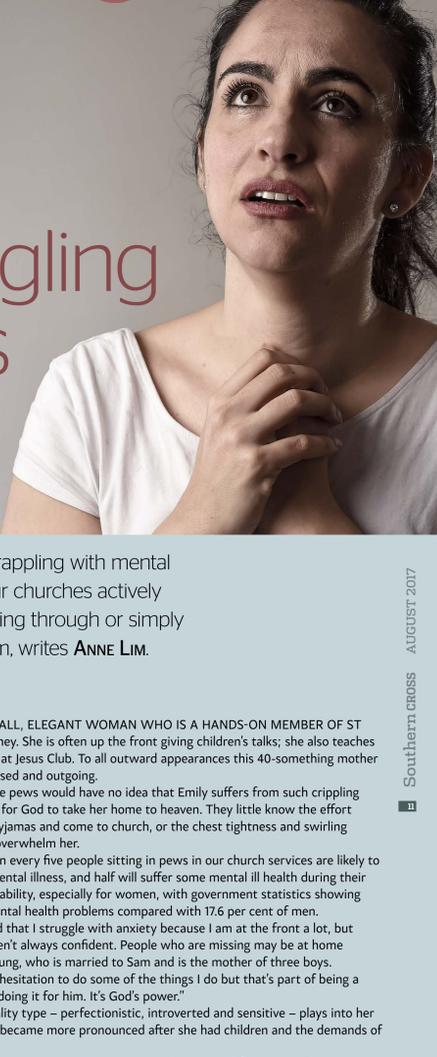
May we follow the Bible's instruction and the Prayer Book's lead by honouring marriage both within the church and in society as a whole.

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

Struggling saints



So many Christians grappling with mental illness feel those in our churches actively reject what they're going through or simply can't understand them, writes ANNE LIM.

EMILY FUNG IS A TALL, ELEGANT WOMAN WHO IS A HANDS-ON MEMBER OF ST Thomas', North Sydney. She is often up the front giving children's talks; she also teaches Scripture and leads at Jesus Club. To all outward appearances this 40-something mother is confident, composed and outgoing.

Most people in the pews would have no idea that Emily suffers from such crippling anxiety that she has often longed for God to take her home to heaven. The little know the effort it can cost her to get out of her pyjamas and come to church, or the chest tightness and swirling thoughts and worries that often overwhelm her.

The startling reality is that one in every five people sitting in pews in our church services are likely to be suffering from some kind of mental illness, and half will suffer with mental ill health during their lifetime. It's a leading cause of disability, especially for women, with government statistics showing 22.3 per cent of women suffer mental health problems compared with 17.6 per cent of men.

"Friends are often a bit surprised that I struggle with anxiety because I am at the front a lot, but people who come up the front aren't always confident. People who are missing may be at home because they can't face it," says Fung, who is married to Sam and is the mother of three boys.

"I do have to overcome my own hesitation to do some of the things I do but that's part of being a believer, trusting in the Lord and doing it for him. It's God's power."

Fung now sees that her personality type – perfectionistic, introverted and sensitive – plays into her tendency towards anxiety, which became more pronounced after she had children and the demands of life piled up.

"I like order, I like to know what happens next and my biggest challenge in life is having three boys because life is not predictable. It's extremely messy!" she says. "It's not ordered, and I've sometimes thought that it's like juggling – not three balls, maybe 20 – and struggling really hard to keep them all going."

"The other thing is my husband is an action person and while I'm juggling 20 balls with the kids he's lobbing in curve balls from the side. I'm trying to keep it going and everyone okay, and it is sometimes overwhelming."

When in the pits of anxiety, Fung's swirling thoughts and worries often rob her of hours of sleep, leaving her tired, teary and unable to face the world.

"Sometimes you can't stop sobbing, sometimes there's shortness of breath or just feeling a tightness in your chest. And at the very worst it's like, 'Just take me home, Lord.'"

Fung has seen a counsellor, takes medication every day to keep her symptoms at bay and now views her anxiety as akin to Paul's thorn in the flesh.

"I consider it hard, but it is actually God's gift to me because it's forced me to have complete dependence on God," she says.

"When I get to the end of myself, when I can't control everything, I come to him and I just throw myself on him and he's my everything. If I didn't have this then I wouldn't be so fully dependent on him."

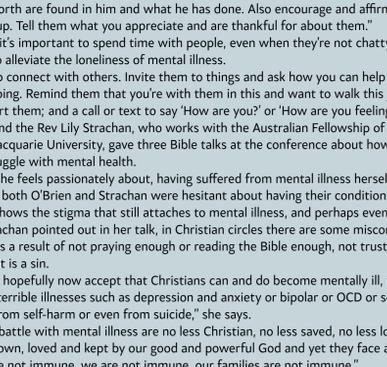
"I've come to realise that I'm not centre of the universe – I can't control the world. Psalm 46:10 says, 'Be still and know that I am God'. And that's a great reminder to me that he is sovereign, he's in control and I can't just leave the details to him. I don't know what'll happen next, but my challenge is to keep trusting him daily and... he'll take me where I need to go."

THE EXTENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS

- Almost half of Australia's population (45.5 per cent) has experienced a mental disorder at some point in their lifetime.
- Every year, about one in five Australians will experience a mental illness.
- Females were more likely than males to have experienced mental disorders in the 12 months before a Department of Health survey (22.3 per cent compared to 17.6 per cent).
- Mental illnesses are the third highest cause of disability burden in Australia, accounting for an estimated 27 per cent of the total years lost due to disability.
- About 14 per cent of Australians will be affected by an anxiety disorder in any 12-month period.
- About 3 per cent of Australians are affected by a psychotic illness such as schizophrenia, where there is a loss of contact with reality during episodes of illness.

- About 2 per cent of Australians will experience some type of eating disorder in their life, with women nine times more likely to experience this than men.
- Prevalence of mental illness decreases with age, with the numbers highest among 18 to 24-year-olds.
- Women are more likely than men to use services for mental health problems.
- According to a 2016 study by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, mental and substance use disorders were responsible for 12 per cent of the total burden of disease in 2011 – placing it third as a broad disease group after cancer and cardiovascular diseases.

The same study showed mental and behavioural disorders were the largest contributor (23.6 per cent) of the non-fatal burden of disease – a measure of the years of "healthy" life lost due to living with a disability.



Sources: The Australian Bureau of Statistics, Mindframe and Beyond Blue

STIGMA AND STRUGGLE

Fung was one of five brave women who gave testimonies about battling mental illness at a women's conference on mental health at St Thomas' earlier this year. Another was Briar O'Brien, wife of the church's youth minister Gerard O'Brien, a stay-at-home mum who has suffered from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and generalised anxiety disorder for more than 10 years. When the obsessions about cleanliness, intrusive thoughts and checking behaviours were at their worst, she says, she struggled to see God's purpose in her suffering and her faith was challenged.

"I know that over the past 10 years, and even now as I continue to struggle with this illness on a daily basis, that God is using it all to refine my faith, build my character and maturity and deepen my dependence on him," she says. "None of the struggle is ever wasted. God always uses it for his glory and to display his power in my weakness."

O'Brien is grateful for the way her continuing struggles enable her to bless others in her discipleship and pastoral care roles. "I'm able to help others in similar situations and empathise in a way that others can't. As Paul says, 'I've been able to comfort those in any trouble with the comfort I have received from God [2 Cor 1:4].'"

O'Brien's practical advice for those who want to help a friend suffering with mental illness is to spend time with them, be informed and stay in touch.

"Be real and ask deep and genuine questions," she says. "If you're concerned about someone, don't just ignore it – be informed; learn about mental illness and read about how to support those going through it. Don't be ignorant and base things on stereotypes."

"People with a mental illness often struggle with feelings of self-hatred and feeling useless, hopeless and worthless. You can help by reminding them of God's promises and who they are in Christ. Their identity and worth are found in him and what he has done. Also encourage and affirm them and seek to build them up. Tell them what you appreciate and are thankful for about them."

O'Brien says it's important to spend time with people, even when they're not chatty or fun to be around, to help alleviate the loneliness of mental illness.

"Help them to connect with others. Invite them to things and ask how you can help them feel comfortable going. Remind them that you're with them in this and want to walk this journey alongside them to support them; and a call or text to say 'How are you?' or 'How are you feeling?' never hurts."

O'Brien's friend the Rev Lily Strachan, who works with the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students at Macquarie University, gave three Bible talks at the conference about how to cling to Jesus in times of struggle with mental health.

It's an issue she feels passionately about, having suffered from mental illness herself.

The fact that both O'Brien and Strachan were hesitant about having their conditions written about in this article shows the stigma that still attaches to mental illness, and perhaps even more so in church. As Strachan pointed out in her talk, in Christian circles there are some misconceptions that mental illness is a result of not praying enough or reading the Bible enough, not trusting God enough, and even that it is a sin.

"Most people hopefully now accept that Christians can and do become mentally ill, that they are not immune from terrible illnesses such as depression and anxiety or bipolar or OCD or schizophrenia; nor are they safe from self-harm or even from suicide," she says.

"People who battle with mental illness are no less Christian, no less saved, no less loved by God. They are, in fact, known, loved and kept by our good and powerful God and yet they face a really horrible illness; they are not immune, we are not immune, our families are not immune."



Emily Fung



Hamish



Lily Strachan

“ Sometimes you can't stop sobbing, sometimes there's shortness of breath or just feeling a tightness in your chest. And at the very worst it's like, 'Just take me home, Lord.' ”

“ [The Lunch & Leisure Club] is very important because it gets me out of being at home and helps me forget my problems. ”

“ The lie that underpins all the lies is that my God is not good. This lie led me to all sorts of dark and lonely places. And this is what we must fight, moment to moment, with the truth of Scripture. ”

In addition to the many people burdened by depression and anxiety, our churches also open their doors to people with all sorts of complex problems such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder with psychotic episodes. Such people can be very challenging to love. So what should a church do when it finds someone's need for support is greater than its capacity to deliver?

"What I find is that people who are good, loving people sometimes have difficulty saying 'No,'" says Narelle Hand, senior manager of Anglicare's PHaMs (Personal Helpers and Mentors) program, which works with churches that share the vision to support people with mental illness.

"I talk a lot about boundaries, I talk a lot about a circle of security and support in a church. So if there's one person who needs a lot of support, maybe we can get a number of people around helping... and then maybe it's going to impact on their health."

Hand says the PHaMs program has the capacity to support churches when this ministry goes off course.

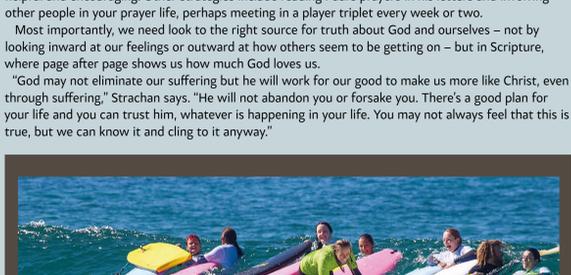
"For example, we help run art groups for a year and then, hopefully, we can move out and the church can run it and we go somewhere else," she says. "If things get hairy or anyone gets unwell we can come back in. And we wouldn't want to set anyone up to fail. It's about building that strength in our community."

She adds that even with her own professional skills and long experience, this type of ministry can still be full-on. "What you'll find with most people, I've learnt, is they are just as scared as you when their friends aren't working to capacity, when psychosis kicks in. When anything like that happens, people are terrified."

This means it's important for a helper not to try and juggle too much on their own.

"You might get connected with someone, and then things around their need for support might be greater than you can offer," Hand says. "So, doing what you can with the skills and resources that you have, but not going to an area where you're not comfortable – not feeling like you have to hold it all. A problem shared is a problem halved."

"The first thing I say when I'm training people is don't feel like you have to fix stuff. We can get help without having to take the responsibility of trying to fix someone's health."



LUNCH WITH THE FAMILY

Hamish sits quietly at the table as other members of the Riverwood Lunch and Leisure Club play a video game to raucously commentary in the cosy den at Riverwood-Punchbowl Anglican Church. He seems lost in his own thoughts, but as soon as he is asked why he comes to the L & L Club each week a beautiful smile transforms his face.

"Just for friendship," says Hamish, who lives alone in a local bedsit. "We all get on well and respect one another. It's very important because it gets me out of being at home and helps me forget my problems."

L & L Club co-ordinator Kerri Grant tells me Hamish used to work in a nursing home but when his anxiety worsened he had to give up work. But Hamish says in the five years he's been coming to L & L Club he's become "more confident, less self-conscious, more relaxed."

The parish's minister the Rev Jarrod Booker says the L & L Club was started more than 10 years ago by the then minister, the Rev Bruce Southwell, to provide a safe place and friendly community where people struggling with mental health issues could come for conversation and company, a healthy meal and interesting or helpful activities such as art therapy and music therapy. Once a term the group heads outdoors or somewhere special for an outing.

"These are not high-functioning professionals that come for a bit of help or support – they're people from the area that are really struggling with the day-to-day issues of life and coping, so it's very real, very raw," he says. "The group aims to help people with life skills as well and provide advice on dealing with day-to-day issues."

There she joined the group last year after participating in a mentoring program with the church ran with Health Department funding, which paired people with a suffering mental illness with someone in the community in one-hour weekly mentoring sessions. A sufferer of MS and depression who is in a wheelchair, There is a bright spark who has enjoyed making friends with people who is in a wheelchair.

"I used to come with a carer but they realised these guys are all my carers," she says. "They cut my steak up when we have steak, they give me a knife and fork and get me a drink. And they built me a ramp because they're caring people."

"I call them my diamonds – they are all gems. They have a story. You have to be able to sit with about what they're interested in and then they'll talk to you." She also loved being speak to them with the group in church last Christmas.

Kerri Grant has been involved with the L & L Club for the past 10 years, and says it's like family for some of the members because they don't have any contact with their own families.

Dolores, who used to run the group, now returns as volunteer cook because "we're committed Christians and we really believe in what's happening here".

DON'T DISMISS IT

Research shows some disturbing misconceptions about mental illness in Christian circles. For example, a US study showed 42 per cent of people with mental health problems had the illness dismissed in some way by their church. An Australian study in 2007 by Kristine Hartog and Kathryn Go found that more than a third of churchgoers attributed a demonic cause to mental illness, even to depression.

"Another far-too-common way of dismissing mental illness – generally by well-meaning Christians – is the myth that prayer is all a Christian needs," adds Max Schneider, the NSW director of the Australian Institute of Family Counselling, which provides courses to equip Christian counsellors.

"These views can result in the alienation of many who desperately need the spiritual support that the church is best placed to provide. Healing does require prayer, but prayer is sometimes not all that goes into healing."

While Strachan stresses the importance of getting medical treatment for mental illness, she believes the spiritual aspect of the sickness is just as real and important. Warped thinking amid suffering lead us to doubt God's goodness and believe Satan's lies about ourselves and God. The deepest and most important need, she says, is to trust in the goodness of God.

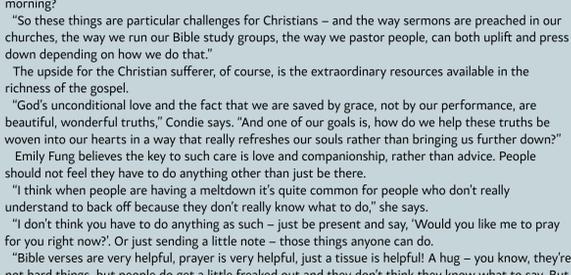
"In my depression, I believe the following lies: that there's no hope and I will never get better, that God is not good, that he doesn't have a good plan for my life, that there's no purpose to my suffering, that I will never be happy, that the Bible cannot help, that prayer cannot help, that God's people cannot help," she says. "And the lie that underpins all of the lies is that my God is not good. This lie led me to all sorts of dark and lonely places. And it is what we must fight, moment to moment, with the truth of Scripture."

Strachan reassures anyone suffering from mental illness that they are not "bad" Christians if they can't spend sustained time in prayer every day. "God knows how you are feeling and he rejoices in your simple cries for help," she says.

She suggests keeping a journal as a therapeutic and helpful way of pouring out your feelings to God and pleading with him to heal you. Looking back later to see how God has answered your prayers is helpful and encouraging. Other strategies include reading Paul's prayers in his letters and involving other people in your prayer life, perhaps meeting in a prayer triplet every week or twice.

Most importantly, we need look to the right source for truth about God and ourselves – not by looking inward at our feelings or outward at how others seem to be getting on – but in Scripture, where page after page shows us how much God loves us.

"God may not eliminate our suffering but he will work for our good to make us more like Christ, even through suffering," Strachan says. "He will not abandon you or forsake you. There's a good plan for your life and you can trust him, whatever is happening in your life. You may not always feel that this is true, but we can know it and cling to it anyway."



FREEDOM ON THE WATER

Mental health charity Waves of Wellness (WOW) foundation partners with Anglicare in a learn-to-surf experience for people with mental health issues, based at Bondi Beach and Cronulla.

"We're excited to have the support of Anglicare, which shares our passion for bringing innovation to mental health support," says the charity's CEO and founder, Joel Pilgrim. "We've had a couple of people say that the program has changed their life, and in one case a participant said the program had saved their life."

"Throughout the existence of the WOW program, we have heard some incredible stories of triumph over adversity. One participant noted he was on the edge of suicide and said without this program he wouldn't be around today. The program was the two hours of the week when he was able to not hear the voices in his head or have to rehearse everything he was going to say."

Anglicare support facilitator Mark Micelli also commends the results of the program. "It was an incredible experience seeing the participants gain confidence in themselves and their mental health recovery over the eight weeks," he says.

When it comes to the ocean, Pilgrim believes there is something about crossing the barrier of the shoreline that distances people from the challenges they are facing in everyday life.

"It's almost like a protective mechanism where you get out there and you get to be at one with the water but also just to escape off from those distractions and the negative stimuli that can impact us in society," he says.

Pilgrim and Micelli co-facilitate the weekly program, which begins with a half-hour wellness discussion on the sand before a 90-minute surf lesson.

"Instead of an uncomfortable hospital environment we're providing a really comfortable, collaborative setting for people to engage on the beach... and a lot of the time we find people are really able to open up because they don't feel threatened any more," Pilgrim says.

Adds Micelli: "As a facilitator, being able to see participants getting active, enjoying themselves but also having really meaningful conversations about mental health is hugely rewarding."

WOW has been running for just under a year, but existed for a couple of years before that under a different umbrella called One Wave. "The program was so successful that we decided to register WOW as its own charitable organisation," Pilgrim says.

About 150 young people have taken part in the program to date, along with about 60 volunteers. One of the volunteers is Nicola Travers-Robinson from Wild Street Church in Maroubra, who has found it a great way to connect with vulnerable people in the community.

"I thought it was incredible how well it was run to make it such an open and easy environment for people to talk about mental health," she says.

"The two guys who run it just make everything so normal, and I think the participants really responded to that. I learnt a lot of really practical things about what it meant to serve people in your community, and to love your neighbour beyond the neighbour that you know and try to identify with anyone."

Travers-Robinson says the facilitators work hard to blur the line between the volunteers and the participants, so that it simply becomes a group of people rather than patients and helpers.

"We definitely had nothing but positive feedback... the discussion part was great because there were amazing strategies, and the practical part was great because exercise and being outside are such important things for mental health," she says. "It was really cool to see that people were experiencing it and the difference it made in their mental health."

She is looking forward to continuing as a volunteer when the program starts up again in October.

SUFFERING AND RESPONSE

Former Moore College lecturer on pastoral care, Dr Keith Condie, believes churches need a more robust theology of suffering to balance the message of the world that people can have whatever they want and achieve anything.

"It's not true," he says. "Life is hard. When it comes to suffering, how will they respond to that?"

He also wonders if church services are sometimes too upbeat for someone suffering a mental disability.

"If you're depressed and you come to church and everybody's happy and all the songs are upbeat, do we send a message, 'This is a place for people who've got their lives together and are doing well'? he asks.

"I wonder how we lost the something from the fact that at church we don't say the psalms any more – because the largest part of the psalter is lament. And where is our lament? Where is the place where the someone who is really struggling can cry out to the Lord?"

The most helpful thing the psalms do, Condie adds, is head off our natural instinct to withdraw from God when life is going badly; instead they give us "God-ordained language" to cry to him in lament, then move from lament to praise.

Condie and his wife Sarah are the inaugural directors of the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute, an innovative project of Anglican Deacons Ministries. They have drawn up a strategic plan – of prevention, equipping and supporting – to help churches care for their flock, especially those who have mental health concerns.

"We've come up with a three-pronged strategy," Condie says. "The first one is prevention. We've got a real heart for anything we can do to work at the preventative level of mental illness."

Their plans include providing access to parenting resources to help strengthen families, plus developing the biblical concept of friendship to build church communities.

Condie believes that when Jesus asks in Mark 3, "Who are my mother and brothers?" he powerfully redefines family along faith lines rather than merely biological bloodlines – and cites research showing that the number one thing needed to sustain a healthy life, whether someone is mentally ill or not, is social support.

"Isolation is a killer, it's as dangerous as smoking – that's what the research is showing," he says. "So we're trying to think of a suite of resources that can be made available over the coming years that will strengthen marriages, strengthen families and church communities."

He believes the porn epidemic, social media and work stress are all contributing to an increase in anxiety. He quotes Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showing a threefold increase in the incidence of anxiety in the three years from 2011-12, when 3.8 per cent of the population had an anxiety condition, to 2014-15 when it had jumped to 11.8 per cent.

In the second prong of their strategy, the Condie's hope to build a website in 2018 filled with helpful material on mental illness that is accurate medically, psychologically and theologically – as well as being comprehensible to the untrained reader. They also hope to run courses for pastors and people in pastoral ministry.

SUPPORT

"The third area is the actual supporting," he says. "How can we care? What can we do to provide care for people in the midst of mental illness and also help to care for the carers, because the carers always bear a very significant load as well."

Condie believes senior ministers are key to reducing the stigma attached to mental illness, "because the senior minister shapes the culture of a church, both consciously and unconsciously."

"The mental health of senior ministers is important, but also those ministers need to be prepared to speak about mental health up front and make helpful applications in their sermons, recognising one in every four or five people sitting in the pew is likely to be suffering from some form of mental illness."

He believes a sermon has the capacity to uplift or depress a Christian suffering mental illness. "For Christians carry extra resources, but also extra challenges, when it comes to mental health," he says.

"When we read in the Bible, 'Do not be anxious', so what happens when you are feeling anxious? You add guilt onto your anxiety, which makes you feel worse, so it becomes even more crippling. Or 'be joyful' is the command from Philipians and you're feeling completely depressed and there's not a joyful bone in your body – again it makes you feel worse. They were called upon to serve people and be other-person centred but how do you feel about that when it's a huge struggle just to get up in the morning?"

"So these things are particular challenges for Christians – and the way sermons are preached in our churches, the way we run our Bible study groups, the way we pastor people, can both uplift and press down depending on how we do that."

The upside for the Christian sufferer, of course, is the extraordinary resources available in the richness of the gospel.

"God's unconditional love and the fact that we are saved by grace, not by our performance, are beautiful, wonderful truths," Condie says. "And one of our souls is, how do we help these truths be woven into our hearts in a way that really refreshes our souls rather than bringing us further down?"

Emily Fung believes the key to such care is love and companionship, rather than advice. People should not feel they have to do anything other than just be there.

"I think when people are having a meltdown it's quite common for people who don't really understand to back off because they don't really know what to do," she says.

"I don't think you have to do anything as such – just be present and say, 'Would you like me to pray for you right now?'. Or just sending a little note – those things anyone can do."

"Bible verses are very helpful, prayer is very helpful, just a tissue is helpful! A hug – you know, they're not hard things, but people do get a little freaked out and they don't think they know what to say. But what to say is not really the issue. It's just loving people and being alongside them for the long haul."

RESOURCES

Books

(available from www.reformers.org.au and www.koorong.com)

- God is Enough*, Ray Galea
- When I Don't Desire God*, John Piper
- When the Darkness Will Not Lift*, John Piper
- Depression: Looking Up from the Stubborn Darkness*, Edward T. Welch
- Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts*, Jerry Bridges
- Spurgeon's Sorrows: Realistic Hope for Those who Suffer from Depression*, Zack Eswine
- How Long, O Lord*, Don Carson
- Suffering Well*, Paul Grimmond
- A Path through Suffering*, Elisabeth Elliot
- I'm Not Supposed to Feel Like This: A Christian Self-Help Approach to Depression and Anxiety*, Chris Williams, Paul Richards and Ingrid Whitton
- When I Am Afraid*, Edward T. Welch
- Living Without Worry*, Timothy Lane
- Anxious for Nothing*, John MacArthur
- The Silent Shades of Sorrow*, Charles Spurgeon
- Is Your Teen Stressed or Depressed?* Dr Arch Hart and Dr Catherine Hart Weber
- Unmasking Male Depression*, Archibald D. Hart
- Dealing with Depression: Trusting God Through the Dark Times*, Sarah Collins and Jayne Haynes
- Christians Get Depressed Too*, David Murray
- Being There: How to Love Those who are Hurting*, Dave Furman
- Nightscape: What to Think About Instead of Worrying*, Timothy Witmer
- Trust: A Godly Woman's Adornment*, Lydia Brownback
- Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission*, Amy Simpson

PHaMs

Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) is a Government-funded program for people aged 16 or over whose lives are severely affected by mental illness. Case managers and peer support workers provide mentoring one-on-one and in groups to support individuals towards recovery.

PHaMs is based at the Anglicare office at St Mary's, Waverley and also has a close partnership with St John's, Maroubra where many of the PHaMs special events are held.

PHaMs groups include:

Anglicare art space – free arts-based program for people who are experiencing, or who are at risk of, mental health challenges. Creative and encouraging, plus re-engagement with community. Contact narelle.hand@anglicare.org.au or phone 9798 1400

Technology group – learn to use technology (iPad, mobile phone, digital camera, internet, email, Excel, PowerPoint etc), bring your own device, one-on-one teaching.

Waves of Wellness – surf therapy. Meet like-minded people and use learning to surf to manage mental health and wellness.

FoodREDI – learn about healthy eating, food preparation and food budgeting.

POPPY playgroup – supported playgroup for families with children under five experiencing mental health challenges, or families with young children with a disability. Contact www.anglicare.org.au for more information on 9700 4000.

<https://www.anglicare.org.au/directory-category/mental-health>

Websites

Christian Counselling and Educational Foundation | www.ccef.org

This Way Up | www.thiswayup.org.au

Beyond Blue | www.beyondblue.org.au | 1300 224 636

Black Dog Institute | blackdoginstitute.org.au

Lifeline Australia | www.lifeline.org.au | 13 1114

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Humanity's value and dignity



When the world tells us some lives are more important than others, the Bible shows us how different God's view is, writes **PETER ORR**.

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT ONE OF THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS behind almost every Hollywood thriller? It is the value of human life. Basically, because we value human life, the hero or heroine will bend over backwards to ensure that the nerve gas isn't released into the city's gas supply, or stop the nuclear warhead from being detonated.

These movies would be pretty short if the heroes simply did a cost benefit analysis and concluded it would be too expensive to save the city. No, the underlying assumption is that human life is precious.

But when we try and analyse why human life is valuable things get a bit more tricky. As Christians we know that human beings are created in the image of God and animals are not. But when we are pressed we often find it hard to say more than that.

Increasingly, though, it will be important that we are clear on the value of humanity since, as Western society turns its back on its Christian heritage, voices are being raised that loudly question the assumption that there is anything special about humanity. A prime example of this is the argument some years ago by Australian philosopher Peter Singer, in the journal *Metaphilosophy*, that to favour human life over animal life is actually a form of "speciesism".

The Bible gives us a different perspective, and perhaps the clearest example of its perspective is in Psalm 8. David asks the question in verse 4: "what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" And the psalm gives us three parts to the answer.

1. Human life is valuable because even in its weakness it brings glory to God (v.2)

The first point David makes is that God's glory – his strength and his majesty – is shown in the weakest member of humanity: "Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger".

Even young children praise God – their mouths can testify to God's strength and that silences those who oppose him. That is how Jesus uses this psalm in Matthew 21:16 as he enters Jerusalem and people complain about the children heralding his entry.

The idea is also that God proves his strength in that he can sustain even the weakest member of the human race. If anything shows humanity in its frailty it is a baby. What chance of survival does a baby have if left on its own? But even more, what chance does a baby have when it is surrounded by the type of people described in this verse: foes, the enemy and the avenger? A baby wouldn't stand a chance. But God declares his greatness in saying that he can and does sustain infants and nursing babies in this situation.

Children give God glory – whether by specifically praising him, or implicitly through the fact that he sustains them. Thus the value of the weakest, frailest human life is that it testifies to God.

This perspective is by no means universally held. Peter Singer has denied that all human life is equally valuable in a series of distressing statements: "Human babies are not born self-aware, or capable of grasping that they exist over time. They are not persons... Killing them, therefore, cannot be equated with killing normal human beings". Further, he argues, "It does not seem wise to add to the burden on limited resources by increasing the number of severely disabled children".

The message of this psalm couldn't be more different. Humanity, even in its weakest form, is purposeful and valuable because it gives God glory.

2. Human life is valuable because in its dominion it displays the glory of God (vv.3-8)

In the psalm David actually hesitates as he considers the position of humanity. He looks at human beings in relation to the universe and, in fact, to God himself. He looks at the vastness of the universe and he can't fathom why God should care for mankind when we seem so insignificant. And the universe is only the work of God's "fingers" (verse 3). The image is that God spun this vast universe into existence off the end of his fingertips.

But it is this vast, powerful God who creates the universe so effortlessly that gives humanity its dignity:

"You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas" (vv5-8).

In these verses David is echoing Genesis 1 and he underlines the dignity of humanity over and above the animal world. Our dignity stems from the fact that God has crowned humanity and given us dominion over all of creation. Nothing in creation is excluded. Humanity was created to rule it all. Human life is valuable because in its dominion over the rest of creation it displays the glory of God

And so, because of this placement and positioning by God, human life is more valuable than animal life. The fundamental difference between a day-old baby girl and a day-old kitten is that the baby girl has been given this position above the rest of creation. Human life is valuable because in its dominion over the rest of creation it displays the glory of God.

Yet there is a problem with all of this. It just doesn't seem to fit with our experience of the world. We don't seem to be able to control the world like this psalm supposes. This psalm just doesn't seem to fit in a world that is ravaged by sickness, disease and death. And so really this psalm awaits a greater fulfilment. Someone of whom these words could be truly said. Someone who is "humanity" personified.

Perhaps as David was writing this psalm he was not so much reflecting on everyone around him, but rather looking forward to someone who would fulfil all that human beings were meant to be. And that is precisely how the New Testament writers understood it.

3. Human life is valuable because of Jesus! (vv.1-9)

Hebrews 2:5-9 reflects on Psalm 8 in relation to Jesus. In 2:9 the writer names Jesus as the one who fulfils this psalm. He fulfils the psalm by becoming a man, undergoing the suffering of death and then, being raised from the dead, he is crowned with glory and honour. Jesus is the man supreme, the true son of man.

The writer also notes that even now we don't see this world as it should be: "at present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him" (v.8). People still die; people still rebel against God. This is not the world of glorious, perfect dominion that the psalm promises us. But the writer has already alerted us to that in 2:5; he is applying the psalm to "the world to come". We will not see Psalm 8 ultimately fulfilled until this world is restored by Jesus when he returns to consummate his rule.

And so Psalm 8 shows us that human life – even in its weakest form – gives glory to God. We were created with a dignity given by God but our dignity is marred. As such, when we look at humanity we can't help but get a confused picture.

And so there is a tension that runs through each human being... except one. Because there is one who fulfils this psalm perfectly. Jesus has been crowned with glory and honour. And although we do not see everything subject to him, when this world is renewed he will be seen as its rightful king and Lord.

So, crucially, this is the ultimate answer to our question. Why is human life valuable? Human life is valuable because God became a man in Jesus. Jesus remains a man and always will remain a man. God has crowned and glorified humanity in Jesus.

When we have no objective truth to appeal to all we can appeal to is economics: "It does not seem wise to add to the burden on limited resources by increasing the number of severely disabled children".

It will increasingly fall to Christians to care for the weak because our society will no longer have any reason or desire to do so. And so it is crucial that we, as Christians, take the message of this psalm to heart and see that all humanity is valuable. Because of Jesus we can love, cherish and value all men, women and children. May God help us.

Dr Peter Orr lectures in New Testament.

Answering reasons why

ST PAUL'S, CASTLE HILL HAS HOSTED an event looking at bullying and suicide in response to the TV show *13 Reasons Why*.

The Netflix series tells the story of Hannah Baker, a teenager who has killed herself and left behind 13 tapes for 13 people, detailing her reasons and their part in her suicide.

While receiving acclaim in some sections of the media, it was also criticised for its perceived graphic – and perhaps even glorifying – depiction of suicide, depression, bullying and rape. It's these reasons that led St Paul's to dig into the issues further through a public event, and explore what the Christian faith can bring to them.

"*13 Reasons Why* was one of the most watched shows in Australia when it aired, and when the kids I lead are watching things, I try to keep across it and watch it, too," says St Paul's youth minister the Rev Pat Jones.

"I watched it and I thought there was both a lot of good and a lot of bad that can come from this. It made me nervous, and given it's an issue people at our church have had to deal with, I thought it was important for us to actually address it and talk about it."

The night saw two key presentations: a biblical perspective from the rector of St Paul's the Rev John Gray, and an analysis by clinical psychologist Collett Smart.

"Collett's kids attend our youth group, she loves Jesus and is sold out for youth ministry – and she's a university lecturer and public speaker on these issues – so she was really perfect to have come and speak for this," Mr Jones says. "But she'd be the first to admit that exegeting the Bible isn't her key strength, so it was good to have John speak as well, not just as the senior minister of our church but also as a member of the Hills Youth Suicide Task Force."

Mr Jones says that parents in particular seemed to value the event, an unpacking of issues that are frequently unseen by many in the church. "I think a lot of youth wrestle with these kinds of issues, either themselves or through friends, but I think for youth leaders and parents the struggle is just how to respond when their kids bring it up. Just having a few things they could do or say makes a lot of difference."



Katherine Langford as Hannah Baker in the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*.



Big heart

JUDY ADAMSON

The Big Sick

Rated M

IF YOU CHOSE FILMS ON TITLE ALONE YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE THAT ENTHUSIASTIC about *The Big Sick*. It's an unappealing – not to mention clumsy – name for a movie. But when it comes to the story, at least you're clear on one thing before you sit down with your popcorn: it's not going to be your average romantic comedy.

So let's get that bit out of the way. Yes, it is about boy meets girl and all that goes with it, particularly in a modern context (read: sex, although it's more spoken of than seen). It's also an essentially true story, written by comedian-actor Kumail Nanjiani (*Silicon Valley*) with his wife Emily Gordon about the beginning of their relationship more than a decade ago in Chicago.

The pair meet when Emily (played by Zoe Kazan) sees Kumail perform his stand-up routine one night at a local club. They get talking afterwards, and a one-night stand ensues – at least, that's what they both insist it is at the time. Yet a curious and quirky relationship develops, and that seems to suit them both very well.

Of course, Kumail doesn't breathe a word about this to his parents because, as a supposedly good Muslim Pakistani boy, they expect him to marry a Muslim Pakistani girl.

There are strong echoes of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* at this point, and that's understandable. For starters, Kumail is "playing" himself. Second, the family's cultural expectations are frequently played out across the dinner table, just as they are in MBFGW. And although Kumail doesn't live at home, his mum introduces him to a potential bride every time he comes home for dinner. He politely accepts the photo each girl brings with her, adding it to a growing pile at his house, while his mother cherishes hopes of him giving up comedy for a real career. If only she knew.

This is engaging enough, but if it had been all there was to *The Big Sick* the movie would have been eminently forgettable. Yet once the "sick" of the title appears the reverse happens: the story grabs you by the neck and doesn't let go.

Kumail gets a call from a friend of Emily's in the middle of the night to say she's collapsed and is in hospital. They've recently had a bust-up but he doesn't hesitate, rushing straight to her bedside and contacting her parents once she's placed into a medically induced coma to stabilise her quickly worsening condition.

The doctors don't know what the matter is and try desperately to find out, while Kumail determines to stay in the loop – despite being rebuffed by Emily's prickly, straight-talking mum (a hoot of a performance from Holly Hunter) and her dad (Ray Romano). He's now realised he loves Emily but, for a comic, his timing is lousy: the folks are dubious and she's unconscious. Will she love him when she wakes up – if she wakes up?



Culture is a major co-star here and it's funny stuff, but the bedrock of the film is the way *The Big Sick* deals with love in all its complicated, unmissable, crazy, life-changing glory.

We know that kind of love from our Creator, but the love that everyone experiences in families and relationships reflects this, too. What else can open you up to such hurt, as well as joy, but love? When else can someone mean more to you than you do – changing your outlook on life, your priorities and your goals? As Emily's dad says, love isn't easy... but none of us would be without it.

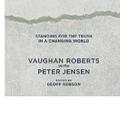
Yes, there's innuendo here and yes, there's bad language (hardly surprising in a film with stand-up comedians!), but *The Big Sick* has tremendous heart and that's what you remember after the credits roll.

Contend for the faith

NIGEL FORTESCUE

Faith in a Time of Crisis

by Vaughan Roberts with Peter Jensen, edited by Geoff Robson (Matthias Media)



WHY INVEST TIME IN READING A BOOK ABOUT CONTROVERSIES AND DIVISIONS WITHIN the Anglican denomination?

With this question the editor of *Faith in a Time of Crisis* opens a book that is timely, essential reading. The answer to his question is, of course, that in the controversies and divisions the gospel is at stake. It is no longer reasonable to assume that the bloodlines of British politeness that run through Anglicanism will hold the Communion together.

The fractures caused by the actions of some Anglican leaders over the past two decades have exposed the reality that at least two different gospels are being preached and believed in the Anglican Church across the world. With this in mind, Roberts and Jensen write to encourage, urge and compel us to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

In typical Roberts style the book is surprisingly short, easy to read and filled with engaging illustrations and sharp pastoral challenge. Several questions were added to my "discuss with staff" list as I read the five chapters that unpack the True Gospel, True Sex, True Love, True Unity and True Faith – the last written by Peter Jensen.

Drawing on solid exegesis, the Anglican formularies, the example of some of the heroes of the faith, scientific research and personal example, the book winsomely draws us back to listen to our gracious God who loves us. We know he loves us because he has spoken to us in his authoritative word of the gracious sending of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We know he loves us because he has called us to off track because much of this is denied and distorted.

The sharp edge of the evidence of this distortion is the acceptance of homosexuality within the Anglican Church. Throughout the book Roberts comes back to this reality repeatedly but is at pains to say that the real issue is about how we view, interpret and apply the Bible and the shape the gospel takes as we do so.

In Chapter 1 he helpfully exposes the way Enlightenment thinking has led to the disintegration of the "true truth" of Christianity and the adoption of a gospel that sounds "comfortable, safe and middle class". In Chapter 2, the fruit of individualism is shown to be insecurity and isolation while the fruit of the gospel is seen in the freedom and fulfilment of sex and marriage as God designed.

In Chapter 3 love is rescued from being an empty, insipid feeling and instead is filled with principled grace and loving, practical care. In Chapter 4, Christian unity is explained as an unavoidable spiritual fact, not a virtue to be pursued at gospel cost.

Finally, in Chapter 5, Peter Jensen forthrightly urges us to see that in these days of indifference and opposition, those who live by faith may need to make difficult and costly decisions if we are to remain as bright lights in the darkness. He calls for true faith that breeds true courage.

This is a book written by people of gospel conviction who are calling all those with gospel conviction to stand for that gospel. And it is not just for Anglicans. In a recent Twitter exchange on these issues, an Independent Baptist friend said that the destruction of the gospel was happening in his circles as well.

Don't just read this book and lament. Read it and prayerfully allow it to help you work out how you will contribute to the need to contend for the gospel today.

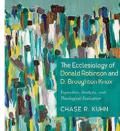
The Rev Nigel Fortescue is the senior minister of Campbelltown Anglican Church.

Forgotten revolution

ROB FORSYTH

The Ecclesiology of Donald Robinson and D. Broughton Knox: Exposition, Analysis, and Theological Evaluation

by Chase R. Kuhn (Wipf & Stock, Eugene, Oregon)



DURING THE 1960S AND EARLY 1970S A REVOLUTION OCCURRED IN THE DIOCESE OF Sydney over how to think about church. That revolution continues to have a significant impact, especially as today its main conclusions are simply taken for granted.

The then principal of Moore Theological College, Broughton Knox, together with the vice-principal Donald Robinson, rethought the crucial question of what the church actually is, and where may it be found. Although, rethought from different perspectives each church actually is, and where may it be as the Bible was concerned, can only be that which gathers together. The word, and the theological weight behind it, cannot be legitimately used to refer to any organisation or entity that is not gathered together.

Linguistic and exegetical considerations led Knox and Robinson to the understanding that the Bible referred to the church in two "places" only. There is the actual visible gathering of Christian congregations at various times and places on earth. And there is the continual spiritual gathering of believers in heaven. In both cases the gathering is around, and centres on, Christ.

Neither Robinson nor Knox produced a major work on the doctrine of the church (ecclesiology). Rather, their positions were presented in a more piecemeal form in numerous journal articles, speeches, polemical writings and occasional papers. It is surprising that it has taken more than 40 years for a systematic exposition and evaluation of their view to be attempted. This is what makes Chase Kuhn's work so welcome and valuable.

After some preliminary material, most of the book is taken up with a separate treatment of Robinson and then Knox. Kuhn expounds, summarises and briefly evaluates each man's teaching on church and then in a short conclusion makes some observations of comparison and contrast. Kuhn has put us in his debt by enabling us to hear again the voices of the real Robinson and Knox rather than letting their names simply be attached to a well-known doctrine.

Donald Robinson is the deeply creative and insightful New Testament exegete, Broughton Knox the deceptively simple big picture theologian. Robinson grounds his discussion of church in the history of God's promises and fulfilment in the biblical story. Knox, to the surprise of some who know only a caricature of the Diocese of Sydney, centres it in the broader category of friendship and a vigorous understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit.

A reader at home in the Diocese will find much that is familiar, not least the acknowledgment of corrosive impact on ecclesiastical structures and authority in the "Knox-Robinson" doctrine of the church.

However, some things will come as a surprise. Both Knox and Robinson thought the purpose of the church gathering was worship, although worship understood in a nuanced way. Even more controversially, Knox and Robinson contended that the church has no mission to the outside world. Individual Christians and organisations most certainly may, but not the Christian gathering around Christ.

Those who might be tempted to take "parish rights" comfort from Knox-Robinson will be disconcerted to realise that, in this doctrine, parish church structures are not really church either. Only the actual occasion of the meeting congregation is church. Theologically the parish council and the diocesan Synod are apiece.

Kuhn's PhD is not without its shortcomings, both in style and substance. It has too much of the underlying PhD about it. The evaluation of Robinson and Knox is deferential and tentative and there are signs that Kuhn is not fully at home in the subtleties of Anglican polity.

Further, I suspect he has not fully understood Robinson in attributing to him the settled conclusion that "there is no ecclesial authority beyond the local church because there is no church on earth apart from the local church" (p.95). I was surprised that Robinson's important monograph on the ordained ministry, *Ordination for What?*, was not discussed in the book or even mentioned in the bibliography.

Notwithstanding such reservations, it is to be hoped that Kuhn's book stimulates a revival in Knox-Robinson studies. There is more to be done. Times have moved on.

Robinson and Knox developed their thinking in the context of ecclesiastical overreach by the World Council of Churches and the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia. Today's more chaotic ecclesiastical world is very different and throws up very different issues. What implications does the doctrine have in today's context?

Again, significant further research would be welcome into Peter Jensen's back page insight that Knox and Robinson's "ecclesiology helped equip a generation to minister effectively in a post-Christian world". Is this so and why?

There is also the question whether Knox-Robinson, like all of us in the '60s and '70s, had far too thin a doctrine of the value of institutions. On the bureaucratic organisation of what an institution is, Knox is perfectly right to say there is no sign of the ecclesiastical institution in the New Testament (p.177). But with a richer understanding of institutions as morally purposeful patterns of life that enable humans to flourish we may find there is indeed institutional thinking in the New Testament itself.

Further research sympathetic to Knox-Robinson but with a more sophisticated understanding of institutions would be most interesting.

It might have been a while coming, and it may only be a beginning, but *The Ecclesiology of Donald Robinson and D. Broughton Knox* is a significant and timely publication.