

# SOUTHERNCROSS

THE NEWS MAGAZINE

ANGLICANS

OCTOBER 2021

## Illness has many faces

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN PROVIDE PRACTICAL SUPPORT AFTER A DIAGNOSIS

*COVID roadmap for churches • 24 hours in prayer  
Learn to forgive • Support your mental wellbeing*





# After the diagnosis

HOW SHOULD WE CARE FOR THOSE AMONG US WHO GET SICK?

*Covering up: The diagnosis of a very rare condition means sisters Amielle (left) and Taya Walker have to be covered top to toe when they go outside.*

Judy Adamson

*It was the day the Walker family's lives turned upside down.*

In March, Nick and Yvette Walker's eight-year-old daughter Amielle was diagnosed with Xeroderma Pigmentosum (XP) – an incredibly rare condition that meant her DNA was missing a piece that repairs skin cells damaged by UV. She needs to have

no exposure to sunlight. Ever. What is more, although only one in a million people are diagnosed with this condition, Ami's three-year-old sister Taya had the same symptoms, and last month the results of her DNA test prove she has XP as well.

You might think, "Well, that's hard but it's manageable. They just need to stay out of the sun." But you'd be wrong.

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COVER IMAGE: Amielle and Taya Walker outside their church at Maroubra.

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"One of the big things that has happened is people saying, 'Can't you just keep them out of the sun? Can't you just...?' — and no, you can't," says Nick Walker. "You can't expose their skin to any sunlight, full stop. One of the biggest struggles is that you can tell people the facts, but unless you live it you just don't understand fully what it means."

What it means is that Ami and Taya might be inside, but during the day there's UV basically anywhere with a window. So, every window in the Walkers' home and on their cars now have special tinting. Ami's primary school has tinted the windows of half a dozen rooms and moved her entire class to that part of the school. Their church, St John's, Maroubra, has tinted every window in the church and hall.

Every time Ami and Taya go beyond these few safe spaces, they are covered from head to toe — until the sun goes down. If they don't do this, even for just a brief space of time, they will get dreadful burns from which their skin cells can suffer irreparable damage (yes, even if they're in the shade and wearing sunscreen).

Nick Walker says that while it's good to finally have a diagnosis and know what needs to be done to keep the girls safe, when he and Yvette began to read up on the condition they thought, "this is just horrific, and it is horrific... there's no cure, the girls are 10,000 times more likely to get skin cancer, they're more susceptible to other cancers and will probably have a shortened life expectancy — all these different things — as a result of it. That was pretty hard to take.

"And the fact that it's so rare means no one has ever heard of it. If my child had autism, you could say they're on the spectrum and at least people have heard of that. With XP, people just say, 'What is that? So, when you're explaining why Ami can't do what other kids can do, you've got to deal with the 'Can't you just...?' and explain the condition over and over in detail. It's just exhausting. You're constantly educating people, but to do it properly you just have to explain."

## BE CAREFUL HOW YOU RESPOND

What do we do in such situations — as individuals and as a church family? We need to think carefully, because how we respond can make a huge difference to those among us who have received a difficult diagnosis.

The condition may involve quick surgery and recovery, or it might be life threatening; it might require short-term treatment or lifelong effort and management. There will probably be many things we don't see or understand, and our job isn't to question the diagnosis or offer opinions but to love and support the person who is ill, as well as their wider family.

Teacher Jeannine Baird, who has focused her career on teaching SRE, had to give up her dream job at Beverly Hills Girls' High School after being diagnosed with Granulomatosis with Polyangiitis — an autoimmune condition that, if untreated, can "kill off" parts of the body.

Baird has had to deal with pleurisy, pneumonia and other problems, and has been in and out of hospital with various complications since she was diagnosed just over a year ago.

She says people from her church at Menai have been "really great". There has been food, prayer and emotional support — particularly from her Bible study — and she can't say enough by way of gratitude for her "champion" husband Richard. Having church online right now has also been a blessing at a time when she's immunocompromised and safer at home.



*"Nothing can separate us from God's love": Jeannine Baird.*

However, she adds, "Sometimes you catch wind of things that have been said... that you've fallen into sin in some way and that's why God's allowed this to happen to you.

"I got the sense of that in a conversation, and part of me was thinking, 'Well, *that's* an unhelpful thing to say!' because there are a lot of people in the world that don't necessarily do anything wrong, but the sins of others impact their health in some way. But also, if that's what God's got to do to refine me, then I have to change.

"Either way, nothing can separate us from God's love. There's been this amazing sense of peace I've had in my relationship with him. So, I can hold onto what the Scriptures say is the truth, and discard what people might say."

For Robertson resident Kirrilee Bracht, who has been riding the rollercoaster since a diagnosis of Grade 3 aggressive breast cancer in January, it's been a complicated road for her, her husband Jon and their three kids.

There's been a lumpectomy, many weeks of chemotherapy with debilitating side effects plus four weeks of radiation therapy. She says that the support has been overwhelmingly generous — but a really helpful thing over this time has been text messages such as "I'm thinking of you" or "I hope today has been ok". Just simple contact and care that doesn't require an answer.

People have also provided meals — a boon when Bracht didn't have the capacity to think about what should be for dinner, much





"We've had some really good times together as a family": (from left) Callum, Erin, Kirrilee, Liam and Jon Bracht.

less cook it. Friends have taken one of their kids for an outing or provided the wonderful blessing of supermarket vouchers at a time when the Brachts' income has been reduced.

This has been continually appreciated. What has been harder to manage are the stories: "People giving you detailed information about friends of theirs who've died of breast cancer... you'd be surprised how many people do that. No one's going to intentionally say something hurtful, but I wonder if they go home and think, 'Why did I say that?'"

Bracht suggests that people who know someone at church dealing with cancer also consider ways to appropriately care for and support other family members – in her case, her husband and kids.

For example, she says, "Jon was working as well as doing the washing and all the household stuff, when it used to be shared. And I really didn't want people to constantly ask the kids how I was doing... I want them to talk to the kids about *them*, not about me! They get enough of me and what's going on with me all day, every day."

We can also cause unintentional grief just by chatting about something simple – like the weather. Yvette Walker has recently heard comments about "how nice the weather is and going out to enjoy the sunshine and so on... which is true, but I need to learn how to park that one in my head and not have an internal reaction".

It's hard to always remember such things, of course, but as the Christian brothers and sisters of people struggling after difficult diagnoses, we need to have our pastoral antennae switched on. For example, Nick Walker is contending with grief about what his family's life was like before the diagnosis, and what it is now.

"It's what you'd thought and planned compared to what is happening... like the complication of doing everyday things that normal families do, like going to the beach or going on a picnic," he

says. "We can't just go on a holiday, or get on a plane... anything, really, without lots of planning, and thinking through how to keep the girls safe."



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## TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO PEOPLE AFTER A DIAGNOSIS

### DO

- Send messages to let them know you're thinking of/ praying for them.
- Drop off food (in disposable containers) or random-acts-of-kindness gifts if you know that is welcome.
- Continue friendships in the same manner. Keep inviting them over, mention a group is going out for coffee etc and check if they want to join you. If they can't that day, that's okay.
- Make yourself available for shopping, dog walking, kid minding etc. Sometimes sending a text to say you'll take their kids out later is just what is needed.
- Garner the support of the whole church if necessary, and plan who'll spearhead specific care – especially if long-term support is needed.
- Remember other family members of the person who is sick. They need your support, too.
- Be a non-judgemental ear.
- Start a prayer support group or provide one-to-one discipleship – whatever works.

### DON'T

- Talk in detail about friends/family who've had serious diagnoses or died from the same illness.
- Suggest the condition is somehow a failure of their faith.
- Minimise the situation by saying, "Can't you just...?"
- Stare at them if they look different.
- Ignore them because you don't know what to say. That hurts. Consider in advance how you can talk to the sick person and their family at church or elsewhere, so you're prepared.
- Assume they haven't thought of treatment options.
- Expect you'll always receive an answer to prayer texts or other messages.
- Send messages with questions (even questions about support). In the early days they may be overwhelmed by the diagnosis, and later, if it's being treated, they may have no brain space to respond.

### GOD'S GOT THIS

At the same time, the Walkers are aware that God is walking with them as they deal with the unknowns and difficulties of each day. His sovereign hand, "amazing timing" and guidance are an ongoing comfort.

"When Ami first got the diagnosis she said, 'So, when I'm in heaven I won't have XP, will I?'" Nick Walker recalls. "And I said, 'No, darling, you won't'. She got so excited about the fact that, when she was in heaven, she wouldn't have this horrible condition and she's looking forward to that – but it's made me long for heaven even more, too: being there together where you don't get XP and don't get sunburnt and get cells destroyed by UV."

For Kirrilee Bracht, even amid the worst side-effects of chemotherapy she wasn't afraid of dying, and she knows this is an outworking of her faith. As she is still in the midst of treatment it's difficult for her to see the big picture yet, but she has "no doubt this [experience] is going to have an impact on my faith".

In the meantime, she regularly spends time in the Scriptures over Messenger with Margaret, a missionary friend. "It's been the most helpful thing to keep me in God's word when I probably didn't have the energy to do it alone."

And then there's family time.

"Probably the best thing has been to just get a bit more perspective on what's important and what's not," she says. "We've had some really good times together as a family. A good example is that I came home from a [radiation] appointment one day and my daughter had made a board game while I was gone, so we could play it as soon as I got home. When the phone rang soon after, I thought, 'No, I'm going to do this instead'. It just changes your focus."

Jeannine Baird has seen the powerful witness of friends who have battled illness – sharing Jesus whenever an opportunity arose – and she wants to do the same.

"I've just been aware that if I'm in hospital, God's got me there for a reason," she says. "With opportunities that come up I've got

to be faithful and use those opportunities and think, 'Who has he planned for me to talk to?'"

She knows that God is using every situation to make her "mature and complete", and while that's been tough in some ways it has also provided her with unexpected joy and peace.

### PRAY

For Yvette Walker, a big prayer point is discipleship for all three of their children: "Having people who will love our kids for who they are and disciple them; that they can continue to have those faithful, long-term relationships to reassure them and remind them of God's love for them. That's a big thing on my heart.

"Also, protection and wisdom for how to make decisions for the family, including the wellbeing of all of us in our different situations... decisions have to be made far more often now, and you just think, 'I'm not feeling equipped for this!' So, prayer for ongoing adjustment because we're learning as we go."

While Kirrilee Bracht is aware that she is slowly getting better, she says many people who recover from cancer "start to panic about what's next" and she can see this in her own responses.

"You get a headache or some form of pain and you think, 'What is this? I can't do this!' So, prayer for peace and being emotionally ready for what is next would be great."

Baird asks people to pray – for herself and others struggling with illness – that the Spirit will help them grasp hold of the promises in God's word for them, put hope and peace in their hearts when they need it and remind them that, whether they're sick or well, "that doesn't alter how God sees you. You are his child, and he's going to work through everything you're facing for your good in the future".

**SC**

*You can follow the journey of Kirrilee Bracht at [swimmingthroughwinter.weebly.com](http://swimmingthroughwinter.weebly.com), or the Walker family (including their GoFundMe page) at [www.walkwiththewalkers.com](http://www.walkwiththewalkers.com)*



# Freedoms for churches coming soon

**Russell Powell**

*A number of restrictions placed on churches and places of worship in NSW will be lifted over the coming weeks.*

The Government has announced that the numerical limit for fully vaccinated guests at weddings and funerals will be removed the Monday after the state hits the 80 per cent double dose vaccination target. However, those who are not fully vaccinated may only attend weddings with a maximum of five guests – with no reception – and in the case of funerals, those who are not fully vaccinated may only attend funerals with a maximum of 10 people.

At 80 per cent, churches and places of worship can continue to open with one person per 4 sqm, with no singing. Those who are not fully vaccinated will be allowed, while in other areas of society they will not be allowed out of most restrictions until December 1.

“But that is the one exception,” said Premier Gladys Berejiklian, “and the unvaccinated, I think, will feel very disappointed because they won’t be able to re-engage until December 1.”

The path for easing restrictions in places of worship will begin on about October 24, which is when the NSW Government expects the 80 per cent target to be reached. The state should get to the 70 per cent target by Monday, October 11, but many churches will remain online for the two Sundays between these dates.

“We are pleased that the Government has acknowledged the essential place of worship in the lives of people of faith,” said Archbishop Kanishka Raffel.

“As we have done throughout the pandemic, we will continue to implement Government guidelines and make our churches as safe as possible. My bishops and I have been vigorously advocating vaccination and we have had a good response from congregations, with many achieving very high levels of vaccination.

“In many places the number of people who are not vaccinated may not be large but we have an important responsibility to ensure no-one is left behind and our churches are open, and safe, for all.”

## Roadmap from 80 per cent for weddings, funerals and places of worship

- One person per 4sqm (uncapped) for weddings, with dancing permitted and eating and drinking allowed while standing. Those who are not fully vaccinated may only attend weddings with a maximum of five guests (no receptions).
- One person per 4sqm (uncapped) for funerals. Those who are not fully vaccinated may only attend funerals with a maximum of 10 people.
- Churches and places of worship can continue to open with one person per 4sqm, with no singing. Those who are not fully vaccinated will be allowed.

The Premier emphasised in her news conference that the return to church was under “very strict rules”.

“There will also be COVID safety plans in place so the four-square

metre rule will apply,” she said. “There’ll be mask wearing, there’ll be limited singing or chanting, so there’s still very strict plans in place – very strict plans in place – at 80 per cent double dose for places of worship.”

The Premier said it would be up to faith leaders to enforce the rules. The Government also foreshadowed a further easing of restrictions from December 1, including halving the 4sqm rule and a return to singing. SC

## Roadmap from December 1 for weddings, funerals, places of worship & the community

- No limit on the number of visitors to a home.
- Churches and places of worship can operate with one person per 2sqm.
- Singing is permitted.
- Mask wearing is not required outdoors.
- One person per 2sqm for weddings with dancing permitted, and eating and drinking allowed while standing.
- One person per 2sqm for funerals.

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## Community supports beloved bookseller

*"It was very encouraging and heartwarming": Karl Grice chats to a customer (in non-lockdown days) in his Katoomba bookshop.*

*It was a message that Karl Grice hoped never to write. The unexpected and severe impact of Sydney's second major lockdown, which is still ongoing, meant that just as things were starting to look up for the event-based Christian bookseller, everything came to a shuddering halt. Again.*

The Wandering Bookseller, Mr Grice's conference bookstall business, opened a physical shopfront – The Little Lost Bookshop – three years ago in Katoomba. Since then, it has dealt with fires, floods, staff illness and the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

"Coming into June, we thought things were opening up again," Mr Grice says. "We started trying to go back to normal, packing bookstalls for uni conferences, and then Delta arrived and we ended up back in lockdown. It felt more sudden and surprising this time. I thought we'd made it, but then we hadn't."

He took to Facebook in early August, where he posted a simple plea: "It's been a hard 18 months. Can you help?"

The post also contained a series of images explaining their financial situation, asking patrons to consider purchasing books, book vouchers, or making a donation to keep the business afloat.

More than 150 people shared the post to their friends and family, and comments poured in with expressions of love, appreciation and prayers for Mr Grice and The Wandering Bookseller team.

"They exist mainly to support Christian conferences and events," posted Ruth Baker, a Christian author and member of Glenmore Park. "With COVID, they have been battered by a lot of storms. I am always looking for great resources, especially during lockdown, so have a browse through their books and treat yourself (and support them!)."

The Rev Roger Fitzhardinge, rector of Fairy Meadow, also encouraged his friends and contacts to show support if they could, posting: "Hey book people. My mate Karl Grice runs this sweet bookshop in K-town. A story of bushfires, lockdowns and blergh... buy someone you care about a surprise book (or three)!... Karl's not going to build a rocket with his profit, he's the sort of guy who'd buy a pie for a hungry stranger with his last \$5."

The overwhelming response from people became an answer to prayer for Mr Grice and his family. "I'm not sure what reaction I was expecting," he says. "I was aware that people had expressed appreciation for our ministry, so I guess I thought there would be a

few people who wanted to help, but I didn't know [there would be so many]. It was very encouraging and heartwarming, which meant that it helped both financially and emotionally."

Mr Grice was unaware that his wife had been praying the whole time that God would show them what their next steps should be. "Naomi had been praying [that] somehow through this God would make clear whether we should keep the ministry going or whether it was time to move on to something else," he says. "I guess the support that has come through has encouraged us to keep going."

It's still unclear what the next three to six months will look like. "It will still be helpful if people can remember us as they're planning their book purchases coming into Christmas," he says. "If people could keep praying for us as well. We're still having good conversations all the time [with the community]. Remember us, even though we don't get to see you at events. Stay in touch. Tell us what you're reading!" SC

### TIPS FOR SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

As the owner of a small business, Mr Grice is well aware of what many other small business owners and their families are feeling at the moment. "They're not used to this," he says, referring to months of lockdown and keeping a business going through a pandemic. He notes that even when there is no pandemic, many small business owners are not taking a wage in the normal sense.

Support is more than just purchasing a product from a local small business – a phone call or message asking how you can be there for them also goes a long way. "Some people can't sell at the moment, depending on what business they're running," he says. "The important thing is to check in on them."

In addition, he encourages people to continue to pray for business owners they know, especially for those who can interact with the public. "People can come to the door for click and collect, and for some people that will be the only conversation they have face to face [in lockdown]. Churches are closed, but if there are Christians doing takeaway coffee, or click and collect, they can have conversations that might not otherwise happen at the moment."



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## 24 hours of prayer



*Bring it before the Lord: Pre-lockdown prayer at Marrickville.*

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### Tara Sing

**Could** members of your church pray for 24 hours straight? The saints at Marrickville have just completed their second prayer marathon for the current Sydney lockdown, and they're encouraging others to do the same.

Members committed to half-hour time slots and prayed through resources prepared by the church. They prayed through Bible passages, for their link missionaries, their local community, world issues and for revival. "We immediately saw an impact on the church," says senior minister the Rev Ross Ciano.

The first prayer event took place pre-lockdown, so when Sydney's stay-at-home orders came into effect, church members were keen to repeat the challenge several times over. Their third day of lockdown prayer is planned for this month.

It wasn't difficult to find people to pray, especially in the wee hours of the morning. "The 3am time slots were the really easy ones to fill," Mr Ciano says. "The graveyard shifts were covered by some people who naturally stay up late, like people in their mid-twenties. From 4am to mid-morning [it was] a combination of young mums, people who are retired, people who were busy with their jobs. We saw children pray and parents book half an hour to pray with their children."

Over the years, a culture of prayer has developed at Marrickville. "There's a good bunch of people who meet every week to pray, and that's been happening for a few years," Mr Ciano says. "There are various prayer meetings that happen throughout the week. Prayer is something we do value, and it's becoming a culture in our church."

Inspired by the prayer marathons at Marrickville, the Rev Vincent Chan from St Barnabas', Fairfield with Bossley Park encouraged the congregation to also do 24 hours of prayer. "We stole the idea," he jokes. "It sounded like a great idea. So far, the response has just been completely positive – aside from a few very tired people!"

At first, praying for 30 minutes can seem like a huge task, especially with children: "5.30pm prayers finished with a joyful cacophony of Colin Buchanan songs in the Jamieson household," Andrew Jamieson shared on Facebook. "The kids went from saying 'Half an hour! How do you pray for more than three minutes?', to realising that wasn't enough time to pray for half the things on our list. A very encouraging time! Get involved."

Adds Mr Ciano: "It doesn't matter when it's done, as long as it's done. As long as prayer is happening! You're nuts not to do it. It's such a privilege to pray and to lead your people to pray and intercede for the church and the world."

SC



## LOOKING UP AND OUT

Another creative prayer idea is catching on around Sydney, as more churches erect banners inviting prayer requests via text. Inspired by St Matt's, Manly and its banner on The Corso, the parishes of St James', Berala, St Stephen's, Willoughby and St Mark's. Darling Point are just some of those encouraging their communities to reach out for prayer.

People from the neighbourhoods are able to text or scan a QR code to submit prayer requests – and the whole suburb knows the church actively wants to hear their concerns and bring them before the Lord.

In addition to the banner, St James', Berala members have hit the streets. "We've put about 2000 postcards in letterboxes," says rector the Rev Mike Doyle. "[We've] had perhaps half a dozen prayer requests – including children and adults in hospital and ICU for COVID. Very heartbreaking to hear, but a privilege to pray for."



## LIFTING OUR VOICES TO GOD

In addition to prayer within parishes, Anglican churches across the Diocese joined together to pray on September 22 at the Lifting Our Voices to God livestream. More than 4000 people viewed the event, praying and praising God and hearing a short message from Archbishop Kanishka Raffel.

The chat was filled with many expressions of unity, prayer and thankfulness. One viewer shared how encouraging it was for their family to see so many Christians participating. "So uplifting! Our God is great! My seven- and 10-year-old boys didn't know there were so many Christians in Sydney!"

The idea came from a growing desire at St Philip's, Caringbah to see more Christians praying together. Senior minister the Rev Eric Cheung has been greatly encouraged by the prayer groups he has seen popping up in his church over the past year.

"I kept asking my church what we should be learning in COVID, and everyone said we ought to be not relying on ourselves but on God – which means praying," he says. "We ought to be united together in prayer and in anything else we can do together. At a time like this, if we haven't learned to pray, now is the time to learn."

You can still view the event at <http://praytogether.online>



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## Work for wellbeing

### Judy Adamson

*Whether it's the busyness of modern society, the complexity of life in a fallen world or the effects of the pandemic, there are certainly plenty of reasons why people might need support and guidance to restore or recover their wellbeing.*

In order to assist with this from a Christian perspective, Keith and Sarah Condie (above), the co-directors of the Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute at Mary Andrews College, have created a seven-part course titled *Press On: Building Resilience and Mental Wellbeing*.

In addition to helping people press on in faith (Philippians 3), the course contains a raft of resources and activities under the "PRESS" acronym: physical, relational, emotional, skills and spiritual.

The kernel of the idea came from a clergy training day in the Diocese a few years ago about core strengths, resilience, stress and burnout. The Condies wanted to create a course around these concepts that was aimed at all believers and, after the pandemic hit, realised that the time for such a course was right now.

Says Mrs Condie: "We've all been hit by this pandemic, we've all had to stay at home and some people have found themselves thinking, 'How do I keep myself going? Am I depressed?' Yes, they might be depressed, but they might just be sad."

Adds Dr Condie: "It's looking at mental wellbeing, not at mental ill health. It's about what we can do to help us keep mentally strong and resilient".

The online course contains videos from the Condies and excerpts from conversations with eight other Christians from different walks of life. These Christians talk about their experiences – some of which are particularly challenging – and discuss what they do to ensure their overall wellbeing.

There are also questions to ponder, Bible reflections, and



Seeking to serve well: *Press On* interviewees.

self-reflection time with the aid of a downloadable workbook, all of which can be done solo or in a small group.

Each of the sessions focuses on a different issue – from understanding mental health and wellbeing (and the differences between the two) to the impact of stress, developing habits and routines, and each letter of the PRESS acronym.

The first session, among other things, makes a helpful distinction between self-care and selfishness.

"Christians might think it's a bit indulgent and self-focused to talk about this," Dr Condie comments during the session. "[But] it's not about being selfish; it's about serving well. Our bodies, our minds – these are the tools God has given us to serve him and to love others... so, this course is all about looking after yourself well so that you can serve God and love your neighbour."

SC

*Press On: Building Resilience and Mental Wellbeing* will be launched this month. To purchase the course or find out more see [mentalhealthinstitute.org.au/press-on](http://mentalhealthinstitute.org.au/press-on).



# "May God help us!"



COVID cases are under-reported: Care kits and prevention information are handed out in Keng Tung, Myanmar. PHOTO: ILO Asia-Pacific

## Judy Adamson

**Anglican Aid** is focusing its COVID appeal on growing needs in Myanmar, with its partners on the ground struggling to provide for the medical and spiritual needs of the population.

"We're working with and through the Diocese of Singapore, which is managing the relief efforts for the Anglican Church in Myanmar," says the projects team leader at Anglican Aid, Cameron Jansen. "Through our contacts we've sent \$30,000 so far for the purchase of medical supplies: PPE equipment, oxygen cylinders, oximeters [which estimate oxygen saturation in the blood] and other things like back-up generators."

The equipment has gone to emergency COVID clinics set up by the Church of the Province of Myanmar in Yangon and Mandalay, the two most heavily affected dioceses.

Anglican Aid has morphed its India appeal into a general COVID appeal so it can respond to crises in countries such as Myanmar. According to data from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Centre, cases have been declining in the country since July – however, the Archbishop of Myanmar, Stephen Than Myint Oo, says numbers are likely to have been severely under-reported.

He told Anglican Aid that, "In the midst of immense suffering, I have no strength to utter a word. I feel like we are in World War III – not fighting against flesh and blood, rather fighting against the invisible threes: COVID-19 virus, powers and principalities of darkness, and self-centeredness (self-preservation).

"In the midst of dead bodies lying everywhere, may the living beings unite in prayer with one heart, one mind, one Spirit. May God help us! Amen."

The Rev Jackie Stoneman, who helped set up the Growing Hope

charity in Myanmar, is in regular contact with women from Mothers' Union as well as orphanages that the charity supports.

Growing Hope has paid for an MU worker to be vaccinated and provided funds for an oxygen tank at one of the orphanages – which has had a number of COVID cases. Sadly, the tank had the wrong fittings and couldn't be used. An orphanage has also lost much of its income from raising chickens because all the local restaurants are closed.

"That's just an example of the sort of struggles they have... My understanding is that the country's just overwhelmed and the hospitals are full," Miss Stoneman says.

Her contacts also report the deaths of many Anglican and Baptist clergy. And for clergy still working, culture dictates that when someone dies, they visit the family's home – with the body still in the house, COVID or not. "That's very tricky and problematic for those seeking to fulfil their ministry but also stay COVID safe."

Amid sickness, economic loss, fear and political instability, Mr Jansen says Christians in Myanmar need prayer for spiritual relief – that they would feel the Lord's comfort, hope and peace, and be able to provide this to others when they go out into the community.

"Knowing with certainty that God has you in his hands, that Christ has your life and your future secure, are the kinds of things people in the church who are really struggling need to be reminded of, and that's what people in the community need to see from the church," he says.

SC

To support Anglican Aid's COVID appeal for Myanmar, and future COVID-related needs in developing countries, go to <https://anglicanaid.org.au/covid-19-relief-appeal/>



# Safely ministering to all

Kanishka Raffel



**R**eopening our churches once 70 per cent of the eligible population is double vaccinated is a joyful prospect, but we will need to tread carefully. First, there will be masks, electronic check-in, distancing according to the “four square metre rule” and no

singing – requirements we have accepted in the past in the interests of playing our part in reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19.

However, while these conditions are similar to those required elsewhere, the new regulations involve a requirement that those attending any venue, including churches, must have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or have a medical reason for not being vaccinated. We now know that this will be for a short time only.

I was pleased to hear that the week after 80 per cent of the community have received two doses of a COVID vaccine (estimated to be by October 25), there will be no restrictions on who may attend church – while other venues, such as cinemas and gyms, will be open only to double-vaccinated people until December 1.

This reflects two important principles. The first is that church is not entertainment like the cinema or recreation like a gym, but something more essential. Church is more akin to the supermarket or the hospital in offering spiritual “food” and spiritual “health”. The other principle is that church, by nature, is a place from which people should not be turned away. It should be open to all.

Throughout the lockdown, I have publicly encouraged people to follow NSW Health advice about vaccination, and consult their medical advisors with any questions they may have about vaccination. As a Diocese we remain committed to ensuring that those who attend churches are kept safe in accordance with Government public health orders, and we have and will continue to comply with those orders.

But I did have concerns about Government restrictions on who may attend church. The gospel teaches us that Jesus is the universal Lord of all and his death “reconcile[s] to himself all things” (Col 1:15-20). Jesus is Lord of all, and his gospel is a gospel for all.

Vaccine “passports” are inconsistent with the nature of the church. There is no test for membership of Jesus’ family other than repentance and faith towards him: “There is neither Jew nor

## COVID-19 RESPONSE



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Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

These verses do not speak to the absence of distinction between different people – on the contrary, the church of Jesus, and our heavenly home, are wonderfully diverse (1 Cor 12:12-14; Rev 7:9). Rather, there are no arbitrary divisions within the church. Neither race, gender, age, nor economic or educational status – or vaccination status – are to operate as divisions within the Christian community or barriers to the fellowship we share because of Jesus.

Finally, vaccine passports are inimical to the mission that Jesus left us. There is no section of the community from whom the gospel may be withheld or to whom it is not to be offered, least of all because of vaccination status.

Indeed, it hardly needs to be pointed out that Jesus not only preached to those who because of illness were regarded as "unclean", but did not hesitate to touch them. In imitation of the Lord, Christians from the first century have cared for the sick and dying – long before there were antibiotics, vaccines or PPE – because they knew that love was a greater calling than preserving their own lives, and they did not fear to die because they served a living Lord who had triumphed over death.

#### LAW AND CONSCIENCE

As our churches busily prepare to reopen, many will choose to remain fully online until we reach the 80 per cent mark. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we will continue to implement Government guidelines and make our churches as safe as possible.

I support vaccination because it is the advice of Australia's leading epidemiologists that people who are vaccinated are less likely to contract COVID-19, less likely to require hospitalisation

if they do contract it, and less likely to die from it than people who are not vaccinated. The vast majority of those who have been hospitalised in NSW since the beginning of August were unvaccinated.

I am aware that some people have ethical and other concerns about vaccines, and they are entitled to decline vaccination while these concerns are not addressed to their satisfaction. At the same time, such concerns must be weighed against the ethics of remaining unvaccinated – including the risk of contracting the disease and requiring hospitalisation oneself, infecting a loved one or someone who is vulnerable because they are under 12 years of age, or have not had the opportunity to be vaccinated, or are medically unable to be vaccinated, or are Indigenous or immunocompromised.

Christians are bound to consider the interests of others (Phil 2:4), and to maintain a serious respect and affection for those with whom we disagree, for whom Christ died (1 Cor 8:9-11). Please pray for your senior minister and local church leadership teams as they plan for reopening churches – including, in many cases, maintaining online services while the 4sqm rule is in place.

"Love one another" is the most basic and essential of Jesus' commands to his disciples. We ought not to insist on a bare "right" not to be vaccinated if we are satisfied that there are good reasons for vaccination, that the weight of medical and ethical reasoning favours it, and that to do so is an appropriate way to love our neighbour. Similarly, we should not be dismissive of those who continue to have conscientious objection to vaccination, as though to deny them the opportunity of fellowship was a small thing or merely "their choice".

Humbly, prayerfully and self-sacrificially, we must aim at a higher standard.

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# Tell the truth

*Are we speaking and living the truth with the gospel in this post-truth age, asks*  
**LIONEL WINDSOR.**

**T***ruth is becoming an increasingly rare commodity in our world. In a speech in July 2018 celebrating a century since Nelson Mandela's birth, former US President Barack Obama took the opportunity to warn against a dire trajectory in world politics. The very idea of truth is being thrown out the window and, in its place, raw power is taking over: Unfortunately, too much of politics today seems to reject the very concept of objective truth. People just make stuff up... We see the utter loss of shame among political leaders where they're caught in a lie, and they just double down, and they lie some more... politicians have always lied, but it used to be if you caught 'em lying, they'd be like, "Oh, man". Now they just keep on lying.*

Obama's warnings ring true, don't they? But who's to blame? After all, for at least half a century in the West, the idea of "objective truth" has been relentlessly dismantled and ridiculed. Generations have been taught that there are really no objective standards of right and wrong that apply to everyone. What's true for me is different from what's true for you.

This loss of objective truth has permeated so far that it's now starting to have serious consequences for the way we run our society. Students have grown up and become majority voters; some have even become world leaders. They've learnt their lessons well and they're now running the world, with social media as the perfect tool. And they've learnt that there's no such thing as objective truth.

That means, logically, that there's no such thing as a lie. The voters simply listen to the leaders they like to hear, and the leaders understand that their words are simply tools to achieve their goals of power and influence. Power, not truth, wins the day each time.

The gospel of Jesus Christ stands in stark contrast to this

situation. The gospel is itself a claim to objective truth. And it's a truth that stands above us all. It's a truth that humbles us, disciplines us and severely limits our designs on power. We are all held accountable to this truth. And we can hold others accountable to the same truth.

It's not that there's one truth for me, and another truth for you. There is a truth for us all.

This means, of course, that there are lies – and Christians, says the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, are people who don't tell lies. They tell the truth. Especially to one another: "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour', for we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25).

## THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

In Ephesians, the fundamental "truth" is the truth of the gospel. Near the beginning of his letter, Paul describes his readers as those who have heard and believed "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Ephesians 1:13).

The gospel is the message about Jesus Christ. It proclaims that through Jesus' death and resurrection God has saved us from sin, death and judgment. The gospel tells us that we've been humbled by God's grace and can be confident in his love for us. This fundamental truth teaches us the truth about God, the truth about the world, and the truth about ourselves. So, it changes everything about our lives – particularly our lives together as believers.

Being a Christian means holding on to this truth and living it out. Rather than following false teachings, we need to be "speaking the truth in love" to one another, as members of Christ's body (Ephesians 4:15). We are to learn and teach this to one another (Ephesians 4:21). We are also to change and grow, as we seek



to live righteous lives, devoted to God, all based on this truth (Ephesians 4:24).

## SPEAK THE TRUTH

Truth, then, is foundational to who we are as Christians. That means that truth must permeate our relationships with one another, and especially our speech with one another. Paul says, "let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour", quoting from the Old Testament book of Zechariah.

Zechariah 8 is a vision of God's people as a community of truth. God promises that he will dwell with his people in a "City of Truth" (verse 3) and that he will be their God "in truth and in righteousness" (verse 8). So, God's people should each speak the truth to their neighbour (verse 16) and "love truth and peace" (verse 19). If this is the case in Zechariah's vision, how much more is it the case for those of us who are members of Christ's body – those who are living in fulfilment of Zechariah's vision! As Paul puts it, "we are members of one another". We belong to Christ – together. Truth is to permeate our lives and our relationships.

What does it actually mean to speak the truth to our neighbour? Most fundamentally, it means speaking the gospel to one another, reminding one another of these key truths about Jesus. But it doesn't stop with rehearsing the facts of the gospel. The gospel tells us the truth about *ourselves*. That means we should be speaking the truth about ourselves to one another.

For example, the gospel tells us that we are saved sinners. So, we should never deliberately hide our sin from one another and make ourselves out to be better than we are. The gospel tells us that we have nothing to boast about when it comes to our salvation, so we should be humble in our speech about ourselves.

The gospel teaches us that God has saved us to be a new humanity, changed and constantly renewed by his Spirit. So, we should be prepared, humbly and in appropriate and edifying ways, to point out areas where our brothers and sisters have done wrong, and to encourage them – and have them encourage us – to become more and more like God in the way we think and act.

## REMOVE THE LIES

Speaking the truth rules out lying. We lie because we don't value the truth highly enough. We think that a lie will achieve some greater good, normally for our own benefit. A lie might make me look more intelligent or interesting or powerful. A lie might stop me feeling awkward in a situation where the truth is hard or uncomfortable. If I've sinned in a serious way, a lie will ensure I don't get found out and can continue to be respected.

Some lies can be devastating for the body of Christ, can't they? But in fact, all lies are serious. If you make a habit of telling small "white" lies that don't seem to hurt anyone, all you're doing is laying down habits of deceit in yourself that make it so much easier for you to lie to cover up bigger things.

Speaking the truth will sometimes involve *not* speaking, especially if you don't know all the facts. In a church family, it's all too easy for rumours to spread. We hear somebody tell us a few one-sided fragments of information about somebody else, and we assume we've heard the full story. We pass it on, thinking we know it all. And we use our "inside" knowledge to gain prestige or a following for ourselves. We too easily talk *about* each other, without talking *to* one another and listening to one another.

This is gossip, and it's one of the most insidious forms of self-deception around. It makes us feel like we're speaking "the truth"

to one another when we're actually speaking lies.

It's worth taking time to reflect about your daily life and asking yourself how you're going at telling the truth, minute by minute and hour by hour. But be warned: it's an uncomfortable exercise!

Deception is so often part of the air we breathe. You can see it in the expression, "To be (perfectly) honest...". We use this expression at the start of sentences when we want to indicate that we're being straightforward and down to earth; telling the truth without any embellishment. But why do we need to say it? Because most of the time, we're not being (perfectly) honest! And we all know it. Our habit is to use our words, not primarily to speak the truth, but to achieve other goals: to increase our own prestige, to get people to do things for us, etc. Well, that's what I do, to be perfectly honest.

Tragically, we can even end up being deceptive in evangelism. Since deception is part of the air we breathe, we can start to treat evangelism – sharing the gospel with outsiders – as an exercise in PR and persuasion, where bending the truth a little is allowed for the sake of the salvation of sinners. This is something we must *never* do, even in small ways. Evangelism means speaking the gospel, and the gospel is the "word of truth". How can we speak the word of truth in an untruthful way?

No, Christians are people of the truth. We are people who believe in the greatest truth of all: the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. And that gospel teaches us – demands, even – that we must speak the truth in every situation.

SC



The Rev Dr Lionel Windsor lectures in New Testament and Greek at Moore Theological College.



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# What is your why?

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Jo Gibbs

**W***hy* do you get up in the morning? Why do you serve at church? Why are you studying or working in your current job? These are some of the most fundamental questions we can ask.

At the heart of “Why?” questions are our convictions – core beliefs that shape who we are, how we see the world and the kind of decisions we make.

As Christians we realise the importance of living a purposeful life shaped by our core beliefs. We admire those who do this well – whether it’s the missionary who uproots their life to tell people about Jesus, or a Christian whose faithful everyday life reflects the beauty of God’s character.

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## WHAT IS CONVICTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

In recent years we have become aware of multiple types of intelligence beyond simple IQ (such as emotional and moral intelligence). I have recently been challenged about convictional intelligence and Christian leadership from R. Albert Mohler’s book *The Conviction to Lead*.

Convictional intelligence is about having mental reflexes that correspond to biblical truth, so that we can live and lead faithfully. It is about the extent to which our core convictions shape every part of our daily lives. Asking, “Are we actually living what we believe?” This is a key question in the mind of preachers on Sunday. They want their congregations to not just understand



what God's word is saying but apply it in their lives on Monday.

Ideas connected with convictional intelligence include obedience, consistency and faithfulness. While this isn't a new idea, I've found it helpful to bring it into the forefront of my thinking and my conversations with others as I seek to live in wholehearted obedience to God.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

While in theory we know this is important to living a God-honouring life, it takes time to develop and doesn't happen by accident. It happens with intentional focus through the work of the Spirit and by God's grace.

We can see the importance of good convictional intelligence most clearly when it is missing. At best it can look inconsistent and hypocritical as we operate (sometimes unintentionally) out of a different set of convictions to the ones we articulate. At worst it results in disobedience and sin.

### WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

Here are some examples:

- We know God is trustworthy, sovereign and good, but when a pandemic hits we often worry rather than trusting him (Matt 6:25-34).
- We know we are beloved children of God (1 John 3:1), so why do we still doubt ourselves, lack confidence, or seek significance from social media?
- We know Jesus is the world's only hope (Acts 4:12), so why do we spend so little time sharing the gospel with family and friends?

My own capacity to live with and ignore these contradictions in my life astounds me. There are many things vying for our attention and our passions. While we live in this fallen world our struggle with sin, the world and the devil will continue until we see Christ face to face. Until then, how can we grow in convictional intelligence?

### Clarity

Be clear on convictions that are central – in the Bible, this is the gospel itself: the story of God's determination to glorify himself by saving sinners through the atonement accomplished by his own Son. As Christ himself made clear, every word of Scripture serves to tell this story.

The gospel is at the centre of the Bible story and so, as a Christian, it should be at the centre of my life. I need to know it clearly, preach it to myself regularly, and daily centre my life in

its key truths. If I am not regularly in God's word, my focus will easily drift to other things.

### Comprehensiveness

Clarifying gospel convictions does not mean our focus is solely on gospel proclamation, or word-based ministry in church. Scripture shows us how the gospel applies to *every* part of our lives. The gospel is where we find our identity and meaning. The gospel brings us into a relationship with our heavenly Father and continues to be the framework for how we live as followers of Jesus, living a life worthy of the gospel (Phil 1:27).

A simple and practical way to connect it to our daily lives is to ask, "What does the gospel say to this?" Michael Bullmore's talk "The Functional Centrality of the Gospel" ([www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org)) is helpful for identifying scriptural examples of truths and behaviours that flow from the gospel.

### Connection

We also need to grow connections between our head and heart as we respond to the gospel. After many years following Jesus, it can be easy sometimes to listen to a gospel-centred sermon and "spiritually yawn" because we have heard these truths many times and no longer sense their power.

The gospel is earth-shattering news that is to stir our hearts with thankfulness and joy, not just fill our heads. While we don't want to be led by our emotions as they can so easily deceive us, we also don't want to ignore our emotions and give only intellectual assent to the good news of Christ.

If you aren't being moved by gospel truths, take some time to pause and check what is happening. Drill deeper into all that Christ has done – or imagine what your life would be like without Jesus – then stand back to wonder again at all he has done on your behalf.

### CONCLUSION

Convictional intelligence is not something we're born with; it develops over time. While I've focused on things we can do to grow in this area, it's important to remember that God is at work – through his Spirit, by his word, within our Christian communities – shaping us into the likeness of his Son (Eph 4:13).

So, let's be in prayer, asking for God's help, and let's encourage one another. If we cross paths, I encourage you to check how I'm going in this and ask that key question: "What does the gospel say to this?"

SC

The Rev Jo Gibbs is CEO of Anglican Deaconess Ministries.

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# Lockdown 2.0

## CREATIVE MINISTRY IDEAS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

*Dress up for Jesus: one of the weekly kids' videos from Christ Church, St Ives.*

**Tim Beilharz**

**A**s I write this, Sydney has now been under a COVID-19 induced lockdown for many weeks. Across the Greater Sydney area, churches have once again found themselves in the unenviable position of seeking to serve their members, disciple the saints and evangelise the not-yet-Christians in their midst without being able to gather in person.

As was the case in Sydney's first lockdown in mid-2020, 20

children's ministry leaders have sought to be creative and wise in their approach, utilising technology while keeping the discipleship of children and families at the centre of their ministry.

In the following four snapshots, I want to share a variety of different ideas. My hope is not that you will necessarily copy these strategies (though of course, you're welcome to!), but that you will be inspired to be equally thoughtful and creative in a way that's relevant to your ministry context.



## BIBLE STORIES WITH SUZ

Suz Mann from Emmanuel Anglican Church in Glenhaven has been using the live video feature on Facebook to read the Bible with children and families from her church.

"I was very passionate about ensuring that we reached all of our children and families during this current lockdown period," she says. "Doing 'Bible Stories with Suz' gave us the opportunity to reach our youngest children, who would not be engaging in our Sunday Zoom classes. It was a creative and simple way to connect with all of our children and families... I love teaching these kids about Jesus and it gives me an opportunity to engage with them regularly."

She is reading three times a week on Facebook Live, using *Read Aloud Bible Stories* for younger children and the *Jesus Storybook Bible* for older kids.

"I have a lot of support from our kids and families – they love it," she says. "I even have some grandparents connecting, so we are also reaching older members of our church family as well."

"One parent said that they were 'Super excited for these stories. My child loves Bible stories with pictures. She was mesmerised the whole time and pretty sure she was convinced you could see her!'. Being in lockdown has given us the opportunity to connect with our church families in a different way than we normally would and it's so good."



## ONE-ON-ONE FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP



Meaghan Gates at St Michael's, Wollongong has taken a similar approach, but with a large leadership team has been able to assign one leader per family to do a once-a-week video check-in. "Last year we put a lot of energy into producing digital content but we found that, in our context, it was quite tiring for leaders and there wasn't significant uptake within families," she says. "So, this year we decided to change strategy and put our energy into individual discipleship for our kids."

"Part of the reason we settled on this was it encompasses the simple basics of discipleship: God's word, prayer and relationship. Last year the relationship is what we lacked, and when we returned to church – whilst still livestreaming – some families didn't prioritise meeting in person. They'd gotten comfortable at home and didn't see the value in it."

She says the leaders video call their assigned family once a week at an agreed time. They check in with the kids and families and read the Bible with them, following the planned curriculum for the term.

"We really wanted to emphasise the value of learning alongside your brother and sister in faith by modelling that relationship, not only to the kids but also their

families," she says. "Meeting with the same family each week meant that they could revel in the clear growth they see... and take heart in the way that the Lord is using them for his good work."

"I spent time with the leaders beforehand, providing guidance on the format of how each call should go. I was also able to drop around CEV bibles to every leader to read with the families, and *Youthworks' Kids Read cards* to stimulate discussion. We also made sure that there were simple Safe Ministry practices in place, like having to be in an open family space and not in bedrooms."

"The parents have really valued this time, as well as the kids."



## EQUIPPING PARENTS FOR HOME DISCIPLESHIP

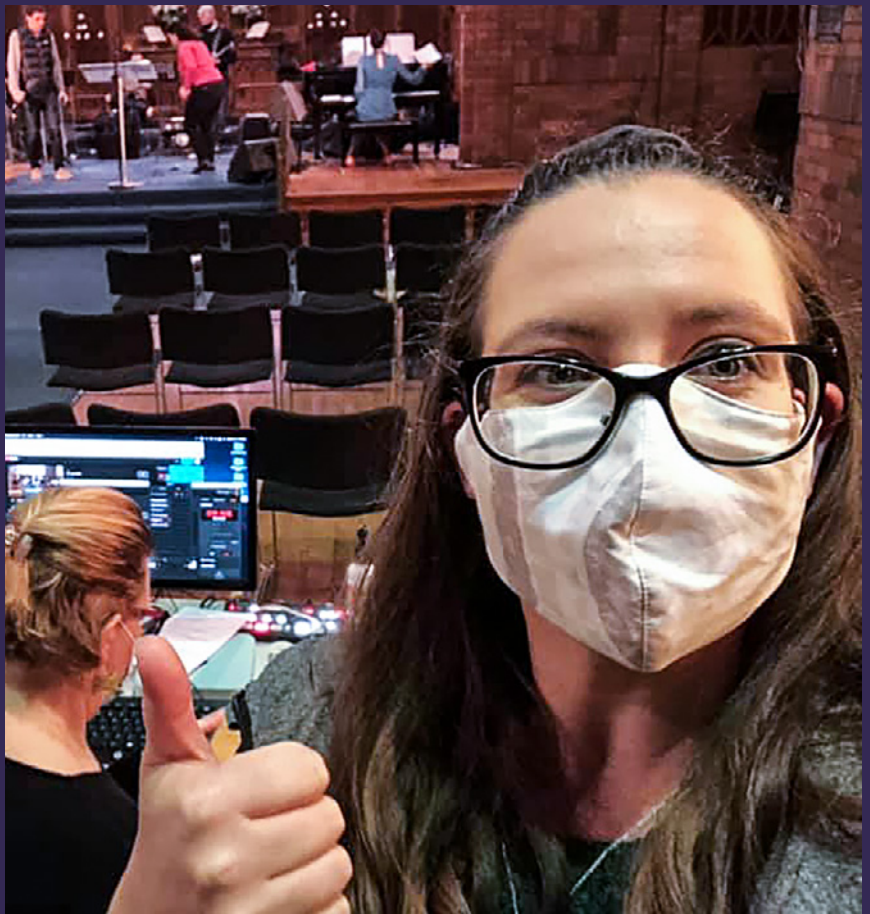
Mel Bell (right) from St Andrew's, Roseville has used the lockdown to complete a long-term project, providing a comprehensive list of resources that parents and caregivers can use to disciple their children at home.

She says the focus has been to equip parents to go deeper into the word with their kids, seeking to encourage them to use the extra time at home purposefully. To that end, "we wanted to give them access to as many resources as we could – daily devotionals for every day of lockdown, a weekly, parent-led church experience and ideas of other resources that are easily accessible.

"We have a big range of families; some that feel really confident in their discipleship and would benefit from being stretched, but many that are brand new to Christianity and need simple resources for all ages and stages."

She adds that the parish had been wanting to build a [resource page on its website](#) for a while, and lockdown has been the perfect time to do it.

"It's been such a joy to be introduced to many new resources that are out there, and see what parents have loved getting into with their kids... The feedback has been awesome. We are slowly seeing more parents feeling more confident to have more discipleship conversations with their kids, so praise God! He is still very much at work, even in this time."



## KIDS' CLUB TV



Lauren Dewhurst at Christ Church, St Ives has been utilising the creative skills of her children's ministry team to produce a [half-hour kids' program](#) specifically for the parish's Friday afternoon group. The videos have a *Play School*-style aesthetic, with basic backgrounds, dress-ups and props, but are edited together to provide engaging Christian content for children and families.

She says the church made some videos like this last year during lockdown and "families loved watching them together, so we replicated it. We have people willing and able to serve, so that makes the whole thing achievable. During Term 2 we had about 100 kids coming each week on a Friday, so we wanted to capture that audience and we were pretty sure the Sunday kids would follow".

The videos are released every Friday at 4pm – Christ Church's regular kids' club time – but can also be watched on demand. "We are getting high interaction from our Friday kids and our Sunday kids love them too," she says. "Families watch together, and we get good feedback and lots of views. They have bite-sized teaching moments so that everyone can watch, from creche to preschool and school kids.

"We also know that people are sharing the videos with other families and friends, and they are accessible to kids all over Sydney, like my nieces and nephews!"

The team has also created a virtual fireside with songs, stories and prayers, targeted at children but available for the whole family. "Families are building a fire, fake fire, Netflix fire, and coming to sing, be encouraged and pray. It's half an hour and honestly has been a really easy invitation. We will replicate it every second week or so if it goes well."



# WHO ARE YOU RAISING UP?



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# Am I losing the best years of my life to lockdown?

Hannah Thiem

**Y***our twenties are often described as the most exciting years of your life. Without the responsibilities of marriages, children or careers, you can enjoy a wealth of opportunities to travel, study, meet new friends and try new things.*

Yet as lockdown continues and borders remain firmly shut, many young people are feeling the emotional toll of their reduced

freedoms, and find themselves wondering, “Am I missing out on ‘living my best life’?”

These fears are only natural, given that our lives look radically different to what we expected years – even months – ago.

We talked to Tim Young, student minister at Waitara, and Kate Stace, an assistant minister at Vine Church, about how Christians can respond to any feelings of FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out).



## OUR MOST MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES GROW A LOVE FOR GOD

Mr Young and Mrs Stace both have fond memories of adventures they had in their twenties.

"In my early twenties at uni I would love the freedom that three months' worth of holidays would bring," Mr Young says. "I would get involved at church with Christmas and charity events, and spend weeks leading on things like SUFM beach mission or Crusader camps."

Mrs Stace went down another path – the "Aussie gap year".

"After school I packed up my bulky pink digital camera, my first-ever puffer jacket and moved to the UK," she says. "It seems like a lifetime away now, [when] my main hobby is walking my dog around my suburb with a mask on!"

Despite the many joys of youthful freedom, Mr Young recalls that his favourite experiences as a young adult remain those that grew his love for God and others.

"Though the thrill and adventure of ministry was real and exciting, it taught me to put God and others first, it exposed me to the real difficulties people face in life, and taught me that the universe doesn't revolve around me and my problems," he says.

This reminder brings real hope for those experiencing FOMO during the pandemic. Although ministry may look very different, there are still meaningful opportunities for us to grow in the most significant way – in our heart for the gospel.

## NOTHING CHANGES HOW PRECIOUS WE ARE TO GOD

When considering how our lives have been affected by lockdown, it is important to measure ourselves against the right ideals. Our fears about losing time are amplified by a world that defines worth by how exciting, successful or productive our lives are. Thankfully, the Bible does not measure success by these standards.

"COVID may have taken away so much of what you were hoping to adorn your life with, but it will never change how precious you are to [God] and his promise to clothe you with what you need to love and serve him with your life," Mr Young says.

Christians can hold on to the truth that our salvation has been earned for us through Jesus' sacrifice, not through the productivity of our days. Jesus has already come to give us the "life to the full" we crave.

## TRUST IN THE GOD WHO HAS GIVEN YOU LIFE

It's not only travel or socialising that COVID has put on pause. The pandemic can cause frustration for those seeking bigger milestones such as finding a partner and getting married, buying property, or starting a new job or ministry.



Remember when we travelled?: Kate Stace during her gap year.

Mrs Stace suggests that missing out on ticking these boxes can provide a helpful opportunity to ask ourselves whether we are trusting in the life God has given us, and trusting in the God who has given us life.

"Trusting in the life God has given you will mean that when things get hard, or you feel like you're missing out, it'll be easier to walk away," she says. "Trusting in the God who gives us life means that our circumstances can change, but we will still be fulfilled in Christ."

While the past 18 months may have been a surprise to us, they haven't been for our heavenly Father. Lockdown is a chance for us to deepen our faith that he was, is, and has always been in control.

"One day life will return to normal – normal-ish? – and we'll look back on this time and wonder how we got through," Mrs Stace says. "All those experiences will still be there for you to experience together, with a greater trust in the God who has given them to you."

SC

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# How your church can support Year 12 students

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Tara Sing

**T**he Year 12 class of 2021 never imagined they would face greater challenges than the cohort of 2020. Yet, with no warning, they lost their final term of face-to-face learning and along with it many of the rites of passage school leavers cherish. Preparing remotely for the biggest exams of their lives has been exhausting and frustrating.

For Tim Moore, a Year 12 student who attends St Mark's, Malabar, keeping focused has been a challenge. "At home, I feel like

I have a lot of time," he says. "Staying motivated is quite difficult. A lot of Year 12s [at youth group] said similar things."

Naomi Clarke from Hoxton Park agrees. "It felt like we had to persist through the regular routine of school, but without any of the aspects that make it enjoyable: connecting with friends, classroom community, and any special events that regularly should've happened – including simple things like band practice that we had gone to without knowing it was the last."



She says the constant modification to exams and assessments has also left many feeling uneasy. "A lot of other Year 12 students I've talked to felt difficulty in having to sit through pretty significant periods of uncertainty, particularly when we weren't sure whether the HSC was even going ahead... Being stuck at home, only 'going to school' by opening our laptops, made our whole situation feel frankly quite surreal."

### REMOTE LEARNING AMID EXAMS HAS BEEN A CHALLENGE

A major difference is the timing of this year's lockdown, leaving schools scrambling to rearrange trial HSC exams at the last minute, and remotely guiding students through the changes. The HSC is scheduled to start on November 9 – a date by which most students in previous years would have finished.

"It's [been] quite confusing for kids as to what they're aiming for," says David Lindsay, head of the senior college at St Andrew's Cathedral School. "It's a challenge for students and teachers to traverse that for a variety of different reasons and, in lockdown, it's harder because you're not dealing with the students face to face."

"It's quite hard to engage [with] all the stresses, and it's hard to deal with the stresses remotely."

Another challenge is the loss of major milestones such as graduation ceremonies. Nick, a creative and performing arts head teacher in a western Sydney public high school, describes it as a big anti-climax.

"The vibe seems a bit sad," he says. "Any time you see the kids on the bike track, or out and about, they're really craving human interaction, as we all are. [Year 12] is meant to be a time where they're out and about, celebrating, and they've lost that."

Students are also anxious about future plans, with questions surrounding university entry, exam results and career prospects. "They won't have had an opportunity to show what they can do," Mr Lindsay says. "Music students are not performing in front of examiners and not performing with the ensembles they want to perform with. They haven't been able to give the best in the environment they were preparing for."

"We know there's a good chance their route to uni will be no different, but if you're a parent or a student coming up to this point in your life, there is uncertainty about what is ahead."

### WHAT COULD YOUR CONGREGATION DO?

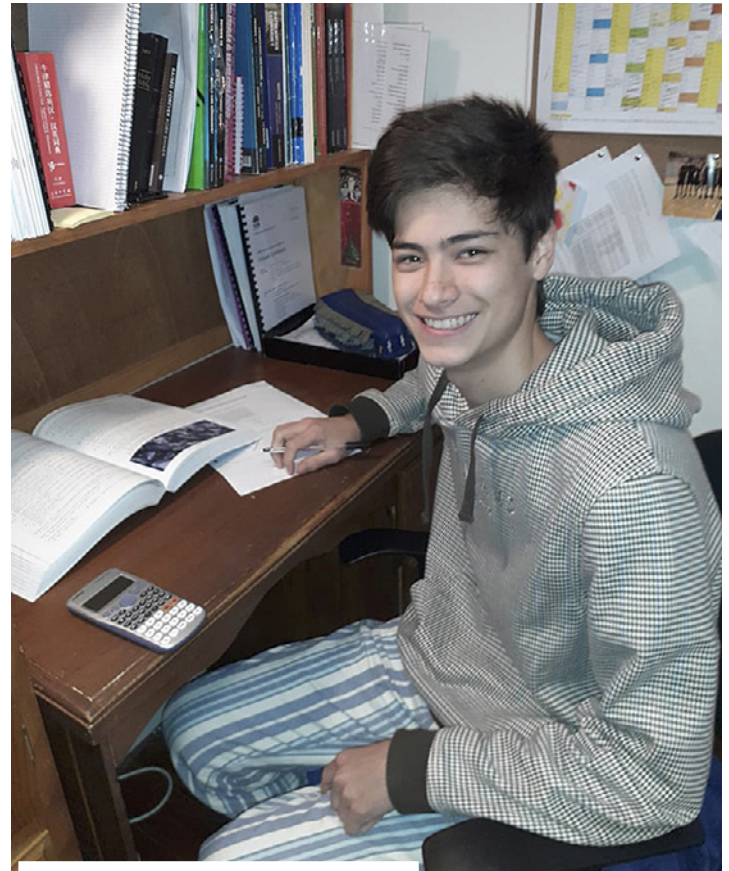
Given that nearly all interactions have been virtual, offering something tangible is a powerful way to show support. "Tangible is what students in Year 12 don't have at the moment," Mr Lindsay says. "Anything that is tangible seems to make a difference."

Care packages, blocks of chocolate in the mail, cards and messages letting students know they are being prayed for, has a big impact. "A few times someone from my church has dropped off treats [Mars bar slice, lollies etc] and sometimes written encouragement, which has been pretty nice," Miss Clarke says.

Mr Moore agrees. "My teachers have sent me care packages, words of encouragement, Kit Kats, stuff like that." He has also appreciated the people from church who have reached out, offered to go walking together, or checked in to see how he is.

"Making sure that the Year 12 students haven't fallen off your mind, [letting them know] that you're still thinking about them, really helps," he says.

Prayer makes a massive difference. Says Nick: "If you're good mates, give them a call and tell them you're praying for them. It's



"Staying motivated is quite difficult": Tim Moore at his desk.

a huge encouragement when you explicitly say, 'This is what I'm doing for you'. I've always felt encouraged when people ask me what they can pray, because every case will be different."

His church, St John's, Camden, has made an effort to pray for HSC students over the years, previously preparing a list of Year 12 students from the church that members could pray through.

"Even in services, pray for Year 12s," Nick says. "I know kids have appreciated that, and I've always liked that as a ministry, too. If there's a way you can, get them up the front [of the service] and pray for them as a whole church. Hopefully, knowing you're being prayed for leads to resilience."

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## PRAY WITH US FOR THE YEAR 12 COHORT OF 2021:

- that those who are Christian can keep focused on Jesus, leaning on his strength instead of their own.
- for a reduction in anxiety and mental health issues, and that those who are struggling will still stay connected and reach out to friends or family.
- for students grieving the loss of celebrations and milestones, engagement, camaraderie and finishing school the way they would have liked.
- that amid the hardships of this year the students will persevere and develop resilience rather than burn out or become overwhelmed with frustration.
- for the hope of faith. "That's what I pray for this Year 12, that they would rely on a hope that is lasting," Mr Lindsay says. "A hope that is lasting sees that what happens next year is one part of God's big picture for them."





**“I want to be  
on Jesus’ team”**

**Tara Sing**

W

hile it is disappointing that, thanks to the current lockdown, Special Religious Education classes are on hold and may not return until next year, there is plenty we can look back and be thankful for.

*hile it is disappointing that, thanks to the current lockdown, Special Religious Education classes are on hold and may not return until next year, there is plenty we can look back and*

We asked Scripture teachers to share their most memorable moments in the classroom. Here are several stories of student curiosity, students grasping key concepts and realising that the Bible has a place in their lives.

## WHEN STUDENTS GET GRACE

Seeing a room of students click and understand the concept of grace still makes Wycliffe Ochieng, a Scripture teacher from St Stephen's, Bomaderry, smile. Last year, he ran a seemingly simple paper airplane competition with his class, promising a gift to whoever could hit the extremely small bullseye.

“For the analogy to work, everyone had to miss the target, so you can imagine what I was secretly praying for while the game went on,” he says. “Nobody actually hit the target, so I was very much relieved.

“[At] the end of the game, I went to give the gift to the least deserving student, and woah, in came the reactions. From ‘I was the closest, I should get the reward’ to ‘It’s not fair, how come he is getting the gift?’ It’s safe to say that in teaching them this year, they all understand the meaning of what God’s grace is.”





## “THIS LESSON REALLY TOUCHED HER HEART”

A lesson on reversals while studying Mark’s gospel stands out for Katie Stringer, who goes to church at All Souls’, Leichhardt. While her class shared what kind of reversals they would like to see in the world – as a lead-in to talking about Jesus and the reversals he brings – a normally disengaged and quiet student spoke up and surprised her.

“She put up her hand and said, ‘I want to have a world that doesn’t have disabilities, [or] if you have a disability, you are treated with kindness, compassion and fairness’. She had all of these ideas bubbling out, and we got to write them up on the whiteboard.

“I could see, for her, this lesson really touched her heart. For this student, sitting in a wheelchair, the things that Jesus brings, the hope he brings, are really important – especially to her.”



## CHOOSING TO BE ON JESUS’ TEAM

For Matt Shannon, families pastor at Minchinbury, it’s always memorable when a student makes the connection between the lessons that have been taught and their own lives.

“My most memorable moment came in a Year 1-2 class I had been teaching for a whole year,” he says. “There was one boy in that class who, for the whole year, had seemed pretty disinterested. One day after class he came up to me and said, ‘I want to be on Jesus’ team’. That was such an awesome moment, to see a kid thinking critically about what the Bible says and what Christians believe.”



## IF THERE ARE TRICKY QUESTIONS, IT MEANS KIDS ARE THINKING

The tougher, or more left-of-field questions, are a joy for Pam Hilton, who attends church at Moorebank. She loves hearing how little minds are working and thinking through the Bible stories of each lesson.

“A child asked me how did Joseph talk to the Egyptians when he was taken there as a slave?” she recalls. “My response was, ‘Wait until next week for the answer!’, as the next lesson mentioned they used translators. [It was] not a deep theological question, but it did show he was engaging with the lesson.”

Other questions she enjoys answering and gets asked often include, “Was God ever a baby?” and “What if we don’t trust and follow Jesus?”. She finds there is always an opportunity to point children to Jesus in her classes.

## IF YOU COULD SAY ONE THING ABOUT JESUS, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

Although it’s been a few years since he taught Scripture, Moore College student Adam Johnson remembers his SRE lessons fondly. The student minister at Sylvania has many quotes tucked away that bring him great encouragement and joy, remembering how his primary students would make connections between different parts of the Bible.

While explaining about the Lord’s Supper in a lesson about things that happen regularly in church he asked his class, “Why do you think we eat bread during the Lord’s Supper?” One student paused, and then replied, “It’s like a reminder of Jesus, when he broke bread during his last supper with his disciples before he died”. Another student, bursting with excitement, added: “Oooh! Ooh! It’s also like how Jesus said, ‘I am the bread of life!’”

During his final Scripture class he asked his students, “If you could say one thing about Jesus, what would you say?” Students replied, “Jesus is the king!”, “Jesus made the world”, “Jesus is the saviour”, “Jesus died to pay for our sin!”, “Jesus is God’s son” and “Jesus is Lord!”

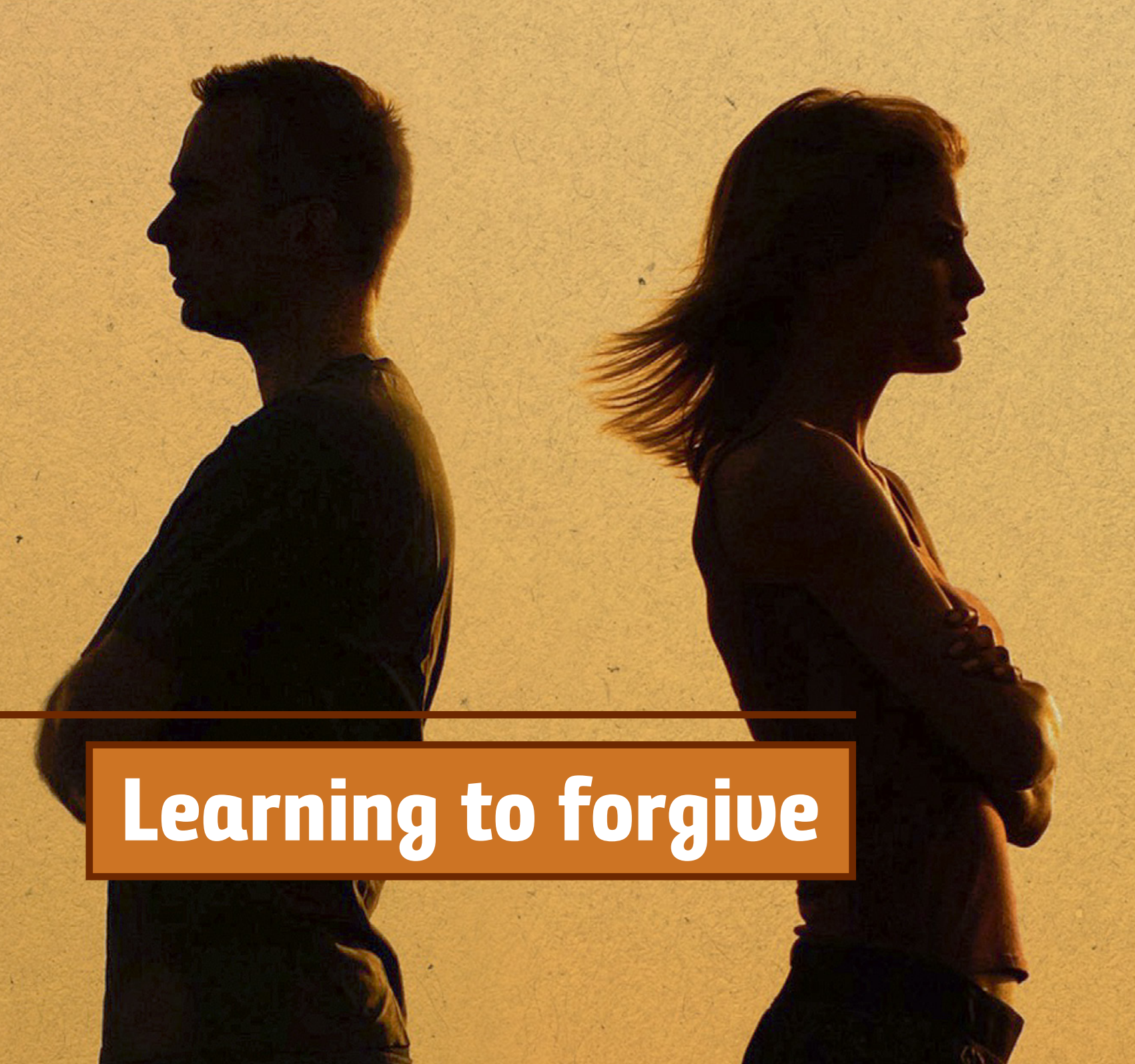
Mr Johnson says, “What a great joy it has been to see God at work in the classroom”.



Pray for the students enrolled in SRE classes, that they would continue to think about the things they have learned although classes aren’t currently happening. Please also pray for the many

Scripture teachers and volunteers who make these classes happen, as they wait patiently for the opportunity to teach Scripture once more.





# Learning to forgive

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Kanishka Raffel

**J**ESUS teaches his disciples to pray to our Father to “forgive us our debts” (Matthew 6:12). He reminds us that we need forgiveness and God is the one who grants it.

The word “debts” conveys one aspect of what the Bible calls sin, and what we owe God. We need forgiveness because we do not give God what we owe him: thanks, praise, love and obedience, and because, as the Anglican confession prayer says, “we have not done what we ought to have done”. Yet, amazingly

and wonderfully, the God we offend is a God of mercy.

The Bible uses many images to describe God’s forgiveness. In Romans 4:8, God does not reckon sin against the one he has forgiven. Psalm 32:1 says the one whose transgressions are forgiven has their sins “covered”. In Isaiah 38:17, Hezekiah praises God because “you have put all my sins behind your back”. He deals with sin. It no longer stands between us.

Psalm 103:12 famously records that God removes our

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transgression from us “as far as the east is from the west”. In Psalm 51, he is merciful to the undeserving. We are stained by sin, but God washes us clean. The whole Bible teaches that forgiveness comes as God absorbs into himself the cost of forgiving us: the death of the sinless Son of God in our place for our sake.

When Jesus teaches his disciples to pray “forgive us our debts” he reminds us that we need forgiveness and God will forgive. But the prayer doesn’t stop with “forgive us our debts”; it adds, “as we also have forgiven our debtors”. The Bible consistently connects God’s forgiveness with the command to forgive others.

### **FORGIVEN FORGIVERS**

Jesus expounds the request in the Lord’s Prayer this way: “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15).

We are not only people who need forgiveness. If we are to be the children of our Father, we must also forgive.

It’s not that we earn our forgiveness by being forgiving. Rather, those who have received forgiveness must be people who *offer* forgiveness. We have been forgiven, therefore we must be forgivers of others.

### **WHY SHOULD THOSE WHO ARE FORGIVEN, FORGIVE OTHERS?**

Sociologists and psychologists will tell you forgiveness is good for you. It is therapeutic, reduces the urge to violence and revenge, and has a liberating power – whether the person who has offended against you has repented or not. It’s no surprise to learn that what God commands is good for us, but that is not the primary reason why we forgive.

First, we forgive because forgiveness is the heart of our “compassionate and gracious” God (Exodus 34:6-7). As Jesus gathers his friends for a final meal, he places forgiveness at the centre of Christian life and faith: his blood is “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). The heart of God, the heart of the cross, the heart of the Christian life is forgiveness.

Second, we must forgive to be the children of our Father. Forgiveness is God-like. On August 5, 2002, Murree Christian School – for the children of Christian workers in Pakistan – was attacked by gunmen, who killed six school workers. Students and teachers hid wherever they could.

One of the students recorded events in her classroom: “People were praying all around; a constant hum in the classroom. Now and then people would pray out loud, for God’s protection, for his angels around us, for [a student’s] Mum who’d been shot and was lying on the floor in the hall, and for everyone else in the school. Someone prayed for the attackers.” A child at gunpoint prays for her attackers. Forgiveness is God-like.

Third, we must forgive others because we have been forgiven. The church must be a community of forgiveness, or it is not the church. Colossians 3:12 says to “bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you”.

Churches must be communities of continual forgiveness. Someone didn’t listen, didn’t remember, didn’t care. An insensitive remark, an unwarranted criticism, a broken promise. Does that happen in church? Sadly, it does! We think we can separate from each other and be forgiven by God, but God says forgive or you will be separated from me.

The reality of my forgiveness must show itself in forgiveness of

others. If I bear a grudge to the grave, it will keep me from heaven because, ultimately, it will show I have not truly repented towards God. But if this is true, we must be clear what we are aiming at when we aim at forgiveness.

### **WHAT AM I DOING WHEN I FORGIVE?**


The cross of Christ, where Jesus secures our forgiveness by his death in our place, confronts us with the depth and horror of our own sin. The self-sacrifice of the most beautiful human life in history, who is none other than God the Son through whom the universe came into existence, teaches us the gravity of sin and the desperation of our plight. Only his sacrificial death could atone for the sins of the world.


It follows, therefore, that forgiveness is not turning a blind eye to sin. Forgiveness does not deny the truth, harm and evil of sin – rather, it names and confronts it. As Christ on the cross pays our debt, so forgiveness bears the cost of the damage done by the offender’s sin. Forgiveness names and blames sin, but it withholds punishment from the one who deserves to be punished. Instead, it is the one who offers forgiveness who absorbs the pain and forgoes the right to punish. Instinctively, we know this. At least, we know it if we have ever forgiven someone. The forgiver bears the pain and absorbs the injury, and the forgiven goes free.

### **WHAT ABOUT REPENTANCE?**

There can be forgiveness whether or not there is repentance. Without repentance there will not be reconciliation between the parties, but the absence of repentance must not be a cloak for nursing unforgiveness.

In Luke 17:3 Jesus says: “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him” (cf. Matthew 18:21-22). The point of





“There is no place whatsoever for sexual abuse or other misconduct in the life of our churches. I am committed to ensuring the Sydney Anglican Church has a consistent culture of safe ministry through regular and up-to-date training and resourcing of clergy and lay church workers.”

**Kanishka Raffel - Archbishop**

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these sayings is not that repentance is essential, but *forgiveness* is essential. It is arguable that when Jesus says you must forgive “seventy-seven times” (Matthew 18:22), he means even if repentance is shallow and short-lived, forgive. We must not justify resentment and unforgiveness on the basis that there has been no repentance. It is possible to cancel the debt and give up the claim for vengeance even without repentance.

There is no forgiveness from God without repentance because we must turn to the Lord if we are to find forgiveness. But we are bound to release others from their indebtedness to us because God alone is their judge. We forgive as forgiven sinners.

Can a wrongdoer demand forgiveness? Certainly not. That would be an exercise in avoiding responsibility for what they have done. Real repentance that holds out the possibility of reconciliation involves full acknowledgement of wrongdoing, redress for the loss suffered if possible, and a commitment to real and lasting change.

Without repentance there can be no reconciliation. But it needs to be said that, in some cases, even if there is genuine repentance, restoration of relationship cannot be assumed. Sometimes the damaging consequences of a sin or pattern of sinning endures, and will be healed only in the new creation. Sexual abuse, domestic abuse and adultery are some circumstances where I have observed this to be the case.

Forgiveness is not the same as forgetting. Though God forgives our sins and remembers them no more, that is not typical of us. Over time, sins we have forgiven may fade from our memories, and hundreds of minor hurts and disappointments caused by our spouses or family do get forgiven and forgotten. But just because you remember some sin against you does not mean it is not forgiven.

## WHAT ABOUT PUNISHMENT?

We need to understand that the Bible permits some punishment for wrongdoing without forgiveness. The role of the State is to punish wrongdoing. Victims of crime who are believers must seek God’s help to finally come to forgiveness of those who have wronged them.

And we need to bear in mind that when we forgive someone their sin against us, we do not forgive their sin against God, who will bring every sin to light. The person who does not repent towards us when we forgive them will still face God’s judgment if they remain unrepentant – as will we.

We do not need to think we failed to forgive because the wrongdoer has been punished by the State, or because we have not yet forgotten, or because we have not been reconciled. None of those things necessarily mean we have not forgiven.

## HOW SHALL WE FORGIVE?

In 2 Corinthians 5 the apostle Paul says that, through Christ, God reconciled us to himself, not counting our sins against us – so anyone in Christ is a new creation, and he gives to us the ministry of reconciliation. We live no longer for ourselves but for him who died for us and was raised.

We cannot forgive out of our own strength. That would be foolish, proud and fruitless. We dare to forgive only because of the grace we have known in the forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ, through which he lives in us.

I can’t swim like Ian Thorpe no matter how much anyone tells me to. But if Christ tells me to forgive, and then promises to come and make his home within me, I can forgive by the power of Christ in me by his Spirit. Failure to forgive can disclose that we have not ourselves repented and welcomed God’s forgiveness into our own lives.

We must stand at the cross to forgive others, because we are to forgive as have been forgiven. We have been loved beyond measure, we have been forgiven at great cost, we have been welcomed and embraced in the love of God and are indwelt by his Spirit.

It’s hard if you’ve been hurt. It’s hard and slow. God is able, he can do it. God is patient; he won’t rush you. God is gracious; you may go two steps forward and one step back. We must pray and ask God to teach us to forgive. Ask him, gather a mature Christian with you, ask the Lord to work.

In 1944, Dutch woman Corrie ten Boom was released from Ravensbruck concentration camp where her beloved sister Betsie had died. She spoke often after the end of World War II about the reconciliation and forgiveness that can only be found in Christ.

At one such meeting, a man came toward her – one of the camp guards. He had since become Christian and extended his hand towards her saying, “*Fraulein*, will you forgive me?” She felt incapable of forgiveness but, mechanically, put out her hand praying, “Jesus, help me”.

She wrote afterwards that a healing warmth then flooded her being, and with tears in her eyes she grasped his hand and said: “I forgive you, brother! With all my heart”.

SC

This is an edited version of a talk Archbishop Raffel gave at a Centre for Christian Living event in late August. Dr Philip Kern also spoke at the forgiveness event.

A link to both full talks is available at <https://ccl.moore.edu.au/tag/audio/>

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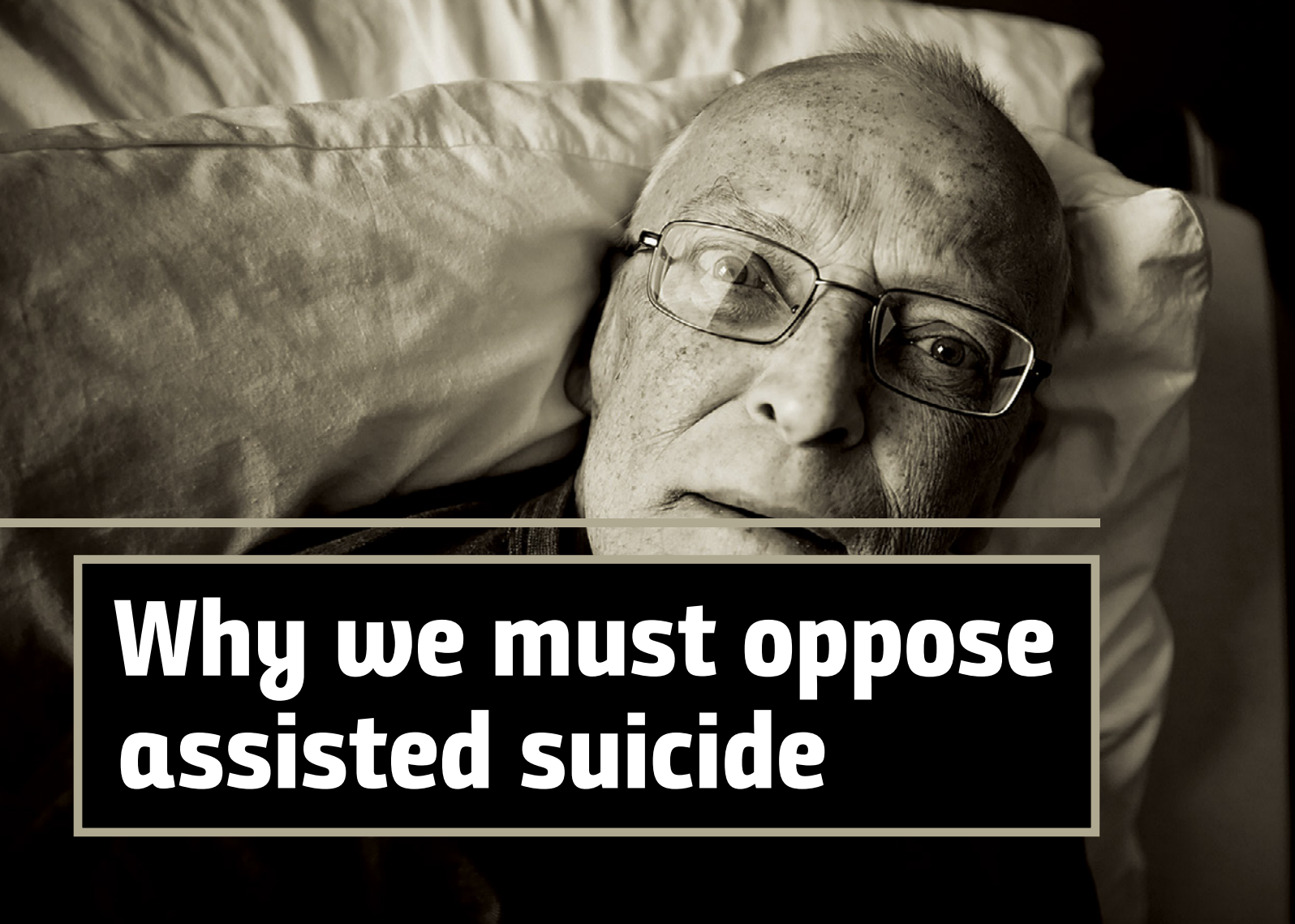
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# Why we must oppose assisted suicide

Michael Stead

**A**lex Greenwich MP plans to introduce his controversial Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill in NSW Parliament on October 14. Voluntary assisted dying (VAD) legislation has now been enacted in five of Australia's six states – Victoria (2017), Western Australia (2019), Tasmania (May 2021), South Australia (June 2021) and Queensland (last month). Proponents have now turned their sights on NSW, hoping it will be the next “domino to fall”.

This timing is all wrong. Debating this during the COVID-19 pandemic prevents public participation and protest (or perhaps that is the point). At a time when we are under stay-at-home orders to protect the vulnerable members of our society, Greenwich is seeking to push through a bill that poses a grave risk to the elderly. Given the findings of the Aged Care Royal Commission about the crisis in aged care, we should be addressing these issues to ensure that elderly Australians have the best possible care, including palliative care.

Advocates for VAD claim the moral high ground – that they are the compassionate ones. The implication being, of course,

that those who oppose VAD are without compassion. Sometimes, the implication is made explicit. For example, columnist Peter FitzSimons says: “we can expect fierce opposition to this legislation to come from mostly religious groups, lead [sic] by some Catholics who genuinely think that months of agony is all part of God's plan, and cannot be opposed”.

To be clear, I do not know of anyone who argues against VAD on the basis that unrelieved agony is a necessary part of God's plan. On the contrary, Christians have always been at the forefront in palliative care, and with modern palliative care almost no-one needs to endure intolerable suffering. Although VAD legislation is promoted as being necessary because of “intolerable suffering”, the bar is lowered considerably in the fine print. VAD is for a terminal illness where “suffering cannot be relieved in a way that the person considers tolerable”.

VAD hides behind euphemisms. It is not “compassion” to inject someone with lethal drugs. VAD is physician-assisted suicide – which puts members of the medical profession, who have a duty to care for the elderly and vulnerable, in an impossible position. The



policy of the Australian Medical Association is that doctors should not be involved in ending a patient's life.

But there is a distinctively Christian reason to oppose VAD.

### BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

I have sat with, and prayed with, countless older saints in hospitals, nursing homes and hospices as the time of their death approached. Many have said to me, "I don't want to be a burden". Our world is increasingly driven by utilitarianism, where people only have value when they are contributing members of society. If that is true, then as people lose capacity – physical or mental – they are a "burden" on society, and a "burden" on their families. VAD reinforces this destructive narrative, because it provides the terminally ill with the option of a last heroic act that can relieve society of one more burden.

Christians have a very different way of thinking about people that doesn't measure value by a person's contribution to Gross Domestic Product. We need to flip this "burden" narrative and help our ageing saints see that their infirmity is an opportunity to let others help bear their burdens, which to their friends and family is no burden at all. This is what Christians do – "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). In this condition, they are still "dying with dignity", because dignity comes from being made in the image of God, not from our capacity to contribute.

We should rightly be concerned that a decision to end one's life might be coerced and not truly "voluntary" (and there are not sufficient safeguards in the bill to prevent this). But an even greater danger is that – because VAD legalises killing oneself – we become a society where choosing death voluntarily is increasingly normalised. This in itself creates an insidious pressure, much in the same way that the high prevalence of abortion has led to a deplorable expectation that young pregnant women should terminate an unplanned pregnancy.

If the "normal" end for the terminally ill is by lethal injection, then it is not hard to imagine, emerging over time, a not-so-subtle pressure against "choosing" to prolong life with (expensive!) palliative care and "choosing" to put emotional and financial demands on your family as they support you in your last months. As soon as society legitimises the "choice" to end one's own life, the alternative course of action also becomes a choice.

### WHAT CAN CHRISTIANS DO?

It is not too late to write to our NSW parliamentarians. The organisation HOPE – Preventing Euthanasia & Assisted Suicide has created a web page ([https://www.no euthanasia.org.au/petition\\_2108\\_ocp\\_nsw](https://www.no euthanasia.org.au/petition_2108_ocp_nsw)) that automates the process of sending your email to your local State MP, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and all the members of the Legislative Council. Please act ASAP, so our politicians know that you do not support this bill.

SC

*The Rt Rev Dr Michael Stead is Bishop of the South Sydney Region.*



# What counts when you are counting?

Peter Hayward

**T**he 2021 Census went ahead in August despite the added complexities of lockdown restrictions. The Commonwealth's five-yearly Census is such a significant measuring point for our nation that not even a pandemic could stop it. Over coming years, the information gathered will help us understand societal trends and help with future planning.

How the Census was undertaken this year was very different from the first Commonwealth Census in 1911. Along with almost every other area of life, we can now complete the Census online. Clearly, for governments to plan for society, having relevant information on population and demographic changes is essential.

The desire to measure and record is a very human characteristic. Indeed, you cannot read through the Old Testament without noticing how significant record keeping must have been, as the age of individuals and number of people are noted. It is not the main point of Genesis 5 – the first time ages are recorded – but the existence of an extensive system of recording individuals' ages is noteworthy.

As the storyline of the Old Testament unfolds, the writers take the time at significant turning points to note what we might today refer to as statistics. Of course, they were never mere statistics: they expressed – in a measured way – God's unfolding purpose.

So, our current interest in measurement and statistics is not new. What has changed is the extraordinarily rapid expansion to measure all aspects of our society and our personal lives. That we can now complete the Census online is all the evidence we need as





to why this has happened. Technology has profoundly changed what and how we measure.

With little reflection on how the count has been determined, we wait daily for the 11am COVID-19 briefing to hear exact numbers from the previous day. We can know immediately whether we got close to taking 10,000 steps each day. Whatever platform our church uses for an online gathering, we can receive immediate feedback on numbers. Each of these is a small indication of how much of life is now measured.

Our capacity to generate data and statistics on all aspects of our society has proven benefits. It allows more informed predictions to be made. We learn from mistakes and track progress. For these reasons alone, our diocesan churches participate in the National Church Life Survey, completed the same year as the Census, and provide annual statistics to the Registry.

However, care is needed. First, in a culture obsessed with measuring everything, we need to remember that numbers can never quantify who we are. As an example, personal data does not care about our relationships or help us discern what is valuable.

Second, though we may have information through personal data, we do not have self-knowledge. There is a movement called the "quantified self" that desires to find meaning through the self-knowledge available from numbers, so the individual can improve their physical, emotional and mental life. Yet measurement of data cannot deal with us as social and relational beings.

Third, the obsession with the measurement of life feeds secular

materialism. We feel that if we have sufficient data, we can control our lives and remove all mystery. Pushed too far, this reinforces a secular mindset. Since what is measured are the physical aspects of our world, the material world is valued above all. We value what we can measure. Yet data alone cannot provide meaning.

### MEASURING CHURCH?

What does this mean for our diocesan use of the National Church Life Survey and our annual church statistics? Perhaps Tim Keller provides wise counsel: "Don't let numbers go to your head or lack of numbers go to your heart".

We need to reflect on what has been done and make informed predictions. Ongoing statistical measurement allows progress to be tracked. But numbers cannot tell the whole story; what is always essential is God's word faithfully preached.

Faithfulness is required in times of increase or decline. However, without reflection, understanding of context, evaluation and ongoing adjustments, "mere" faithfulness is not the appropriate response to our current cultural obsession with numbers.

Appropriately used, they are a tool that can help us in our prayerful aim of reaching every community within the geographic reach of our Diocese with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. **SC**

*The Rt Rev Peter Hayward is Bishop of the Wollongong Region.*





# Compelled by Christ's love



*Kara Hartley is the Archdeacon for Women in Sydney. She trained in media before studying at Sydney Missionary and Bible College and Moore College. For 12 years she served in local church ministry, and she has been Archdeacon for the past eight years. She talks to **SIMON MANCHESTER**.*

*Kara, you have the job of being Archdeacon for Women in the Sydney Diocese – can you tell us the best things about the position?*

The best thing is the privilege of teaching and encouraging women from the Bible. This happens as I meet with women who are serving in the local church or our organisations like schools and Anglicare, as well as speaking at local church conferences. It's a great joy to see and hear how the ministry of the gospel is being lived out in every area of our Diocese. I also love being involved with women in post-college training.

*Are you mostly involved with women in paid positions, or do you get around to meet women in many churches as well?*

My role has a particular emphasis on training, recruiting and supporting women in paid ministry – ordained, lay, full time and part time. Yet I'm deeply interested in how God is using the women of our churches to proclaim Christ. It's wonderful to meet women who are loving and serving Jesus all over the Diocese. God really is using the many, many women in our churches in wonderful, creative and strategic ways.

*Do you feel your work and study background have prepared you well for your current responsibilities or is this work something quite different?*

Yes, my Bible college training equipped me thoroughly for serving women when I was in the local church (any failures I made weren't the fault of my training!). Having the Bible as the foundation for ministry doesn't change moving from the local church into this role. There are different challenges and responsibilities because



of the broader nature of the role, but essentially my prayer is that the gospel will continue to shape me and all I seek to do.

*Recently you have taken a helpful stand against (what seems to be) a cheap media shot at the Sydney Anglican Church. Can you summarise what you thought needed to be said?*

There's some discussion in the media that women might suffer domestic violence in Sydney Anglican churches because of so-called "patriarchal" teaching on men and women. Among other things I simply wanted to affirm that the biblical teaching on husbands and wives is God's good word to us and our responsibility is to teach clearly and unambiguously in a way that doesn't allow for misunderstanding.

Also, when perpetrators use the Bible to justify their abuse they are doing so in a way that God does not endorse, nor does his word allow. I acknowledge that, tragically, some use the Bible to justify their wicked behaviour, but it doesn't necessarily (and can I say usually) flow that violence is the outcome of teaching male leadership in marriage.

I'm not convinced changing our teaching will solve the problem, which ultimately is a sin and heart problem.

*Going back to your early days, how did the gospel come to you and what convinced you to trust and follow Jesus?*

By God's grace a neighbour invited me to youth group when I was in late high school. Arriving at that youth group I encountered people I already had connections with from primary school. That kept me there. Over the course of two years, I think God slowly warmed my heart to the gospel.

I discovered that, even though I'd been to Sunday School and an Anglican school, and even though I was a "nice" girl who didn't have a problem with the existence of God and Jesus, God didn't regard those things as worthwhile credentials for a relationship with him. In fact, he regarded me as his enemy. This was shocking news for me!

I don't have a day or time, but I know I grew in thankfulness for Jesus' death and resurrection and put my trust in him for the forgiveness for my sins.

*Have you felt frustrated in your work that certain roles and privileges have been kept from you? And what have you most loved doing since you began?*

I've never been frustrated because there's so much work to do! I've always been encouraged to serve, and I've tried to get on and do that as faithfully and wisely as possible. There's nothing more wonderful than explaining the gospel to someone and them putting their trust in Jesus. There's nothing more wonderful than seeing someone young and fragile in their faith grow and strengthen as you meet and read the Bible together. I've loved these things, and love encouraging young women to serve and use their gifts for God.

*Your husband Brett is a headmaster, which means that you both have huge areas of life to cover. How do you make time for "work-free" conversation and breaks together?*

In a household without children it's easier to find moments of simple and interruption-free conversation each day. We can read the Bible and pray together at dinner easily. We don't plan for them, but we do find opportunities to have a coffee or go for a walk on the weekend where we "catch up". We seek to go away

every year for our anniversary. Also, we try and spend time with friends and family so life isn't "all about us".

*Do you think that the Sydney Anglicans who hold a complementarian position are quite alone in this position and are hindering the national and global church or helping it?*

No, Sydney isn't alone and, in fact, I think this teaching is one that enriches our church, not hinders it. Complementarianism values the distinctions between men and women, in both the home and church, while continuing to affirm our equality. Many churches around Australia and the world hold to the same view. So, with that in mind, as men and women we get on and contend side by side for the gospel, as is the model in the New Testament.

*What would you say are the important issues for Christian women today that keep cropping up in your discussions and travels?*

There are lots of ethical issues facing us and we need to ensure it's the Bible informing us – on sexuality, thinking about gender identity and euthanasia, for example. For women, personal issues of identity in Christ, finding hope and confidence in him, is something I'm often speaking about. There are so many voices, demands and challenges to that identity. Courage is also another issue (not just for women) – how to keep being courageous for Christ as the world grows more hostile. Mental health, juggling responsibilities, raising kids, healthy marriages, loneliness – these are all issues that seem to weigh heavily on many.

*Which women have been helpful to you in their example – mentoring, writing or speaking?*

I'm nervous about naming names in case I leave someone out! By God's grace I have had several older women minister to me, shape, correct and teach me over the past 20+ years, and some amazing friends who likewise model faithful and godly living.

Some writers: Kathleen Nielson, Claire Smith, Jen Wilkin. Susannah Spurgeon is someone I've recently come to appreciate deeply.

*The team of bishops that you work with seem to be a terrific and very gifted bunch. Are your meetings marked by joy and thanksgiving or is it all putting out fires and battling away?*

Our meetings are a highlight in my week. I am so thankful for my brothers – they are a terrific bunch. We do talk about some hard things going on, but we spend an hour in the Bible at the start of our meetings, which is a real joy. We have fun together and also rejoice deeply in what God is doing across our city through his people.

*What keeps you going in these hard days (is there a verse or promise you treasure) and what sort of invitation would draw you away to another part of Christ's service?*

The verse I have carried with me from my early years as a Christian is 2 Corinthians 5:14-15:

*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

So, I have tried to "live for Christ", though at times (many times) haven't done this as well or wholeheartedly as I'd hoped. Still, by God's grace, each day I have a go and trust that God will turn my efforts into something that might bring him glory.





## Gosbell encourages gospel growth at MAC

Mary Andrews College has announced that its dean of students, **Dr Louise Gosbell**, has become principal of the college, effective August 24.

Dr Gosbell has been connected to Anglican Deaconess Ministries since 2010, when she received a scholarship that helped fund

her PhD research. She has since been a lecturer at MAC in New Testament and Disability Studies as well as an ADM Fellow.

She added the role of dean last year, which gave her the opportunity to develop support systems for students with disabilities and primary carers, as well as students dealing with mental health issues.

Dr Gosbell's PhD thesis in Ancient History at Macquarie University focused on physical and sensory disabilities in the gospels, and she has ongoing involvement in a range of ministries and organisations that run or support disability ministry. She became acting principal after the departure of Dr Katy Smith earlier in 2021.

"MAC is 130 years old this year, and it feels like there's a very long legacy of women who've gone before me in this role," she says. "They're very big shoes to step into and I feel very aware of all of that history. The Hebrews verse of having this 'cloud of witnesses' is a really lovely image of MAC's ministry going ahead of me."

"With the passion I have for disability and inclusion and accessibility, I'm really dedicated to making theological education for women as accessible as possible."

"[We now have this] great option of online learning, and that helps make study as accessible as it can be for people who might not be able to access traditional forms of theological education – such as students with disability and mental health issues, but also women who have a lot of competing demands on their time."

"I'm excited about being able to continue to serve MAC and grow our reach to equip everyday women to serve Christ."

The CEO of Anglican Deaconess Ministries, the Rev Jo Gibbs, said she was "excited and thankful" that Dr Gosbell had accepted the principal's role, adding: "She has a deep love for God's word, a passion to see every Christian woman growing in the gospel, and an amazing ability to come alongside women, encouraging them to grow in Christ."

"She deeply gets the DNA of Mary Andrews College and the women who study with us. Over the last few months, Louise has proven her exceptional leadership of the team as acting principal. I can't think of a better principal to lead the college through this next chapter and I'm excited to see what God will do through her faithful leadership."

### LATEST ANGLICARE CHAPLAINCY MOVES

The rector of Minto for 15 years, the Rev **Chris Hangar**, became chaplain at Liverpool Hospital on June 28 – the first day of lockdown. The Rev **David Anthonisz** began his new role at Concord Hospital on the same day, having moved from the Prince of Wales. **Bethany Downes** has moved to POW (from Liverpool) to work three days a week, with an additional part-time role at Dillwynia Women's Prison.

In justice chaplaincy, the retirement of the Rev **Colin Sheehan** at the end of 2021 after 31 years of ordained ministry – the past 11 at Long Bay Correctional Centre – will see **Timothy Johnson** step into the role. Mr Johnson is moving from the Northern Territory, where he has been Anglicare's co-ordinating prison chaplain in Darwin, in addition to working in pastoral care at Nungalinga Bible College with his wife Ali.

In other moves, the assistant minister at Stanhope Gardens, the Rev **Edwin Thambyaiyah**, has taken up an additional chaplaincy role part-time at the nearby Parklea Correctional Centre, and the Rev **Jeremy Lin** has become chaplain to the Tamworth Correctional Centre.

The Rev **Andrew Levy**, one of the assistant ministers at Christ Church, Gladesville, will become rector of St Anne's, Ryde on October 11.

The rector of Milton-Ulladulla for the past decade, the Rev **Ross Maltman**, will retire from the parish on October 18.

The Rev **Steve Gooch's** long association with the parish of Kingswood – six years as assistant minister and 23 as rector – will end on December 11, when he moves to Glenmore Park to take up an assistant minister's role.

### VACANT PARISHES

List of parishes and provisional parishes, vacant or becoming vacant, as at September 28, 2021:

- |               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| • Ashbury     | • Liverpool South        |
| • Balmain*    | • Menangle               |
| • Berowra     | • Mona Vale              |
| • Camden      | • Panania                |
| • Cherrybrook | • Peakhurst-Mortdale     |
| • Cronulla**  | • Pymble                 |
| • Eagle Vale  | • Rosemeadow*            |
| • Figtree     | • Ulladulla              |
| • Greenacre*  | • Wahroonga, St Paul's** |
| • Guildford   | • Wilberforce            |
| • Huskisson   |                          |
| • Keiraville  |                          |
| • Kellyville  |                          |
| • Kingswood   |                          |

\* denotes provisional parishes or Archbishop's appointments

\*\* right of nomination suspended/ on hold



## POSITIONS VACANT



## NSW/ACT Regional Officer

The Bush Church Aid Society of Australia (BCA) invites ordained, mission-minded applicants for the role of **NSW/ACT Regional Officer**

**This is a full-time position with a preferred commencement date of early 2022**

BCA, an evangelical mission agency ministering within the Anglican Church throughout Australia, seeks a leader who has a passion for mission plus gifts in communication, networking, pastoral care & mobilising volunteers. The nature of the role requires the person to be flexible, energetic & motivated. Self-management and administrative abilities are essential.

The successful applicant will be:

- Based in Sydney and required to travel throughout the region.
- Eligible to be licensed by the Archbishop of Sydney and other Diocesan Bishops in the region.
- Subject to the Faithfulness in Service code for clergy and church workers.

For a position description and application form contact **BCA National Director, The Revd Canon Greg Harris at [national.director@bushchurchaid.com.au](mailto:national.director@bushchurchaid.com.au) or on (02) 9064 9912.**

Applications close Friday 22 October 2021

*Reaching Australia for Christ since 1919*



## P/T Children's Minister

## Austinmer Thirroul Anglican Church

**Location:** Austinmer (Wollongong), NSW, 2515.

**Date advertised:** 20 August, 2021

**Job Type:** Part time, Permanent (Paid position 3 days/ week as per SDS remuneration guidelines)

**Closing Date:** 15 November 2021

We have a vibrant children's and youth ministry in the Northern Suburbs of the Illawarra area and are in need of a Children's Minister who can also Coordinate primary SRE in 3 local schools. This ministry position is designed to work alongside Nathan Sandon (Senior Minister, MTC) and Paul Gaetjens (Assistant Minister-Young Adults and Youth, YWC, RC).

**HOUSING POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE as part of package-** with negotiation upon application, to provide housing for the right candidate.

Requirements of the role are:

- Oversee and partner in the coordination and running of **Kids Church**.
- Coordinate and Teach Primary **SRE**.
- Oversee kid's midweek program (**Austi Kids Crew**)
- Meet with the **staff team** and participate in staff training.
- Be mentored and coached by Nathan Sandon, or Paul Gaetjens, with a view to Christian growth, ministry skills development and theological development.

This is a permanent role, commencing January 2022 or earlier if the right candidate is available to start sooner. The role is subject to a 12-month probation period, with tenure confirmed on satisfactory performance. The role is to commence in 2022 with extension pending staff & warden approval.

**Full Job Description – [www.austianglicanchurch.org.au](http://www.austianglicanchurch.org.au)**  
**Applications & queries- [austianglicanoffice@gmail.com](mailto:austianglicanoffice@gmail.com)**



Holy Trinity Anglican Church Dulwich Hill is seeking Expressions of Interest for the position of a

## FULL TIME MINISTER (CURATE-IN-CHARGE)

It is expected the successful applicant will commence on a date to be advised in January 2022. Please email the selection committee at the email address provided by the 31st October 2021. Stipend expenses and superannuation will be provided as recommended on the Anglican SDS website [SDS.asn.au](http://SDS.asn.au) staff remuneration and related benefits. Accommodation provided if required. Package total up to or in excess of \$110,000. Our Parish Profile can be located by accessing the website url below.

<http://www.holytrinitydulwichhill.org.au>

For further information or to apply please contact [HTDH-2021@iinet.net.au](mailto:HTDH-2021@iinet.net.au) and/or phone Julie Muir 0412 589 537.

## Are you passionate about developing & growing a children's ministry?

We are seeking someone suitable to strengthen the families of St John's as well as reach out to others through the development of children's activities designed to invite families in the local area to bring their children. The right candidate would ideally be servant-hearted, committed to personal godliness, and be teachable and be willing to work with the wider ministry team to develop their ministry. Please contact Tom Hargreaves (Minister) to express interest and for a detailed job description for the position: [tom@stjohns.org.au](mailto:tom@stjohns.org.au).



**Children's Worker  
2 days per week**

**ST JOHN'S  
SUTHERLAND**

## CLASSIFIEDS

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## MISCELLANEOUS

**MOBILE LAWYER:** Philip Gerber, LL.M., M.Crim., Dip.Bib.Stud. 33 yrs exp. [gerberlegal@bigpond.com](mailto:gerberlegal@bigpond.com) [gerberlegal.org](http://gerberlegal.org) 0408 218 940

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ALPINE LODGE**

Southern Cross Alpine Lodge is a Christian lodge in Smiggins Perisher Ski Resort in the NSW Kosciuszko National Park.

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rollicking good time watching it while we're stuck in lockdown, is to recognise that the response of Gander's residents is one Jesus would want us to emulate as we live to honour him: treating others as we would wish to be treated; caring for our neighbour or the stranger in our midst; turning no one away.

*Come from Away* is incredibly uplifting and joyous, while still carrying the sorrow caused by 9/11. The rip-snorting, Celtic-influenced score is performed live on stage by a small ensemble throughout the performance, and the only drawback is that you can't be in the theatre whooping and clapping along – because, trust me, if you like musical theatre at all, you'll totally want to. At this stage it's only available to Apple TV+ subscribers but, hopefully, it will be on other platforms or free-to-air TV before long.

**SC**



# Musical joy out of 9/11

**Judy Adamson**

**Come from Away**

Available on Apple TV+

Contains coarse language, adult themes

**T**here are many sorrowful memories that return when we recall the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US, yet out of that tragedy and loss has arisen this extraordinary, life-affirming, multi-award-winning musical.

It had an all-too-short run at the Capitol Theatre in June – and if it hadn't been cut off by COVID, I would happily have taken my whole family to see it. It's really that good. Now, a Broadway performance of *Come from Away* has been filmed and was released just in time to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11.

For those unfamiliar with the true story behind the show, it takes us to the town of Gander, Newfoundland – a small community on an outpost island off the east coast of mainland Canada. Or, as locals call it, “The Rock”. It's hardly the kind of place you'd expect to play a major role in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, but it was here that 38 planes were forced to land and wait, for days, for the US to reopen its airspace.

This meant several thousand people of all ages, races and faiths suddenly needed to be catered for in a place that definitely wasn't prepared for them.

On the face of it, the story doesn't seem like good material for a musical. How do you write songs about 7000 people stuck in a Canadian town? Where does a coherent storyline come from? And how can there be anything but sadness in reliving events that only occurred because of 9/11?

However, this doesn't reckon with the people of Gander. In 2001 they didn't just put up with the influx of airline passengers – they welcomed them with love, care and consideration. They opened their homes and community. They brought in the stranger – those who had “come from away” – and, without giving it a second

thought, turned their lives inside out to look after them.

And it was a mammoth effort. As one character, Beulah, says in a phone call as the town gets ready:

*I thought I'd see if I could help whosoever in charge of getting the school organised... How many passengers can we take? Uh – well, we fit about 400 students... Yes, we could probably do 600... Yeah, or sure, 700, if we really pack them in. When are they coming?... Could be any time now? Well, I'm glad I phoned!*

Each of the ensemble cast plays a range of characters, changing in a blink from the local bar owner, an animal welfare worker, policeman or mayor to an international businessman, anxious parent, Muslim passenger or the first female captain of an American Airlines commercial plane, Beverley Bass. And while some of the characters we see are blends of a few different people, they are all real people, and all true stories.

The threads of these very different lives and experiences are cleverly interwoven in word and song by Irene Sankoff and David Hein – who also deal sensitively with the negative effect of the attack on Muslims, creating a song that also manages to include the faith practices of Christian, Jewish and Hindu passengers. Then there's the openness with which the Gander people care for the Muslim “enemy”, and everyone else for that matter.

No, the musical doesn't suggest that all faiths are the same. It also doesn't suggest that all are wrong or that one is right. It just recognises the faith is there and lets the characters tell stories from within their faith experience, including one very touching Bible moment.

The big takeaway for Christian viewers, apart from having a

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