

# CHURCH PLANTING: ANGLICANS NEED TO DECIDE



Whatever happens in the Anglican church, the scare-mongers speak of a 'crisis'. One of the latest 'crisis warnings' to go public is about church planting. Even though the statistics don't portray a very healthy picture of Australian Anglicanism, apparently church planting ought to be seen as a taboo. One Archbishop has gone on record as saying that he will come down on any church planter in his diocese 'like a ton of bricks'. Extreme situations call for extreme measures, apparently.

But, given the gospel's relatively small depth of penetration in Australian society, further church planting seems to be an absolute necessity. Although the thought seems to be abhorrent to some Anglicans, the other denominations are all moving in the same direction. Church planting is the mood of the moment in Australia, and Anglicans need to decide whether they are going to continue to decline, or to take the next logical step for the gospel's sake.

Previous Synods have already endorsed church planting as a strategy and agreed that boundaries are no obstacle. This year's Synod will discuss 'The Establishment of Congregations', which seeks to facilitate the recognition of churches already planted and in existence (see page 7). But, as is so often the case, the need for new legislation arises because the real world have already changed, and church structures have to recognise a new reality. We are living in post-denominational Australia. Anglicans long ago divided our geography up into Dioceses and Parishes, but, despite this, Australians still seem to keep away from us in droves. But it is not as if the gospel is not at work. New congregations are springing up amongst ethnic groups (see the article by Ernest Chau, page 7). Evangelism amongst particular professional groups (media, film, business, education, medicine) has brought churches into existence now being nurtured with a specially focussed mission. This is the day and age of

multiple options and choice. If Anglicans want to remain at the vanguard of gospel ministry, we need to move towards the greater flexibility that our gospel heritage both allows and even demands.

Church planting is part of our heritage. Even Anglicans read the book of Acts, where early christianity was a church planting movement, and, yes, when it was also called a 'sect' (Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22). Then in the hey-day of colonial expansionism, Anglicanism was 'planted' all over the globe. Missionary work then followed, and more Anglican churches sprang up in the gospel's wake. The mere existence of an Anglican Communion itself bears testimony that Anglicanism has a church planting heritage. When and where did Anglicans say that this church planting should stop, because the full number of Anglicans has now come in?

It is also true that our heritage also bears eloquent testimony to an inflexibility that resists the **Continued page 6**

# The Australian CHURCH RECORD

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# Olympics Evangelism

David Tyndall

The largest peacetime venture in Sydney's history is just about to conclude! Enormous resources and "people power" were deployed for the Olympic Games. Special Olympic road lanes for VIP's, altered rail and airline schedules and changed working hours were experienced by many people. And so with the conclusion of the Paralympics a venture that has taken seven years to plan will have come to fruition. It has been a unique experience. How has it affected the church?

Just as this was a unique event in Sydney's history, the Olympics and Paralympics have been a unique ministry opportunity. Although one of the difficulties of a new ministry is getting people interested, with sports' ministry this was not so. Most people's response was "we need to do something, but what?"

Some 200 Anglican churches in the diocese participated in ministry during the Olympics, alongside other denominations. Initiatives included Sports clinics and games days (over 140 events), Creative Arts ministry



What have we learnt from this exercise? Firstly, people have found it easier to evangelise their friends when sport is involved. The "faith sharing" of ordinary people is helped when they can be confident their unbelieving friends will enjoy the event.

Secondly, sports' ministry allows parishes to minister according to their resources. Some used spare bedrooms for the Athletes Family Host program; others close to venues exercised hospitality in the open air; others used their halls for Big Screen events; others ran sports clinics and games days. The wide scope of options opened up avenues for every type of parish.

Thirdly, when high quality, imaginative, culturally relevant, theologically accurate resources are placed in the hands of our people, they get distributed! 6000 copies of our "Interactive Guide", giving information about every event and a gospel presentation, were distributed by one parish—and they had more people volunteer to help distribute them than they needed!

Lastly, evangelistic sports ministry is effective at major events and a motion to continue this ministry has been placed before the Sydney Anglican Synod. We have world class sporting venues and major

sports events will continue to be held regularly in Australia—such as the 2003 World Cup of Rugby, which will be centred in Sydney, Brisbane and New Zealand.

The Sydney Olympics have seen 28 sports with 10,200 athletes taking part in 640 sporting sessions watched by a television audience of approximately 3.5 billion. Some people have rightly been concerned that sport is seen as a "god" in our community. However sport is a neutral commodity and sports ministry seeks to show that our God, the father of the Lord Jesus Christ is above all others. Through engaging the culture of it's day christians have risen to the challenge and used this once in a lifetime opportunity for the extension of God's kingdom. ●



Since 1996, David Tyndall has been the full time director of the Olympics Task Force.

**People have found it easier to evangelise their friends when sport is involved.**

at more than 150 venues, 110 Festivals, Athletes Family Hosting, Hospitality centres, Big Screen evangelistic events, Chaplaincy in the village and the distribution of approximately a million resources—an "Interactive Guide", the Sports New Testament, audio and video cassettes and C.D's. During the Paralympics a Tourist Bus ministry for Paralympians and their families will be conducted and Joni Eareckson Tada will speak evangelistically at a number of events.

Creative ingenuity gave rise to some fascinating gospel events. The team involved with the "Church on the Water" ran 33 Sydney harbour cruises, in which the Gospel was presented in "word, drama and song" and christian literature distributed.

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# Fatherhood and Leadership

Joanna Warren



Joanna Warren is a teacher, who serves as a Synod rep. for her congregation.

A strong underlying desire for freedom and creating our own rules has had profound effects on our society. This was an interesting thread linking all three speakers at the Fatherhood and Leadership conference held at Carlingford on 26th August, sponsored by Equal but Different and Laity for Biblical Leadership.

In the first address, Peter Jensen, Principal of Moore College, focussed on the uniqueness of the Christian experience of the Trinity. In Christ we have real personal liberty and true unity with others. Because our world conceives of lib-

erty quite differently, excluding from it any sense of obligation or subordination on the part of the individual, some have started to re-interpret the nature of the relationships within the Trinity to fit in with this secular view of liberty. This has caused great confusion in regard to our acceptance of order in our relationships within church. We need to discover the freedom of loving service, rejoicing to be free to do what Jesus would have us do.

Tony Payne, author and Editorial Director of Matthias Media, told how today's society struggles to find meaning in 'fatherhood' and provides little guidance for men. By contrast, the Bible abounds in very clear examples and teaching about the nature and responsibilities of fatherhood. The father generates or creates a group and gives that group its identity—whether a biological family or a tribe or nation. Since he is responsible for the group, he has loving authority over it.

Once again the desire for autonomy and freedom and the fleeing of obligation in today's world raised its ugly head. Many fathers today are renouncing loyalty and responsibility and leaving a family in chaos and hurt. For a Christian father though, leaving is not an option. Self-actualisation and freedom are not the ultimate goals—

Christ is. All other interests and aims, however good for the individual or the family, must be rightly subordinated to Him.

David McDonald, Senior Pastor of Crossroads Christian Church in Canberra contributed a most thorough and thoughtful examination of the church of God in relation to the Christian family. Cultural pressures also play a part here in making it difficult to discuss the different roles of men and women without sometimes

**Both the family of God and the biological family, derive their shape and structure from God, and there are strong parallels between them.**

arousing antagonism. Both the family of God and the biological family, derive their shape and structure from God, and there are strong parallels between them. In both situations the male leader has the Christ-like role of sacrificial love and service to ensure that all under his care grow into maturity in Christ. Family and church members are called to gladly submit to such loving leadership. Applying such teaching presents its own challenges, but it is the Bible that must critique our culture and not vice-versa.

The 200 who attended this conference were rewarded with good, thought-provoking teaching. Bible-based clarity cut across much modern confusion. (The talks can be acquired from the web [www.lbl.asn.au](http://www.lbl.asn.au), or from Matthias Media for \$5 per talk or \$15 for the set)

Leslie Ramsay Chairing the Fatherhood and Leadership Conference.



# What's at stake in the Women's Ordination Debate?

Andrew Mitchell, Chairman, Laity for Biblical Leadership

We often hear it said "Eminent Evangelicals disagree among themselves on the question of Women's Ordination, so how can anyone know the truth on this question." Could it be, however, that the confusion arises because some "Eminent Evangelicals" have a non-biblical way of reading the bible?

In recent weeks an article has appeared on the Anglican Media web site entitled **Why Godly Women Can Have a True Calling to the Ordained Ministry—An Evangelical Argument**. This paper is a contribution to the women's ordination debate by the Very Rev. Dr. Peter Moore, who is dean and president of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry. Dr. Moore argues for the ordination of women on the basis of a principle of interpretation he calls "development".

He writes:

"Of course, 'development' is the key to my argument. I must begin by saying right here that any attempt to ground the

*ordination of women on specific biblical texts cannot be supported. Instead, I would argue that it is consistent with the development of the roles and ministries of women found in Scripture.* [Italics added]

He argues that God created Men and Women as equal participants in marriage but that the fall resulted in a distortion of this relationship which is expressed in the curse of Genesis 3:16. This distorted relationship is then played out in the Old Testament era. But when Jesus arrives a new attitude to women unfolds and this new attitude gains momentum as the church emerges.

Again he writes

"At this point we should pause to marvel at the development of the place and role of women. From near obscurity in large parts of the Old Testament, they have risen to prominence

in the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles, far beyond what might be expected, given the culture of the day"

Dr. Moore wants to say that this development in male-female relationships did not come to an end in the first century when the scriptures were written. He sees a development trajectory from the first century toward the ideal of heaven when "we can expect all male supremacy to have vanished." Paul and the other apostles could not prescribe the ideal relationship between men and women because of the constraints of their culture. Fortunately though, he points out "our age like no age before has an opportunity to look afresh at the biblical promise that 'there is neither male nor female'."

This approach to the word of God cannot avoid promoting the idea that it is culturally and temporally bound and lacking relevance to the twenty-first century person. The Scriptures breathed by God for our instruction, **Continued page 5**

# Ambassadors for Christ

John Chapman



In 2 Corinthian 5 our Apostle tells us two reasons why God wants us to be urgent in taking the gospel to people. They are:—'the fear of the Lord' and 'the Love of Christ'.

**Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade people.** (2 Cor.5: 11)

The Corinthians, who owed their salvation to the Apostle Paul, had forsaken his spiritual authority over them. New 'super apostles' has arrived on the scene. They spoke more persuasively. They claimed to do better miracles. All in all the Corinthians were completely taken in.

The Apostle is writing a defense for his ministry and we are the richer for this. He tells us that the fear of the Lord is a strong motive for persuading people. He knows that he will one day stand before His Lord and give an account of the stewardship of the gospel that had been entrusted to him. He is mindful of the very grave responsibility that this carries. He goes on to say 'What we are is plain to God'. His conscience is clear and he is surprised that they do not recognize this. He has tried to persuade them and he was very successful at doing it.

Regular preaching about the return of the Lord Jesus marked the first few years of my Christian life. It seems these day not to be so popular. It made me conscious that the judgment could be at any moment and that I should live constantly with the expectation that my living in God's world was a serious matter. I was to be held accountable. It is a strong motive for trying to persuade people.

However it is not the only one.

**For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died** (2 Cor.5: 13)

The death of the Lord Jesus compels Paul to live not for himself but in the service of others. (v.15) The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has begun the new creation (v.17). This has been brought about because God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ (v.19). He has committed the ministry of reconciling to the apostles which they exercised through the message of reconciliation.(vv.18-19). That message is **'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** (2 Cor. 5:21) Christ took the punishment that our sins deserved so that we could be right with God.

That Apostolic ministry and message has been passed on to us today. We have been reconciled to God through the work of Christ. We heard it from someone who exercised this 'apostolic' ministry. They spoke to us as Ambassadors for Christ. We heard Christ 'speaking' the words "be reconciled to God".

These two reasons are wonderfully balanced—the fear of the Lord and the Love of Christ.

When you tell people the reconciling message you also are an ambassador for Christ. That is a great privilege and a grave responsibility!

Represent him well! ●

# Editorial Church, Sect, Cult and the Evangelical Future

**B**ecause evangelicalism is the movement deriving from the evangel, insofar as it represents and maintains that evangel, it is true Christianity. Because, in God's plans, the gospel shapes the future, so too the future is evangelical.

This is difficult for others to see. For those with a 'top-down' view of Anglicanism with the Archbishop of Canterbury as the Anglican equivalent of the pope, and the chain of command filtering down through Primates, Bishops and Clergy, grass-roots gospel work seems a mere blemish on the face of a much larger organization.

This tension was epitomised by the suggestion made on *Four Corners* that Sydney Anglicans were like a 'sect'. This is, in one sense, flattering, for the same charge was made against 'the sect of the Nazarenes' in the earliest days (Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22).

## Sect as a Swear Word

In the late 70s, quasi-religious groups made 'sect' synonymous with such things as manipulation, mind-control, sexual excesses, financial indiscretions, and the like. It is right to condemn the psychologically manipulative techniques and ungodliness that such 'sects' have made infamous. Following the charge made on *Four Corners*, some churches in Sydney were particularly concerned that the pejorative overtones of such a word might harm their good work.

The unqualified use of the word 'sect' of Sydney Anglicans was irresponsible. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the post-70s pejorative sense of this word was deliberately exploited to harness community fears against the cause of evangelicalism.

## Sect as a Sociological Term

The term began its life as a neutral descriptive category. Following Weber (1904/05), and then Troeltsch (1912), sociologists of religion speak of the 'Church-Sect' continuum in an attempt to classify 'religious' groups. A group's stance towards society is one of the criteria by which groups are located on the continuum. So, 'Church' can be defined as 'a social institution, supported by and supporting other institutions in its society, coextensive with the society and its membership'; and a 'Sect' is 'an exclusive association of those committed to its ideals and beliefs, which is unusually critical of, or antithetical to, at least some of the institutions of society.' (B. Hargrove, *Sociology of Religion*, 132). Or, insofar as a group adopts a 'prophetic/critical' stance to society, they are at the Sect end; insofar as they reinforce society, they are at the Church end' (H. Mol, *The Faith of Australians*, 13).

## 'Sect' and the New World

This classification, developed in European countries where the 'Established' church was closely tied to the State, is problematic in places like the USA and Australia, where there is no established church.

Like most models, the simplicity of the classification did not match real life. From the beginning there was a third category, 'mysticism', characterised by a high degree of individualism, which later received the label 'Cult'. The sheer variety of existing groups led to sub-classifications. According to their stance towards society, Yinger (*Religion, Society and the Individual*, 1957) divided sects into 'acceptance' (eg. Tractarians—Anglicans please note!); 'aggressive' (eg. Anabaptists); or 'avoidance' (eg. holiness movements) types. Bryan Wilson, from 1961 to 1970, began with four types, but arrived at seven.

In the USA context, H. Richard Niebuhr (1929), supplemented the simplistic dichotomy with 'denomination'. Sects are necessarily short-lived and transient, either disappearing or becoming a denomination with more stable structure and organization. This means that 'denominations are simply sects in an advanced stage of development and adjustment to each other and the secular world' (H. Beker, *Systematic Sociology*, 626).

The Four Corners programme was irresponsible because it clearly allowed 'sect' to remain a pejorative term, without further explanation in terms of the sociological niceties. If the label is to be used, the user should 1) precisely define their meaning; 2) identify the type of sect they have in mind; and 3) provide an analogy of the type.

## 'Sect' as Protestant

Although some Sects may secede into separate organizations, it is perfectly possible for a sect to operate *within* a larger 'Church'. Because it is interested in finding important, valued commodities within its ranks, that are not found in the larger organization (Church), the 'Sect' exists as a *protest against* a 'Church' gone wrong. As historical examples, some cite the monastic movement and the continuing Catholic Orders. Troeltsch himself pointed to the lay protests against ecclesiastical hierarchy in the medieval towns. The early Methodists and the Tractarians also belong amongst such 'Sects'.

## Sydney as 'Sect'?

So how does Sydney evangelicalism look against this sociological theory? 'Sect' is a neutral term, sociologically speaking, but it can be 'valued' differently, depending upon how the sociological information is utilised.

If you are someone at the 'Church' end, and feel that a 'Sect' is within 'your' organization, and that they are protesting against 'you', then you will enjoy being able to exploit the post-70s pejorative overtones. But this is not the only way to speak of the data.

As long ago as 1962, when rapidly dying liberal churches fuelled a movement towards ecumenism, an executive with the USA National Council of Churches, Dean M. Kelly, wrote a book entitled *Why Conservative Churches are Growing*. He argued that the kind of things that sociologists use to characterise

a 'Sect' are actually the things that make for a strong organization. On the other hand, the kind of things highly prized by 'ecumenical' churches, sociologically speaking, are destined to weaken, erode, and kill an organization.

'To the person who is concerned about the future of the ecumenical churches, this theory can offer little encouragement. The mainline denominations will continue to exist on a diminishing scale for decades, perhaps for centuries, and will continue to supply some people with a dilute and undemanding form of meaning, which may be all they want.' But, on the whole, the plans to unite into some big ecumenical church are 'not conducive to conserving or increasing the social strength of the religious groups involved or—more important—the efficacy of the ultimate meanings which they bear.' (p.175).

Because of humanity's quest for meaning, the beliefs of an organization are absolutely crucial. Kelly therefore urged his ecumenical churches is to get 'serious' about their faith:

- 1) don't have a confused faith, or one mingled with other beliefs; don't pretend all beliefs are of equal merit.
- 2) Place high demands on your members;
- 3) do not consent or allow violations of standards of belief or behaviour ;
- 4) don't keep silent about it, apologise for it, or act as if it makes no difference.

Sociological theory about Sects can therefore act as yet another encouragement for evangelicals not to bail out. Yes, the evangelical cause *is* a 'Sect' — as long as it remains a protest movement against a 'Church' gone wrong. Yes, and those who want to endorse that 'Church' may continue to irresponsibly exploit the post-70s pejorative overtones of the term. And, yes, being a 'Sect' will ensure our strength and growth.

As the list of names is assembled for potential Sydney Archbishops, questions must be asked about each candidate's vision of the future.

Will he strain against his Synod to endorse his role in the 'Church'? Will he speak of such ecumenical concerns as 'unity with diversity', 'openness', 'acceptance of various beliefs'? If so, he will help Sydney to join in the decline of the wider institution.

Or will he exercise evangelical leadership? Will he stand with his Synod and protest against a 'Church' gone wrong? Will he exercise a gospel ministry that will move towards reform of a wayward 'Church', and provide a strong lead for true evangelicals world-wide (such as our Archbishop's support of Bishops Murphy and Rodgers)?

To stand within the strong heritage that has already been set by his predecessors, Sydney's new Archbishop must be so committed to the evangel that he is prepared to hold an office in 'the Church', but still be part of a 'Sect'.

Because the future is evangelical, Sydney needs to part of that future. ●

## The 'Sect' and the Secular State

**F**rance has adopted what *The Guardian* (June 2000) has called 'Europe's toughest anti-sect legislation'. A new crime of "mental manipulation" has been created, which is punishable by a maximum fine of \$A125,000 and five years in jail.

Groups such as the Church of Scientology, not regarded as a religion in France, and the Unification Church have denounced the legislation as fascist, in the wake of Parliament identifying 173 quasi-religious groups as dangerous.

Under the legislation, a sect can be ordered by a judge to dissolve if a member is convicted of a crime; is banned from advertising; and is prohibited from missions or recruiting for new members near schools, hospitals or retirement homes.

*The Guardian* identifies the law's 'key weapon' as the new crime of mental manipulation. This has been carefully defined to exclude legitimate churches: "exercising, within a group whose activities are aimed at creating or exploiting

psychological dependence, heavy and repeated pressure on a person, or using techniques likely to alter his judgment, so as to induce him to behave in a way prejudicial to his interests".

Some Catholic leaders have concern that it may lead to discrimination against 'genuine religions'. Within the mainly Roman Catholic environment, evangelical groups are often suspected as being 'sects'. The impact of the new law on evangelical work is yet to be seen.

According to Paul King, CMS mis-

sionary in Paris, the legislation is, in part, a response to some suicides by some associated with a sect, as well as an atmosphere of fear about sect manipulation, and cases of financial fraud.

Even though Paul is working for a French christian student organisation (GBU), the French suspicion of sects has affected him personally. He cites as examples a phone call from the police, and suspicion aroused when non-christian friends are invited by students to evangelistic meetings. ●

# Warnings from ECUSA



Peter Hayward is the minister of an independent Anglican church in Spokane, Washington, USA.

## Limiting Diversity: A Growth Strategy

Peter Hayward

Observing the Christian scene in America is both fascinating and baffling. Fascinating because you can begin to understand where the different streams of Christian thought and practice can end up when people really put their mind to it. But it is also baffling because of the tendency of American Christianity to fracture into different groups.

As an example of this second tendency that is often highlighted, is the 250 different Baptist groups that exist in the USA. However, this is not as impressive as it seems. Anglicans, with a total constituency one twentieth the size have managed to create 50 different groups. The Baptists are hardly in the same ball park.

Just limiting our frame of reference to the last 30 years few would have the time

or energy to keep track of the Anglican groups that have formed, split, discontinued or continued. What most have in common is a disenfranchisement with the Episcopal Church of the USA (ECUSA), but what defines each group is usually a particular issue or concern. In a consumer driven society the defining issue that legitimizes your existence is your difference to other groups. It is this that becomes the point of identification, it is what binds.

In this context Archbishop Goodhew's recent call for American Anglicans to form a broad based consensus as they seek to establish a new Anglican Province in North America is both right and commendable. But this will be no easy achievement.

In the past 12 months the different

Anglican groups have begun to meet and talk. It soon became apparent that there was enormous diversity amongst those who were broadly biblically orthodox. The very issues that were the defining points of each group made it difficult to agree on how to proceed. Convictions about the nature of the sacraments, ordination of women, the use of liturgy, what type of liturgy, the authority of Bishops, the understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit in corporate worship, divorce and remarriage—were not just peripheral issues, they were often the presenting issues of very different visions of Christianity. The sheer diversity of conviction was perceived to be a weakness in the desire to move forward.

Two groups, First Promise and the Anglican Association of Congregations on

Mission then took the lead and wrote the "Constitutions and Canons for the proposed New Anglican Missionary Province". In it they sought to define positions on many contentious issues that were faithful to the word of God and sensitive to the Anglican tradition. They purposely sought to put limits on the diversity within any new Anglican Province while setting an agenda that focuses on evangelism, mission and church planting. It is around the positions outlined in this document that consensus is now being built.

Difficult choices now face many groups, with some choosing not to be part of any new Province. In the end, though the consensus may not be broad, its very strength may be in limiting diversity so the potential for continuing divisions and separation is also limited ●

## What you will not hear

David Mills

David Mills is associated with Trinity Episcopal School of Ministry, Pittsburgh.

Those who have not gone through a General Convention (or a session of General Synod) often do not know what happens there, because so much of the important work is done by the committees, which the press does not cover very well.

As a rule, no matter how carefully worded an orthodox resolution is, the particularly orthodox wording is stripped out in the committee, and something blander or more politically acceptable put in its place. This makes everyone more or less happy: liberals get the sort of vaguely traditional statement that keeps the people back home happy, and therefore passive, and conservatives get a statement they can, with some exaggeration, make into a victory.

I will take as examples two resolutions the Bishops passed one day near the end of Convention, as I happened to be sitting in the press gallery. Both passed unanimously and with no discussion at all.

### The two resolutions

The first, "Raising Awareness of Adoption," began its life affirming "the value of adoption and recogniz[ing] it is in the best

interest of the child to be adopted by a stable family with a mother and father to nurture him or her." It also declared that the General Convention "encourages its clergy to recommend adoption as an alternative to abortion when counseling parishioners facing an unplanned pregnancy."

This would seem fairly straightforward and unobjectionable. It reflects every biblical teaching beginning with God's creation of the human family at the very beginning of Genesis. It reflects the growing body of secular scholarship, by writers like David Blankenhorn (*Fatherless America*) and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead (*The Divorce Culture*), on the necessity to a child of having both a father and a mother. It does not even imply that single-parent families cannot be good families, even if they are not the ideal.

The resolution would seem perfectly unobjectionable. But no, not at the General Convention. The second declaration disappeared entirely, because, I am sure, no implication that abortion is not a good thing will be allowed.

The first remained, with two small but significant changes. "Family" being too exclusive, or heterosexist, or insensitive, or something, "person or" was added before it. And "with a mother and father" was taken out, presumably for the same reasons.

Now, you will say, it is certainly better for a child to be adopted by a single parent than aborted or left in foster care. This would be true, and would be the line the "centrists" on the committee would offer, but it is in the very best interest of the child to be adopted by a family with a mother and father, not by a single person. It is the normal and biblical family the resolution refused to approve or even acknowledge.

### No to Lambeth

The second resolution, rather clumsily

titled "Biblical Literacy Resolution," began by urging each parish "to offer a program of systematic Bible Study... as a means of empowering the baptized to live out their Baptismal promise to 'continue in the apostle's [sic] teaching and fellowship.'" It then affirmed the Lambeth Conference's resolution III.1 on the authority of Scripture.

That resolution began by "recognizing the need in our Communion for fuller agreement on how to interpret and apply the message of the Bible," and then "reaffirm[ed] the primary authority of the Scriptures." It appealed to "our best traditions and scholarship" because "the Scriptural revelation must continue to illuminate, challenge and transform cultures, and ways of thinking." It closed by urging the Anglican Churches to promote Bible study programs at every level.

The resolution, you will note, is perfectly normal traditional Christianity. It is, if anything, rather bland. It does not even touch the very difficult questions of how Scripture is to be interpreted, or to what "best traditions and scholarship" refers. It did not touch the long-controverted question of the relation of the authority of Scripture to the authorities of tradition and reason, nor the equally controverted question of how to apply the biblical teaching to the present.

It is perfectly normal statement of Christian belief, and perfectly acceptable to any Christian. If anything, it is too thin to be of real use to anyone. And it had just been approved by a large majority of the world's Anglican bishops, including most of the American bishops. It is, one would think, truly uncontroversial.

And it disappeared entirely in the committee. Not a line, nor a reference, not a paraphrase was left. All the committee left, and the bishops approved without a peep of protest or an attempt to reinstate the Lambeth resolution, was the urg-

ing to parishes to offer Bible studies.

A member of the committee told me that when the resolution came up, one bishop made cutting remarks about Lambeth, and the committee happily changed the resolution to support studying (in his words) "the Bible, tradition and reason in an environment of theological reflection." Only after he objected that this changed the intent of the original resolution, which committees are not supposed to do though they do it all the time, and a liberal bishop supported him, did the gelded version pass the committee.

### Not heard

Politically, when this version came to the Bishops for a vote, the conservative bishops had little choice. If they managed to get their House to reinstate the language—and they almost certainly would not have been able to—the resolution would not have gone back to the House of Deputies in time to be passed before the end of Convention. It would have died, and the encouragement of Bible study with it.

I can understand even the conservative voting for it without trying to improve it. I am not blaming them. The alternative to voting for the expurgated resolution was to face headlines declaring "Episcopal Bishops Reject Bible Study."

To the extent these resolutions were covered by the press, secular and religious, you heard that the Episcopal Church supported adoption and Bible study. What you did not hear, but what will tell you a great deal about the General Convention, is what the Episcopal Church refused to support. ●

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### Bishop refused Holy Communion at evangelical church

On 6 August, Bishop Charles E. Bennisson was denied Holy Communion at two services he attended at St. John's Church Huntingdon Valley, an evangelical parish, outside Philadelphia. This is the first known occasion that a sitting bishop was not permitted to take communion. The assistant ministers explained to him that they refused the communion because of his unbiblical theological and ethical positions and because "we believe it was not in his best interests to receive communion. We did not believe it would be loving on our behalf to give him Holy Communion."

Bennisson denies the unique salvific role of Jesus for all mankind, undermines biblical authority and inspiration, and is an advocate of the ordination of non-celibate homosexuals and the blessing of same-sex unions.

St. John's clergy, vestry and laity have stated their refusal to allow local diocesan bishops to preach, celebrate or confirm at the parish because of their false teaching with regard to Christ, the Bible and human sexuality, for nearly a decade. Throughout this period the church has maintained discussion with their bishop, while withholding parish assessments as a protest.

# Synod Spot

## A Synod of Olympic Proportions!

Robert Tong

**S**ynod 2000 is jam packed. Seventeen Ordinances and two dozen Motions appear on the business paper and the first day is sure to bring another score of Motions.

A public policy issue of first importance has been scheduled for Wednesday night. The Law Reform Commission is proposing amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act which, if adopted, will restrict freedom of religion as practised in the Diocese. There are Motions which speak plainly and clearly to Anglicans beyond the Diocese and we ought not have a muted voice on matters of fundamental belief.

The 'Establishment of Congregations' Ordinance. Synod has already approved the idea of a mechanism for recognising

existing autonomous congregations so that they can be incorporated into the mainstream of diocesan life. Some oppose the Ordinance because of a mistaken view that the Ordinance is a mechanism for

**There will be Motions marking the end of an era.**

church planting. Everything should be done to facilitate the entry of these existing congregations into the diocesan family.

The ghost of Pymble remains with us for another year. Several Ordinances address issues raised in that episode. The

big question remains: If the present pattern of relations between clergy and people is adjusted by these Ordinances, will this be for the good of gospel ministry in the Diocese and beyond?

Just when you thought it was safe to go into the water again, the women's ordination question is on the Business Paper. Last time the proponents failed to persuade the Synod that procedures should be varied to allow the question to be considered early in the Synod. This time the proponents must contend with a formidable Doctrine Commission report. A variation on the theme is the Motion asking for a report on women bishops.

This is the last Synod for the Archbishop, so there will be Motions marking the end of an era. ●

## What's at stake in the Women's Ordination Debate?

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rebuke, correction and training are reduced to clay in the hands of the teacher and his culture. This is far removed from the stance Jesus and the apostles had to the word of God.

We see Jesus' attitude to scripture clearly presented in the Sermon on the Mount. He asserts the continuing relevance of the Old Testament law to his audience Matt 5:17-20 and then goes on to quote the Old Testament scripture to ground his great ethical teaching. Paul also sees the words of the Old Testament having direct relevance to those to whom he is writing despite being in a completely different cultural situation. Paul speaking of Abraham's justification and its relevance to his readers says

"The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. *Romans 4:23,24*

And in Romans 15:4 he writes.

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. *Romans 15:4*

From the point of view of Jesus and Paul there has been no development of male/female relationships in way Dr. Moore describes. Both quote Genesis 2 as they speak about marriage and Paul uses Genesis 2 and 3 as the grounds for his teaching that restricts teaching eldership in church to men.

A further implication of Dr. Moore's paper is that God requires different behaviour from people living in different centuries and different cultures. The message of the apostles is that men and women of every nation and age are under the condemnation of God for their sin until they find salvation in

Christ and begin a new life with him as Lord. His Lordship is exercised as they hear his word and obey it no matter what their context. We need to see that to argue as Dr Moore does, brings the authority of the scriptures under attack. It is a very serious matter indeed.

A motion promoting women's ordination will be on the business paper for the Sydney Synod this coming October. What is at stake in this debate? Pursue Dr. Moore's argument and we will lose the authoritative word of God. Lose that and you lose the gospel. ●

**Ordination and Incumbency: Tracking a Question through Synod**

Can ordination to the priesthood be considered as a separate issue to incumbency? If so, can women be ordained to the priesthood, but not be licenced as the incumbent of a congregation?

.....

**1981** What steps need to be taken to implement through General Synod that '(a) Ordination is primarily to a cure of souls: therefore only those in charge of parishes would be in priests' orders.'

.....

**1982** Legal committee reports that the proposition 'ordination is primarily to a cure of souls' has not been proven to be true. If it were the concept of ordination in the Ordinal would have to be changed.  
Matter subsumed by a committee examining General Synod report relating to women's ordination to the priesthood.

.....

**1983** Committee observes that the G.S. Report did not allow room for 'permissible variations in the interpretation of Anglican formularies', ie. that 'not all agree that ordination to the Priesthood should necessarily or primarily mean ordination to the cure of souls of a parish'. This was one opinion of three represented on the committee.

.....

**1984** Further report reveals the majority of committee supported ordination of women to the priesthood but not to sole cure of a parish.  
Parish and deanery discussion requested on four propositions, including (4), which supported the ordination of women to the priesthood, but not rectorship of parishes.

.....

**1985** Synod hears that only 3.5 out of 22 Deanery conferences agreed to the priesting of women, and only 1 more supported it via proposition 4. 17/22 did NOT agree to proposition 4. The committee shown to be out of step with the grass roots of the Diocese.  
Consequently, Synod rejected this as an alternative way forward by affirming its support of 'the present practice of ordaining only male persons to the priesthood.'

.....

**1987** Synod resolution 34/87 (b) asks 'whether and how only priests and bishops are eligible to be in incumbents and the desirability of the same.' Issues in ...

.....

**1991** Report '34/87 Nature and Functions of the Three-Fold Orders of Ministry' resolves the Legal question: 'at present the law of the Church requires only priests to be instituted into parishes', but recognises Synod could make another order if desired.  
On the theological question, however, the Doctrine Commission report simply declared 'this is not primarily a doctrinal or theological matter. Incumbency is a matter of church order', apparently suggesting that theology had no interest in church order. The strangeness of this declaration was highlighted by the appended note, in brackets: '(However we do note that "elders" were given the responsibility of settled leadership in the N.T. churches).'

.....

**1993** Report on 1992 conference on Ordination of Women to priesthood called for in 1991 and held in 1992. Paragraphs 149-151 separate ordination from induction to an incumbency, and ask whether ordination of women and appointment as rectors be considered separate issues.

.....

**1998** Report of conference on the future of women's ministry (called 1997; held 16/5/98) tabled. One option discussed allowed for women priests but limited their licencing. The responses to the conference did not encourage Standing Committee to recommend in this direction.

.....

**1999** Requests 'Standing Committee consider how the practice of ordination to the presbyterate (priesthood) might more clearly and consistently [be] linked with the "cure and charge of souls" or congregational oversight.'

.....

**2000** Doctrine Commission Report concludes 'there is no good reason to conclude that a restriction on licencing women as incumbents would meet those theological reasons previously advanced with respect to restricting the ordination of women to the priesthood.'

## YOU CAN WRITE A BESTSELLER!

Alison Blake



Browsing through the book department of my local department store the other week, looking for some holiday reading, I came to the conclusion that Australia is a nation of "sticky beaks" and "busy bodies".

You see, I discovered row upon row of biographies, each recounting the life of a prominent person. There were suc-

cessful business men and women, sports people (winners, of course!), musicians, songwriters, achievers in the realm of arts and politics. Men and women who had, apparently, faced adversity, met the challenge and succeeded, in their chosen field.

My immediate reaction to this gallery of human fame and achievement was—"No self-esteem problems here! You've really got to have tickets on yourself to let someone write a book about you, while you're still alive—or, worse still, write it yourself!"

But then I got to thinking—these books are on display because they sell! I've got books just like these sitting in the bookcase at home. And what's more, I've read and enjoyed them!

So what's the appeal in reading the life story of someone you've only ever seen on TV or who will only ever be the name behind the voice of the CD you play while driving to work?

Whatever the reason, I think we Christians can pick up on this enthusiasm for checking out the lives of current day heroes and showcase the gospel of Christ in the process.

Christians aren't renowned for parading themselves to the world. But perhaps we should be more 'up front and personal'. With our friends, colleagues, neighbours and family, we could probably be much more open about our life story—what life was like before we became a Christian, how that change came about and what life is like now. I wonder if we've underestimated how interested people might be in hearing our autobiography, our personal story?

Of course our story would put the spotlight on God and his kindness in sending Jesus to save us. Paul recounts the biography of every Christian in Ephesians 2:1-10 using the pattern "You were... but God... and now..." . That's a great model for us, with the focus clearly on the life and work of Jesus. In Philippians 3, Paul shares his own testimony, including some of the highlights of his life. We too have unique, God-given life experiences and personalities that we can draw on to personalise our story of God and us.

Never mind that your life lacks the glamour, fame, fortune or adventure of a best-selling biography. Your neighbour or sister-in-law is far more likely to relate to your life-story than she is to Sir Elton John's!

And who says your testimony isn't exciting? We were dead in sin, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature, objects of God's wrath. Sounds like a pretty hair-raising life to me! But God himself made us alive in Christ—how's that for drama? Then we were raised up with Christ, in fact, right now we're seated in heaven with him! Forget fame and fortune!

As a Christian, the awesome facts of Jesus life have impacted on the ordinary facts of my life and that makes for a story worth telling, without embarrassment but with gratitude to God.

So, have a go at composing your own biography. It could be a Best-Seller! ●

## A Presbyterian Perspective

Kevin Murray chairs the Joint Task Force for Church Planting, a group formed in 1995 by the Presbyterian Church in NSW. After the formation of the Uniting Church in 1977, those who continued as Presbyterian had the twin challenge to consolidate the existing work and to grow new congregations.

Since that time attempts to plant new churches have met with mixed success. Some healthy churches have been established in Sydney suburbs, such as Tregear, Cherrybrook, Concord and Parramatta. There have also been some 'failures', ie. church plants that have been unsustainable in the longer term.

The Joint Task Force was formed out of three state committees—Evangelism, Ministry and Mission, and Theological Education. It seeks to foster the planting of churches, to act as a resource body, and to keep church planting on the "agenda" of the denomination at large.

In the last three years Presbyterian churches planted in East Lismore, Central Sydney and the Central Coast have been growing steadily. In each case we have worked together with the other churches in the region so that the planting of a new church though difficult and challenging might not be destructive to relationships. Acting as something of a "Marriage Broker", the Joint Task Force has tried to look for new opportunities for church planting, to consult those involved, and to find a suitable church planter for that particular context.

Church planting is under way, despite problems such as accusations of impure motives, a constant shortage of funds for church planting, and the suggestion that resources could be better used in other areas. Existing congregations have felt threatened by the establishment of new ones, but it has been gratifying to see that they have been willing to give it their blessing for the sake of the gospel. They have recognised that there are many more people to reach than they are capable of reaching.

In a society that in sociological terms is moving at an incredibly rapid pace, a church plant has the great strength of flexibility. The people who form the 'core group' of a new congregation get to write the agenda of the congregation. They own it and are able to be flexible in order to reach the many people around them for Christ.

## Christian City Churches

Ian Jagelman, Pastor of the Lane Cove Christian City Church, explains that CCC has always been a church planting movement. From its inception at Dee Why in 1979, 85 congregations have been planted around Australia and in other parts of the world. Christian City Churches actively encourage church planting, and provide specific training through church planting schools for those engaged in it. Church Planters are now usually drawn from a church plant, and they have a proven record of being able to build a group of people, with small groups often being a testing ground.

CCC has a variety of strategies. The most difficult is to begin with one family, and the preferred option is to send a pastor and his wife with a team of about twelve, or more. Lane Cove CCC has planted five congregations in 16 years, through peeling off a group of people with as many as possible (12, 30, 130) — with more success the larger the group. This way the church begins fully resourced with leaders and people keen for the church to get going.

Churches are planted in areas where there is a demonstrated need, ie where there is no church, or no church of similar nature to that being planted. The new church has to be in close enough proximity to the sending church to allow support for the team, ie within twenty minutes drive.

This latter strategy has, in part, been honed through a failed church plant situation in a south western suburb. 12 people were sent in 1999. Despite growing to almost 100, the needs of the people converted put strains upon the church planters that they couldn't meet themselves and the Lane Cove congregation was simply too far away to help.

If church planting is to occur a long way from home base, then about five congregations need to be planted at the same time. This was CCC's strategy in Brisbane. The cluster of churches can then help each other with resources.

CCC does not have the geographical constraints of a parish system. But, says Jagelman, 'we have agreed not to plant a congregation within half a mile of another congregation'. The rationale? It is unlikely that two churches will be exactly the same, so two churches create the choice factor. 'The parish has to be recognized as an obstacle, not a help to church planting.'

CCC does have a national oversight board, but church planting is done out of the local church. Training is also done by local churches co-operating together to put on a School of Church Planting, with existing church planters sharing the benefit of their wisdom.

## Baptist Union

Scott Pilgrim, associate superintendent for church development work, heads up the Baptist task force. The Baptist Union in NSW and ACT have established some 11 new churches in the last 15 years, half being intentional church plants. A previous strategy to intentionally plant churches, Forward Mission, has recently been replaced by the New Start strategy, under which 8 new congregations have already been planted this year.

Gospel work amongst ethnic groups has been a key factor. One in four Baptist congregations in Sydney are now ethnic congregations. Areas of new population growth have been targeted for church plants, as well as inner suburban areas where declining Baptist churches are seeking to revitalise. A seven prong priority list has been developed to help to determine where churches ought to be planted, including such factors as population growth, the absence of a strong evangelical witness, how existing churches can be complemented, and the invitation by people in the area for a Baptist congregation to be started.

The task force is discussing the selection and training of potential church planters, and an internship system is already in place. While different models of church planting are being explored, New Start is encouraging existing congregations to replant daughter congregations.

New churches will be resourced through a partnership between the planting church and the Union, which is already spending \$175,000 p.a. on church planting. The denomination as a whole is supportive of church planting, although the autonomy of the local churches can sometimes be a barrier to church planting by not being co-operative towards new ventures. Despite a couple of 'failures', Baptist church plants are doing pretty well.

# Church Planting is a Reality

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expanding work of the gospel. Perhaps the most famous would be the work of the Wesleys, which led to new structures outside of Anglicanism, and eventually to a new denomination. This was because the old structures of Anglicanism couldn't—or wouldn't—cope with the new evangelistic situation. At that time, church planting did not cease, it just continued despite Anglican resistance. The abiding influence of such resistance can be felt in Britain, at least, where the Church of England prides itself as being the Established Church (ie with connections to the state), whereas the other denominations continue to be labelled 'non-conformists'. Even in Australia, where we have never really had an Established Church, such thinking can be detected amongst some Anglicans.

At the present time, the Anglican church has a choice to make. Will it actively facilitate church planting, or will it resist, and allow the gospel to make its renewed impact on Australia without the Anglicans? Despite the recent press, it is not just a small renegade bunch of disgruntled Sydney Anglicans who are engaged in church planting. This portrayal is simply a ploy to marginalise what is a far more serious social phenomenon of Australian Christianity in the year 2000. In fact, all the major denominations are gearing up for a church planting future (see accompanying boxes).

The link between ministry and geography is deeply embedded in the Anglican mind. The beauty of the diocesan and parish system is that someone somewhere has notional responsibility for the cure of souls. But, once the pat-

terns of human geography have changed beyond those of medieval rural England, physical geography can only ever be a rough guide. Rather than being content with someone having notional responsibility for people, we must ask, who is actually reaching them for Christ?

Although Sydney Synod has already agreed that parish boundaries should not restrict new ministries, the geographical

## Will [Anglicanism] actively facilitate church planting, or will it resist?

mindset still lives on in talk of some 'areas' being 'difficult' and to the complaint that ministers won't go into these difficult 'areas'. Certainly we can demonstrate that there are 'parishes' that struggle, when compared to 'parishes' elsewhere, and long-vacant 'parishes' bear eloquent testimony to... something—but what? Perhaps it is not geography that is the problem. More important questions concern the people that need to be reached, and whether Anglican ministry can be flexible enough to be 'all things to even those people'. Perhaps inflexibility at the denominational or local church level might be part of the problem in ministerial supply.

It also needs to be said that there are 'areas' that have not been effectively reached by anyone. There is an 'urban myth' that charismatic churches have better success amongst the 'working classes',

for example. This does not seem to be the case, however. Ian Jagelman, Pastor of the Christian City Church at Lane Cove, is well aware of the difficulty of defining 'working class' areas, since such classifications seem to be of limited usefulness nowadays. However, if generalisation is permissible, then the charismatic churches also tell the story of difficulty, struggle, and even failure in such areas.

It is also easy to lose perspective on the needs of those areas which do not have the reputation of being 'difficult'. To the geographical parish-based mentality, when existing buildings are full on a Sunday, some areas can be deemed 'Bible belt'—as if there is no more work to do. But the statistics still show our penetration is still far too shallow, even here. Tony Prestoe, pastor of Castle Hill Baptist church, reports that, after researching the area carefully and speaking with other churches who have an interest in the area, they have begun a plant 'in the West Pennant Hills Valley of all places'. This is not a 'transplant' operation but 'a raw evangelistic enterprise'.

Many of our Anglican ministers are well aware of the great needs on their doorstep, and feel no threat from church planting at all. As Geoff Taylor, Curate in Charge at Sadleir, put it: 'I still have 35,600 people left to win for Jesus. I would welcome at least 11 more church plants in the Sadleir parish tomorrow. Send them in.'

Given the prevailing situation, the question is whether Anglicans can be sufficiently flexible to be amongst that number. Will Anglicans continue to be church planters, or will church planting continue without them? ●

## Sydney Anglicans

1994 Synod requests working party to present a draft diocesan strategy for evangelistic church planting (8/94)

Synod requests (9/94) a report into future patterns of ministry for the diocese.

1995 '8/94 Planting and Developing New Churches' report presented to Synod, recommending a range of general and specific initiatives.

1996 received report '9/94 Future Patterns of Ministry', recommending legislation be prepared 'to abolish practices which inhibit ministry because of parish boundaries' and asking Regional Councils 'to consider, as a matter of priority, the establishment of new congregations in their regions, and to apply resources accordingly.' So resolved (27/96)

1998 received report '27/96 Future Patterns of Ministry', indicating that 'there is no rule in the Diocese inhibiting ministry across parish boundaries [...]. There may have been a custom in the Diocese which preserved exclusive ministry to incumbents within their parishes. However no such custom has the force of law and need not be put to rest by legislation.'

Leading up to this conclusion, the report stated that 'there is no law to prevent lay members of the Anglican Church establishing a church in any parish on property which is not church property. There is also nothing to prevent those members from holding out that the church is an Anglican church although it may only be a church of members of the Anglican church. It would be wrong for those members to hold out that the church is officially recognised by the Anglican Church but, if they did, it is difficult to see any court intervening to stop them in the absence of damage to person or property.'

In addition, the report indicated that 'a minister of a parish who involves himself in connection with planting a church in another parish or with a church planted by others in another parish' does not commit any ecclesiastical offense.

Synod requested Standing Committee bring 'legislation enabling the establishment of congregations as parishes without requiring them to own any property'.

1999 Proposed legislation presented. Synod requests that proposals be circulated to various interest groups for further comment.

2000 Amendments arising from the various responses will be discussed

## Uniting Church

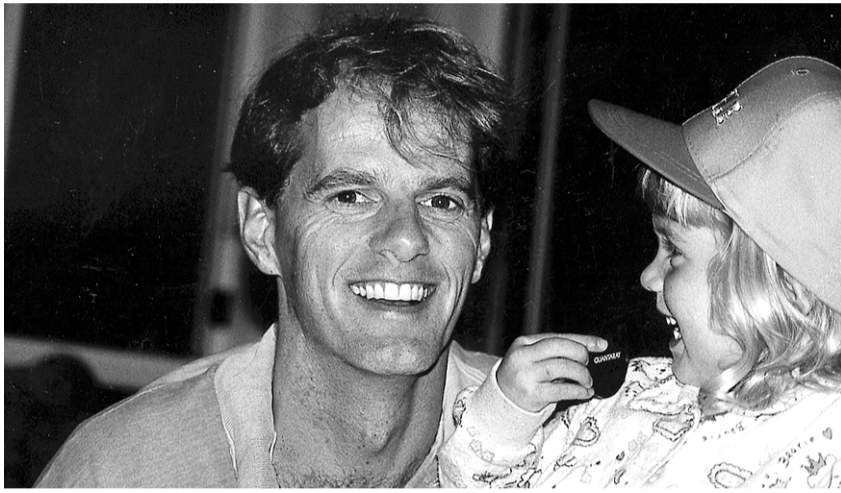
Phil Marshall, the evangelism consultant for the Uniting Church's Board of Mission, reports that church planting occupies first position on the Board's list of eight priorities. Measures have recently been introduced which will develop church planting strategies across the next ten years. In the last two years, regulations for the establishment and recognition of new congregations have been put in place. These regulations have helped to foster the expectation that the Uniting Church is in the business of establishing new congregations.

Non-English congregations occupy an important position amongst the new churches. Sometimes these have arisen from Uniting Church initiatives, but often a group has already sprung up which then approaches the Uniting Church for association. Moves are being made to revive dying churches, in both city and country, and initiatives are in place to reach out in new housing districts in Sydney. New services are encouraged within existing congregations. We welcome new congregations whatever way they come. New congregations prove to be more evangelistic, more vigorous in prayer, their level of faith and expectation is higher. There is still a need to work through the political implications for new congregations.

Some of this is received well, but territorialism is a problem. Many think the territory is covered. Over the last two years, the Uniting Church dispensed with parish boundaries. We now envision congregations clustering together for mission. But the parish system is deep within our collective psyche. We have developed concept of 'faith communities', where people come together for the reason of mission. These can function as a body, yet don't require formal recognition. This creates space for new groups to form and the denomination is now able to fund such mission teams.

# Church Planting in the Public Eye

Andrew Heard



Andrew ministers amongst an Independent Evangelical church on the central coast.

In the last few months I've found myself quoted in papers, interviewed on national TV and the subject of much rumour and comment. To say the least it's been a very interesting time. Much of me wanted to simply put it aside and get on with the massively urgent task of evangelism but there is surely benefit in digging for any significant lesson in it all. I've got three (what else, I'm a preacher!).

Firstly. The temptation has been to avoid all reporters and TV cameras.

A number of people resented the fact that we opened Church up to the ABC's Four Corners. In many ways their concerns were legitimate. They rightly perceived we were being used—in a political fight and in a ratings contest.

Aware of this we tried to maintain some control over what was filmed and how we were used but, of course, the final word was always going to be the producer's. They would show what they wanted and ask what they wanted. This was no more evident than in their interview technique. I had attempt to maintain some control by asking for questions before hand. The reporter happily obliged.

On the day however the questions bore almost no resemblance at all to his stated intentions.

The whole experience was a cause for much prayer within our church. It was a great comfort to know our God is the God of even the media! It appeared to us he graciously answered our prayers. People were fairly represented.

In light of this experience do we say 'no' to the media? I think not. A number of people have commented to me along these lines so the thought is not mine but it is significant that Paul the apostle could boldly say in his public interview with Agrippa that none of the things he was testifying to happened in secret.

'The king is familiar with these things. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner' (Acts 26:26). Christ and his early followers were not afraid of public scrutiny. They had nothing to hide. They were wise, but still open.

Opening our churches to scrutiny, being available for interview, answering frankly and openly is surely one way in which we ensure nothing we do happens

in a corner. No doubt there are many risks involved and much wisdom is necessary but to hide from media can only breed suspicion and distrust. These are the very things reporters thrive on!

Secondly. The problems of denominationalism are greater than I thought.

I have constantly been surprised by the size of the reaction against what we are doing. I was aware there would be some stir. A new church always raises human fears and insecurities. It raises questions about people's loyalty to present churches. Will they leave and join this new work? Will this new church's presence make it harder for us? Added to this was, of course, the fact that I was an ordained Anglican minister teaching the Bible in another diocese, albeit independently. However, after the initial concerns I felt sure people would realise what we were about (evangelism and discipling) and all would settle into a

the four years we've been here).

Order in church life is important (as it is in any organisation). Denominations can be good and helpful. But when an independent gospel work is maligned, slandered, attacked because it threatens other Anglican churches then something is terribly wrong. We all look back in incredulity at what happened to Bunyan (imprisoned for no other crime than preaching the gospel without a licence) and yet what's happening today seems little different.

Lastly. Should we reply to rumour and criticism?

This hasn't been easy to work out. We've been the subject of many rumours. I hear a new one most months. I'm always amazed how the truth can be so distorted. Apparently I married a divorced woman; sent a theological quiz to all ministers on the coast and passed only three; came with the aim of gutting the Anglican church and not evangelising; etc. All of the rumours have been put around by sincere people sure they've hit upon the truth and convinced they're serving others by informing them of the inside story. It's driven home two things:

1) always take second, third, fourth hand information with a grain of salt, and 2) always trust God. It's to him we all must give an account. Keeping a clear conscience before him matters more than public perceptions. Especially given that a ministry that challenges idols will always arouse the father of lies to be active. If we are bold we cannot avoid some taking offence. However God is sovereign. We trust him and get on.

Three questions come to mind in

## When an independent gospel work is maligned, slandered, attacked because it threatens other Anglican churches then something is terribly wrong.

new equilibrium. This has been the case among all other denominations, except Anglicanism. Their reaction seems in some places to be growing. I believe we have uncovered far greater insecurities about Anglicanism than I thought possible.

We are an independent church. We've never claimed to be an Anglican church. We are like any other independent church. We didn't set up with any intention of taking Anglicans out of local Anglican churches (of 700 people involved with us I can only think of 12 who have come from local Anglican churches). And yet we have an Archbishop promising to 'come down like a ton of bricks' on anyone who does what we've done in his diocese. I've tried to read this in the most charitable way possible but it still appears to me a massive over-reaction and expresses not only a deep insecurity about the robustness of Anglicanism but a single minded determination to protect a denomination even at the expense of reaching the community through a proven method of evangelism (we've seen over 60 people converted in

responding to rumour. Does the falsehood merely offend or does it inhibit gospel preaching? Is the falsehood public or merely held by a few? Will the correction inflame the situation or calm it?

These questions by no means resolve the dilemma. The first distinction is not easy to differentiate and the third not easy to see. The Father of lies will never be calmed! He will always seek to twist and distort, find error and condemn.

My response? We just get on preaching the gospel. I hope by the time I work out what to do with all the rumours it will all be history! ●

## Treasure for treasure

John Lavender



Good, faithful preaching. Faithful committed people. God working in people's lives to change them and make them more like Christ. All of these things make ministry go ahead, but there is also another factor that everyone thinks the churches talk too much about.

Perhaps we should think about what it is that might hold ministry back?

It is only a few years that Glenmore Park Anglican Church has been in existence. We have been tremendously blessed to receive grants and financial support from other Anglican Churches in the Sydney region. The importance of their generosity cannot ever be underestimated! We have our own building so therefore do not have to go through the weekly tedium of setting up and putting away chairs and equipment. We are not subject to the whim of other people who want to also use their building. Having our own building is such a great privilege—rarely does a day go by in a week when it is not in use. Not only this, but because our building is central in Glenmore Park and on a major road, visibility has been a major factor in a number of people making that big decision to check us out and come along to church.

As the ministry of our church expands so, of course, does the need for money to finance this ministry. Many people are giving sacrificially to help finance the ministry of this church but we are a new church with a large percentage of new Christians just beginning to learn what the Bible has to say about giving to God's work. We as a church are very aware of how much more there is to be done. If the money was available we could employ 3 extra full time people right now as well as building a much-needed large hall or auditorium for our growing congregation and children's and youth groups!

But is our story any different? Isn't this the story of so many churches? Not so much a shortage of faithful people and willing workers but a shortage of money! This seems to be the case not just with churches but in Missionary organizations and in our Bible Colleges—money, money, money!

Lack of money so often seems to be the thing that holds ministry back—stopping growth, stopping people from being able to hear the gospel, from being effectively followed up and from being trained for ministry—especially in new churches with so many new Christians.

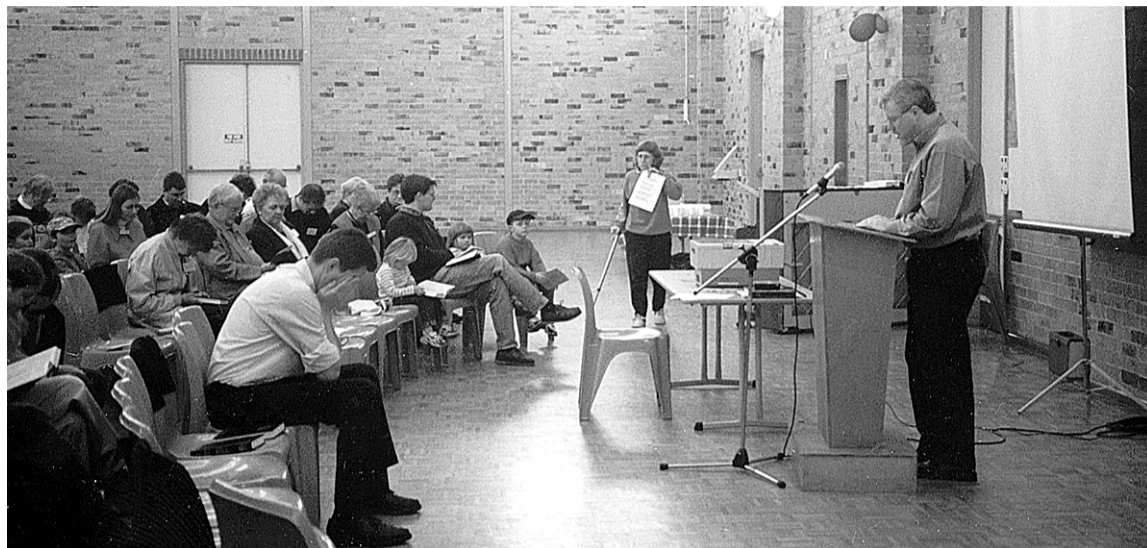
As Christians growing in maturity we need to take seriously Jesus' statement—*"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... you cannot serve both God and money."* (Matthew 6:21, 24)

I am reminded of C.S.Lewis' famous quote "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this." Maybe this is what we need to be—more convinced about the gospel! It is so important that as Christians we put our money where our treasure is, so that others can come to see this great treasure too! ●

David Seccombe, Principal of George Whitefield College, Capetown, RSA, was in Australia when the Four Corners programme was aired. His response was positive:

The Four Corners program on Sydney Diocese was the talk wherever I went. Though it set out to be negative, I was elated by the obvious growth of Christian activity it evidenced. For as long as I have been a Christian the media has been representing the church as decaying and irrelevant. Now they are faced with growing and vital congregations, and more people in training in Sydney for ministry and mission than ever before in Australia's history. So they figure something must be wrong!

# CONGREGATIONS



Cherrybrook Anglican Church meets in the local community centre.

The only ordinance that is being given a full night of discussion at this year's Synod is '34/99 Establishment of Congregations as Parishes'.

The Legislation has been circulated and then amended in the light of the responses. Many responses show some anxiety arising from misreading the legislation to be about church planting. The report admits that the title ('Establishment') may have helped create this impression. Instead, it seeks to facilitate the due recognition of new congregations already in existence.

One fear seems to be that small churches may be encroached upon by larger churches planting congregations in their 'patch'. In fact, the legislation enshrines a commendable consultative

approach between all interested parties. Previous Synods have already recognised both that ministry should not be hindered by geographical considerations, and that church planting should be done in a spirit of fellowship and co-operation. This legislation takes the next step and shows that such fellowship and co-operation should also be involved in the recognition of congregations that have grown up as a result of the gospel seed doing its work.

One of the strengths of the legislation is that it recognises how things actually happen and ought to happen in a denomination. It is a proposal for the recognition of a work already in place. Somewhere, sometime, some ordinary person at the local church end of things took some initiatives for the gospel, and

now there is a congregation in existence. The initiative for gospel work must be retained at the local church level. Diocesan structures, whether Synod, Regional Councils, or Bishops, exist to serve the work of the gospel at the local level. This legislation recognises this fact and seeks to allow for the diocese to enfold a new work into the family.

Given the suggested threat that this legislation poses to existing churches *The Record* surveyed several such churches.

Rick Miller, ministering at Cataract/Ambarvale, stressed that the notion of 'dynamically Anglican' required flexibility, and the need for co-operation at the local level.

For Geoff Taylor, Curate in Charge of Sadleir, 'any initiative to build God's Kingdom is to be applauded'. He would welcome new congregations seeking to win those in his parish for Jesus.

Sandy Grant, Rector of Kurrajong, sums up the stance of many:

'So at best reckoning only 5% of the population are in Protestant Churches each week. So there is plenty of room for other church planting efforts. I hope I would have the grace to welcome any biblically based, Christ-honouring churches who set up in our little area of the world!'

Some of the respondents are concerned that the Legislation appears to enshrine a 'homogeneous unit principle' which is inimical to a proper expression of Christ's church which should be open to all. However, as a mission strategy this seems to be clearly sensible. The

churches we have now aren't as mixed as we would like to suppose.

Gary Nicholson, Rector of Ingleburn, can see an immediate opportunity in his parish. A reasonable sized Department of Housing area in the Parish has no gospel work. His congregation at the moment have no structures for a continuing ministry for interested people here. This kind of situation seems to be ideal for a new church plant, which would be 'homogeneous' in order to reach a group that are not represented in the 'non-homogeneous' parish church at the moment. A team from outside the parish could take this on.

The experience of those in our own city who began with a homogeneous unit principle as part of their mission strategy, also shows that by the time the congregation would take advantage of this legislation, it would already have become more 'mixed' than its initial charter might have suggested. The gospel has a habit of breaking borders!

The important thing is to follow the gospel where it goes. The initiative of the ones and twos, of the local churches, ought to be encouraged. When congregations arise from their work, it is time for Diocesan structures to offer them the care they request. Previous Synods have heard that the parish is a convenient way of ensuring that any lay person can call upon a clergyman to exercise 'the cure of their soul'. Although it addresses modern urban Australia, this legislation is entirely in keeping with the pastoral care rationale behind the parish system. ●

## Chinese Ministry's Perspective

Ernest Chau

Ernest Chau is Curate in Charge at Kirribilli.

Sydney Diocese has been a hospitable and mission-minded church. We allow migrants who want to retain their own identity to use our church buildings for services and other activities. Some of them have found in the Anglican Church the combination of order and freedom which they could not find in other churches, so they become Anglicans. However, the closing decade of the twentieth century has seen a rapid growth in the migrant population in Sydney. Its effect on our Diocese can be felt in the steady increase of ethnic congregations, among which the Chinese congregations have grown from 2 in the 80's to 13 at the present time. Our Diocese will be greatly enriched by those who have come to live in Sydney, and have brought the variety of their experience into the life of the Church. The proposal of 'Establishment of Congregation as parishes' by the Synod is a visionary foresight as the Diocese enters the new millennium. From the Chinese ministry's perspective, the following aspects need to be considered if this ordinance be adopted:

**1. Recognition and Responsibility**  
St. Paul in his letters has a good principle; whoever engages in pastoral and gospel ministry are fellow-workers of Christ. This

principle can be extended to every congregation. Every ethnic pastor and congregation must be given the recognition and responsibility in the gospel work. Two years ago I gave my maiden speech in the Synod. I made this point. Our Synod was very Anglo-Celtic. It will be interesting to know how many of our ethnic pastors and congregation members will be representatives in the forthcoming Synod! We must give visible and practical recognition to our ethnic brothers and sisters.

### 2. Equality

Recognition and responsibility implies equality. St. Paul once again reminds us we are all one in Christ, irrespective of our races. However, when it comes to matters such as ordination and policy-making, it will be rather unfortunate that the ethnic ministers and their congregations are not on the same par with the local ministers and their congregations. It will be sad to treat ethnic congregations within the local parish as something like Sunday School or Youth Fellowship.

### 3. Increase of Chinese Population

The Planning & Research Unit of Anglicare, NSW, has a revealing finding. Chinese speakers will be the fastest growing people group—over 200,000 in Sydney by 2011. Furthermore, the finding also

reveals that among all ethnic groups, only the Chinese does not have limited geographical distribution. Our existing 13 Chinese congregations confirm this finding: 4 in Northern Region; 4 in Western Region; 4 in Georges River Region; 1 in Wollongong Region.

**Chinese speakers will be the fastest growing people group—over 200,000 in Sydney by 2011.**

In order to engage in gospel work among the newly arrived Chinese migrants, it is vital and necessary that Chinese congregations be given the status as parishes. At present, mission to Chinese migrants is not carried out strategically and is often done in an ad hoc way. We must not forget Paul's first-century missionary strategy: Vernacular language and meeting place of the target group, e.g. synagogue of the Jews and the Areopagus of the Greeks.

Parishes without property is the strategic way to meet the newly arrived migrants.

### 4. Development and the Way Forward

In a recent report on Cross-Cultural Ministry, assisted by the Planning & Research Unit of Anglicare, it gives a very significant observation. 'It is possible to identify a distinct area of metropolitan Sydney where the majority of NESB [Non English Speaking Background] people live. This 790 square kilometer is bounded by the five points of La Perouse, Hoxton Park, Kingswood, Quakers Hill and Sydney's CBD. In this area, the general observation is that Anglican affiliation and that of other Protestant denominations is at the lowest level in the Sydney Diocese.' Therefore it is in the best interest of the Diocese to establish ethnic congregations as parishes in this 790 square kilometer area.

### 5. Conclusion

Every Anglican in a diocese is the responsibility of his or her Bishop. Parish or congregation without property does not diminish the responsibility of a Bishop but rather enhances and widens his responsibility. One may foresee not long in the future with the 'Establishment of Congregations as Parishes' there will be an appointment of an archdeacon or an assistant Bishop to be solely responsible for the ethnic ministry in the Diocese. ●



# WITHOUT PROPERTY

## Church without a church

Stephen Pivetta

**C**herrybrook is a north-western Sydney suburb with a population of almost 30,000 people and no church buildings (apart from the Uniting Church chapel, built in 1888). The churches of Cherrybrook meet in rented halls owned by the local council and schools.

These rental arrangements are likely to continue for many years into the future, because they seem to be a positive thing for the life and work of the churches involved.

In 1997 Cherrybrook Anglican Church (CAC) began as a church plant, 'parented' by St Matthew's Anglican Church at West Pennant Hills. After a few months of meeting in homes, CAC took out a regular Sunday morning booking at the Cherrybrook Community Centre for one hall and a smaller meeting room. The congregation has grown so that since 1999 the entire Community Centre complex (2 halls; 2 meeting rooms) is used.

Setting up each Sunday requires at least 3 person hours of muscle and sweat. Seating, sound and projection equipment,

3 Sunday School rooms, a creche, morning tea, welcomers table. Two hours later it all has to be packed away again. This is heavy work and it is *every* Sunday.

Nevertheless, renting accommodation is viewed as a long term arrangement for CAC.

- Rental has made property issues far easier for CAC than would have been the case had land been purchased and facilities built. Most of the time spent by the CAC Committee meetings is given to planning ministry, not property.
- Flexibility—rental arrangements have allowed CAC to hire as much or as little of the Community Centre as required. The centre itself is far more suitable for our church than anything we could have hoped to build.
- Flexibility—if the location of the Centre ever proves to be impractical for ministry purposes we are tied to it for no longer than the term of the rental agreement.
- CAC has no regular responsibility to manage the Centre, apart from the tenants' quarterly meeting.

Amongst the rental & property related challenges for CAC are:

- Without a permanent advertising sign or building with our name on it the work of creating awareness means actually meeting people to get the

of weekly set up and pack up is a challenge, but probably much the same as a mowing duty would be if we were to own a property with a lawn.

- for occasional services (weddings and funerals) it is necessary to find a

**These rental arrangements... seem to be a positive thing for the life and work of the churches involved.**

message across. A recent 'door knock' has shown we need to do more work in this area.

- tenants can be evicted.
- renting the Centre on days other than Sunday can be difficult—it is booked by other tenants virtually every week day & night. Group size is limited to the size of the homes available. Also, if one tenant grabs too much of the available booking time, there will soon be complaints that community use is being restricted.
- staying enthusiastic for the hard work

church building somewhere. Things may one day stretch to weddings at the Community Centre (a couple have even inquired) but it is unlikely that the Centre management would react favourably to a funeral service being held on its premises.

The reality is that the rented facilities have enabled CAC to do as much - and probably more—than any church owned property could have, albeit at a fraction of the cost and without the distraction common to many a property owner. ●

Steve is the pastor of Cherrybrook Anglican Church.

## The Beginning of a Partnership

Bart Vanden Hengel

**B**ack in the May edition of the *Church Record*, Andrew Dircks wrote a fascinating article about Bishop Josiah Fearon and his Diocese of Kaduna, Nigeria. Andrew promoted Josiah's desire that 'evangelical Bible teachers from Australia come to his Diocese', and spoke of the CMS summer school's pledge towards money to train Bishop Josiah's diocesan evangelists using the Moore College Preliminary Theological Certificate.

Even at the time his article went to press, my own plans were already under way to contribute to this opportunity. These plans had begun to take shape when I had met Josiah for the first time at last year's Synod. With the spiritual and financial support of Archbishop Goodhew, I flew out of Sydney on the 11th July, finally arriving in Kaduna on the 13th.

My brief was to teach a four week course using the PTC to 42 evangelists.

These men have been employed by the Diocese to work at the 'coal-face' of bush evangelism. They spring out of Josiah's vision to 'indiginize' the Anglican church in northern Nigeria through the conversion of locals, both animists and Muslims. Some of these evangelists, in fact, were themselves only recently converted to Christ and know the difficulties of such a commission.

Only half the class could take the course in English. None of them had previously received any formal training in theology. They may have had only a basic education. But all of this has not stopped Josiah. Having seen their potential, he wants to invest substantially into each man by bringing them to Kaduna, three times each year. For one month at a time,

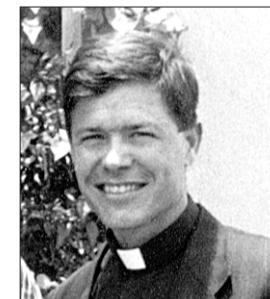
they will be taught the Moore College materials. In this way, they will be trained as they serve.

Even before I arrived, one such session had already been completed using 'Introduction to the Bible'. It was taught by two local Anglican priests, who, sadly, had never seen this material before, nor had they even done studies in Biblical Theology. In talking to them, it was obvious that, although they themselves benefited greatly from the course, they recognized that their training was inadequate to properly teach the material to others. The need for them to translate the lessons into the local Hausa language for those whose English was insufficient added an additional burden.

The exams I gave upon arrival proved their point. Well over half of the students failed! After a few days of review and

dozens of sample essay questions, however, we were able to re-examine the students with far better results. We, therefore, went on to teach the Old Testament 1 course, following a daily routine of morning classes from 9 to 12 noon, then an afternoon session of revision, and sample essay questions from 5 to 7 pm. All in all there was a wonderful sense of achievement in this intense collaboration.

So the partnership which began to take shape with Josiah's visit at last year's Synod has become a functional reality. Plans are currently underway to send two more teachers in the new year, through the combined support of Moore College, CMS and the Archbishop. Together, our Diocese has so much to offer towards a mutually edifying partnership with the Diocese of Kaduna. ●



Since returning from eight years missionary service with SIM in Niger, Bart has been the Rector of Peshurst.



The Moore College PTC is now a regular part of evangelist training in Kaduna.

## The view from Bangkok

Stephen and Marion Gabbott



The Gabbotts are serving with the Church Missionary Society.

We recently reflected upon a conversation with an English representative of what we have come to call “Old World Anglicanism”—let’s call her Susan—who was not happy with the way we do ministry and public worship: “Your building promises a certain kind of Anglican worship—and it doesn’t happen! The needs of people like me are not being met. I want to tell you why all this is so but I don’t want to talk about theology or history and we certainly must not get personal”.

We have been left wondering if this

was a ‘post-modern experience’. Although frustrating, the conversation was helpful—how truly does Susan represent the Church of England, or the American Episcopal Church for that matter? Or instead, did she want a form of religion with no theological moorings, which knows nothing of its own or anyone else’s history, and does not expect its practitioners to ever be held accountable. Is this the ultimate in non-judgmental approaches to religious inclusivity?

We have discovered that this another favourite theme for many. “When I come to church, I expect my needs to be met.” No theology, remember? So you can forget all those biblical ideas about loving one another, about counting others more worthy than ourselves, about gifts given for the benefit of others, about a body made up of many members with all striving for the common good. If this is fairly described as a post-modernist, then Susan could be a long way down the track towards the prize it offers all its devotees—a world of infinitely foreshortened horizons, inhabited by only one person and utterly isolated from the vast wonder and complexity of God’s creation. Nothing to remember, nothing to look forward to and nothing but oneself

to fill the present.

Maybe anxiety is the key to understanding why so many church going expatriates in a city like Bangkok end up thinking like this—or even parts of Sydney. More than one social commentator has identified pervasive anxiety as one of the things that constantly eats away at the lives of urbanites living in such envi-

**Nothing to remember, nothing to look forward to and nothing but oneself to fill the present.**

ronments. Bangkok certainly has that effect on a lot of people and they aren’t all expatriates.

Perhaps the no moorings, no history and no accountability approach is the only way in which many people can deal with this unsettling sense of anxiety. Perhaps it’s their way of reducing the world to manageable proportions, deluding them into thinking that living in such a ‘bonsai

world’ will enable them to regain the control feel they need to have if life is to be meaningful.

It’s a natural response, especially when we find ourselves moving cross-culturally into a world like Bangkok where we do not feel at home. However, it is a response that has a significant and unfortunate consequence for all who want to worship God—as it shrinks and minimises his world, so it shrinks and minimises him too. As we retreat from the privilege of realising what it means to be made in his image, we cannot destroy the reality of our origins. Instead, we must distort them by reducing to nothingness the one who made us to be redeemed by the blood of his Son. Like us, he too must be shorn of certainty, relevance and authority, otherwise it would be intolerable for us to live in his world.

Curiously, it has occurred to us that in her desire to have her needs met by a form of traditional Anglicanism with which she is familiar and in her determination to make her way free of the shackles of doctrine, history and accountability, it could be that Susan has adopted a Buddhist approach to life without realising it. Now how are we going to help her see that? ●

## The Gospel in Asia today

Tom Halls

Tom Halls is the minister at St Peter’s Cook’s River.

Eighteenth Century Englishman Hudson Taylor, whose burden to take the Gospel to China’s millions challenged the church to better things, said that in any enterprise there are three stages: impossible, difficult, done! The story of his outreach and the development of the China Inland Mission [CIM] and its successor, Overseas Missionary Fellowship [OMF] remain useful models for similar ministry.

In the last week of June 2000 in Mumbai [Bombay] India I was privileged to attend the Triennial Conference of mission leaders associated with Asia Evangelistic Fellowship [AEF]; an agency founded in Singapore by Dr G D James in 1960. Representatives from nine countries contributed reports on Gospel outreach among 60% of the world’s population, in which only about 5% profess themselves Christian.

### Impossible task

We are confronted in Asia with the same impossible task as Taylor saw before him in China. Like him, we go forward knowing, that under God the impossible, though it will be difficult, must and will be done.

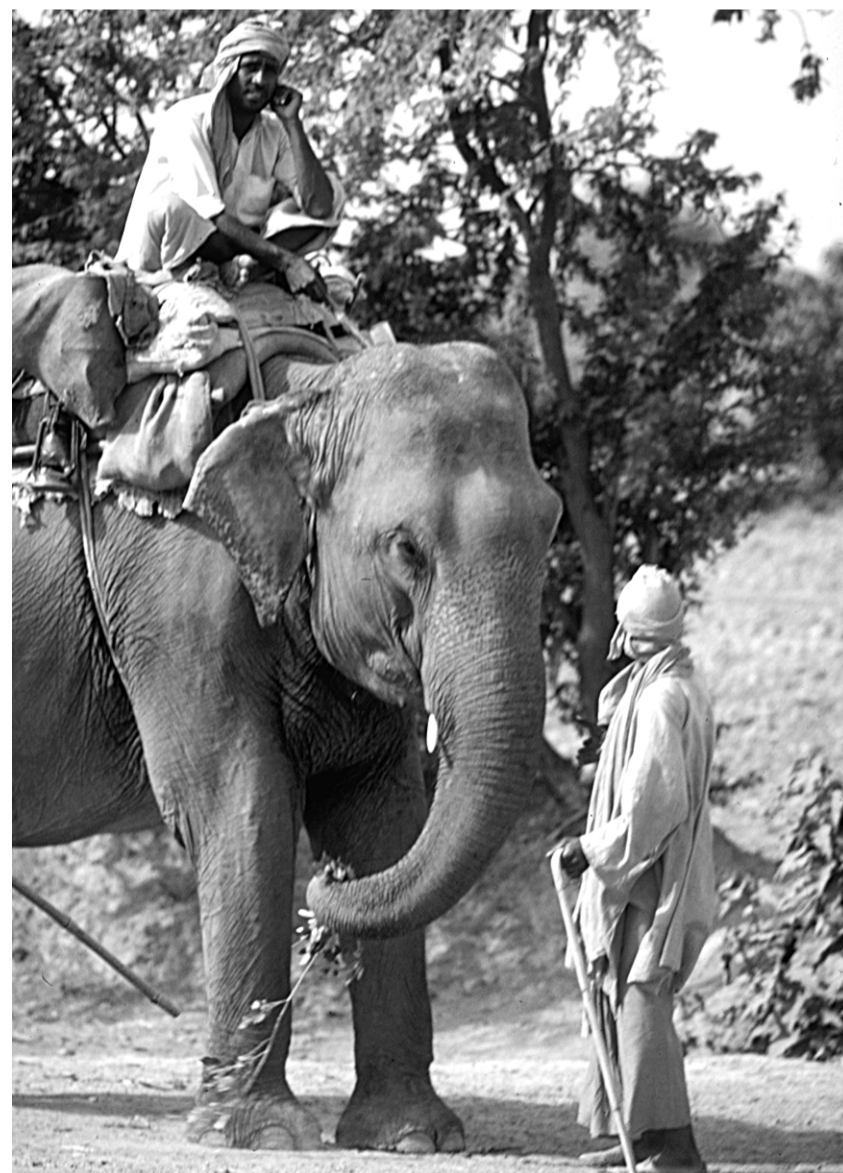
At the Mumbai conference, David from Indonesia told us that, as a Christian pastor, his head carries a bounty of \$US300 offered by Moslem militants. Representatives from Myanmar [Burma] were not prevented from attending for lack of an Indian visa, but because they were unable to get permission to leave their own country! Nehemiah from Nepal spoke of amazing church growth and devastating persecution. Pray that Graham and Heather Simpson serving with the United Mission to Nepal [UMN] and supported by the Church Missionary Society

[CMS] will be able to encourage Nehemiah and others like him. Kaiffa from Nagarland, Northern India moves from a state where 98% of the population are affiliated with the Christian Church, to Assam where only 2% would dare to make such a profession of faith. As the grandson of headhunters, Kaiffa feels he is tough enough to face the opposition. He is also gracious enough to show the love of Christ to the militant Hindus whom he will confront.

**Indian brethren at the conference shared with us examples of the escalating violence they experience daily.**

### India – the big country

In the first fifty years following independence from British rule, major persecution against Christians across the sub-continent of India amounted to a few hundred recorded incidents. Now the toll is much higher. Indian brethren at the conference shared with us examples of the escalating violence they experience daily. In Australia, we are all aware of the cruel murder of Graham Staines and his two sons in January, 1999, but Indian beatings and deaths rarely rate a mention amongst the sports results and economic forecasts which dominate our newspapers. In May last year, I ministered in Orissa State, where Graham died, and found myself overwhelmed with



the grief of our Christian brethren there, but challenged by their resolute commitment to share the Gospel. So many pastors came to my seminars on expository preaching, that the organisers were unable to cope with the response. India will soon contain the largest population of any country in the world, but thank God the Church is vibrant in faith and determined to evangelise their

own people. They have to do this, as foreign missionaries have been unwelcome, and unable to receive Government approval [with few exceptions] since 1965, although Indian Evangelical Mission [IEM], AEF and many other societies are already faithfully preaching the Gospel and sharing the love of Christ across the nation.

Pray for the enormous needs in Asia. ●

## By what authority?

Mark Thompson

**R**ecent events in Britain, the United States, and here in Australia have provided fresh evidence of a continuing struggle within the Christian churches over the authority of the Bible. Whether the issue be the differing roles of men and women in ministry, the priority of hearing the gospel over institutional unity and solidarity, or the repudiation of adultery or homosexuality as sinful, pressure is mounting from those who do not believe that the Bible ought to have the final word. If we are to be taken seriously by our world, the argument goes, we must face the fact that the Bible does not always get it right, or at least it doesn't give us the whole picture. Biblical fundamentalism is blamed for the decline of the churches in the West—against the fact that it is the 'conservative' churches that have been on the increase for decades! Those mounting these arguments are well aware that the issue behind most contemporary debates is the authority of Scripture.

Despite these developments—hardly new but increasing in their ferocity—evangelical Christians continue to exhibit a

robust confidence in the Bible as the absolutely reliable and authoritative Word of God, God's means of gathering and ruling his people. When Christians take the Bible seriously, proclaiming its message with confidence and living in the light of what God has made known there, the cause of Christ flourishes. Standing firm on the basis of the Bible's teaching is critical to the effectiveness of Christian ministry and thus a major factor in true church growth. This is because taking the Bible seriously means taking Jesus seriously and Jesus is the one who is building his church. Our commitment to Jesus determines our attitude to the Bible. After all, it is his endorsement of the Old Testament and his commissioning of the New Testament through his apostles, which ultimately binds us to the Scriptures as the final, unqualified authority for Christian faith and life.

In fact, the decline of so many western churches can be attributed to a century and a half of assault upon the authority, sufficiency, and clarity of the Scriptures. In many circles it is no longer obvious what Christians have to say to their pagan or

atheistic neighbours. All that is left is mimicry of the world's humanitarianism with all its internal contradictions. It is increasingly the case that many Christian leaders feel they can engage in meaningful dialogue with the world without ever mentioning God, let alone the Lord Jesus Christ. The icons of our culture with their strange

At the heart of Christian distinctiveness is a determination to live by the Word of God. Are we prepared to be shaped by the Scriptures, to have our thinking and our behaviour changed—even the way we have always done things in our churches—on the basis of what God has caused to be written for us? Are



Mark Thompson

**Standing firm on the basis of the Bible's teaching is critical to the effectiveness of Christian ministry and thus a major factor in true church growth.**

blend of the secular and the religious are incorporated into the life and message of many churches rather than challenged on the basis of God's Word to us. Christian distinctiveness is considered a quaint notion, perhaps even a barrier to effective evangelism and church growth. And yet as we become more and more like those around us we are listened to less and less.

we prepared to bear the consequences of such change? Are we willing to be misunderstood, slandered, accused of being unloving or divisive, and even to stand firm against an orchestrated campaign to force us into line, all because God's truth matters more to us than human traditions or institutions? Or will we join the others in building houses upon the sand? ●

## Diversity of Opinions?

Joshua Ng

**S**ome say that there is a range of disparate opinions reflected in the New Testament, different 'streams of tradition'.

Ephesians 4:11-12 is often cited to support 'lay' participation of all Christians, or to reinforce the importance of those with "word" gifts ('the clergy'), in building the church.

"It was he [the ascended Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."

But this passage about this issue anyway? Both sides have assumed that "God's people" refers to all Christians, and that Paul is here outlining a pattern of ministry for building Christ's church down the centuries. However, what is translated "God's people" in the NIV is really "the saints" in the original Greek (so RSV). Rather than the good Protestant position, that "the saints" refers to all believers, former Archbishop

Donald Robinson has cogently argued that this expression usually refers to the Jewish Christians of the first century, not all Christians *per-se*. (see, especially, Eph 1:1,15, 18, 2:19, 3:8, 18, 5:3, 6:18).

In this light, Eph 4:11-12 is not outlining the pattern of ministry for building Christ's church down the centuries, but speaking of the first century beginnings of the body of Christ. It speaks of the turning points in the progress of God's salvation plan. Thus when Christ ascended to God's right hand, he gave to his church the preachers of the gospel, the apostles and prophets who are the foundation of the church (Eph 4:7-11; compare 2:20). These people 'repaired' (perhaps a better translation than 'prepared') the saints—ie the Jewish Christians—for their works of service, namely the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all (both Jew and Gentile Christians) reach unity in the faith (Eph 4:12-13).

The Jewish Christians of the first century had a special role in God's plan in

taking the gospel to the Gentiles. Israel of old had failed in being a light to the nations (Isa 49:6, Isa 52:5; compare Rom 2:24), but God's new Israel—the Jewish Christians—were to resume that role.

You might ask, what's the cash value of all this for us? Wouldn't it more practical to just apply "the saints" to every Christian? At least we could then know, or at least argue about (!), the role of 'laity' vs. 'clergy' today. No. God's agenda is always more important than ours.

There is a unity of God's salvation plan from B.C. to A.D. Yahweh of old has now faithfully kept His word, not only by raising Jesus as the Servant to the nations, but also by raising the New Testament Jewish Christians as the new Israel. As Gentile Christians, we are indebted to these "saints". Not only is our New Testament written by Jewish Christians (with the possible exception of Mark and Luke-Acts), but the body of Christ throughout the ages is built on their faithful proclamation.

Understanding this progress of the gospel in history also warns us against

thinking that there was a diversity of opinions amongst the writers of the New Testament. There was no 'Petrine' Christianity, nor a 'Pauline' Christianity, or even a 'Judine' (after Jude!) Christianity. No, they all had one gospel, one faith for

**Understanding this progress of the gospel in history also warns us against thinking that there was a diversity of opinions amongst the writers of the New Testament.**

both the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. True, the Jewish Christians had to come to terms with accepting Gentile converts. But they recognised that the same gospel which made them the New Israel was being preached and believed amongst the nations. It was this same gospel that united them in one body of Christ. ●

Joshua Ng pastors the Fellowship of Overseas University Students.

## The rhetoric of Prophetic Prediction

Peter Bolt

**P**rophets have always been prized in all cultures. The future is such an unknown bogey that the ability to proclaim that future is sure to earn a person a great reputation. If you can know the outcome before the event, then this will help you to modify your actions in the present accordingly.

So your horse won't win? Then don't bet on it. So your lotto number won't come up? Then don't bother watching the balls fall down. The prophetic dis-

missal of an option means that what was an equal chance becomes excluded, and to hold onto the possibility makes you a dreamer, not a realist.

Perhaps because of christianity's high regard for prophecy, such clear pronouncements negating certain possible futures can be heard in the realm of church politics. The political animals love to play the role of the prophet.

Because of the world scene, women's ordination is 'inevitable', we were told. Now, I guess, that same world scene is

telling us that homosexual ordination is also just as inevitable.

With the election of a new Archbishop coming up, those in the political 'know', prophetically pronounce on who is 'electable'. After receiving the opposite pronouncement, the 'unelectable' candidates have no need to get their posters and balloons printed. Why bother? The prophets have seen the future.

This 'rhetoric of prophetic prediction', could also be called the 'rhetoric of lay down and die'. Just imagine if Martin

Luther had consulted the political pundits before nailing his platform to the door. Just imagine if Jesus had crunched the political numbers. Aren't we glad that the twelve disciples didn't feel outvoted in the face of the millions left to reach.

What ever happened to finding out the Truth and not rolling over on it until all are persuaded? What ever happened to finding the best person to uphold the Truth and working your darndest to get him elected? ●



Peter Bolt

## It's the same old song...

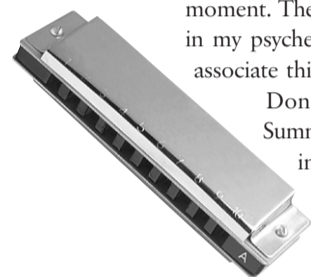
Bill Salier



Bill Salier is currently whistling several happy tunes to see which one fits his new locale in Cambridge, England.

According to T S Eliot the life of J Alfred Prufrock was measured out in coffee spoons. He obviously didn't live in the late seventies or early eighties because then he would have known that it is not coffee spoons that measure out and mark our existence but rather song lyrics.

The words of the prophets aren't written so much on the subway walls but in the choruses of the radio and muzak that surround us daily. I am reminded of this because of changing circumstances. Recently our family has moved to England. Thus far we have been living with talk radio mainly because modern music seems so unintelligible and hits and memories is so full of, well... memories. People kept telling us how marvelous (brilliant is the English word) British radio is but we wouldn't know. The nakedness of my existence is complete. I haven't heard any songs that capture the moment. There is no marker for this time in my psyche; no song with which I can associate this passage in time.



Don Henley's 'The Boys of Summer', the Sex Pistols 'Anarchy in the UK', King Trigger's 'The River', The Talking

Heads and 'Stop Making Sense'; even KC and the Sunshine Band with 'That's the Way (Uh Uh) I like it'. It doesn't matter if you don't know them. They work for me. The merest mention, the faintest hint of a chord and specific times, places, people and events are brought back in an instant.

It's pathetic I know but the words of the prophets are inscribed on the song charts as even entire generations can be summed up in a title; 'Blowin' in the Wind', 'I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For' and so on. No event is complete without a soundtrack to accompany it. At the World Cup Rugby Fiji and England walked on to 'Boom, Boom, Shake, Shake the Room' and they launched the official English song—'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot'. Unfortunately the English chariot swung out of the competition before it could get much airplay. But a song was required nonetheless. At the final Men at Work's 'Downunder' staked a mighty claim as Australia's national anthem.

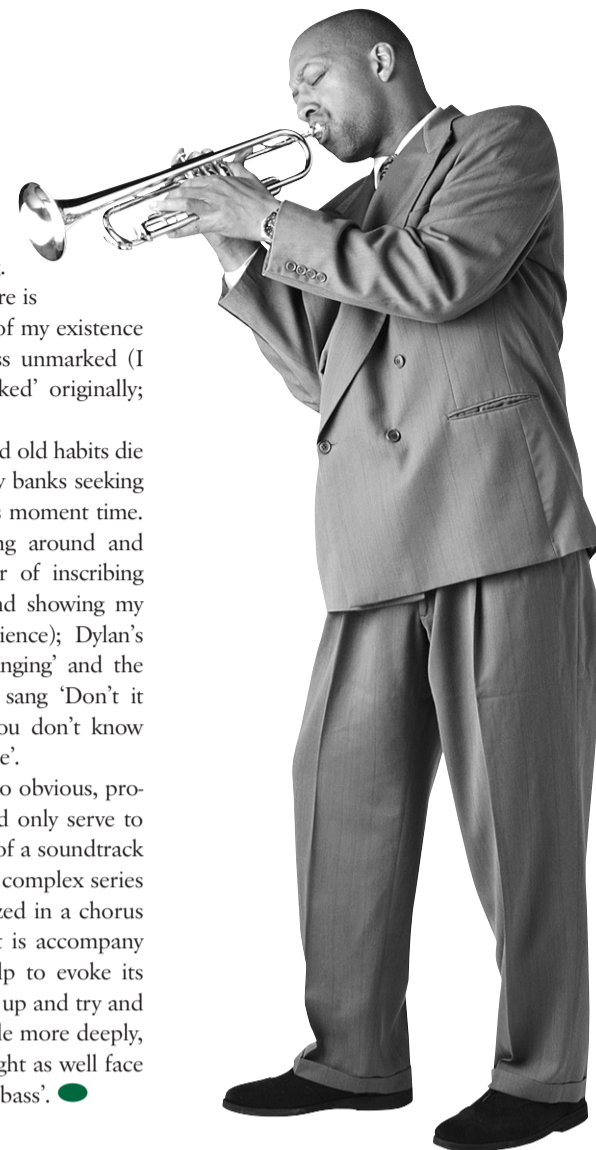
Times, events, experiences and nations are neatly encapsulated in a riff, phrase and chorus; vacuous perhaps but there it is.

But, for me, this present time and

moment are blank. There is no sound track to my life. Not even a bad song. The rest is silence. But there is no rest. An entire section of my existence seems to be about to pass unmarked (I accidentally typed 'unmasked' originally; isn't that interesting?).

But the urge is there and old habits die hard as I trawl the memory banks seeking the musical marker for this moment time. Two old songs are rattling around and competing for the honour of inscribing my present experience (and showing my too many years of experience); Dylan's 'The times they are a changing' and the chorus that Joni Mitchell sang 'Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got till it's gone'.

But these are a little too obvious, provisional reports at best and only serve to demonstrate the problem of a soundtrack generation; to think that a complex series of events can be summarized in a chorus when all it can do at best is accompany the moment and later help to evoke its vibe. Perhaps I should give up and try and describe the moment a little more deeply, in another way..., but I might as well face it, 'I'm totally addicted to bass'. ●



## Exporting your favourite flavour

David Höhne



David Höhne is the assistant minister at the Anglican Church in Wanniasa, Canberra.

*Somewhere along the Boulevard of the Avant-Garde, two young vagabonds' despair of ever finding good Cafes in out of the way places...*

**BILL:** Every time we leave Sydney I always feel nervous about finding a Café that serves good coffee.

**BEN:** I know what you mean. We are so lucky to have so many good ones here in Sydney.

**BILL:** I hear there are moves afoot for one of the major Sydney chains to branch out into other places.

**BEN:** What's all that about?

**BILL:** Well there's that one started up on the Central Coast, what do they call it? The Good News Café?

**BEN:** I think that's it. Isn't the maitre de an ex-surfer?

**BILL:** Then there's that one way out west, what is it the Orange Bowl Café? You know the one that was the combination of a couple of smaller cafes?

**BEN:** I think that was a case of people just getting sick of International Roast all the time.

**BILL:** One thing's for sure, they have created quite a stir amongst other major chains. Did you see that feature on Four Corners the other night?

**BEN:** Yes. Once again the ABC were labouring away to create a storm in a teacup. Still I don't know what all the fuss is over.

**BILL:** That's right, Aunty is more inter-

ested in tea houses and she insists on having the most formal of silver services.

**BEN:** Actually I was thinking more of the interstate managers that were interviewed. They were getting all frothed up for nothing.

**BILL:** What do you mean exactly?

**BEN:** What I mean is that there is all this talk about starting up new cafes here and there, but the truth is that it is almost impossible to find the staff willing to serve coffee outside of Sydney.

**BILL:** Oh I don't know about that.

**BEN:** Look, a couple of friends of mine work in cafes on the coast and they tell me that they have to practically beg people to go and help. One of their largest Cafes was looking for a new maitre de and almost a dozen people from Sydney were asked to go and none could.

**BILL:** Well it is a long way away and no one drinks coffee on the beach.

**BEN:** Yes well what about up north - they needed a new manager for their chain

and only someone from the West Coast could go.

**BILL:** The New England tablelands are hardly cappuccino country now are they? It is more important to concentrate your efforts in a market that will bring a good return.

**BEN:** Oh so, why are there moves to look elsewhere for managers for Sydney?

**BILL:** They say we need people with experience in other places in order to get that '43 bean flavour'.

**BEN:** What about the Cafes that they would come from? Aren't they doing a great trade already? Wouldn't it be a pity to get them to leave those fabulous shop fronts to get caught up in management—what a waste!

**BILL:** You're just not seeing the big picture—the Café business is an extremely complex affair.

**BEN:** So it seems. All I can say is that I'm glad I have a good thermos. I can take my preferred brand wherever I go! ●

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