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'[In Christian congregations] we have real people in real human love desiring not to be separated but to be together, but that is because as lost creatures they have found themselves together before God in his grace.'
 K. Barth, *Philippians*, 20.

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THE BISHOP FROM BELGIUM

WITH MUCH PRAISE TO GOD, AND WITH GREAT joy, the *Australian Church Record* extends warm congratulations to Rev. Chris Edwards in his appointment as the next Bishop of the North Sydney Region in the Diocese of Sydney. With this exciting decision to see someone with such varied ministry experiences at the helm, *Mark Earngey* took the opportunity to interview Rev. Mr Edwards and find out more.

1. Chris, you shared feelings of both trepidation and joy concerning your upcoming episcopal appointment. What is it about the role that brings about those feelings?

I am very aware of the enormous expectations people place on their leaders. They want them to be wise, clever, entrepreneurial, brilliant at speaking, winsome in every way and available at the drop of a hat. At least that's what I expected of my leaders! I feel I may have said 'yes' to more than I will ever be capable of.

At the same time, in 20 years of congregational leadership, Belinda and I have shared some of our deepest joys. We have been invited into people's lives, seen some come to faith and others rekindle what had been left to go cold. I have been stretched by teaching the Bible, often in places and at times when the message it contains is unwanted and unwelcome. And yet there is a joy that comes when the truth of the Bible has sunk into me deeper and deeper so I could, in turn, live in the light of that truth and, where possible, teach that truth to others. And I am looking forward to that joy continuing as I exercise a teaching role in a new and different way—as a Bishop.

2. You mentioned that many have been asking, 'Who is Chris Edwards'? Since training at Moore Theological College, and your curacy at St. George's Engadine, you've spent 17 of the last 20 years outside the Sydney Diocese. Where you have been?

We loved Engadine and the church loved us. They showed us so much about what it is to really love one another. And it was practical and profound.

That made it tough leaving Sydney, but leave we did and we went to Adelaide, to Holy Trinity. But what a great bunch of people we met there and what a fantastic team to be part of! They knocked off some of the rough (Sydney) edges—even the ones we didn't know we had, and they walked with us—and still do.

After 5 years in the city we left with a crowd around us to plant a church in the Adelaide Hills. We all saw God do amazing things there to us and through us. Yes, the attendance numbers grew (thankfully) but the greatest growth we witnessed was in people's lives; the depth and the maturity of their faith. Including our own.

Then we were invited to Brussels. Many of the ministry methods we had tried in Australia (with some success) didn't necessarily work with expatriates.



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THAT'S SIMPLY MARVELOUS

Steve Carlisle



SUMMER IN AUSTRALIA. CHRISTMAS and Cricket.

The Ashes are about to begin again in the world of cricket. A cricket series between two nations, with vast history and rivalry. The homeland versus the colonials. England versus Australia. The series no doubt will be full of tension, excitement and drama for those interested in the sport. In the words of the famous commentator, Richie Benaud, it will be 'marvellous'.

Have you ever stopped to consider the trophy these nations play for? It stands only 6 inches tall, and is housed in a cabinet at Lord's, the home of cricket, in order that it will not be damaged or destroyed. It is claimed that the small urn contains the ashes of a burnt cricket bail dating back to the late 1800's. This trophy is small, weak, and in so many ways, outwardly insignificant. In fact when the winning captain holds the replica trophy aloft at the end of

the series, it is fair to say that the scene is almost comical, that something so insignificant could be so celebrated and revered.

The Ashes might remind us of something else which is of infinite value, and yet often times is considered to be insignificant, unworthy of our attention, or even foolish. The Cross of Jesus Christ is this prize, the trophy, the thing Christians celebrate and revel in. Though at first glance, the death of an innocent and perfect man on a cross seems unlikely to be worthy of celebration, the Bible reminds us that the 'message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us being saved it is the power of God'. The Cross of Christ has the power to save sinners like you and me. In the cross Jesus wins a victory over sin and death and restores our relationship with God. Jesus' death on the cross may not be fashionable, popular or outwardly significant, but in his cross we have the trophy we hold high, for here we find forgiveness, restoration and peace with God. Now that's truly 'marvellous'. ☺

I'M AN ALIEN. ARE YOU?

Alison Blake



I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT ALIENS recently. A friend had made some alien themed cupcakes for the school fete. Think Toy Story - bright green icing, three googly, lolly eyes and antennas. With the faint sound of Sting singing "I'm a legal alien" in the background, my Biblical mind turned to 1Peter 2 in

the NIV Bible - "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that ...they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

God's people expect to feel out of step with the people around us, like the Old Testament people of God. If we don't feel like "legal aliens", then perhaps we've a case of mistaken spiritual identity. You see, my identity is shaped by Jesus' life, death and resurrection and his plans, purposes and promises. I'm a citizen of heaven, looking forward to a new heaven and earth, the home of righteousness. A genuine loyalty to King Jesus and his kingdom can't help but re-style all I do, say, think, live for, hold precious, and even die for. And in twenty first century Australia, that's certain to be ridiculed, regarded as out-

dated, politically incorrect, even offensive, in the eyes of those who don't grasp the truth about Jesus.

What are some of the distinguishing marks of the alien Christian? Peter highlights gentleness, respect, hospitality, grace, goodness, kindness, and love and unity among fellow believers. Our purity, contentment, humility, self-control and faithfulness will mean we don't fit the cultural mould. Are we preparing ourselves, and our children, to live holy lives in a world that doesn't value righteousness?

Whilst the lives of God's aliens will cause offence to some in the watching world, to others our selfless love, certain hope and unmoveable faith in the face of suffering may be strangely attractive. Are you ready to explain your alien lifestyle to earth citizens? That's a far more real and exciting tale than any alien movie!

Is your life looking distinctly alien? How are you helping your home family and church family live as citizens of heaven and strangers in the world? If you teach adults and children God's Word, how are you helping them live as Christ's aliens? ☺

**Marks of the alien...
gentleness, respect,
hospitality, grace, goodness,
kindness, and love and unity.**

EDITORIAL

CHRISTMAS AGAIN? THE APPEARANCE BEYOND ALL APPEARANCES

THOSE WHO LOVE TO CELEBRATE LOVE TO CELEBRATE Christmas. For all kinds of reasons, but all of them good: family, food, fun, gift giving—or gift receiving.

The Scrooges amongst us will find some damper to put on the rest of us: consumerism purportedly running rampant, a time of loneliness or grief for some, family tension for others, perhaps too much Santa and not enough Christ. Where is the ‘true meaning’ of Christmas?, they grumble.

We all know too well that Tinsel has the appearance of celebration, but often appearances cover over the deeper troubles we are all so prone to in this fallen world. But Tinsel is also an apt symbol of a Christianity long on appearance, but short on reality. There is a Christianity, even at Christmas time, which has ‘a form of godliness but denies its power’ (1 Tim 3:5).

People often say Christmas is about giving, which speaks of grace. This, from God’s point of view, is reality. They hardly ever say it is about keeping rules and regulations. This, from God’s point of view, is merely appearance. So if we don’t celebrate law at Christmas time, why is it so often part of what is called Christianity? Perhaps it is an attempt by the Scrooges to bring about the change that we all so desperately want and need, so that we can celebrate in some kind of ultimate or perfect kind of way. But this means to that end is thoroughly misguided.

Christmas remembers the greatest appearance of all time in the birth of Jesus Christ. In his letter to Titus, Paul spoke of this as the appearance of ‘the grace of God that offers salvation to all people’ (2:11); the appearance of ‘our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ’ (2:13); the appearance of ‘the kindness and love of God our Saviour’ (3:4); and the subsequent appearance of ‘the hope of eternal life... promised before the beginning of time... now brought to light through the preached message’ (1:3).

Law does not change people. The grace of God does. We are justified by grace alone, through faith alone. It is only if we grasp the freedom of justification by faith alone that genuine good for others will flow just as freely.

In Titus, each time Paul mentions the appearance

of the grace of God in human history, he immediately shows how grace received becomes grace given. This is the ‘knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness’ (1:1). It is the appearance of the grace of God that ‘teaches us to say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope’ (2:12–13). When ‘our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ’ appeared he ‘gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good’ (2:14). When God’s kindness and love appeared, ‘he saved us, not because of works, but because of his mercy’ (3:5), through the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, so that ‘having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life’ and, having trusted in God for this glorious future, ‘be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good’ (3:5–8). And doing what is good is not just for those inside some religious ghetto, with their misguided rules protecting them from the threat of the world, ‘these things are excellent and profitable for everyone’ (3:8).

The birth of Christ was the appearance in our world of the grace of God in a concrete form that now stands there forever, for everyone to see. At Christmas time every human being has the opportunity once again to take a good look. There we see the end of powerless, moralistic religion, with its pathetic attempts to enact real change in this needy world. But there, too, we see the grace of God—the amazing freedom of justification by faith alone!—and this is the secret to world-renewal, starting from the grass roots up. The appearance of Christ is the end of religion by appearances only. It is the beginning of real power. It brings about the renewal of the human heart, a reality which always strains ahead to the blessed hope of eternal life, with its promise of the grand regeneration of all of creation.

Christmas is a time for the celebrators and the Scrooges to get together and say, ‘Take another look at Jesus in the past. And bring on the future that Jesus promises!’ 



The Australian Church Record has served Australian Christianity since 1880, seeking to promote independent and evangelical thinking amongst Australian Anglicans. Since 2004 the publication has been online. Back issues are on the website, which also enables notification emails to be requested. www.australianchurchrecord.net

The Australian Church Record is an evangelical newspaper in the Reformed Anglican tradition of the historic creeds and the 39 Articles of Faith, and the standard of teaching and practice in the Book of Common Prayer. We accept the Scriptures as God’s word written, and as containing all things necessary for salvation and the final authority in all matters of faith and behaviour.

Publisher: Australian Church Record

Executive Editor: Peter G. Bolt

The Australian Church Record is designed and typeset by Lankshear Design

Australian Church Record. ACN 000 071 438

All enquiries: PO Box 218, Camperdown NSW 1450

THERE IS MORE TO NOVEMBER THAN MOVEMBER

Peter Bolt

AS WELL AS THE MONTH WHEN *other* MEN SUDDENLY start looking more handsome, November seems to be emerging as a month for raising awareness of significant social issues that must surely be kept on the agenda, and of causes in which Christian people should also become more actively involved.

Movember is genuinely home-grown (sorry!). 'From 30 Mo Bros in Melbourne, Australia, in 2003 to 4 million Mo's by 2013, Movember, through the power of the moustache, has become a truly global movement that is changing the face of men's health' (<http://au.movember.com>). Its goals focus on men's health, prostate and testicular cancer, mental illness. And they do it all by improving men's looks remarkably—at least for a month!

The 19th November is International Men's Day (www.internationalmensday.com). After small and erratic beginnings in the early 90s, the day moved to

November in 1999 and gained strength internationally. At the first Australian rally in 1994, participants wore a red rose to symbolize the 'strength of character and courage in

Evangelical Christians look back with great thankfulness to the involvement of our [...] English forebears.

meeting the challenges men face in building better, safer communities and in reaching their full potential'. The Day focuses on the health of men and boys, but also seeks to 'improve gender relations, promote gender equality, and highlight positive male role models'. It is an opportunity to celebrate men's 'achievements and contributions, in particular their contributions to community, family, marriage, and child care'.

'Men make sacrifices everyday in their place of work, in their role as husbands and fathers, for their families, for their friends, for their communities and for their nation. International Men's Day is an opportunity for people everywhere of goodwill to appreciate and celebrate the men in their lives and the contribution they make to society for the greater good of all'.

Alongside this agenda to appreciate positive male influence, the day also seeks to 'highlight the discrimination against them'. Although it has proved much more difficult to gain widespread acknowledgement of such discrimination, there are currently healthy signs that

the community is becoming more aware.

Following hard on the Men's day, Universal Children's Day (20 November) has been around since 1954 (www.un.org/en/events/childrenday), seeking to promote international togetherness and awareness among children worldwide, as well as children's welfare.

With roots back to the early 1900s, International Women's Day is not a November celebration, but since 1975 it has been celebrated at the other end of the year on March 8th (www.internationalwomensday.com). However, in 1999 the UN declared the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and since it first began in Australia in 2003, November 25th has become White Ribbon Day (www.whiteribbon.org.au). With several extreme and high profile examples of male violence against women amongst our sporting heroes in recent years, the Australian Campaign has grown in strength by recruiting prominent men to publicize that they have taken the white ribbon oath, in an endeavour to provide alternative positive role models.

Although of much more recent origin, World Vision has encouraged Churches to hold special focus services at the end of November (24th in 2013) for Abolitionist Sunday (www.worldvision.com.au/takeaction/AttendEvents/AbolitionistSunday.aspx). Evangelical Christians look back with great thankfulness to the involvement of our late 18th early 19th century English forebears' contribution to the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave trade. This



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THERE IS MORE TO NOVEMBER THAN MOVEMBER (CONTINUED)

Sunday is part of a new abolitionist movement seeking to do something about the millions of men, women, and children who are being exploited through human trafficking, contemporary slave labour, and especially the countless numbers of women and girls enslaved to serve the prostitution and pornography industries. Human trafficking is estimated as a \$32 billion industry. World Vision hopes that Governments in our Region will have a

A new abolitionist movement seeking to do something about the millions [...] being exploited.

comprehensive anti-trafficking policy by 2015. One concrete local initiative emerged in 2011, when more than 110,000 Australians called for an ambassador to end human trafficking, although such a person is yet to be appointed. Human Trafficking is driven by the rules of supply and demand. Vulnerable people just seeking to survive are tricked, threatened, or kidnapped by those who seek to exploit them for their own profit. This is an immense global problem that should be constantly on the prayer lists of those who value the freedom in Christ that makes us free indeed, and so a special day to focus such prayers in church is surely a welcome initiative.

Future Novembers promise some good opportunities for Christians to join together in common cause with our fellow human beings. In the lead up to the celebration of the birth of the one who came as the Saviour of humanity, November provides numerous opportunities to remember the reason why he came into this sad and sorry world. Wearing our white ribbon, our red rose, and bedecked with some kind of struggling or glorious moustache, Christians can work towards a better world now, while we proclaim that Christ's best world, while yet to come, is nevertheless sure and certain. ☺



www.flickr.com/PaulArps

Slavery then and now

	From 1450 – 1900, slavery legal	Present day, slavery illegal
Extent	approx 11 million slaves ¹	Estimated 10 to 30 million slaves ²
Cost per slave (profitability)	equivalent to \$40,000	\$80 – 400

Human Trafficking right here right now³

- 2.4 million people are lured and trafficked at any given time
- 80% victims are women and girls
- 15-20% of victims are children
- 80% of cases are for sexual exploitation

Human Slavery: a US \$32 Billion industry⁴

- Estimated global annual profits made from the exploitation of all trafficked forced labour are US\$ 31.6 billion

Of this:

- US \$15.5 billion – 49% – is generated in industrialized economies
- US \$9.7 billion – 30.6% is generated in Asia and the Pacific
- US \$1.3 billion – 4.1% is generated in Latin America and the Caribbean
- US \$1.6 billion – 5% is generated in sub-Saharan Africa
- US \$1.5 billion – 4.7% is generated in the Middle East and North Africa

How many slaves work for you?

Take this little quiz.

<http://slaveryfootprint.org/survey>

Because it crosses international borders, steps taken with business and trade might be more powerful than Governments which often can't. It is a start for individuals to:

- Become aware and talk it up
- Pray
- Shop Ethically: Research the things you buy⁵
- Dress Ethically: see Ethical Fashion Guide⁶
- Do not use internet pornography and help others not to use it either.
- Write to politicians and local councils to act morally in regard to prostitution and vice.
- Do something rather than nothing

1 <http://slaverysite.com/Body/facts%20and%20figures.htm>

2 <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/2011/03/04/modern-day-slavery-a-problem-that-cant-be-ignored/>; <https://www.freetheslaves.net> puts it at 27 million.

3 United Nations office of Drugs and Crime (<http://www.unodc.org/blueheart/>)

4 Patrick Besler, *Forced Labour and Human Trafficking: Estimating the Profits*, working paper (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2005).

5 <http://www.worldvision.com.au/act/ShopEthically.aspx>; There is a Shop Ethical! App for your phones.

6 www.baptistworldaid.org.au/get-involved/be-vocal/ethical-fashion-guide/

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THE BISHOP FROM BELGIUM (CONTINUED)

But bible preaching and regular bible studies made a big impact. We were 'standing on the shoulders' of those who had gone before us. Home groups already existed, many ministries were up and running and, despite the flavour of the Diocese being anything and everything, the Church was evangelical. The challenge in Europe was leading the Church so it could stay evangelical! Being expats, once the GFC started to bite, corporations pulled their executives out, families were called 'home', and 50% of the congregation left in one year! Finding and training new leaders and Sunday School teachers, musicians, technicians and welcomers—meeting budgets... It was exhausting.

New people arrived but many not used to Bible teaching. Reading the Bible together and praying weren't part and parcel of what they thought small groups did. They might do some charity work, have meals together and organise outings but the groups were primarily vehicles for English speakers to meet each other. So we 'converted' them. We introduced Christianity Explored to some, we developed Bible studies that followed the preaching series and slowly God turned things around.

In Brussels we were again included into the lives of families, loved and cared for and we left there with relationships that have been sustained across thousands of kilometres and now many months.

3. Turning our attention to the Northern region, what are some of the particular Gospel opportunities you would like to see flourish in the near future?

The Northern Region has great Churches with some really well taught and well equipped leaders. I would love to see them embrace opportunities for ministry. I hope the 'Jesus brings ...' campaign might give us the impetus and opportunity to think outside the box for how we might work together, to share strengths, and to really let the North know the great blessings Jesus brings.

4. Having worked in contexts with significantly varying levels of evangelical heritage, what would you describe as the current challenges to the Gospel in a context such as Sydney?

We have only been back in Sydney for 18 months so maybe I don't have a really clear view of all that's happening—so I am cautious about what I say here. And Sydney is a complex place.

But in many ways the challenges we face here are the same as the challenges any Church in the west faces. People are putting their hopes in 'things' and they ignore God or they don't trust Him. So whether it's mainly

materialism or hedonism or atheism—or a mix of these and more, take your pick, but whatever '-isms' people latch onto will challenge us because we want people to look to God but they will try to gain security, joy, purpose and meaning by themselves. People won't want God or to hear about Him. But hey, that's not new! But I think it remains a challenge for us.

I think that some '-isms' may be a challenge for us too. What I mean is, the Diocese is large and impressive and we may be tempted to rely on our size, or our history and heritage or our resources. It's the temptation to think, 'If only the financial pinch wasn't so tight; if only we had a bit more money we could crack this city.' We need to watch out for the gods of our age who claim they will solve our problems—even in the church. It won't be money that will turn hearts back to God. In Adelaide and in Europe, where evangelicals are in the minority, you aren't tempted to rely on the funds of the Diocese. And I think it taught us to pray more.

In Europe (and possibly the US and Canada) the big issue for evangelicals is around the uniqueness of Christ. I don't sense the issue is as large here (yet). But we tend to catch whatever is being spread over there. It's why I think our preaching really needs to teach people about Jesus' uniqueness. Our preaching needs to expose the scriptures so people understand how Jesus is different and how his ways are not our ways. We need to mention Jesus by name and not allow our language to give way to fluffy notions of 'god'.

5. Of all the verses of Scripture, which of the biblical gems is the most precious to you?

Romans 9:16 'So then it does not depend on human will or effort but on God who shows mercy.'

We can fall too easily for a new form of righteousness by works: 'The more (Christian) work I do, the more I am saved—or the more people will be saved.' I don't want to condone complacency but I want people to realise it is God, who is rich in mercy, who we must depend on. Not our efforts, or glossy brochures or slick performances. So when we pray, 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' we should mean it. Not my will. Not my effort.

And I have to say that I can only conceive of doing my new role in light of this passage. That is I am comforted to know that people's salvation won't depend on me; my effort or my will. But God is giving me a great opportunity to work alongside his people to make known the words of Jesus. In the very next chapter Paul says, 'faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ'. So I need to know Jesus' words so I can let other people know them too. ☺

GAFCON BY NUMBERS

Gav Poole



Gav Poole with Stanley Ntagali (Primate of Nigeria). The GAFCON Primates are an important aspect of the representational nature of the movement.

WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT—SOME DO NUMBERS AND others don't. Numbers don't scare me. I can read a profit and loss statement and know the questions to ask. To me, combinations of 10 digits tell a story. Others would rather read a Greek manuscript than a balance sheet. They just want a report to cut to the chase—"is this good or bad news?"

GAFCON 2013 was staged in Nairobi during October this year. It produced a lot of numbers—1358 delegates, 331 bishops, from 38 countries, 5 days (getting sleepy yet?), staying at 9 hotels, using 1500 lanyards, costing \$1.8 million, using 40 reams of paper (you are getting very sleeeeeeepy).

Indeed, the sheer scale was something to behold. Producing a five page draft statement for each delegate was a mammoth task. Think about it—that's 14 reams of paper. If the average domestic printer prints 22 pages a minute, that will take almost 5 1/2 hours to print. All that for a five page document!

There is a lot that could be said for GAFCON. The program was top class. The mini-conferences were informative, the praise music inspiring and the talks challenging. Paul's letter to the Ephesians was a wonderful choice of text. It was also an opportune moment to network with brothers and sisters from around the world.

The real test of a great conference however must be measured in its outcomes. The conference produced the Nairobi Communique (<http://gafcon.org/news/nairobi-communicue-and-commitment>). This was truly written by the delegates. Each of the mini-conferences contributed to the overall wording which was edited by a team of writers. The draft statement was then studied and

discussed in provincial groups, which made recommended changes. These changes were then incorporated into a final document which was adopted by standing ovation.

The statement made significant claims. GAFCON self-proclaimed itself as an, 'effective instrument of communion during a period in which other instruments of Communion have failed to uphold gospel priorities...' It recognised non-Canterbury Anglicans like the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and the Diocese of Recife. It recognised the new Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) and affirmed that certain cross-provincial ordinations and consecrations will be required. The conference committed itself to putting the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GFCA) on a new footing, making financial resources available for expansion and organisation. This could change the shape of the Anglican Communion.

All of this would be somewhat presumptuous if GAFCON was a small outfit, somewhere in the communion. I couldn't imagine a local church coming out with these claims. We want to know that the statement has weight, gravity... teeth. It all depends on who said these things.

GAFCON claims that it 'represents tens of millions of faithful Anglicans worldwide'. In fact it has been claimed that GAFCON represents the 'majority' of the world's practising Anglicans. That would certainly be a convincing number but how are Anglicans represented? Were those delegates appointed to speak or act on behalf of a constituency?

This is where the GAFCON Primates' Council is important. This has been a fluid group with Primates retiring or losing their primacy. There are currently 8 GAFCON Primates.

They are certainly not the majority of Primates in the Anglican Communion. They do however come from the larger Anglican provinces. But are Primates considered to be representatives of their provinces? Australian Anglicans certainly wouldn't talk about their Primate that way.

Then there were the Bishops—331 of them. That is a significant amount. The group also included 31 non-Canterbury Bishops (the type who would not be invited to Lambeth). Episcopal presence was large in number and scope.

And then there is the Nigeria factor. As the largest Anglican Province in the world, we are simply not going anywhere without them. The presence of the 480 Nigerian delegates was clearly felt and you can be assured that they are GAFCON backers.

A final document [...] was adopted by standing ovation.

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GAFCON BY NUMBERS (CONTINUED)

38 countries ensured diversity but keep in mind that some of those countries had only one delegate. You can hardly say they represent their countries. There were also notable absences, particularly from South East and North Asia.

Representation is difficult to achieve. You can come close through a preferential representation voting system. This ensures that the people who attend represent the majority of their constituents. The delegates were chosen by the GAFCON Primates' Council members. This may change in the future but a sophisticated voting system is probably too costly and complicated.

All depends on what is meant by 'representational'. The fact is that all GAFCON members and sympathisers could not be present at the one meeting. If it was important to have a large number of key Anglicans from a variety of locations then GAFCON was a success. We should recognise the magnitude of that achievement.

GAFCON was representational in that it was a significant gathering of Biblically minded Anglicans from different parts of the world, who shared a desire to see the gospel proclaimed

throughout the Anglican Communion and the disaffiliated supported. It demonstrates that there are huge numbers of Anglicans who believe there is a cavernous gap between the Anglicans who remain committed to Biblical truth and those who support the revisionists. It demonstrates that there are a significant number of Anglicans who believe the traditional instruments of communion have failed to call the revisionists to repentance and to offer support for the disaffiliated. It demonstrates a desire to take matters into our own hands rather than wait for the officials to act.

GAFCON is representational enough to make people sit up and listen. Some even consider it dangerous. For others however, it has provided a lifeline and offered hope for the Anglican Communion. Without it, many would have jumped ship and given up on the Anglican Communion long ago. It's not a matter of numbers but a matter of alignment with gospel truth and distance from the anti-gospel forces that have spread throughout the communion. There is little doubt that GAFCON has made a significant impact on the Anglican Communion for the time being. 

SOME SPACE TO MARVEL

Mark Earney

CHRISTMAS IS A WONDERFUL SEASON. NOT JUST IN the sense of joy, rest, relaxation and peacefulness—but in the proper sense that it is full of wonder.

And yet how often is this season consumed by the haste of preparing presents, lunches, family (dis)functions, running the Gingerbread house event, getting the jumping castle reading for the Kids service, and finally knuckling down to write the Christmas sermon itself—the list could go on!

Yet as the list goes on, perhaps the full wonder of the incarnation of the Son of God can sometimes escape us during this wild flurry of activity? Imagine being in the shoes of Simeon from Luke 2. Imagine becoming so activist and busy with our righteous duties, that we'd not have had the time to rush to the temple courts, hold the Messiah in his arms, look at Him and marvel at the 'light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel'? Imagine that—not having the time to pause and marvel at the incarnate Son of God who is full of wonder?

But marvel we must! 'For even if the Word', Calvin writes 'in his immeasurable essence united with the nature of man into one person, we do not imagine that he was confined therein. Here is something marvelous: the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without

leaving heaven, he willed to be borne in the virgin's womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet he continuously filled the world even as he had done from the beginning!" (Institutes, II.13.4)

To crudely paraphrase the great Abraham Kuyper—even when being held by Simeon as a babe, there was no square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ did not cry: 'Mine!'

In a city experiencing the increase of Islam coupled with a decrease of basic biblical

literacy—this shocking, scandalous, and sublime truth is something we simply mustn't be too busy to marvel at. For the person of Christ is inextricably linked to the work of Christ, the incarnation is the presupposition of the atonement, and Christmas is the premise of Easter. Yes, the Word became flesh with a preordained purpose: for us and for our salvation. But let's be sure to create some space this Christmas to stop and marvel at the Incarnate One. So, let's not be too busy for him. Oh come, let us adore Him! 

The full wonder of the incarnation of the Son of God can sometimes escape us.

WHERE HEALING BEGINS

Scott Blackwell

HOW SHOULD THE SAINTS RESPOND TO GOD'S might, mercy, love and grace? The response may be as broad as there are believers, circumstances, personalities and needs. But if we are to read the Scriptures for an answer to this question, we will not be surprised to find that the Bible gives us a simple and direct answer: we should respond in joyful praise, heart-felt thanksgiving and sincere prayer.¹

This is the way the saints are to receive the blessings that their God showers upon them. Joy, humility and thanksgiving are never out of place within the Christian community, especially when unanticipated healing comes. In fact, my observation is that healing is most often the blessing that reminds us of our great dependence on our Creator and our unworthiness to receive anything from His hand. So often when our prayers are answered, all that we can do is bow down, cover our faces and worship the one who rules over all things, for we recognise that we have no right to stand in the company of one so great and powerful, let alone be the recipients of His unmerited love and mercy.

However, it seems that our joy and celebration in the presence of healing must always be seasoned with a genuine dose of humility and deep introspection, like Daniel in chapter nine of that OT book. After receiving a revelation that God would soon lead his people out of exile and back to their home (Daniel 9:1-19), this great saint's response is to pray in words of great *sorrow and distress*. God had made a promise to His people and His people did not believe Him. So, Daniel falls to his knees and confesses the sin of Israel to God. His prayer is a remarkable one because in his praying, he shows us the truth of what God is like—and the truth of what Israel is like.

The mercy and faithfulness of God drove Daniel to his knees in repentance; Job's restoration was accompanied by self-abased humility; the woman healed of her bleeding fell to her knees in trembling fear; when he had been set free, the man who had once called himself 'Legion' could not keep from declaring the wonder and authority of

¹ Exodus 15:2; Deuteronomy 10:21; 1Chronicles 16:8-9, 25; Psalm 13:6; 28:7; 52:9; 103:2; Isaiah 63:7; 2Corinthians 1:13; Hebrews 3:13; James 5:13.

Jesus, much like the man born deaf and mute. This is how the Bible presents the responses of those who had been restored by the mighty hand of the Lord.

Christians have long been lampooned for their tendency towards emotional sobriety, but there is a good and godly reason why believers are never far from donning garments of humility during times when others might celebrate unfettered. It is because no receipt of God's unmerited favour can be divorced in the believer's heart

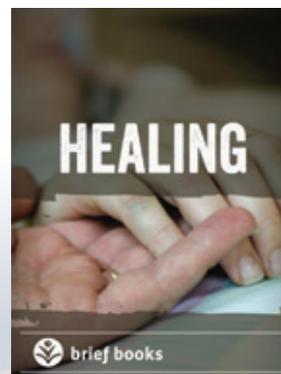
from that great act of healing and deliverance won on our behalf at the cross.

In truth, every blessing we may have flows from this wonderful

and terrible act. All of our victories have been won at the cost of the blood of the Son; all of our blessings flow from his wounds. This is a truth that is deeply engraved on the heart and mind of every Christian person. As such, our joy and thanksgiving will always, at some point, return to that place where the one true servant of God was despised so that we may know true joy.

All healing begins here, and so all healing will take us back to this place. It is a place to which the faithful delight to return, even though they may be dressed in tears of joy, for here and here alone are we reminded of who we truly are, how much we have gained and of the glorious reality that is the God who saves at His own cost. ☪

No receipt of God's unmerited favour can be divorced... from that great act of healing and deliverance won on our behalf at the cross.



This article is an extract from a new book on Healing soon to be released through Matthias Media. A preview of the book can be downloaded for eReader at Amazon.com and Matthias Media's website. It is also available through subscription to *The Briefing*.