



Community

Quarterly news magazine of St Paul's, Manuka, and St David's, Red Hill, in the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn

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Out of the shadows of grief and disbelief

This issue of *Community* covers a wide field as we reflect on the year just gone, what 2015 might hold for us and our part in it. Different voices contribute to a context for discerning spiritual growth “out of the shadows of grief and disbelief”.

A central theme is about renewal—of wholeness towards a new life. At its core is relationships—from internal healing of mind, soul and body to inter-faith understanding. Language has its own power. The closer it is to the Scriptures, the more meaningful it becomes as a reference point.

The language of healing, both personal and national, is important in building those relationships fundamental to our well-being.

In his Christmas message, the Vicar General, the Rt. Rev'd Trevor Edwards, said that in the shadow of atrocious violence Christmas was a confused celebration.

“We have been taken aback,” he said, “by the horrific experience of those trapped within the Lindt Café even while the sign in its window wished passers-by a Merry Christmas.

“How can it possibly be cheerful or joyful?” he asked. “If you had to write a brief one sentence definition of what Christmas is about, what would you now write? My definition would be ‘in love God became

The shining light of hope

“Let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”
Matthew 5:15 (NIV)

The Gospel Reading at the Christmas Eve Service at St Paul's.



More than 1300 people attended services at St Paul's and St. David's over the Christmas period. Nearly 400 people attended the Children's Eucharist which included the performance of the Nativity Play. The Christmas children's service has become a feature of St Paul's attracting a wide audience offering a significant family encounter with the Christian story

Photo: Peter McDermott

poor to make us rich’.

“Richness in our world is most often described in purely economic terms, but God became poor to restore our debased humanity. In His coming he dealt with our past, transforms our present and guarantees our future”.

Canon Theologian of the Canberra-Goulburn Diocese, the Rev'd Dr Scott Cowdell, speaks of the general confession in our Eucharistic liturgy, in which we collectively own up to our failings, both as individuals and as a Church.

“This moment of vulnerable self-awareness,” he says, “is the necessary prelude to God's forgiveness being declared by the priest, and then celebrated in a collective kiss of peace and reconciliation.

“Confession and absolution must come first, before we can experience a new solidarity that's actually worth having. The alternative is a makeshift and tawdry solidarity that costs us nothing in the way of soul searching and uncomfortable self-awareness”.

“Surely we in the Christian community have a better story to tell than that, and a more worthwhile solidarity to offer”.

An understanding of healing in all its dimensions takes us on our way—“spiritual healing” of body and soul, restoring “wholeness” in ourselves.

That “wholeness” clearly begins with the Eucharist and the receiving of the sacraments. “For when the soul is healed, the body has benefited also.”

As Dr Annette Rice observes in this issue, for her “there is no distinction between healing prayer and medicine. They are God's good gifts to bring healing through both natural and sacramental means”.

Brief encounters and congregational renewal

At each Sunday Eucharist we pray to “renew us by Your Holy Spirit”.

Renewal has become a spiritual guidepost for the future. That future is presently defined between two poles: on the one hand declining Church attendances, an absence of young people and dependency on shrinking congregations for its vibrancy; and, on the other hand, large attendances at Christmas and Easter and other special occasions.

One consequence of being at a cross road is to contemplate another reality, the link between the goals of ministry and mission and their resourcing to make them happen.

Each church is shaped by its own history and context and its commitment to public faith. Each is presented with particular

problems and opportunities. They are all in their diversity viewed equally as part of the “mixed economy” that is today’s Church.

St Paul’s occupies a special place among its Anglican Parishioners and in the broader public life of Canberra. It displays many of the characteristics of a cathedral in relation to other churches. Its profile goes beyond congregational life.

As a venue for public occasions and choral and orchestral performances of sacred music it offers a range of “brief encounters” for a wider public. It is, therefore, well positioned to explore new ways of “being church”.

We speak of balance between word and sacrament in worship. There is another balance sheet, that of finances. Here is where the spiritual and secular accounting come together.

Research conducted by the University of Wollongong of an Anglican parish in 2005 concluded that Financial planning targets serve a spiritual purpose to achieve the

church’s goals. The balance sheet is a tool of ministry and mission. It performs an enabling role to support “sacred business”. Without resources the achievement of spiritual goals is diminished.

Bishop Stuart has stated that “the link between ministry, mission and property resources can seem tenuous; however, if we see all three on the same page, new prospects emerge”.

The Anglican ReSource centre speaks of “renewal for mission” to help build a church which is diverse, local, “renewed in the spirit” and effective in mission.

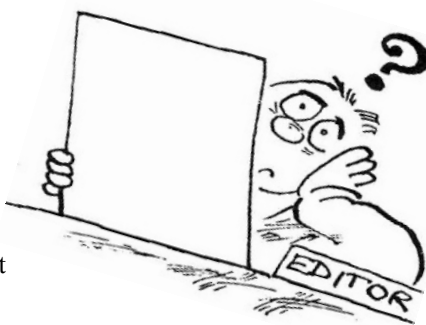
The Bishop’s invitation presents an opportunity for deep discernment on the spiritual health of the Parish, where we are as a church, where we want to be and how we might get there, with an ear to the circumstances of our time.

The time has now come, it says, to broaden and deepen our understanding of spiritual renewal, and in particular to embrace its missionary dynamic. Renewal, it says, is something we ourselves have to build into our pattern of worship. Authentic renewal just means ‘being made new’ and being made new will depend on the ways in which we have become worn”.

Elsewhere we hear: “Through the opening of our minds the Holy Spirit is there. May we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination”.

The Bishop’s invitation to explore together the shape of any future development for the St Paul’s precinct, on the three pillars of ministry, mission and money, may offer an opportunity for deep discernment on the spiritual health of the Parish, where we are as a church, where we want to be, and how we might get there.

Such discernment would reflect the crucial role of the Parish to refresh, reaffirm and renew the faith



within and to reach out to those who may yet return and others who might cross the threshold.

The report to General Synod on viability and structures saw the need for the church to become more adventurous and flexible to connect with local communities.

In their preface to working group papers prepared for General Synod of the Church of England the Archbishops of Canterbury and York issued a reminder that the church’s vocation is “to proclaim the good news afresh in each generation.

“As disciples of our Risen Lord,” they said, “we are called to be loyal to the inheritance of faith which we have received and open to God’s Spirit so that we can be constantly renewed and reformed for the task entrusted to us”.

The spiritual challenge of reform and renewal, they said, was both personal and institutional, to re-imagine Ministry and contribute to the common good.

These observations reflect what Bishop Stuart has called “revival” in which the lay people have a significant role to play alongside the clergy.

“In revival God’s word comes alive...as God’s word is taught and explained and read, it is as if God is speaking to us powerfully and directly – immanently.”

Bishop Stuart has spoken of a community where people proclaim by word and deed “the power of new life.” He saw the participation of lay people as being at the centre of this transformation.

Assessing and preserving the present vitality of the Parish is central to our conversation as we contemplate a new vision. A conversation has the potential to be transformative in itself.

DIALOGUE

Gloria Dowling's new journey of faith

After taking time to meditate, to discern and seek guidance on God's will for the next stage of her life journey, Gloria Dowling has now chosen a new path and graciously shares her thoughts of faith and hope with Community, as she embraces a new dimension of her commitment to God.

Gloria Dowling has taken many paths in her Christian journey to spiritual fulfilment. One might have thought, therefore, that she had arrived at her destination, complete within herself.

But then the Christian spirit is one of seeking; so it came as no real surprise to learn that Gloria was embarking on yet another stage in that journey, one perhaps more testing of the spirit that has called her.

There is, of course, a significant wrench, a deeply felt and emotional sacrifice: it means leaving what has been her spiritual home, St Paul's, where she was baptised into the church at the age of three months and later confirmed "very serious in my intent."

By the age of 17 when she left home to train as a registered nurse she had already grown up with St Paul's, to become since the mid-1970's an integral part of its fabric. Gloria recalls that her family were foundation members of St Paul's and deeply involved in the Parish from the time they came to Canberra in 1924.

For the next stage of her journey Gloria has chosen to "test the vocation to religious life" with the Sisters of the Community of the Holy Name in Cheltenham, Victoria. The testing and training process would be lengthy, beginning with her being received as a postulant on 2 February 2015.

Reflectively she says with managed enthusiasm: "God and the community willing I will be admitted as a Novice for at least a further two years of learning and experience before being considered to take the

vows of a Sister providing we all believe this continues to be God's calling and will for me on my spiritual journey."

Gloria is eminently qualified, experienced and committed for this next stage of her Christian journey. Gloria recalls that it was at her first Cursillo that she heard of the Community of the Holy Name. This led her to investigate whether the Order of Oblates was "where God was leading me at that time". She was subsequently received as an Oblate in 1988, professing to "live the spirit of the



Gloria was farewelled by the Rector of St Paul's, the Rev'd Dr Brian Douglas, at services on Sunday 18 January

religious life in a form suitable to my state, being married with children and living and working in Canberra".

Gloria explains: "I have subsequently renewed those promises annually and visited the community regularly to join in the life of prayer". She has also attended at least one retreat each year. These visits became more frequent after her husband, Bishop Owen Dowling, died in 2008. Finally in 2013 she spent seven weeks "Living alongside" the

Sisters and again for three months in 2014. The visits came to explain her absences from St Paul's.

Gloria, therefore, knew she was engaging with an Anglican Religious Order with a long tradition of prayerful service. Founded in 1888, it was the first Anglican religious order for women in Australia, and one of only four such communities in Australia.

There was the realisation even then that it would be a life changing experience for her. Gloria was no stranger to confronting challenges, particularly as a Bishop's wife, both in office and retirement. There was, nevertheless, still yet further prayer for discernment and guidance of the Holy Spirit to be able to continue to go forward on her chosen path with God.

She also knew the discipline ahead of her, reminded, in the words of the Community, that "Each of us has our own personal path as we journey into the fullness of life with God" And the commitment: "A vocation of the religious life means for the person involved a total commitment of themselves to God within the community to which He calls them" And finally: "What is wanted is not your works, but your being: not your gifts but yourself."

Gloria knew the gifts she had to bring and she was now to give further of herself. She has already lived the witness. Behind her commitment lies a dedicated and outstanding contribution to the life of the Parish of Manuka in prayerful, God-given and enduring ways as a faithful communicant member, both as parishioner and lay minister, performing a full range of tasks: ministering in the parish, in people's homes, in aged care facilities and hospitals, a chaplain to several aged

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Gloria and Dr Annette Rice, keynote speaker at a recent healing seminar Photo: Kay Pendlebury

care facilities, drawing on her nursing experience to assist in care of the elderly, to whom she has brought an understanding and caring presence, at one stage as a Diocesan Aged Care Chaplain, demonstrating pastoral sensitivity and aware of the responsibility involved in her ministry. She has been a liturgical assistant, an intercessor of spiritual depth, and an intelligent reader.

Gloria made a particular contribution with her husband, Bishop Owen Dowling, as a team in shaping the Ministry of Healing and then afterwards in memory of him.

She rounded out her church duties relieving in the Parish Office.

The Rector, the Rev'd Dr Brian Douglas, said of Gloria: "Over the years she has worked to proclaim the Kingdom of God in ways that have touched and affected the lives of many people."

Our conversation turned to the observation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, "to pursue positive holiness and seek afresh the call of Jesus Christ. There is no greater adventure."

While still contemplating her next move, Gloria confidently shared with *Community* her deepest conviction: "I now believe God is calling me to test the vocation of religious life. It is a huge step on my religious journey—a very winding path!"

GEORGE MENHAM

New warden settles in at St David's Close

St David's Close has welcomed their new Warden, the Rev'd Canon John Campbell. John, in his "third retirement" from different roles during his long career will also be associate priest in the Manuka parish under an arrangement between the parish and Anglicare Care.

John, "a very proud Tasmanian" brings a wide background as school principal, chaplain, bush brother, and rector, combining his teaching, pastoral skills, and ministry.

John was ordained a Priest in 1985 at St John's in Launceston. For 27 years he performed joint roles as teacher, principal and chaplain in independent Anglican schools.

In Launceston he was assistant to the Archdeacon, assistant school chaplain, and head of the primary school at the Launceston Church Grammar School. He later performed similar roles in Orange and Penrith, where he began an Anglican primary school.

As a bush brother in the diocese of North Queensland, while priests served the outback, he became a lay teaching Brother and taught at All Souls, Charters Towers. As an assistant to Bishop Ian Shevill on missions he became known as "the singing Brother". From there he moved to Canberra to take up an appointment at Canberra Grammar School.

After 42 years he "retired" from teaching, deciding to accept his own Parish, having already assisted in different parishes. He became Rector of the Binda Parish in western New South Wales "which was wonderful". With seven centres it was widely spread. He enjoyed the contact with the three little bush schools with weekly religious lessons.

Ill health finally forced him to retire. He recalls: "I was actually going to join Father Brian at St Paul's five or six years ago but the bishop and the dean asked me to be a canon at the cathedral." I visited the cathedral two or three days a week assisting in an honorary capacity. He is still involved with the cathedral.



John is not new to Manuka Parish. In 1972 he was a member of St Paul's, sang in the choir, and was an organist at the 8 AM service. He remembers being present at the dedication and opening of St David's.

Of St David's John says: "I am really enjoying my role here, I can see how it is 'my sort of place'."

"I really love music, though not a great musician; I love to play the organ in my own amateurish way, and to sing in choirs." He is looking forward to being involved in the music at St Paul's.

He is comfortable with being in a community environment at St David's close. "I've been head of various boarding houses in schools, where I was either chaplain or priest. Not quite the same, but in many ways it is, and having been a bush brother there is that same sense of community".

He adds: "I spent 10 years in a children's home after our mother of 10 children died, so I have normally lived with groups".

John's wife, Malamatenie (Marlene), who had been a regular parishioner at St Paul's, died two years ago. One of their four children is a professor of new testament Greek in the USA.

When *Community* first spoke to John he was preparing to go on holidays....to Tasmania. On return, as he took the service at St David's on Sunday, 1 February, it did not escape the notice of the welcoming congregation that he was celebrating the 30th anniversary of his ordination.

Coming in from the edge

Recalling his time as part of a choir in residence at York Minster (UK), St Paul's Director of Music, Matthew Stuckings, speaks of his passion for sacred choral music. "It offers," he says, "a rich depth of inner nourishment and meaning to people, regardless of any particular beliefs".

His views reflect the growing significance of both music and ritual in cathedrals, as indicated by attendance figures prepared by the Church of England's Research and Statistics Department.

"Performing music in the context for which it was written also adds so much to our understanding and experience of it," Matthew says.

One of the attractions for cathedral services in England has been seen in the way cathedrals offer a place of peace and prayer in busy lives. The number of people attending midweek services at cathedrals has doubled in the past 10 years.

One of the factors attributed to cathedral attendance is that they convey "a sense of the spiritual and sacred even to those on the margins of the Christian faith, or who stand some way beyond, reaching out to the general public".

Among the highest motivating factors for Cathedral attendance were music, worship, a friendly atmosphere, offering a welcome to those of all faiths and none". It underscored the power of music to express and to awaken feeling of many kinds.

"From the perspective of those who assume the grand narrative of the secularisation of British society," the report observes, "thriving cathedrals are seen as anomalies. The unexpected vibrancy of cathedrals gives reason to pause and reconsider the possibility that circumstances might be more complicated than they appear".

The narrative noted that in 2012, a landmark report entitled, *Spiritual Capital: The Present and Future of English Cathedrals*, demonstrated the

significant role that cathedrals continue to play in British society. This was among the "good news". "Far from becoming obsolete in a rapidly changing world," it said, "cathedrals have proven to be remarkably well-positioned and fit for purpose to respond to profound cultural changes in the spiritual landscape of England".

While research among visitors and tourists was able to focus on the transient community that passes through the cathedral, it was research on the Sunday (and weekday) congregations that was needed to explore why cathedral congregations are growing at a time when congregations in so many parish churches are declining.

"There'll be a lot of people who just slide in from the side. It's not so much about anonymity, there's the feeling there's a journey you can travel which doesn't require huge steps - it just requires one little step."

This research strand aimed to clarify attendance trends between different acts of cathedral worship, between different types of cathedral and between different parts of England.

A combination of statistical analysis of attendance figures and qualitative work has been used to build a profile of cathedral congregations and gain an understanding of their growth in recent years.

Comparative work with greater churches provided an opportunity to evaluate cathedral growth in light of other churches with a cathedral-like ministry to identify whether there are unique facets of cathedral ministry, which are facilitating this recognised growth, what draws congregations in.

"It is our conviction", the

Church of England report says, "that cathedrals and greater churches offer a complementary ministry, which can strategically promote the mission and work of their dioceses in proclaiming the gospel, worshipping God, and engaging with others.

"The challenge and the opportunity is to heed the wisdom, experience and good practices that have positioned cathedrals and greater churches for growth and explore new ways in which these habits might be offered as gifts and resources to one another".

When Bishop of Durham, Justin Welby, now Archbishop of Canterbury, said: "Church decline is neither inevitable nor accurate in retrospect...the Church of England appears to be gathering the will to change: an accurate and reasoned understanding of what is happening . . . is essential."

The Dean of York Minster, Vivienne Faull, commented: "We do have the opportunity of allowing people to come in from the edges. If I take a Eucharist at 12.30 in the middle of the week in the nave of York Minster there'll be a lot of people who just slide in from the side. It's not so much about anonymity, there's the feeling there's a journey you can travel which doesn't require huge steps - it just requires one little step."

Stephen Lake, Dean of Gloucester Cathedral, said: "Patterns of church attendance are different now. Cathedrals are uniquely placed to be providing greater opportunities for worship and that includes during the week."

Matthew recalls that while at York Minster the choir sang a traditional service of Choral Evensong every day of the week, and three Sunday services. "It was heavenly," he said

Sources: *Canberra Times Panorama, Church Growth in Britain 1980 to the Present, Cathedrals, Greater Churches and the Growth of the Church, October 2013*

HEALING MINISTRY

When medicine, prayer and healing intersect

The Order of St Luke, the Physician, (OSL) explores the interface between faith and healing, and how science, medicine and spiritual gifts can work together for those seeking healing. There is renewed interest in the healing Ministry being restored to the life of the church, to accept healing as wholeness, rather than being a fringe interest. The Order of St. Luke seeks to help people to understand different approaches to the healing Ministry, and to encourage discussion among those who are actively involved in health and healing. The fourth Owen Dowling Memorial Lecture on 18 October 2014 (St Luke's Day) specifically explored the dynamic relationship between medicine and prayers for healing from the very personal perspective of Annette Rice, a practising doctor and a member of OSL Ministries, Australia. Highlights of her presentation are summarised in this article.

“For me personally”, Dr Annette Rice says, “there is no distinction between healing prayer and medicine. They are God’s good gifts to bring healing through both natural and sacramental means”. Her passion is “to see people come to Christ and experience the fullness of life available through him and the Holy Spirit so that God may be glorified”.

With degrees in medicine and theology, and working full time as a medical practitioner in an outer Melbourne suburb, she gave detailed accounts and practical examples of healing as a doctor inspired by her Christian faith. To demonstrate how prayer for healing intersected with her practice of medicine, and their spiritual connections she spoke openly from personal practical experience and the depth of her religious belief.

At the heart of her message was the importance of relationships in all their forms as means of healing. All people, she said, are made for relationships, and as Christians we are able to point to the only one who brings ultimate hope and healing.

She explained: “When patients have deep trauma it is often hidden. When they feel safe and secure they may be able to disclose these issues and start the process of healing”.

Healing involved gifts of insight and intuition. Many people who are hurting, she said, want a doctor who is ‘lovable’ and friendly,

approachable as well as competent, a good doctor-patient relationship.

She believes Christian doctors are ideally placed to be true healers as they are able to address the psycho-bio-social as well as spiritual issues people face. Offering hope through relationship, and healing through prayer, should be as natural as offering a prescription or referral.

Dr Rice further explained the spiritual process of healing: “In the Ministry of Healing we promote wholeness, pray for healing and relief of pain, suffering and disease and intercede to support people until they are whole. We use different methodology but the aim is the same: to bring comfort, relief of suffering and promote wellbeing in our patients, those who come to ask for healing”.

Of the dimension of the healing process, she said: “Cure is often, but not always, the goal of ministry and medicine. Sometimes wholeness is the aim, rather than cure. Sometimes the care and support to live with disease is a valid outcome. I believe in asking for the best outcome possible and then waiting for the result to be shown. I am often surprised at the outcome of medical treatment and also healing ministry and prayer”. She added: “We do not expect that God will always act in miraculous ways but believe that his healing touch will achieve his loving purposes for the person”.

Dr Rice said she was someone who had always ‘known’ God. “I



Annette with Archdeacon Emeritus John Gibson, chaplain of the ACT Chapter of OSL.

Photo: Kay Pendlebury

cannot remember a time when I was not aware of him in my life, speaking with me and answering prayers. I have so many examples of his intervention in my life as a child. I was always drawn to ‘look after people’, especially those who were hurt and lonely”.

Of her pathway to being a doctor she said she had been a happy child but experienced hurt and rejection like most people and this could have caused her to doubt God’s love for her. “However”, she adds, “it made me trust his love and acceptance more”.

She had praise for God for all people in Christian ministry who are promoting the Ministry of Healing as an integral part of the Gospel. It would clearly be impossible, she said, for people to understand the relationship that God makes available through the Gospel if they had not been spiritually healed first.

“God needs to remove all that comes between himself and his people before they are able to hear him speak and experience the freedom available through Jesus’ death and resurrection”.

In Healing, she said, “we ask what people would like Jesus to do for them (ask what the problem is) and then ask if we can pray/lay on hands/anoint for healing. We then wait on the Holy Spirit to ‘see’, ‘hear’ or ‘know’ what to do next and then we pray for their request in the Spirit for healing/ mercy/ grace or however we are lead.

Dr Rice said that as a doctor with a gift of healing and faith, she often combined all modalities for bringing relief to people. At the clinic, she often prayed (silently and vocally)

for patients. "God will often give me supernatural knowledge about an issue and lead my prayer".

"I do not remember actively asking God for direction in every case; it just happened as part of my following him. I do remember asking God for guidance at times and for his mercy for patients, but had no special ritual for this.

She reflected: "Looking back now I believe it was 'Spirit' led. It seemed to just be ideas or knowledge that popped into my head while I was sitting with and listening to patients. I did my best to be a good communicator and examine people thoroughly but this knowledge seemed far beyond anything I had heard of, especially with conditions I had hardly ever 'learned' about and definitely not seen before."

It was, she said, all God's sustaining power that assisted her work and ministry, and brought healing from pain, and hope from despair to many in the local community.

She said: "I believe that doctors need to be excellent practitioners of their discipline in medicine before they are able to develop the relationships and credibility to offer the Gospel and healing in a natural, non-threatening way to patients".

For Dr Rice there was no boundary between her role as a disciple and her responsibility as a doctor. "There is no time when I feel I am a doctor and not a disciple and I have never felt like a disciple without the need to show love and compassion, to set captives free and to bring people to wholeness".

Being a doctor had allowed her to use and develop all the gifts God had given her. Her preaching had assisted her ability to speak in public, teach and chair large meetings. Her role as a doctor had given her insight and wisdom in medical matters and assisted her communication skills.

"I still believe that many issues that are attributed to demons may just be human frailty, best dealt with firmly and as soon as it becomes evident. I have seen people set free from this demonic power, and trust God to work when Jesus' name is spoken".

Dr Rice said she had so many testimonies to God's healing in Church and at the practice and believed He uses medicine and counselling as well as prayer, anointing and touch as means to heal.

"I prayed for many who have lived much longer and better than ever expected. I have prayed for simple things and complex things, but through it all God has worked to bring great glory to himself.

"I think that for me personally there is no distinction between healing prayer and medicine. They are God's

good gifts to bring healing through both natural and sacramental means.

"It is the Holy Spirit and Jesus' power that are at work in each method used for healing. It is all his work. We are the disciples who do what God tells us to do to bring about a touch from him.

"I have been healed. God has used me to bring healing to others. Jesus is the means through whom we are healed. The Spirit leads us in wisdom and gifting to 'do' as we are led. To God be all the Glory! He has done great things!

Creative Writing in Healing Ministry

As an important subset, activities of the Order demonstrate a relationship between the language of creative writing, drawn from the Scriptures, and a healing ministry. These were central themes of a presentation by Dr Elizabeth C Allen at the International Order of St Luke conference 2013 in New Zealand.

*"I hear this most gentle whisper ,
from One I never guessed would speak to me."*

God yearns to speak to us today, as He did to David in the psalms, to the prophets of old, and to His people in ages past. He longs for us to have listening hearts so that He can speak His healing love into our lives.

The more we listen, the more the Holy Spirit gives us words that encourage, strengthen, comfort and inspire others. When we ask the Lord to speak to us, He anoints our imagination and speaks through us – everything from simple prayers to prayer poems to reflections on the healings of Jesus and prayers to be used in healing services.

Does this kind of listening and writing sound wonderful, but a little beyond you? Would you like for the Lord Jesus to bless you with a deeper intimacy with Him that is reflected in your writing?

Whether starting out or writing for years, you are encouraged to write under the influence of the Holy Spirit, anchored in the Holy Scripture. You can do it!

Communication includes readings of prayers, prayer poems, and reflections, all with the theme of Jesus' healing ministry. The method is to take a portion of Scripture and gradually make a "reduction" of it, boiling it down to its essence, the way a French chef slowly simmers a dilute broth, transforming it into a delicious, flavourful sauce.

We then pray for the Holy Spirit to kindle our creativity and give us listening hearts as we write as we are led.

Dr. Elizabeth C. Allen

Workshop 5

International Order of St Luke Conference, New Zealand, 2013

Elizabeth composes God-inspired poetic reflections. She shares her writing to encourage participants to do likewise: "Listen to God's leading and write as inspiration comes," she says. "Sometimes we can be shy about what we write, in reflecting our deeper thoughts and devotions". She encourages others to have confidence in doing so.

Recognition for 50 years service

Archdeacon Emeritus John Gibson presents Canon Dr Robert Withycombe with a certificate to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination.

Dr Withycombe told *Community*: “I was surprised {more than anything else) by Archdeacon John Gibson's initiative to my 50 years of ministry. It has been a privilege to serve, though there have been unexpected and uncomfortable moments. Yes, it has been a privilege to serve here in Canberra and abroad.

Dr Withycombe has made a distinguished contribution to Anglicanism in Australia in a range of fields as lecturer, historian and

writer. He lectured in church history at St Mark's National Theological Centre. He is a recognised authority on Anglican church history.

The Editor is grateful to Kay Pendlebury for the photograph taken in special circumstances. Kay was serving on the altar at St Paul's 10 AM service, and as she recalls, “The presentation in the pews was nearly all over before I managed to dash off the sanctuary, grab my camera from the vestry and scurry down the aisle!” It was a record dash in the time honoured tradition of getting the story.

Photos: Kay Pendlebury



CHRISTMAS AT JINDALEE

The Christmas service at Jindalee Aged Care Residence was led by the Rev'd Susan Bridge with assistance from lay preacher, Kay Pendlebury, in one of her many roles as liturgical assistant. “We sang the old favourite carols and a good time was had by all”, Kay records.

Photos: Kay Pendlebury



Symbols of Light in Darkness

Scott Cowdell

Canon Theologian of the Canberra-Goulburn Diocese and Research Professor in Public and Contextual Theology at Charles Sturt University, Canberra, Professor the Rev'd Dr Scott Cowdell, shares his All Saints', Ainslie, Christmas Sermon, in the light of recent events, believing that we all need a bit of good news right now through symbols of light shining in darkness.

John's Gospel (John 1: 1-14) gives us the powerful symbol of light shining in darkness.

In cold, dark northern climes, the winter solstice meant that days began to lengthen and that light began its steady return and eventual defeat of darkness.

Our early Christian forebears knew the symbolic power of celebrating Jesus' birth at this time of year, with symbols of hope from nature helping us capture the meaning and significance of Christian hope.

In Australia during the lead-up to Christmas we've come up with new public symbols of light shining in darkness: that huge expanse of flowers and cards taking over Martin Place following the Lindt Café killings; Christians, Muslims, atheists, and ordinary agnostics who still yearn for a better, more compassionate world all joined together in that tribute; the Katrina Dawson

Foundation, set up to support the advancement of women and girls—from the darkness of Ms Dawson's murder comes the light of new hope.

There was also a bike ride by Muslims and their friends from Lakemba to Martin Place, linking the geographic heart of Islamic faith in Sydney to the geographic heart of its financial and legal institutions. And there was the remarkable "I'll ride with you" campaign, in which a world of ordinary people stood up together against racial stereotyping and vilification. This symbolic action reassured peace-loving Muslims that they're welcome here and that all the suspicion and abuse in the world won't change that.

We've also been shocked by the appalling news of eight Cairns children murdered in an unthinkable

act by their mother. Yet in the midst of unspeakable grief for the Torres Strait Islander community, with a whole city in mourning, a symbol of love and healing began to grow in the park next door. The site will become a symbol of the solidarity that represents our nation at its best.

We need all these symbols of light arising in the midst of darkness, because there's plenty of darkness about.

In the hands of newly virulent Islamic extremism, a violent archaic version of the sacred is returning to shock and disorient the supposedly tolerant and civilised modern West. Hate speech and racism grows up in response.

What remains for us is to get on board with this action of God, to reclaim the gift and call of God's Holy Spirit in our Baptism and Confirmation

Whether it's deranged Jihadis or their white supremacist mirror images, or whether it's respectable right-thinking citizens who lose all perspective and magnanimity when it's time for payback, we see the darkness at work against which the light must always fight.

Jesus was born as the light of our world. But then he brought too much light, didn't he. Most people appreciate a hopeful glimmer to help keep despair at bay.

We don't want the full exposure of our sins and petty aspirations, do we? We prefer the shadows over the full light of day, so that we can keep control of our lives and not be accountable: not to God, not even to our own best selves—to possibilities of personal



transformation that may occasionally beckon and tantalise us, but which are surely just too demanding, too far-fetched.

The good news of Christmas is that all these symbols of hope—light in darkness, flowers in Martin Place, a campaign in support of Muslims on public transport, and a remembrance park in North Queensland—are not in vain. They add up to more than just whistling in the dark.

God doesn't force the world to relinquish force; God doesn't violently control us so that we give up violence. Instead, God was willing to accommodate our fragile and compromised way of being; God came among us in all the murk and horror of history, sharing its worst extremes in order to turn the tables on all this, opening a way back to God through Jesus that's credible and trustworthy.

Hence while the darkness is real, the light of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is more real. This light comes among us at Christmas and completes its work of dispelling the darkness at Easter.

What remains for us is to get on board with this action of God. What remains for us is to reclaim the gift and call of God's Holy Spirit in our Baptism and Confirmation. Many of us find that churches are a good place to start, where Sunday by Sunday our imaginations are freed up by God's Word, our spirits are nourished by Jesus himself in the Eucharist, and where we're formed and equipped to be Jesus' agents in the world.

An opportunity for retrospection

Wayne Brighton, diocesan communications officer, discusses “the public act of retrospection” undertaken by three Anglican Churches—The Anglican Church of Australia, the Church in Wales and the Episcopal Church (USA)—as each “confronted the problem that is their participation in God’s kingdom” and offered different ways forward.

It is not simply a failure of heart, spirit or theological correctness that besets these churches. Nor is it simply that attendance is on an intractable trajectory of long-term diminishment or that their structures are financially unsustainable.

Rather, these churches painfully and reluctantly conceded that their incapacity to imagine, innovate and follow Jesus into a different world is the problem. While each church has the same problem, they have adopted a different process to address it.

In July 2014, the Australian General Synod received a report about the viability of dioceses nationally about a crisis that afflicted all. While several rural dioceses tottered on the brink of financial collapse all of the large urban dioceses were no longer keeping pace with the ministry challenges associated by our nation’s growing cities.

A culture of blinkered vision emerged in two ways. First, the Synod’s attention focussed on the immediate issue of rural finances as though we simply faced an organisational problem.

This diverted attention away from our urban dioceses and turned the conversation into one about charity rather than responsibility.

Second, our blinkered vision became apparent in the way Australian Anglicans pursued the conversation. Frankly, it is easier to talk about administration, diocesan boundaries and trust funds than congregational performance. The report politely overlooked our ineffectiveness at evangelism.

There are good reasons for avoiding the conversation about performance. Everyone is stranded on the shoals as to whether proclamation or service is the Gospel priority. This prevents our communities from honestly assessing how they connect with

those who do not share our affinities, interests, values or commitments.

Inexplicably, General Synod is expected to fix the problem of diocesan viability when it lacks the tools, culture or capacity to address the real underlying problems confronting congregations everywhere.

The Episcopal church in the USA undertook a wide and deep consultation process that involved thousands of Episcopalians, not just those in institutional positions of power.

Significantly, people were asked about, ‘their hopes, dreams, ideas and concerns for the Church and [their] collective mission to serve Christ.’ The report’s authors undertook a work of ‘learning and discovery’ that highlighted how diminishment is not simply a structural issue but one that is profoundly theological, spiritual and cultural too.

Unlike the Australians, the Americans sought to draw congregations into the process of re-imagining. It asks congregations everywhere to ‘learn how to form Christian community and practice Christian witness in environments where the culture no longer supports Christian belonging as it once did.’ Innovation happens when congregations are open to cultural change.

Finally, repentance seemed absent from the Australian report. Maybe it’s because we view repentance as an exercise confined to worship, divine accounting or newcomers. It is as if their faithfulness to Anglican heritage has blinded them to the need for effectiveness in mission.

Repentance is a prominent feature of the American and Welsh reports. The Welsh approach reflected that although

congregations were, ‘warm and welcoming and there are many good things happening the Church in Wales cannot go on doing the same things in the same way; some things need to change and we are open to – and indeed encourage – that possibility.’ Put simply, a large gap had opened up between the church and their communities.

The question arises: what do these churches need to repent? In what ways had it offended God?

The church needs to repent of offering culturally inappropriate forms of Christianity to others in the belief that these forms alone are sufficient and necessary vehicles for grace.

Repentance involves acknowledging that something is profoundly wrong and that we are the problem. Repentance requires resolve to review things honestly and to put things right.

Repentance requires action to live things differently. Jesus told our forebears that a new life could only be found by picking up their cross, denying themselves and following him (Luke 9.23-24).

Australian Anglicans are stubbornly committed to a heritage that is now alien in many of our communities. Will our churches lose everything because their sense of faithfulness is too small?

Faithfulness for Jesus always involved Him moving outward and engaging with unbelief and disinterest with grace. Jesus crossed many boundaries to faithfully live out God’s mission and he calls us to do the same.

The year 2015 may yet be the time when Australian Anglicans gained a new sense of how God’s kingdom has drawn near.

There may yet be time to discover a vision that’s bold rather than blinkered to listen more attentively to those who do not share our cultural affinities, to take up their cross and follow Jesus into the world to experience the wonders of grace. May we become more than what we are, so that the world might see that God’s kingdom has truly drawn near.

WAYNE BRIGHTON

Christ and Islam

Robert Willson

The Rev'd Robert Willson speaks of the need for Christians and Muslims, united in many things, to understand each other as being of "one blood" and sharing a common heritage. He reminds us that Christians are called to follow Jesus in enduring suffering, refusing to retaliate and loving one's enemies, to be joyful in hope, and faithful in prayer, to know our Christian faith much better, and live out our own convictions.

The Scripture says in Acts 17: 26, part of Paul's sermon to the Athenians on Mars Hill: "God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth."

Indeed we are all "one blood". But there is a question that is shouting at us in the public sphere: "What about Islam?" "What about the Muslims?" This is a real issue. There are real questions.

So I want to speak about Christ and Islam. What should a Christian say to our Muslim neighbours in the street, or the shopping mall?

At the opening of Parliament in 1988 three faiths were represented: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Why those three? They are all "People of the Book".

Christians and Jews and Muslims share a Semitic spiritual heritage from Abraham and Moses, Ishmael and Jesus. Muslims believe that God (Arabic Allah) is, in the words of the Presbyterian catechism, "infinite, eternal and unchangeable"; He is absolutely one. That conviction is called "monotheism". There is no God but God. That is their faith and ours. People are surprised to learn that we Christians share this spiritual heritage with Islam.

Muslims believe that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, who is mentioned in the Qur'an. He was a great prophet of God but Muslims believe that his message has been corrupted over time and that the Qur'an, or record of the revelation of God to Mohammed, is the "Final Testament" or revelation of God and can never be altered. (In fact scholars tell us that it has been altered over the centuries.)

The great prophet of Islam is Mohammed who lived from about 570 to 632 AD, about 500 years after Christ. In 610 AD he claimed he had a vision of the Angel Gabriel and began to preach a strict monotheism. He accepted that Jews and Christians also worshipped the one true God but he said that they had strayed and that he had the final revelation. He denounced idols, and promised his followers a paradise in heaven where there would be many alluring girls to entertain them in flowing gardens. He preached "Islam" or complete submission to God, and the equality of all men.

Christians, Jews and Muslims share a Semitic spiritual heritage from Abraham and Moses, Ishmael and Jesus

Mohammed was illiterate. At first he made few converts in Mecca and eventually he made the "Hegira", or flight from Mecca, to Medina, about 300 km away. There he began his religious movement, and eventually overcame all opposition.

He was both a spiritual leader and a military leader of great talent, and some years later he conquered the Mecca people who had at first rejected him. Now Islam was on the march. When he died he had several wives and one of them "Aeysha" was important because her father was Abu-Bakr, a familiar name. He succeeded Mohammed and collected his writings and sayings to make up the Qur'an, or sacred book of Islam.

So from small beginnings, this illiterate Arab founded an empire based on the simple duties of acknowledging One God, prayer, almsgiving, charity and fasting, and a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime.

That empire came to dominate many parts of the world and nearly conquered Europe. Islam also led to a flowering of arts and sciences which

shone all the more brightly against the background of the Dark Ages of Europe. Scientific words like Algebra and mathematical terms like zenith and zero are all pure Arabic.

The Qur'an preaches Christ-like qualities but also has a brutal strain that enjoins military conquest of all who do not submit.

So Christians, Jews and Muslims are united in many things. We are all people of the Book and we share a common heritage going back to Abraham.

In Australia there are more than 300,000 Muslims. In the world there are perhaps 1,600,000,000, comparable to the Christian church. They are deeply divided into groups such as the Sunni, the Shia and so on, just as Christians are divided.

The word "Muslim" means "One who submits to God". A female Muslim is called a "Muslima". Conversion to Islam is simple: The formula is: "There is no God but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God."

In recent years there has been a surge of fundamentalism in Islam. The rise of ISIS, or the Islamic State, in Iraq, has posed new threats to the world. Our fellow Christians in the Middle East are facing terrible issues.

What can we do? Firstly we need to understand Islam. The so called "Islamic State" terrorists are trying to recreate the ancient days when the first caliph, Abu Bakr, exercised absolute authority in Iraq and Syria. All who did not support them were enemies. Most Muslims do not support them. Many Islamic scholars have roundly condemned these fanatics. They are horrified as we are by the public beheading of journalists and random attacks on the streets in Australia. That is why many Arab states have expressed support for the military action against IS forces.

The vast majority of Muslims we meet in Canberra wish us no harm and are law-abiding and peace-loving. We can understand how threatened they feel at present. But sadly, a few find inspiration from this

(Continued on page 12)

CHRIST AND ISLAM

(Continued from page 11)

violent and savage surge and even rush to join it.

There is also no doubt that the New Testament allows our government to use military force to protect the innocent and end this horrible extremism. We should all pray for our national leaders and for the armed forces.

But Christians are also called upon to follow the Lord Jesus in enduring suffering, refusing to retaliate and loving one's enemies. St Paul in *Romans* 12 calls upon Christians to be joyful in hope, patient in suffering and faithful in prayer. Bless those who persecute, bless and do not curse. *Luke* 6 tells us to love our enemies, do good to those who hate us.

The simple challenge is to go out of our way to express love and friendship towards the Muslims we meet, and to pray for them. We should know more about their convictions and what we share. But we should also know our Christian faith much better, and live out our own convictions.

Remember that we are Christians. We follow the Lord Jesus Christ who bears the wounds of love and reconciliation. We follow the Christ who said: "Father forgive them...." St Paul reminded the Athenians as he reminds us: God has made us "one blood."

Sermon preached at Evensong, St Paul's on Sunday 15 February.

IDLE MOMENTS

Bristol

Ivor had died early in 1945, just before his fourth birthday. He was buried at St Nicholas, Whitchurch, on the southern edge of Bristol: we lived in Gilda Close off Wells Road while Dad worked at Bristol Aircraft at the Fry's factory.

By day Dad inspected metal components of fighters and bombers, at other times doing fire watching, and firing anti-aircraft rockets at the dreaded Hun. (Did my Dad 'pass' for use the components which found their way into aircraft which my step-son's grandfather flew in? Quite possibly: Pop was a Bristol Blenheim gunner).

I asked where my big brother had gone and was told that he'd gone to heaven: all I could see over the wall was a stone barn, so that was, obviously, heaven and I could go there to see him. I was just two and a little bit.

Some days later, frantic Mum couldn't find her darling little Bobby: her elder son had just died and baby Doug was four months old. She

started to run up the road, out of Gilda Close, into the main road and no sign of him.

She must have been the rather obviously desperate mother: a passing motorist - they drove slower then, and could see what went on around them - stopped and said: "Hey, missus, are you looking for a little tyke on a Dinky? He's riding his trike up the middle of the road up that way".

'That way' was towards St Nicholas, the barn, heaven and Ivor.

Rob May

Editor's note:

Rob writes: "Here's an extract from something I've been writing up for my family called 'Disconnected Travels' - things in my family which have happened while or because of travelling. This bit seems to fit with *Community's* Idle Moments column". It certainly did with a sense of nostalgic poignancy captured in the memory of childhood. -Ed

GOD'S HEALING VISION

This vision of a healing centre –
this deep desire to provide a place
where the broken-hearted, the discouraged,
the sick, the lonely, the outcast,
and the burned out, including pastors,
can come for prayer,
to be heard, to be loved,
to be welcomed and healed,
forgiven, set free, and transformed,
a place where My children can come to be
renewed and re-filled
with My life-giving Spirit,
My love, My power, My truth,
My light, My hope, My joy, My peace –
this dream is a dream of My heart.
This is a dream of My kingdom coming,
here on earth, in your neighbourhood,
for you, your family, your friends, your church,
your city, your nation, your world!
With blessings of abundantly answered prayer!

Elizabeth C. Allen, MD
Winston-Salem, NC
Workshop 5
International Order of St Luke Conference, New Zealand,
2013

FROM THE DIOCESE

Renewal and revival themes for Bishop's Convention

Principal speaker at the Bishop's Cathedral Convention on Friday and Saturday May 14-15 will be Dr Alison Morgan, a UK-based researcher and writer who has worked widely in teaching and training and is dedicated to serving the church in renewal and mission.

The Convention, at St Saviour's Cathedral in Goulburn, will also feature the inaugural Bishop Barlow Lecture, presented by Dr Stuart Piggins on Friday evening. He will be speaking on the topic of revival in rural areas.

Alison Morgan will present three sessions on Saturday: Called as disciples of Jesus; Living in God's story; and Doing what Jesus did.

Alison works as a thinker and writer for ReSource, a Church of England charity commissioned in 2004 by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A member of the Archbishops' College of Evangelists, she is also the editor and director of ReSource's discipleship program for Africa which is used in 15 countries.

She has a PhD from Cambridge University and has worked alongside her husband Roger in parish ministry while writing a number of books, including *The Wild Gospel* (Monarch 2004) and its sequel *The Word on the Wind: renewing*

confidence in the gospel (Monarch 2011).

Central to her thinking is the concept that "Jesus saves people, not for heaven but to help God's kingdom happen on earth".

She says: "As disciples we are not only called to live out God's marvellous story in the world but given everything needed for the job".

Associate Professor Stuart Piggins is the Director of the Centre for the History of Christian Thought and Experience at Macquarie University.

He has taught church history at the Universities of London, Wollongong and Sydney. A former Master of Robert Menzies College, Macquarie University, and the founding Director of the Macquarie Christian Studies Institute, he is also Chairman of the Australian Christian Heritage Foundation. His academic interests include the nature of spiritual experience and religious revival and the history of evangelicalism and missions.

His books include *Spirit, Word and World: Evangelical Christianity in Australia 1788-2013*.

Pastor Brian serves as the Divisional Superintendent for the Central Bay Area District of Foursquare Churches comprised of 22 churches.

Pastor Brian received his pastoral training at Life Pacific College and is currently enrolled in the Masters in Strategic Leadership program there.

He has travelled widely in the United States as well as many other countries, teaching in pastoral and worship conferences. He loves to "serve the Body of Christ in areas of worship, spiritual gift training, discipleship, teaching God's Word and encouraging and inspiring God's people to fulfil the purpose and extraordinary destiny they were created to live".

Batemans Bay parish priest Colin Walters, who is also National Director of SOMA Australia, said that SOMA Australia was keen to be involved in providing opportunities for people to grow in the knowledge and use of their spiritual gifts.

"One way we are able to do this is to partner with local Anglican churches as they facilitate conferences and training opportunities for interested people," he said. "We hope that this initiative will bring renewal and revival within the Anglican Church in Australia."

He added that SOMA Australia will look for other opportunities to partner with Anglican Churches across Australia to promote the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Along with inspirational teaching, praise and worship are an integral part of the annual Spirit Conferences hosted by Batemans Bay Anglican parish. St Peter's Anglican College at Broulee has proved to be an excellent venue for the event.

A life changing experience

For the first time, Sharing Of Ministries Abroad (SOMA) Australia is partnering with Batemans Bay Anglican Church to present the Spirit 15 Conference to be held at St Peter's Anglican College, Broulee, from 7pm on Friday 17 April to Sunday lunchtime on 19 April.

Building on the success of similar events over the past five years, the Spirit Conference offers an opportunity for lay and clergy to

grow in knowledge and experience of ministry in the Spirit.

The theme for the Conference in 2015 will be "Spirit break out: Break our walls down".

The Guest Speaker Brian Goodell has been Senior Pastor of The Bridge Foursquare Church in Foster City, California since 2002. He has served the Foursquare denomination as ordained pastor for almost 20 years.

Suffering for Doing Good

A reflection from St *Peter* (3 8:18)

All of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For:

Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.
(*Psalm 34:12-22*)

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

Our new year needs love

Jeremy Halcrow

Please forgive me starting the new year on a sombre note. There has been so much grief and tragedy over recent weeks. Some of it within the Anglicare family.

Perhaps you are also like me in being affected by some of the horrible events brought into our lounge rooms by the TV News.

In difficult times, it is important to remember the values we share at Anglicare. They can help us get through the challenges of the year ahead, whatever they may be.

One important value at Anglicare is that we offer loving service, care and support to all people regardless of their faith (or none).

Reflecting on the recent terrible tragedy in Paris, it felt appropriate to want to stand in solidarity with the victims of such barbarism. However on deeper reflection I concluded that I could not honestly say "Je Suis Charlie".

Freedom of speech doesn't give us a right to insult other people and their core identity.

One of our organisational values at Anglicare is to "respect the intrinsic worth of every person". Part of respecting someone else is to respect their identity, which includes their religious beliefs.

This doesn't mean you have to agree with them. But as St Peter said in his first letter to Christians in what we would call Turkey, the Christian way is not to provoke disagreement but to "have an answer for anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

Of course, no right thinking person would condone murder, whatever the provocation. Yet, wars begin with words (or images) of hate.

Disregarding other people's sensitivities is not the way of peace and at Anglicare we are called to be agents of peace. Showing love to Muslims means respecting their objection to visual representations of their prophet Mohammed.

(Jeremy Halcrow is Chief Executive Officer of Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT.)

Source: Diocesan Web Site

Renewing for each generation

Ahead of the February meeting of the Church of England General Synod the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York issued a number of discussion papers developed by separate task forces under the title: “In Each Generation” : A programme for reform and renewal”.

In their preface to papers prepared for General Synod the Archbishops Justin and Sentamu said that the church’s vocation was to proclaim the good news afresh in each generation.

“As disciples of our Risen Lord,” they said, “we are called to be loyal to the inheritance of faith which we have received and open to God’s Spirit so that we can be constantly renewed and reformed for the task entrusted to us”.

The spiritual challenge of reform and renewal, they said, was both personal and institutional. Four task forces had been established to discern what has been happening in parishes and dioceses, and to reflect on the experience dioceses have had in developing their mission and ministry.

The Archbishops said that renewing and reforming aspects of the church’s institutional life was a necessary but far from a sufficient response to the challenges facing the Church of England. Synod would consider them in the light of exploring what it means for all Christians, lay and ordained, to be a community of missionary disciples.

“The reports also need to be approached,” they said, “against the background of the wider range of ongoing work to promote numerical and spiritual growth, contribute to the common good and re-imagine ministry”.

They said they were continually encouraged in their visits to parishes and dioceses by the many signs of life and growth in the numbers of people coming to faith and growing in faith.

“There is a remarkable breadth and quality of service and commitment offered through initiatives in cathedrals, parish churches, and fresh expressions of church. There are sure grounds for hope both in the grace of God and in

the dedication of God’s people”.

The urgency of the challenge facing the church, they said, was not in doubt. Attendance at Church of England services had declined at an average of 1% per annum over recent decades and, in addition, the age profile of its membership has become significantly older than that of the population. Finances had been relatively stable, thanks to increased individual giving. This situation could, however, be expected to continue unless the decline in membership was reversed.

If the Church of England was to return to growth, there was a compelling need to realign resources and work carefully to ensure that scarce funds are used to best effect.

The four task groups each identified changes which were designed to enable the Church of England to be better equipped for meeting the challenges that it faced.

“There can be no single strategy for the Church of England’s mission and ministry,” they said. “The proposals have been developed in the light of what bishops and dioceses said when consulted. There will continue to be 42 diocesan strategies, each of which are entitled to national support”.

In developing and supporting leaders, “we must ensure they are equipped and can call on the expertise they need.”

Particular attention was given to “the priority of making new disciples.” Mission, it said, was about being sent. Although mission is wider than evangelism, the mission of God is not being undertaken in all its fullness unless people are called to become disciples of Jesus Christ. Making new disciples “is also our response to Christ’s commission to proclaim

the good news”.

The report says: “By linking the goal of spiritual and numerical growth with an increase in the Church’s ‘capacity to serve the whole community provides a clear framework of spiritual growth, numerical growth, and kingdom growth, all of which need to be held inextricably together.

“A vibrant Church which grows new disciples will have more energy to transform the world through the power of God’s love.

“This holistic vision of growth is focused on the Kingdom of God, not just on church attendance. Yet without a regular flow of new disciples, the Church will be less and less able to fulfil its calling to be an agent of God’s transformation in the world”.

It follows that making new disciples should be a priority for all parts of the Church. Evangelism/evangelisation is core to the vocation of every Christian and every church community.

A strong Christian community is the place where people learn about the Christian calling to live a good life, and where attitudes and behaviour change. There can be no authentic Christian ethics without a faithful community to embody it. The priority of growth is an authentic core component for all the traditions within the Church. Making new members is vital to the endurance of holiness and truth.

Unless there is a significant increase in new people joining the Church over the coming years, there will be an accelerating decline in the overall number of worshippers.

The Church nationally needs to pioneer new approaches among the ever-increasing proportion of the population who have never had any contact with church that will awaken in them the possibility of God and help them to explore how God might be relevant to them.

Facilitating growth is multi-faceted. The ultimate issue for the Church in making new disciples is a spiritual one. It needs a “transformation of the heart and its values and priorities”. It must involve the whole Church whether ordained or lay. It is a challenge to diocesan and local church structures and patterns of worship and ministry.

SERVICES

St Paul's

Sunday Services

7.00 am Holy Eucharist (Book of Common Prayer)

8.00 am Holy Eucharist (A Prayer Book for Australia)

10.00 am Holy Eucharist - Sung (A Prayer Book for Australia)

Choral Evensong

6.00pm Service of Choral Evensong on the third Sunday of the month, February to November

Prayers for Healing—

on the second Wednesday of the month immediately following the 10am Eucharist

Weekday Services

10 am Wednesday- Holy Eucharist

St David's

Sunday Service

8.30am - Holy Eucharist

Weekday Service

10 am Thursday- Holy Eucharist

ST PAUL'S PARISH COUNCIL

Members of St Paul's Parish Council are: The Rev'd Dr Brian Douglas (chair), the Rev'd Susan Bridge, Dr Ingrid Moses (Rector's Warden), Robert Deane, Peter McDermott (People's Wardens), Catherine Bohm, Robert Bailey, Mary Pollard, Sandy White (Parish Councillors), Duncan Anderson, Lorraine Litster (St. David's Wardens), Tony Ralli, Peter Cumines (Rector's appointments). Helen Raymond. (minute taker)

OUR EDITORIAL PURPOSE

Community aims to connect people with God, with each other and with our community by sharing experiences through reflective dialogue.

Community seeks to create a sense of encounter and belonging, to build relationships within the church and beyond, to recognise the capacity of religion to nourish individual lives, and to reflect the unique position of St Paul's and St David's in the life of the Diocese and the nation.

It will do this through stories of the Parish and the wider Anglican communion in ways relevant to its readers.

Community seeks the engagement of readers and contributors to reflect the richness and diversity of the Parish and to honour and proclaim an expression of faith in our life together.

Acknowledgment of sources for further reading:

Church Growth in Britain 1980 to the Present, Cathedrals, Greater Churches and the Growth of the Church, October 2013

"Secular Tools and Sacred Goals: A Case Study of How Anglican Priests Are Embracing Management Accounting and Strategic Planning"

Daphne Rixon

Saint Mary's University

Alex Faseruk

Memorial University of Newfoundland, *Journal of Business Diversity* vol. 12(1) 2012

The Sacred and the Secular: The Variable Significance of Accounting in a Religious Organization

P. Booth

University of New South Wales, March 1992

"Balancing money and mission in a local church budget"

H. J. Irvine, University of Wollongong,

Accounting, Auditing &

Accountability Journal, 2005, 18(2), 2005, 211-237.

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