

SOUTHERNCROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR SYDNEY ANGLICANS

JULY 2021

Help for the helpless

CHURCHES! SOCIETY NEEDS YOU MORE THAN EVER

*No tolerance for abuse • Kanishka consecrated
Cancel culture • Christian writers of fiction*



Churches uniquely placed to help the social recession

Tara Sing

There is strong evidence of a COVID-led social recession and an increase in financial hardship, according to Anglicare Sydney's Life After Lockdown report.

The report, released last month, reveals an increase in people reaching out to Anglicare for

help, with many Australians struggling to repay rent deferrals. About 30 per cent of rent variations during the pandemic involved deferring rent rather than reducing it, resulting in large debts.

There has also been an increase

in young people accessing food and financial assistance services and in clients reporting stress and anxiety – jumping from 20 per cent in 2018 to 34 per cent in early 2021.

“People are feeling more lonely, more anxious and more isolated

due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Anglicare CEO Grant Millard.

Mike Sheedy, Anglicare's head of mental health, has found that even since pandemic restrictions began to ease late last year, the number of people coming to

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Anglicare in financial stress has almost doubled. "Sixty-three per cent [of clients] are saying they are more anxious and down than usual, and 57 per cent are more disconnected from family and friends," he says.

Three quarters of people who lost employment or had hours cut as a result of the pandemic reported moderate or severe levels of psychological stress.

The report calls for governments to implement robust policies in a range of areas, "including more ambitious social housing targets, better protections for renters and action to contain and reduce levels of homelessness" – as well as improving mental health support and aid for victims of domestic violence.



Providing support: (L-R) Anglicare Sydney's Teresa Clark with a volunteer, Sue King and Mike Sheedy.

PARISHES A KEY PART OF THE SOLUTION

"Churches have an integral role to play in addressing issues of social isolation because of their capacity to create and offer social capital," the report says. "Anglicare recognises the part to be played by local churches, both in partnership with organisations such as Anglicare and in working on the ground in local communities."

Parishes can not only continue to partner with Anglicare in areas such as the Mobile Food Pantry, but are also uniquely positioned to offer community and provide opportunities for socialisation to help combat the pandemic of loneliness.

"Older people are particularly affected by the loss of physical contact with family," Mr Sheedy says. "Younger people are also affected by social isolation at times, and financial issues."

He says churches can look out for needs and offer support to people their congregations and in the community. "Engage people in conversation, listen to the answers, and then continue to walk alongside people."

For those who might not be able to extend much support to others, Mr Sheedy recommends linking the person in need with a pastoral worker or someone who is able to provide that

support. "The church might not be equipped to handle [particular issues], and that's the point where you can refer to agencies, such as Anglicare, who have case workers who look after food and financial assistance."

The third way churches can be part of the solution is by identifying those who may need help.

Teresa Clark, head of Anglicare's food and financial assistance arm, says many people are reluctant to speak about their financial situation and ask for help, which often leads to more dire circumstances by the time they do reach out.

She says there are small signs that can indicate if a family is struggling. "If you're looking at the person next to you, you could be looking for a long time before they give any sign that they need support. But if you ask a few deeper questions, that's when you'll start uncovering underlying issues like work hours being cut, people falling behind on rent, etc."

COVID-19 is providing opportunities for churches to make fresh contact with their communities, offer practical help with their life circumstances and ultimately, bring the hope of the gospel – new life in Jesus. SC



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No tolerance for abuse

All Anglicans should be deeply grieved by the study released last month by the Anglican Church of Australia on domestic and family violence.

"Like my predecessor, I want to state clearly that all forms of domestic abuse are incompatible with Scripture and Christian faith," said the new Archbishop of Sydney, Kanishka Raffel. "Nothing justifies violence or coercion. Christian relationships are to be marked by love, gentleness and respect."

The report indicates the prevalence of family abuse was the same or higher than in the wider Australian community. "There is much work to do and our shock and sadness should stir us into further action," Archbishop Raffel said.

This further action includes studying the report to identify gaps in current diocesan policy and practice. At its June meeting, Standing Committee referred the report to the Domestic Violence Response Monitoring Committee, which will present an initial report before Synod in September. In the meantime, a 10-point commitment has been enacted by the General Synod.

Archdeacon Kara Hartley, speaking on behalf of the Sydney Diocese Domestic Violence Task Force, said, "It

is entirely appropriate that, as a national Anglican church, we should be committed to hearing from victims and taking a serious look at how churches have responded and are currently responding to survivors.

"The results of this survey mirror our concerns about domestic violence among church communities. This led the Sydney Synod to adopt a Domestic Abuse Policy and Guidelines in 2018."

In 2017, the then Archbishop Glenn Davies commended the work of the Sydney Diocese Domestic Violence Task Force, saying that abuse among those connected with churches, within the congregations and even in clergy families should never be the case as "it dishonours both God and his image-bearers".

It represents a personal tragedy in each case and an affront to God – which, as Archbishop Davies said, must be "responded to both with justice and pastoral sensitivity".

Said Archdeacon Hartley: "Alongside our policy, we've developed materials and training to highlight that all forms of domestic abuse are wrong and not tolerated in our church. We've also taken seriously the fact that domestic violence

has occurred in some clergy households and have established a fund to care for clergy spouses.

"Through Anglicare and Youthworks, we have developed the *Before it Starts* campaign to educate young people, from the Bible, about respectful relationships, which we hope will lead to long-term change in the incidence of domestic violence and sexual abuse."

Archdeacon Hartley said the research was a reminder to those in the Diocese that there is more to do on the issue, "and we continue to seek ways to ensure victims of abuse in our church are listened to, valued, respected".

"In particular, it is disturbing that less than 12 per cent of Anglicans who find themselves in a violent relationship turn to clergy or those within their

church for help. This is despite the finding that clergy and lay leaders had high levels of awareness of abuse issues and that 74 per cent of those who sought help within their congregation were supported."

She added that the issue of twisting Scripture as a cover for violence was also raised in the research.

"Some abusers distort the meaning of Scripture in order to exercise control over their victims. Rightly understood, the Bible condemns all forms of domestic abuse. Therefore, using Scripture as a cover for violence is a gross distortion.

"This report reinforces a key finding of our task force, that we must give priority to biblical teaching on marriage that leaves no room for misunderstanding or abuse."

SC

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No higher title than “child of God”

Russell Powell

There was a knock at the Cathedral door just moments after the afternoon rehearsal for the consecration and inauguration of Kanishka Raffel on May 28. The door was opened by the Archbishop-elect himself.

“Would you like a cup of coffee?” he said to the person at the door, one of the many people in difficulty who take shelter around the Cathedral.

“Do you take sugar?” the about-to-be Archbishop said as he went off to make the coffee himself.

It seemed fitting that only four hours later, before the Governor-General, politicians and leaders of other religious denominations, he was urging humility before the cross of Jesus.

Archbishop Raffel made history as he was consecrated and inaugurated at St Andrew’s Cathedral as the first non-European Archbishop of Sydney.

St Andrew’s Cathedral was as full as COVID would allow. It had cut short the plans of Victorian guests but plenty of visitors from the Archbishop’s old church in Perth were able to attend, as was the consecrating bishop – the Primate and Archbishop of Adelaide, Geoff Smith (video of the full event is available on [YouTube](#)).

Bishops from all over Australia

took part in the traditional laying on of hands to consecrate the new Archbishop. He was then given the pastoral staff of the Diocese of Sydney.

In his first sermon, Archbishop Raffel made it clear he wanted to mobilise the 275 parishes and 450 congregations in Sydney and the Illawarra, and he stressed the central message is God’s salvation plan through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

“The message of the cross is indispensable for archbishops, for the Church’s mission and for Christians in daily life and witness,” he said.

“Our culture is suspicious of revelation, we’re sceptical about truth, we only trust what we experience. If people are interested in the spirit, it is private – not something I do in community.

“We must engage with all of that; we must be creative, courageous, contemporary, willing to fail. We must find a way of speaking that connects with our culture but we will not make disciples without the message of the cross.”

He added: “To the most empowered but anxious generation we have ever known, the cross says you are loved, you are not alone, you may cast all



“The cross says you are loved”: Archbishop Raffel.

your anxiety on God knowing that he cares for you.

“How can we know he cares? Because of the cross. The Apostle John says, ‘This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.’”

Archbishop Raffel spent the final moments of the sermon addressing his personal reaction to his election in early May by the Diocesan Synod.

“I am cognisant of the weighty

responsibilities committed to me. I have made solemn promises and I have asked for your prayers and God’s help. There is an element of tradition and history. But do not let the paraphernalia obscure the message. Do not be deceived.

“At the foot of the cross, which is all the world to me, I am nothing more and nothing less than a grateful and forgiven sinner. Though I have been given particular responsibilities, I have no higher dignity or title than ‘child of God’.” SC



“Weighty responsibilities”: (from left) Archbishop Raffel receives the Bible from Archbishop Smith; he and his wife Cailey are applauded by senior clergy.



Torres Strait's 150 years in the light

Christianity, church and culture: Uncle Ben Harry is taking members of St John's, Glebe to celebrate the gospel's arrival in the islands. PHOTO: Tara Sing

Tara Sing

This month the people of the Torres Strait are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the "Coming of the Light" – remembering the arrival of the gospel on the islands, which lie between Cape York and PNG.

Uncle Ben Harry, a Torres Strait elder from St John's, Glebe, will be attending the festival for the first time in 50 years, and bringing along with him a number of guests from the congregation.

The festival recalls the arrival of the Rev Samuel McFarlane in 1871, when he sailed to Erub (Darnley Island). The elders of the clan of Erub accepted him and took him in as their guest, enabling Mr McFarlane to share the Bible with them and spread the gospel in the Torres Strait.

The first big Coming of the Light festival was held 50 years ago. "My grandfather took me and my sister in our boat, the *Stephen Davis*, and we travelled for a whole day [to get to Darnley Island]," says Uncle Ben, who grew up on Yam Island.

"When we get there, we go straight to where McFarlane landed on the beach. Today it's called Kemus Bay. Everyone comes together there and we do prayers and hymns."

The festivities carry on for two or three days in the Torres Strait, with singing, prayers, dancing, a re-enactment and plenty of feasting. "Coming of the Light is the biggest event in the Torres Strait," Uncle Ben says.

The gospel has always played a big part in Uncle Ben's life,

thanks to his grandfather encouraging him to go to church as a child. The church bell would ring daily, he says, adding: "My grandfather was a church warden for 30 or 40 years, back in the Torres Strait on Yam Island".

It's important to recognise that the Torres Strait Islander experience is vastly different from the mainland Indigenous experience. While the arrival of Mr McFarlane is seen as an arrival of light in the Torres Strait, there is much grief and mourning among Indigenous people associated with the arrival of foreigners to Australia.

However, for Torres Strait Islander people around the country, July 1 is a significant date. "Every year in Sydney

and around the cities, Torres Strait Islanders will celebrate," Uncle Ben says. "Pastor Mark [Wormell] asked me what it's like [to celebrate], so I said, 'If you want to see it, come for yourself'.

"I will take them up there and show them how people up there react to God and Christianity, to the church, the culture, and the history of Darnley Island."

For those who are not of Torres Strait Islander heritage, July 1 is a day to offer thanks for the way God has worked in the islands.

"I'd like them [non-islanders] to recognise the date, first of July, as when the gospel came to the Torres Strait," Uncle Ben says. "So, when it comes up on that day, we will all get together and celebrate and pray." SC

Introduce Jesus in everyday conversations

Talking about Jesus doesn't always need to be a big biblical presentation. Sarah Seabrook believes that simply speaking about our faith in everyday conversation can have a bigger impact than we realise.

"McCrindle research identified that conversations are the biggest prompt when people are thinking about spirituality and belief," Mrs Seabrook said in her workshop on Introducing Jesus into your Conversations, which was part of a recent Evangelism and New Churches conference called "Gossiping the Gospel".

Forty-four per cent of non-Christians are attracted to people living out genuine faith, but this rises to 62 per cent for non-Christians who are already open to change. "Nobody likes a hypocrite," Mrs Seabrook said.

Knowing where others are coming from, and knowing ourselves, is key to introducing Jesus into our conversations.

"We are not religious observers; we are people in a right relationship with God," she said. "This is a fundamental thing about Christianity that most people don't get: they don't hear enough about the relationship we have with God."

WE DON'T NEED TO BE "EXPERTS"

It's important to remember that people don't know what we know. "It's our job to let others know what it means to live a Christian life and to be in a relationship with God," Mrs Seabrook said. "We are the ones who hold that information and need to bring it up in conversation."

She advised people to share their experiences with the gospel — particularly what captured them — and the hurdles they needed to overcome to

believe, but to do so without watering down the message.

She said we don't need to be experts in all areas of theology to talk about Jesus, adding that it's helpful to reflect on what you *do* feel confident talking about. Share what you love about God, church, Jesus, the Bible and your Christian friends. Talk about the difference Jesus makes to your life — including your relationships, security, future, decision making and your identity.

It's also important to remember that we are the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13), that our words will polarise (2 Cor 2:14-16), and that we must be prepared (1 Peter 3:15).

"This is how we're going to come into conversations," Mrs Seabrook said. "We've got all these things in mind. We have our story to tell, the theology, but we are minding the gap when we drop into conversation."

"We're not just going to say 'church' or 'worship' or 'I was saved by the blood of Jesus'. But you are going to drop in questions. You're going to be a questioning person. You might be that switch that helps people see that their assumptions are not [correct]. You may have the ability to change someone's mind, but it's going to take time."

"We can't out-inform people in this age. What people need to see is that Christianity works. It makes a difference. It works because we tell them the joy we have in knowing God, the relief in forgiveness, the hope in eternal life [and] that we've found our home."

JESUS CONVERSATIONS ARE "BUILDING BLOCKS"

The goal is not to get to a gospel presentation as quickly as possible. "Mentioning what

you did on the weekend and mentioning church is a great place to start... You don't have to always get straight to the gospel. It's building blocks. When you have time, you can come back to that."

Having practice gospel conversations with your church family and other Christians will also help make this a habit. The more comfortable we are speaking about faith with others, the more likely we are to bring Jesus up with the non-Christians we know.

The most important element to introducing Jesus in conversation is to pray. "They won't listen or understand unless we pray," Mrs Seabrook said. "It's God's job to do the converting. We don't know how God will use what we say, except that he will."

SC



Sarah Seabrook is a Moore College graduate with a teaching background who works with ENC as a speaker and trainer in evangelism. She is a resource for your church! To find out more go to <https://www.newchurches.org.au/book-a-speaker/>

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Burwood joyfully clocks up 150

It's had everything from wealthy weekenders, celebrity weddings and support for the homeless over its 150-year history, but the rector of St Paul's, Burwood – the Rev Dr James Collins (right) – says the attitude within the church itself has stayed pretty much the same since 1871.

"St Paul's was founded in a way that we still are today... our worship is meant to empower us to go and live Christ-like lives in the world: to love God and to love our neighbour," he says.

"The two are inextricably linked. If we say we love God without loving our neighbours, the Scriptures tell us that we're liars! So that's why we do what we do."

What this "do" involves is maintaining strong links of care and support with the community. And the suburb has changed completely in the past 150 years: from rich Anglos



with stylish homes who spent their weekends fox hunting, to an ethnically diverse population with the second highest rate of housing insecurity in NSW.

"We feed a 1000 people a week," Dr Collins says. "We give away the equivalent of our annual income every fortnight. God provides. We don't hold on to everything – we give it all away

and we trust in God."

July 29 is the 150th anniversary of the laying of St Paul's foundation stone, marking the beginning of a week and a half of celebrations. There will be concerts, exhibitions, talks about the parish's history, church services most days – including a special thanksgiving service on August 1 – plus the launch

of a book about St Paul's at a celebratory dinner on July 30.

Sadly the author of the history, Graeme Starr, died a few months ago, but he finished the book and the notes he prepared for the launch will be read on the night by his daughter.

"It's a beautiful book and there's a very rich history to share," Dr Collins says. "We are giving thanks to God for all that has been and looking forward in hope for all God has in store."

"It's a very full program [of celebrations] – we'll be tired afterwards! – but it's all worth it because this parish is coming alive: first, because of trust and faith in God but also because we're outward-looking."

"As Jeremiah 29:7 says, we're seeking the wellbeing of the place where God has set us." SC

For more detail about the celebrations, see stpaulsburwood.org.au/events.php

UNEXPECTED HONOUR

Amid preparations for his parish's sesquicentenary the rector of Burwood, the Rev Dr James Collins, was surprised to receive a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in June's Queen's Birthday Honours list.

"I've not the faintest idea [who might have nominated me] – not a clue," he says. "It's very humbling and touching to have been thought of in this way. It's like getting a nice, big hug! But I think it's more about what God is doing at St Paul's – and I can't do all the things that are happening on my own."

"I look on it as the thanks

and appreciation of the community for what God is doing in this place."

Dr Collins received his OAM for service to the Anglican Church of Australia, having served in a range of roles in Perth and Tasmania prior to his arrival in Burwood a decade ago. In 2015 he was also Burwood's Community Citizen of the Year, and won a Westfield "local hero" award three years ago.

Also awarded an OAM was barrister Malcolm Young (above, left) – who attends St Mark's, Darling Point – for service to the community of Double Bay. A member/office holder of the Double



Bay Residents' Association since 1986, Mr Young has also served on Woollahra Council and on the parish council at St Mark's.

A notable recipient of an honour beyond the Sydney Diocese was the Archbishop of Brisbane, Phillip Aspinall (above, right), who was made a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC).



The citation said Archbishop Aspinall, who was Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia from 2005-2014, received the highest honour "For eminent service to the Anglican Church of Australia, to the development of ecumenical relationships and professional standards, and through commitment to social justice and welfare".

What's in a name? Millions of people

"It is what people identify with and it better reflects what the region is," says Bishop Peter Lin (right) about a name change to the region he oversees – which from this month will officially become known as the South Western Region of the Sydney Diocese.

The name and shape of the region has been evolving since it was created in 1993. The bishop in charge was originally known as the Bishop of Liverpool, but in more recent years it became the Georges River Region, taking in a wide tract of parishes around the river.

However, with the regional redistribution earlier this year (see April *Southern Cross*), Bishop Lin says it was time to update.

"Because of the boundary changes, the region is more towards the southwest because we're taking in the Macarthur-Camden areas," he says. "Also, people across the region don't particularly identify with the Georges River.

"As we move further southwest they're not really connected in any way to the Georges River area, so the new name reflects the geography of the region and the identification of people."

Apart from leaving behind the angry sounding acronym of the Georges River Region (GRR), the new name may also help focus people's attention on Sydney's fastest-growing area.

"It's a very significant region in the future of Sydney and it's one of the big growth corridor areas," Bishop Lin says. "We currently have over a million people and hundreds of thousands more are coming to the South Western Region."

Bishop Lin, who chaired the Archbishop's election Synod in



May, made an impassioned plea at the time for Sydney Anglicans to open their eyes to what he called a "strategic moment".

"Take the southwest, where the new city of Bradfield will be located next to Sydney's second airport," he told Synod. "Size-wise, this city will be in the order of 1.5 million people. There will be over 300,000 people moving into just the immediate area around the new airport. We currently have three churches available for those 300,000 people."

Not that Bishop Lin thinks a simple name change will have missional value, but it might reinforce the identity and partnership of churches.

"There is already a good spirit of co-operation in the region," he says. "Most of the mission areas are functioning really well and people seem very happy to be doing ministry together. So I think there's really good collaboration happening."

"We have great opportunities to really anchor ourselves in the new airport area and establish ourselves before people move in, so we are there ready to go."

"We want to build as many partnerships as we can with churches, with Anglicare, with schools, in order to serve the area and the communities – and, more importantly, to be there to reach them with the gospel." SC



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Iran election warning for Christians

Russell Powell

The victory of hardline Muslim leader Ebrahim Raisi in Iran's presidential election last month may spark a new round of persecution for Christians in the country.

Less than half the population voted – the lowest turnout in Iran's history – which is thought to be due to the sidelining of more moderate candidates.

Ebrahim Raisi, who was head of the Iranian judiciary, wears a black turban, identifying him in the Shiite tradition as a direct descendant of Islam's Prophet Mohammed.

Observers say that, under the previous administration, persecution of Christians and other minority groups has been intensifying and it will only get worse under Raisi.

The charity Article18, which promotes religious freedom in Iran and advocates on behalf of its persecuted Christians, predicts more oppression and a greater crackdown on civil liberties.

According to the group, thousands of persecuted Christians from Iran have fled to Turkey. It also cites the case of an Iranian Christian convert sentenced to a nine-month prison sentence for "propaganda against the Islamic Republic by promoting evangelical Christianity".

Reza Zaeemi (above), 40, handed himself in last month after receiving a summons. He had previously been interrogated at a detention centre belonging to Iran's Revolutionary Guard.



He was initially sentenced to 18 months' jail but the sentence was cut in half on appeal.

"It is quite clear from the charges against Reza that he is being sent to prison only because of his religious beliefs, in spite of the regime's repeated claims that 'No-one is imprisoned on account of their beliefs in Iran'," Article18's advocacy director, Mansour Borji, said.

"We call on the Iranian government to immediately revoke this sentence and to explain why, contrary to its claims, Christian converts and other unrecognised religious minorities continue to be prosecuted and imprisoned for no other reason than their personal beliefs, in violation of the international covenants to which Iran is a party, and also of Iran's constitution."

The group has a list of more than 20 Iranian Christians arrested and imprisoned in recent months.

Many observers believe Iran's Christian community is growing faster than anywhere on earth, with Operation World saying young people are particularly responsive to the gospel. SC



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Prayer in partnership

Kanishka Raffel

Cailey and I are deeply grateful for the many kind expressions of support and encouragement we have received. COVID-19 limited the Cathedral's capacity to about 500 but it was wonderfully uplifting to have a "full house" drawn from parishes, schools and agencies – as well as visitors from across the Province and nation – to share in the consecration and inauguration service.

I am particularly grateful to Bishop Peter Hayward, Administrator of the Diocese, for his role in overseeing the arrangements for the service and the transition to a new archbishop. In all this, he has been a model of grace and efficiency.

Many individuals and churches were praying throughout the period before and after the retirement of our esteemed Archbishop, Glenn Davies. We continue to give thanks for the

long and faithful ministry of Glenn and Di, and seek God's hand of blessing, protection and guidance upon them as they walk new paths in his service. Happily, they remain very much in our midst, contributing to the Diocese's life and ministry.

In Philippians 1, the apostle Paul gives thanks for the gospel partnership of "all God's holy people in Christ Jesus in Philippi" and offers this reflection on their prayers, in the context of his own pressured situation in prison: *"I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"* (Philippians 1:18c-20).

Despite his imprisonment, and opposition from those who

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“preach Christ out of envy and rivalry” (1:15), Paul has at least two sources of confidence: that things will turn out for his deliverance through prayers, and through God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus. We are used to the (stunning!) idea that the Spirit of Jesus sustains, strengthens, helps and guides us in all kinds of circumstances. But do we share the apostle’s confidence in the power of the prayers of God’s people?

Of course, our prayers in themselves have no power. The power comes from the person to whom they are addressed – “God our Father” – and the one in whose name they are prayed: “the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2). The God to whom we pray is the one who “began a good work” in the Philippian believers and “will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (1:6).

God has committed himself to the salvation of his people, including their preservation until “the day of Christ”. What God began, he will complete. No wonder Paul says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (4:6). In troubling and anxiety-inducing circumstances, prayer to a God who hears us, and is committed to our perseverance until the last day, results in “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding” (4:7).

It is, I hope, your common experience that people pray for you. At least, if you are a member of a local church or otherwise in Christian fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ, I hope you are willing to seek the prayers of others, and I hope you have had people pray for you.

Perhaps this happens in a small group of some kind; perhaps you have been included in your church’s “prayer list”; perhaps there is a friend or relative with whom you share in mutual prayer. In many ways this can seem like a strange, even foolish activity. Certainly, it doesn’t look particularly impressive or powerful and, in fact, very often happens far away from anyone’s sight.

But the apostle reminds us that the prayers of (relatively young and inexperienced) Christians, far away from his prison cell, gave him confidence that all will “turn out for my deliverance”. That he will be strengthened to “in no way be ashamed” of the Lord for whose sake he is in chains, and that – on the contrary – he will have courage to conduct himself in such a way that “Christ will be exalted”, whether he lives or dies.

All this, achieved through the prayers of the Philippians and the gift of the Spirit! As our Father God hears the prayers of others on our behalf, so he sends the Spirit of the Lord Jesus to strengthen and sustain us, so that we may live for him. What a wonderful

privilege to pray for others, and what a wonderful gift to have others pray for us.

Cailey and I treasure the prayers of so many who have upheld us, the assistant bishops, the Cathedral and the Diocese over these many weeks of transition. Thank you for this vital and precious expression of partnership in the gospel. As we bring our requests to the God who has begun, even in us, his good gospel work, he graciously and generously provides his Spirit to “carry it on to completion in the day of Christ Jesus”.

SC

MY RESPONSE TO THE DV REPORT

Elsewhere in *Southern Cross*, you will find coverage of the report by the National Anglican Family Violence Project, undertaken by the General Synod Family Violence Working Group (FVWG).

The FVWG was chaired by the Rev Tracy Lauersen from the Melbourne Diocese. The Rev Canon Sandy Grant and Dr Karin Sowada from Sydney were also members. The findings of the report are, sadly, consistent with the research undertaken in the Sydney Diocese in 2018.

In light of media reporting on the research, I wish to reiterate that I regard the prevalence of the experience of family violence by members of our churches, and especially in ministry families, as a matter of the utmost seriousness.

It is in no way acceptable for a Christian family (or any family) to be characterised by patterns of abuse, coercion or any form of emotional, physical or psychological violence. Scripture provides no justification for such behaviour, nor does Scripture require a woman to submit to such treatment from her husband.

As Archbishop I am committed to ensuring that churches are safe, supportive and welcoming places for those experiencing family violence, and that clergy and church workers are adequately trained and resourced to respond to victims and survivors. I am also committed to listening to those whose experiences of family violence might help us prevent further abuse.

Contact can be arranged through Archdeacon Kara Hartley on khartley@sydney.anglican.asn.au. Anyone requiring immediate assistance is encouraged to contact Anglicare Counselling on 1300 651 728 or call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732).



The mutual ministry of pastor and congregation

*Service and care should run both ways in Christian circles, writes **MARK THOMPSON**.*

One of the great legacies of the Reformation, 500 years ago now, was a new view of Christian ministry. More particularly, it was a new vision of the pastoral ministry of the local congregation.

When we gather as God's people, it is not as if all the important stuff is done up the front by special people (in the Medieval period it all happened behind a rood screen, too!). We are all engaged in what is happening. Prayer when we gather is not only private but common. So, too, is our praise. We are a congregation, not an audience. We serve one another. We are active, not passive.

Martin Luther put it in the starkest terms: "We are all equally priests". We all have unmediated access to God himself. We do not need anyone else to stand between us and God, to dispense God's grace to us, or to bring us near to him.

Yet in another and more important sense there is only one true priest: the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. He is the one priest; his cross is the one altar, his atoning death the one "full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world". All that was needed to bring us to God has been done by God himself in Jesus. We do not need special holy men or women.

Nevertheless, the Reformation did not do away with the pastorate. All the mainstream Reformers were convinced of the need for some Christians to be properly prepared and set apart to

care for God's people and proclaim to the world the salvation that is only found in Christ.

Such people are recognised and authorised by the congregation, or by those given authority to recognise and authorise on behalf of the congregation.

In other words, this is not a responsibility someone may just take upon themselves. They are called upon to live out their own discipleship in a public space and to take responsibility both for nurturing the faith of believers and for leading them in the mission that we all share as disciples of Jesus.

It is a serious and seriously accountable exercise, as we read in the Anglican ordinal: "And if it should come about that the church, or any of its members, is hurt or hindered as a result of your negligence, you know the greatness of the fault and the judgment that will follow".

There is only one priest — Jesus. We are all priests as those brought to the Father by Jesus. Yet some of us are called upon to do what belongs to all of us in a more public mode and are freed from other concerns in order to do just that.

By thinking about ministry in that way, the Reformation reconceived the relationship between the pastor and the congregation. Ministers are not somehow more holy, or in a different state from the people to whom they minister, with

a unique source of spiritual comfort, strength and wisdom not available to others. They stand alongside the rest of us as brothers and sisters who are themselves in need of pastoral care as well as being those who are charged to exercise it.

The pastor needs to be pastored as much as the congregation, and the most direct and appropriate source of that pastoral care is, in fact, the congregation in which they serve. There is a mutuality of ministry that emerges when these basic truths are understood. We have a responsibility for each other. The goal is that each of us, pastor and people, are nurtured in faith, provided for in love, encouraged in hope, equipped for ministry.

GENUINE CONCERN NEEDS TO GO BOTH WAYS

It is interesting how early in Paul's letter to the Romans he speaks of this mutual ministry – in his case between the apostle to the nations and the young fledgling congregation meeting at the heart of the empire.

"I long to see you", Paul wrote, "that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you – that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom 1:11-12). At the other end of the letter, having reminded the Roman Christians that "each of us will give an account of himself to God" and then outlining a concern to help rather than hinder other believers, he wrote, "So then let us pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding" (Rom 14:12, 19).

Mutuality of ministry flourishes when there is a genuine concern for the other in both directions. Once again Paul is a wonderful example of this. His care for the congregations to whom he writes surfaces again and again in his letters. Those who were supportive, like the Philippians, those who were troublesome, like the Corinthians, or those who were struggling, like the Thessalonians – they all knew the apostle sought their welfare even at cost to himself.

In the other direction, Paul wrote of the care he had received from these congregations – not just support for the mission (Phil 4:15), but providing for personal needs (Phil 4:16) and bearing with his difficulties (Gal 4:13-15).

This mutual ministry is most poignantly on display when Paul is farewelled by the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. What grieved them most was "the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again" (v38).

Such is the powerful witness of a congregation where that kind of mutual love and ministry is evident, you would expect it to come under attack by the evil one. That attack comes from many quarters today: the professionalisation of ministry, the busyness of life, the public fall of very high-profile Christian leaders, even our obsession with growth and size and the megachurch ideal.

Yet beneath these and other contributors that reduce fellowship to attendance, a congregation to an audience and worshippers to consumers, lies the perennial problem: the self-centred nature of sin. We protect our own interests, demand things our own way, insist on our own needs being met. The other-centred love of God in Christ is eclipsed by a determination to get what I want. We are so adept at it that we can actually make it sound entirely justified and gospel-driven. When conflict arises it can rapidly deteriorate into a matter of either "He goes, or we go".

The point I want to make is that the mutual ministry of pastor and congregation is so good – good for those who are involved in it and good as a testimony to the gospel and its impact – that we need to recapture our delight in it.

THE CHALLENGE

Will we who are pastors commit ourselves afresh to the rich, other-centred love of those God has entrusted to our care? Will our every activity be evaluated in terms of God's singular glory and their eternal welfare?

And will we who are congregation members commit ourselves afresh to the same rich, other-centred love for the one or ones God has put among us to bring his word to us, to walk alongside us in a life of discipleship, and to lead us in mission? Will we pray for them, support them and seek to further their eternal welfare in every way available to us?

As we emerge from the COVID pandemic there is far too much stress, anxiety and conflict among us. We need each other. We need to repent of our hard-heartedness toward each other. God's word calls us to "love one another earnestly from a pure heart" (1 Pet 1:22).

Our congregations need to return to being beacons of hope in an uncertain world, powerfully effective because of the love that characterises them – thereby giving an added credibility to their proclamation of the gospel. In particular, the mutual love and ministry of the pastor and the congregation is a particularly potent demonstration of that love.

If we are going to turn the world upside down again in this next generation, we will need to both speak the truth of God's word and live the truth of God's word, and we'll need to do it in this area as much as any other.

SC

The Rev Canon Dr Mark Thompson is principal of Moore College.



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Tara Sing

The cancellation – or public ostracism – of people, ideas, products and services is an almost daily occurrence now, and no one is immune.

In the past month there have been several examples of celebrities facing online debate about whether they should be “cancelled”, such as singer-songwriter Billie Eilish and TV host Chrissy Teigen. Even the popularity of the Harry Potter franchise could not prevent controversy surrounding author J.K. Rowling, due to public comments she has made about gender identity.

The Rev Jo Gibbs, CEO of Anglican Deaconess Ministries, believes cancel culture is having an impact on how Christians speak, act and navigate situations of conflict. She defines cancel culture as the removal of support from a celebrity, person or organisation in response to an action or words that people find questionable or unacceptable.

“It can make us question whether we have the freedom to express our opinions,” she says. “We do an amount of self-censorship because we worry about public response. The other

thing [cancel culture] can do is take issues that are nuanced and complex and can turn them into something simplistic and black and white.”

According to research done by Mark McCrindle and Mainstreet Insights, three-quarters of Australians believe cancel culture has affected how they share opinions – with more than half now hiding their perspectives on political and social issues, including issues of faith.

“Because of the fear of judgement and self-censorship, the temptation is to reduce what you say and compromise the gospel,” Ms Gibbs says. “I don’t think it is anything new. God has told us in Scripture that persecution will happen. This can simply be another type of persecution.

“The motive behind cancel culture can also be positive, when we use our buying power to choose products that are ethical, and remove support for companies or products that are not... so we’d want to consider how we can reflect God’s character in what we do and similarly be people of justice and mercy.”

THE GOD WHO CANCELS SIN

The first step to navigating cancel culture as a Christian is to reflect on how God deals with people. "If anyone has the right to cancel us, it's God – but he doesn't," Ms Gibbs says. "In fact, he doesn't just bear with us, he's so generous in Jesus and beautifully loving. In Colossians 2:14, God doesn't cancel us but he cancels our sin. He cancels what stands in the way of us knowing him."

God's example of cancelling sin, but not people, provides a model of grace and love to follow. "The early church had people who disagreed on secondary issues, but Romans 14 is rich with practical ways to welcome each other warmly even when you disagree – bearing with one another and not passing judgment, but making every effort to be at peace and accept others as Christ has accepted us."

"But Scripture is also clear that we should never compromise on the gospel and that this is a point at which we should be clear and unwavering. And we should take a stand against evil and injustice in the world. But other secondary issues that don't impact on our salvation – that's where we want to focus on unity in Christ and not judging others."

While cancel culture shuns a person, providing no means of repentance, as Christians we operate with a heart of discipleship and seek the spiritual growth of others.

"If we look at every person in life and think, 'How can I help you grow in Jesus?' then when we disagree, I will draw close to them rather than stepping away," Ms Gibbs says. "I'll want to open up Scripture in a loving way. We want our churches to be safe places, so people can be themselves. Churches need to be places where people can honestly say, 'This is what's happening', or 'I disagree'."

WHEN THE GODLY GET CANCELLED

When Christians face cancel culture, Ms Gibbs says the first place we should turn is Scripture. "While cancel culture is a relatively new social phenomenon and is multifaceted, the Bible is very helpful as we consider how to respond as Christians," she says.

"We firstly shouldn't be surprised that it happens. 2 Timothy tells us there will come a time when people won't put up with sound doctrine and that they will turn away from the truth. At those times we need to keep being consistent in doing what God wants us to do. It's also encouraging to remember that we're united with Christ in his sufferings, as well as his death and resurrection."

"It's helpful to think about the cross as an example of cancel culture, where Jesus' opponents sought to cancel him. The encouragement from the cross is seeing that God's voice was not silenced by Jesus' opponents – and to remember that God's truth is



"We shouldn't be surprised it happens": Jo Gibbs on cancel culture.

bigger than the response we get from people, so don't change the gospel based on how people respond. But we also want to present the gospel relevantly and sensitively."

When it's a person being cancelled, the biblical response is to extend love and grace. Ms Gibbs notes that Scripture tells us to continue loving people, even if we are the ones being cancelled.

"The most incredible thing we can do is keep loving someone. Love and care for those who have been cancelled and let them know they're not alone; and love the person who cancels us. Our temptation is to give an eye for an eye, but that doesn't change hearts and minds."

We also need to watch ourselves and notice when we are tempted to lean towards cancellation rather than love in our own circumstances, or notice how cancel culture may be influencing how we live as Christians.

"When you notice yourself being angry, or disagreeing in your mind, think about what's happening for you and how you're responding," Ms Gibbs says. "Think about leaning close [to the other person] rather than stepping back. Think through the primary and secondary issues and ask, 'Is this a salvation issue?'"

"We also want to make sure we're spending time with people we disagree with, developing the ability to listen well and learning the art of persuasion rather than silencing people. Let's get better at speaking the truth in love."

"We want to work hard at honesty and trust, creating a culture where people can be real about what's happening for them and not be afraid of the response they will receive. So, people know they are accepted and loved even when we disagree."

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Effective discipleship to kids may mean increasing leader numbers

Hannah Thiem

Safe ministry requirements in our churches are an important part of loving and caring for our smaller church members. Yet the Rev Kate Haggar, a children's ministry advisor for Youthworks, encourages us not to see compliance with safe ministry guidelines as the end of the story.

"We make a bit of a mistake when we aim for the bare minimum for safe ministry standards," she says. She suggests that, instead of asking what child-to-leader ratios are needed to meet our legal obligations, we should be asking the more important question: How many leaders do we need to effectively disciple these kids?

Here's why your church should consider aiming above the minimum child-to-leader ratios in its ministry.

DISCIPLING KIDS MATTERS

The statistics are clear: with 78 per cent of Christians coming to faith before they turn 20, kids' ministry really does matter. For many believers, the foundations of their faith are laid in their early years of life, through Sunday school, family devotions and youth group.

"It is more than reading Bible stories," Miss Haggar says of children's ministry. "It is making disciples."

This means we need to reframe our view of kids' ministry from trying to fill in time while the adults learn. The lessons, games and craft we share are part of actively fulfilling the Great Commission.

We want to consider how we can best minister to the kids in our care. That may mean having one or two more leaders on our team to have one-on-one conversations and make sure every child understands the good news of Jesus.

THE GOSPEL IS FOR EVERYONE

We know nothing is perfect this side of heaven, so disability and neurodivergence (that is, conditions such as ADHD, autism and dyslexia, which affect a persons' sociability, attention span and



the way they learn) will always be a reality. But another reality is that each one of us has inherent worth by being "fearfully and wonderfully made" in God's image (Psalm 139:14).

Just as Jesus did not discriminate in his earthly ministry between race, religion or ability, we need to make it clear that the free gift of salvation is open to everyone – including those who look or think differently.

Sadly, many of our churches are not equipped to reveal the love of Jesus to children with neurodivergence. Miss Haggar says the churches don't have bad intentions, just not enough time or leader resources to treat every kid as an individual. Yet it's important that we don't let these barriers get in the way of helping each child understand the gospel.

"We could be turning them away from Jesus if we aren't able to stop and think about what the child needs," she says. Reconsidering how many leaders we have on our teams may be one way of practically improving our ministry to kids with different needs.

EVERY CHILD IS UNIQUE

"Just because something works for one child, doesn't mean it will work for others," Miss Haggar says. Rather than thinking, "How do I get them to do what everyone else is doing?", we should get to know what each child loves, struggles with and engages with.

She encourages kids' ministry leaders to think about where one-on-one conversations and relationships can happen. It may not help all kids, but there will be some who will benefit from it immensely. This is where improving our child-to-leader ratios can be a helpful way to personally love each child. We want to remove every possible obstacle to children grasping the amazing reality of God's grace.

There are plenty of educational resources available for your team to keep thinking about effectively discipling children. You can also reach out to Kate Haggar at kate.haggar@youthworks.net for further advice.

SC

Single parents pass on the faith



Tara Sing

What does it look like for a single parent to pass their faith on to their children? When the pressures of providing and parenting fall onto one set of shoulders rather than two, sometimes sharing faith effectively can feel like an impossible task.

Ed Springer, former head of ministry support at Youthworks, believes that single parenting shouldn't be a bleak experience. Instead, it can provide opportunities for the church to step up to be fathers and mothers without degrading the role of the parent.

"The church and the parents are co-workers on the same mission to see the next generation receive the knowledge of God and pass it on themselves," he says.

He has identified 13 simple things that single parents can do to help them realistically share the gospel with their children and raise a new generation of disciples.

1. **Pray for them.** An obvious, yet often overlooked, place to start. Prayer is powerful because we pray to a powerful God who is able to do more than we can imagine. Begin by praying for God to work in your children, for their minds to be curious and for their hearts to be open to Jesus.
2. **Ask two to five people to regularly pray for your children.** Create a small network of people who are committed to praying along with you for the salvation and sanctification of your kids. This provides a spiritual support network for your kids but, as a single parent, helps you to know that you are not shouldering the burden alone.
3. **Ask two to five other Christians to invest in them.** "It's choosing people apart from the parent who are helping them grow," Mr Springer says. "It's relational... it's brothers and sisters helping the solo parent." Find people who will

be there each step, and who can celebrate milestones that your kids reach as young Christians such as starting youth group or getting their first grown-up Bible. This creates a real and recognisable family of God around the nucleus of you and your child(ren) that is founded in Jesus and the joy of being part of a bigger eternal family.

4. **Read the Bible with them regularly.** Opening the word of God together as a family doesn't have to be complex, although as a single parent it can feel like it at the end of a hard day of work and parenting. Start by reading something small daily, and let God's word do the work.

5. **Walk and talk the faith.** Deuteronomy 6 outlines the ways that parents are to explain the commands and decrees and promises of the Lord to the next generation. In the same way, explain to your children why you do the things you do for the Lord. Tell them why you pray as a family, why you give thanks for meals and why you make church a priority on Sundays. When they ask questions, take the time to share about who God is and why these things are important.

6. **Invite questions and explore doubts.** Welcome challenging questions and invite your children to wrestle with their faith. Share what you are reading in the Bible and praying for, and give them space to engage with these things.

7. **Treat them as your child, but also as your eternal brother or sister.** You're their parent, so you must treat them as your child, but at the same time you are equal before God. Share with them your own doubts and struggles, in an age-appropriate way, and allow them to share the same with you.

8. **Pray with them.** Help them develop prayers that are not just asking God for things. Help them to pray about who God is, give thanks and grow in their relationship with him.

9. **Do faith-related things together.** Normalise Christian things with them, such as attending Christian conferences or church weekends away, serving together at church and outside church, sharing meals with other Christians (or bringing them with you to deliver food to someone's home).

10. **Give them a heart for the lost.** Talk with them about the reality that many don't follow Christ yet and teach them a biblical response.

11. **Prioritise Christian community.** Being part of the Christian community matters, not just for your faith but for theirs and others. Help them to find ways to serve and support other Christians, and also be supported in their own faith.

12. **Provide more input as they get older.** It's tempting to pull back as children become teenagers, but from 12 years onwards they need more input, not less. As they grow, they are looking for more input in life from others and if Christians aren't there, our teens will find their influence and input elsewhere.

13. **You can always start again.** Things may stall, but that doesn't mean they need to stop. Don't give up on giving these things a go. We have never finished the job of shepherding our children.

The suggestions on this list are not exclusive to single-parent families – they would benefit any Christian family trying to raise disciples. However, for those undertaking the task solo, it's not an impossible task that you've been left to do alone.

"God is sovereign, and we parent with him," Mr Springer says. "Choose to invest in the discipleship of your children in the rhythms of their life, whether that is the weekend you have them, or the whole time."

SC

Come and see

John Lavender

When spending time with friends, it is easy to throw into the conversation; "Have you seen that new movie... it's so good!" or "Did you see the footy on the weekend? What a great game!" And as we casually chat with neighbours, it is so easy to ask, "What's happening this weekend?" or, "How was your weekend?" and we find ourselves talking about sport or entertainment or the weather or real estate.

These are easy, familiar things. Yet, sadly, and so often, we baulk at speaking about Christian things in the same easy, natural way. Things like the encouraging Bible verse we have just read, or the helpful Bible talk we have just heard, or the sermon series we are enjoying and benefiting from at church.

How sad this is! Is it because we are afraid of what others will think of us?

Are we afraid that people might challenge us and ask questions we do not know how to answer and therefore perhaps we could look foolish? Perhaps we have lost confidence in the God who not only transformed our life, but the God who is able to transform the lives of the people around us? Or are we ashamed and embarrassed to identify ourselves with Jesus?

In the New Testament, we see people who have been transformed by Jesus naturally talk about him to the people around them – to their friends, neighbours, family and to those they work with.

We see them talking about the difference he has made to

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their lives. And we see them often doing this by simply saying “Come and see!”

In John chapter 1, Andrew brings his brother Simon Peter to come and see Jesus for himself. The result is Simon Peter coming to know Jesus and becoming a follower of his. In that same chapter, Philip invites his friend Nathanael to “come and see” Jesus. And as a result, Nathanael too, becomes a follower of Jesus.

A little bit later in chapter 4, Jesus speaks to a Samaritan woman who then goes back to the people in her town, her neighbours, saying, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

John then goes on to say, “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony”. They then come to hear Jesus for themselves and John records that they said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world”.

How amazing is that!

This is the consistent New Testament pattern. Men and women who are so greatly impacted by Jesus that they cannot help but speak about him. They certainly didn’t have a huge amount of knowledge or have all the answers to tricky questions. They were just keen for people to “come and see” Jesus for themselves and pointed others to him. It puzzles me that so often we are reluctant to do the very same thing!

We read in the Bible and know from experience that there are

many ways we can help people come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour: learning more about the gospel; learning how to answer tough questions; learning how to share your own testimony; practicing explaining the gospel; and, of course, prayer and more prayer.

These are all important for us to be doing so others can come to know Jesus, but here, in these first few chapters of John, we see a very simple, natural way of talking about Jesus and bringing people to know him: “Come and see!”

“Come to church with me on Sunday.” “Come and read the Bible with me.” “Come and listen to this great talk about Jesus that I heard the other day.”

“Come and do the *Christianity Explored* course at church with me.” “Come and see what Jesus has done for me and what he can do for you.”

Come and see.

So simple. Not complicated. Following this simple example of Andrew and Philip and the Samaritan woman – pointing people to Jesus – is something each of us can do so that those around us can come to personally know Jesus, the Lord and Saviour of the world.

How amazing that would be!

SC

The Rev John Lavender is assistant director of Evangelism and New Churches.



A prayerful encounter

David Peterson

had the pleasure of attending the consecration of our new archbishop in St Andrew's Cathedral on May 28. The service was uplifting and encouraging in every respect, the archbishop's sermon was challenging and hopeful, the music was excellent. But I was particularly impressed by the fact that prayer was a constant factor throughout.

I have been thinking about this recently with reference to our regular Sunday gatherings. All the services in the *Book of Common Prayer* and contemporary alternatives provide a succession of prayers and praises, linked to Bible readings, sermon and sacrament (when the Lord's Supper or baptism is involved). But what is your experience of church?

Prayer is often confined to the "prayer time", consisting mostly of intercessions for government and society, church and mission, the sick and the needy. Apart from this, there may be an informal prayer from the leader at the beginning of the service, from the preacher before the sermon, and from the leader again at the end.

However, I have experienced services where the first time we talked to God was 30 minutes in, just before the sermon – as well as services where there was no prayer after the sermon helping us respond to the message preached, or where there was no prayer of thanksgiving for what the Lord's Supper should mean for us.

Prayer in the Bible is not simply a series of petitions for others. Believers pray for God's help and guidance, confess their sins and seek his forgiveness. They give thanks for perceived blessings and praise him for answers to their prayers. They question what he is doing in their lives while still expressing confidence in his goodness towards them. They seek his purifying and transforming presence to live more faithfully in his service.

Prayers thoughtfully placed throughout a service help us to focus on God, rather than the participants, and to respond appropriately to everything we hear from him. Songs can help in this process, but they rarely express with

such precision and directness what we need to say to God at a particular moment in our meeting with him. At least some of the prayers ought to be expressed corporately to facilitate our involvement in the process.

Consider what we can learn from the Prayer Book communion service in this regard. First, we ask God to prepare our hearts, that we may perfectly love him and worthily magnify his holy name. Second, we respond to the reading of the commandments with prayers for mercy and for God to "incline our hearts to keep this law".

Third, the collects of the day highlight key themes in one or all of the Bible readings to follow, mostly focusing on aspects of Christ's work for us and the implications for Christian living. Fourth, there is a lengthy prayer of intercession for the church and the world. Fifth, there is a corporate prayer of repentance after the sermon and in preparation for communion.

Sixth, there is a prayer about worthily receiving the sacrament. Seventh, there is the prayer of thanksgiving for the institution of the Supper and what it signifies. We conclude with the Lord's Prayer, prayers of thanksgiving and dedication, a hymn of praise and the Grace. Even if we shorten and adapt this pattern, there is much to learn from the sequence and content of this liturgy.

We don't simply come together to be taught, but to respond to what we hear from God in prayer, praise and obedience. We don't simply come together for mutual encouragement, because "our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3) and this needs to be expressed in the way we relate to him together.

Growing in "the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18) requires an earnest response to God's word and a seeking after his help (2 Peter 1:3-11).

Everything we do in church should help us grow in this way. **SC**

The Rev Dr David Peterson is an emeritus faculty member at Moore College and former principal of Oak Hill College London.

Scrabbling gender

Chris Edwards

The book of Judges ends with the words, “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25). Doesn’t that sound familiar? We, too, are living in days when people live as if there is no king. The popular view is “I decide what’s right for me”.

In this post-Christian, postmodern world each person gets to decide what’s right for them – and there seems to be no limit!

We have a daughter in Sweden. She’s been living there for about 10 years. When she first moved there, gender reveal parties were quite popular (for those of riper years: a gender reveal party is an opportunity for a couple to announce the sex of their unborn baby).

Now, just a decade later, it is considered *very* politically incorrect to tell a Swedish child what sex it is. The popular view is that this is a decision for the child alone to make – or not.

The changes in values that have brought Sweden to this are not confined to the Nordic states. Many application forms now ask us to indicate if we are male, female or other.

Mattel, the company that gave us many of our favourite childhood toys and games, recently decided 200 words can no longer be used in Scrabble. While I might agree with some of the changes, the thing that bothers me is what is behind Mattel’s decision.

It has little to do with promoting the spirit of Scrabble. Like many of the big toy manufacturers, Mattel has chosen to take the culture war into the nursery with a view to re-educating young people so they will adopt Mattel’s values.

When Mattel released its new range of gender-neutral Barbie dolls in 2019 the company’s spokeswoman, Kim Culmone, said: “Through research, we heard that kids don’t want their toys dictated by gender norms. Toys are a reflection of culture and as the world continues to celebrate the positive impact of inclusivity, we felt it was time to create a doll line free of labels”.

Really? Were children really demanding gender-neutral dolls?

Similarly, the decision to rebrand Mr Potato Head as gender neutral by Hasbro was not a response to children saying they “don’t want their toys dictated by gender norms”. The sterilising of Mr Potato Head has to be motivated by political ends. The rebranding of Mr Potato Head is being driven by the goal of promoting gender fluidity.

Hasbro said it is “making sure all feel welcome in the Potato Head world by officially dropping the Mr from the Mr Potato Head

brand name and logo to promote gender inclusion”. The Mr and Mrs titles are too “limiting when it comes to both gender identity and family structure” because “culture has evolved”.

When people say that “culture has evolved”, what they really mean is that they want culture to change. One of the best ways of changing any culture is to control its language, censor terms deemed unacceptable and promote new values. Which is precisely what the toy makers are doing.

Turning the playpen into a seminar on intersectionality and critical race theory is hardly being “playful”. Tragically, such campaigns don’t stop at Scrabble and some dolls. Banks, insurance companies and energy companies are all reflecting these evolving cultural changes through their advertising and corporate values. And the ability for entertainment companies to stream programs right into our living rooms means we are more exposed to these evolving cultural changes than ever before.

Which might all be fine if it was harmless. But it isn’t.

What is behind these evolving cultural changes is a rejection of the God who made us. It shows disbelief in his ways as the ways that allow us to live the best life we could ever possibly live. It is a denial that Jesus is the king. And if people don’t believe Jesus is king, then they will do whatever is right in their own eyes.

But don’t panic. Don’t despair. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

It shouldn’t surprise us to find he is at work. Just as in the days of the Judges, when the stunning love story of Ruth took place, God has not left us. The Christian’s task (as Eugene Peterson put it) is “to become aware of what God is doing so that we can respond to it and participate and take delight in it”.

So, trust in the Lord with all your heart. Guard everyone in your nursery. Think twice about what you watch in your living room. Beware in your workplace. There is a deadly cultural evolution taking place, so don’t lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge king Jesus and he will direct your paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).

SC

The Rt Rev Chris Edwards is Bishop of North Sydney.





Faithful parish servants retire

Calling it a day: Stuart and Julie Pearson from Liverpool.

It's one thing to retire, but it's another thing altogether when you've spent 25 years in the parish you're about to leave.

That's the case for two rectors who retired at the end of last month: the Rev Stuart Pearson, from Liverpool, and the Rev Dr Roger Chilton, from Pymble. Add the Rev Ray Robinson to the mix – a busy, long-serving rector in two locations – and you have almost a century of ordained ministry. And more than two-thirds of that is in the parishes from which they have just retired.

"At 5 o'clock on the 30th of June I'll walk out of the office and that'll be the end of it!" Mr Robinson said a week or so before his retirement.

Which, of course, won't be true. Watch any rector who retires, and they will continue in ministry until they day they're called home. But it's certainly true that for these three, it's the official end of their ministry jobs.

Mr Pearson's is a medical retirement, following what his neurologist termed a

"catastrophic" stroke about 15 months ago.

"She was, quite frankly, surprised to be talking to me," he says. "I'm walking, I'm talking, I can drive a car, I've got a lot of life skills back... [but] it just became apparent to me that I can't deal with the complexities of running a parish with the effects of a stroke and the fatigue that happens as a result."

GOD'S PLANS



At Pymble, Dr Chilton admits that he never expected to be in the one place for so many years. Ordained in Armidale in 1989, he worked in Wee Waa and Walcha before receiving the invitation from Pymble

– and even though he grew up in nearby Turramurra, he says with a laugh that "I had to have my arm twisted a fair bit to come back to Sydney!"

However, his family's coming to the parish and remaining for 25 years was always a decision "for the Lord".

"I thought I'd be moving," he says. "But when you stay, you have the joy, for example, [of seeing] someone who I baptised as a baby the year after I came – I took his wedding a couple of years ago. So that's lovely. You see the kids grow up and marry and have their own kids, too."

"I'm going to miss the people, and so will my wife Sue... you're not just moving out of the church, you're moving out of your church family and relationships... and you need to find a new church to go to and relate to people there."

While he has no specific plans, Dr Chilton is speaking to a few different churches about part-time work. "But nothing's in place yet," he says. "I'm not in a great hurry."

TO THE COMMUNITY, WITH LOVE



Mr Robinson believes in "long ministry", so 28 of his 37 ordained years have been spent at Chatswood and Katoomba. Locals in his mountain parish "like to see Christianity with its sleeves rolled up," he says. "They see you as being relevant if you care and look after people."

The parish runs community Thursdays where locals can come in, get some soup and link up with Anglicare support.

The congregation has also worked at making the church "visible": taking part in festivals, holding concerts and exhibitions, getting a set of bells to encourage a bellringing

community – even getting the belltower wrapped in tarpaulins one year for the Winter Festival, with the help of the SES.

“We attached a long piece of red cloth [to the wrapping] and set it up to look like a ribbon with a gift tag on it, on which we wrote, ‘To our community with love’,” Mr Robinson says.

“St Hilda’s has a profile in the community that’s very positive. And that’s hard yards – a lot of work by parishioners doing a range of activities for children, adults and seniors over the years.

“I have enjoyed immensely proclaiming the gospel within the context of the local church... I think it is a very effective place to fish from, and so it’s been a joy to do that long term in places. And after a break, I’ll be ready to go out and pastor some more!”

BOOKENDED BY AN ARCHBISHOP

Mr Pearson and his wife Julie will remain at Liverpool for the time being. Some years ago they bought a house nearby, intending to support ministry in the southwest after retirement.

“The plan is to stay at St Luke’s, at least in the short term, as key parishioners... until the new guy arrives, and then see what the new guy thinks about whether I can stay!” Mr Pearson says.

Adds Mrs Pearson: “Our adult children are still parishioners at St Luke’s, so leaving would be like abandoning ship, really. It’s nice to be able to stay and have that conversation with the person who comes in.”

Mr Pearson spent all his ordained ministry at Liverpool – as assistant under Jim Ramsay, then as acting rector before

being made rector in 2000.

In late May, old friend (and new Archbishop) Kanishka Raffel attended the lunch at Liverpool for the Pearsons’ 25 years of ministry.

“He ‘bookended’ my time there,” Mr Pearson says. “He encouraged me to apply [for the assistant role]... and I said, ‘I can’t – I’d be replacing Bill Salier!’, who was senior student at college before he went to Liverpool.

“But Kanishka encouraged me to apply, Jim Ramsay kindly offered me the job and I’ve been there ever since. So it seems quite right that Kanishka helped me finish my time at Liverpool.”

Now, however, Mr Pearson will continue recovering and they will wait on God to show them his plans. Says Mrs Pearson: “He knows what they are – we’ll just catch up when the time is right.”

MILLARD CALLS TIME

After 10 years at the helm of Anglicare Sydney, including oversight of the merger between Anglicare and Anglican Retirement Villages in 2016, Grant Millard has decided to retire as CEO.

He will stay in the role until a replacement CEO has been found – a process that is expected to take several months.

The chairman of the board, Greg Hammond, expressed his sadness when making the announcement, saying Mr



Millard had a “passion” for servant leadership.

“Grant’s... strength in faith is absolute,” he said. “His humility, compassion and commitment to serving our clients have guided

Anglicare Sydney through some bountiful times and also some challenging times.”

Mr Hammond also expressed thanks for Mr Millard’s partnership with the organisation’s board and leadership team.

“I am grateful that the fruit of this partnership has provided Anglicare Sydney with very capable leadership and a strong foundation to continue to increase our presence in areas of greatest need,” he said.

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VACANT PARISHES

List of parishes and provisional parishes, vacant or becoming vacant, as at June 21, 2021:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| • Ashbury | • Liverpool |
| • Cabramatta* | • Menangle |
| • Cherrybrook | • Minto |
| • Cronulla* | • Paddington |
| • Eagle Vale | • Peakhurst-Mortdale |
| • Figtree | • Pymble |
| • Greenacre* | • Rosemeadow* |
| • Harbour Church** | • Ryde |
| • Huskisson | • Toongabbie |
| • Katoomba | • Wahroonga, St Paul's** |
| • Keiraville** | • Wilberforce |
| • Kellyville | • Ulladulla |

* denotes provisional parishes or Archbishop's appointments
 ** right of nomination suspended/on hold

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Faith in fiction

Know any Christian voices in the secular publishing world? JUDY ADAMSON talks to four authors about their work, their beliefs and how the two intersect.

Whether it's *Harry Potter*, vampires, dystopia or the latest historical romance series, plenty of secular authors have readers lined up to devour their newest book. And Christians are often among them.

But what about the latest fiction output from an author who is Christian? Do you read their work? Can you even name a handful of Christian authors?

If you can't, perhaps part of the reason is because you have assumed that a fiction writer who also happens to be Christian will only pen work that looks and sounds, well, holy. "Bonnet" tales à la *Little House on the Prairie*, or novels where Jesus is always front and centre, and important gospel lessons are taught.

After talking to four writers who attend Sydney Anglican churches (see box p30), it's clear that while they are writing through a Christian lens, their focus is on telling a story. And they do it in very different ways.

"I think all fiction veils the gospel to a certain extent, because the number one aim of fiction is to entertain," says Kristen Young, whose first young adult novel, *Apprentice*, was published last year.

"Preaching a sermon goes down like a lead balloon in fiction! You've got to be able to weave a captivating story at the same time as including the Christian worldview in terms that are also captivating, but perhaps not always recognised.

"There are enduring classics like C.S. Lewis's Narnia tales that hold precious truths within an entertaining fictional narrative. It's

almost like a parable... those who have ears to hear will hear it, and it won't necessarily do anything other than be a pleasant story for others."

Claire Zorn, the multi-award-winning author of four young adult novels, agrees.

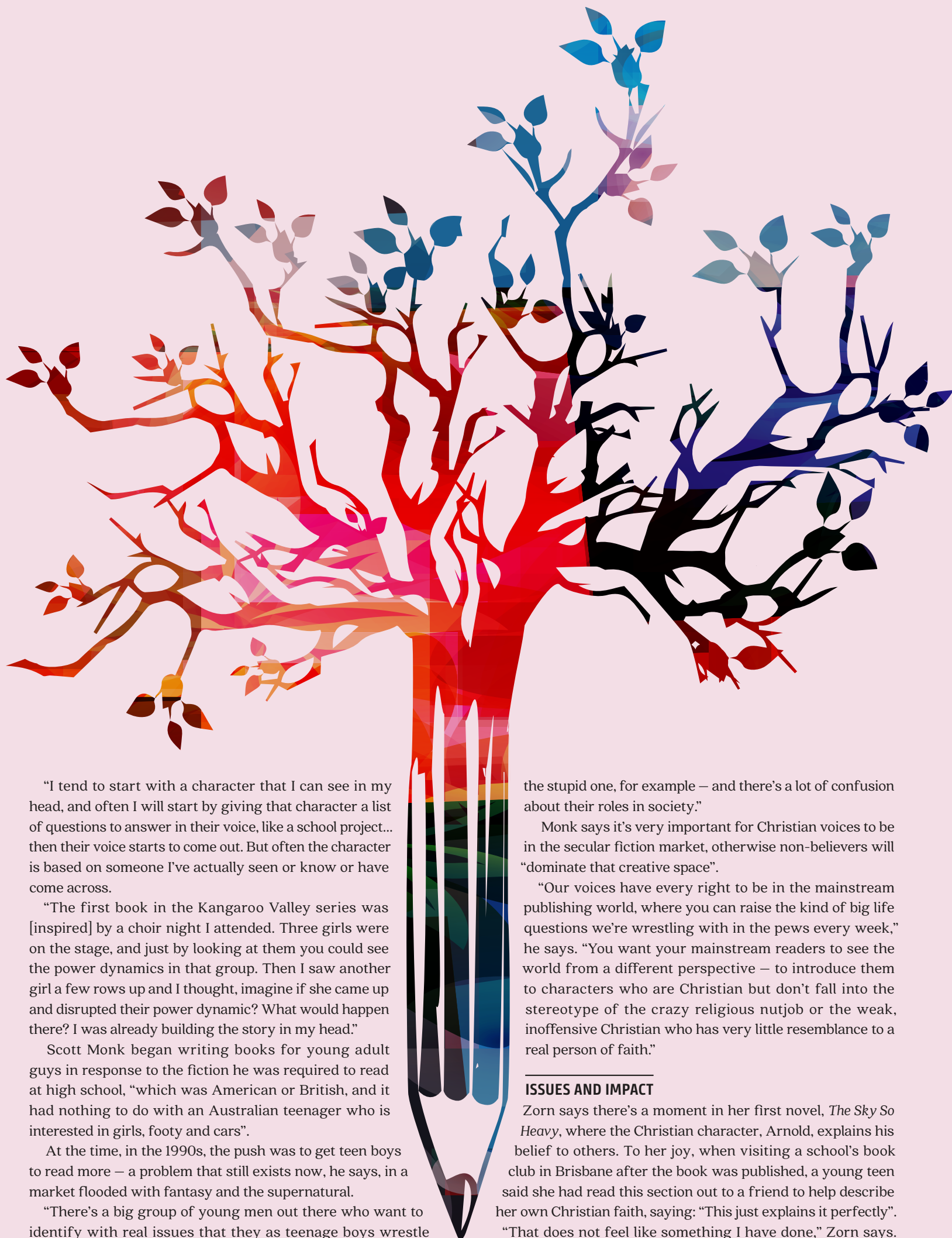
"It does depend on the angle you're coming at it from, [but] it's informed by what you think literature for young people should be," she says. "There is an old-fashioned idea that it should somehow be instructive: let's tell stories about perfect Christians behaving perfectly so that kids will read it and think, 'Oh, that's what I'm supposed to do'.

"There are a lot of problems with that. Perfect Christians don't exist, and it's also not my job to provide instruction. I try to reflect the world and what's happening in the world. There's a lot of stuff that isn't great and if I write cosy pictures where everything is lovely, I'm not reflecting the world. Kids know straight away if you give them something that isn't authentic, and you lose them instantly."

THE WHY OF WRITING

When Cecily Paterson decided to make good on her childhood dream to be a writer, she made a conscious decision to focus on girls in their tweens and "write books that could be their friends".

"There's a real drive to do it. I can't not," she says. "I don't particularly enjoy the process of writing, but I really love having told a story – a story that will move other people and has meaning.



"I tend to start with a character that I can see in my head, and often I will start by giving that character a list of questions to answer in their voice, like a school project... then their voice starts to come out. But often the character is based on someone I've actually seen or know or have come across.

"The first book in the Kangaroo Valley series was [inspired] by a choir night I attended. Three girls were on the stage, and just by looking at them you could see the power dynamics in that group. Then I saw another girl a few rows up and I thought, imagine if she came up and disrupted their power dynamic? What would happen there? I was already building the story in my head."

Scott Monk began writing books for young adult guys in response to the fiction he was required to read at high school, "which was American or British, and it had nothing to do with an Australian teenager who is interested in girls, footy and cars".

At the time, in the 1990s, the push was to get teen boys to read more – a problem that still exists now, he says, in a market flooded with fantasy and the supernatural.

"There's a big group of young men out there who want to identify with real issues that they as teenage boys wrestle with: identity, respect, sexuality, the meaning of life, mateship and power. And at the moment, there's a real sense that young men, and men in general, are devalued – in a lot of ads, they're

the stupid one, for example – and there's a lot of confusion about their roles in society."

Monk says it's very important for Christian voices to be in the secular fiction market, otherwise non-believers will "dominate that creative space".

"Our voices have every right to be in the mainstream publishing world, where you can raise the kind of big life questions we're wrestling with in the pews every week," he says. "You want your mainstream readers to see the world from a different perspective – to introduce them to characters who are Christian but don't fall into the stereotype of the crazy religious nutjob or the weak, inoffensive Christian who has very little resemblance to a real person of faith."

ISSUES AND IMPACT

Zorn says there's a moment in her first novel, *The Sky So Heavy*, where the Christian character, Arnold, explains his belief to others. To her joy, when visiting a school's book club in Brisbane after the book was published, a young teen said she had read this section out to a friend to help describe her own Christian faith, saying: "This just explains it perfectly".

"That does not feel like something I have done," Zorn says. "That feels like it came from a Creator far more capable than I am! It still blows me away when that kind of thing happens."

Monk has also experienced extraordinary feedback – hearing



of a teenage girl in Newcastle who had read his first two books dozens of times, was able to quote whole sections verbatim, and told a teacher-mentor that they were what had kept her alive during a very difficult period. He has also met a young man in juvenile detention, who wept as he told Monk how much his books meant to him.

“When you write you never realise how much impact your writing is ever going to have, but God is using your stories to help people in ways you never could have expected,” he says. “It may not convert people, but your books can inspire people and change people and give them hope.”

While the kids Paterson is writing for are younger, the issues they face are just as real and complex.

“I always want young people to be filling their minds with good

and helpful things – not necessarily nice-as-pie things, but good, real things,” she says. “Life can be dark and unpleasant... so, to touch on that and show that there can be hope is something I want to convey, because some young people don’t have many others who can show them wisdom. I want those things to be there for them.”

In one of her books, *Invincible*, the main character – who is 13 – has a boyfriend who, over time, wants to push the relationship further than she wants it to go. Paterson was disheartened to see a one-star review on Amazon by someone who declared this made the book unsuitable for its declared age bracket.

“I wrote it because something happened to a 12-year-old I knew, and she had to learn to say ‘No’ – girls need to know how to say ‘No’ to the pushy boys in their lives,” she says.

WHO THEY ARE

So, what style of books do our four writers create?



Kristen Young, who attends St Paul’s, Lithgow, has created an alternative world in *Apprentice*. It’s the first novel in the planned three-part Collective Underground series and has been nominated in the science fiction category of the US Realm Awards. The second book in the series, *Elite*, will be published in September.



The characters Claire Zorn (Fairy Meadow Anglican) writes about grapple with a range of difficult issues in a real-world setting, although in two of her books – including her March release, *When We Are Invisible* – this happens during or after a nuclear winter.



Cecily Paterson, who is married to the rector of Belrose, has written numerous books aimed mostly at 11- to 12-year-old-girls – although more recently she teamed up with another Christian writer, Penny Reeve, to create the Pet Sitter series for kids aged five to nine. The fourth book in her Kangaroo Valley series, *The Ava Show*, comes out in September.



Scott Monk (Church by the Bridge) writes young adult fiction with guys in mind. His first book was published in 1996 and his second, *Raw*, was on the HSC English reading list for eight years.

Other local Christian writers whose work you may like to investigate are Laura Sieveking, Meg Mason and Penny Morrison.

"Of course, every parent's entitled to say what's suitable for their children... some people think it's too 'old', but you can't just hope that every kid or every parent is going to be okay with your book! You can't please everyone."

SAFETY AND "APPROPRIATE" CONTENT

Young works as a lecturer and pastoral worker with Year 13 students, and her experience is that young people "want to turn to something that is safe... but it's hard to know what is safe".

She used to help young people see "how awesome Jesus is" through non-fiction. Now, she hopes to do the same thing through a different medium.

"I always knew my trilogy was going to be a Christian story," she says. "It's based on an alternative universe, but the themes are too overtly Christian for it to be a secular work, so I intentionally wanted it to end up with a Christian publisher."

"I know there are some communities, for example, where [a character] swearing is a big deal, so it is important to have an opportunity for that community to be catered for. I guess it depends on what your goal is when you're writing."

She says that for a "clean read with none of the swears, sex etc" she would likely send a reader to one of the American Christian publishers. Having said that, she regards Zorn's books – which do contain swearing – as "really great for teens" because of the serious themes they explore.

Zorn considers her faith to be in everything she writes – in the chaos and calm, the beauty and ugliness – saying she doesn't regard "swearing or the other sinful things that people do as unsuitable for books [written by a Christian]".

"It's like saying paintings about war are not suitable, because war is a bad thing. There are classic paintings of war that are very graphic, so should they not exist because war is bad? I realise it is actually incredibly important because it shows an experience that we need to know about."

"I have these stories in my head and I have to get them out," she adds. "It's not, 'I have this certain belief and I should write a story

that expresses it'. It doesn't work that way at all. It's more organic. And while I think a lot of my – I hate using the word 'ministry' – is through my writing, it's never felt like I'm performing some sort of ministry. It's just something that I have to do."

Monk's observation is that the sinfulness of the world, and how that is portrayed in one's work for authenticity's sake, is "one of the biggest moral wrestles Christian writers have".

"Profanity, sex scenes and blasphemy will keep you up at night and really have you questioning whether you can be a mainstream writer," he says. "My personal policy is, I have to answer to Jesus for what I create and present to the world. I'm known for writing gritty young adult fiction, yet there is no swearing in any of my books. I've been asked to put sex scenes into my novels... by my publisher and I flatly told them 'No.'"

It's the same for Christian readers or parents. Some will be happy to read or recommend fiction with swearing; others won't. Some will have issues with fantasy or sci-fi content, or the depiction of bullying or drinking or criminal behaviour; others won't. As Paterson says, you can't please everyone.

Given that the inclusion of certain elements is a dealbreaker for some, it's helpful for potential purchasers to undertake a little research before parting with their hard-earned. That way everyone knows what they're paying for and is (hopefully) happy.

Whatever our reading choices, it's encouraging to know that Christian writers are represented in an industry full of secular attitudes, creating fiction that can resonate with us, our society and our faith.

"If people like an author, they should support them," Paterson says. "Buy their books, go and hear them speak, follow them on [social media] platforms. The number of times I've thought about giving up, then I get an email saying, 'I love this book or that book, please don't stop writing'. And I think, someone doesn't want me to stop! Maybe I'll keep going."

SC

Know other Christian fiction writers whose work you'd recommend? Send us your thoughts: info@anglicanmedia.com.au

from page 32

window into different cultures, as well as witnessing practical, trusting faith in the great God who loves to give good gifts to his children.

And the stories! Working with his Aunt Val among the Afar people in 50°C+ heat, where every kid over the age of 10 has their own sword. Soldiering on with a leg swollen to twice its normal size. The suspicious witch doctor whose own successful fistula operation causes her to send other women to Browning's hospital. The funding provided, after prayer, just when it's needed.

Over time, Browning's desire to support women begins to focus as much on prevention as cure. This leads to the creation of the Barbara May Foundation, which raises funds to help build, equip and run maternity hospitals in areas of great need.

Through it all – from family life to funding shortfalls, safety concerns to health problems – God reveals himself as sovereign. Prayers are answered, wisdom and endurance are provided, and sorrow is turned to joy.

It's a bit of a cliché to label a book as inspiring, but there really is no other word that effectively communicates the impact of *A Doctor in Africa*. The dedication of Dr Browning and the many staff and volunteers with whom he has worked, former patients



Inspiring: Dr Browning with his Aunt Val, who has lived and worked with the Afar people in northern Ethiopia for more than 40 years.

and their families, and supporters across the globe... it's moving, occasionally upsetting, sometimes funny, always inspiring.

However, this isn't just because "good" work is being done. It's because God is being glorified by those who serve, give and trust in him. It's because disaster, red tape, illness and human frailty won't stop his work. It's because the book is a challenge to all others who believe to ask where their heart is, and how they can serve.

SC

To Africa in God's service

Judy Adamson

A Doctor in Africa

by Andrew Browning
(Pan Macmillan)



*It seems extraordinary that 2021 marks two decades since Catherine Hamlin's book *The Hospital by the River* was published, introducing millions in the West to the distressing realities of obstetric fistula.*

The author of *A Doctor in Africa*, Andrew Browning, has followed in Dr Hamlin's footsteps as a compassionate champion of the women, communities and nations in need of better access to maternity services, in order that debilitating fistulae can be cured – or prevented from occurring in the first place.

He has dedicated his medical career to this work in Jesus' name. For Dr Browning, the decision to live and work with his family in majority world locations, with many potential dangers, has not been about safety (something he is often asked), but whether it is the right thing to do.

The Lord, he says in the book, has "given me the skills to be able to do it and so I do it in his service. After all, Christ led by example... I don't think he asked, 'Is it safe?' as he was led to the cross to be crucified".

Fistula is virtually non-existent in countries like Australia but,

in the majority world, thousands of women each year develop holes between their bladder, bowel, uterus, vagina and rectum during obstructed childbirth. If they survive, and the fistulae are not repaired, they will leak urine (and/or faeces) for the rest of their lives.

The statistics quoted are chilling. In Australia, one in 16,000 women die from pregnancy complications. In African countries south of the Sahara the figure is one in 37.

In *A Doctor in Africa* Browning shares the background of his early life, faith, study and experiences as a medical student before his fateful meeting with Catherine Hamlin in 1996. In her Addis Ababa hospital, he saw with joy the transformative effect of the often-simple surgery to repair obstetric fistula, and when Hamlin invited him back to work with her, God's answer was clear.

The continent is brought to vivid, colourful, chaotic life within the book's pages, as he works in a range of locations across Ethiopia and beyond, seeking always to refine and improve the surgery available for fistula damage. We are also given a privileged

continued on page 31